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JAN., 1909 COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE 15 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

DRAWN BY EDWARD PENFIELD


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"The City of Numbered Days," a complete novel by Francis Lynde, in February number; also "Bill Harris—His Line," a serial by Howard Fielding.

VOLUME XII NUMBER 3

The Popular Magazine

JANUARY 1909

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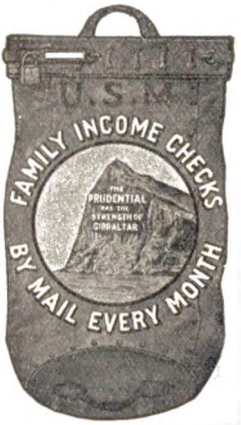

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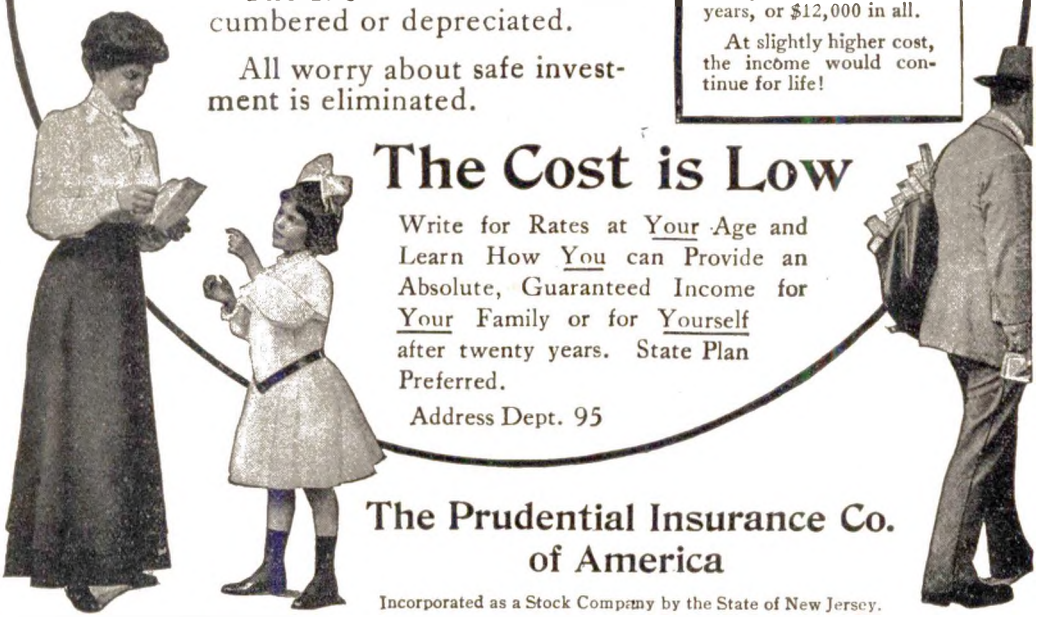

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XII. JANUARY, 1909. No. 3.

The Gun-Runner

By Arthur Stringer

Author of "The Wire Tappers," "Phantom Wires," Etc.

Stringer's remarkable "wire-tapping" stories earned for him an enviable reputation as inventor of a brand of thrilling adventure fiction that is absolutely original with himself. "Popular" has arranged that its readers shall have from him a series of even more thrilling stories of wireless telegraphy. This is the first of the series. Woven around and depending from the wonders of "wireless" aboard ship, are the big facts of a Central American revolution, the personality of a powerful king-maker, and the unusual romance of the wireless-operator and a beautiful woman enmeshed in intrigues of State.

(*A Complete Novel*)

"SENDING yet?" asked the stranger in the black raincoat, blocking the doorway of the *Laminian's* wireless-room.

"Not till I've tuned up this pile of *junk!*" was the preoccupied answer of the operator, bent low over his work.

"You don't mean it's broken down our first hour out?" demanded the stranger. He still stood there, studying the shirt-sleeved figure in the center of the room.

"I can't make her spark right. And I've got a damp helix and a motor running weak!" The words were followed by a gasp of exasperation and the rattle of a tool flung to the floor.

The huge-shouldered man in the raincoat made no effort to conceal his disappointment. It was what one deserved, he conceded, for traveling in such a punk-riveted, slush-pitted, coal-eating second-rater!

He stood leaning against the dripping rail, peering out from under bushy iron-gray eyebrows drawn close over the flat-bridged nose, unmindful of the rain that beat in from the northeast as the *Laminian* plowed her way down through the Narrows and the Lower Bay. His red-rimmed, many-wrinkled eyes were still on the horizon, and his massive, russet hand was still clamped on the white awning-stanchion as Sandy Hook was passed and Atlantic Highlands melted down into a vague monotone of rain-swept loneliness.

Beyond the ship's officers, who fretted uncertainly back and forth along the bridge, his figure was the only one on the deserted deck. As the mist shut off the last dull line of Navesink, and the nose of the steamer swung southward, rising and dipping in the long ground-swell of the open Atlantic, the

watching man gave vent to an involuntary sigh of relief. But he still stood there, in the slanting rain, while the deck beneath his feet shook with the purposeful throb of the engines under their "full steam ahead," and the pulsating and ponderous thing of steel, "carrying a bone in her teeth," shouldered her way on through a ghostlike world of sea and rain. She seemed for all her pitted and rust-stained plates, dignified with some new-found sense of mystery, of austere and unknown missions, as she sought out her predestined path through the gray loneliness of her universe; she seemed humanized, endowed with the will of a sentient and reasoning being.

The stranger looked about quickly, as the thick-necked, short-legged captain, in dripping oilskins, leaned over the port bridge-gate and called back along the empty deck.

"Aren't you getting the *Princeton* there?" he demanded. He flung the rain-drops from his cap-brim, with a bull-like shake of the head, as he waited. There was no answer to his question. So he repeated it, this time in a bellow. Then came the sound of coughing from the wireless-room and the rattle of a quickly opened shutter.

"I'll have her in five minutes," answered the operator. The shutter closed again, sharply.

The man in the raincoat turned and studied the operator's "station" where the after-deck superstructure rose squat and square as a scow cabin out of the bleached flooring of the weather-deck. He peered up to where the "T" aerials of phosphor-bronze wire on their ash-wood stretchers bridged the two mast-heads; he followed the course of those united wires as they led down into the square little "station."

Next to this "station," on the right, was the ship's lamp-room. In front of it stood the flag-locker. Farther along the deck, he noted, came the chart-room, and then the captain's cabin. In front of that again was the wheel-house and the canvas-strapped bridge. On this bridge an officer, unsheathing a glass, was peering out to sea. The stranger followed the direction of the pointed glass and made out the ponderously rocking mass of a war-ship as she crept up on them through the mist. There was something ominous and authoritative about her, with her sullen turrets and her monotone of color, as she belched out her black smoke plumes that hung low on the sky-line.

Then the stranger in the dripping raincoat swung sharply about and looked up at the masthead. As he did so he saw a nervous blue spark appear and disappear at the ends of the taut-strung aerials that cradled back and forth with every dip and plunge of the ship. A muffled crash and clatter of sound echoed out of the closed "station"; a simultaneous kiss and crackle of broken noise came from the mast-head.

It was the wireless-operator at last working his key. It was the Hertzian waves, erupting from the mended coils, winging their way with the speed of light out through the loneliness of the rain-fogged afternoon.

Then came a space of silence, interrupted by the sudden appearance of the operator, still in his shirt-sleeves, with his coat held over his head, like a hood. He scurried forward to the bridge-gate, where he was met by the waiting captain. Together they bent over a sheet from a tinted form-pad. Then the hooded figure once more scurried back to the "station," and the slam of a door punctuated his disappearance from sight. The man in the raincoat turned back to the war-vessel, and stood thoughtfully regarding the bursts of foam on her plunging cutwater and the intermittent shower of spray as she rose and dipped in the cross-swell. Through the engine-room skylight behind him came the call of subterranean voices, the busy clangor of iron scraping on iron, the quick slam of furnace doors, magnified in the open shaft-head to sounds of titanic proportions. As he stood there a deck steward mounted the brass-plated stairway, carrying a tray with coffee-cake and steaming cups of tea.

The man at the rail wheeled about

quickly at the unexpected sound of a voice so close behind him. He declined the proffered refreshment, bruskly, and swung back to his earlier position, staring out at the war-vessel. The steward took up his tray and passed on to the operator's door, where, adroitly balancing on one foot, he tapped on the panel with the other.

The door opened, and this time the white glare of the electric light shone along the wet deck. The man at the rail caught a clearer glimpse of the room. Behind the door swung a curtain of soiled denim, partly withdrawn. Squatting on a canvas camp-chair before his unpainted work-table was the operator. His wireless helmet-receiver, or "set," was clasped over his ears and held close to the bent head by a chaplet of glimmering metal. Against each "receiver" the operator pressed a white handkerchief, to shut away outside noises.

His face was thin and keen, and though still youthful, seemed almost colorless in comparison with the ruddiness of the open-weathered ship's officers. He had the high brow and the wide cheek-bones of the natural ascetic. Though his eyes were impersonally studious and abstracted, there was a redeeming line or two of humor about the still boyish mouth. His hands were long and bony and slender, with something persistently scholarlike about them. This impression was further borne out by the restless, uncoordinated, and, at times, almost wolflike restlessness of the spare and nervous body.

He nodded cheerfully enough to the steward, however, at the sight of the coffee-cakes and the steaming tea. Then he turned back to his responder. The steward, leaving his tea and cake on the seat of a broken-armed steamer-chair, went on his way, and the deck was again deserted.

"Why aren't you getting the *Princeton* there?" Captain Yandel once more demanded from the bridge-gate. It was plain to see his feeling for the new operator was not an overkindly one.

The new operator showed his head and replied, "I'll try again, sir!"

Once more came the hiss and rattle and crackle of the spark, and once more the head appeared around a corner of the stateroom.

"He's busy talking to the navy-yard!"

"What did he tell you?"

The new operator hesitated for a moment or two before answering. His singularly quiet eyes were resting on Captain Yandel's nose, for it was a remarkable nose, something between a cardinal and magenta color, stippled with the brighter hues of countless l t-tle broken veins.

"He told me to shut up, and cut out!" was the answer.

The passenger in the raincoat fell to pacing the open deck. He stopped once or twice, quite casually, to glance in at the wireless apparatus. Then, seeing that the operator had taken off his earphones and was leaning back in his canvas chair, giving his open and undivided attention to the tea and coffee-cake, the stranger came to a stop and leaned companionably against the jamb of the open door. The young man glanced up at the huge figure darkening his cabin. He did so with no outward sign of emotion. He had, apparently, become inured to the wondering eyes of the passengers, and he had his own ends to pursue. So he went on with his coffee-cake, in silence.

"Could you take those messages of mine now?" asked the man in the raincoat.

"Any old time now," answered the operator, without so much as a second glance.

"I settle for it with you, don't I?" asked the stranger, drawing out a roll of bills. The formidable dimensions of that roll were lost on the man bending over the teacup.

"Leave your name and cabin number, and pay the purser. They don't seem to trust operators on this floating palace! All I do is stamp the time-check on the message and send it out."

He took the two messages, stamped them, and read them aloud, before penciling the number of words on a corner of each sheet and stabbing it on his "send-hook." He read perfunctorily:

VARREL, Sixty Wall Street, New York.
Our man on board *Laminian* bound Puerto Locombia. Wire Washington. Will have him held by authorities to await instructions.
DUFFY.

The second message he read off quite as hastily, and with equal nonchalance.

DOCTOR BERNARDO MORALES, Mobile.
Advise Charleston wireless to relay *Laminian* southward bound if shipment of laundry equipment and steel ties left Mobile for Ganley and date of sailing.
MICHAEL DUFFY.

The stranger waited a moment at the door, as though expecting some further word or movement from the operator. But that youth was already busy over his "tuner." So the man in the raincoat turned away, with a look of mild exasperation in his predaceous and puzzled little eyes.

II.

It was four hours later when the man in the raincoat reappeared on the bridge-deck. The night was thick, and McKinnon, the operator, worked with his coat off and his door hooked back against the wall-plates. He looked up for only a moment as he saw the huge figure once more confronting him. The stranger, unrebuffed by his silence, stepped calmly inside.

"Anything come in over this machinery o' yours for me?" he inquired, as he took out a cigar, pushed his hat back on his head, and struck a light. The operator looked up with his habitually abstracted and unseeing stare.

"What's the name?" he asked, once more studying his "tuner."

The other was indignantly silent for a moment; then he laughed a little, forgivingly. "Duffy," he answered. "Michael Duffy."

The operator shook his head; the movement was followed by another minute or two of silence.

"It might've come under the name of Cody, Richard Cody," explained the intruder. Something in the younger man's smile caused him to add: "You see, that's our firm name, Duffy and Cody."

An alias, south of the Twentieth Parallel, often enough carries its own explanation. But McKinnon merely gave a shake of the head. It was several minutes before he glanced about at the other man, with a closeness of scrutiny that might have been impertinent, had it seemed less frankly impersonal.

"Nothing in for passengers this trip," he announced, as he turned back to his "tuner." He drummed impatiently on the table-edge for a moment, before readjusting his helmet-receiver. But the huge-shouldered intruder was not to be so easily shaken off.

"Your machine's working, isn't it?" he asked, preoccupied with an inspection of the end of his cigar. This cigar was soft and thick and short, like his own fingers. Despite its dark and baleful color he kept inhaling and expelling great lungsful of it as he talked. The operator idly registered the mental decision that cigars such as those were surely of Hondurian make.

"I saw you giving a message to the captain, didn't I?" And again the bellowslike lungs expelled their languid cloud.

"That was to not take on coffee at Puerto Locombia!" answered McKinnon. The stranger was suddenly offering him one of the thick short cigars. A shadow seemed to have lifted from his face.

"I don't smoke," said the ungracious man at the key. "And I'm busy sending!"

"You mean you're talking to New York or somewhere, now?" amiably persisted the other. The operator's hand went out to the switch, black against the unpainted boards, and flanked on either side by a fuse.

"I've been tuning for Atlantic City. We're just picking him up," he answered as his fingers hovered over the starting-box lever clamped to the same pine boards above the switch. A sudden deep buzzing filled the cabin. It grew louder and louder as the lever crossed farther and farther down on the contact-pins. It sounded like a hive of bees stirred into anger. The stranger peered in at the dynamo under the operating-table.

"So you're talking!" he murmured.

"How long will you be in communication with them?" he went on, after a second or two of thought.

The other raised an ear-phone to listen, as the question was repeated. Then he turned back and bent over the carborundum-tip between his responder-points.

"We're never really out of touch with 'em, on this run!" he retorted. He seemed to resent his own increasing concessions to the other's imperturbable good nature.

"You mean you can call up New York from the Caribbean?"

The operator put down his ear-phones and shook out his small cardboard box of carborundum fragments, picking through them for a fresh piece for his responder-points. It seemed apparent enough that he was neither friendly nor unfriendly; it was simply that he was busy.

"No, I don't mean that, exactly. New York never works south of Atlantic City, as a rule. He's got too much to handle there, too many ships going in and out. But New York can relay to Galilee and then down to NF—that's Norfolk—and from there on to Hatteras. Then Hatteras could throw a message over to Charleston, and if we're depending on land stations alone, Charleston can relay to Savannah, and then Savannah can get in touch with the naval station at Saint Augustine."

"And then where?" asked the stranger, leaning back against the cabin wall.

"Then Key West could catch it up, and if there wasn't a gunboat or an Atlas fruit-liner crawling somewhere round Cuba, why, the navy-yard at Guantanamo could get it relayed over to Limon, and from Limon, in decent weather, you'd catch the navy-yard operator at Colon. And if the night was clear, you'd run one chance in a hundred of waking up the Coconut Trail aerials behind Puerto Locombia."

"Could Puerto Locombia get anything outside of a passing ship? Kingston, for instance?"

"Kingston never had wireless—it's prohibited by the British government."

"Then there's New Orleans, on a pinch?"

"There's too much map between," explained the operator. He gathered up his box of scattered carborundum.

"Queer, isn't it, getting words on a tape that way, four hundred miles off!" said the stranger. He scratched his huge head in a sort of mute astonishment, as he surveyed the cabinful of apparatus.

"We don't use a tape," the other corrected, waving a preoccupied hand toward the inscription on the condenser-case. "We're De Forest! And we don't claim to talk around the world yet!"

The stranger was peering contentedly and aimlessly about the crowded little cabin. "Where d'you suppose that cruiser was off to?" he next inquired.

"That's what *I've* been trying to find out!"

"They all carry wireless?" asked the other, as he sent an exhalation of pungent cigar smoke ceilingward.

"Yes, but they're not aching to talk just yet. Wait till they've been lying down there in the heat for three months! They'll be calling all night, just for the sake of seeing something doing with a coherer!"

The stranger, who seemed well satisfied with what he had learned, remained silent for a moment or two.

"By the way, could you take a message for New Orleans to-night?"

"I could take it all right, if you're willing to prepay land charges."

"I'll pay anything you say, so long as you get me in touch with my people there. I want to ask Jean Careche, at the St. Charles, just when a shipment of oil and mill-shafting got out of that port."

"Wait a minute, then, until I get Atlantic City again. You can be writing out your message and I'll get the time-check on it."

McKinnon bent over his table, with a wrinkled brow, and started to "call." As he caught the lever-handle of the huge key in his fingers and worked it deliberately yet slowly up and down—

he was sending "strong"—the sudden blue "splash" of flame exploded and leaped and hissed across the "spark-gap," from one brass-knobbed discharging-rod to the other. It filled the roughly improvised "station" with a sound like the rattle of musketry. The ceiling and walls of the room, crusted with many paintings of white lead, mirrored and refracted the purplish-blue flashes. A faint ozonic odor, not unlike a sublimated smell of brimstone, filled the air. The operator threw off his switch again, and listened intently, with his two handkerchiefs muffling his ear-phones. Then he suddenly swung about and looked at the man behind him.

"That cruiser's going to Culebra, off Porto Rico. She's ordered south on account of the Locombian trouble."

"You don't mean she's going to mix up in that mess?" the intruder cried, with a note of disgust.

"No; Atlantic City says she's just going to lie there and wait for instructions from Washington."

The operator turned back to his table without apparently noticing the interest in the other man's eyes. He sat detached and unconscious of any presence in the room except that of the mysterious spirit which came and went at a touch of his hand. A smile began to play about his mouth as he listened. It was held there in suspension, while his gaze shifted from side to side, vivaciously, in response to that far-off and mysterious Voice that was winging its invisible way across so many miles of rain-washed sea and emptiness, to creep along a slender thread of metal into his closed and crowded cabin.

He still seemed unconscious of the mounting look of determination, of obdurate belligerency, that smoldered up into the square-jawed face of the watching stranger, as his eyes traveled from a wall map of the Caribbean down to the brass key, and then back to the map again. "You'd think our Uncle Samuel had enough troubles without trying to play school-teacher to those dinky little fire-eaters down there!" he meditatively ventured, as he took out another of his black Hondurian cigars, and once more fell to studying the map of the Caribbean.

The operator, bent low over his apparatus, did not deign to answer him.

III.

"You've made this trip before?" observed the stranger, studying the youth before him with the same calm and half-closed eyes as he had bent on the faded wall map.

"Never on *this* tub!" McKinnon responded, with a contemptuous side glance about his "station."

The stranger followed that glance as it circled the crowded and disordered room. It was both a sleeping-cabin and an operating-office. Under the wide shelf that supported a double row of Leyden jars, surmounted in turn by the De Forest helix, was the operator's narrow berth. Toward the foot of this berth, below the condenser, stood an enameled wash-bowl and a litter of tools. Next to these was a wooden-slatted trunk, on which lay a clutter of recently unpacked clothing, a pair of canvas-covered dumb-bells, a shaving-set, and a tin box of photographs. Against the farther wall, half-way to the door and directly in front of the dynamo, stood a broken steamer-chair. In front of it was the rough pine table at which the operator sat and worked. On this table stood the tuning-box, with its mysterious rows of numerals along the three slots in which lever-heads moved back and forth, the great, long-handled despatching-instrument, like a Brobdingnagian model of a telegraph-key, and the delicately mounted little responder, the nerve-center of the wireless system. Above this on the outside wall stood the switchboard. It was of unpainted pine, like the table. Set in it, near the top, was the starting-box, with its broken and roughly spliced lever, and below it the switch-arm itself, standing between its two protecting fuses. At the end of the table was the faded wall map of the Caribbean and a shallow clothes-locker. It was a strange medley of the obvious and the

inscrutable, of the commonplace and the mysterious.

"How'd you get aboard this tub, anyway?" the stranger suddenly asked, with a sympathetic wag of the head.

"I needed the money. But I never thought I'd have to face a mess like this!" And the new operator waved an arm about the room, disgustedly.

The stranger was meditatively rubbing his pendulous chin.

"You don't like the work, eh?"

"It's good enough when you've got a decent station. But *this* room isn't fit for a pig to live in! Look at that box of a sleeping-berth! It's worse than a coffin! And I'm going to kick a board out of that cabin wall if they don't get a ventilator-tube in here—it's like sleeping in a dough-box! And look at that bunged-up tuner! And that operating-table that's never seen a coat of paint; and that switchboard—nothing but raw pine! Why, nine of the connecters in those Leyden jars turned out to be broken, after I'd struck this place at noon. I had to patch them up with all the wash-bowl chains from the first cabins as we came down the Bay. I got onto *that* dodge aboard the *Prinz Joachim!*"

"*She's* a real boat!" interpolated the stranger.

The young operator was wistfully nodding his head.

"But you can make this snug enough," the other soothed.

"Snug! Why, this place looked like a box stall in a livery-stable! I haven't even got a silence-room or an annunciator connecting me with the bridge—I've got to be hollered at like a sinker-cook in an East Side beanery!"

The stranger laughed. It was altogether a laugh of sympathy. But his meditative eye kept roving about the stateroom.

"I suppose you've seen a good deal of the South?" he said at last.

"All I want to, thank you!" promptly answered McKinnon. The vigor of his retort made the other man smile again.

"You don't like it down there, eh?"

The operator, who had slowly adjusted his caplike receiving-apparatus, performed his habitual rite of lifting the phone-receiver from his ear, to catch the question as it was repeated.

"Do *you?*" demanded the operator.

The stranger did not answer the question. Instead of that, he asked another.

"Why don't you keep out of it, then?" There was nothing but good nature in the query. The operator laughed.

"I can't afford to!" was all he said, though he added, in an afterthought: "Until I can get at the work I want!"

McKinnon's questioner looked relieved. He became more light-hearted, more suavely consolatory.

"But it's so deucedly mysterious—sending all kinds of messages for all kinds of people!" he argued.

"What's so mysterious about it?" the man at the table demanded. "*I* think it's confoundedly simple!"

"The machinery is, I suppose, when you understand it; but I mean the mixing up in big events, the getting next to life with the shell off."

"Oh, it's mostly weather-reports and 'sweetheart' messages and captains giving distances and saying they're coming into port or passing lights or wanting wharf-room, if it isn't the navy people asking for Sunday papers and news from home."

"But think what a swath you could cut with wireless, if you wanted to!" pursued the other, in his placid disregard of all side-issues.

"Me?" said McKinnon, turning quickly about.

"I mean as a side-line," interposed the stranger, with a shrug. Still again McKinnon's nervous gray eyes swept the figure in the steamer-chair.

"But I *have* a side-line," explained the operator, as he noted the other man's puzzled gaze resting on his box of models.

"How d'you mean?"

"I mean that reed-disk and Ruhmkorff-coil transmitter you see there. *That's* the work I want to get at!"

"But what is it?" was the other's half-diffident inquiry. His lack of interest

in no way seemed to depress the younger man.

"It's my wireless-telephony scheme for pilot-boats and fleet-maneuvers and yacht-races and ten-mile work in general. For instance, there's a battle going on, and the whole top-hamper of a cruiser gets blown away; all we'd have to do, with this, would be to run a wire up on an oar and call on the flag-ship for orders."

"But aren't other folks getting in ahead of you on this?"

"Well, I can still use my outfit to smash their monopoly and stop royalty overcharges. You see, it's only an arrangement of steel reeds connected with a receiver, or, say, to a responder like this one on the table. These reeds are tuned in unison with the transmitter-reeds—it works on what we call the law of syntonic synchronism."

He noticed, as he went on, the other's companionable grimace at the polysyllables.

"Models cost money, of course; I have to go slow. But once I've got that apparatus where I want it, you'll never see *me* south of Hatteras again."

He stopped, and waited for the other man to speak.

"It's not a white man's country," admitted the stranger, with a nod toward the South. "The only good thing in it is the mules!"

"We've got to take that as it comes!" McKinnon said. Then he leaned back with half-closed eyes and linked his long forefingers together behind his head. "You see, I can always save money on a coastwise run like this: there's no way of getting rid of it."

"Well, money's worth having now and then," the stranger remarked, as his sagely ruminative eye fell on the little varnished box that held the wireless-responder.

He was silent for a moment or two, though McKinnon watched him closely out of his half-shut eyes. Then the stranger swung slowly about and touched the operator on his soiled shirt-sleeve. McKinnon felt the heavy forefinger on his arm, but he did not move.

"See here," said the stranger, and both his voice and his expression had undergone some quick and pregnant change, "see here; d'you want to make ten times what you get out of this key-operating business? D'you want to make a good round sum, helping me out of a hole?"

The *Laminian's* operator looked closely at the man who had invaded his cabin. He had, apparently, been afraid of some such undercurrent of self-interest in the other's advances. He seemed to possess the man of thought's persistent horror of material and entangling alliances; he seemed to feel that some secret web of inveiglement had been woven about him.

"How could *I* help you out of a hole?" he curtly demanded.

The stranger did not answer at once. The other's suddenly aroused suspicion had warned him to go slow. Instead of speaking, he leaned back in the steamer-chair and studied his companion. The path before him seemed a precarious one. His pursed-up lips worked slowly in and out, as he sat there temporizing. There was something suggestive of the ruminant in his large and heavy silence.

"Could we talk here—us two, man to man?" he finally asked, with a look at the door.

"Of course we can!" the operator retorted, nettled by the sense of mystery the other was conjuring up about so simple a situation. This vague feeling of irritation seemed to merge into something that was almost anger, as he watched the stranger slowly rise to his feet and cross over to the cabin door, held back against the wall-plates by its brass hook. He lifted the end of this hook, on his toe, and let the freed door swing shut with the slow dip of the steamer's deck. Then he ruffled out the faded denim curtain, and came back and sat down. The two men continued to look at each other, guardedly.

"I've got a hard job ahead of me," began the intruder, seeming to feel his way as he went. "A hard job—and you're the only man on this ship who can help me along!"

"Well?" said McKinnon, with a sig-

nificant glance toward his large and authoritative silver watch. The stranger's eye, following him, passed on to the key-lever, and then on again to the helix wires.

"You may recall that you sent a couple of messages out for me, this afternoon?" he began finally.

McKinnon recalled the fact of the two despatches.

"I suppose I've got to explain them," said the stranger, fondling one of his thick short cigars in his thick short fingers. "You'll notice that the first message went to Sixty Wall Street. You may or may not know that that's the information bureau of the Consolidated Fruit Concern. And if you've knocked about the Banana Belt long enough you've found out that those people just about *own* those little yam-eating republics down there!"

McKinnon nodded, as a sign that he understood.

"They've got a good many millions of money locked up in that export business o' theirs. And when you're doing business in a republic that's built on bullets, you've got to watch where you're walking. It means that you've got to keep your ear to the ground; see that your governments are stable, I mean; and your marionettes in their nice little red and gold uniforms running smooth and true. That's why they retain a big man like Varrel for their information bureau—just to know who's poking a finger into the political pie down there, and to be ready for trouble when it blows up!"

It was all obvious enough to the listening operator.

"Well, I'm here acting for Varrel and the Consolidated Fruit people. The Locombian *chargé d'affaires* at Washington tipped our office off, about five weeks ago, about trouble ahead in Guariqui."

"Guariqui?" quietly asked McKinnon.

"Guariqui's their capital—the capital of Locombia. Since we've heard that, of course, we've been cooperating with the Department at Washington, keeping an eye on any Locombian likely to be interested in the Guariqui mix-up!"

McKinnon confessed that he had known of detectives engaged in the sole pursuit of shadowing Latin-American exiles.

"And it's right here under this deck"—Duffy tapped the floor with his heel as he spoke—*"it's right here on this ship o' yours that we've got Ganley—the one and only Ganley!"*

IV.

The stranger peered across the cabin at the unperturbed operator.

"Who's Ganley?" asked McKinnon. The man in the steamer-chair let his astonishment explode in a ceilingward belch of smoke.

"Ganley! Why, Ganley's the biggest gun-runner doing business in the Caribbean! He's the slickest revolution-maker that ever shipped carbines and smokeless into a Latin-American republic!"

"He's new to me!" McKinnon protested.

"He's the man who's always smelling out a country that's looking for a liberator! And he gets a rake-off from the patriots, and a rake-off from the Birmingham gun people, and another rake-off from the nitro-makers! Why, he's the man who's been engineering this Locombian uprising for the last seven months! But now we've got him good, and got him where we want him."

"Then what's he doing on a steamer like this? Couldn't he see he was going to be cornered?"

The disposition of the operator was not altogether an inflammable one.

"That's just the point, my friend! He couldn't get out of Charleston or Mobile or New Orleans. We had those ports watched. So he slipped quietly up to New York, engaged a passage on Saturday's Hamburg-American steamer for Colon, and then slipped over to the *Laminian* in a closed cab, when he thought we weren't keeping tab on him. And he's under this deck, down there in Cabin Fourteen, and you'll find that he's going to stay there

until we slip into the roadstead at Puerto Locombia!"

"But what have I got to do with all this?" McKinnon demanded.

"That's just what I'm coming around to," the intruder was saying to him. "This Ganley, remember, has got his 'fences' and confederates and small-fry helpers. He works the thing thorough, when he does it. And as likely as not, between here and Puerto Locombia, he's going to get messages sent in to him, or he's going to send out some despatches on his own hook—so as to keep in touch with his people."

The stranger came to a stop, and sat regarding the younger man, as though he looked for some word of encouragement or comprehension from him.

"The thing I've got to guard against most," the stranger who called himself Duffy continued, "is the Department at Washington. If they sent something in, and it got out all over the ship, it would be likely to spoil everything!"

"But it won't get out all over the ship!" the operator corrected.

"You'll promise me that?" asked the other, with a look of relief.

"Of course I'll promise you that—it's part of my business!"

"But there's the other side of the question," the stranger discreetly continued. "Ganley is almost sure to be sending or receiving something. Why, I shouldn't be surprised if you've been handling something for him already!"

The operator reached out for his message-hooks. The movement was merely perfunctory, for the hooks were all but empty.

"What name would he be traveling under?" McKinnon looked up to ask.

"He's booked as John Siebert, Cabin Fourteen," was the answer.

The man in the steamer-chair looked relieved, but only for a moment, when he had learned that nothing had come or gone.

"Of course I may be wrong about his trying to keep in touch with those people of his. And it may happen the Department won't even try to have him held. Perhaps they won't do anything until we get him ashore at Puerto Locombia. But we've got to get him there—it's our last chance. We've worked too hard on this thing not to see it put through to a finish!"

"And?" asked McKinnon, waiting.

"All I want you to do is to keep tab on anything that comes in for this man Ganley, or about him and his tin-horn warfare down there—and on anything that's to go out until we land."

"Are you acting officially?" McKinnon demanded, with a studied effort toward impersonality. "I mean, are you acting for the Department at Washington?"

"I'm acting as the confidential agent of the Consolidated Fruit people, and the Consolidated Fruit people have been cooperating with the Department for several weeks now."

"And you simply want to know what these messages are?"

"Yes, that's all: I mean that's all, unless they're of such a nature as to defeat the ends of justice. We don't want anything to get through that's going to help our man slip away from us!"

"You mean for me to hold back everything that looks suspicious until you O. K. it?"

"And couldn't you do that, if I made it worth while for you?" quietly inquired the stranger.

"How do you mean worth while?"

"Why, I'll pay you for your trouble! I'll——"

But McKinnon's seemingly indignant start brought the older man to a stop.

"You don't suppose I'm going to take money to hold up the company's business?" he demanded.

The stranger raised a thick, red hand, protestingly. McKinnon noticed a scar in the center of the wide palm: he inappositely wondered if it could be a bullet-wound.

"Hold on a minute," he warned the other, appeasingly. "This isn't a matter o' messenger-boy tips. It's out-and-out business. You've got to remember they're big things involved in this, and big people, too!"

"Why do you want to mix me up in the mess, whether it's big or little?"

complained the operator. The other man permitted the protest to go unanswered.

"But can't you tell me what it's worth for you to cooperate with us in this?" he blandly insisted.

"It would be worth my job!" McKinnon cried.

"Well, what's that worth?" queried the other, undisturbed. In fact, there was an undertone of contempt in his guttural question.

"Oh, it's not what the job's worth," protested McKinnon. "It's the putting outside business before the business I'm paid to do. It's the acting against regulations and getting the company officers down on me. It's the doing of something I'm not here to do!"

"But this is merely a matter between us two, man to man. The company doesn't have anything to do with this."

"They own this junk," broke out the operator, with a wave of the hand that designated the apparatus about him. "And they about own me, too, as long as I'm on their pay-roll."

"Of course they do," the other soothed, tranquilly. "But you're here, and they're in New York, and you've got the running of this apparatus until we dock at Puerto Locombia."

The operator sat looking at the other man, in silence.

"Why, you told me yourself, a few minutes ago, that your machinery doesn't always work right. And you say you haven't a tape, or anything that registers the messages as they come to you. Isn't that right?"

The operator nodded.

"Then why couldn't you accidentally miss a message? Or why couldn't you send it out without being sure that it was going to carry clear across to the next operator?"

McKinnon still looked at the other man. There was something so placid and intimate about the tones of the stranger's voice that the very purport of his suggestion had seemed robbed of its enormity.

"I wouldn't do a thing like that for five hundred dollars!" the operator at last declared.

The stranger looked back at him without a move of his great body in the steamer-chair. McKinnon's glance of open contempt in no wise disturbed him.

"I'll give you one thousand dollars if you do it!" he said. His voice was quiet and casual as he spoke, but again the operator swung about and blinked at him. He opened his lips to reply, and then suddenly became silent. He shifted in his chair, as though to draw away from some tangible and precipitating temptation.

"I'll give you one thousand dollars," repeated the stranger, "and I'll promise to stand between you and any trouble you're afraid of!"

"It's not what I'm afraid of!" the other retorted.

"Then what is it? You fail to catch a message or two, and no one's the wiser! What of that? Good heavens, man, you're not doing anything crooked! Nobody's cut a throat back there in New York! Nobody's trying to get away from your Center Street people! You're not doing anything against the penal code!"

"Why didn't you go to the captain about this?" complained the operator. The tacit note of concession in that complaint did not escape his companion.

"Because the captain has no more to do with this than De Forest himself! And I imagine he'd rather be soaking in brandy pawnees than talking business to outsiders! This is something between us two. You're not cheating anybody! You're not hurting anybody! All you do is to help me win a big case and get well paid for your trouble. And a twist of the wrist is what it costs you. For I'm assuming, of course, you can put that machinery of yours out of business, for the time being, without exactly showing how!"

"That's easy enough!" said the operator, with a stare at his apparatus. "There are a dozen ways of throwing a complicated thing like that out of kilter. It's my getting out of kilter with the company that worries me!"

"The company doesn't count, my friend! They're outsiders in this. And

you get your thousand dollars in cold cash, to work on that reed-disk of yours for half a year if you want to!"

McKinnon laughed a little. Then he grew more thoughtful, and was about to speak, when the quick tread of feet sounded on the deck without. He caught up the phone "set," hurriedly, and bent over the pine table. The steps passed on, but the betrayal of disingenuousness remained a consoling and obvious fact to the man in the steamer-chair. It left him no longer in doubt.

He reached down into his capacious trouser pocket and produced a roll of treasury notes held together by a double rubber band. He peeled off three orange-tinted twenty-dollar bills and folded them neatly across the middle, lengthwise. Then with equal deliberation, he thrust them into McKinnon's still hesitating fingers. The operator looked down at the money doubtfully, and then up at the stranger.

"That's just a trio of twenties, to bind the bargain," the latter explained. "You've got to get something for me taking up your time like this."

"But how are you going to clear me —I mean, how are you going to make them see I haven't been acting against the ship, if it ever comes to a showdown?" asked the operator.

"There'll be nothing to clear, and nothing to show," the other retorted. "All you've got to do is to have a bad ear when a certain message or two happens to come along! But I'll go further than that, just to put your mind at rest. To-morrow, when I pay over the balance, I'll put it down on paper, with my name to it, that I guarantee to protect you. We can both sign a note showing we're acting straight, and where we stand. Then you'll have me tied down, in black and white. That seems square enough, doesn't it?"

"Oh, it's square enough! But suppose this man Ganley comes to me with a message to send out. I've got to show it to you, and, if you don't approve of it, I've got to act the lie that the message has been sent, and keep lying to him, every time he asks me about it!"

"You're not paid to be a 'fence' for a gun-runner, are you?"

The older man laughed a little. Then he rose heavily to his feet. His head almost touched the cabin ceiling. "There's not much danger he'll ever ask about it! And when you know the man and his business, you'll never let things like that worry you!"

"That doesn't excuse me—his being a gun-runner!"

"Of course, I don't want you to lose either your job or your self-respect, just because my official duty's been making me shadow a man!"

The wireless-operator seemed groping about for an answer, when the quietness of the ship was broken by a sudden sound. It was the *Laminian's* fog-horn, hoarse and mournful through the darkness, tearing the quiet with its slowly repeated call. The two men stood side by side, listening, as the bass-noted complaint was repeated.

"We're running into thick weather," said the operator, turning to catch up his ear-phones. The two men, immured in their own ends and aims, had lost all thought of time and environment.

A moment later, heavy footsteps sounded on the deck, and the captain appeared in the doorway. He stood in the narrow opening, red-nosed, gnome-like, with the white light glistening on his waterproofed figure.

"Are you keeping an ear open for everything in there?" he demanded, with a scowl of disapproval at the man beside the steamer-chair.

"Yes, sir," McKinnon answered, the "set" already over his head. The door shut again. McKinnon turned back to the littered pine table. The fog-horn sounded and grew silent; the dynamo purred and buzzed as the starting-box lever crossed down on the contact-pins.

The stranger beside the steamer-chair buttoned his coat. Then he crossed the cabin, and turned back to peer at the operator, bent low over his table.

"So I can count on you in this?" he asked, in his quiet and reassuring guttural. His hand was already on the cabin door-knob.

"To the finish," answered the other

man, pregnantly, replacing his ear-phones and holding them close to his head with his muffling handkerchiefs.

V.

McKinnon was oppressed by the thought that the hour was late and his body bone-tired. But he did not close communication with the "Royal Mail" operator who had "picked him up" through the fog until he had been duly warned of heavy weather southeast of Hatteras. Through the night came also the news that one of the "Royal Mail" passengers, an American consul from Aregua, had broken his thigh-bone against a bulkhead, and the *Laminian* was asked to relay the news to New York. This meant a call for ambulance and doctors to be at the landing-wharf, together with an order to have a hospital-room made ready.

So the key was kept busy again, while the beneficent resources of science were being marshaled, so many miles away. The *Laminian's* operator had just bidden his far-off fellow worker a sleepy "good night," and was still stooping absently over his tuning-box—which had not adapted itself to the thick-weather work—when a knock sounded on his cabin door.

"Come in!" he said, lifting off his ear-phones with a little sigh of mingled weariness and resignation. He suspected that his undisclosed caller was a junior officer, much given to garrulity. He began to dread the thought of being kept out of bed for another hour or two.

The door opened slowly, and the look of frank annoyance as slowly faded from the operator's face. For standing there, confronting him, blinking in the strong glare of his electrics, was a young woman.

Her skirts, gathered up in one hand, and held high from the wet deck, showed in a sweeping cascade of white against the gloom behind them. On her head was a blue sea-going cap, swathed in a long, cream-colored motor-veil. Behind her stood a stewardess, fat and untidy, carrying a cloak, with the outward and studious solicitude of a servile nature exalted by the consciousness of having been handsomely over-tipped. She would have made an ideal figure, the operator felt, for the nurse of the Capulets.

McKinnon put down his phone and rose from his seat, still peering at the figure closer to him, the woman in the doorway. He noticed that she was wearing a gown of dark-blue cloth, and that she was smaller than he had at first supposed. One of her hands had been thrown out to the door-jamb, to steady her against the roll and pitch of the deck. The pale oval of her face—and it seemed more the mature and thoughtful face of a woman than the timid and hesitating face of a girl—was shadowed and softened by a crowning mass of brown hair. Her teeth, as she ventured her sober yet oddly conciliating smile, showed very white and small and regular. Her deep-lashed eyes were dark and alert, set wide apart under the low and thoughtful brow. These eyes carried an inalienable sense of wisdom in their almost austere steadiness of outlook, McKinnon felt, as the woman still stood in the doorway, puckering her face at the strong light.

Then she stepped boldly in across the high door-sill, and held out a tinted form-pad sheet to the operator. The solicitously purring stewardess, at a gesture from her benefactor, had already disappeared.

"You are still sending, are you not?" asked the young woman, stepping still nearer the operating-table. Her voice betrayed no trace of foreign origin, as McKinnon had at first expected it might. The speech was that of a well-groomed New York girl, the type of girl that McKinnon had so often noted about the Fifth Avenue shops and the theater lobbies. The voice was the New York voice, yet with a difference. It was the slightest and thinnest substratum of accent, of modulation, that made up this difference. Yet in doing so, it imparted to her words a mild and bewitching gentleness of tone that seemed to hint at some indefinably exotic influence of education or environment. It

seemed to impart to her the crisp piquancy of the Parisian, persistently yet mysteriously accounting for her birdlike alertness of poise and movement, for some continuous suggestion of schoolgirl youthfulness that belied her actual years.

"Then you *are* sending?" she said, as though in answer to her own question.

"I'm sorry," said McKinnon, backing away from the chair, that she might take it if she chose. "I'm sorry, but I've just stopped for the night!"

For the first time, he was conscious of the fact that he had been at work in his shirt-sleeves, and that these sleeves were wofully soiled. He took down his coat and struggled into it. The young woman noticed the movement, gratefully, and sank into the chair he had abandoned for her.

"But can you not get somebody?" she asked. There was no note of pleading in her voice, but the mute appeal of her eyes, as they rested on his, made him suddenly change his mind.

"I've been having trouble with that tuner of mine," he explained. "It's rather hard for us to pick up anything on a thick night like this, you know. But I'll try."

She bent a little to one side as he leaned over the table and threw down the switch-lever. They were side by side, almost touching each other. He caught the key in his fingers and the blue spark once more leaped and exploded across the spark-gap. The girl watched him with intent eyes and slightly parted lips as he fitted the "set" to his head and listened, with the phones pressed against his ears.

McKinnon was keenly conscious of her presence there, so close beside him. There was something perversely and insidiously exhilarating in it. It made him forget the hour and the fact that he was bone-tired. The orderlylike stewardess, fluttering about, he supposed, somewhere beyond the closed door, alone took the romance out of a visit so deliberately secret. He turned to his key again, and again called through the night. Then he adjusted his phones and listened. He finally put down his "set," with a shake of the head.

"I'm afraid we'll have to wait until morning," he said. "If you'll leave the message, I'll file it."

The woman handed him the message-form, with her intent eyes still on his. "Must I pay now?" she asked.

"It will be charged against your stateroom; the purser will collect it before you land," explained the operator, as he jabbed the message on his send-hook, with a businesslike sweep of the hand.

"But you will see that it's sent?" she asked, as she rose to her feet.

"It will be off before you're up," McKinnon answered, watching her as she drew the heavy folds of her veil close down over her face. She looked back, at the door, with a timidly audacious nod of the head. The next moment the door closed, and she was gone.

McKinnon, still conscious of the subtle fragrance that filled the room, swung about to his table. He paused only a second, to wonder a little at this faint but persistent perfume that seemed to have charged and effeminized the very atmosphere about him. Then he reached out to the send-hook, and quickly unspeared the message.

He looked at it for several moments, without moving. Then he passed his hands over his tired eyes and reread the words. They were addressed to Enrique Luis Carbo, Locombian Consulate, New Orleans, and they said:

Am on board *Laminian* with Ganley, bound from New York to Puerto Locombia. Advise necessary quarters. ALICIA BOYNTON.

McKinnon was still peering down at the message in his hand, when he was startled by the sound of some one at his door. Even before he could restore the message to the hook, this door was opened, and as quickly closed again. It was the girl who had just left him. He noticed that she was panting. She leaned against the jamb, for a minute or two, as though weak from fright.

"What is it?" the operator asked.

"Oh, it's nothing!" she faltered, struggling bravely enough to regain her

composure. Her answer was not altogether convincing.

"What has happened?" persisted the startled operator.

She moved away from the door, in a listening attitude.

"It was a man!" she tried to explain, inadequately. "He frightened me!"

"But what man?"

"A stranger—somebody outside!"

"You mean that he dared to speak to you?"

There was a moment's silence.

"No," she answered in her low voice. "But it was the shock of seeing him, so—so unexpectedly!"

McKinnon stepped across the cabin and stood near her. His efforts to catch some clearer glimpse of the veiled face were fruitless.

"Won't you sit down until you feel better?"

"No, no, I must go! It's so late. I *must* go!"

But she still hesitated.

"Shall I take you to your cabin?" he ventured.

She showed actual alarm at this.

"Oh, no; that is out of the question! But if you will turn down your lights, until I have slipped away!"

He snapped out the electrics. He could hear her, in the darkness, quietly opening the door. She stood there looking out for several moments. "Good night," she whispered gratefully, as she slipped across the deck, and was gone.

McKinnon stood looking after her, deep in thought.

VI.

It was the next morning that the *Laminian* ran into a coastwise gale that left her decks clear of passengers and her funnels white with salt. The intermittent crackle of "static" from the humming "aerials" kept obliterating the etheric "splash" of the *Laminian's* low-powered coils. The ship was left inarticulate and alone on her course. Beyond the erratic "sneeze" and "cough" of the atmospheric electricity there was no answering voice within McKinnon's sternly delimited radius of communication.

The weather disturbed McKinnon much less than did his own state of mind. The day, which was one of brain-fogging pitching and tossing about his cabin, left everything connected with the night before still in suspense. The ship seemed a deserted one. Captain Yandel and his officers sat alone before the "racks" of the musty-odored tables. No one ventured on deck. McKinnon, during that enforced armistice, escaped a day of total inaction by packing away his belongings. That task accomplished, he overhauled his helix and drafted a casing for his dynamo. As the afternoon deepened into evening and the wind fell, he coerced his attention on his Ruhmkorff-coil models; and he was still studying over his reed-disk apparatus when an unexpected tap sounded on his door.

Even before he had time to answer, the door itself was opened. It was the girl in the blue gown, his visitor of the night before. She looked back, one intent moment, as though to make sure she was not being watched or followed. Then she quietly closed the door and as quietly slid the brass bolt that stood under the knob, locking herself in the cabin.

She smiled a little, nervously and yet spiritedly, as she caught sight of the other's concerned and puzzled face. Then her own face became quite sober. Again McKinnon was conscious of a faint perfume pervading the place. It seemed as finely feminine to him as the rustling of skirts.

"Could I speak to you?" she asked, a little disturbed at the other's continued silence. "I have something to explain," she continued, "something in which you might help me."

The flow of her English seemed as even and natural as the flow of a river, yet there still remained that puzzling and piquant undercurrent of the exotic.

"You do not mind?" she asked, obviously puzzled by his continued aloofness. It was plain that she was not a woman who frequently asked favors of men.

"Of course I don't mind! It's only that a visit like this might be misconstrued——"

She shrugged her shoulders, ambiguously, and sank into the steamer-chair. McKinnon discreetly slid back the shutter of his cabin window. He took the further precaution of drawing the faded denim curtain. The woman watched the operation, with her mild and meditative gaze still on the figure before her. Then she motioned for him to sit down. She noticed his eyes on the door in apprehension, and she smiled a little. Then she became serious again, and peered studiously about the room.

"You could put me in there," she suggested, with a satiric motion toward the operator's closet door.

McKinnon seemingly took her query in good faith, for he threw open the door and peered inside. His troubled look returned to him.

"There would scarcely be room," he explained. "It's so crowded and shallow, you see!"

"It would be an adventure," she maintained, making due allowance for his lack of humor.

He agreed with her that it would. He even laughed at the thought of it, infected a little by her spirit of quiet audacity. But as he let his eyes rest on hers, there remained with him the stubborn yet vague impression that her presence there was the preamble for some deeper and undivulged purpose. The seconds lengthened themselves into a minute, and still neither spoke. They were still gazing at each other, when the sound of a quick step on the deck without fell on their ears.

The woman stood up, with a little gasp. The look on her face changed into one of appeal. McKinnon, impressed with her fear, also rose to his feet. They could hear the locked cabin door being impatiently shaken.

"What shall I do?" whispered the woman. The operator pointed toward his clothes-closet. It was the only resource. He motioned for her to step into it, as he himself crossed the cabin toward the outer door, on which some one was now impatiently knocking.

There was a fleeting rustle of drapery, a warning pressure of one slender finger against the woman's lips, and a moment later she had disappeared into her place of hiding, and had swung back the door. McKinnon, as soon as he saw she was safe, withdrew his bolt. In the frame of light stood the great wide-shouldered figure of Duffy. He waited there, without advancing, for several seconds. But McKinnon could see his slowly roving eye as it took in each detail of the stateroom. He betrayed no surprise and no curiosity, but across his face flitted a veiled look of apprehension.

"Are you alone?" he asked.

McKinnon nodded.

"Busy?" he next demanded.

The single word bristled with something more than interrogation. But McKinnon felt that he was not in a position to resent it. He stooped over the last of his wireless models, and lifted the box back against the closet door.

"I am packing away my stuff for the night," he answered, as he turned back to his operating-table and caught up his ear-phones. His action, in doing so, was simply a rite of repudiation. The gesture was not lost on the other man.

"I guess you're busy to-night," he said; "I won't take up your time. All I wanted was to close up that agreement of ours."

He reached into his pocket and drew out his roll of bills, placidly, with the businesslike unconcern of a man contemptuous of small transactions. He counted off nine hundred and forty dollars, folded them together and flung them on the pine table. McKinnon, all the while, was thinking of the half-shut closet door.

"That puts us even, doesn't it?" Duffy said, backing away a little. His movement brought him nearer to the ever-menacing door.

McKinnon was not in a state to argue it out with him. His strangely self-frustrating wish was still to cry everything off. But he was afraid of some second complication.

"Yes, that makes us even," he ad-

mitted, suddenly remembering he had a witness to the strange business in hand. The intruder stepped back to the table again.

"Then we'll both sign these duplicate slips of paper, so we'll know where we stand," he suggested.

After Duffy had ponderously signed his name, with a heavy, gold-banded fountain pen, the operator took his place. The paper seemed nothing more than a receipt, yet something about its wording was repugnant to him. He did not take time to analyze this feeling: he was too oppressed by the thought of the woman and the near-by door. He ventured one half-hearted objection, however, as Duffy thrust the pen in his hand.

"I can't say I altogether like this!" he complained.

"Where d'you want it changed?" Duffy demanded, as he fell to pacing the cabin. His wandering threw McKinnon into a sudden panic.

"It's not the wording—it's the signing of a thing like this."

"Of course it is," the other agreed, mild and indulging, as a doctor might be with a restless patient. "But weren't you saying you wanted to make this every-day work of yours a little more romantic?"

He had stopped in front of the closet door, and was apparently studying the faded map of the Caribbean. The position was perilous.

"Where do I sign?" demanded McKinnon, bringing the other man back to his side at the table.

The ink was scarcely dry on the papers before a change crept into Duffy's manner. He seemed more sure of himself, more conscious of mastery over an ally, who, if a reluctant one, was still an ally.

He folded the receipt and dropped it into his leather wallet. Then he placed the wallet in his breast pocket; his movements were always ponderous and deliberative.

"Remember, this means a devil of a lot to me! I'll have to depend on you to do the right thing, when the time comes."

"It's not that bad, is it?" the operator asked, with an effort at humor, as he pocketed his copy of the paper.

"It may be as bad as either of us could imagine," Duffy retorted.

"If that's the way it's shaping, I'd better draw out of it!"

McKinnon seemed more and more resentful of the other's attitude of masterfulness.

Duffy slowly tapped the pocket which held his wallet.

"It's too late for you to draw out of it," he declared, with heat. Then his mounting tinge of anger went suddenly out of his face.

"Pshaw, what're we squabbling about, anyway?" he cried. "We're both making easy money out of this, and that's an end of it. We'll have time to talk, later on. And I guess you're busy tonight."

There was a veiled tone of mockery in his voice that left McKinnon a little troubled. He followed his visitor to the stateroom door, in silence.

"We'll pull together," assuaged Duffy, largely, suavely, as he stepped out on the deck. "We've got to, eh?" He laughed a little as he said "Good night!"

"Good night!" answered the operator.

The stateroom door had scarcely closed before the woman had pushed aside the model-case and was out of her hiding-place. Her face had lost its last vestige of color.

"Oh!" she cried, pantingly, and nothing more.

"Hush!" said the alarmed operator, listening at the closed door.

She stood there, breathing hard, with her hand on her breast.

"What is it?"

"That man!" the woman exclaimed. She looked older now, under the trying white light of the electrics. Her aura of belated youth had in some way fallen away from her. *"Madre de Dios,* do you know who that man is?"

"He's an agent named Duffy," explained McKinnon. "He's acting for the information bureau of the Consolidated Fruit Concern." He was about

to say more, but on second thoughts he kept silent.

"Duffy!" cried the woman in derision, "Duffy!"

Then she drew herself up and gazed at her companion with what seemed a look of mingled wonder and contempt wrinkling her low white brow.

"And you two are working together?" she murmured.

"Yes, in a way."

"But how?" she demanded. "How are you acting with him?"

Her alarm did not seem to disconcert him.

"It's not exactly a partnership. He's simply shadowing a man on this boat. I've promised to help him out, when the time comes."

"How help him out?"

"If you must know, by holding back certain despatches."

"But whose despatches?" still demanded the woman.

"Despatches for the man he's shadowing, of course!"

"But still you don't tell me who this man is!" cried the impatient woman. McKinnon found it hard to fathom the source of her anxieties.

"I mean this man called Ganley," he explained, concealing his growing impatience.

"Ganley!" echoed the woman.

"Yes, Ganley," retorted the other. He noticed that her breath was coming in short gasps by this time and that her face was as white as his cabin walls.

"Ganley!" she cried. "Why, *the man who went out of this cabin five minutes ago is Ganley!*"

VII.

There was a silence of several seconds.

"That man was Ganley?" foolishly repeated the operator. His face, as he peered back at the woman, was almost vacuous. He had expected surprises, he had prepared himself for emergencies. But this was more than he had counted on.

The frightened-eyed woman still confronted him, her face seeming one of pity touched with fear. When she next moved her gesture was almost that of a person wringing their hands.

"And you have promised to act with this man?" she little more than whispered. "You have taken his money?"

"But he came to me as a man named Duffy. He's the man who's got to turn Ganley over to the authorities the moment we touch at Locombia."

Still again the woman's wide and pitying eyes rested on his face.

"They are making a tool of you," was all she said.

"Of me?"

"Of you! They are deceiving you—they mean to make use of you."

"But how?"

The woman remained silent. McKinnon stood before her, perplexed, lost in a moment of troubled thought.

"Then who are *you?*" he suddenly demanded, noting her quick glance down at her little jeweled watch. He felt, as she stood there compelling herself to calmness, that there was something epochal in the moment, that in some way the uncomprehended was about to reveal itself.

He turned slowly about and relocked the cabin door. Then he sat down opposite the broken steamer-chair in which she was already leaning back so wearily.

"You want to know who that man is?" she said, at last.

"I want to know who *you* are."

"That will come later," she explained. And again she leaned back wearily and sat there with her eyes closed. McKinnon studied her face, line by line, from the pale ivory of her dark-browed forehead to the tender curve of her almost statuelike chin, for the shadowy and thick-planted lashes did not lift from her cheek until she began to speak again.

"The man who was in this room is Kaiser Ganley—King-maker Ganley they call him everywhere south of Guatemala. His business is to make revolutions. He has agents in almost every one of the Central American republics, in New York, in Cuba, in New Orleans—everywhere. When he sees

signs of unrest, he sends a man to strike a bargain with the enemies of the government. He waits like a buzzard on a housetop, until his meal is ready. Then he is given money, and he brings so many men and so many carbines, and so many mules and machine guns. Sometimes it's for the patriots, sometimes it's for railway charters, or for mine rights. Sometimes it's for rubber and coffee concessions. A more conciliatory man must be made dictator, or a more dependable friend must be set up as president! That's the way he won the Caqueta Asphalt concession; that's why he never dares land in Brazil or be seen in Venezuela again!"

She paused for a moment. Then she added:

"And now he has the rebellion in Locombia. The Locombian president has been called the 'Friend of Foreigners'; he has been good to the *Americanos*. He is modern and progressive; he is the——"

"Are you a Locombian?"

"I am not a Locombian," answered the woman, after the slightest pause. "But I have my interests in that country. Oh, believe me, I know this man to be its enemy! He is fighting for the downfall of its government. His plan is made. He is only waiting for the end. Now, to-night, while we sit here, his men—deluded peons and beachcombers and paid mercenaries—are drawing up closer and closer on Guariqui. They are to wait there; they are to be moved, like wooden pawns on a chess-board, when he orders it, and in the manner he orders. On the thirteenth of the month, a revolutionist, wearing the uniform of the government, is to assault an American citizen in the Prado of Puerto Locombia. A Mobile ore-boat is to take the assaulter on board, openly. He is to be dragged ashore again by government officers. Roof-tiles are to be flung down on these officers, as they pass through the town. Arrests, of course, will follow. That will arouse the people—they are so foolish in their hate for the *Americanos*. And while this is going on, many miles up the coast machine guns will be landed, and tubs of cartridges, and two thousand rifles."

"But how do you know all this?"

"It became my duty to know it!"

"But why?"

"Because my brother is Arturo Boynton, the Locombian minister of war," she answered, after a moment's silence.

McKinnon gazed at her in wonder. "Is he a Locombian?"

"No."

"Then why the Arturo?"

"That was a concession to local prejudices," she answered, after still another moment's pause.

"But why such concessions? You see, you'll have to be perfectly frank with me."

She smiled a little. It was not a smile of condescension, for her earnest eyes were almost deprecative as she looked at him.

"That will mean a sad lot of family history," she said with a little shrug, as exotic, almost, as the Southern inflection of her voice.

He laughed a little, too, for all the anxiety that was weighing on him.

"But, you see, we have to understand each other's position in this."

"My brother went to Guariqui seven years ago," she said, quite sober by this time. "He was compelled to go there to look after my father's lost nitrate claims."

"Your father, then, was an American?" interrupted McKinnon. He felt glad, in some vague way, as he saw her head-shake of assent.

"We are—or rather, we used to be the New Orleans Boyntons," she answered. "But father had interests in Argentina, cattle-lands and things, and property in Belgrano, where the English-speaking colony is, just outside Buenos Ayres. So for nine years Buenos Ayres was our home—if you could say we ever had a home. But as I wanted to tell you, my brother Arturo was a mining engineer. I think, too, he had a good deal of father's spirit of adventure. He saw great chances in Locombia, but what was more important, he found that the alti-

tude of Guariqui agreed with him. So he stayed on and on, and kept working harder and harder, and getting newer interests, until finally he undertook to work the abandoned government mines with Doctor Duran. They were copper-mines."

"Do you mean Duran the president?"

"Yes; but that was before he had been made president. Indeed, when Duran first actively entered Locombian politics he persuaded my brother to join him. I was at school then, in France—but I know that when their party came into power my brother found himself in Duran's cabinet, as minister of war."

"And you are going down there to face all this?" McKinnon asked, with a vaguely comprehensive wave of the arm.

The woman said "Yes"; she looked very slender and fragile and unsuited to the ways of war, above all things, to the ways of Latin-American guerrilla war.

"But that seems as brutal, as unthinkable, as a girl going into a ring with two prize-fighters," he tried to explain to her.

"Yes, I know; but I'm not going *into* the ring," she answered. "All I can do is hover about the outside edges of it, and do what I can when I know there is underhand work, when there is foul play like this going on."

"Then that brings us straight back to the question of just why you are going back to Locombia at such a time," McKinnon patiently insisted.

"But Guariqui is my home—it is the only home I have now." She noticed the fleeting look of concern, that amounted to anxiety, overspreading his face, and she hastened to add, with her slow and almost mournful smile: "You know, they often speak of it as the Paris of America! And there's something appealing in the life, when you've got used to it—the stir and color and romance and movement of it all!"

"But you see you haven't yet quite explained *why* you are going back to Locombia."

Her deep and troubled eyes seemed to be weighing him; she seemed to be pondering his possible weakness and strength.

"How can I explain to you, when you're a paid agent of Ganley's?"

"Don't be too sure of that!" McKinnon ejaculated, with more feeling apparently than the woman had expected.

"You mean you may not work with him?"

"If you like to take it that way!"

"But he has won you over to his side—he has captured you against your will!"

"I don't quite understand!" persisted the operator.

"No, but Ganley does. That's why he has bought you over, and led you into his power in this way." She was speaking more rapidly now; a brightened color had come into her cheeks.

"But how am I in his power?" McKinnon asked.

"What was the paper you signed? What have you promised? What was the money paid over to you for?"

"To hold back certain messages."

"Yes, to hold back messages. And why do that?"

"So that this man Ganley—the man he calls Ganley—can be held at Puerto Locombia."

"You mean the *other* man, the man in the cabin? Then you don't believe what I have said about the real Ganley?"

"I don't know what to believe!" the non-committal McKinnon complained, studying the woman's face. The only conclusion he came to was that it was a disturbingly beautiful one.

She was silent for a moment, apparently deep in thought.

"I don't ask you to believe me now—it's not fair. But do you realize where you stand?"

The solemnity of her manner, more than her words, prompted McKinnon to ask: "Where do you think I stand?"

"Before danger you scarcely dream of;" answered the young woman, returning his gaze. "It's not so much that you have formed an alliance with a criminal, an outlaw, who would have to face a *fusilado* the moment he was caught in Guariqui. But it's the fact

that he's as treacherous with his friends as with his foes. You have declared yourself his partner. He will hold you to it. He will use this paper you signed as a proof that you accepted hush-money, if it suits his purpose to do so. He will claim you agreed to work with him. He will hold this over you and force you to act for him."

"But why should I stand for coercion like that?" asked the undisturbed McKinnon.

"What would you do? You can't go to your captain; nor to your company. It's too late for that. You've cut yourself off from them. But that isn't the real danger. The real danger is that Ganley's the actual head of the revolutionary Junta and that he can now show that you, too, are one of them!"

"That I'm one of them?" echoed the other.

"He holds a document which practically brands you as a Locombian revolutionist. We are being carried to a country where things move strangely and quickly. If Duran has the upper hand when we reach Puerto Locombia, you dare not make one move against this man Ganley."

"I dare not, you say?"

"If you do, he will have you handed over to Duran's officers as an enemy of the government—and he will have his document to prove it. If Duran has been deposed, then Ganley is the open and undisputed master, and what he orders, you will have to carry out!"

"But I'm not going down there to be that government's catspaw!"

"How will you escape it?"

"I'll call Ganley up here and get that paper back!"

Alicia Boynton laughed quietly and wearily, with an upthrust of her shoulders.

"Can't you see that it's too late? The price has been paid; the bargain's been struck. A man like Ganley never trades back. The mistake was in the signing of the paper. It was a manifesto, a confession. It was the last will and testament of your good name."

McKinnon, who had been pacing the cabin, suddenly swung about and faced the young woman in the steamer-chair.

"Why are you saying all this to me?" he demanded.

Her troubled eyes rested on him, almost in pity. He was, after all, little more than a boy.

"Because we are facing a common danger," she answered, at last. "Because we may yet have to work together to escape from that danger."

"But you haven't told me anything! You haven't explained how or why *you* are in this danger!"

Again her studious eyes seemed to be weighing and judging him. He knew, by the mournful anxiety that crept slowly into her face as she watched him, that her decision was not altogether a flattering one.

"I am here because there was no one to take my place," she answered, simply enough. "I can't explain everything, now, but I knew they were plotting against Guariqui, and against my brother. I knew, at the last moment, that Ganley was hurrying to Locombia, and I knew that the authorities at Washington were sending a cruiser to the Caribbean, to be near in case of trouble."

"You mean the *Princeton?*" McKinnon asked.

The woman nodded.

"Listen," she went on, after another moment of thought. "Anything may happen before we reach Puerto Locombia. If the Junta have carried out Ganley's plans, everything will be ready for his *coup d'état.* If the revolutionists hold Puerto Locombia we will at once be placed in quarantine there. That will be their pretext for keeping us prisoners of war. It is an old trick. They draw what they call a 'dead-line' and they shoot every one who crosses it. That will leave everything clear for Ganley to land; we will be held there until Guariqui is carried. That will not be easy, of course, unless the field-guns have already been landed. The Palace is of stone; it could stand to the last—it was built for such purposes. It could hold out for weeks, with only the president's body-guard, until help came."

"From where?" asked McKinnon.

"That is what I must explain! When Duran installed the electric-light plant at Puerto Locombia, he put up a wireless station, one at the coast, and another on the Palace at Guariqui. Unless the guns have been landed, there is to be no assault on the capital until Ganley has been heard from. Puerto Locombia, of course, will be in the hands of the revolutionists. They will destroy the wireless station at the coast. There are few or no ships there now, on account of the yellow fever. It's not the fever, of course, but the quarantine, the weeks and weeks of imprisonment, they are afraid of. This ship will be the only one in the roadstead. You are equipped with wireless. That means you will be able to talk with Guariqui. If Duran and my brother are shut up there, calling for help, you will be the only person to hear their messages. Can't you understand? The Guariqui station is not one of high power. It can't possibly call beyond the coast. Yet the cruiser is to be lying somewhere between Culebra and Locombia, waiting to help, only too anxious to interfere at the first official call. *But that call can never reach them without being relayed from the roadstead, out across the Caribbean. You may be the only person who can hear and understand Guariqui's cry for help!*"

VIII.

McKinnon drew in his breath, sharply, but he did not speak.

"Can't you understand?" the woman was saying. "Ganley has thought this all out. He found out we carry wireless equipment. He knew this call would come to us. He has foreseen that we could relay it from Puerto Locombia to the *Princeton*. He knows that you, and you alone, could send that message out of Locombia."

"And he's tried to tie me up, to keep me from sending it! And those first despatches he filed were simply blinds!"

"Just as his pretense of shadowing Ganley was a blind!"

McKinnon fell to pacing the cabin again. The woman watched him, without speaking. Then the operator came to a sudden pause.

"But I'm not free yet. That schemer still has me tied down to him. We haven't got that paper out of his hands."

The woman nodded her head slowly, without any outward emotion.

"He could still discredit me with the captain of this tub! He'd show us both to be a pair of liars the moment we tried to corner him!"

"And once at Puerto Locombia he can have us dragged ashore! And if Guariqui falls he can have us held as enemies of the new government!"

"This is a nice mess!" half-groaned McKinnon, in a derisive moment of self-contempt. He seemed to have forgotten the presence of the woman. She rose from her chair and stood before him.

"We have to get back that foolish paper," she said. "Before everything else we must get back your receipt!"

The quiet determination of her voice startled him a little. He stood regarding her, with a new light in his eyes. All his training had been repressional; his life had taught him to resist every threatened surrender to the emotional. Yet as he saw her there, so isolated from her kind, so unfitted for the tasks before her, so insidiously appealing in her fragile womanhood, a warm and winelike current of sympathy began to creep incongruously through his veins. She must have caught some inkling of that soft invasion, for suddenly, and without apparent reason, her face deepened in color, and then grew paler than before. She held out her hand, as though to bridge the awkward silence that had fallen between them. McKinnon saw it was a gesture of farewell.

"Will you promise me to do nothing until I have got this receipt back for you?" she asked, as he still held her outstretched hand.

"But why should *you* fight my battles for me?" he asked, wincing a little before her open and courageous gaze. "I can't have you turn highwayman for me!"

There was welling up in him a wayward sense of guardianship over her isolated and fragile figure, of responsibility for her safety and well-being.

"It must be done!" she declared, with a bitterness that surprised him a little. "There are two doors to Ganley's cabin. It is one of a suite. I can get in through one of those doors."

"Through one of those doors?" echoed the man before her.

"Yes, to-night."

"To-night?" cried McKinnon, looking down at her in mingled protest and astonishment.

"Hush!" she warned, with her fingers held up close before his face. Their accidental contact with his lips sent a responsive thrill through his nervous body.

"But I won't hear of you doing this sort of thing, just because I've been all kinds of a fool. I'm going to this man Duffy, or Ganley, or whatever his name is—I'm going to face him myself, and make him put this whole thing right."

"That is impossible," she warned him, in her tense whisper. "You do not understand. You don't know this man's ways!"

He could see some definite yet mysterious fear shadowed on her face.

"But think of what you're threatening to do!" McKinnon argued. "You have to break into this brute's cabin and steal back a receipt! Think of the risk you'd be running!"

"It has to be done; the sooner it's done, the better."

"But why does it have to be done in this way?" persisted McKinnon.

Her unuttered misery, her inarticulate anxiety, more and more disturbed and depressed him. But there were many things on which he was still uncertain, and above all things, he must go slow. The woman confronting him must have seen some flash of doubt on his face, for she caught at his arm with a sudden little movement that was as imploring as it was feminine.

"You don't trust me? You don't believe what I have told you?" she cried, in her hurrying, low-toned whisper.

"No, no; it's not that!" McKinnon answered. "But I can't see my way out—I can't see what it's all leading to."

"But nothing can happen now, here at sea. And you will understand later. Promise me you'll wait!"

"Yes; but wait for what?"

"Until you are free to act, and you know what I have said is true."

He took a turn up and down the cabin. "*Is* this paper so important? I mean, isn't this a lot of fuss and feathers about a small thing?"

"It's one of the small things that count in war—and this is war."

Still again he felt the inapposite and insidious appeal of her womanhood. It wound about him and tugged at him, eroding away his self-will, his old-time careless audacity of spirit, like a current eating under a sand-bank. It made sacrifice on her behalf a burden to be almost gladly borne.

"Only promise me that you'll wait!" she pleaded. His career had been one of much contention; but never before had he been compelled to fight against what seemed his own self-interest. He felt, in doing so, that he was being thrust and involved in entanglements which should have been evaded as mere side-issues. He even marveled at his sheer lack of resentment against capitulation so indeterminate and yet so complete.

"Promise me!" she whispered. He wanted to beg for time, to think things out, but her troubled face was bewilderingly close to his, and the memory that he was not innocent of the anxiety weighing upon her made him more and more miserable.

"I promise," he answered. The clasp of her hand sent a second inapposite tingle of joy through his body.

"You *will* wait?" she insisted, as though doubly to impress on each of them some future course of action. "You will say nothing until I have done what I promise?"

"There's nothing I can say or do," he replied, still demanding of himself if it could be right to put her to such a test.

"Then remember," she said, and her voice was little more than a whisper. "We are acting together."

McKinnon still stood there, watching her, as she opened the cabin door and stepped out to the wet and gloomy deck. Something about her departure so paralleled that of the man who had gone before her that the coincidence struck him, with a start. It brought the thought through him like an arrow, that he had in some way pledged himself to two opponents, that he had made a promise to act for two enemies. This was followed by a second and an equally disturbing thought: he had not once been honest or open with her; he was letting his lack of candor make her path a harder one than she deserved.

He sprang through the door, after her, swept by a sudden fierce fire of self-hate. A moment later, he had called her back, across the midnight gloom of the dripping and rocking deck.

"I haven't been fair with you!" he confessed, as she stepped into the cabin, her eyes wide with wonder. He made sure the deck was empty, and closed the door. Then, with an obvious effort, he wheeled nervously about and faced her.

"I haven't told you what I ought to have told you," he began. "But it's not too late. And it may not be too late for us to get out of this mess—and get out of it in the right way!"

"But what way?" she asked, puzzled by his unheralded change of front.

"The quick way, and the sure way!" he answered, swinging across the cabin until he stood before his switch-lever. His hand hovered about the apparatus as he went on. "I mean our way out is to get the *Princeton*, now, to-night, before she's out of touch with us! I mean it's best for us to play our card at once, when it's not too late! The *Princeton* has already passed us, on her way to Culebra, to replace the gunboat *Eagle;* she's leaving us farther and farther behind, every hour!"

"But what do we gain by getting the *Princeton* now?" Alicia Boynton demanded.

He was at the key by this time, and the "crash—rash—rrrrash" of the great spark as it leaped and exploded from the discharging-rods filled the cabin with a peremptory and authoritative tumult of sound. The woman stood watching him, spellbound. A moment later, McKinnon's left hand was fidgeting above his "tuner," while his right pressed a phone-receiver close to his ear.

"What we've got to do is to get that cruiser to Puerto Locombia," he hurriedly went on, as he waited there, without looking up. "She will be needed; she *is* needed; and she may as well be told of it, now. I mean we'll do what we've got to do while the way's still clear!"

"But you have no power to do this!" demurred the puzzled woman. "You are not the President of the United States! You have no authority to order about a battleship!"

"I'll *make* the authority!" he cried, as he sprang to his key and once more called through the night. "You've said just enough to give me my chance, to make my course plain. American interests are threatened in Guariqui, at this very moment; American property has already been destroyed in Puerto Locombia. It's only forestalling the inevitable! I mean I'm going to send an official call for that cruiser, myself!"

The woman looked at him in amazement as he swung about and clapped the phones once more to his ears.

"If we can only get her!" he half-groaned, as he stood with bent head and fixed eyes, listening, while the seconds dragged slowly by. "If we can only get her!" he repeated, less hopefully.

He turned to his switch again, and still again the great blue spark erupted and crashed and volleyed from the discharging-rods. Then again he waited and listened, the lines on his face deepening in the hard light from the electrics above him.

"The night's against us!" he exclaimed, almost despairingly, as the switch came purringly down on the contact-pins and his hand once more went out to his key-lever. His fingers closed on the handle, but the intended call was not sent. No nervous flash of blue flame bridged the waiting spark-

gap. For even before he turned, McKinnon knew that his cabin door had been suddenly opened and that a squat and thick-set figure stood there peering in at him.

"What are you working that key for?" demanded the figure. It was the thunderous voice of the ship's master, Captain Yandel. McKinnon remembered that he must have overheard the spark-kiss at the masthead, from the bridge.

"What're you trying to send out there?" repeated the officer.

"I'm getting distances from a Standard Oil tank," answered the man at the table, after just a moment of hesitation.

"Distances at this time o' night?"

"You heard what I said, didn't you?" cried the defiant McKinnon.

The enraged officer let his glance wander to the woman, who had backed away a little, as near to the door as possible. McKinnon did not move, but he was thinking both hard and fast. He had already seen the look on the other man's face.

"What's this woman doing here?" demanded Captain Yandel.

The operator shot up out of his chair, angrily, at the barb in that thunderous voice. He kept telling himself to keep cool. Yet still again the challenge was flung at him.

"What's this woman doing in this station, at this time of night?"

McKinnon turned slowly about.

"Shall I tell him?" he asked. His voice was so quiet and seemingly self-contained that the woman's first blind panic of fear slipped away from her.

"Yes, tell him," she answered.

The captain strode into the cabin. He stood behind Alicia Boynton, a little to one side; McKinnon, from the operating-table, faced the intruder. The tones of his voice, as he spoke, carried a tacit reproof to his superior, a reproof for the boisterous note that had been thrust upon their quiet and orderly talk.

"This woman is my wife!"

"Your what?" cried the captain.

"This woman is my wife!" repeated the operator, without so much as a glance at the panting girl's colorless face. "As you may have the discernment to discover, she is not strong."

"And what has that to do with it?"

"It has this to do with it—that she is making this trip as a cabin passenger. I mention the fact because you may see her in this cabin again, at many times, and at hours quite as unusual as the present!"

"I will, will I?" retorted the other.

"You will! And what's more, so long as I do my duty by this ship, and by my company, her presence here calls for no insolence, either official or unofficial! I'm here to do my work, and I'm——"

"Yes, by Heaven," broke out the irate captain, "you're here to do your work! And I'm going to see you do it in the right way, wife or no wife! And what's more, I want you to bear in mind that I intend to stay master of this ship! And while I'm master of this ship, I want no insolence from upstart wire-stretchers! So you do your despatchin' in regular hours, and when I say so, or I'll ship you back to your company in irons!"

The captain of the *Laminian* wheeled about and strode out of the cabin, swinging the door shut with a slam that loosened flakes of white-lead paint from the ceiling-boards.

"So *he's* against us too!" murmured the operator.

There was a moment of unbroken silence before the woman looked up. "Why did you say that to him?" she demanded, trembling with indignation. Even her voice shook a little as she spoke. "How dare you say a thing like that?"

McKinnon crossed the room, until he stood almost at her side.

"I had to say that," he answered. "It was the only way out!"

"A lie, a base lie like that, the only way out?"

"Yes, the only way, for now that man must not suspect! Because we're going to fight Ganley together, whatever it costs, however it hurts!" he explained to her. He took her bewildered and weary hand in his, as he spoke. "*And*

that's why we've got to save Guariqui and all it stands for!"

IX.

It was the next morning that McKinnon came unexpectedly face to face with Alicia Boynton, in one of the *Laminian's* narrow companionways. He was returning to his operating-room, after a hurried mockery of a breakfast in the ship's musty-odored dining-saloon, and would have passed on with nothing more than an unbetraying nod. But the anxious-eyed young woman, with a barely perceptible gesture, signaled for him to turn back.

He followed her at a discreet distance, as she stepped into a damp-carpeted side corridor flanked by white-leaded cabin doors. She quietly opened one of these with a half-obliterated "7" on its lintel, and motioned him inside. He surmised at a glance that it was her stateroom. He next noticed that she had closed the door and locked it. Something in the quick decisiveness and directness of her movements touched him to a fleeting moment of admiration. He was conscious of the fact, as he turned to her, that his earlier sense of uneasiness had departed from him.

"Listen," said the woman, peering impersonally up at him as she spoke, and yet standing so close that her sleeve brushed his hand. "I've been thinking a great deal about that foolish receipt. It's the only thing, now, that stands between us and our freedom of action. We have cleared away so much; but this still stands between us. I mean it's still a danger to you—much more a danger than I can make you understand, unless you know how treacherous and vindictive this man Ganley can be!"

"But why should I be afraid of Ganley?" McKinnon maintained. "I can fight him in his own way!—I *am* fighting him in his own way!"

"You might do it, at home, in your own country," she warned him. "But not in Locombia; not anywhere in Latin America. He knows his ground too well, his tricks and his chances, his burrows of escape when he needs them! He would never give you a fighting chance. That's why we must do what we can, at once, without delay!"

Still again he marveled at her directness of purpose and movement, at her unequivocating frankness of outlook. It implied, he felt, a courage seldom demanded or met with in the immured and upholstered walks of a modern woman's world.

"I thought it could be done this morning," she went on hurriedly, yet in a tone so low that he had to stoop a little to catch her words. "Ganley left his cabin, early; I was ready and waiting. The moment he was away, I let myself into his room. I had won over my stewardess, to help me. She had found a pass-key that fitted. I could see it was dangerous, and I had very little time. But I failed. The receipt was not there!"

"But you can't do this sort of thing," McKinnon expostulated. He remembered an earlier speech of hers: "It's one of the small things that count in war—and this is war."

"Isn't it rather late for going back over that ground?" she was saying.

"But this sort of thing involves too much risk! It's too unfair to you!"

"I looked through everything as far as I could," the white-faced woman at his side went on, not heeding his protest. "I could find no trace of the receipt."

"Of course not! He shows the value he puts on it by carrying it about his person, in his wallet!"

"But there was something else I did find out. It is that eight mountain-guns are to be shipped out of Mobile this week, invoiced and crated as steam-laundry equipment. They are Hotchkiss rapid-fire guns, breech-loading, and with fixed ammunition. Those are the guns that are to be landed somewhere in northern Locombia. They can be taken apart, piece by piece, and carried up through the hills, to Guariqui, on burros."

"And he had the coolness to send out a wireless about that equipment!" commented McKinnon. The woman, with

a warning look, motioned for him to speak more quietly.

"My second discovery was even more important. It began with what seems to be a note from one of De Brigard's generals. It mentions eighty-eight cases of cartridges and 800 Remington rifles *which are on this ship, and under this very deck*. The ammunition is in boxes of powdered slag and the rifles are disguised as cases of structural iron."

"That's Ganley's work," muttered McKinnon.

"As far as I can make out, they intend to commandeer a certain eight-horse-power track-motor from the Consolidated Fruit Concern. They are to seize it and take it from the roundhouse just north of Puerto Locombia. It's a specially built Birmingham motor of the railway department of the Fruit Concern. I can remember when it was first imported, a year ago. The new railway construction engineers have been using it instead of a coach and locomotive, for inspecting the ore-road extensions and the narrow-gage banana lines that have been run out into the Parroto plantations. You see, it's so light in weight that six or eight peons can lift it about on the track; they can reverse it without a turntable. De Brigard's men intend to run this motor out on the railway along the pier, at night, and keep it hidden in the Fruit Concern's weigh-scales shed, not forty feet from where the *Laminian* will be sure to dock. Then, as far as I can make out, the slag-boxes are to be quietly dropped over the side and piled up in the motor's tonneau. Then it is to be hurried out along the railway-track to Coconut Hill, where everything is to be stored in the power-house until the Junta distributes the supplies to De Brigard's men."

"But what power-house is this?"

"I mean the electric-light power-house just outside the town."

"This is worth knowing!" said McKinnon, his leaping thought already struggling to bridge the vicissitudes of the future.

"But this isn't the problem that's blocking our way," his companion warned him. "The first thing we must do is to recover our lost ground. We have to get back this receipt that ties you down to Ganley!"

"But even for that we have to wait our chance!"

"Why not make the chance? Ganley is in hourly dread of every message that comes into your wireless-room. He insists on censoring anything that might betray him. Then, after he has gone to bed, to-night, why not send for him—hurriedly call him up to your operating-room? Why not insist that he should come, before he has time to dress? The mere fact that he carries this receipt about with him on his person, as you said, shows how precious he holds it to be. But if he's caught off his guard, in that way, he might forget. You might easily enough keep him there with you for ten or fifteen minutes!"

"You mean the chances are that he'll simply throw on anything that's nearest him, a blanket or a bath-robe, if it's late enough?"

"Yes."

"But there's the captain," objected McKinnon. "There's the scene we went through last night!"

"Then wait until the captain has gone to his cabin for the night. The later it is when you call Ganley, the better. I can be waiting. The moment he has left his cabin, locked or unlocked, I can be there making my search."

McKinnon looked down at her, puzzled, not by her proposal, but by the sheer fact that she could make it.

"Suppose Ganley suspects something?"

"He can suspect nothing if we only do our part of it in the right way," admonished the youthful intrigante before him. "He lives in daily dread that you may receive messages about the Locombian uprising, or his connection with it. Then why not assume that a despatch has come in, one, for instance, stating that De Brigard and Ulloa have met, that this revolution about which you understand so little has actually begun? You have no suspicion as to who

these men really are. It will only be natural for you to make inquiries. You might even be sending for further particulars. That would keep him in suspense; that would hold him there and give me the time I need!"

"But if he insisted on not waiting?"

She stood for a moment or two in deep thought.

"Then you would have to warn me!"

"But how?"

Again she stood gazing at him with meditative eyes.

"By the sound of your spark. You could start to send quickly. I could hear it quite plainly, through the open port-hole."

"But even in that again is a risk. I might be sending to hold Ganley, and not to warn you."

They stood in thought for still another moment or two. McKinnon was not altogether unconscious of her presence, so companionably close to him. Until that day, he had faced the isolation of the man who plans and fights alone. There was something vaguely consoling in the thought of comradeship so unlooked for and yet so sustaining.

"Wait," he said, as a sudden thought came to him. "I might send one word, a simple word like *'Go.'* You could easily recognize it, then, as a warning. That would be simple enough, if you could only remember the Morse."

"Would it be hard?"

He tapped out the dots and the dashes with his finger-tip, on the rod of brass from which the berth-curtains hung. She listened closely as he repeated them. Then she stooped and reproduced the signal with her own finger-tip, on the wooden edge of her narrow berth. The light and alertness of her inquiring eyes, as she looked up into his, sent a quick thrill of appreciation through McKinnon.

"That will be the danger-signal," she agreed. "When I hear it, I'll understand!"

But McKinnon was held back by a sudden disturbing thought.

"Suppose Ganley himself is able to read the Morse?"

"But don't you see, that is impossible! He's shown that already. He never would have come to you as he did when the *Laminian* was leaving New York, if he had been able to stand on the deck and read your spark at the masthead, or if he had caught the sound from your cabin as you sent. All that talk of his was only to blind you to his real end; it was only to find out if he himself had been found out!"

"But even if we have the good luck to get back this paper he's holding?" began McKinnon, once more marveling at the quick coherence of her reasoning. "That is only the beginning of things."

"Yes," she agreed, dropping her intent and troubled eyes before his steady gaze. "But why should we cross our bridges before we come to them?"

He still had to confess to himself that there was something almost enigmatic in that persistent yet febrile energy of hers. It was so vastly different from what life had taught him to expect from women whom the hardening years had not touched with bitterness and left old and wise. It seemed a contradiction of everything about her—her youth, her softness, her obvious honesty of outlook, her childlike candor of face and character.

He could imagine nothing less militant and predaceous than that soft and birdlike warmth which lay for a moment between his fingers as he turned away toward the door.

X.

McKinnon waited until he knew Captain Yandel had turned in from the bridge. Seven bells, of the first watch, had already sounded mournfully out of the gloom of the dipping forecastle, and to wait longer would only add to the danger of the enterprise in hand. The wind had somewhat lessened, so that the seas on the *Laminian's* quarter were less thunderous than during the day, and comparative quietness reigned on the ship's upper deck. McKinnon, as he stepped out and glanced toward the bridge, felt that this quietness was not

without its touch of the ominous. Yet he quickly hooked back the cabin door and adjusted his helmetlike receiver. Then he deliberately pushed the call-button that summoned a steward from below. This done, he turned back to his operating-table, drew up his form-pad, and wrote a sentence or two on it, studiously knitting his brows as he decided on the name and distances of the sending ship. Then the pencil once more flew over the form-pad. He did not look up until he heard the steward's repeated knock on his door-frame.

"Tell the passenger in Stateroom Eleven to come to the wireless-room, at once," he requested. "Get him here quick, for it's important!"

Even before the sleepy-eyed steward had turned away, the operator had his phones once more over his ears. Then his eyes traveled to the watch lying on the table before him, and an increasing spirit of uneasiness showed in his quick and nervous movements as the minutes dragged away.

It was not until he caught the sound of approaching steps that he reached out and swung down his switch-lever. He stood, then, in an attitude of studied preoccupation, waiting to send the "splash" of his blue-flamed spark out into the night. Yet the one sound that came to his anxious ears was that of slippered feet shuffling nearer and nearer to him along the deck. It was not a hurrying sound. There was no touch of anxiety or eagerness in the heavy and methodic tread, even as it entered his very cabin. Yet McKinnon knew, before he so much as looked up at the intruder, that it was Ganley who had come in answer to his call.

"Well?" demanded the non-committal and titanlike figure, as McKinnon worked his key for a feverish moment or two, switched off, and once more caught up his ear-phones.

It was at least a minute before the operator deigned to look about. When he did turn, his first movement was a peremptory sign for his visitor to close the cabin door. Yet before the man with the phones had once more turned about to his key and closed communication with a studiously weak-powered "Good night," he had made careful note of the intruder's figure. It suggested, as he had hoped, that of a sleeper turned unexpectedly out of his berth.

Ganley was still in his pajamas of braided Chinese silk. Over these he had thrown his great black raincoat. This he held together at the waist in an attitude incongruously feminine, though the operator could still see the fat, dead-white flesh where the sleeping-jacket stood apart beneath the pendulous and weather-darkened throat. There seemed something gigantically and incongruously Columbinelike, something shaming and overintimate and repulsive in the waiting figure and its accidental exposure of dead-white flesh.

"Well?" the titanlike visitor draped in black once more demanded. He seemed to show no undue haste, no exceptional interest, as he stood there with his great shoulders hunched impassively up. Between his fingers, strangely enough, he held one of his thick-bellied, short cigars, as yet unlighted. He made a picture of guarded and judicial unconcern, a picture so complete that McKinnon stopped for a moment to admire it, in secret. And every second that passed was a second gained. But the limit of delay had already been reached.

"You said you wanted to look over anything special that came in," began the operator, laying down his phones.

The Columbinelike giant in pajamas nodded his head.

"I've got news, big news," McKinnon confessed. "Yet it's not exactly about Ganley!"

He could see the other man's eye-flash of impatience, but still the attitude of wary unconcern was not relaxed.

"Well?" was all Ganley ventured.

The man at the table, as he tore the written sheet from his form-pad, knew that he was being closely and keenly watched. This prompted him to toy with the situation for another moment or two.

"Do you know anything about this

Locombian mix-up?" was McKinnon's casual question, as he peered down at the sheet in his hand.

"Not a whole lot," guardedly answered the man in the raincoat. "And what's more, I don't want to! They're all the same, those tropical revolutions; the same fireworks, the same brass bands, the same bad ammunition and gold braid and bombast, and the same eternal countryful of starvin' peons!"

McKinnon, watching him covertly and closely, was a little disappointed at his enemy's apathy. The red-rimmed eyes seemed to grow no more alert or alarmed, the heavy lips continued to chew the end of the unlighted and thick-waisted cigar. Yet time was slipping away, minute by minute.

"I seemed to have picked up pretty bad news from down there," began the operator, waving his message-sheet.

"You mean bad news for me?" mildly inquired the other, with a languid uplift of his shaggy, iron-gray eyebrows. The two men looked at each other, for a silent moment or two. McKinnon had a twofold end in view, and his line of advance was not an easy one.

"There's been hard fighting in Locombia," he slowly asserted.

Again the pajama-clad figure merely nodded.

"I've picked up a Savannah liner bound north; she relays the news from an Atlas fruiter. They've got this revolution of Ganley's in full swing!"

The speaker did not allow his eyes to stray from the other's face. Yet he could still detect no unusual betrayal of concern. Beyond the spasmodic and habitual working of the heavy iron-gray eyebrows, the huddled hulk of a body made no movement that could be interpreted as a sign of surprise.

"They report that the revolutionary forces under De Brigard met the government forces under Ulloa on Tuesday. It was twenty miles southwest of Puerto Locombia; De Brigard was convoying eight mountain-guns up toward Guariqui!"

McKinnon stopped and waited. The other man slowly took his cigar from his lips and looked at the tattered end. Any current of emotion that may have been wakened in him remained shrouded and subterranean. Whatever he might be, concluded McKinnon, he was at least a consummate actor.

"Well?" the stolid and guarded figure demanded; and that was his only comment. McKinnon bent over as though to consult the message-sheet.

"They report that De Brigard has pounded his way through the Locombian lines, and has occupied Itzula!"

The other man sat down, with a scarcely audible sigh, in the broken deck-chair beside him. There was an appreciable space of silence, unbroken except for the breathing of the two motionless figures.

"Itzula?" at last purred the black-coated man, as though uncertain of the name. Then he peered down at his slippered toes, for several meditative seconds, slowly stretching the gross legs clad in Chinese silk. McKinnon knew he was digesting his victory, but only to the initiated could the movement have been interpreted as the very core and essence of any such luxurious mental easement. Then he looked up, and repeated the word "Itzula?"

Before McKinnon could realize it, the man was on his feet.

"One moment," he called back, as he crossed the room.

McKinnon caught up a message-sheet and intercepted his enemy at the door.

"I want you to see this despatch," he said, catching at the other's arm and talking against time. "I want you to understand what this 'Three-Four-Five-Two—Six Refunfuno' means. You'll see it here in the A B C Telegraphic Code. It means 'Revolution broken out here.' I want you to see it for yourself. Then you'll know——"

"I'm taking your word for it, young man," retorted the other as he shook his arm free and started through the door. McKinnon knew it would be madness to try to hold him by force.

"What's up, anyway?" he asked, instead, following the other out on the deck.

"I've got a map of that country down

in my cabin," answered the huge figure in the Chinese silk.

"But we don't need your map," persisted McKinnon.

"I guess we may as well find out where they're having all that fun we've had to miss," called back the other from the stair-head. And he was gone before McKinnon could get to his side.

The operator knew only too well what the man's return to his cabin meant at such a moment. He did not take time to determine in his own mind the cause of that return, whether his enemy had suddenly remembered his unlocked door and his unguarded papers, or whether something had cropped up to arouse his suspicions. But McKinnon, without a moment's loss, sprang back into his wireless-room and faced his switch-lever. He threw the ebony handle of his starting-box down across the contact-pins with a force that seemed almost to explode the dynamo into a roar of droning protest. It was like the burst and sound-rush of an ascending rocket. Then his hand darted out to his key and he broke and closed the great current, quick and strong, sending the huge blue spark exploding from his coils until it cannonaded through the closed cabin with a crash and throb like the quickened thunder-claps of a tropical storm. Madly he repeated the call, again and again, wondering, as he feverishly worked the key, if he had been too late, praying, as the moments dragged away and nothing broke the midnight quietness about him, that the woman in the cabin below had heard and understood his warning.

He suddenly began to reprove himself, as he stood there counting off the seconds and listening to the interminable muffled throb of the far-off engines, for not thinking in time, for not holding Ganley back, even though it had to be by force. Or he might have done it, he felt, by the mere pretense of some fresh message coming in. He might have kept him there for another precious five minutes, if he had only acted as a man in his place ought to have acted. But he had missed his chance.

He crossed to his open door, and paused there to listen. He knew that by this time Ganley was in his cabin, and that, unless Alicia Boynton had caught the warning signal, she had already been trapped. This gross, malevolent, red-handed enemy of whom she stood in such fear must already have confronted and caught her. The mere thought of it was too much for him.

McKinnon started back to his cabin, remembering the revolver that still lay in his trunk. But something in the quietness of the midnight ship filled him with some sudden keener sense of impending disaster; without the loss of another second's time he turned and darted below-decks.

XI.

It took McKinnon but half a minute to reach the passageway that led to Ganley's cabin. He felt, as he paused for an instant before his enemy's closed door, that his entrance into the room before him involved a final and unequivocal betrayal of his own position. His line of advance, from that time forward, could no longer be a circuitous and subterranean one. The contest between him and Ganley, thereafter, would have to be open and aboveboard.

Then, preparing himself for the scene he was to face, he turned the knob and swung open the door. The cabin was empty. The electric lights were on, the disordered berth stood before him, and Ganley's massive pigskin wallet lay on the floor. But the room was without an occupant.

McKinnon, now thoroughly alarmed, turned and ran to the second door farther down the passageway. This door, he remembered, led into the cabin of Alicia Boynton, and for just a second or two he hesitated about entering it. Then a great sense of gratitude welled up through him, for as he stood with his hand still on the knob the sound of the girl's voice came out to him. He had no time to resent the tumult and poignancy of this newer feeling, for it was the woman's words, and not her

voice, that coerced him into sudden attention.

"How dare you come into this cabin?" she was crying. McKinnon could hear her gasp of what might have been either indignation or increasing fright.

"This is a little dose of your own medicine, young woman!"

It was Ganley who had spoken. His voice was still low and unhurried. It seemed almost casual in its studied deliberateness. Yet it held a tremolo of restrained passion that made the deliberating McKinnon wait there for a minute or two, with his hand still on the door-knob.

It was Alicia Boynton's voice that sounded out of the quietness.

"How dare you!" she gasped.

"Cut out that play-acting. And stand back against that wall there. So! Now hand out that stuff of mine; every line and rag of it!"

It was the woman who spoke next.

"I have nothing to hand out."

"I'll give you ten seconds," protested Ganley, "I'll give you ten seconds to get those papers of mine into my hand here, every shred of 'em!"

"I have no papers of yours," declared the more and more terrified woman.

"I'm no fool—I saw 'em—I caught you at it!"

"Will you leave my cabin?"

"Then explain what you've got stuck down in your waist."

"It's nothing of yours."

"Hand it out, or I'll rip those clothes off your back."

"I can't," was the woman's answer, scarcely more than a whisper.

"Hand it out!" Then came a second or two of unbroken silence.

"You're going to shoot!" gasped the woman. It was only too evident that Ganley had stepped closer to her.

"No," he said, his thick voice shaken a little with his close-held passion. "I'm not going to shoot. But I'm going to pound your lying head in with this gun-grip—I'm going to pound you till your own mother wouldn't know you!"

The woman uttered a little cry [illegible]t shrill enough to be a scream, not low enough to be called a moan. It was then that the waiting McKinnon swung open the door and sprang into the room.

He was barely in time to behold the infuriated Ganley, with his heavy black-handled Colt revolver held by its barrel, charge on the girl, who stood with her back against the cabin wall. He was not in time to prevent the blow that fell on the girl's outthrust forearm, as blindly and instinctively she threw it up to guard her head. But as the clubbing gun-butt raised for its second frenzied blow, the intruder sprang. As he sprang he caught the swinging revolver in his hand. One quick movement, one twist of the levering grip, wrenched it free. The next moment McKinnon's fingers were clamped on Ganley's fat and pendulous throat, and he had the man in the black raincoat thrust flat back against the berth-edge, gasping for breath, pawing the air with his thick, fat hands.

"You hound, to treat a woman like that!" was all the overwrought McKinnon could say.

"Let me breathe, you fool!" gasped Ganley. "Let me breathe!"

"You hound!" repeated McKinnon, thrown into a primitive and unreasoning passion of revolt against the brutality of the scene.

"I *caught* the she-cat—I caught her coming through my door!" cried Ganley, getting his breath again.

"Are you hurt?" the operator demanded of the woman still motionless against the wall.

"No," she answered.

"Then I'll settle this with the gentleman myself, in his own cabin, or in the captain's, if he prefers!"

But Ganley was on his feet at once.

"Nobody's going to leave this room," he declared, with an oath. "That woman's lifted documents o' mine that aren't going to get out o' this cabin."

McKinnon's less primordial instincts were slowly reasserting themselves. He looked from the one figure to the other, as though mystified by the case,

as though uncertain of the charges being bandied back and forth.

"Who is this woman?" he demanded of Ganley.

"Who is she!" cried the exasperated Ganley. "I know who she is, and she knows I know!"

"Have you anything of this man's?" McKinnon asked the girl suddenly, realizing that his intrusion had not yet amounted to a complete betrayal of his own position. The gaze of the girl against the wall and that of the wireless-operator met. Ganley moved closer to the door, as though to guard it. No one spoke until McKinnon repeated the question.

"Yes," said the woman, "I have something of his."

"What is it?" asked the operator.

"A slip of paper."

"Where is it?"

"I have it," was all the girl answered.

"Then hand it out to me," ordered Ganley.

Her eyes were still on McKinnon's, as her hand went to her breast.

"No, hand it to *me*," interposed McKinnon, as he watched the slowly withdrawn hand that held a crumpled sheet of white paper. The wide, troubled eyes of the girl turned from one man to the other. Then she opened the slip of paper and glanced down at it. Ganley's hand went out for it, authoritatively.

It was then that the girl fell back a step or two along the cabin wall. She held the paper between her hands, as she did so, and with a quick movement of her trembling white fingers and before either of the men could stop her, she tore the sheet in two, again and again.

"I'll *kill* you for that!" choked Ganley, shaking and twitching, but not moving from where he stood.

McKinnon, with the revolver still in his hand, stepped between them.

"There's been enough of this prize-ring work," he cried, as he faced Ganley. "I want to know what all this means."

"It means I'm going to get that woman," panted the other man, his face grayish purple with rage.

"How get her?"

"Get her in irons, where she belongs."

"I stole nothing," interrupted the white-faced woman. McKinnon, realizing in that moment something of her restless and febrile life, felt a sudden pity for her. And a stab of remorse went through him as he remembered that he himself was the cause of this last and unlovely scene.

"She lies," Ganley was saying.

"Hold on here," said McKinnon, getting a firmer and firmer grasp on the situation. "I came into this cabin and found you beating a woman over the head. Say what you've got to say about it. Then the woman can say what she has to say."

Ganley stared at his self-appointed judge.

"Are you the master of this ship?" he demanded.

"I'm the master of this situation," retorted the wireless-operator, with a pregnant upthrust of the revolver which he still held in his hand. "And before our party breaks up I'm going to understand what it means."

"Then ask this woman what she stole from me!"

McKinnon had to feel and test his way as he went, like a man on thin ice.

"You mean for the woman to speak first?"

"Yes," retorted Ganley. "And she's going to do more than speak!"

McKinnon turned to the woman, who stood still staring at him in unbroken silence.

"Well?" he said at last.

"What must I explain?" she finally asked, still studying his face.

"What you carried out of my cabin," answered Ganley.

"You want me to explain that?" she asked, her eyes on the younger man's face.

"Yes," answered the operator.

"Must I tell you?" still parried the perplexed woman.

"You must," McKinnon replied.

"It was the contract made between

this man and the wireless-operator of this ship," she deliberately answered.

"A contract?" said McKinnon.

"It was the agreement you signed to become a partner of this man."

"And you tore this agreement up?" demanded McKinnon, with an assumption of incredibility. He waited for her glance of intelligence, to show him that she had caught some vague inkling of his position in that strange tangle of interests. But she did not seem to understand.

"You saw me tear it up," she replied, wondering, in turn, just what was expected of her, anxious not to endanger him by any foolish misstep on her part.

"Why?" asked McKinnon.

"I could not see any one tied to a man whose hands are stained with blood."

Ganley laughed a heavy and mirthless laugh, as though resenting the theatricality of the woman's phrase. "That's a hell of a reason," he mumbled in his sullen guttural.

"I did it because I know what this man is," went on the woman, turning her slow and puzzled stare from the operator to Ganley.

McKinnon, now in perfect control of himself, wheeled about to the Columbinelike figure in the black raincoat and the Chinese silk pajamas.

"You are Richard Duffy, acting with the Consolidated Fruit Concern and the authorities at Washington for the capture of a man named Ganley, are you not?"

"I am," answered the man in the raincoat, doggedly facing the young woman. McKinnon could see her lip pucker up with its little curl of unspeakable scorn.

"The man lies," said the girl, in her calm and deliberate tones. "This man is Ganley, 'King-maker Ganley,' himself!"

The man in the raincoat once more laughed his sullenly derisive laugh. His contemptuous defiance seemed to nettle and anger the woman into more coherent thought. When she spoke next she uttered her words more incisively, more quickly.

"This man," and her scorn was infinite, "is the buzzard of the tropics, the creature who waits and watches over sick republics, who prowls about after dying governments, to pick their bones!"

"You're crazy!" scoffed the man she was accusing.

"He's called 'Kaiser Ganley,' the gun-runner, 'Pasha Ganley,' the agent of every Central American patriot," she continued. "He's the fighter who never comes to do his own fighting. He's the man who sucks his living out of a blinded and ignorant people's gun-wounds."

"She lies," declared Ganley, blinking up at McKinnon indifferently, yet as though to note the effect of her words on him.

"He drugs these simple-minded people with war-talk, and blinds them with the glitter of a little gilt braid," went on the woman, with increasing bitterness. "Then he turns and robs them. And there he is, the colleague, the *intimado* you have found, the man who made a tool of Juan Parra and murdered him in the swamps of the Magdalena, the man who was given twelve hours to make his way out of Brazil, the man that even Zelaya refused to stand by. He is the upholder of the weak who shipped twenty-five thousand rounds of ammunition into Locombia, embedded in lard, and twenty-eight hundred carbines crated and invoiced as laundry equipment, and nine cases of dynamite that went out of Mobile as land-fertilizer for the Costa Rican coffee plantations!"

The man in the raincoat, who had been squatting contemptuously on the berth-edge, leaped to his feet at this. His many-lined, heavy red face had lost its color, until it remained only a faded brick-dust tint.

"You see!" cried the woman more tumultuously. "He even confesses it is true. It surprises him that I should know so much. But there are other things I know. I know that he was the instigator of the Orinoco Colonization

frauds. I know he was once a Cuban blockade-runner, and once an agent of Don Carlos, the Spanish pretender. I know that he was a gun-smuggler into the Balkans at the same time as he was being made a pasha by his friend the Sultan of Turkey."

She paused for breath, and pointed mockingly at her enemy's short, thick fingers as they slowly clenched and unclenched.

"Look at his hands, and you will see! He went to Lhassa in the pay of a Russian secret agent. And they caught him and crucified him on one of their convent walls—they nailed him there through the hands. You can see the marks! He can't lie *those* away, for he hung there twelve hours, until a tribesman set him free and spirited him across the frontier. And this is the great soldier who gave you money——"

Ganley once more broke in on her as she stopped to pant for breath.

"These are a pack o' lies!" he cried, and his voice was rasping and forced, as though it required a great effort for him to utter the words. "These are all blamed lies!"

The woman pointed to the little particles of white paper scattered about the floor.

"And that was not an agreement with this man here?" she asked derisively.

"This man made an agreement with me, an open and honest agreement!"

"Honest!" interpolated the scornful woman.

"And he had the right of saying yes or no to it. He's past the age of being wet-nursed into what he wants to do."

"Then he had the right to know what he was tied up with," parried the scoffing woman.

"He still has the right of saying yes or no to that agreement," declared Ganley, as he brought his great russet-colored hand down on the berth-edge with a sudden blow. "But what's he to you, anyway?"

She looked from one to the other of the two men before her. But McKinnon gave her no chance to reply. The moment he had been waiting for had already arrived.

"I've had enough of this," he said, as he held his hand out toward the sullen-faced Ganley. In this outstretched hand was a roll of bills held together by a rubber band.

"What's this?"

"It's your money!" said McKinnon as he dropped it on the berth beside the man. "This thing's too tangled up for me. I'm out of it! And I've got a key waiting for me up-stairs!"

A new look of anxiety flashed across the other man's face, at the mention of the key. It was a flash and nothing more.

"Then you believe what she says?" asked Ganley, more soberly, looking from the paper-littered floor to the roll of bills, and from the bills to the woman still standing motionless against the cabin wall.

"You haven't disproved it," said the operator.

"I'm proving and disproving nothing," was Ganley's reply. "I haven't been doing the talking. I'm not the talking kind. But I've come into touch with this kind o' woman before. I know her, and she and her whole gang can't hoodwink *me!*"

"Well?" said McKinnon, a little impatiently.

"Oh, I've known her, and that crooked little concession-hunter called Boynton."

"Stop!" cried the girl.

"For three years now she's been a feeder for that one-lunged climber, that Yankee renegade who's been trying to pose as a Spaniard. They're the team who went down yonder with a cooked-up claim on the Corucho Rubber Treaty territory."

"Stop!" cried the indignant girl, more shrilly. The scene in some way reminded McKinnon of a meeting between a cat and a mastiff. More and more he grew to resent the fact that this fragile and isolated figure should be dragged through such demeaning mires of scurrility. But Ganley was not to be stopped.

"And when they'd wrung their money

out of that," he declared, "they dished up a Locombian nitrate claim, and drained that dry. And when that was picked clean they wheedled their way into Duran's good graces. And then, to cinch her graft, this woman, this pink-and-white beauty right here before you, married a Santo Domingan half-caste filibuster who'd made a half-million out of brandy-smuggling and counterfeiting!"

XII.

McKinnon felt as though the deck under his feet had opened and let him down into the depths of a chilling sea. Insidiously he had grown to believe that this unbefriended and lonely woman was in some way very close to him. Little by little he had come to accept the hope that they might draw even closer together. But as he stood listening to Ganley's thundered declaration, there swept through him the impression of being engulfed and suffocated in fogs of duplicity, of being entangled in endless webs of lies and intrigues and counter-intrigues. He felt suddenly oppressed and disturbed by a sense of unlooked-for and undefined conspiracies beyond conspiracies, of bewildering and inscrutable forces at play all about him.

"Is this true?" he demanded of the woman before him. His question was almost a prayer for its own denial. He could see that the scene through which she had passed had exhausted her. She looked wan and worn. She was not a girl, but a woman who had known and seen much of life. "Is this true?" he repeated, and even as he asked it he felt that whatever part she might be playing in that crowded drama, he was still compelled to stand by her.

"No," whispered the woman, white to her lips. "It is not true."

"Have you a husband?"

"No," she still answered in her low voice. The monosyllable was emotionless, yet he could see by her face that she was suffering.

Ganley laughed outright. It was not a pleasant laugh.

"And you never married a mangy half-caste diamond-wearing Santo Domingan named De Perralta?" demanded the man on the berth-edge.

"I married a man named Perralta," answered the woman slowly, her unwavering eyes on McKinnon as she spoke.

"Then it *is* true?" A note of involuntary bitterness rang through McKinnon's sharp query.

"Yes," she answered.

"But you have just said you had no husband."

"He was dragged from the carriage an hour after the ceremony—after our marriage—I have not seen him since that day. Seven weeks later he died of yellow fever."

"And tell him why he was dragged from that carriage," prompted Ganley, with his guttural and mirthless laugh, as he saw the woman's wide eyes watching him closely, almost challengingly.

"He had shot the wife of a government official named Gurmanito in Bogota," she answered in her listless monotone. "That was only one of other things."

"Other things which made him almost worthy of the family he'd married into," interpolated the scoffing Ganley, in luxurious appreciation of her misery. McKinnon could see that she was shaking, that her whole body was quivering. When she spoke again, hurriedly, her voice was higher in pitch, as though the strain upon her was becoming a tension she could no longer control or endure.

"I have never spoken of these things," she said in her tremulous soprano, facing McKinnon. "But I want you to understand. It was three years ago, when I was little more than a schoolgirl. I was under a great debt of gratitude to this man who—to this man Perralta. I had been left in care of the American consul at La Guayra; I had taken an English steamship to Venezuela, after two years in a French convent. I was to reembark from La Guayra for Puerto Locombia, but quarantine was established, on account of bubonic plague, before I could get away. I had to live at the consulate

on short rations—the American consul had refused the demand of the Venezuelan government for a certificate that La Guayra was free of the plague. He and his family were taken off by a United States gunboat, the *Paducah,* and I would have been sent to the detention camps, had it not been for this man Perralta. He seemed a gentleman, then, and had money and influence. He played his part well. He leased a seagoing tug and had me and my companion, a German woman, carried out of the infected district. After we had passed the necessary period of quarantine, for observation, in the English hospital at Georgetown, we went on to Guariqui—and he followed us. I did not understand, then—and I was very grateful to him—I tell you all this because—because I want you to understand."

"I do understand," answered McKinnon.

"And is that all?" asked Ganley, with his careless sneer.

"Yes; that is all," she answered. The insolence of the gross-limbed gun-runner was like a whip-lash to McKinnon.

"And is that all on your side?" he asked, with a sudden movement of disgust.

"Not by a long shot!" retorted the man in the raincoat, with unlooked-for energy. "I want later history than all this! I want to know just what this woman's got of mine."

"She has explained that she took this paper," replied the other, pointing to the littered cabin floor.

"What do I care what she said, or says, or is going to say? You've got to show me—I'm from Missouri!"

McKinnon pondered the situation. It was plain that Ganley had regained his self-control, that he could no longer be counted on to act with the unthinking directness of the outraged savage he had seemed.

"There's a very simple way to settle this problem," McKinnon suggested. "We'll lock this cabin, so nothing in it can be interfered with. The three of us will step into your cabin. You'll then go through your belongings, these documents and papers of yours, and I'll check them off as you do so, one by one. It will be easy enough to tell then if anything is missing."

The proposal aroused no enthusiasm in Ganley.

"This is not the hour o' night I care to go into the general-auditing business," was his reply.

"Nor is it altogether the hour of night for keeping a young lady out of her bed!"

Ganley peered at the speaker for several seconds before replying.

"I like to see you being nice and considerate," he said at last, with his mild and studied laugh. "And I imagine you enjoy being judge and jury in a case like this. And I also imagine, just because this woman's flashed her lamps at you a couple o' times, that you've got an idea that *she's* all right and *I'm* all wrong. You've both concluded that this little talk-fest has settled the whole case. But it hasn't. And I guess it's not going to."

He rose to his feet heavily and slowly and thoughtfully, and then turned to McKinnon.

"Remember, I'm not trying to hold you in any way. You're free. You can do what you like. But if anything unexpected should venture to happen, just bear in mind I gave you your chance to stand in with me, and you wouldn't take it!"

"Is that a threat?" asked McKinnon.

"Threat? Why should I make threats? Talking's cheap, and there's been a good deal of it handed round here to-night. And, as you say, we've rather tired the lady."

There was no longer any trace of mockery in his voice as he drew himself up and spoke more directly to the younger man.

"And now good night, for I'm going to turn in. But bear in mind that I'm still trying to be a friend o' yours!"

Before the other quite realized it Ganley had completed his suave and all-forgiving arm-wave and crossed the room to the cabin door. No one spoke

as he passed out through it and closed it after him.

It was the watching and motionless woman who finally emitted a little gasp in which fear seemed to override astonishment. Her companion was startled by the look of apprehension, mounting almost to anguish, that crept slowly over her face. There seemed to be something akin to pity in her eyes as she gazed up at him.

"But it's settled," he told her consolingly. "It's settled, and he hasn't even understood."

"Yes; it's settled," she echoed, unhappily.

"But isn't this what we wanted, what we were working for all along?"

"You do not know this man as I do," was her answer. "You don't know what he will still do!"

"But it's over—I'm through with him and his revolution!" persisted the operator.

"*He* is not through with *us!*"

"But what can he do, when once I've got in touch with the *Princeton?*"

She looked about the small cabin, from side to side, with an almost Latin-like shrug of her slender shoulders. It seemed to McKinnon as though she had been weighing the place's possibilities against assault.

"Are you nervous about staying here?" he asked, not comprehending the scope of her fears. She shook her head in negation.

"This is an American ship," was her answer. "I feel safe enough, *here.*"

"Then where do you anticipate trouble?"

Again that look of guarded pity crept into her tired eyes.

"Where there's no law," she replied. "Where Ganley and his 'Liberal' party can break or make their own laws!"

A tragic and hopeless something in her voice sent a disagreeable chill through him.

"But we're not in Locombia yet, and, as you say, this is an American ship. There's got to be law and order on board here."

"Yes, I know," she said, inadequately, realizing the futility of attempting to put her fears into words. She could not, for some reason, quite conceal the pathetic quiver of her softly curved under lip. Her ordeal had been greater than he could understand. His thoughts, indeed, were already of the future.

"We may be steering for the Caribbean, but after all, we're civilized," he asserted reassuringly, as he moved toward the door. "We're not knocking one another on the head; we're not altogether pirates, you know!"

"Ganley is something that is worse than a pirate," was the woman's enigmatic and disturbing speech, as she quietly opened the door for him and held it as he stepped out.

"Good night!" he whispered. But there was no reply; she had already closed and bolted the cabin door.

XIII.

It was not until the *Laminian* was well down off the coast of San Salvador that she rode into settled weather. Then, in a night, she seemed to emerge from a world of unrest and tumult into a world of brooding quietness. As she crept on, forging ever southward under the high-arching azure sky, this sense of quietness and completion grew deeper. The air became warm and soft. The sun streamed down on the patched awnings, on the worn deck that seemed bone-white in the flat, strong light of noonday. Through the ventilators, all day long, came the purposeful throb and beat of the engines, muffled, like the throbbing of a great heart. There seemed something inevitable and ordered in that unhurried and undeviating pulse, as though the ship and all she carried were forever at peace with the world.

The outward sense of peace that brooded over the *Laminian* was not shared by all her passengers. Alicia Boynton, after a feverish night and a day in her berth, emerged from her cabin a little paler than before, and with the soft hollow under either cheekbone—which had always given her face its almost tragic sense of womanly ma-

turity—a little more marked. But otherwise she showed no sign of the scene through which she had passed.

McKinnon's own nights, since Hatteras had been left behind, had been equally unsettled. His restless and broken sleep was disturbed by dreams wherein he thought he was engulfed in burning quicksands, and held fast there, when he ought to be at his key. The more he struggled and raged to reach his instrument, just beyond his touch, the more firmly the engulfing quicksands seemed to hold him.

The drama about him was at a standstill. But only too well he knew that this suspense was for the time being alone. It was not peace into which they were drifting. Things had gone too far for a long-continued armistice. And the longer a truce was maintained, McKinnon felt, the more decisive would be the final action. Yet he himself, he argued, had not altogether betrayed his position. It might be impossible to placate or hoodwink Ganley, but there was still the hope of eluding finalities; there was still the possibility of temporizing and keeping under cover until some outer and more authoritative force put an end to the situation. Yet the mere fact that an end was inevitable, and that no open steps were being made to approach it, only added to the wearing sense of arrested action.

McKinnon found this waiting game a hard one. He knew that the most he could do was to be guarded and watchful. As Alicia Boynton had warned him, he was facing an unscrupulous and adroit enemy, an enemy who gave no signal and took no stand on which to centralize an attack. The scenes in which Ganley had played so active a part, indeed, seemed to have passed from his mind. He still paced the deck, at times, up and down under the gently flapping awnings, with his ponderous and deliberate stride. Once, as he stood at the rail, McKinnon passed within a few inches of him. But the gun-runner's meditative eyes were turned up to the stars of the tropical night, soft and warm and luminous against a sky of velvety blackness. He seemed at peace with the world and his own soul; if he had any inkling of McKinnon's presence so close to him he gave no sign of it. Yet all day long the wireless-operator had held the man under his eye, just as he felt that he, in turn, was being watched by his opponent.

But nothing happened to disrupt the *Laminian's* calm. Nothing came to the quiet and sun-steeped ship to relieve McKinnon's accruing sense of anxiety. More than once he felt tempted to confront his impassive and quiescent opponent, if for nothing more than to end the strain, to knock the chip off his shoulder and bring things to an issue.

His sheer hatred of inactivity would surely have prompted him to this end, had any slightest chance or excuse for it arisen. But Ganley gave him no opening. And there crept through the younger man, as time dragged on and the second long and sultry day ended in a black and star-strewn evening, the feeling that he was not only friendless and alone, far from his own kind, but that dark and undiscoverable conspiracies were being enwoven about him. With the coming of the calm and spacious tropical night there came to him a self-pitying sense of his isolation. Then, of a sudden, this isolation seemed a thing of the past. For, looking up as he sat before his "tuner," he saw Alicia Boynton standing at his door.

Even before she stepped in across the threshold of his narrow "station" he had time to make an inward note of the variability of his own feelings. More than once, during her absence below, he had tried to torture his soul with the claim that she was an intrigante working for her own selfish and unknown ends, playing on his sympathies and feelings, to the utmost, taking advantage of her sex's appeal to warp and blind his own judgment. But the moment he caught sight of her, in her low-throated gown of white linen, he felt the subjugating influence of her presence. His heart began to beat faster, even before she stepped in across his coppered door-sill. He was sud-

denly ashamed of all his suspicions and uncertainties. He felt grateful for her companionship. With her faint yet friendly smile came a reassuring sense that he was not, after all, so alone in the world. He noticed her pallor and the restlessness of her brooding eyes as she sank into the broken-armed steamer-chair that he placed for her.

"Are you getting anything?" she asked, with an anxious glance at his apparatus.

"Nothing," he answered, "though I've been calling regularly, twice an hour."

"And not a message in two days?" she asked, a little hopelessly.

"Yesterday afternoon I picked up a few words from an Atlas Liner, bound north. She seemed to be reporting distances. But I couldn't get enough power; my coils weren't strong enough to reach her."

The girl rose to her feet, restlessly, and crossed the cabin and stood studying the faded map of the Caribbean on the closet door.

"But aren't there chances of still getting in communication?" she asked. "There are so many ships, nowadays, that carry wireless."

McKinnon stood beside her, regarding the map.

"Yes, there are hundreds and hundreds of ships, but, on the other hand, there is so much ocean, so much distance to swallow them up. It's more than likely we'll not get another call all the way across the Caribbean."

"That means we can't get help—that the *Princeton* won't be at Puerto Locombia?"

"I can't say the case is hopeless," explained McKinnon. "But the chances are against us. All we can do is wait and be ready. Sometimes, on these clear, still nights, we can make wireless carry a surprising distance."

"There must be somebody—some ship!" persisted the girl, as she sank into the chair again. McKinnon noticed the constraint in her manner as she sat facing him, but he attributed it to her anxiety, and nothing more. He began to wish, as he watched her, that it lay in his power to bring some touch of contentment to those unhappy and restless eyes before him.

"I'm hoping that we'll still be able to pick up Puerto Locombia itself," he ventured.

She shook her head, absent-mindedly, and a little mournfully.

"There is no station at Puerto Locombia. It will be dismantled—most likely it will be burned by this time. If De Brigard is fighting his way up to the capital, he would never leave a coast-station behind him, to be calling for help."

"Can you remember if there is a telegraph-line between Puerto Locombia and that capital?" asked McKinnon, after a moment of deep thought.

"There was one, once," answered the woman. "But their poles rotted down in less than a year—the heat and rain and insects of that climate, you know, will make a log as high as your table crumble away in one season. So the government brought in a ship-load of street-car rails, I think they were second-hand rails from Kingston, and planted them for poles to carry the line up to Guariqui. But the natives kept cutting out sections of the wire for their own use, to mend saddle-girths and tie up hut-wattles, and it took three-quarters of Arturo's government troops to patrol the route and keep the line open. So they gave it up, at last, and fitted up the three wireless stations."

She joined in McKinnon's laugh, a little wanly, at the untimely end of Locombia's telegraph-system. Then she was silent again.

"Where is the third station—the one besides Guariqui and Puerto Locombia?" he asked.

"At Boracao—that's the biggest of the banana-shipping towns." Then she was silent again.

"It's hard to have to sit and wait for the inevitable this way," he said, with an assumption of cheeriness. "But we have the satisfaction of knowing that Ganley is doing the same."

"Yes, it is hard," she said, out of

the silence that fell over them once more.

He felt, none the less, wordlessly grateful for her presence there, talking or silent. She seemed to bring a new and more vital atmosphere into his squalid little station. She seemed to throw a warm and transforming tint on everything about her, as he had seen a rose-tinted stage-light alter and enrich the canvas and tinsel of a Broadway playhouse. Yet he noticed her take a long and troubled breath, look up at him, and once more look away. The hum and whir of his electric fan was the only sound in the cabin.

"I have told you an untruth," she said at last, taking another deep breath.

"In what way?" asked McKinnon.

"I lied to you, when Ganley and you were in my cabin. I can't let it go on. I can't endure the thought of this lie standing between us like—oh, like a quicksand that can never be crossed."

"But what is it?" asked the startled operator.

She looked up at him, very steadily and very bravely.

"I told you that my husband was dead," she answered in her low and constrained voice. "He is not dead."

"He is not dead?" echoed McKinnon.

"I said that he died of yellow fever. He took the fever and was ill with it. But he did not die. He was sentenced and sent to the Island of Malpanto, on the Pacific coast. The Locombian penal colony is there. He was sent there, for life. He was dead to all the world—he was dead to me. Penal servitude is a cause for absolute divorce, in Locombia."

"Then he *is* dead, to all——"

"Wait. I wanted to make sure of my freedom, to be foolishly sure of it. So I went North to New Orleans, to my old home. A felony, in Louisiana, is also adequate grounds for divorce. So I was set free in my own country. That is why I went to the United States, alone. That is why I was there when the news of this revolution first reached me."

"And Ganley knows this?" McKinnon demanded.

"I am afraid that Ganley knows everything," she answered.

"And this is why you are so against him?"

She shook a little, and had to school herself into self-control before she could go on.

"I have a better reason for being against him. If he and his Liberal Party once acquire power, Ganley will annul that divorce. He will bring Peralta back to Guariqui and commute his sentence. He will do this to strike at my brother Arturo, to dishonor us in the republic, to hound us out of Locombia."

McKinnon looked at her in amazed and silent comprehension. At last he seemed able to understand. He had been disturbed by the thought of so fragile a figure entangled in such brutal and rudimentary conflicts. The lack of motive for her presence in the same circle with Ganley, whether facing or following such a man, had been the underground yet actual cause of so many of his wayward suspicions. But now he understood. And her confession, instead of shocking and disturbing him, brought into his softened eyes a sense of release, of more perfect understanding.

"We'll never let that man win!" he said. It was something more than the fire of foolish youth that spoke. And the woman must have seen and known it, for a touch of color came into her pale cheek. The soft and balmy night air beat on their faces. The gloom and quietness of the ship were about them.

"Won't you let me fight this fight out, *for you?*" asked McKinnon, surrendering to the tide of feeling that seemed tearing him from all his old anchorages.

"If we only could!" she said, inadequately.

"We can, together," he cried, with blind and unreasoning hope, resenting the familiar look of something that seemed strangely akin to pity as she gazed down at him. She did not answer, in words, but some slowly trans-

forming emotion, some inner and unuttered capitulation slowly overbore the look of trouble that weighed upon her. Then she closed her eyes, as though shutting out some glimpse of happiness too great to be anything but a mockery. Before she opened them McKinnon had her hand in his, and reckless fire and warmth and daring went singing through his veins.

"I'd fight hell itself for you," he told her.

XIV.

Acting on Alicia Boynton's suggestion, McKinnon kept his station under lock and key. He also went armed, as she had pleaded with him to do, though he felt this latter precaution to be unnecessary. It was his own suggestion that Alicia Boynton herself cooperate with him in watching Ganley, as the greater part of the operator's time was taken up with his "tuner" and phones. So the girl spent most of the day under the patched awnings of the bridge-deck, apparently deeply engrossed in a book.

The first fruits of this quiet espionage was the disturbing sight of Ganley making his way to Captain Yandel's stateroom. What took place there it was impossible to tell. All that the girl could be sure of was that he remained for nearly half an hour with the ship's master. For the past few days, she suspected, this thick-necked and bullock-minded officer had been more or less under the influence of liquor. Alcohol, apparently, only served to crown his sullen taciturnity with an animallike ferociousness when interfered with or accosted. That silent and friendless man, she knew, was not one to be easily won over. He had neither the brains nor the ambition to disrupt the even tenor of his oxlike days by affiliations with anything so disquieting as a revolution-maker. He was not open to a gun-runner's *negocio*, or he would surely have played his hand earlier in the game. Yet there was something terrifying to her in the mere fact that Ganley could remain closeted with that autocratic functionary for so long, whether the time was being spent in bribe-passing or in mere imbibing of *aguardiente* flavored with Jamaica rum and dried mint-leaves.

Much of her fear fell away from her when she saw Ganley come out of the stateroom door again. His face was dark and troubled, and to the guardedly watching woman his tread seemed heavy and spiritless. He had not succeeded in his mission, whatever it may have been.

McKinnon, when she explained the episode to him an hour later, was not as disturbed by it as she had expected.

"I don't think even Ganley could placate a beast like Yandel," explained the operator. "It would be like trying to wheedle yourself into the good graces of a grizzly. And he's been drinking—drinking abominably. It would be worse than trying to pet a boa-constrictor. He knows how to navigate a ship, and that is all."

"But suppose Ganley should put the whole case before him, and make the bribe a sufficiently big one? Suppose he waits until the last, and then simply buys him over?"

McKinnon shook his head.

"He's not the buyable kind, or he would have been bought before. And then he's *against* everything—he simply lives by fight and friction and opposition. He's nothing but a whisky-tippling and saturnine misanthrope."

"Still, couldn't he be bought over, if the bribe were made big enough? As big as Ganley could afford to make it?"

"I don't pretend to knowledge as to what a man will do when he's tempted enough," answered McKinnon, as he fixed his absent and studious eyes on the troubled woman. "But something instinctive tells me Captain Yandel is not going to be our danger-point." Then he was silent for a moment or two, for her question had sent his mind off on a new tangent.

"Why shouldn't *I* be the one for him to come and bribe?" he demanded. "Why shouldn't I temporize with him and keep him guessing until it's too late for him to bolster up another ally?"

"But what would be gained by any such duplicity?" asked the woman.

"Time, if nothing else. And even time is worth something to us."

"But it would only make things worse, in the end."

"Could they be any worse?"

"Perhaps not, but how can you expect Ganley to trust you now?"

"First, I'll give him back his revolver. It's no use to me—and I've noticed he carries a second gun."

"But you, yourself?" interposed his companion. McKinnon touched his pocket.

"I had to carry this, now and then, even before this trouble. But as I was saying, I can't lose anything by getting in touch with him again. It's the way of war. He used strategy on me, and I'm going to use strategy on him. However it turns out, it's better than this suspense. And there's always the chance of picking up something."

"Then the less he sees us together the better."

"He must not suspect we're still acting together in any way," the operator explained. The girl swung round with a new thought disturbing her.

"Suppose Captain Yandel has spoken to him of the scene in your room here, when you claimed I was—your——"

She seemed to find it impossible to utter the word.

"I know," said the unhappy McKinnon. "I'm sorry I lied—I'm sorry I stooped to a trick like that."

"It will make it so much harder, later," she mourned.

"I'm sorry," was all he could say. Her pale face suddenly colored at the thought that he had misinterpreted her.

"By *later* I mean by what we have to go through before we are off this ship," she explained.

"Then escape from this ship is to be counted the end of everything?" he asked.

"No, no," she murmured, "the beginning. But it will be the end, unless we escape from Ganley."

"Then Ganley is our first bridge to cross," he said, with sudden energy. "And before we cross that bridge I'm going to test a girder or two!"

XV.

The *Laminian's* wireless-operator sat in his room, three hours later, with his door hooked back against the wall-plates and his window-curtains gently flapping. From its unpainted shelf droned and hummed his dry-battery electric fan. A seaman passed by under the awning, carrying in his hand a cluster of deck-lamps. From the open ventilator-heads came the discordant sound of steel shovels grating on steel, the occasional slam of a furnace door, the throb and pulse of the unvarying engines. Otherwise it was very quiet; sea and sky met in a world of unbroken peace which the passing of so incongruous a thing of steel and steam disturbed for only a moment, agitated foolishly, yet for only a heart-throb or two.

Then high above the quiet deck sounded out an even more incongruous noise, the nervous, tense staccato of the wireless "spark." It seemed like some underworld god of speed striking out titantic chords: it was like some ghostly fingers playing on a harp of haste. McKinnon sat between his four flashing white walls and sent his Hertzian waves arrowing out over the lonely acres of the Caribbean, hurling his coil's mysterious and imponderable force against the engulfing isolation of the sea. Then came a space of silence and again the blue-colored sprite danced and jigged at the masthead.

As McKinnon had hoped, that sustained rattle and roar of his "spark" brought to his open door the figure that had been slowly and meditatively pacing the bridge-deck.

"Could you take a message for me, if you're in touch with anything?" asked Ganley from the doorway.

The operator put down his ear-phones with a touch of impatience.

"I thought I had something then," he explained, "but it's only static breaking through—lightning, you know. I can hear it go like a roll of drums that

bends up to what we call a cough or sneeze."

"Perhaps you're not in good running order," ventured Ganley, eying the apparatus, as a street cat might eye a canary behind its cage-bars.

"It's working as smooth as oil," answered McKinnon, adjusting his receiver again and listening for a minute or two. "But we're too far away from things! We're drifting too far away from a white man's world!"

He took the metal band from his head and swung about and faced his visitor. "Come in," he said, with an effort at offhanded geniality, pushing forward his broken-armed steamer-chair.

Ganley stepped into the cabin and sat down, with his slow and ponderous deliberateness. McKinnon found it hard to begin, for the weight of their last encounter was still heavy on his spirit. The other man seemed to understand the source of his embarrassment. He sat back, at last, and diffidently remarked: "You had something to say to me?"

McKinnon reached a long thin arm over to the back of his operating-table.

"Yes, I wanted to give you back this gun of yours," he said, as he held the revolver out to its owner.

Ganley took it, diffidently, turned it over in his fingers, puckered his heavy lips, and casually dropped the gun into his side pocket. Then he looked up at the other man.

"That was pretty ugly talk you got about me the other night," he began, sliding low in his chair until his attitude was nothing more than a nonchalant lounge. "I suppose you swallowed it whole—everything that attractive young woman said?"

It cost McKinnon an effort to hold himself in, but the only line of procedure in such warfare, he knew, was the indirect one.

"I don't believe everything I hear," was his answer, as he assumed an equally indifferent position.

"I guess most stories 've got their two sides," remarked Ganley, largely.

"This woman, though, claimed you were nothing more than a gun-runner," the younger man carelessly reminded him.

"Well, *I am*," suddenly declared Ganley, with his little deep-set eyes squarely on the other man's. "Can't there be two sides to gun-running?"

"The law side and the outlaw side, I suppose," suggested McKinnon. Ganley stared at him, a little heavily, a little impatiently, as the beetling iron-gray eyebrows worked ruminatively up and down.

"Look here, young man, I want you to understand this situation! These *bodega*-hugging, labor-loathing fire-eaters down here have got to have their theatricals. And they've got to have somebody set the stage and supply the colored lights for 'em. And if one man doesn't tote in the fireworks, another soon will."

"And toting in the fireworks is your business?"

"That's my business! I keep supplying them with the nicest little pinwheels that money can buy. They've got to have 'em, no matter where they come from. So I'm keeping their show going, and I'm making them pay for it good and plenty."

"But hasn't this particular calling its particular dangers?" McKinnon casually inquired.

"That's part of the game! There are even men down there who'd go so far as to call me a lawbreaker. If that's what I am, I'd like to know what you'd call those Yankee concession-hunters and wire-pullers and bribe-givers who burrow around for underground contracts and then run squealing to Washington like a stuck pig every time a peon slaps a banana-car with a machete! No, sir, that's my market, and I'm going to hold it."

The other was compelled to acknowledge there was something primordially massive about this uncouth Caribbean king-maker. There was something titanic and persuasive about this self-confessed filibuster of petty republics. His very audacity was a ponderable asset. The sheer force of the man could still appeal to some substratum of ro-

mance in the other's none too emotional state of mind.

Some trace of this feeling must have shown itself in McKinnon's half-smiling glance, for a new confidence crept into the tones of the man so closely watching him.

"I've been in my tight holes," he placidly declared, folding his arms over his great chest. "And I've got out of 'em, every time, just as I'm going to get out of this one!"

"But where's the hole, this time?" mildly inquired the operator.

"Not having you on my side," said his candid enemy.

"I'm on *nobody's side*," equivocated McKinnon.

"But what's the use o' falling between two stools? Why not swing in with the right side, while you've still got the chance?" Ganley was on his feet by this time, and standing over him. "See here, you're no piker. You're not afraid of a big thing, just because it *is* big. I've got my wires laid, and I'm going to knock that Locombian government off its feet, if it costs me half a million to do it. They've got chromium-mines down there worth more than that alone. I'm going to clean out that Guariqui gang and I'm going to do it good when I do it. That's *my* country down there," and he waved a great, apelike arm toward the southwest, "and a week from now'll see it made into a white man's land."

McKinnon peered up at him, wondering if by any chance the man had indeed persuaded himself of the justness of his cause.

"I tell you you've got to swing in with us," Ganley was blandly declaring. "You haven't any show. This work is going to be done quick and done quiet."

"But how about leaks?"

"There's not going to be any leaks. Every small craft and coaster that swings in to Puerto Locombia next week is going to be held there, in quarantine. That won't be anything to worry over, for we're the only sizable thing that's due there. But if any of those tramp tubs should happen to have wireless aboard—and it isn't likely—we're going to take over their apparatus as contraband of war. The only thing we don't want is interference from outside. It's our fight, and once we win it there'll be no trouble. We're a nation then, you see, the New Liberal Party. We're a government of our own, and we can go back and patch up outside quarrels when we see fit."

"But what will you do with the *Laminian?* How about our captain, for instance?" McKinnon asked.

"I'll tie him up so tight in quarantine that his anchor-flukes'll be barnacled before he gets away again," he said, with a snort of contempt for that saturnine ship's master. "Oh, I've got this thing figured out as close as a sum in arithmetic. Some night this week our men are to surround their little two-by-four capital. Tuesday morning, by daybreak, if our guns and stuff are all landed, they'll begin to cannonade. By Tuesday afternoon we'll be advancing on the Palace itself. By Wednesday night we'll have Duran and his gang shelled out or our own men shoved in. By sunup on Thursday we'll have Duran deposed and the new government declared, an hour after those Palace gates come down, with our own men in office. There's no use my beating round the bush with you any longer. It's all got to come. And I don't want you workin' against us. I don't want to see you cuttin' your own throat. And if you see us through for the next two or three days I'll do the right thing by you."

"How the right thing?"

"I'll deed you over a third interest in the Parroto chromium-mines, and make you minister of telegraphs for the new republic, with a salary of six thousand dollars in gold!"

Some momentary spirit of romance, of vast issues and strange dangers, of hazards and risks in far-off corners of the earth, hovered about the hot and stuffy little cabin.

"I mean it," went on Ganley, as placid and persuasive as before. "I'll tie myself down to it. And that hill-town

of Guariqui is going to be a mighty livable little city when we do it over!"

"It's not Guariqui I'm afraid of," was McKinnon's evasive answer. He was thinking how the spirit of youth and adventure less sophisticated than his own might be stunned and intoxicated by such prospects as these.

"Then what are you afraid of?" demanded Ganley.

"It's so *big*," complained the other. "So big for me, I mean!"

Ganley laughed, a little scornfully.

"Then take a day to get used to it. Sleep on it, and let me know how you feel about it to-morrow. Is that satisfactory?"

"Yes, I'd rather think it over for a day or two," was McKinnon's answer. The other man rose heavily to his feet, crossed slowly to the door, and turned back to stare absently about the crowded little room.

"You'll be with us all right," he said, without emotion. But instead of going below, after bidding the operator good night in his suave and deep-throated guttural, he slowly and meditatively paced the bridge-deck, idly blinking up at the stars above the mastheads and out over the rail at the dark sea on either side of them.

XVI.

It was two days later that the *Laminian* swung in toward the coast of Locombia. Her rust-stained bow, under the lash of the sweeping trade-wind, lifted and dipped again in a sapphire-colored sea streaked with yellow windrows of drift-weed. The hot sun blistered the painted woodwork; the air was like a back-draft from an opened furnace. The wind freshened, as the day wore away, whipping spray along the bleached decks and humming through the tight-strung aerials at the masthead. It brought with it occasional driving showers that pelted on the sodden canvas and steaming woodwork.

McKinnon, in his cabin, labored in vain over his tuning-box and responder. He had held Ganley off for another day, hoping against hope that something might still be picked up. The gun-runner had not accepted this enforced delay with a good grace; there would be little more chance for quibbling in that quarter. McKinnon, stooping to overlook his dynamo, felt that he had at last reached the end of his rope. When he stood up again he mopped his face with a handkerchief, and irritably summoned a steward and for the second time sent down to the engine-room asking how he was expected to operate his coils on less than a hundred volts.

Then he once more adjusted his helmet-receiver and sat back and sighed, letting the hot current from his electric fan play on his face. But the tropical air seemed devitalized, bereft of its oxygen. He was dimly conscious of the passage of time, of the muffled and monotonous drone of the fan, of the casual ship-noises far below deck. But nothing came to stir his responder into life. There was not a ship or station to be picked up. The day had gone, and nothing had come to help him solve his problem.

Already, on the ship's bridge, the navigating officer in soiled duck had picked up the Toajiras Light. Behind that light lay the flat and miasmal Locombian coast. And somewhere, still farther to the southwest, armies were being arrayed against each other. Somewhere, across the deepening night, men were ambushing and shooting.

The night was well advanced when a great wide-shouldered figure passed quietly along the empty bridge-deck. This figure cautiously tried the door of the wireless-room, but found it securely locked. Then he crept about to the half-open shutter and stood there, minute after minute, in an attitude of listening. Beyond the unbroken drone of the electric fan there was nothing to be heard from within. And the cabin itself was in utter darkness.

The man at the window waited for still another space of time, peering back and forth along the deck to make sure that his movements were unobserved. Then he raised a cautious arm and slid

the barred shutter farther along its groove.

The damp wood rasped and stuttered a little, for all his caution, as he pushed it, and he drew quickly back from the window. For he had heard the sound of a sudden half-articulate sigh, followed by the stir of a body moving impatiently on a mattress, and then the quick pad of bare feet crossing the cabin floor. It was McKinnon, startled out of his sleep of utter weariness by the momentary sound of the moving shutter.

He turned on the single-globed, green-shaded electric that swung low over his operating-table. He stood there in his crumpled madras pajamas, looking dazedly and sleepily about the room. Then, automatically, from sheer force of habit, he adjusted his "set" over his head, swung a sleepy hand out to his tuner-levers, pressed the phones close over his ears, and listened.

He grew tired of standing there, half-leaning against the sharp table-edge, as he listened, for the responder had given no sign of life. So he dropped into the chair before his instrument, and sat there, yawning sleepily, with ludicrously wandering eyes, his elbows spread wide and resting on the edge of the unpainted pine board.

The man at the shuttered window could see his face, half in the strong light of the shaded electric globe. He could see his nervous thin hand move back and forth to the tuner and shift and reshift the buttons in the slotted box-top columned with numerals. He could hear the operator's low mumble of disappointment as he lifted the "set" from his head, disarranging more than ever his already tousled hair. Then the listener drew closer, for a sudden little sound, half-grunt, half-cry, had broken from McKinnon's lips.

The phones were once more held down hard on his ears as he stooped forward, this time wide-awake. The coherer had stirred and quivered into life. A faint and febrile little shower of ticks was pounding minutely against his ear-drums. Some one was "sending."

He reached out and drew up the form-pad before him as he listened. The call was coming clearly now, repeated again and again. "Pt-Ba," "Pt-Ba," came the query through the night. McKinnon, as he listened and "tuned up" to the other man's tensity, could recognize the nature of the "send" as one would recognize the accent of a Westerner in Boston or a Londoner in Dublin. It was the unmistakable yet undefinable inflection and cadence of a navy man. It was an American battleship of some sort, calling Puerto Locombia.

McKinnon was on his feet again, tingling with excitement. He threw down his switch-lever, caught up his key, and sent the answering call rattling and exploding across his spark-gap, loud above the purr of the wakened dynamo.

Then he turned again to his phones and listened. They had not tuned up to him; they had not picked him up. For still again came the call "Pt-Ba," "Pt-Ba." It was out of the hours for sending. The engine-room had diminished his power, leaving him without voltage enough to make a "splash" that would reach the war-ship.

But his hand went out to his form-pad and he bent over it, busy with his transcription, as the noise pulsing and creeping in through his receivers translated itself into intelligibility.

This is cruiser *Princeton* lying off harbor of Torreblanca. Send word of Guariqui situation. Mobile despatch two days ago reports protection wanted for American interests. Please instruct our consul send immediate advice. LIEUTENANT VERDU.

Then came a minute or two of silence, and then the call again, followed by the repeated message:

PT-BA: Are you asleep? Why does *Princeton* get no answer?
LIEUTENANT VERDU.

And still again came the silence, and still again the call, indignant, peremptory, to the appreciatively trained ear as eloquent of impatience in its microphonic dots and dashes as the human voice itself could be.

Automatically McKinnon wrote out

the despatches, word for word, as a matter of record. His chance had come at last: all he now needed was power. It would take him but a minute to slip down to the engine-room, he concluded, as he threw on a striped green bath-robe with a hood like a monk's cowl. Then he could see to it himself that they were slinging the right voltage up to him. He sprang for the cabin door, unlocked it, and swung it open. As he leaped out across the door-sill he ran head-on into the arms of Ganley.

He scarcely looked up. His one thought was to reach that engine-room and to reach it without loss of time. He accepted the momentary obstruction as nothing more than a clumsy seaman. He struggled to edge about the unyielding bulk, swinging to one side with a half-growl of impatience. It was not until he found himself seized and almost carried back into his cabin that he saw either the meaning or the menace of the situation.

"Is that message for me?" demanded Ganley, his huge figure blocking the doorway, his glance on the top sheet of the form-pad.

"No!" was the defiant retort. Ganley reached back and swung the cabin door shut.

"I'd like to glance over that message," suggested the man by the door. His tone was soft and purring, but there was a suggestion of claws behind the velvet.

"This is ship's business," cried McKinnon, ripping the written sheet from the pad, his spirit of obduracy now well stirred into life.

"Could I look over that message?" repeated Ganley, as quietly as before. But there was no mistaking the threat in his voice. McKinnon, eying him, saw his hand drop down to his side. The movement was quick and casual. But when the hand was raised again it held a revolver, a heavy, forty-four caliber thing of blue gun-metal, with a sawed-off barrel. The worn corners of the metal glimmered disagreeably, in sinister little touches of high-light, as Ganley held the barrel low, close in against the other man's startled body.

"Could I look over that message?" he reiterated, with no trace of excitement in his voice. The eyes of the two men met; they studied each other for a second or two of unbroken silence. Then the operator flung the sheet on the pine table before the other man. The situation allowed of no further equivocation.

"Read it, if you want to!"

Ganley pounced on it, like a cat on a cornered mouse. He backed away to the door, but kept his revolver still poised in front of him while he read. McKinnon, as he watched the gun-runner calmly restore the sheet of paper to his table, saw that the chance he had at first hoped for slip past him.

"Don't you think we'd better kill that message?" Ganley suggested, with a pregnant movement of his right hand.

"Why?" asked McKinnon. He was trying to think, to gain time.

"You know why," retorted the gun-runner.

The operator looked at his apparatus, at the sheet of writing, and at the opponent who had his heel on the neck of the situation. Then he laughed in the purely passionless way of the man so submerged in bitterness that fate can bring him no further sting.

"No, I don't see why," he answered, still clutching about for some forlorn straw of deliverance.

Ganley came a step or two nearer.

"I'll tell you why," he said, drawing his gravely interrogative eyebrows closer to his flat nose-bridge. "I'm going to be up here on this deck of yours to-night—I've decided it's cooler than that cabin of mine. Seein' this is our last night at sea, I'm going to enjoy it. And the sound of any message, of any message whatever, going out on those wires up there, is going to spoil my night! Is that plain enough for you?"

He put the revolver back in his pocket and waited. The operator did not answer him. He knew that all he could do now would be to grope forward slowly and blindly; he could only crawl and test and wait, like a crustacean with foolishly waving feelers.

Ganley, watching him, backed toward the door.

"I'll say good night now," he purred, with mock affability. "If you're still in doubt about anything, you'll find me on the deck here all right!"

The operator watched him as he went through the door and as he wheeled about for one malignant and admonitory stare into the cabin. From the depths of his soul McKinnon resented that smile.

"You *own* this ship?" he flared back.

"No, but I'm going to," was Ganley's placid retort. He had taken out one of his evil-looking, thick, black cigars, and was proceeding to light it with the utmost leisure.

"And this is *your* apparatus?"

"And my particular little corner of the earth," responded Ganley, with the studiously voluptuous satisfaction of the idealist who has achieved his dream. McKinnon's eyes narrowed. The taste of being beaten at the only game he knew how to play was growing very bitter in his mouth.

"And supposing I don't kill this message?" he ventured. Had the words not been in the form of an interrogation, they might have been claimed to carry the weight of an ultimatum.

The huge, red-faced figure with the black cigar leaned in through the narrow doorway.

"I think you will, though," was the vaguely menacing retort.

"And why?"

Ganley laughed a little.

"Do you s'pose I'm going to let a couple of children like you"—and he threw a world of contempt into the word "children" as he uttered it—"step in and try to stop *my* steam-roller?"

"You haven't told me *why!*" retorted the dogged McKinnon.

"Well, this is why," said Ganley, and he leaned closer in through the door as he spoke. "If you don't choose to put a padlock on that wire, I'm going to put a padlock on *you!*"

"Just what do you mean by that?"

"I mean that you'll kill that message, or *I'll* kill *you!*"

Then he shut the cabin door, quietly, and the operator was left standing alone in his station.

XVII.

McKinnon was aroused by a quick, light knock, repeated for the second time. He took up his revolver, slipped it into the loose side pocket of his bath-robe, and cautiously opened the door.

It was Alicia Boynton who stepped in as he did so, pushing him sharply back and closing the door even more sharply after her. Then she stood confronting him, with her finger to her lips, as a sign for silence. McKinnon had long since learned that catastrophic moments and ceremonial seldom walk hand in hand. But the thought of his attire and its simplicity disturbed and shocked him; his embarrassment, even at that moment, was greater than that of the woman's.

"What is it?" asked the operator, nettled by the intent look on her listening face. She made a second sign for silence. Then she took a deep breath of relief. For the first time he noticed that she was fully dressed, as though for land-travel. Something about her conveyed to him the passing impression that she was disconcertingly well-groomed. But her face showed gray under the heavy upturned veil; it carried a touch of weariness and shadow about the eyes, as though she had been passing troubled and restless nights.

"I have heard every word," she explained, in her low and intimate tones. "I was leaning on the rail, under the bow of the life-boat. I waited until Ganley passed behind the officers' quarters. He's walking up and down, smoking—and waiting."

"Did he see you come in here?" asked McKinnon, distressed at the thought there was no hospitality he could extend to her, feeling that this fight was his own, and his alone.

"No; he did not see me. It was so hot below—I had been sitting on deck for an hour. This means so much—to-night. I must be here, with you!"

The impersonality of her declaration seemed to clear the air like a thunder-

clap. McKinnon knew but one moment of wavering.

"There's going to be trouble here, to-night," he warned her. "I'd rather you went below."

"I couldn't, now," she answered, very simply. "And we are wasting time in talk when every moment is precious. What did you pick up by wireless?"

"I had the *Princeton,* at Torreblanca."

"The *Princeton!* Then we *are* wasting time—we're getting farther and farther away from her every minute."

"No, that's impossible if she's lying off Torreblanca. We're drawing a little closer to her, if anything. The danger is that he'll leave his instrument before I can call again. And I've got to have power from the engine-room."

"Then I'll watch your key while you go below," she promptly suggested. He pondered the problem for a moment or two.

"No, that would be inviting danger. I want *you* to carry this message to the engine-room for me."

"I'm ready," she answered.

He lifted his revolver from his bath-robe pocket.

"I want you to take this," he told her, holding it out for her. He noticed her hesitation, her tentative glance up into his face, and then her quick and unequivocal movement of the hand toward her breast.

"I have my own," she said. They both knew, as they stood facing each other, that the ever-narrowing apex of the dilemma was crowding up to its final climacteric point.

"But what will you do—when the power comes?" she asked.

"I'm going to send," was his reply. "I'll fight it out with him. Ganley can't dictate to the high seas of the world."

Even in anarchy and outlawry, he felt, there had to be some final substratum of reason. And Ganley had fallen back on nothing but brute force.

"Why couldn't I go to the captain?" she pleaded.

"That's worse than useless. He's drunk. And we'd only get *him* against us, for he'd order us to keep out of the mess. He'd fight shy of entangling alliances. He'd forbid me to send, for he's got his ship to clear from that port."

"But the *Princeton* would be *his* protection, as well as ours."

"That's true—but the man's brain is too brandy-soaked to understand such a situation. We've got to act ourselves, and on our own hook."

He told her, briefly, the way to the engine-room. Then he switched off his light, unlocked his door, and glanced out to see that the way was clear. Yet he waited at that open door with his revolver in his hand, until he had made sure she was below-stairs. Then he locked himself in again, and made a mad and desperate dash into his clothes. Then he unlimbered his revolver, looked over its chambers, brought out his box of cartridges, and saw that every cartridge was in place. He had, by this time, more or less made up his mind as to his line of procedure. He had his natural rights, and they were going to be respected. There would be no more free-and-easy invasion of his station, no more buccaneer's airy threats of force. He had been made a football of for too long: he had been mauled and bullied and browbeaten like a street-curb panhandler. He was an official, with official duties to perform. He had vacillated and temporized too long. The time had come to act, and he was going to act. Once Alicia Boynton was back in his cabin he would barricade the door and leave her on guard behind the window-shutter. Then he would go to his key, to the work that lay before him. And at the first movement of aggression or interference from Ganley, he would shoot—and he had long since learned to pride himself on the fact that when he shot he seldom wasted powder.

As he waited for the girl's return he busied himself pulling out his trunk and standing it on end, to be shoved against the locked door as a further reenforcement against possible attack from outside. The wall-plates themselves, he knew, could never be penetrated by a

bullet; it was the wooden-shuttered window and the door alone that needed defense.

No touch of fear rested on McKinnon as he worked out his plan, point by point; it was more perplexity as to the outcome of the movement, touched with wonder as to whether or not any contingency had been overlooked. He regretted, vaguely, that Alicia Boynton was to be dragged into this trial by fire, that she would have to stand so closely by and endure a combat so sordid and demeaning. Yet he felt, in some way, that that night was to subject her to the acid-test of a final integrity. It would be unalloyed purity of purpose alone, he argued, that would keep her there at his side, during such an ordeal. He no longer suspected her or her motives. That was all a thing of the past. But he almost gloried in the thought that such an unequivocal and authentic seal was to be put on a relationship that had once seemed little more than fortuitous.

XVIII.

McKinnon, ill at ease, was wondering what could keep Alicia Boynton so long below-deck, when the sound of hurried footsteps, followed by an oath and an answering cry of alarm, sounded from outside his door.

"You keep out o' here!"

It was Ganley's voice, short and brusk. The knob of the locked door twisted and moved; the girl must have caught hold of it from the outside. It was equally plain, from the sound of her sudden gasp and the scuffle that followed, that Ganley had flung her aside from the door.

McKinnon switched out his light before he opened that door, for he wanted every chance. The first message that flashed to his brain was that it was very dark outside. The second was that a great malletlike hand had descended unexpectedly on his own, out of this darkness, and had sent his revolver rattling across the boards of the cabin floor. His next was the knowledge of clinching and writhing and struggling with a fighting and heaving hulk that bore him quickly back over his door-sill. Then came a brief and bitter battle for what seemed to be a short-barreled, heavy-butted revolver in one of the malletlike hands. The revolver fell away from them both in the hot and stifling blackness of the cabin, but still they clawed and panted and writhed from side to side. Then came the sound of the door slammed shut, and the woman crying to McKinnon to turn on the light. He dropped low and twisted sharply, tearing himself loose from the apelike arms.

"The light—turn on the light!" cried the woman, as though apprehensive of some danger he could not fathom.

McKinnon, still panting and shaking, sprang for his light-switch and snapped on the current. The blank darkness puffed into a sudden picture. It showed in sparkling high-lights on the wireless apparatus. It revealed the huddled figure of Ganley crouching back against the sleeping-berth. It showed the white-faced and terrified woman close by the cabin door. But that was all; for in the next second the light went out again, and the cabin was once more blanketed in utter darkness.

But McKinnon, in that brief heart-throb of illumination, had caught and fixed in his mind's eye the position of his fallen revolver. He was on his hands and knees, on the floor, like a cat, crawling to the farther corner of his dynamo base. The silence seemed something material, something smothering and choking the three watchers. No one knew from what quarter the bolt would strike. McKinnon's long, lean fingers padded feverishly yet silently about the floor, exploring the area in which his fallen revolver must lie. He thought he had it; but his fingers had closed only on his heavy, canvas-covered dumb-bell. He padded farther into the blackness, feeling along the dynamo base, wondering if it were blood, or only sweat that was trickling down his face.

Then he gave a gasp of relief, and fell back, slowly drawing himself upright as he retreated. He was armed again; he was once more able to face

the situation. All he wanted now was to get the woman out of the way, out of the cabin, if possible. It was not going to be the sort of thing she should face. It was too late for half-measures. He had been subjected to too much; he had gone through too much. There could be no possibilities of further compromise. He felt, dimly, that it would be horrible; and yet he felt that it had to be. It was the inevitable and final movement toward which all others had centered.

He backed toward the door until his groping hand came in contact with its knob. Then he caught at the girl's arm, and half pushed, half dragged her toward the threshold, with a whispered *"Quick"!* He never knew whether she mistook him for Ganley, or whether she had determined to remain in the wireless-room, even against his wishes. But she did not go: she only drew closer in to the wall as he swung the door open for her.

It was at that moment that Ganley must have caught some dim silhouette of his figure against the less opaque blackness of the open deck. For, as the door swung open, Ganley swung out with the oak-framed steamer-chair, which he had already caught up as a weapon of defense. He swung it short and quick, with a forward and elliptical motion as he leaned out toward the dimly discerned shadow. He heard it strike home; he heard the inarticulate little half-groan, half-sigh, as the stunned man crumpled down over the door-sill. Ganley heard the woman's cry of terror, but he had other fish to fry. He pawed frenziedly about the cabin wall until he found the light-switch, and turned on the light. He saw McKinnon still half-over his door-sill; he saw the woman crouched shield-like over his body; he saw the broken steamer-chair lying on the cabin floor. He also saw a heavy iron dumb-bell, covered with rusted canvas, lying at his feet, not six inches from the dynamo base. The terrified woman screamed again, and still again, as she saw him stoop and catch it up.

It was not until the great, apelike arm of the gun-runner brought the dumb-bell crashing down on the operating-table that she realized her mistake, that his actual intention flashed through her. His fury now was not being directed toward McKinnon. It was the instrument that he was attacking. For the heavy iron had struck with a crashing blow on the delicately poised responder, with its fragile and mysterious coherer, crushing the flimsy mechanism of glass and wood and metal as a mallet might crush a bird's egg. She felt McKinnon's mumbling and struggling body under her; but she gave it no thought. She only saw and knew that this maddened brute was beating the very heart out of their wireless apparatus, that with every blow he was crushing her last hopes. She dragged and wrenched McKinnon's revolver from his outstretched hand. But before she could so much as raise it, Ganley's second blow had fallen. This time it fell on the "key" itself, tearing the heavy metal lever free from its binding-post. He had just caught it up and flung it malignantly out through the cabin window, whirling out into the sea, when she fired.

Her first shot went wild. Before she had time for a second, Ganley had wheeled about and sprung on her through the smoke-filled air. The huge forty-four Colt seemed too heavy for her, beyond her strength, for she had no second chance of using it, as she knew she should have. But she caught at him and clung to him, blindly, panting, and screaming, wondering why no one came. She clung and clawed at him like a cat, until, under the sheer fury of that attack, he had to take thought to defend himself. He fell back a step or two, and the movement sent them both falling over the broken steamer-chair, grotesquely, foolishly. But not for a moment did the woman cease to fight and scream. The sound of it all seemed to sting the dazed McKinnon into a consciousness of what was going on. He dragged himself up to a sitting posture; but before he could struggle to his feet, Captain Yandel and an officer from the bridge were in the cabin.

He saw them tearing and dragging at Ganley's great limbs. He saw the white and panting and disheveled group once more upright, each shaking and facing the other. Then for the first time he saw his dismantled apparatus.

"What's this shooting on my ship?" roared the captain.

"That cat tried to kill me!" cried Ganley, breathing short and quick. The woman struggled to speak, but the captain gave her no attention. His eye for the first time had fallen on McKinnon leaning against the cabin wall, with a little trickle of blood running down over one swollen cheek-bone.

"What's this mean?" he demanded of his operator. McKinnon's senses had come back to him by this time. But a hopelessness that was almost worse than death itself crept through him.

"He's killed our wireless! Our wireless! Can't you see he's killed it!"

The captain's mental state was such that ideas filtered into the narrow seat of his consciousness but slowly.

"But how? And why?"

"Look at that responder!" cried the operator. "It's smashed. And the key's ruined! He's cut the heart out of our apparatus!"

"But I want to know the meaning of this barroom brawling aboard my ship!" still thundered its master.

McKinnon pointed landward savagely, toward the mangrove swamps and mountains of Locombia.

"He's at the root of that revolution. He's been trying to stop my sending. He said he'd kill me if I sent."

"That's a lie," retorted Ganley. "He's working with this woman to juggle messages for Duran! They're making a tool of you and your ship!"

"*That* shows who's making a tool of you!" cried McKinnon, pointing with his lean and shaking finger to the shattered responder. The ship-captain's face was blotched and purplish and horrible to look at by this time.

"And he's killed our wireless?"

"Look at it," answered McKinnon.

For the second time Captain Yandel looked. The indignity, the enormity of the thing threw him into a slowly growing ecstasy of sublimated rage.

"And who fired that shot?" he demanded, with an almost voluptuous delight in the anticipation of further fuel for a still more towering fire.

"I did," said the white-faced woman.

"So you did," purred the captain, slowly releasing the torrent. "And you're a nice pair, the two of you, makin' a pot-house of my ship! You half-breed filibusters! You garlic-eating outlaws! You murderin', slave-drivin' tin-horn conspirators! Get out o' here, you flimflam beach-combers! Get out o' my sight! Get down to your cabins and stay there until you're put ashore at Puerto Locombia, or by the living God, if you so much as show a nose outside your doors, I'll clap the whole lot o' you into irons and carry you back to New York harbor!"

The captain turned to McKinnon.

"Have you picked up anything about fightin' in there?" he demanded, with his guttural running obligato of mariner's oaths. "Or have you been too taken up with your own fightin'?"

"I've picked up nothing," was McKinnon's answer.

"Then why can't you get Guariqui?" The ship's master was still slow in grasping the situation.

"I tell you we're cut off from everything! My responder's gone!"

"Can't you fix it?"

"Not unless there's a De Forest responder brought aboard from Puerto Locombia."

"Can't you shift without it?"

"No more than you can live without a heart."

The captain turned on the strangely placid-eyed and listening Ganley. The latter's indifference seemed to sting him into a renewed ecstasy of anger.

"You'll cool your heel in the Puerto Locombia *quartel* for this," he declared, with another of his explosive oaths. "I'll damned soon hand *you* over where you belong!"

His threat had no effect whatever on his placid-eyed listener. His heavy face, with its houndlike, pendulous jaws,

and the drooping-lidded, deep-set eyes, with their misleading look of pathos, seemed to show nothing but a patient forbearance.

"I want you to get that couple where they belong," he calmly and slowly replied. "I want that woman put where she won't be taking pot-shots at every passenger she doesn't like!"

The waiting and wide-eyed group at the door had increased by this time, until their bodies, pressing close, shut all air from the crowded cabin. The captain shouldered them back savagely. That his authority should be overridden, in his own ship, on his own deck, was more than he could endure.

"Get out o' here!" he cried at Ganley, in his arbitrary rage. "Get out o' this cabin, or I'll throw you out!"

The ship's mate, diplomatically forestalling his superior officer's intention and action, dropped the long, leather-covered bridge-telescope, which in his haste he had carried in with him, caught the rebellious passenger by the right arm, as though to drag him forth.

But one sweep of that huge right arm sent the mate stumbling and falling over the ruins of the steamer-chair. Captain Yandel beheld that offense, and it left him no longer a reasoning being. His last instinctive sense of order and right had been outraged. He caught up the leather-covered bridge-telescope. He swung it back and down, blindly, in a quickly shortening half-circle, bringing the huge cylinder of glass and steel sharply down on Ganley's head, close behind the thick, red ear.

"Get 'im out o' here!" raged the infuriated officer, as the man went down, without a sound. "Get 'im away from here—get 'im off this deck, or I'll kill him!"

There was the sound of a boatswain's whistle, the murmur of voices, the shuffling of feet. When McKinnon looked up, the room was cleared. He saw Alicia Boynton, face down on his berth. For a moment he thought she had fainted and fallen there. But she had only turned away to relieve her speechless horror, her overtaxed mind and body, in a paroxysm of dry, hard sobs.

XIX.

McKinnon looked down at the girl's forlorn and weeping figure without speaking. Then he looked at his broken and dismantled apparatus. He felt like a child in an open boat, without oars, approaching an inevitable Niagara. He turned back to her, in mingled helplessness and pity. There was no message of consolation he could bring to her; he felt that it was hopeless for both of them. So instinctively, as he stooped over her, he touched her hand and murmured: "I'm sorry." He was a man of action always before one of emotion; but he had to swallow hard, to clear the lump from his throat, as he spoke.

He stroked her white and fragile hand, as it lay on his pillow, with the rough timidity with which a seaman might stroke a tired and captured landbird. Her sobs of utter weariness grew quieter, but she did not look up or speak to him. So he drew back his berth-curtain and lifted his electric fan from its shelf, placing it on the operating-table so that the current of air from its whirring wings might blow in to where she lay.

"Is it hopeless?" she asked, without turning her face to him. She had struggled to ask it casually, but the bitter listlessness of her voice translated every tone and word of that question into the notes of utter tragedy.

"No, it's not hopeless," he said combatively, aggressively, for her sake alone. "This is a De Forest station. We have the international rights common to all wireless operation. We are immune. We can hold this room until help of some sort arrives."

It was foolish, he knew, even as he uttered it. They could be driven out, or starved out, or baked out, in a single day. Yet as he kept up the pleasant fiction, he was infinitely glad of her presence there. He needed her, not because she could buoy him up to meet implacable adversities, but to compel him to sustain himself for her sake.

"We can attach a power-wire to that cabin door-handle, so that no one dare touch it. We can run a wire to——"

His voice trailed off and went out, like a burned fuse. The change that had come over him was so sudden that the woman turned and sat up.

"Wait!" he called, in a voice so high-pitched it sounded what was almost a treble note. "Wait!"

He stood rooted to the spot for a moment, petrified by the new thought that had come to him.

"It's *not* hopeless!" he cried exultantly. "It can be done! The models! My telephony models! They carry what is practically a responder!"

The woman watched him, wide-eyed, for he was down on the floor, on his knees, before the box of models, lifting out strange and delicate bits of machinery—machinery for which she had always felt a strange fear and aloofness, since the quiet evening he had once spoken to her of high-frequency oscillations and audions and ionizing gases.

"I tell you I can make it work!" he exulted. "It'll take time and work, but I can do it! I can have the whole thing rigged up by daylight. By morning I can be sending and receiving again!"

He was on his feet by this time, trying to explain it to her.

"My key's gone, you see; but that doesn't make it hopeless. I can adjust a piece of heavy copper wire to my rear binding-post here. Then I can take the other end of that wire and touch it at the contact-point here where my key used to strike. I can spell out the Morse that way, word by word. We'll be able to talk! We'll be able to send out our message!"

"Is this true?" she asked, her wide and shadowy eyes searching his face.

"Every word of it, or I don't know wireless!"

"That means we can call the *Princeton*."

"We'll be still closer by morning. I'll be ready and waiting by the time their operator is at his key. And by noon we ought to pick up Guariqui, if we passed the Toajiras Light over three hours ago—no, before that, any time after sunrise!"

"If they are still sending!" said the woman absently.

"They must be sending," cried McKinnon hopefully, as he bent over his mysterious instruments, "or the *Princeton* would never have been calling them the way it was."

"Then I must help you!"

"No, you must rest. This is work I have to do alone. You are worn out; you need rest; you must have rest. You must sleep if you can."

"And you?" she asked.

"Oh, I'll be working this out. There'll be no sleeping in this place, you know, once I start to send!"

"But I meant that *you* need rest," she explained.

He could laugh now, though his laughter was both brief and preoccupied.

"Rest!" he cried. "I'm good for two days without a drop of it, once I've got things going the way I'm trying to make them go."

She watched the white electric light of the drop-globe pour down on his bent and constantly shifting head. She could see the little black stain of dried blood on his temple. She could also see the sweat running down the side of his face, between his cheek-bone and his ear. For some inexplicable reason, she gave a throaty and inarticulate little gasp of gratitude.

"And things will *go* our way!" he declared ruminatively. "Once we get this message out, we'll have three hundred American bluejackets up in Guariqui inside of two days. We can have a banana-train filled with machine guns climbing up through those hills and every rebel in Locombia under cover!"

Alicia Boynton did not answer him as he stooped and studied and worked. But she sat there, with her hands clasped together, loosely, watching the aureole of light that the swinging electric made about the wireless-operator's head.

XX.

Things did not go McKinnon's way as easily as he had expected, or had so bravely pretended to expect. The

first gray tinge of morning, deepening slowly to pearl, showed along the eastern sky-line before he had completed his task.

He sat back with a sigh of relief; he sat back like a god who had wearied of creation, looking on his work and seeing that it was good. The gray and pearl along the sky-line had by this time turned to pale rose, and slender pencils of light were showing through the chinks in his cabin shutter. Alicia Boynton was still asleep on his narrow berth. So narrow was her resting-place, and so quiet her breathing, that it seemed to him as though she were lying in a coffin. She had dropped off into that sleep of utter weariness against her will. She had resolved to be with him and near him every moment of his labor, but the intriguing claims of the body had dethroned her volition.

And now, as he gazed down at her white and tranquil face, he dreaded to waken her. He felt touched, as he watched the quiet throb of the pulse in her blue-veined temple where the dark and heavily massed brown hair had fallen back, with a sense of mystery before the ancient miracle of sleep. He wondered where her escaped spirit had gone to; it seemed nothing more than the quiescent shell of her, the empty husk of her, that he stood and watched. A wayward sense of loneliness, of desertion, crept over him, and he turned about, not ungratefully, to listen to the familiar swish of deck-hose and thump of holystone as the early-awakened deck-crew washed down the decks. It was commonplace enough, that swish and thump of mumbling workers, but now there was something wordlessly companionable in it to the listening McKinnon. It reminded him that the every-day trivialities, the orderly actualities that sustain the machinery of life, must always go on, no matter how close may brood the spirit of outer tragedy. It reminded him, too, that it was morning, and that the hour of his ultimate trial had arrived.

He swung his door open, and looked out along the deck. He beheld a windless sea, and a blood-red sun mounting up above its rim, where dull orange paled into dark azure. He also beheld a dirty-jacketed and heavy-eyed steward carrying a pewter coffee-pot and a tray of fruit and toast and eggs along the deck to the captain's stateroom. This heavy-eyed steward willingly enough surrendered his burden when McKinnon thrust a dollar into his hand, and went shuffling below-stairs again, to replace the coffee-pot and replenish the tray. McKinnon closed and locked his cabin door, before he set down the breakfast thus caught on the wing, and when he looked up he saw Alicia Boynton regarding him with wide-open and vaguely wondering eyes. He felt glad that he had escaped the brutality of waking her to the troubled world that still encompassed them.

"What is it?" she asked.

"It's your breakfast," he said, with studied cheeriness. "You're going to drink this black coffee and eat this toast while I start to send."

"Then you can send?" she asked. Her world of reality seemed slow in coming back to her.

"I've got to go to the engine-room first," he explained, "to see about my power. Lock this door when I go out, and don't open it; don't open it for Captain Yandel himself, until you hear me knock three times."

She had made her hurried toilet by the time he was back, but the coffee and eggs remained untouched. McKinnon, at the still open door, could see that the brief tropical morning had already merged into open day. He could see, too, that they had drawn closer into the Locombian coast. McKinnon's flesh tingled and crept a little as he looked on it, for it disquieted and overawed him, that land of crawling mists and blazing light and flaming heat. The thought of its overcrowded and self-strangling vegetation, of its ceaseless and sinister and overexuberant life, depressed him. He was glad enough to shut and lock his door on it all.

"You haven't eaten?" he said, as his eye fell on the untouched breakfast.

"I couldn't," she confessed. "I couldn't until I knew you were sending

again!" He thought over that statement, for the situation had its difficulties.

"Not a word, not a dot, goes out until we've had our breakfast," was his ultimatum. He knew that she needed nourishment. He also knew that it would be unwise to bank too strongly on his untested apparatus. And he knew that defeat, if defeat it was, would be a crushing one. So he ate, though it was more to encourage her than to appease his own hunger. And when their frugal meal was finished, he looked at his watch with speculative and half-closed eyes. Then he gave a deep sigh and turned to his operating-table.

The girl, sitting on the berth-edge, saw his hand go up to the switch-board; she saw the lever come down on the contact-pins, one by one, and heard the hum and drone of the wakened dynamo. She saw his rubber-muffled fingers catch up the piece of heavy insulated copper wire which had been attached to the dismantled binding-post, and the flash of blue flame that exploded from knob to knob across the spark-gap as he completed his circuit by touching his wire-end to the contact-point of his improvised key. She saw his intently inclined head as he sat listening with his phones pressed close over his ears, and the thin and still oddly boyish-looking face beaded with minute drops of perspiration. His preoccupied left hand went out to his tuner, and still he sat there, over his reconstructed responder, waiting. The only sound in the cabin was the continuous whir of the electric fan on its unpainted pine shelf. The minutes dragged slowly away. The silence became nerve-torturing, piling up like a wave that refuses to break and fall.

"It's useless!" cried the girl.

McKinnon silenced her with a peremptory movement of the hand. He leaned forward, slowly, until his breast-bone pressed against the edge of the table. Then came a moment or two of unbroken quietness.

"*I've got them!*" he whispered.

But still again the silence was unbroken as the man with the glimmering steel band across his head sat crooked up like a schoolboy over a slate, listening. His hand went out to the lever-heads in the numeral-lined slots of his tuning-box, as he paused to tune up to the wave-pitch of some as yet undecipherable message. His half-closed eyes opened and widened, and he was suddenly springing for the switch-handle of his starting-box again.

"I've got them," he cried exultantly, as he turned to his key. "I've got *two of them*. They're both talking at once. I've got to make one hold back, if I can reach him. If not, I've got to try to tune him out!"

His voice was cut off by the familiar spit and flash of the huge blue spark, and a thin ozonic odor filled the closed room, strangely like the smell of summer air after a thunder-storm. The rapt and wistful eyes of the woman watched him as he worked, touched into wonder before the inscrutable, humbled into momentary amazement by the unfathomable mystery of Hertzian waves.

"Thank God!" he cried, "it's Guariqui!"

"Guariqui!" echoed the woman. He silenced her sharply, for he had his ear at his phone again, and was once more working nervously over his tuning-box.

"We've lost them," he murmured dejectedly. "We've lost them both!"

The whir of the fan and the breathing of the two listeners were the only sound in the cabin. The quietness again seemed like an up-piling breaker that refused to fall and retreat. The woman stirred uneasily.

"Wait!" cried McKinnon, with suddenly inclined head. His face, now seamed with runnels of sweat, was drawn and pallid. He jerked a nervous hand toward the droning fan peevishly, as though its presence were a personal affront to him.

"Shut off that fan," he commanded. The woman rose without a word and shut it off. There was a malicious little spit of the rebellious current, a spark of blue under the japanned standard, and the revolving brass wheel-wings came to a stop.

"There!" McKinnon's voice erupted like one of his own coil-sparks through the silence. "*Now* I've got them!"

He jumped for his key, talking over his shoulder as he did so.

"It's the Guariqui operator," he explained, as he worked. "He's sending very weak; I can hardly get him. He says his power's giving out, and De Brigard's men are targeting at his aerials with carbines."

Then he flung himself into his chair, and caught up his form-pad for transcription, with his receiver once more over his head. He wrote slowly, with intent eyes and wrinkled brow, word after word, sometimes going back and scratching out a phrase, sometimes puzzled by a lost dot or dash in the stuttering Morse, sometimes quickly "breaking" and asking the operator to repeat. His breath came shorter and quicker as he listened and wrote. Then he called frenziedly, and listened, and called again.

"They're dead!" he exclaimed, in disgust. "I can't get them! Their wires must be gone!"

His use of the word "dead" terrified the woman at his side. He had no time to explain. He simply thrust his inscribed pad-sheets into her hand as he turned to his key again, for time now was precious, terribly precious. She read:

Duran's men all here. Shut up in city waiting cartridge shipment. Light skirmishes last two days. Ulloa held De Brigard back all yesterday, but had to fall back on city at night. Short of ammunition. We are shut in. De Brigard's forces surrounded city at daybreak. Courier reports rebels bringing machine guns up through hills, from Sanibella. We must have help before guns join bombardment. Carbines are picking at my aerials from Paraiso Hill, to the east. Can you get Chilean battle-ship two days off Puerto Locombia or British ship out of Kingston? Must have help. Relay call to anything in reach. Duran's authority. Or if Chilean or British marines can be landed in time advise them to push in by way of Boracao. American Consul Klauser shut up there holding wireless with Kilvert, United Fruit operator, but report bad sending. Is only disaffected town outside capital. Entrain there. Must hurry.

Her hungry eyes rushed back and forth along the second sheet which McKinnon had thrust into her hand:

Can get *Princeton*. Some one from God's country. Must hurry. Yes, president and cabinet safe. Seven hundred crowded in Palace yards and water shut off. Tell *Princeton* not to wait to land guns. Remember Boracao switch bridge is mined. Bullet against switchboard. Get me south of Boston again—hurry—use—power dying—hurry.

That was the end of the message.

"But the *Princeton!*" gasped the woman. "If you can't get the *Princeton!*"

"Wait—wait—I'm getting her," answered the man, bent low over his responder, as though the sense it appealed to were vision and not sight. "They've been waiting for me to relay, they've been——"

He left the speech unended, for he was busy sending his spark cannonading across its gap.

He kept up that cannonading until it seemed, to the watching woman, that it was never going to end. Then he switched off and listened again, and again cannonaded his answer. Then he dropped wearily into his chair, wiped the sweat from his face, and remembered that he was not alone. He looked up at the woman with a strangely transfiguring smile on his pallid face.

"It's over," he said, with the simplicity of utter weariness. "I've got them!"

She put out her two hands to him. It was meant as an impersonal gesture of gratitude, and he knew it as he took them in his. But there seemed something revivifying and electrical in mere contact with them, something that brought the hope and joy of life back to his tired body. He laughed aloud.

"I gave them what they were aching for! They were lying there steaming and baking and fretting for the very one word I sent on to them. They were lying there *whimpering* to get up at De Brigard, just like a rat-terrier whimpering to get at a kitten."

He was silent for a moment, as his mind pictured the sudden change, so many miles away, that was flashing and thrilling through all the great gray

hulk of that wakened cruiser, of the signal-bells clanging, the orders being given, the furnaces being stoked, the decks being cleared.

"And before to-morrow night they will be anchored at Puerto Locombia."

"Before to-morrow night?" she repeated, with sinking heart.

"She has to steam all the way from Torreblanca—she can't cover the distance in less than thirty-six hours under any circumstances."

"But *we* will be at Puerto Locombia to-day before nightfall!"

"I know it," he said.

"Then Ganley will have one whole day to act. The Sanibella guns will be pushed up to Guariqui. Ulloa's men will be without ammunition. The thing will be over and done before we can help them. And *we* will be here at the mercy of Ganley!"

She failed to impart any shred of her terror to the listening operator.

"We still have that bridge to cross," he confessed. "But I think we can cross it when the time comes."

"But how?" she demanded.

"By going to Guariqui—you and I—to-night!" He said the words so quietly, so guardedly, that they were little more than a whisper.

"How—how?" she asked helplessly. "In what way?"

"We have to make a way," was his answer.

XXI.

It was nine hours later that the *Laminian* made her way under half-speed into the roadstead at Puerto Locombia. A long iron pier ran out into this green-watered roadstead, its trestles spanned by the single track of a narrow-gage railway. On either side of the concrete breakwater that lipped the sea edge of the town itself stretched away two curves of white sand with their intermittently whitening surf. Then came scattering clumps of lonely palms, then a lower mist-hung coast of ooze and mangrove and steaming lagoon. Behind the concreted crescent of shore-line, to which the roadstead pier seemed like an arrow set in a drawn bow, stood scattering lines of thatched huts, of mud and bamboo wattle, crowding on narrow streets that sloped to the center and held sidewalks no wider than a wall top. Still nearer ranged the more substantial part of the town, the bald, sun-scorched buildings of corrugated iron and tin, the one-story, open-front shops, with red tile roofs, the uninviting rectangular *bodegas*, and the bold and austere government buildings. Over the latter drooped strange flags of yellow and red and blue.

On the higher ground to the right ran rusty streets lined with pink and yellow-tinted house walls of stucco, with heavy Spanish shutters and terra-cotta roof-tiles. Along the fringe of lower ground to the left stood irregular rows of wattled huts, raised the height of a man from the "sand-jiggers" and the miasmal tundra under them, looking like lines of patient herons as they balanced on their rotting palm-wood stilts. Beyond the town, leading into the slowly rising ground of the southwest, wound a road of shell and limestone, leaving a crooked scar of white against the blackness of the lowlands through which it crept. Close in by the concrete breakwater lay the ribs and spars of a wrecked schooner, mysteriously adding to the atmosphere of gloom and neglect. On a side-track curving from the pier-end stood a dismantled train of cars, so small that they looked like a child's toys. Near-by lay a derailed locomotive, brown with rust, strangely pathetic in its attitude of resigned helplessness. Thirty paces from this stood the tottering remains of a corrugated-iron warehouse, its fallen roof and twisted wall-plates showing plainly enough that it had been blown up by either Ulloa or the insurgents.

Farther out along the broken pier rolled and creaked a soft-coal-burning little tug. About her single deck, under her overlarge and drooping ensign of red and yellow and blue, lounged and waited a number of figures in red-striped uniforms. Obsolete brass cannon shimmered at her bow and stern, and a carbine-rack showed out just aft of her wheel-house.

It was while this tug cast off and came puffing and wheeling about to meet the newcomer into the roadstead that McKinnon and Alicia Boynton stood at the rail, gazing landward.

"And those are the tools that Ganley works with!" said the operator, looking with open scorn at the strange tug, the strange ensign, the still stranger figures in uniform. He tried to hide his anxiety and depression under a lightness of tone that seemed as incongruous, even to his own ears, as the tricolored ensign flapping over the soft-coal-burning craft before them.

"Those are the tools that can cut deep when they have to," was the woman's answer as she shuddered a little, and once more looked landward.

"They're burning Parroto!" cried some one from a lower deck, in plaintive wonder. "That's Parroto going up in smoke there!"

McKinnon, under the rocking awning that could not altogether shut out the hot sun of the late afternoon, leaned farther over the rail and peered inland.

Far to the south and west stretched the flat and gloomy swamps, steaming under the sun's rays, miasmal and menacing. Still farther away, tier by tier, rose the hills, with a condor wheeling above them here and there. They lifted, in gentle waves softened with the green of orange, banana, and coconut-palm, bamboo and breadfruit, until they crowded mistily up to the huddled blue line of the mountain-ridges, to the very peaks of the Cordilleras, lonely, forbidding, and seemingly impenetrable. From one of the nearer tiers of hills black columns of smoke twined and curled and billowed up into the air. It was the town of Parroto, still in flames.

But no sound or sign of movement came from shore. A mysterious and druglike sleep seemed to envelop both town and swamp and hills. Yet McKinnon, watching with set and thoughtful face, knew that somewhere in the dust-laden streets between the stucco walls señoritas were peering from jalousies, and naked children were playing and lean curs were prowling. In the yellow church facing the Prado priests were moving about. In the shadowy *bodegas* flies were buzzing and glasses were clinking, and swarthy and undersized patriots were rolling cigarettes and enlarging on the true paths that led to liberty. In each tesselated *patio* shadowed by rustling palm-fronds were women and old men; and beside the mud oven of each wattled hut meals were being made ready and eaten.

"Does it look like home?" he asked the girl at his side, a little absently, a little bitterly.

She was silent for another minute or two, as her eyes turned through the broken line of the Cordilleras to where Guariqui lay, to where still waited the life for which she had fought and risked so much.

"It will never seem home to me again," she answered. "Yet I used to think it was almost beautiful. The movement and color and mystery of it. The *fiestas,* and the music, the glitter and pomp of its little court life that so satisfied my foolish vanity, the riding and the freedom, the passion and warmth of everything—I can remember when it used to make me almost drunk, especially at night!"

He felt vaguely envious of those earlier and happier days; he felt that he had been cheated out of something. But her eyes, through all their mournfulness, glowed like a tropical sea touched with moonlight as she smiled up at him, and he forgot the feeling.

"It *was* beautiful to me—then," she confessed. "But the beauty was there because I put it there."

He turned his anxious eyes to the tug swinging authoritatively in under the *Laminian's* quarter. He knew only too well, from the gasconading attitudes of its uniformed officials, from the sheer effrontery with which they swung in and overhauled the bigger steamship, that he was at last beholding the local instruments of the new "Liberal" dictatorship. And he knew that with their advent the curtain was about to rise on a new act of the tangled drama. He racked his brain to understand what Ganley's move would be. He knew that all day long the gun-runner had kept to

his cabin. A steward had reported that his head was bad and was causing him much pain. He had eaten nothing; he had kept to his berth, cursing the *Laminian* and the heat of her coffinlike cabins. Yet McKinnon knew it would take more than a sore head to keep him from acting when the moment for action arrived. The one thing that puzzled the operator was what form that first move of Ganley's was to take.

The solution of that problem came even as he stood there at the ship's rail watching. It came in the form of a shoe, flung from an open port-hole of the *Laminian* to the deck of the indrawing tug. This shoe—it was a ludicrous, wide-toed, well-worn thing of humble calfskin—was picked up by the epauletted officer of the local *comandante*, looked at with open disgust, and flung openly overboard. But McKinnon noticed that before this took place, the officer in question had extracted from its wide-toed interior a slip of closely folded paper. He promptly disappeared from sight, in the wheel-house, and when he reappeared, his tug was grating and bumping along the *Laminian's* side-plates, heedless of the blasphemous and stentorian imprecations of Captain Yandel, bellowing and gesticulating from his bridge-end.

McKinnon, however, was busy watching the port-hole, from which the shoe had appeared. He saw a boat-hook swung carelessly up to it, a red hand reach out and lift something from the end of it, and the boat-hook continue to scratch along the ship's side-plates as though searching for a hold. Then the tug made fast.

Two minutes later a coffee-colored official wearing cavalry boots, red-striped, blue denim trousers, a yellow-braided white jacket and a gold-braided cap, came aboard. He carried a sword, held at his side by a red sash, and was followed by an alert-eyed, narrow-shouldered, yellow-faced youth in blue denim striped with red. The officer with the sword brought his heels together and saluted Captain Yandel. That worthy seaman, descending from his bridge, demanded to know, in English, why he was so slow about getting pratique, and what all the fuss was about.

That was all that McKinnon heard, for the talk was resumed in the captain's stateroom, with thunderous volleys of broken Spanish on the one side, with calm and dictatorial insolence on the other. It was to this talk that Alicia Boynton, as she leaned over the ship's rail, listened so attentively.

"What is it?" asked McKinnon, noticing her wide and terrified eyes.

"We are in quarantine," she answered.

"Do they say why?"

"The *comandante* has ordered us to be held here. They are sending a detachment of soldiers to watch the ship. We are to be held here, prisoners, inside their dead-line."

"That's Ganley's move!" exclaimed McKinnon.

"He claims that it's yellow fever—that we've entered the affected zone."

The intentness with which he was studying her face brought her wondering eyes up to his.

"I'm afraid you've got to be very brave," he said, as gently as he could.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because you and I are going to break that quarantine to-night!"

She looked from him to the smoke columns that hung over Parroto, and then back at the carbine-rack and the brass guns of the *comandante's* smoke-belching ship-of-war.

"We can't," she said, with a little gasp of despair. "We would have no chance. There is no place to go to—and they will have orders to shoot. It would be giving them the chance they are waiting for. We can't go!"

"We've got to!" McKinnon said doggedly.

XXII.

Alicia Boynton stood on guard at the door of the wireless-room, waiting for McKinnon's return. More and more, in those last strange hours of uncertainty, she dreaded being alone. There seemed something ominous and bodeful in the very quietness of the midnight

ship, as she rocked and grated against the pier in the long and sullen groundswell of the roadstead. The screw no longer throbbed, the engines no longer pulsed and churned. The quietness seemed deathlike. It was broken only by the steps of De Brigard's sentries, as they sleepily paced the long deck, one to port and one to starboard. Yet even these two figures, with their shouldered carbines, seemed ghostlike, presaging vague evils. The heat, too, was oppressive, for not a breath of air seemed to stir in the quiet ship. But infinitely more oppressive was the silence so rhythmically broken by the spectral tread of the pacing sentries.

The girl's heart stood still as McKinnon himself jerked back the cabin door, dodged inside, and as quickly closed and locked the door behind him. He stood there with his back to her, listening, without so much as a glance in her direction. He heard the pacing steps pass and die away, and pass still again. Then he murmured a grateful "Thank Heaven!" took a deep breath, and turned slowly about to the waiting girl. His gaze was impersonal and abstracted; he scarcely seemed conscious of her presence as he stood there, deep in thought.

"Well?" she whispered at last, struggling to keep some tremor of dread from her voice.

"That letter was right," he said, with the look of perplexity still in his studious eyes. "Eighty-eight boxes of fluxing-slag have been passed out from the hold and piled along the pier. They've been standing there covered with a tarpaulin."

"Is any one there?" she asked.

"Five of De Brigard's men—four men and an officer. The four men are moving those boxes now. They are lifting them in through the east door of the weigh-scales shed. The south door has been kept shut; and the United Fruit Concern's track-motor has been kept there waiting. They have divided the eighty-eight boxes into two lots. They intend to take out only one-half of the shipment to-night. I counted the boxes from under the life-boat. Forty-three were left; that means they are taking off forty-five."

"That means almost three hundred thousand rounds of ammunition!" she exclaimed hopelessly.

"The Remington rifles, of course, they can't touch. The forty-five boxes, I imagine, have completely loaded the body of their car; filled it up!"

"But what are *we* to do?"

He looked at her, and laughed a little recklessly.

"They have to run those boxes of slag out through Puerto Locombia to De Brigard's headquarters to-night. They have to get them out there quietly, very quietly. The track, doubtless, has been cleared for them. It *has* to be cleared for them, for even a hundred-and-forty-horse-power motor can't sidetrack an ore-train or switch a string of banana-cars. And there is no longer any telegraph between this port and the inland points they have to pass."

"No, there is no telegraph," she said, still at sea.

"There are four men and an officer," he mused irrelevantly. Then he looked down at his watch, and turned abruptly to the girl again.

"You have a revolver?" he asked. She showed him the slender, jeweled-handled toy that her brother Arturo had given her three years before. He looked it over, saw that it was loaded, and handed it back to her.

"Have you ever learned to use it?" he asked. She looked at him with growing wonder.

"I don't think I could kill a man," she said very quietly and very slowly.

"But could you protect yourself, at a pinch? Could you shoot round a little with it, I mean? You see, that toy couldn't kill a man if you tried for a week!"

"I have learned to shoot," she said, white-lipped.

"Good; then that makes three!" he exclaimed. Her wide eyes detected the fact that, for all his assumption of jocularity, his hand was shaking a little as he held Ganley's huge revolver and his own under the electric light. He saw that they were fully loaded, and then

counted his cartridges. There were eighty-three, all told.

"What must I do?" she asked, as bravely as she could.

He stood studying her with his impersonal and abstracted eyes once more.

"Could you run a motor, a track-motor like this?" he asked, with a side jerk of his head toward the pier.

"I have run one often," was her simple answer. "There is no steering-wheel. It is simply a starting and speed-lever and the brakes—though we always took a boy, to blow, to keep the tracks clear!"

"The boy will not be needed to-night," was his grim rejoinder, as he once more studied his watch. She drew back from him, slowly, step by step, aghast.

"You are not going to try to take that motor from them?" she asked.

"We've *got* to take that motor. It's our only way out. And with your help I can do it."

"But these sentries! And there are five men! And forty-eight miles of country held by De Brigard!"

"Listen," he said, so simply, so matter-of-fact in the facing of the problem, that his very quietness brought her stampeding thoughts back to her. "There are just two danger-zones. The first is in the weigh-scales shed, where those five men will be. The second will be in De Brigard's lines. The officer will be the only man armed of those five. I'll attend to him. Before the other four can get to their carbines we'll be off—*you'll* be off, I mean, for remember, whatever happens, you are to get to that starting-lever and get away with the car. I'll be holding the men off until we're clear. Once out of the town, we've got a clear run until we strike De Brigard's outposts. It will be simply a matter of rushing them—and trusting to luck."

"It's hopeless," she sobbed.

"To be here at daybreak when Ganley holds the trump-card is more hopeless!"

"Even if we did get through," she tried to explain, "we couldn't get into Guariqui. They would fire on a car breaking into their lines—they would kill us both before they could understand!"

He shook his head dissentingly.

"They are waiting for us. I told them to look out for us, sixteen hours ago, by wireless."

He caught up his coat, and dropped a revolver into each side pocket, and after them the loose cartridges, in handfuls. Then he slipped his wicker-covered brandy-flask into his hip pocket, and once more consulted his watch.

"Our time is up!" he said.

He looked up at last, for she had not spoken. It tortured him to see such hopeless fear on her white face, but he knew it was perilous to surrender to his feelings.

"I know it's hard," was all he said, "but it has to be done."

"I understand," she said.

He turned, with his hand on the light-switch. "Is there anything you feel you ought to take along with you?"

"Nothing," she whispered.

"Then are you ready?"

"Quite ready," was her answer.

She heard the snap of the light-switch. She heard him quietly turn the key in the cabin door. She knew, as she stood with her hand on his sleeve, that he was listening and waiting for the sentry's steps. He waited until they passed and died away toward the bow of the ship. Then he noiselessly opened the door and drew her out after him into the blackness of the balmy, musky-odored midnight air.

XXIII.

They crept across the deck, hand in hand, to where the shadowy outlines of one of the life-boats blocked their path. They slipped in under the bow of this life-boat, groping their way to the davit, where the ship's rail ended. Before them was a drop of six feet, from the ship's deck to the string-piece of the pier, against which the rusty side-plates were creaking and groaning.

McKinnon made a sudden motion for the girl to wait, for dark figures were moving about on the pier below. She

could make out the gloomy mass of the weigh-scales shed, its oxid-red paint leaving it black by night. She could see that the west door of the shed was open, and that a figure stood just inside this door, holding a lantern. She knew it was the officer, for she could see the light glimmer on the sword-scabbard that moved back and forth with every movement of his body. She could see, too, that he was smoking a cigarette contentedly. She could even smell the tobacco smoke, mingled with the heavy odor of a decaying shipment of bananas that rotted farther out along the pier-edge. She could hear low voices, now and then, speaking cautiously in Spanish, as two barefooted soldiers padded past the swinging lantern, in through the door. They carried a heavy box that reminded her of a baby's coffin; and as they came out again two others passed them on their way in. Then she felt McKinnon touch her arm warningly, and whisper for her to be ready. She could hear the slow tread of the sentry's feet behind her, to the north of the shielding life-boat.

"Now's our chance," McKinnon was saying in her ear. He dropped silently over the deck-edge. She could just make out the white patch of his face as he stood there waiting to lift her down.

She knew no emotion, beyond a vague and persistent anxiety, as she felt his arms clasp her surrendering body. The moment's intimate contact brought her neither joy nor repugnance. She only knew that McKinnon was leading her by the hand to the far end of the shed that faced the west. Then he took away his hand, and drew a revolver from his pocket. It struck her that the odor from the rotting banana-pile was becoming almost unendurable.

She followed him blindly, her outstretched finger keeping in touch with his coat-sleeve. She saw him step in over the railway-tracks that were bridged by the shed. A broken right angle of light, from the lantern within, outlined the huge, loosely fitting door that covered the west end of the black-boarded building. In this huge door a smaller one had at some time been cut; it was through this smaller door that McKinnon led her, cautiously, noiselessly.

The track-motor stood backed almost against the eastern end of the shed, next to the door through which the barefooted soldiers were carrying the heavy boxes. The officer with the lantern still kept his position just inside this door, placidly smoking his cigarette. The girl and McKinnon had to stoop low to keep in the shadow of the square-topped, heavy-bodied motor-car. They crouched in under its acetylenes, close to the rust-covered, many-dented circulating-coil, as a cartridge-box was lifted into the body of the car by the two barefooted carriers, with a muffled thump as the weight was released and the grating of wood against wood as the box was pushed and twisted and jerked into position. They could hear the sigh of one of the men, the pad of bare feet, and the nonchalant "Forty-three, forty-four" of the counting officer.

It was then that McKinnon lifted her bodily into the driving-seat, whispering to her to sit low, even lifting her outstretched hand to the starting-lever.

"Start as the door opens," she heard him whisper, and she knew that he had crept forward again, and that she was alone in the car. She tried to school herself to calmness, to coerce her attention on which was the starting-lever and which the speed-lever, to force into life the hope that all might still turn out well. Once free of that door, she felt, she could breathe again.

She waited, straining through the dim light, wondering what kept McKinnon so long. Then the quietness was broken by the sudden sound of metal rasping on metal, of a falling piece of wood that echoed cavernously through the high-roofed shed.

"Who is there?" cried the startled officer, in Spanish, as he swung about with his lantern. He whipped out a revolver from his belt as he repeated the challenge. The door had not opened; they were shut in, trapped.

The officer sprang forward, holding the lantern out at his side as he ran.

Then a sudden roar of sound filled the shed, followed by the crash of glass. It was a shot from McKinnon's revolver, a deliberate and well-put shot that shattered the lantern and left the place in darkness.

"Quick—come ahead!" called McKinnon out of the darkness. As he spoke the officer emptied his revolver toward the sound of the intruder's voice. The shots, in rapid succession, filled the shed with tumult, left the air stifling with powder smoke. Quick calls and counter-calls came from the ship. The four barefooted soldiers, springing for their carbines, charged in through the narrow east door. They fired as they came, but only into utter darkness.

"Come ahead!" called McKinnon still again out of that darkness—she could not tell where. "Sit low and take the door on the run!"

She hesitated, bewildered, for the command seemed a foolish one. The carbines were spitting close about her. She heard the cries of alarm, the deafening detonations, the crash of wood.

"For God's sake, come ahead!" implored McKinnon. She knew he was still safe. She no longer hesitated. She threw the starting-lever back, threw the speed out full, and crouched low in the bottom of the car front. She knew that somebody was clubbing at the seat above her with a musket-end. She could hear the guns of the *Laminian's* sentries giving the alarm. Then she closed her eyes, and crouched lower, for she knew the car was under way.

It had some fifteen or sixteen feet of headway before it struck the huge pine door that barred the tracks. There was a sudden rending and splintering of pine, a crunching of wood, and the car had gone through the door like a hound through a paper hoop.

McKinnon swung up beside her as the door went down. He was astride her body almost, fighting and panting, for a swarthy-faced Locombian was on the car-step, making frenzied thrusts at her with his carbine-end. Another was on the cartridge-boxes, and he shot once, scorching the operator's face with his powder-flash as it passed him. He had no time for a second shot, for McKinnon's hand went up and his revolver barked. The carbine fell forward into the seat between them. The Locombian himself rolled sideways, to the left, with a howl of pain. He staggered to his feet, swayed there a second, and then toppled backward over the boxes, and fell from the car.

Another man took his place as he fell. McKinnon sprang for him, catching and jerking upward the barrel of his carbine as he fired, tearing a hole through the car-roof. Then the two men closed, and as they fought and tore at each other in the racing car, the sentries from the ship's bow kept firing along the dark track. Then a third man, the officer who had held the lantern, swung from the now racing car's hand-rail forward, until he reached the driving-seat. He had taken out his sword—the girl could see the white steel flash in the dim light. He was slashing blindly with it as he climbed and worked his way up to the box-pile. It was several seconds before she realized that the slashing sword-end was meant for her. McKinnon's revolver lay in the bottom of the car; the girl could feel it with her shaking hands. There was only one thing to do.

She quickly raised it, closed her eyes, and fired. The shot went wide, for she had aimed it low, at his knees. But it served to fix her position in the mind of her assailant; and again she saw the naked steel flash and shimmer in the darkness. She fired again, before it had time to reach her.

She knew the bullet had broken his arm, even before his grasp on the hand-rail relaxed. She saw him sway back, helplessly, and then topple and fall outward, against the string-piece of the pier. She stood up, and looked back for her companion. She could just make out the two men still struggling back and forth, doggedly, determinedly. Then she saw one man raise the other up bodily, and bring him down with all his remaining strength on the close-packed cartridge-boxes. The blow seemed to stun him; before his senses

came back to him his adversary had taken advantage of that helplessness, and was rolling and pushing him out from the back of the racing car.

He remained so long there at the rear of the car, panting and fighting for breath again, that the waiting girl was in doubt as to who had been the victor. She lowered the revolver, slowly, as he clambered weakly back over the boxes, and dropped in the seat beside her.

"Are you hurt?" he gasped.

"No!" she said. But the sound was more like a sob. The siren of the *Laminian* was now screaming and bellowing through the night. The sentries on the ship were still shooting after them, foolishly, for the car by this time had covered more than half of the mile-long pier. A land-breeze, balmy and many-odored, blew in their faces.

"Thank God we're free!" said McKinnon devoutly.

XXIV.

McKinnon's cry of thankfulness was cut short by an exclamation from the girl at his side as the car rocked and swayed along the uneven pier-track.

"Look!" she gasped. "They are closing the gates ahead of us! They are shutting us in!"

McKinnon peered through the darkness. He could see a number of moving lights. He could also make out the shadowy lines of a building or two. Where the track ran between these buildings, at the end of the pier, a white-painted wooden gate had been swung and locked across the rails to stop the car. He could see the light from the restlessly moving lanterns refracted from its painted slats, from the swords of the officers and the rifles of the waiting soldiers.

He knew what it meant, but it was too late for half-measures. With the quickness of thought he jerked down two of the heavy cartridge-boxes, to the left side of the driving-seat, as a barricade against a chance bullet. He felt sure it would be only a chance bullet; his contempt for both the arms and the marksmanship of the Latin-American was of long standing. He hauled and twisted and rolled two boxes as quickly down on the right-hand end of the driving-seat, calling to the woman at his side to crouch down between his knees as he reached out and took the speed-lever in his own hand.

Alicia Boynton had instinctively slowed down the car, for the moving lights were now not more than two hundred feet before them. McKinnon, with his foot held ready on the brakes, threw the motor out to full speed. He no longer felt afraid of the flimsy wooden gate. What he feared was a tie across the track or a switch thrown open to derail him. And any moment, he felt, as the heavy car gathered speed and once more hurled itself forward, they would start shooting at him with their pot-metal rifles.

He crouched lower and lower between his barricade of boxes as the car swung in toward the shadowy pier-end, so that his stooping body forced the girl to the very floor of the driving-seat. He saw a red tongue or two of flame dart out of the blackness ahead of him, and he knew that the firing had begun. He could hear the whine of the bullets as they passed overhead, he could hear the lead ping and pound against the car-sides. He had little fear for the boxes of ammunition surrounding him; the cartridges were covered enough by the powdered fluxing-slag to be cushioned against concussion. Once, indeed, a bullet splintered against the wood of the very box against which he leaned. He held his breath and waited, rocking and swinging onward toward the moving lights.

But still the firing kept up. The white-painted gate before him seemed a mirage, which receded as he advanced. It seemed that he would never get to it. And he knew what a bullet might do at any moment. He carried no lights, and he felt certain that as yet the men attacking him had nothing against which to centralize their fire. But as he came closer, he knew that advantage would be lost to him. Then it suddenly occurred to him that a show of re-

sistance would be a possible help to him. He had no time to feel about for the carbine. But his groping fingers found the revolver on the car-seat cushion behind him.

Before his arm could go up, however, he knew that it was too late. The fire was pouring in on them broadside; he could hear the whistle of the bullets and the splintering of the car-hood sides. He had ridden down the lights and the waiting men.

The stabbing and jetting and drifting powder smoke obscured the gate so that they were upon it before he knew it. There was a second rending and snapping of wood, a vision of flying white pickets, a cry from the soldiers on either side of him. But the car had passed its second barrier, carrying away one end of the framework across its battered lamps.

McKinnon took a deep breath and waited with his foot still on the brake, oppressed by the terror of a sudden derailment. But the great car kept to the tracks and went thundering in between the shadowy buildings that shut them off from the grilling rifle-fire of De Brigard's men. He knew, by the passing of the thunderous echo, that they were in the open again, circling up through the scattering lines of mud huts. The sound of a shot or two still came to his ears. He could feel the girl move; she was trying to rise to the seat. But he held her there as the car continued to plunge and sway along the crooked tracks. Now and then the howling of dogs came to his ears, breaking through the continuous monotone of the wind's rush past his face, straining and peering into the darkness ahead. Down in the roadstead the *Laminian's* siren was still bellowing and roaring. Lights began to appear in the houses of the wakened town.

Alicia Boynton, still pinned down by his knees, was struggling and calling to him. He knew that she was safe, that she was still unharmed, and that was all he cared to know.

"Hurry!" she called to him.

"Yes," he answered, leaning closer to catch her words.

"We circle about the town," she was calling into his ear. "We have to come out by Point Asuncion, next to the new hospital. There will be guards there. They can cross from the pier-end almost as soon as we can circle around!"

"It's out to the last notch," McKinnon explained, and she had to steady herself in the reeling car by suddenly catching at his arm.

"They'll try to stop us there!" she called out to him once more.

"They can't!" he called back recklessly, almost drunkenly, for the speed of their escape seemed to have gone to his head. "They can't!"

He suddenly forced her down to her former position, between his sheltering knees, for his straining eyes had once more caught sight of moving lanterns ahead. They had passed through the heart of the town, and were once more on its ragged outskirts. They were following a little embankment of made land, littered with cinders and scrap-iron. McKinnon could see the oily glimmer of water beneath him, to the right. To the left, the ghostlike chimney and walls of a power-house floated past, and were lost behind them, as the car rumbled over a culvert and ground and bit with its wheel-flanges on the curve that took them sweeping in again toward Point Asuncion. But all the while his eyes were on the moving lights ahead.

Suddenly he uttered a started cry, a cry that had more resentment than fear in it, and stood up in his seat, reaching back for the carbine as he rose. For the drifting and shifting lights had defined themselves. He had made out the meaning of the movement he had to face.

It was a body of uniformed men carrying a bridge-girder of iron. And he knew that girder was meant to stop his flight. His last doubt as to his enemy's intention disappeared with the sudden *pinnng* of a rifle-bullet through the darkness above him.

He ducked low as he heard the sound, and brought his carbine into play. Throwing the old-fashioned magazine-lever down and back, he took quick but

careful aim at the moving lanterns, light by light. It was not until his magazine was empty that he dropped the weapon and caught up his revolver. His shots were going wild, he knew, but he did not stop. He saw the moving lights come to a halt, almost beside the track-edge. He saw one of them go down and scatter, and the oil break into flames. He saw the remaining lights waver, draw back, and disperse. And the girder fell as the men wavered and retreated. But it did not fall on the rails.

He swept past where it lay beside the burning oil, six good feet from the track. He heard the hasty volley they tried to pour in on him, broadside, as he went. But they had nothing more than a racing shadow for a target, and the car had thundered past before they could make a second move. He felt the girl clasping his knee; whether from fright or weakness or gratitude at their deliverance he could not tell. Nor did he care to ask as he helped her up into the seat.

They were clear of the town now, and in the open country. A long level stretch of swamp-land, musky-smelling, miasmal, blanketed with mist, stretched before them. McKinnon knew that no courier could overtake them. He remembered that no wires ran from Puerto Locombia inland, that the coast was cut off from the hinterland, that they were comparatively safe until they had climbed the Height of Land and Guariqui itself came in sight. Then there would be the Liberal army's lines to run, De Brigard's sentinels to pass. Then, if all went well, their journey would be at an end. Getting into Guariqui would mean one last risk and one last fight; but in the meantime they were comparatively safe.

He lessened the mad speed of the car a little, wondering, for the first time, if they carried enough gasoline to see them to their journey's end. The more he thought over that problem of gasoline supply the more it disturbed him. With his tank once empty they would be stranded in a hostile country, in which there would be no hiding, from which there could be no escape. The mere terrifying thought of such a contingency caused him to throw out the speed-lever a notch or two. He noticed, as they plunged on and on through the quietness of the night, that his hands were cut and scratched, that his face was caked with dried blood, that his body was sore and stiff. But deep within him was a persistent and unquenchable glow of exhilaration, something more than mere speed-drunkenness and mere thankfulness for delivery from past dangers.

It was the world-old and primordial joy in accomplishment, the intoxication of conquest implanted in him by a thousand fighting ancestors. And he felt at his side the tired and overtaxed body of the woman for whom he was battling; and as she swayed there with the swaying of the car, letting her weight fall against his shoulder and then recede from it, this feeling that might have been nothing more than pagan exultation was touched and transformed into something higher. The air beat against their faces, side by side; nocturnal moths flattened against their clothing and were held there by the wind.

McKinnon could see that they were beginning to climb, now that the swamp-land had been left behind, and that leaves and palm-fronds were rustling on either side of them. The air seemed to grow clearer, the darkness less abysmal. He could see that they were at last on the edge of the banana-belt, still climbing and pounding and swaying upward. Their path was now a lonely aisle through the forest of rustling greenery that crowded up to the very track-edge; sometimes a leaf swept the car-roof. At times they could hear the ripple of water in the irrigation ditches. Once a light swung across the track, a mile ahead. It brought the lever out to full speed again, and the two figures in the car lower down behind their barricade. A voice shouted to them out of the darkness as they swept past, but that was all.

They were grinding and screeching on a curve again, before McKinnon

could lessen the speed. As they swept around the sharp quarter-circle, the car descended on what must have been a grazing burro or a steer. The heavy framework shuddered with the force of the impact; there was an animallike sound, half-groan, half-grunt, as the obstructing black mass was thrown aside. McKinnon felt a spurt of blood thrown up in his face, and the next moment held his breath, for he knew they had sped out on a cobweb of steel that bridged the cañonlike bed of a river. But still they kept on, up and up, until the gradient began to tell on the motor and the air grew perceptibly cooler. Forest trees were about them now, and they could hear the startled call of birds and the cry of monkeys. Once a jaguar called out through the night, and once, as they swept past a sleeping village of little white huts, they saw the glow of coals in an open mud oven.

But still the flying wheels carried them up and up until they could see behind them the vague glimmer of the Caribbean, and the starlight grew so clear that McKinnon could make out the woman's locked hands in her lap at his side. He felt her shiver with the cold, and forced her to drink a little of the liquor from his brandy-flask. Then he groped about, looking for a covering, for he knew that as the altitude grew greater the cold would increase. Under the seat-cushions he found an oil-skin coat, and helped her into it. The coat was much too large for her, but he doubled it over, in front, and held it in with a cushion-strap about her waist.

He noticed, for the first time, that they were both hatless. And as he began to feel the penetrating chill creep into his own bones, he swallowed a mouthful of brandy and buttoned his coat close up to his throat. But they were still racing on, up and up toward the Cordilleras. And he thanked what gods he thought were watching over him that the gasoline had held out, and that the car had kept to its tracks.

A cluster of three or four lights showed ahead, on their left, and brought a little cry from the girl.

"That's Paraiso!" she called out to him. "The road divides here. We must take the track to the right."

"That means a switch!" called McKinnon, slowing down.

"We have to circle Paraiso Hill," she explained. Then she stood up, with her hand on his shoulder, and peered ahead through the darkness.

"And on the other side of Paraiso Hill is Guariqui," she said. It startled him to see that she was crying a little, for no accountable reason, as she sat back in her seat at his side.

XXV.

McKinnon kept slowing the car down, at the repeated warning of Alicia Boynton, until they did nothing more than creep along the rails. No lights were seen now, and the heavy foliage on either side of the track left them in what was almost an unbroken tunnel of darkness. So McKinnon leaned out over the side of the slowly moving car, waiting for the telltale *clug* of the wheels against the metal of the switch-points. They groped their way on for a quarter of a mile at this snail's pace before the telltale jolt of the car told them the wheel-flanges had struck and swerved against the "points." The switch was set for the left-hand track, so they had to reverse and back away again, coming to a standstill some ten or twelve paces east of the switch-stand target. Then McKinnon went forward to reconnoiter, leaving the girl, with the revolver, to guard the car.

He made two discoveries as he crept about the track in the darkness. The first was that the switch was locked. It did not take him long, however, using his carbine-barrel as a crowbar, to pry and twist the lever free. His second discovery was a more alarming one. Standing on the Guariqui track, blocking his way, was a flat car piled high with roughly hewn sticks of logwood. To push that car ahead of them to Guariqui was out of the question. He knew it would have to be hauled back and sidetracked on the rails to the left. Whether or not it was beyond the strength of his motor only an actual test

could tell. He found a chain binding the logwood-pile together, and after a few minutes of hard work this chain was securely attached to his car-axle and hooked over the coupling-pin of the flat car.

But try as he might, the obstacle was not to be removed. The loaded car refused to stir. His motor, skulking and back-firing under the unnatural strain, was not strong enough for the task. And he was sorely afraid of injuring his engine and finding himself broken down and helpless on the very outskirts of De Brigard's lines. He saw that there was nothing to do but unload the flat car where it stood.

Alicia Boynton would have helped him at that slow and dreary labor, but he pointed out to her the necessity of standing on guard while he worked. The rough-hewn sticks of logwood seemed heavy beyond belief. Some of them, which he could not lift, he had to work slowly outward and let fall from the side of the car. He also had to make sure that every log and stick fell clear of the track. His muscles ached, his fingers seemed without joints, his strength was gone. Twice he had to resort to heavy drafts from his brandy-flask.

But he worked on, doggedly, sullenly, arguing with himself that he ought to be grateful that he was gaining his end without being discovered, picturing what such labor would be under the fire of a dozen half-breed sharpshooters at short range. He also tried to console himself with the thought that his gasoline had held out, and that another seven-mile dash would see them pounding their way into Guariqui. And once in Guariqui was safety, and rest. There would be good hot coffee in plenty, and food, and a bed somewhere. The thought of that bed seemed the most consoling of all.

But a new fear stabbed through him as he stooped and labored so doggedly over his lumbering sticks of logwood. Would daylight come before they were on their way again? Were they to be caught and trapped, after all, by the rising sun?

His watch had run down; in the excitement of the last twenty hours he had neglected to wind it. All sense of time had long since passed from him. He turned and looked up at the sky. It seemed to him that the great velvet dome studded with silver star-points was more luminous than it had been. The eastern horizon was shut off from him by a wall of heavy foliage; he could see no telltale line of breaking light. But it seemed to him that the darkness about him was waning, merging into a gray and ghostlike translucence. Somewhere out of the distance, as he looked, came the sound of a rooster crowing. The thought that this new enemy, this relentless enemy of light, was on his heels turned him back to his work, frenziedly, until his heart pounded like a trip-hammer under his aching breast-bone, and his breath, in that rarefied atmosphere, came with short and painful gasps.

He had to resort to his brandy-flask, and empty it, before he could reach the car again. There he rested for a precious minute or two, explaining to Alicia Boynton that he would pry against the empty flat car's wheel with a logwood stick, while she hauled and tugged at its lower end with the reversed motor.

It was perilous work, calling for the utmost caution lest one fault of judgment undo all his labor, but an inarticulate little cry burst from him as he saw the black mass slowly yield, and then move, inch by languid inch. He heard the grind of the rusty wheel-flanges against the switch-points, and knew that he had won. Then the operation was repeated, when once the switch had been cleared and the lever thrown over, and again the stubborn flat car was pried and pushed into motion. When it came to a standstill, it was left resting well off to the left of the switch, with the road to Guariqui once more open.

McKinnon's ears were ringing, and his head swam a little, as he climbed into the track-motor's driving-seat. He noticed, too, that he was wet with sweat, and that the cool mountain air was sending a chill into his very bones.

"Look! It's daylight coming!" cried the girl at his side. He peered out through the phantasmal grayness that lightened about them, and a new anxiety crept and corroded through all his aching body.

"It will have to be full speed now—to the end," he told the girl. She called back, "Yes—I know," as the lever went to the last notch and the car racked and pounded along the uneven rails. The forest fell away, and they came into a more broken country, winding and twisting between bald and rocky hills, past coffee-farms from which early-awakened dogs barked out at them. Then the light grew stronger; they could see a more orderly and level country studded with *rancho* and *hacienda,* and a crooked, sun-baked road, white with dust, and broken walls, and clumps of stunted trees.

Then the girl gave a cry and caught at his arm.

"Guariqui!" she said, pointing toward the northwest. He had no time to look, for at the same moment his own eyes had caught sight of something which filled him with an even more compelling emotion.

Before the rocky hill-crests toward which they were sweeping, he caught sight of a row of smoke columns and the serried white splashes of tent walls against the yellow-gray of the parched fields. He leaped to his feet as he saw it, and struggled with one of the cartridge-boxes on the row behind them. He pulled and tugged and worked it quickly forward, to heighten the barricade on the right-hand side of the car, for he knew they were charging down on De Brigard's camp. He realized that their climactic moment was at hand, that the time for their last dash across the enemy's lines had come.

Already he could see the pacing sentries as they met and countermarched between the scattered splashes of white. He could see the corraled horses and mules of De Brigard's cavalry feeding together. As the car raced on, he could even make out groups of men in ragged uniform, barefooted, squatting about the camp-fires. Some of them he could see stooping quietly over black pots; one group was splashing and washing at a long wooden water-trough. There seemed something tranquil in the scene, something strangely unlike the way of war in the slowly rising smoke columns, in the slowly moving barefooted men, in the *ranchos* of palm and tree-boughs, in the water-trough and the tranquilly feeding horses and mules.

Then the scene changed, with the quickness of a stage-picture. The cue for that change came with a single rifle-shot from the sentry on guard at the track-edge. The camp changed with that shot. It seemed to McKinnon like the sudden change that swept through his coherer-dust when vitalized with its magnetic current. The sentry, in the meantime, repeated the shot, three times, until the man in the charging car stood up and returned his fire, sharply, driving him to cover.

But the alarm had been given. The tree-clumps and the broken stone walls seemed to swarm with men; the white tents became strangely like hornets' nests disgorging excited occupants. The barefooted idlers grouped about the camp-fires no longer watched the pots and splashed about the water-trough. They became armed irregular infantry, pouring lead into a huge, rusted, bullet-riddled track-motor that had ridden down their sentries and broken into their very lines.

For one incongruous moment McKinnon had felt vaguely sorry for those lean and hungry-looking and unkempt idlers in dirty denim uniforms. He had thought of them as homeless and unhappy men who were being made the tools of forces which they could not comprehend. Now they seemed to him dancing and running brown-faced fiends, doing their best to put a bullet through the head of a stranger who was very tired and hungry, and a little tipsy, perhaps, from immoderate drafts of brandy on a wofully empty stomach. He saw them, as in a dream, but he scarcely gave them a thought. Death had snapped at his heels too often and too closely that night; he was supremely contemptuous

of their firecracker powder and their pot-metal guns. He wanted to get to Guariqui and have something to eat, and then sleep for twenty good hours. And the racing of the car made him dizzy. And every bone in his body ached. And he wondered how long he would have to keep shooting.

He was stirred a little by the sudden scream of the girl at his side.

"You're wounded!" she cried, foolishly. He denied it, indifferently. But he saw her white face bent over the pool of blood on the seat-cushion. Then he knew that she was tying a handkerchief, a foolish little lace handkerchief, about his arm, just below the left shoulder. He let her do it; he humored her, for he was too tired to argue with her. And it was pleasant, he told himself, to have her fussing about him. He was glad too that the noise of all the shooting had at last stopped—he was glad they were getting up to Guariqui, after all.

Then he remembered pounding in across a narrow iron bridge, and seeing walls, white walls and blue walls, and red roofs, and hearing a bugle call and call again, sweet as silver, like a voice out of a dream; then one gunshot, and a challenge; and then cries and calls. Then the car must have come to a stop. He could see a yellow-faced man with a pointed gray beard at the car-step. He wore a uniform like an officer's and carried a sword from a red silk sash, a foolish and womanish-looking sash. Then came other men, and other officers. Then the square where the car stood changed into a sea of human beings—it seemed packed with little brown-faced demons, in red-striped uniforms, shouting and dancing and throwing foolish little red-striped caps up in the air, gibbering and calling in an outlandish tongue.

He could not understand what it meant; all he knew was that he wanted to get somewhere where it was quiet, and where he could rest. Then the noise grew worse again, and a band of shouting men, with carbines, on prancing little Peruvian ponies, swept down past him. Then he felt sure he saw Alicia Boynton's white face bending over him, and somebody tried to choke the breath of life out of him by pouring what could be nothing but liquid fire down his throat, from a leather-covered flask. This flask was quickly and mercifully knocked to one side, by an angry-faced man in white duck, who wore spectacles and said in perfect English: "Get the poor beggar into that *fiacre.*" Then there was a cry of "Stand back!" and "To the hospital!" and "No; to the Palace!" He felt that there was a woman weeping beside him, but he could not be sure of this. He heard a thin and far-away pound of hoofs and a rumble of wheels. And that was all he could remember.

XXVI.

McKinnon was very happy. It was five long days since they had dug the bullet out of his shoulder and told him to lie quiet for a while and rest up and make blood. But on this particular morning he had been given permission to go to the Palace roof, where Aikens, the Boston youth who acted as the Guariqui operator, was still struggling over his half-renovated wireless apparatus. So McKinnon had been carried to the roof in a chair, by two of Duran's own body-guard, and the white sunlight and the many-tinted city and the companionship of the lonely and garrulous boy from Boston went to his head, like wine, and left him foolishly and wistfully happy.

He laughed at the idea of a corrugated-iron wireless station on the roof of a Palace; it seemed as incongruous to him, he told Aikens, as a Crusader smoking a cigar, or a monastery with mail-chutes, or a cathedral with a cash-register. Then Aikens led him to the battlemented edge of the flat roof and showed him the arc-lights that swung in Avenida Sacramento and Calle Florida, and the new power-house toward Paraiso Hill, and the statuary that gleamed through the green palms of the Parque Nacional, and the Asilo Chapai and the roof of the new Boynton Hospital, and the columned front

of the Theatro Locombio, and protested that Guariqui wasn't such a one-horse town, after all!

McKinnon continued to look down at Guariqui, after Aikens had gone back to his work. He could see the iron-fenced Palace gardens, cool and shadowy and secluded-looking. In the Plaza beyond he could see the splash of water from a frond-hidden fountain, and the white statue of some unknown hero who had died in some unknown war for Locombian liberty. He could see the yellow front of the cathedral and the sun-steeped Prado white with dust. He could see the American bluejackets, from the *Princeton*, who were still picketing the streets, and a bullock-cart that crawled noisily over the cobblestones. At the head of Avenida Sacramento he could see another detachment of white-helmeted marines clustered about one of the *Princeton's* machine guns. He could see a scattered group of Ulloa's mounted Irregulars crawling in toward Guariqui, across the flat-shadowed plain of burnt grass. He could see rows of flat houses and red-tiled roofs, and tame buzzards perched on ridge-poles, and a high-standing royal palm or two. And beyond the sun-bathed town and the burnt plain lay the gray-green hills and the lonely blue peaks of the Cordilleras.

Then the sound of cheering floated up to him, and to the east, advancing along Calle Nacional toward the Plaza was a long line of infantry headed by a mounted band that broke into shrill and stirring music as they made a détour in past the turreted barracks. He could see the gathering street crowds, the men in linen and duck, the bare-headed women in mantillas, the *Princeton's* midshipmen in tight-fitting tunics, pretending to ignore the heat, the marching lines of barefooted men in grotesquely soiled and ragged uniforms.

He knew that De Brigard's movement had been crushed, that the revolution was already a thing of the past. There was a smoldering province or two on the lower Pacific slope, but a week or two of gun-seizing by Arturo Boynton's mounted police would stifle all that was left of Ganley's *coup d'état*. And Ganley himself? He knew that Ulloa was still patrolling the coast to cut off Ganley's escape. He wondered, with a strange sense of detachment, just where between the blue peaks of the Cordilleras and the Caribbean's pulsing surf-line that man of destiny was skulking and hiding. He wondered where under that unpitying and high-arching tropical sky the lonely fugitive was still scheming and plotting and battling for the right to live.

Yes, it was all over and done, McKinnon told himself, wearily, as a comprehension of the solitudes that enisled him began to creep like a slowly rising tide through every fiber of his being. They meant nothing to him, these outlandish soldiers in ragged uniform, this sun-baked city among its lonely hills, these denim-clad peons with long-bladed machetes, these red-tiled homes of a people who were foreign to him, this overgaudy Latin palace with its second-rate statuary and its gilding and mirrors that would be an affront to a Hudson River steamboat's cabin. It was a land of strangers to him. He suddenly knew that he was homesick for the North.

He was possessed with a longing for the older and more austere ways of life, for more tranquil and muffled and orderly days, for the crowded and companionable cities of his own kind. There seemed something barbaric to him in the very music of the band that brayed and shrilled from the streets below. In the men who followed that band he could make out the narrowed shoulder and the protruding cheek-bones of Carib-Indian blood. They seemed more than outlanders to him; they were scarcely white men. And he was tired of them and their foolish little wars; he was homesick.

He heard a movement at his side, and he looked up from the embrasure over which he leaned to see Alicia Boynton standing almost within reach of his hand. She seemed almost ghost-like, to his first startled glance, for she

was dressed in white linen, and many days and nights of anxiety had left her face still colorless. The strong sunlight, too, accentuated the tender hollow that lay under either cheek-bone. The touch of tragedy that this shadow in some way seemed to give to her face was contradicted by the deep and happy light in her eyes. The strangeness and the loneliness of Guariqui seemed to fade away; she humanized it and brought it near to him.

"You mustn't do this," she said, reprovingly, as she drew closer beside him, so that her tinted parasol threw its shadow over his head.

"But it's so good to be out again," he said, recklessly. "And they're giving Ulloa's Irregulars an ovation down there."

"But you are not strong yet," she warned him, looking up into his face with anxious eyes. "And that is a tropical sun you are standing in."

"It isn't the sun that makes me feel so bad," he confessed. "It's being so far away from—from home, from—oh, from everything!"

There was a minute or two of silence as they stood gazing down over Guariqui.

"I know," she said at last, comprehendingly. He looked down at her, almost timidly. She had seemed a little aloof from him during the last few days. Guariqui and its official life seemed to have flung a bar between them, to have drawn and shut her in as one of its own. He had grown almost afraid of her, since the morning he had seen her from his window, sitting up so slender and fragile in Duran's flashing official landau as it swept out through the Palace gates surrounded by galloping and gorgeous cuirassiers with brazen breastplates and horsetail helmets. And the consciousness of this alienation brought a touch of bitterness into his voice as he went on.

"No; I don't believe you *do* know. This is the life you were born to. This is your home. It means everything to you!"

"Not everything," she corrected him, very quietly. He could not see her face, for she was gazing out over Paraiso Hill.

"But I know you would never be happy away from it, from everything about here that has been making me feel so lost and miserable, any more than I would be happy away from the things that would make *you* feel lost and miserable."

She glanced up with a little look of surprise.

"I'm not a Locombian, a Spaniard," she said, laughing a little.

It was his turn to laugh, though there was little mirth in it.

"No; but you are the sister of Doctor Arturo Boynton, Minister of War for the Republic of Locombia, Member of the Federal——"

She looked up at him again, and met his gaze without hesitation.

"And you are the man who saved the Republic of Locombia from—well, you know what from!"

He threw up his hand with a gesture of protest.

"I was thinking hanged little about the Republic of Locombia," he retorted, with a short laugh. "I wanted to get you out of that Ganley mess."

"Then you saved *me*," she protested.

"When I happened as a primary consideration to be fighting away to save my own precious neck!" he deprecated. He noticed the silent reproof in her eyes, and as he saw it a new and faltering courage began to grope upward out of the darkness of his heart. But he hardly knew how to begin. He thought, a little enviously, of the days when she had been so close to him, when the arm of no intervening convention had stretched out between them. All his life suddenly seemed an empty and aimless and wasted life to him. It seemed an affront to her, even to tell her how unworthy he was, yet the growing hunger and ache in his heart forbade him to keep silent. He watched a condor wheeling above the gray-green hilltops until it became a drifting black speck in the turquoise sky.

The glare of open light made his eyes ache. He remembered a certain

sentence of Ganley's: "It's not what you'd call a white man's country." The thought of that brought his troubled gaze back to the woman at his side.

"Have you always been happy here?" he demanded, audaciously. "And will you always be happy here?"

She shook her head, slowly, from side to side.

"Not now," she answered. Again a mocking flame of hope shot through him. But he did not speak. Her hand lay on the embrasure beside him. He reached out his arm and quietly covered the white fingers with his own. His mournful glance met hers, and for the first time the full significance of her nearness came home to him. She drew back a little, frightened, and slowly raised her head. The touch of her hand on his had turned his very blood to fire.

"I love you," he whispered, without moving. She swayed a little beside the embrasure; but she did not speak. He reached out his unbandaged arm, as she still stood gazing at him, and made a movement, a hungry and pleading movement, as though to draw her closer to him. "I love you," he repeated, inadequately.

A soft and luminous beauty crept into her face with its tragic little hollow under either cheek-bone; it seemed to suffuse and renew and transform it as spring itself transforms the world. She raised her hands slowly, almost mournfully, as though it cost her a great effort, until they rested on his shoulders.

"I am not worthy of it," she said, with a break in her voice that was almost a sob. She would have said more, but her speech was silenced by his movement, a movement which brought her trembling into his arms.

"I have always loved you," she whispered, weakly.

"And you would go back with me?" he pleaded.

"Anywhere," she answered, as she surrendered her wistfully smiling lips to his. They were alone under the high-arching tropical sun. The condor wheeled back over Paraiso Hill unnoticed; barefooted soldiers in ragged denim marched by under the Palace unseen; Ulloa's mounted band brayed itself into the distance unheard.

It was Aikens the wireless-operator who brought them back to the world of reality.

"I've got 'em!" he called excitedly, from his little station door shadowed by its awning of faded striped canvas. "I've picked something up!"

He disappeared from sight, and called a second time, a little more impatiently.

"You'll have to receive for me until I get somebody from the war office. I ought to have the president here, now."

"What is it?" asked Alicia Boynton, as they crossed to the station door.

"It's Boracao calling the *Princeton*. It's going to be the last rocket-fizz of this fireworks exhibition." He flung on a coat and turned to McKinnon. "But you watch that responder until I get back!"

And he was off before McKinnon could adjust the phones and take his seat before the instrument. But as the newcomer pressed the receiver against his ear, he could hear a sound, faint and small, like the tick of a wood-beetle. This sound translated itself into a coherent sequence of dots and dashes, spelling out the call for "Cruiser *Princeton*" and repeating it, impatiently, with a strangely human note of complaint in the petulance of the wood-beetle tickings.

"Princeton—Princeton," the call was repeated, almost frantically, it seemed to McKinnon, as he caught up the operator's pencil and began to write on the paper before him. Then came the break and the answer of the far-off cruiser. Something in the crisply stiff "send" of the navy operator reminded the listener of the tightly jacketed midshipmen in the Plaza below him. Then came the hurrying dots and dashes of the Boracao operator:

Detachment of Morazan's Scouts captured American named Ganley this morning at daybreak. Ganley held here in *quartel*—condemned to death by *fusilado* after drumhead court martial by Morazan. He claims

to be American citizen and wants protection of his government. I cannot get Guariqui —station there dead for five days past. Hurry in relief on receipt of this or will be too late. If possible land marines at San Antonio Inlet and push overland to Boracao by way of Agira River Trail. I have done everything in my power, but am helpless. You must hurry—is to be shot at sunset.

ADOLPH KLAUSER,
American Consul, Boracao.

McKinnon handed the written sheet to Alicia Boynton without speaking. She read it and handed it back to him. Her hand was shaking a little.

"What can we do?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

"There is nothing we can do," was McKinnon's answer. "Our coils are still out of order. We can't send."

"But we can't stand here and see the man die—now—in that way!"

McKinnon suddenly held up a hand for silence, for the *Princeton* was sending again.

We cannot land men before communicating with Guariqui. Ask suspension of execution of American named Ganley for day or two until Guariqui conference.

LIEUTENANT VERDU.

Then came a break and another wait, while from somewhere far off in the streets below floated up the bray and throb of the military band. Then a second Boracao message trickled down through the Guariqui wires and stirred the coherer into feeble life.

Can do nothing. Morazan claims acting for General Ulloa under President Duran's orders. But whole thing terrible mistake. We must have help at once, or innocent citizen will be murdered. Send men and heliograph advance from San Antonio Hill.

KLAUSER.

Aikens' hurried return with two orderlies and an officer in full uniform kept McKinnon from intercepting the *Princeton's* reply. The little station had suddenly become close and stifling. He felt weak and unstrung, and was glad to gain the open air and find the quiet sunlight and the slowly waving palms about him once more. He was glad to know that the woman he loved stood at his side, and that their future life was to be a life far from such scenes.

They were still there, side by side above the embrasure, when the hurrying Aikens, as he darted below-stairs, thrust a sheet of paper in their hands as he passed. McKinnon held it up and read it aloud.

American named Ganley just shot down by *quartel* guards as he broke jail here—body surrendered to me by alcalde—am holding it awaiting instructions. KLAUSER.

The sheet fluttered to the ground.

"It's over," said the woman, covering her face with her hands, while a movement that was almost a shiver crept through her stooping body.

"Yes, it's over now," echoed McKinnon, absently, as his arm went out to sustain her. And they sat there, alone with their thoughts, for many minutes.

DOGS AS DOWRIES

EVERYWHERE is the dog the friend of man, but in Manchuria he is more strictly the friend of woman. There the dowry of a young woman does not consist of hard cash as in Europe, but in a certain number of sleek dogs with thick fur or silken hair. The girl's status may almost be guessed by her wedding portion of dogs. If she receive six she is poor; if a dozen, her parents are in easy circumstances; and if twelve dozen it may be taken that she comes from a rich family. They are carefully fattened for their savory flesh, and their skins, after death, become coverlets, pelisses, vests for hunters, or bedside carpets, which scarcely ever wear out. Even to its fur the devotion of the dog is warm and lasting.

How Hector Won His "Y"

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Stroke-oar," "A Case of Professionalism," Etc.

Another of Paine's inimitable stories of college athletics. Hector Alonzo McGrath, perennial and unsuccessful candidate for athletic honors at Yale, learns accidentally that he is a human grasshopper. A brindle bull is instrumental in starting him on his career as champion high-jumper. The Akmet of Tongaloo almost proves a hoodoo but Julius Caesar Jones beats him as "the old reliable mascot."

HECTOR ALONZO McGRATH had come to the winter term of his last year at Yale without winning any of the athletic honors for which he had manfully striven from the day when, as a callow freshman, he had first set foot upon the campus and eagerly asked the way to the gymnasium. Hopes deferred and ambitions thwarted had not cooled his ardor and he determined to make a final attempt to win his "Y" in the rôle of a track athlete.

He was too light by twenty pounds to be taken seriously as a crew candidate and one captain of the nine had told him, bitterly and truthfully, that he could never hope to make a base-hit until the pitcher was allowed to curve watermelons over the plate. The track-team, however, offered greater variety of opportunity. A man might be built like a grasshopper or lack the gift of the "batting eye," but there was no telling how fast or how far he could run with a chance to choose the distance that best suited him.

Mr. "Mike" Morrison, the gray-headed trainer of the Yale track-team, had no sense of humor, else he might have shared the amusement of the college at large at the latest aspirations of Hector McGrath, the perennial candidate. When the sanguine youth presented himself for the early-season work, the trainer looked him over with a critical eye and sententiously observed:

"I think I gave you a try-out last year, didn't I? You wanted to be a sprinter but the only trouble was you couldn't sprint. I don't believe I can make anything out of you at any distance, but you may as well trail along for a while."

"I have decided to make a long-distance man of myself, Mike," returned Hector, undismayed. "Perhaps I was slow at a hundred yards, but if I could keep up that same gait for a mile it would be going pretty fast. But I won't be fussy about it. I may be better at the half-mile or the quarter when I get on the track."

"And perhaps you may turn out a world-beater at throwing the hammer," commented Mike Morrison with mild sarcasm, as he cast a dubious glance at the excessively fragile physique of the confident youth.

For a month thereafter Hector doggedly trotted across country with the squad, toiled at chest-weights in the gymnasium and practised limber-legged exercises in his room at bedtime. Whenever he happened to see the

brawny oarsmen pulling in the tank or met the baseball men on their way to batting practise in the "cage," he was filled with envious admiration and longing, but these emotions could not dull the edge of his enthusiasm, for winter was fast waning, and soon he would be given his real "try-out" on the cinder-covered track.

At length Mike Morrison spoke the word to report at the field in preparation for the spring handicap games. Hector McGrath having persisted in his intention to test his mettle among the long-distance runners, was set to jogging around the track in company with a dozen other novices who were paced by a trio of seasoned "milers." He flitted along like a plucky sandpiper, easily dogging the heels of the leaders until the day when the trainer held his watch in hand and told them to "let out a few links and finish as strong as they could."

Then to the agonized surprise of Hector Alonzo the pace-makers set off from the mark at a much faster gait than they had previously displayed, and swept the squad along with the remorseless, unflagging energy of a machine over the first quarter, to the half-mile, and toward the end of the journey. Hector discovered that his best efforts, when spread over a mile, were too slow for this rate of progression and inasmuch as spurting made him breathless he had to fall back and pound along at his own limit of exertion. Badly beaten, he trailed into the home-stretch long after the leaders had finished and was greeted by Mike Morrison with the unfeeling criticism:

"You don't know how to run and never will learn, McGrath. I don't know what the matter is, but you can't go fast enough. There is no use in your wasting time on the track."

"Perhaps I can do better at a shorter distance," panted Hector. "Do you think I am utterly hopeless, Mike?"

"Oh, go in for the half-mile at the spring handicaps, if you like," reluctantly vouchsafed the trainer. "But I am pinning no medals on you in advance."

Thereupon Hector trained more conscientiously than ever, tried to imitate the styles of famous champions as portrayed in books, pestered Mike Morrison for advice, and hired a strong-armed Irishman to rub him down night and morning.

The spring handicap games attracted a notably large attendance of seniors who marched to the field in column carrying a banner inscribed:

MCGRATH FOREVER!
OUR CANDIDATE MUST,
SHALL AND WILL WIN
TO-DAY.

"It is his first real race, fellows," counseled Jim Stearns, the football-captain, "and he deserves the support of his class. I will lead the cheering and you want to make a prize noise, understand?"

When Hector pranced from the dressing-rooms and surveyed the crowd which filled the stand beside the home-stretch he was greeted by this thunderous salute from his classmates:

Who is the pride of the Yale cinder path?
Hector Alonzo hot-footed McGrath.

The ovation was disconcerting and the more so when the captains three of the university crew, the nine, and the eleven, marched abreast across the track and solemnly presented the blushing Hector Alonzo with a wreath of immortelles from which dangled a huge placard bearing the legend:

HE WAS ONE OF US—
FOR A FEW MINUTES.

"Confound you all, if I did get fired off your teams it is low-down to rub it in," ingratefully blurted the recipient. "You have put them up to this nonsense, Jim Stearns. Wait until I——"

His threat was cut short by the curt command of Mike Morrison: "Cut out that foolishness, boys. All out for the half-mile. Get on the mark where you belong, McGrath."

Hector slipped out of his bath-robe and the godless seniors burst into a tempest of cheering at sight of his attenuated figure as displayed in scanty running-garb. He heard fragments of a song which Jim Stearns was leading

with frantic gestures, the refrain beginning:

Oh-h, our Hector McGrath
Is built like a lath,
But he runs like a frightened gazelle.

Waiting at scratch was Bonsall, the stocky, deep-chested intercollegiate champion, and strung out ahead of him were a half-score men placed at their respective handicap-distances. Hector felt slightly aggrieved that he had been allotted the most generous handicap of them all and, in fact, he seemed to be stationed about half-way between the start and finish of the course. Sad to relate, however, the seasoned judgment of Mike Morrison had been at fault in not granting Hector concessions even more lavish, for when the contestants sped away from their marks he was rapidly overhauled by those to rearward of him until he was making a stern chase after the flying field of runners. He could not make his legs move any faster; in truth he was flinging them so desperately that his heels seemed about to smite the back of his head with every stride, but even two lowly freshmen overtook and passed him as if he were anchored, and he failed to be "placed" at all.

As he wobbled past the finish-posts, pale and panting, Jim Stearns observed to a friend: "Plenty of hock and knee action, like one of those horse-show hackneys, but he doesn't get over the ground. Poor Hector, there goes his last hope of being a varsity athlete. Give him a long cheer, fellows, with nine McGraths on the end of it."

Hector took his defeat so much to heart that he refused to march with his classmates who clamored to escort him to the campus. Sulking in the training-house until the field was clear of spectators, he was prepared for the worst and felt no shock of surprise when Mike Morrison sauntered into the dressing-room and told him:

"I am sorry, McGrath, but there is no sense in your training any longer. Don't lay it up against me, will you? But I can never make a runner of you, so help me."

The downcast youth nodded without speaking, made a bundle of his athletic wardrobe, tucked it under one arm, and walked slowly and sorrowfully across the field. Laggard as was his gait, he presently overtook the bent, hobbling figure of Julius Cæsar Jones, the ancient negro whom college sentiment accepted as the official mascot of Yale athletics, and purveyor of good fortune to the university crew in particular. Hector was too sore at heart to wish to encounter the rude badinage of his classmates, but he knew he would find a sympathetic companion in this hoary attaché of the campus and he hailed him cordially:

"Hold on, Julius Cæsar. Why don't you take a street-car. Are you going to walk all the way in?"

"Why, bless my soul, if it ain't Mistah Hector Alonzo McGrath," chuckled Julius Cæsar, doffing his battered hat and wheeling with a respectful old-fashioned bow. "I toted myself to th' field jes' specially to see you run th' half-mile, suh, and that's why I'se walkin' home."

"You don't mean to say you bet your carfare on me!" cried Hector as he slackened his gait to walk beside the old man.

"I was jes' as foolish as that," admitted Julius Cæsar, hastily adding with warm-hearted tactfulness: "'Twa'n't your fault that you losed th' race. It was the handicappin'. A few hundred yards mo' start an' you'd ha' surely scrambled home to th' good. How it come that I made a bet of fifteen cents agin' one dollar on you, suh, was 'cause Hannibal Jackson done kind of pestered me into it. He is a 'sasperatin' old nigger, you know that, Mistah McGrath, an', beggin' your humble pahdon, suh, he 'lowed you couldn't run away from a tarrapin with a brick tied to his tail. I couldn't stand no such talk an' I jes' bet my limit."

"Fifteen cents to a dollar against the field and I had the biggest handicap at that," was Hector's lugubrious comment. "It shows how public opinion had me sized up. Well, Julius, here comes a hack. I owe you a ride. We

will journey home in style even if we did get beaten and go broke. My own classmates laughed at me, but you were loyal enough to show fifteen cents' worth of confidence in me as a track athlete. I won't forget it."

"I was s'prised to see Mistah Jim Stearns makin' sport of you tryin' for the track-team," observed Julius Cæsar as he sank against the cushions with a sigh of contentment. "He bein' cap'n of las' season's football-team an' rowin' three years on the Yale university crew, he is of cou'se the biggest man in college, an' he ought to be encouragin' men to come out an' work for Yale, 'deed he had."

"Oh, you mustn't mind him, Julius. He wouldn't hurt my feelings for the world. He has always played horse with my athletic ambitions. I suppose it does look funny, after I have tried for every team in college since freshman year, to see me made a monkey of in these trifling handicap games. But they can't say I haven't tried to make good, can they?"

Julius Cæsar was quick to reflect the sober mood of his companion and his kindly old face was grieved, but he brightened to reply with great decision:

"It ain't too late yet. I don't quite see how it's comin' to pass, but I got a powerful hunch that you is gwine to win your 'Y' yet, you hear me? I'se had my eye on you, an' the race ain't always to the swiftes' or the battle to th' stronges'. Sometimes I has dreams an' visions, Mistah McGrath. Jes' you keep in mind what Julius Cæsar Jones imparts to you in th' midst of your distresses."

II.

On a buoyant, sunny afternoon of April Hector McGrath set out alone for a long walk into the country, which had begun to entice the wayfarer with the tender loveliness of budding springtime. The rural highways were still heavy with black mud, and after leaving the city far behind Hector wandered off across the rolling fields whose aspect was shifting from sodden brown to many delicate shades of green. His spirits were normally youthful and he rejoiced in the sights and sounds and odors of the awakening year. The humiliating collapse of his last athletic ambition was in oblivion, he whistled or sang aloud while he looked for arbutus and idly followed the course of a brook which leaped foaming from a woodland hard-by.

From a rugged elevation the idler gazed across a wide expanse of vernal landscape and presently discerned toward the eastward the tall and towered grand stands of the Yale Field, a landmark which made him reflect aloud:

"I must have doubled on my trail without knowing it. I thought I was four or five miles from the field. By Jingo, I believe I will strike across country and watch the tail end of the baseball practise."

Whereupon at a much brisker gait he made a bee-line for his goal, Nature in her most beguiling mood being so promptly jilted for the allurements of an athletic arena. Hector had covered perhaps half of his journey over hill and dale when he descried a solitary man seated upon a stone wall with the air of one waiting for something to happen. Nearer view revealed the fact that this person was Mr. Mike Morrison, and Hector was fired with curiosity to discover why this trainer of Yale athletes should be perched on a wall in the midst of a rural wilderness, so very far from the madding crowd.

"Why, he ought to be at the field, grumbling at a herd of poor unhappy slaves in skimpy clothes and chasing them round and round the track," reflected Hector. "He must have gone off his head. Perhaps he is a prey to remorse for having treated me so cruelly and is meditating suicide."

But as Hector advanced within hailing-distance Mike Morrison descended from his perch and amiably observed:

"Hello, McGrath, have you come out to watch 'em, too? This is as good a place as any."

"Watch what, Mike? The dicky-birds? I never took you for a nature-lover."

"My cross-country team," seriously replied the trainer, overlooking the other's persiflage. "They go to Philadelphia in another month for the intercollegiate cross-country championship and I am giving them a hard five-mile spin this afternoon. They will pass us in the lane yonder on their way back to the field and I want to look 'em over and see how strong they are going."

"I suppose the team is not expecting to find you out here in the woods?" suggested Hector.

"Not exactly," said Mike dryly. "I think we had better move into this bit of pasture and wait at the far end of the lane. The land looks higher and we can see them come by the edge of those woods yonder."

The grizzled trainer and his discarded pupil strolled together across the pasture, Hector's interest having quickly shifted from the baseball practise to the prospect of seeing the cross-country team in action. Presently they toiled up a gentle slope and gazed down the winding lane which threaded its way from the turnpike, beyond which the fields unrolled for a considerable distance. Soon they saw a row of tiny human figures moving across this green carpet like so many manikins.

"There they come and pretty well tuckered at that," said the trainer. "This last hill will make them pump. See here, McGrath, the ground looks even higher over yonder in the middle of the pasture. Why not shift our ground again?"

Accordingly the two men retreated to the backbone of the ridge and stood gazing at the distant string of runners who were slowly advancing at a labored trot. The trainer was absorbed in noting their pace with censorious eye and Hector was greatly interested in his vitriolic comment.

"That tail-ender is Hawkins. He runs like a clodhopper and he has no sand. I found he had a soft spot in his heart last year. Ten to one he will come limping home half a mile behind and tell me he has sprained his ankle. I have a good mind to let him go and——"

He bit off his sentence abruptly, his jaw dropped, and he stared in amazement at Hector McGrath, who was gazing beyond him with an expression of horror-smitten consternation as if his emotions were beyond all words. The trainer wheeled swiftly, caught one lightning glimpse, and bounded toward the nearest stone wall with the speed of the wind. He had been a world-famous sprinter in his youth, and his feet had not lost their cunning. He was going faster with every stride when Hector got fairly under headway and put after him, emitting terrifying whoops, and sprinting at a rate which would have won praise from Mr. Mike Morrison if that gentleman had not been too busy to look over his shoulder.

Behind the twain bounded a brindled bull, head down and tail up, while through a break in the pasture wall streamed a pursuing band of farmers brandishing bludgeons, pitchforks and ropes. The two fugitives had been oblivious to the warning clamor and the irate monster had made for them full tilt as the most conspicuous objects upon the face of a landscape which he was eager to devastate. The flight of his quarry inspired the bull with wrath even more unreasoning, and with a bellowing roar that shook the hills he strove to overtake them this side of the pasture wall. Mike Morrison had seen many an overconfident runner lose his race a few yards from the tape by glancing behind him and he had no intention of committing such an error of judgment. He was doing his duty as a pace-maker and Hector McGrath must look out for himself. The trainer was really outfooting the brindled bull, but Hector was making what could have been fitly termed "a neck-and-neck finish of it" and was in great danger of being overtaken and gored by the horns of the pursuer.

Mike Morrison, first to reach the wall, was horrified to find it surmounted by a stiff fence of rails, but he climbed, clawed and scrambled over to safety. Sprawled upon his back, he was trying to rise when Hector signaled

his coming by means of a blood-curdling yell. For his part he had no time to climb fences, nor room in which to double and seek an easier exit. The brindled bull was gaining with a rush and the embattled farmers were still too far distant to afford hope of succor from that quarter.

Mike Morrison had gained his feet and was peering over the wall with ghastly countenance, in the nick of time to behold Hector Alonzo McGrath instantaneously achieve the impossible. With one wild-eyed, despairing glance at the wall and towering fence in front of him, the hunted youth shortened his stride, gathered himself together, leaped straight at the top of the barrier, and soared over it like a bird. Alighting in a heap on a soft patch of turf, he lay there while the baffled brindled bull crashed against the wall with a noise like a falling house. With the demeanor of a man whose eyes had seen more than his brain could transmute into coherent thought, Mike Morrison helped Hector to his feet and hand in hand they stood and watched the farmers put the bull to flight and bring him to bay in a corner of the wall.

"We kind of guessed he was goin' to ketch the young feller," shouted one of the farmers in passing. "Hope he didn't harm you none. He broke out of the barn-yard and give us quite a chase. The young feller must be the prize jumper of Yale College. I guess you are glad they trained you to jump that way, hey? You went over that fence as if you had wings."

Hector found breath to mumble that no bones were broken and then turned to look at Mike Morrison, who seemed under a spell. The trainer was gazing first at the timber-topped stone wall, then at his young companion, and muttering under his breath. Without a word he extracted a tape-measure from his hip pocket, climbed over the wall and solemnly made record of the distance from the turf whereon Hector had taken flight to the upper edge of the topmost rail. This ceremony was performed with the utmost deliberation, after which the trainer regarded the tape with puckered brow, whistled, wiped his face and burst out with explosive energy:

"Why in blazes didn't you have sense enough to tell me you were a natural-born high-jumper, eh? What were you doing—trying to run on a track—you—you—why, you never breathed a word about jumping. Do you know the height of this jump of yours, in your street clothes, heavy shoes on, and a poor take-off at that? Do you want to know? Well, that top rail is five feet eight inches from the ground and you cleared it with two or three inches to spare. I saw it with my own two eyes. By the piper that played before Moses, I'll have you clearing six feet a week from now, and the Lord only knows what you will be doing before it comes time to send you to the intercollegiates. You are one of those athletic miracles, McGrath, and you didn't know it yourself. Why, I have a good mind to——"

"Hold on, Mr. Michael Morrison, not so fast," implored Hector, waving his hands and trying to collect his wits. "This scare has gone to your head. What if I did jump five feet ten inches high? It doesn't mean anything. Confound it, I could have cleared a fence ten feet high just as easily. *I had to.* But you can't turn that brindled bull loose at me every time I make a try at a high jump on the Yale Field. And I am sure you wouldn't be allowed to enter him in the intercollegiates to help me over the bar. It wouldn't do at all. The athletic association wouldn't stand for it. So all your excitement is for nothing, Mike. Let us calm down and talk sense. Your cross-country team will be along in a few minutes."

"Oh, hang the cross-country team," snorted Mike Morrison, with gusty impatience. "You come along home with me. I want to talk to you. You are welcome to your joke about needing the bull as pace-maker. There may be something in it, but I have seen enough to show me that I need you on the track-team. There is not a high-jumper in sight who will clear more than five feet eleven at the intercollegiates this year."

Events were crowding so fast on one another that Hector was still giddy and breathless. If the brindled bull had been a bolt from a clear sky, this revelation of athletic prowess wholly undreamed of was even more startling. In a kind of ecstatic bewilderment he trudged along beside Mike Morrison, whose rugged features became radiant with satisfaction whenever he glanced at the slim figure of his companion. After an interval of silence, as if the situation had overpowered him, Hector ventured to ask:

"Do you really mean that you want me to train with the team, and is there any chance of my being entered for the intercollegiate championships? Why, Mike, that would mean winning my 'Y.'"

"Say nothing about it, my boy," the trainer replied with some abruptness. "I don't hanker to run the risk of springing a false alarm on the college. I want you to join the track-team at the training-table for supper to-night. Then between recitations to-morrow morning you can sneak out to the field and we will do a bit of jumping in private. Of course, if you find you can't jump without that blankety bull playing checkers on your coat-tails, we will have to call it off."

Hector's nerves were unstrung and this glad news made him feel like hysterical laughter. He stammered a foolish jest or two, slapped the trainer on the back, and was surprised to find his cheek wet with tears. Having given Hector in charge of a stalwart "rubber" at the training-house, the trainer left orders to knead him thoroughly, wrap him warmly, and send him to the campus in a hack. Rather timidly Hector presented himself for supper at the training-table of the track-team two hours later. The hungry athletes greeted him with vociferous surprise, and the upper classmen who dared to be facetious at his expense demanded to know if he had lost his way, and were about to throw him out bodily. The intruder held his ground and managed to make them hear his declaration of independence.

"Mike Morrison told me to join this menagerie for grub. First thing you know, I will be crowding one of you loafers off the team. Where do I sit?"

"I suppose it's all right but it strikes me as a queer performance, McGrath," expostulated Ted Warner, captain of the track-team. "Mike has said nothing about it to me and you have not been working at the field since he fired you from the squad. What does he intend doing with you? Are you going to run again, and what is your distance this time?"

"Mike will have to explain it. I shall be out with the team for practise soon. He—he—that is—he overlooked my sterling qualities and being a fair-minded person, he says it is never too late to mend."

"I guess we all overlooked those sterling qualities of yours," dryly retorted the captain. "But here is hoping you make good, whatever it is."

The other men, noticing that the newcomer was finding the situation awkward, forbore to tease him and he began to rally, already conscious of a glowing delight in the fact that after four years of futile endeavor he was actually seated at the training-table of a university team. It might be only for a night, but Hector Alonzo McGrath was dwelling vividly in the present. When he went to his rooms and made ready to turn in at an early hour he gazed at his meager shanks with respectful attention before inserting them into pajamas and murmured:

"Now I know what *you* are good for. And you have *got* to jump—without any brindled bull to throw a scare into you, either."

When he met Mike Morrison at the field next day, the trainer expressed reassuring confidence in the prowess of his new-fledged high-jumper.

"Now, I don't expect you to repeat your jump of yesterday, McGrath," said he. "I make allowances for being shy of a bull to stir you up. I am going to start the bar at five feet and raise it a half-inch at a time. I want you to hop over it careless and easy. Quit

whenever you feel tired or find you are flinching. I don't expect you to show any style. If you are the born jumper I take you for, too much coaching will spoil you."

With sinking heart and trembling knees Hector backed away from the bar, ran at it with a nervous rush, and leaped awkwardly over with an odd, sidewise kick. The trainer grunted, raised the bar, and with more confidence than before, the novice went dexterously over it. His motions were clumsy but he seemed able to hoist his feet clear and kick himself out of harm's way by a method all his own. Before long Mike Morrison had raised the slender barrier to five and three-quarters feet and the jumper was hitching himself over with no great effort.

"I don't understand how I do it," said Hector, "but I know I can do a good deal higher than that."

"It is because you are a human grasshopper, my boy," replied the trainer. "It is too late to make you ready for the Yale-Harvard dual meet, but I expect to have you all primed for the intercollegiates, and the man who beats you will have to do as good as six-feet-four. Perhaps if I could turn that bull loose on Yale Field this afternoon I might discover some more talent hid under a bushel."

News travels fast on the campus and by next day it was known abroad that Hector McGrath had made good as a high-jumper, and was sure to win his "Y." Among the first to congratulate him was Julius Cæsar Jones, who waylaid the hero upon the steps of a recitation-hall and tremulously declaimed:

"Who is th' old reliable mascot, uh? Didn't I tole you I had a hunch, Mistah Yale-University-athlete? When I plunged fifteen cents' wuth on you, didn't I *know?* I'se had you in my mind, night an' day, an' I surely jes' mascotted you into jumpin' like a scared rabbit. And I'll be at the intercollegiates, jes' rootin' an' prayin' while you makes them Harva'd an' Princeton an' Pennsylvania men look like they was tied to th' groun'."

The fates had at last conspired to favor this youth who had been for so long an athletic cast-off. His daily practise at the field showed sure and unbroken improvement under the careful tutelage of Mike Morrison. After he had been three weeks in training his photograph was reproduced in a New York newspaper and fell under the eye of his father, who had played a valiant part in the crude Yale athletics of another generation. This loyal sire had set his heart on his boy's winning a "Y," but he had given up all hope until now at the eleventh hour here was Hector Alonzo McGrath proclaimed as one of the most brilliant athletes of the intercollegiate season. Whereupon the father turned aside from making steel and millions in smoky Pittsburg and wrote a long letter of fond congratulation, enclosing a check for a thousand dollars in token of his pride in his offspring. This stimulus was so inspiriting that after depositing the check Hector sallied forth to the field and surpassed himself with a series of leaps which made Mike Morrison jubilantly exclaim:

"Another year and I could be smashing world's records with you. Oh, why are you not a freshman, or at least a junior? Can't you come back to college next year and take a post-graduate course in the Art School or take a fall out of the Theological Department?"

Two days before the intercollegiate meeting at Mott Haven, Hector's father telegraphed that he had decided to come on to New York in his private car, bringing as his guests a number of Pittsburg alumni and most important of all, Miss Suzette Aiken and her mother, at which tidings the youth's devoted heart throbbed perceptibly faster. The Yale team was to be quartered at the Murray Hill Hotel in New York for the night before the games, and the journey from New Haven brought unalloyed delight to the soul of Hector Alonzo McGrath. His doubts and fears were cast behind him. He was one of this gallant company of Yale heroes, outward bound to battle for the blue.

Alas, for his joy in the present and his anticipations of the morrow's rival-

ry! That guardian genius of ebony hue, Julius Cæsar Jones, must have been napping. The team trooped from the train into the Grand Central Station, Mike Morrison marching in the lead, Hector carrying himself with a confident swagger. A baggage-truck top-heavy with a burden of trunks came charging along the platform in haste to catch a waiting express. The hub of a wheel collided with an iron pillar and a heavy trunk slid from its perch and toppled to the floor below.

The athletes were filing between the truck and an empty train and a warning shout made them scatter to avoid this danger. Hector McGrath, however, was lost in a day-dream and looked up an instant too late to jump clear. Throwing himself against the side of a car, he escaped being struck upon the head, but an end of the trunk pitched over upon his right foot with cruel weight. Pinioned for the moment, he groaned with pain while his comrades rushed to raise the trunk and free him from the trap. After sending a porter scurrying for a wheel-chair, Mike Morrison knelt beside his injured "star athlete," who was writhing upon the floor, holding his crippled foot in both hands.

"Are you hurt bad? Can't you stand on it? Here, let me get the shoe off. Don't move until I look at it," implored the agitated trainer. "Maybe it is only a bruise. Some of you boys hustle after that nigger with the chair and fetch him on the jump. Of all the condemned hard luck that ever was!"

"It fell on me like a ton of brick," quavered Hector. "I guess I do no jumping to-morrow. Are any bones broken?"

"No, but there is a nasty gash across the instep and the foot is beginning to swell," said the trainer, exploring the foot with sure, deft fingers. "We will put you in a carriage and get a doctor at the hotel. Maybe it is not as bad as it looks. Cheer up, old man. Things might be worse."

"Not much, if this has put me out of the intercollegiates," sighed Hector. "Ouch, go easy, Mike. Give me your shoulder and I guess I can hop into the chair."

It was a melancholy body-guard of Yale athletes that escorted the disabled jumper through the station and helped lift him into a carriage. The captain of the team and Mike Morrison rode with Hector and gave him such faint comfort as they could find in a situation so tragic as this. A little later the surgeon who had been summoned in haste to the hotel finished examination of the hurts and spoke a verdict which carried grief and dismay to the heart of Hector McGrath.

"You were right, Mr. Morrison, there are no fractures, and the foot will heal nicely if you can keep this young man quiet for a fortnight. I want him to lie flat on his back for three or four days. No, it is out of the question for him to think of jumping to-morrow. I doubt if he could walk as far as the door yonder. I will look at him again this evening."

He went away and left the cripple trying to hold back the sobs which it would have been unfair to call childish. Life had never dealt him as bitter a blow as this, and while he tried to bear his misfortune with courage he could not forbear to stammer to the sorely distressed Mike Morrison:

"It was my one chance to win my 'Y'—the one chance I have been working for and hoping for all through college. I—I suppose I am a big baby, but I can't help feeling all broken up, Mike. Please let me try to walk on my damaged foot. Maybe I can jump on it. It doesn't hurt much, honest."

"No, you do as the doctor tells you, Hector. It is a hard dose to swallow but you have sand enough to take it like a little man. And the other fellows will work all the harder to win without you to-morrow. Anything more I can do before I go out and get you a nurse?"

"No, nothing except to send a wire to my father before he leaves Pittsburg to-night," faltered Hector. "Tell him to come to the hotel in the morning. Break it as gently as you can. And I want to send a message to a girl who

is coming on in his car. I'll try to write that myself, but I feel kind of queer and dizzy."

III.

A week after the intercollegiate games Hector McGrath was limping slowly across the Yale campus with the aid of a crutch when Mike Morrison hailed him from afar and drew near with a speed which betokened urgent business.

"How is the game prop?" asked the trainer as they shook hands. "I would have waited in New York to bring you home but when your father told me he was going to send you back to New Haven in his private car I knew you were in good hands. It did you a whole lot of good, I suppose, to hear that we won the games. It was a close margin on points but old Eli got there once more. Now, I have something even better than that to talk about. It will make you throw away your crutch and turn handsprings. You are going to jump for Yale and win your 'Y' with more glory than would be coming to you from a dozen intercollegiates."

"Go away, Mike. You must be daffy. Why, the track season is all over for this season and I graduate this month."

"Here is the cablegram. It came this morning, addressed to the captain of our track-team," answered the trainer, opening his fist and disclosing a yellow slip. "Oxford and Cambridge have accepted a joint challenge for a track-meet with Yale and Harvard to be held in England and we sail on the first day of July. Yale takes all her point-winners at the intercollegiates and——"

Hector's face had become heavy with gloom and he broke in to say with a catch of his breath:

"I didn't win any points, and I don't really belong to the team, so I suppose I can't——"

"Of course you do, you little trouble-hunter," snapped Mike. "Your foot will be as sound as a dollar by then and you are going to win the high jump for Yale and Uncle Sam. Harvard is weak in your event and we are going up against Howell of Oxford, who holds the English amateur record. Now will you cheer up?"

"I go to England to jump against Oxford and Cambridge?" gasped the dumfounded undergraduate. "Why, this is the biggest thing that has happened during my time in college. Of course I shall be in fighting trim. Oh, Mike, my luck has turned. Let me go telegraph my daddy."

"And there will be kings and queens and all kinds of crowned heads and nobs with titles to look on," chirruped Mike Morrison. "Now take good care of yourself and if you see a baggage-wagon, walk on the far side of the street. You are all right when it comes to dodging brindle bulls but trunks are too speedy for you."

"Julius Cæsar Jones is right on his job again as my mascot," said Hector to himself as he hobbled toward the telegraph-office. "I must tell him the good news as soon as I can."

But for a fortnight thereafter Hector had other matters to absorb his time and energy. His interest in lectures and recitations had been fickle through the spring term, and having been disabled on the eve of his final examinations, there was much midnight oil to be burned before he could be certain of laying hands on a Yale diploma.

The prospect of competing against the flower of the athletes of the great English universities was a mighty stimulus toward quick recovery and three weeks after his casualty Hector was able to begin light work at the field.

Shortly before the Yale and Harvard men were to sail for Southampton Hector was surprised to discern Julius Cæsar Jones making his laborious way across the campus. Old age was fast overtaking the faithful mascot and Hector felt a twinge of conscience as he noted his bent figure and uncertain gait. "I ought to have looked the old man up before this," thought the youth, "but I took it for granted he had gone to New London with the crew," and then he said aloud as Julius Cæsar halted and waved his hat:

"Why aren't you holding down your

official position as mascot at Gales Ferry? You must be cock-sure of their winning without you, to leave them in the lurch, Julius."

"I jes' come to town to investigate 'bout this goin' to Englan', Mistah McGrath, an' how is your good health?" was the courteous response. "Of cou'se I ain't countin' none on goin' with your team, for I'se mascottin' th' university crew, but—but you isn't goin' to set sail till the day after th' boat-race, when I'll be done of my duties an' 'sponsibilities, an' I reckoned as maybe—well, suh, I'se jes' a committee of ways an' means to s'arch into this yere problem. Seems like I had ought to be wid th' Yale team in a strange land, 'mongst all them hostile, barbarious furriners. Of cou'se they kin take that whopper-jawed bulldawg Handsome Dan, what calls hisself a mascot, but what he goin' to amount to in time of trouble an' close finishes? Mistah McGrath, I'se needed on this yere projeck across th' big ocean."

"I am afraid the track-team manager won't stand for the expense of your passage, Julius, though your arguments strike me as all to the good," sympathetically quoth Hector. "Upon my word, I feel as if I ought to have you along as my own private and personal mascot. You have certainly brought me good luck, and if you had gone to New York that trunk would not have dropped on my foot. Are you going back to New London in a hurry?"

The old man scratched his head, shifted his footing, and appeared to be meditating matters of grave import. At length he spoke with an air of diffident indecision:

"It surely would be a powerful 'sperience for Julius Cæsar. And besides th' team needin' me, I is mighty desirous of seein' them furrin shores before I die. I'se saved a leetle money, an' I was a-thinkin' that mebbe I could wait on the ship-cap'n an' brush his clo'es an' shine his shoes for my boa'd on th' Atlantic Ocean."

Hector McGrath was a young man of hair-trigger impulses and impetuous action. Before the old man had done speaking he had made up his mind that the team must have "the old reliable mascot" for this venturesome pilgrimage overseas. When this young man's heart was touched his purse was quick to respond and he recalled that thousand-dollar check bestowed by his doting parent as an honorarium, Julius Cæsar Jones had no intention of begging for assistance and Hector knew it, wherefore the surprise was overwhelming when the good-hearted youth declared in a tone of finality:

"You bet you are going to England with us. Just you pack your gripsack and don't worry about the price. Your ticket will be ready for you and your expenses will be taken care of on the other side of the big pond. Now don't make a scene and throw fits right in the middle of the campus."

Wholly disregarding this injunction, Julius Cæsar Jones fell upon his knees, clasped his hands, and lifted up his mellow voice in a pæan of such stentorian joy and thanksgiving that Hector fled the scene. Nor did the old man again set eyes on his benefactor until the eve of sailing-day when Hector appeared at Gales Ferry to escort his venerable charge from the crew-quarters to New York. The other members of the team were glad to welcome Julius as an essential feature of their equipment. He had never presumed upon their light-hearted but genuine fondness for him, and his old-fashioned breeding and lifetime of association with gentlefolk enabled him to play a quaintly amiable and courteous part without a hint of intrusion where he was not wanted.

During the voyage he won much popularity among the second-cabin passengers with whom he was quartered and was always glad to chat with his "Yale boys" who went out of their way to meet him when he strolled on deck in smooth weather. His mind was full of the novel wonders of the deep and he frequently quoted aloud such passages of Holy Writ as seemed most appropriate to his fearsome environment. But the Julius Cæsar Jones most familiar to the campus did not find himself until

the athletes had landed and were settled in the training-quarters prepared for them at Brighton. As soon as they had donned their working-togs and were scampering to and fro upon a wide expanse of velvety English turf, the old man assumed an air of dignified importance and began to voice his expert opinions concerning the merits of the various runners, jumpers, hurdlers and weight-throwers.

Toward the Harvard members of the team his attitude was respectful but by no means cordial. Although Yale had joined interests with her rival for the time, in the eyes of Julius Cæsar this was no more than a truce between hereditary foemen. With Mike Morrison he journeyed to London to inspect the Queen's Club grounds at which the contest was to be held and discovering several Oxford and Cambridge track athletes at practise he surveyed them with glowering front as if these were enemies dropped from another planet. To Hector McGrath he confided upon his return to Brighton:

"I'se actually seen th' Englishmens trainin', an' bless my soul, they looked jes' like our men. I was 'spectin' they'd look different somehow. But I wasn't afraid of 'em, no, suh. I jes' looked 'em straight in th' eye an' I says to myself, 'You-all may have a lot of dead kings an' Westminster Abbeys a-rootin' for you, but we Yankees ain't got no time for dead folks. We all is too up-an'-doin'. Julius Cæsar Jones kin root harder an' longer an' fetch more good luck all by hisself than a ten-acre lot full of ghosts.'"

Meanwhile the London newspapers were giving much space to describing the daily practise of the American collegians. The sporting experts compiled tabular comparisons of the performances of the rivals and concluded that England should win "on form." Mr. Mike Morrison evolved similar estimates in his wise gray head and for his part held that Yale and Harvard ought to win by a narrow margin. Change of climate had produced no ill effects among the youthful Yankees, who were in prime condition to toe their marks. It was thought advisable for them to tarry at their Brighton hotel until the morning of the games, then go to London by special train, have luncheon there, and reach the Queen's Club grounds in the early afternoon ready for the competition without delays or needless excitement.

At breakfast on the appointed day, Hector McGrath was diverting himself by reading what the *London Chronicle* had to say of the singular training-habits of the American athletes who, according to this account, did everything they ought not to. Having digested this severely critical arraignment of the invaders, Hector idly glanced at the adjoining columns and was attracted by the mention of Brighton beneath this very unusual headline:

THE AKMET OF TONGALOO.

The African potentate from the Gold Coast who is at present visiting England for the purpose of acquainting himself with the customs of civilization has left London for Brighton. This dusky native ruler has created much interest and amusement by means of his eccentric behavior and prodigal expenditures. For several weeks he has been a familiar figure in the shops and hotels of Piccadilly and the Strand, fastidiously arrayed in the height of European fashion, his black coat adorned with glittering rows of ribbons and decorations. Although the Akmet of Tongaloo is past seventy years of age he is a tireless sightseer and an old gentleman of the most impetuous and headstrong temper. His secretary, a boyish-looking Australian, has so far managed to rescue the Akmet from his escapades and altercations with London shopkeepers in which he has displayed the intention of acting as his own judge and executioner.

Shortly after the arrival of the Akmet of Tongaloo at Brighton last evening, he entered the shop of a diamond merchant, Morris Isaacs, and after examining the wares, peremptorily ordered five thousand pounds' worth of gems to be sent to his hotel. Inasmuch as the merchant was wholly unacquainted with the Akmet, he declined to part with his diamonds unless cash or security were tendered. After a stormy argument the Akmet smote the dealer over the head with the metal tray in which the jewels were displayed, kicked him violently in the stomach, and at the same time commanded his secretary to see to it that the police take the unfortunate Morris Isaacs into custody for doubting the word and credit of the Akmet of Tongaloo.

The victim of this unprovoked assault was taken to a hospital, but at a late hour no trace had been found of the Akmet of Tongaloo. Doubtless he will be called to account by the local authorities for this high-handed outrage which not even British courtesy toward a visitor of royal blood can afford to overlook.

"Read that for a sample of stolid British journalism," carelessly laughed Hector as he passed the newspaper to a neighbor. "The real news is buried at the tail end of the article, and instead of having fun with this jolly old Akmet of Tongaloo, they treat him as seriously as if he had not really dropped out of a comic opera. The Akmet of Tongaloo! There is a name for you. He must be a peach. Did any of you fellows happen to cross his trail last night?"

"I saw a crowd in front of a store a couple of streets from here, but I didn't bother to investigate," drawled one of the men. "I thought it was another of those confounded wandering minstrel troupes."

"Don't loaf here if you have finished breakfast," spoke up the captain of the team. "You must be getting packed up before long. Bring your suit-cases down-stairs and stack them together in the lobby. The bus will be here in less than an hour."

When the team was ready to go to the railway-station Mike Morrison dutifully counted noses and discovered that Hector McGrath was missing. He was about to go in search of him when the Yale captain explained:

"Hector is up to his ears writing a letter to his girl and he says he wants to send a couple of cablegrams when he gets through. He will jump in a cab and overtake us. He would not be left behind for worlds, so we may as well go ahead in the bus."

"I suppose he will turn up and I don't want to fluster him to-day," grumbled the trainer. "All right, pile into the bus. Hold on. I don't see Julius Cæsar Jones."

"Oh, he won't stir a step without McGrath," said the captain. "The old man is hanging about waiting for him. They will come along together. Our train will not start for thirty minutes, Mike."

When Hector and his protégé bowled up to the station in a hansom and hastily sought the special train reserved for the American athletes, a brass-buttoned employee casually informed them:

"Oh, we had to send it out ten minutes ahead of time. It was a special train, you know, and it had to be shunted out of the way of an express that was running a bit off its schedule. It made no difference, for the American party had arrived from the hotel."

"It makes a whole lot of difference to me," snapped Hector. "This is a fool way to run a railroad. When can we get up to London on a regular train?"

"Oh, you are the young gentleman that the coach, or trainer, or whatever he is, said was to follow by the next express and go directly to the Queen's Club grounds as soon as you had a bite of luncheon. You can leave in forty minutes, sir. The booking-office is the first turning to the left, across the station. Thank you."

"Well, this is not so bad," gasped Hector, recovering from the first shock of dismay. "We will go first-class, in a compartment to ourselves, Julius. I am lucky at making close finishes so long as I travel with you."

The old man was breathing hard but he managed to sputter:

"I'se gettin' too many years past my prime for any more of these yere break-neck finishes, suh. They makes my heart go all wibble-wobble. But it's jes' as you say, they can't lose us nohow."

The express-train in which they set out for London had been moving across the green, well-ordered landscape for some time when Julius Cæsar Jones began to make elaborate preparations for his English début as an important member of the American party. First he polished his silk hat with a handkerchief, patted, smoothed, buttoned and rebuttoned his new frock coat, and then fished from several pockets an amazing collection of badges stamped with gilt

lettering which had admitted him to the side-lines of many championship football-games. Displaying these upon the cushions, he next exhibited a string of silver medals such as used to be given as college trophies to members of winning teams.

"Th' old-time cap'ns was kind enough to give me a trophy along with th' boys to 'member 'em by," he proudly explained. "I'se jes' goin' to pick out the bes' of these sooveyneers an' pin 'em on my breast. And when I walks out on th' Queen's Club grounds all them Englishmens will surely know that I belongs body and soul with th' Yale an' Harva'd athletes. This is my great an' glorious day, Mistah McGrath, an' I'se suttinly goin' to make her *shine*."

"You will be an impressive exhibition," laughed Hector. "Put them all on, Julius. If the royal family turns up at the games, you will make them look like a total eclipse."

When Julius Cæsar Jones arose to disembark at London, he bore himself with immense dignity, and with his snowy head, his benignant, wrinkled face, his shining tall hat, and the flamboyant rows of medals and ribbons stretching across the front of his coat, he was a figure to command attention anywhere. Hector felt rather proud of him as a well-preserved relic of the Yale campus, but he did not in the least expect him to be the hero of an ovation. Numerous guards and porters were drawn up in line on the station-platform and several helmeted policemen were holding back the populace, which showed symptoms of excitement as the Brighton express came to a halt. The carriage in which rode Hector Alonzo McGrath and Julius Cæsar Jones came to a stop within a few feet of this spectacular array and the athlete cheerfully observed:

"There is the reception committee, Julius. It looks as if we were going to get the glad hand. Where are the Lord Mayor and the brass band?"

The countenance of Julius Cæsar shone with gratified pride as he emerged from the train with bared head, making ready to bow an acknowledgment of this tribute to the fame of the American athletes. Three fussy, elderly gentlemen stepped forward and held brief counsel with a red-faced inspector of police who scanned a document held by one of them. The inspector beckoned to two stalwart "bobbies," the three fussy gentlemen put their heads together and glared at Julius Cæsar Jones. There was a moment of awkward hesitation and then as Hector McGrath bobbed from the train behind his resplendent companion the inspector bowed with punctilious courtesy and said:

"I must trouble your majesty to accompany me to the chambers of these gentlemen. I trust that you will be good enough to offer no resistance."

Julius Cæsar Jones stood dumb and bewildered, rubbing his chin with a white-gloved hand, while Hector stepped toward the inspector and protested:

"Don't scare a harmless old man to death, my dear sir. What is the joke? Talk to me. This is my personally conducted party."

"Ah, this must be Mr. St. John, the young Australian secretary to his majesty, the Akmet of Tongaloo," the inspector remarked and then with another glance at the document: "Speaks with a marked American accent, quite so—boyish and slender—dark eyes and hair—it is correct, is it not?" turning to one of his starched companions who looked like a solemnly respectable barrister.

"The Akmet of Tongaloo," stammered Hector in acute astonishment. "Do you mean to say you have mistaken this harmless old fossil, Julius Cæsar Jones, for the murderous Akmet of Tongaloo? Why, Great Scott, man, this is the funniest blunder that ever happened in England, Ireland or Wales. And I am a young Australian with an American accent? Why, I am one of the members of the Yale-Harvard track-team—McGrath the high-jumper, on my way to the Queen's Club grounds for the games with Oxford and Cambridge this afternoon. And this ancient

colored gentleman is one of us, a mascot, a heeler, an heirloom, all the way from New Haven, United States of America. Call him what you like, but for Heaven's sake, drop this Akmet of Tongaloo foolishness and permit us to go on our way."

"Very cleverly put," crisply commented the elderly barrister with a sagacious nod. "The American athletes arrived in a special train an hour ago. You saw them file out of the station, Inspector Briggs. Come, come, let us have no more of this impertinence. It will be possible to settle matters without criminal proceedings if we can persuade the Akmet to accompany us to our chambers in a four-wheeler. Delay is dangerous. At any moment he may become unruly."

Inspector Briggs replied confidently:

"Oh, there is no doubt that he is the Akmet of Tongaloo. The station-master at Brighton telegraphed most accurate descriptions of both to Scotland Yard when they bought tickets for this train."

Hector recalled the newspaper article which had amused him at the breakfast-table, and realized that the coincidence was positively uncanny. According to the published description, the high-tempered potentate from the Gold Coast must bear a striking resemblance to Julius Cæsar Jones, whose holiday raiment and regalia had wrought his undoing. Nor could these stubborn, unreasonable captors be expected to believe that two aged colored gentlemen of aspect so strikingly alike could be roaming at large in Brighton at the same time. Hector gulped, savagely eyed the curious crowd which was pressing closer and whispered to Julius:

"Keep your nerve and do as they tell you. I will straighten it all out in a few minutes. All right, Inspector Briggs, we are at your service."

"Th' Ak-Ak-met o' Kan-Kangaroo?" chokingly sputtered Julius Cæsar Jones as he was escorted toward a line of waiting cabs. "For Gawd's sake, Mistah McGrath—what these gen'lemen call me? What I done to 'em? Is we bein' toted to th' lockup? Where is Mike Morrison and our boys? Mebbe they is goin' to put our heads on a choppin'-block at th' Tower o' London same as Mistah Oliver Crumwell an' Conquerin' Willyum an' John th' Baptist."

"They have mistaken you for a real king from Africa, the Akmet of Tongaloo," was Hector's soothing response. "He is visiting England with all his spangles on and he was expected on this train for luncheon with the Prince of Wales. We are being escorted to Buckingham Palace in proper style."

Flattered by this version of the episode, but still dubious and agitated, Julius Cæsar muttered brokenly to himself while the starched gentlemen helped him to enter a four-wheeler, and Inspector Briggs took his seat facing the captives twain. The elderly barrister joined them and, accustomed to the clean-cut Anglo-Saxon speech of the educated negro of the West Indies, he was unable to follow the fevered soliloquy of Julius Cæsar, who had lapsed into the plantation dialect of his distant youth.

"The Akmet speaks English very imperfectly, doesn't he?" remarked this polite gentleman to Hector, who was staring out of the cab window and biting his nails.

"I understand him well enough," retorted the athlete. "He is truthfully asserting that you are a lot of silly asses. My dear sir, the matter of identification is the simplest thing in the world. If you will not accept my card and any letters I happen to have in my clothes as proof that I have never set eyes on this infernal Akmet of Tongaloo, then won't you be rational enough to telephone to the Queen's Club and get hold of Mr. Morrison, the American trainer, who must be on his way there by this time. The games will begin in less than two hours. And I must be there to win the high jump. This is a matter of life and death to me. If you have one drop of sporting-blood in your veins, you do not want to spoil our chances by making a gift of my event to the English team."

"We will discuss the affair in detail

in my chambers," stiffly returned the unshaken Briton. "As for making use of the telephone, my firm will have nothing to do with so undignified a method of communication. It is too American! Perhaps we may consent, after consultation, to send a messenger to the Queen's Club with a letter to this Mr. Morrison. The diamond merchant whom the Akmet of Tongaloo assaulted and technically robbed is waiting at my chambers to identify his majesty. We hope to make a settlement and if you can persuade the Akmet to take a reasonable and just view of the situation you will be free to go to the Queen's Club or wherever you like by nightfall."

It seemed to Hector as if he were butting his head against a stone wall. Send a messenger to find Mike Morrison? Why, this delay might spell utter ruin. He damned the Akmet of Tongaloo under his breath, and then moved to pity by the lugubrious aspect of Julius Cæsar Jones, who was evidently very skeptical about meeting the Prince of Wales, he murmured to this faithful servitor and comrade in misfortune:

"Don't forget you are the only genuine, warranted Yale mascot, and root for good luck as you never rooted before. You are my only hope. Keep your right hand tight-hold of that rabbit's foot in your inside pocket and say your prayers."

"These proceedin's has got me plumb twistified," returned the old man in tremulous accents. "But it suttinly appears to me that this yere Akmet o' Tongaloo is th' original hoodoo man."

After what seemed an interminable journey the prisoners alighted in front of a gray pile of masonry and were escorted up rambling stairways to the chambers of the legal firm which had undertaken to handle the case of the offending potentate with tact and discretion. No sooner had Hector set foot beyond the threshold than he delivered himself of an impassioned harangue which was punctuated with fervent "Amen" and "Bless th' Lawd, it's gospel truth" from Julius Cæsar Jones. Inspector Briggs warily hovered near the alleged Akmet and presently summoned from an inner room a morose-looking person whose head was swathed in bandages, asking him abruptly:

"Mr. Isaacs, is this the Akmet of Tongaloo who committed the assault in your shop at Brighton last evening?"

Mr. Morris Isaacs glared angrily at Julius, moved nearer and replied:

"Yes, he was dressed like this, silk topper, frock coat, medals and ribbons pinned on him, little bunch of woolly whiskers under his chin, white head, same age, same wrinkles, but somehow he looked fiercer to me. And the young man with him had a squint in his right eye and looked to be a little heavier built. There couldn't be another pair like 'em in England, could there, Mr. Inspector?"

The perceptible shade of doubt in Mr. Isaacs' summary offered Hector a fighting chance and he appealed to the inspector to send a messenger to the Queen's Club. Inspector Briggs had in his veins that drop of sporting-blood lacking in the congealed anatomy of the barrister and he made answer:

"If by any chance this young man *is* one of the American team, it would be a sad affair to keep him out of the competition. I will send one of my men to the grounds at once, and meanwhile I suggest sending out for some food and making them as comfortable as possible."

In sulky silence Hector waited through what he reckoned to be days and weeks and months and years for tidings of salvation from Mike Morrison. Inexorably the hands of the clock on the wall traveled to one, passed the half-hour, and crept around to mark two, the time set for beginning the games. The field events were to be contested while the track program was run off. The high-jumpers would be summoned before three o'clock. In a harrowing panorama the four years of his life at Yale flitted past Hector's mental vision; his unavailing struggles to become a university athlete, his dismissal from one squad after another, the jests of his classmates, the disappointments and heartburning, and as a

climax, unforeseen, incredible, his swift elevation to the pinnacle of his desire. Then had come the misfortune which had barred him from the intercollegiates, and now this hideous mishap had blighted him forever.

Julius Cæsar Jones was sitting with bowed head, his silk hat between his knees, and into its depths trickled one slow tear after another. The stolid Britons gazed at the wobegone potentate with respectful solicitude, their inborn worship of rank making them oblivious to the color of the skin of this sable Akmet of Tongaloo. At length a spruce young "bobby" strode into the room and saluting Inspector Briggs gave him a letter and announced:

"It is all right, sir. One of the American athletes is missing, McGrath, the high-jumper, and an old darky they call their mascot, whatever that is. The trainer was wild with rage and his language was frightful, sir, when he read your letter. And what he said about his majesty, the Akmet of Tongaloo, was shockin'ly disrespectful."

The inspector read the incandescent epistle of Mike Morrison while the members of the legal firm peered over his shoulder. One of them hemmed and hawed and began to say:

"I am satisfied that a mistake has been made. If an apology is in order I——"

Hector Alonzo McGrath had heard enough. Whooping like a wild man, he seized Julius Cæsar by the coat-tails, dragged him from the place, and clattered down the stairways to freedom. Into a passing hansom they dove, Hector shouting insanely to the driver to kill his horse in making for the nearest underground station. When at length they emerged in sight of the Queen's Club grounds they caught a glimpse of long grand stands massed with thousands of spectators, of a flagstaff from which the Union Jack flew above the Stars and Stripes, and they heard the sound of British cheers.

"We have lost that event, whatever it was," groaned Hector. "It may have been the running high jump. Root hard, Julius."

Charging pell-mell past the gatekeepers, Hector bolted for the dressing-rooms of the American team, not daring to look toward the field. He tore off his coat as he ran, threw collar and tie aside as he vaulted the railing and leaped for his locker. Mike Morrison was there before him and without wasting words the trainer fairly ripped off the lad's clothing, pulled a jersey down over his head, helped him into his breeches and thrust his feet into a pair of spiked shoes. Then slapping him on the back the trainer yelled in his ear:

"The high-jumpers went on the field ten minutes ago. Get to it, my boy. We have lost two events straight off the reel, the half-mile and the quarter. You have got to win."

Aquiver with excitement, Hector bounded across the track and trotted toward the athletes clustered near the jumping-bar, their white costumes picked out in the several shades of blue of Oxford, Cambridge and Yale, and the deep crimson of Harvard. One of the judges called out to him:

"McGrath, is it? You have forfeited the first trial by coming too late, I am sorry to say. It will be your next jump, on the second round."

His heart thumping from the ordeals of the day, the Yale jumper drew a long breath and tried to steady himself. For a moment he gazed around him at the multitude of English onlookers, and then at the handful of American visitors grouped in a small stand abreast of him. Among them he recognized the face of a classmate, saw him jump to his feet, wave his arms, and then heard him shout:

"Now, Yale, all together! Three times three for Hector McGrath!"

The familiar battle-cry of the distant campus so defiantly chanted by this little company of his own countrymen thrilled Hector through and through. In this moment of rare exaltation he would gladly have given his life for Yale—here on this foreign soil, among an unfriendly people. By Jove, he would show them what high jumping was. His jaw was set and his fists clenched as he walked slowly back,

carefully scrutinized the turf, and made ready to canter up to the bar. He was over it before there was time to think of stage fright.

Up, up, the bar crept until only two competitors were left, Hector McGrath of Yale and the lanky British champion, Howell of Oxford, who was jumping in more formidable style than he had ever before displayed. At six feet, one inch the Englishman's trial was successful, but Hector, slipping at the "take-off," dislodged the wand at his first attempt. The strain and tension of his unlucky adventure in London were beginning to tell. Pulling himself together, however, he cleared the height at the second trial and became somewhat calmer.

The attention of the crowds had become focused upon this spectacle. They perceived it to be a duel of superb quality and British reserve thawed into tumultuous hurrahs when Howell soared over the bar at six feet, two inches. By this time Hector had found himself. He was filled with a sense of a supreme confidence in his ability to beat this splendid foeman. With less apparent effort than had been needed to achieve a much lower height, he propelled himself over this six feet, two inches. Finally at six-feet-three, the Englishman faltered, showed signs of nervousness, and blundered badly. He had done as well as he knew how, and after a plucky series of attempts he was compelled to surrender to the impossible. Hector walked rather than ran up to the bar and an instant before he rose in air, a well-known voice came booming through a megaphone:

"Look out for the brindled bull!"

As if he were shot upward by steel springs, the Yale jumper made his leap, threw himself sidewise, and fell sprawling to earth. The delicately poised bar still rested upon its lofty pegs and the event was won for Yale and Uncle Sam. But Hector was not done with the Queen's Club grounds, and calling the judges to remeasure the height, he told them to set the bar at six feet, four inches for an exhibition jump.

Five minutes later Hector Alonzo McGrath had broken all intercollegiate records for England and America and was walking from the field while the band of the Seaforth Highlanders played "The Stars and Stripes Forever." Throwing himself upon the couch in the dressing-room, the victor was too weary and unnerved to realize how happy he was. He lay there for some time until Mike Morrison, who had tactfully let him rest, hurried in and roared at him:

"All over and we won by one event. And we came blankety-blank near being licked by the Akmet of Tongaloo, whatever he is. Julius Cæsar Jones has been trying to tell me about it, but the old man only makes it foggier than ever. Here he comes now. Shall I let him in to see you?"

"Of course," cried Hector with a radiant smile. "When it comes to a real grand-stand finish and the art of turning hard luck into a blaze of glory, there is no getting along without his majesty, Julius Cæsar Jones."

The old negro ambled in with a dancing, rocking shuffle, his high hat jammed on the back of his white head, and exclaimed with a mellow, unctuous laugh:

"What about this yere British lion, uh? What become of *him?* Crawled in a hole an' drug it after him? *We* done it, didn't we, Mistah McGrath? Was it wuth totin' Julius Cæsar Jones 'leven thousan' miles to put Good-Old-Yale-Drink-Her-Down up top once mo'? Say, Mistah McGrath, now it's all over, who *is* this yere Akmet o' Tongaloo? They had me scared to death with their policemens an' their confabulations! What I done to be mixtified up with him?"

"It is better that you never know, Julius," grinned Hector. "He is a spook, a phantom, a hoodoo, but you were too strong for him. I have won my 'Y' at last, Julius, and when I am gone from college, you can tell the freshmen for years and years to come that the career of the champion high-jumper of your time began with a brindled bull and wound up with the Akmet of Tongaloo."

The Fifth John James

BEING A HITHERTO UNRECORDED INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF FRANKLYN POYNTER, COMMERCIAL FREE-LANCE

By Herbert Kaufman

Here is a business story from the inside, based on a recent exploit in advertising that first mystified and then amused newspaper-readers from Maine to California. The story, however, is much more interesting than the mere facts, if only in reintroducing to us that wizard of commercial prestidigitation, Franklyn Poynter

WHEN John James Manders opened his little chemist's shop on Bowling Green, the pills of the nation were as few as its ills. His was a day of old-fashioned ailments, old-fashioned doctors and an old-fashioned pharmacopœia—an era which found most of our present "ologies" and "ologists" still waiting for invention in the Greek lexicons. By all of which, you may gather that the firm of Manders' Sons possessed a heritage of traditions and ethics.

During the period of the sailing packets, which put out to the South American countries for quinones and the other miscellany with which the mercantile marine of Perry's day were accustomed to return, Manders' Sons was the commanding house in the trade. But as the country grew into a patchwork of States and the States began to take on a pattern of cities, conditions changed. The newspaper and the advertising quack formed their alliance and the day of the patent medicine—each bottle containing ninety-eight cents of claim and two cents' worth of cure—saw its dawn. Manders' Sons refused to acknowledge the brotherhood of these outlaws—maintaining its standards unaltered until fretted and harassed by the competition it disdained to battle, its proud position became just a memory, one of pride but not of profit. Here and there it kept a customer, but its ledgers were rapidly assuming the aspect of an old saw, with just a workable tooth or so—in brief, Manders' Sons was sawing very little wood.

Nature is an immutable force and her formulæ seldom vary. The tide is strongest in its ebb, just before the fulness of its flow. The loudest clap of thunder is usually a cue for the rainbow's entry. The strongest rebound follows closely upon the moment of greatest strain. And so it was with the firm of Manders' Sons.

John James, fourth head of the house, born conservative and prouder of his pride in its hours of fullest falsity, had stopped his ears and blinded his eyes to the methods and cries of the new mart. "I will see my sons stripped to their birthright of strong limbs, before I shall strip Manders' Sons of the dignity with which it reached my hands." Advertising he regarded as ethical degeneration. To exploit his firm would have been to him as lowering as it would be reprehensible in a gynecologist to adopt the billboards, or an aurist to reach the ears of the public through the screaming megaphone of the press.

The inventive and daring younger men with their pert, perky, insistent and resourceful drummers—their window displays and demonstrations, and

their polychromatic placards—were not of his day as he was not of their hour. When young John James, fifth of the name, took the usual course in the usual college and the usual post-graduate term in the laboratories of the usual German universities, he had before him the prospect of a kingdom without domain, a vast ancestry and a depleted entail.

Now it happened that John James the Fifth turned out to be the long-deferred rebound—the compensation for all the starved-out and checked enthusiasm of the line. He was as a sheep-dog sired by many loyal guardians of the flocks, who suddenly becomes killer. He was an outburst—a revolution. He beheld the spirit of progress which vibrated throughout the wholesale district. He saw snip houses, without dignity and with just "dig," build bigger businesses in a decade than the whole stacked-up outfit of John Jameses had managed to create in a century. And John James did some tall thinking and planned some tall doings, against the time that his hand should hold the reins.

He was the widest-awake dreamer seen around his college in a great many moons—was this same John James. He poled and plugged and studied with an energy hitherto only associated with ambitious high-brows taking a side course in table-attendance. He gathered about him for intimates only the hardest-working men of his classes. He read assiduously of economics and other things outside of the chemico-biological group. He subscribed to the journals of the trade, and kept himself thoroughly saturated with the impulses of advertising through a surreptitious course in a correspondence school, so that when he made his entry into the old-fashioned, dingy, gray-stone concern, over the door of which the faded sign with its Roman lettering proclaimed the stronghold of his fathers, it was a different cadet of the demesne who came, one such as had never before been bred from the loins of the house.

It was a dented, but by no means daunted, confidence with which he found himself at the end of the first year. The ancient but highly sensational contest between the camel and the needle's eye was piffle compared to the difficulties which attended his attempts to alter the family business coat into a garment of later-day cut. So that when even the full pharmacopœia was strangely lacking in potency to rebuff the inevitable coming of the ancient foe of Æsculapius, and John James the Fourth died as he had lived, a very honorable and good gentleman and a very poor business man, even the bite of his grief was somewhat dulled by the irrepressible exultation that swept through John James' ambitions.

The United Drug Company—whose by-product is merchandise, but whose main output is profit—had become mighty in the land during the span of the immediately late John James' career. Its position was that of overlord, boss, satrap, dictator, tyrant, and then some more. Its absolute domineering of retail and wholesale fields made it as fine a Goliath as ever bellicose David wished for. And being a modern Goliath and knowing that little Davids now and then cause trouble for the strongest men, the United maintained an unobtrusive bureau much akin to a certain section of the Russian police, whose business it is to know everything that is none of its business. And so upon one of the red biographical cards which recorded the heirs of all unassimilated competitive houses, the Trust had a very fair idea of the type of man it could expect to find in John James.

They watched John James, and they found out enough to believe that it was not a waste of expense to keep watching him. Therefore, when Errick Thorman discovered that the cardiac tubes of the calf were worth more than all the veal of its body, and his Cardiom Elixirs demonstrated beyond doubt an inevitable cure for angina pectoris, as well as the whole school of organic heart disturbances—with the one exception of arrow-wounds of a certain, or rather, uncertain type—the United began to fear that Manders' Sons might come into its own. For between

John James and Errick there was that camaraderie which comes only from a shared bed and the bond of a fraternity. Whereupon the United, with the wisdom of a serpent, began to get the kinks out of its coils and to limber up for action.

Now, the United belonged to a "frat" of its own, the insignia of which is the double "I" superimposed upon the "S." And so within one week after Manders' Sons began to produce the Cardiom Elixirs, the packing-houses suddenly discovered a new breed of calves with valveless hearts, an improvement in stock-raising only second in importance to hornless cattle and rivaling the seedless apples and the spineless cactus of the horticulturists.

But it required more than the misplay of one card to discourage young Manders in a game as big as that in which he sat, and realizing the significance of the cooperation of the meat barons, he again started Thorman on a line of investigation to the end that another leaf soon sprouted upon his rapidly thickening crown of laurels. Inside of a year, the equivalent elements of the original Elixirs were produced from the hearts of rabbits and guinea-pigs—a live stock over which no trust will ever hold a controlling hand so long as their present family enthusiasm remains undulled. The Cardiom Elixirs became a commercial product instead of a laboratory triumph and the prestige of Manders' Sons stirred its bed of lavender—gave itself a shake and again started to stalk through the land with a vigor surprising in a recluse of such years.

The serpent once more inspected its coils, practised its old standby, the strangle-hold, and went squirming and twisting along the trail of the aforesaid rejuvenated eminence. And what with the United resources—its cunning, the terror of its approach, its unscrupulous laboratory investigators, its two million legal reserve, its enormous advertising-fund, its thousands of retail branches, its demonstrators, its medical editors and its subsidized clinics, the journey upon which the fame of Manders' Sons was setting forth did not extend nearly so far as was projected.

His Cardiom Elixirs soon became a necessary stimulant for the downcast John James himself and threatened to register their first flunk—his heart all but failed him. But the Fifth John James was a David and such opponents, like dynamite, must not be estimated on a basis of the packages in which they come. A fighter—a *good* fighter—allows himself to become thoroughly frightened—so much so that he is more afraid of his fear than of its cause and then he gets over into a corner with his back up against the wall expecting that murder is the least that he can hope for, and scraps accordingly. That is why little men, when they once start in, generally knock the chestnut dressing out of six-footers. They know that with just their muscles they haven't any more show than a widow gives a débutante and they battle with their hearts and souls and with the terrific dynamics of their terror, as well as with their bone and sinews. And John James knew the size of his contract.

Besides being one of the sons of David, he was an improvement on the founder of the ancient order, who after all, never pulled off his stunt more than once, on which occasion, if truth be told, he was probably more surprised than Goliath. Anyhow, no one ever heard of his subsequent performances with the slung-shot. Which justifies the belief that he probably had the experience which most of us undergo the first time we visit a rifle-gallery, when the gun goes off and hits the bell before we have had a chance to see the bull's-eye. Only we aren't as foxy as David the First, and immediately enter into a contest for Annie Oakley's tin-tag collection, only succeeding, however, in hitting the bull-pup on the other side of the street. Manders had no mistaken ideas upon his ability to endure in the contest before him. He went to see Franklyn Poynter.

We are in the habit of associating heroic proportions with those who achieve great deeds. While we read,

our mental pencils are busily etching portraits even of those characters whom the author has not definitely limned, and so it was but natural that Manders, having heard of Franklyn Poynter's exploits in the battles-royal of commerce, should have a preconceived idea about the man. He looked forward to meeting a physical, as well as a mental giant. And, when after three days' delay he secured an appointment and was ushered into Poynter's office, his dismay was so intense that even his well-nurtured good breeding could not check the look of contempt which he realized was sweeping across his face.

Could this be the man upon whom he was counting to win where he was failing?

Was it possible that an undersized popinjay with the figure of a boy and the face of a bumpkin could be Franklyn Poynter?

As many another before him, he began to reconsider his determination and was half-inclined to make some hasty excuse and terminate the visit.

"Are you Mr. Poynter?" he asked.

The other paused between his puffings upon a long, slender cigar, which with little imagination might, with some happiness, have been compared to a walking-stick, and inclined his head in assent.

"Well, I'm damned," ejaculated the chemist under his breath.

He sat down and continued his examination, slowly sizing up the flaring, crimson Ascot and the overstyled shoes. His sense of taste shuddered at the green-plaid suit and the alligator waistcoat, and when his gaze returned to Poynter's countenance, and he measured the characterless nose, the weak mouth and little eyes, with their colorless lashes and brows, he could hardly restrain an impulse to demand that this overdressed office-boy cease his futile masquerade and forthwith summon his employer. Poynter, if he was aware of the thoughts flashing through the other's brain, was not at all perturbed by Manders' scrutiny.

"It's too bad," he lisped, "that the United has got the best of you on the Elixirs. Why didn't you sell out when they first offered to purchase your formulæ?"

"How did you know that they made me a proposition?" asked the surprised Manders.

"I didn't know," was the reply. "Common sense tells me that it would have been far cheaper to buy you out than to dry you out. You made a mistake in fighting them. I guess you realize it now."

The Fifth John James squared his jaw. "The fight is only started," he said. "I'll get back at them."

"How?"

"That's what I came to see you about."

"My dear man," retorted Poynter, "it takes more than the desire to retaliate against the United to realize your ambition. More men have butted out their business brains emulating the tactics of the bull than through any other cause. Don't mistake a desire for vengeance for ability to avenge. To nutshell this whole matter, the United has stolen your secret, wrecked your business, aroused your rage and left you with a very empty treasury and a very full spleen."

"Mr. Poynter," replied the Fifth John James, "your estimate of the situation is painful, but convincing. None the less, my treasury isn't quite depleted, and even if it were, I'm enough of a bull to keep butting until either the wall or my head gives way."

"Have a cigar," lisped Poynter. "It'll make you think better. I want to ask you a question or so, and if there is any possible chance to win out, we may yet do something. One manful of energy dominated by a high-voltage battery of wrong has a pretty strong shocking power. I like your type and I don't mind telling you that a brush with the Drug Trust presents attractive prospects—it's a man's job, and I haven't had one in quite a while."

This was at three o'clock. When Poynter's secretary entered at six, the two were still busily engaged. Poynter looked up and was about to tell her

that she could go home for the day, when he checked himself in the midst of his speech.

"Miss Wensen," he said, "I want you to apply at the offices of the United Drug Company for a position as stenographer."

"Have they advertised?" asked Manders.

"Not that I know of," replied the other, "but a woman with a speed of one hundred and eighty-five words a minute and an A. B.'s vocabulary doesn't usually experience difficulty in securing employment. Besides, Miss Wensen's salary from me makes it possible for her to offer unusual inducements in the matter of wages."

"I think that I shall remain this evening and clean up my notes," said the girl as she paused at the door. "There are some matters that Miss Robbins would not understand. I shall make my reports daily."

"We should have some news of the United's future plans within the next fortnight," lisped Poynter. "The longest it ever took Miss Wensen to reach the executive offices was twenty-three days. Such ability as hers can't remain unnoticed very long and as there are not five secretaries in New York with her speed or general knowledge of routine, we can safely estimate that she will be in a position of inestimable value to us by the time we are ready to act."

Two days afterward, Manders' telephone-bell rang. He picked up the receiver and a smile of satisfaction flitted across his face.

"What's that? She's at work—great!"

He hung up the phone. "The little runt," he muttered under his breath.

Water and typists possess at least one trait in common—both find their proper levels without delay. Therefore, once entered in the service of the United Drug Company, Miss Wensen's progress from the general to the executive offices was not long protracted.

The second morning, following Poynter's message, the personal secretary of Birmingham, secretary of the Trust, did not make her appearance and in the emergency the new stenographer was sent to take her place. Birmingham frowned when he saw the strange girl. "Miss Wilson is indisposed," she exclaimed, "and Mr. Arthurs instructed me to report to you until she returned."

Visions of the weirdly transcribed letters and orthographic inventions of the usual substitute flashed across Birmingham's memory as with an air of resignation he took up his morning's correspondence, but to his delight Miss Wensen not only kept unquestioning pace with his dictation, but turned over to him a stack of letters without a punctual or verbal error. Furthermore, what instructions she received were carried out with such expedition and accuracy that he determined to retain her in his own service and sent word to the superintendent that Miss Wilson upon her return should be placed in some other office of the concern.

But his satisfaction would have changed to serious concern had he known that the girl nightly placed the notes of his letters in her hand-bag, and in the seclusion of her own apartment carefully retranscribed every communication for the benefit of Franklyn Poynter.

Birmingham was a very busy individual. His position was practically that of general manager and his office was the heart of the concern, performing the full functions of a cardiac member—no matter what details of the business, they were bound in the course of their circulation to pass under his observation. It may therefore be easily conjectured to what extent Poynter was gradually becoming conversant with the most minute details of the United's affairs.

Among Birmingham's other secretarial duties was the directing of the advertising campaigns of the Trust, and at this particular period much of his time was devoted to plans for the approaching winter months. A new cure for colds based upon an entirely original principle had just come from the

United's laboratories, and so glowing were the reports of the chemists and so multitudinous were the possibilities ascribed to this sovereign remedy, that Birmingham made up his mind to inaugurate a heavier campaign of publicity in its interest than was usual with the products of the Trust. The details of this exploitation were a source of prolific discussion between himself and the Brampton Advertising Agency, through whom its contracts were negotiated.

The general public is not aware that even the largest concerns do not deal directly with publishers. The newspapers and magazines have established agents to whom they allow a standard commission on all business which passes through their hands. This commission is paid by the publisher and the agents can sell space just as cheaply as it can be purchased by the advertiser dealing directly.

These agencies are aware, through constant contact with varying interests, of almost all phases of business, and soon gain a broader knowledge of advertising than any individual aware only of the conditions in his particular specialization. The Brampton Agency was one of the largest in America and numbered among its clients hundreds of the largest manufacturers.

Therefore, when Birmingham determined upon his expenditure, he naturally went into the fullest details with his agents and largely entrusted to them all the plans, he merely passing upon the various ideas submitted, eliminating this feature and suggesting that, until he had the copy satisfactory to himself. At the same time the list of newspapers best suited for his needs was determined upon, and the final plans were set forth in a voluminous letter of instruction. This communication was dictated to Miss Wensen, so that it happened that Poynter and Brampton himself were noting its contents at about the same hour.

Again and again Poynter read through the pages, fixing every point thoroughly in his memory, and then carefully filed away the document, giving instructions that he was not to be disturbed until the afternoon. Throughout the morning he sat with his feet cocked upon his desk and gave himself up to thought, from time to time referring to a slip of paper upon which were jotted brief notes from the Brampton letter.

Manders met him at luncheon and afterward the two went to the latter's office. There Poynter outlined to the astounded John James a plan which for the moment stunned him by its audacity and then made him grin with expectation as he reviewed the prospective rage of the United and the potential profits for himself.

"It will require a considerable amount of money to carry it through," warned Poynter, "and while I haven't very much doubt as to its outcome, still I recognize in every untried plan a necessary element of chance; but as matters are going now, it is absolutely certain that they'll down you and only a desperate move such as this can possibly get you out of the mire. You will have to figure out if you can raise the sum."

"How much will it necessitate?" replied Manders. "I'm game, and if I weren't game, I'd have to be."

Poynter threw a slip of paper on the table. "As near as I can estimate, my stunt will cost that much, but to that you must add the outlay for the boxes, signs and a big enough stock to take immediate advantage of the coup. You know how many distributors must be reached and what quantity of goods each one will be forced to have on hand."

Manders made a few rapid calculations, after which he left his office and conferred with some of his subordinates. When he returned, the light of battle was in his eye and there was that in his face which one sees at the ringside upon the striking of the gong. "Go ahead," he said, "I can raise it. It means every cent I have in the world and a mortgage on this building and our home, but if I'm to go broke, they'll break me fighting, not passive. It occurs to me, however, that the record-

ing of the deed may arouse their suspicions."

"The best thing that could happen," rejoined Poynter. "It will make them think that you're in the last ditch and render them careless. The United folks will make up their minds that you are going the way of every other man who stood in their path, and inasmuch as up to this time they have not had a thrashing, the mortgaging of your last assets will be the signal for a premature requiem. It is always a good plan to arouse overassurance in a competitor. Fear of an opponent brings men's energies to an instant focus and in this case, the less opposition we meet, the easier we will find our success.

"I think it will likewise be advisable to mask our operations by incorporating an entirely independent company. If Manders' Sons places an order for so many cartons and boxes, the news is bound to reach the other side, and defeat our very purpose. I suggest that we establish the International Drug Company. We'll make it a New Jersey corporation and take out our charter with a list of dummy directors. We'll capitalize the International to the full extent of your available funds and the full payment of stock will give you a rating upon which there will be no question. We'll pay all bills immediately upon presentation, and thus avoid inquiry from the commercial agencies.

"Establish a factory in an entirely different part of the town from the Manders' offices, and employ a new staff of men. Standard molds are all the machinery we require, so we should have the new enterprise in fairly good shape inside of a fortnight. You had better keep out of sight all the way through the deal. I'll attend to the drawing up of the papers and see that they are filed with the Secretary of State immediately. Within a week, I will have a corps of men traveling out of New York with samples and instructions to sell the goods with a positive guarantee to the jobbers and druggists that they will be advertised to the extent of half a million dollars, before sixty days have elapsed, failing which, we will receive back any stock which they desire to return."

"Say, Miss Poil," whispered Ferdy, the office-boy, to one of the Brampton stenographers, "you orter see it. He's a cross between a cheese nosegay and a custard bun. Oh, he's the Willie-boy for fair, all right. Honest, you'd 'a' thought Clara the beautiful cloak-model was talking to you. He's in with the boss now. Don't miss it. I'll pipe you off when he hits the grit. There's my signal now—I'll have to beat it."

Ferdy hastened to Mr. Brampton's office. "Get Mr. Poynter some matches," his employer remarked. As the boy left the office, he turned around for one more admiring glance at the resplendent individual in whose cause he had been summoned.

"Somehow or other, I can't think very well unless my weed is burning," lisped Poynter.

Brampton looked up. "I guess it would take more than a weed to make you think," he commented to himself. Then aloud: "I'm very busy this morning, and am afraid I can give you very little time, so please state the nature of your business as quickly as possible." Brampton was not impressed by his visitor. Had he managed to catch sight of him before he was ushered in, he would have found some expedient to fend off this sartorial invasion. Ferdy, at this junction, returned with the matches.

"Tell Mr. Brown I will be with him in a few minutes," remarked Brampton significantly. "Mr. Brown" was the prearranged signal in all emergencies where the head of the firm desired an opportunity of shortening an interview.

"He was just asking for you again," said Ferdy. "Said he would have to leave unless you could see him shortly. I'll tell him you'll be ready for him in five minutes."

Poynter lit his cigar and drew a package of papers from his pocket. "Mr. Brampton," he said, "I want to spend

half a million dollars within the next sixty days to introduce one of our specialties. I am the general manager of the International Drug Company. We have just incorporated and expect to become large operators. I am visiting all agencies and the concern that is best fitted to handle our affairs will receive the account. What I want is service, and I am willing to pay well for it. What percentage do you charge for placing advertising?"

Brampton had not quite recovered from the shock of Poynter's opening remark. Half a million dollar orders do not drop from the heavens every day. It required considerable effort to adjust himself to a new consideration of his visitor. The preoccupied "I-am-a-very-busy-man, so-be-brief" expression faded from his face and in its stead a fatherly, reassuring, havenlike smile took its place. "My dear Mr. Poynter," he smiled, "have you had any previous experience in these matters?"

"None whatever," replied the other.

"Then, how did you hear of us?" questioned Brampton.

"Oh, I did a very clever thing," smiled Poynter, assuming a purposeful air of smug complacency. "I copied all the names classified under 'Advertising Agents' from the telephone-book, and I shall visit each one in turn until I find the right concern. Brilliant, wasn't it?"

The Brampton smile broadened. His fatherly air instantly assumed ten additional degrees of paternalism. "Then, I'm very glad," he said, "that our name appeared so early in this list. Had we been among the 'R's' the impressions you would have received from the 'E's,' 'M's' and 'O's' might have made our negotiations somewhat more difficult." And he launched forth into a very profuse explanation of the mysteries of rate-cutting and non-service agencies, expounding to great length upon the size of the Brampton organization—its tremendous volume of business and consequent influence with the publishers—its corps of expert copy-writers—its high-salaried artists and its advisory board, headed by "our Mr. Harker, who receives a salary as great as that of the President of the United States."

Long before this, the exultant Ferdy had noisily made his entrance and had been dismissed with instructions to "tell Mr. Brown that he must wait or make another appointment." Having completed his résumé of the Brampton facilities, he launched forth into a recital of its past exploits. He reminded his listener of the famous campaign of the "Fine Fit Corset Company." He related the history of the house of Shaffenheimer, which within six years, through the Brampton brains, was enabled to put its mark on the minds of every man in America and its suits on their backs. One by one, he proudly reeled off his successive triumphs, reserving as his sixteen-inch gun the fact that the United Drug Company was not the least of their prominent patrons. After which he paused to note the effect upon his listener of this tremendous fact.

And Poynter did not disappoint him by his reception of the information. "Do you mean to tell me," he asked with well-pretended incredulity, "that the United Drug Company has brought in an outside concern to transact its advertising affairs? Why, it doesn't seem possible that they would entrust such important matters to any one outside of their own organization."

Brampton smiled condescendingly. "My dear Mr. Poynter," he said, "an advertising agency such as ours can not only furnish space as cheaply as its clients can procure it, but even save them money besides." And off he went again into the A B C's of his craft, explaining that the commission paid by the publisher was not extended to individual concerns and that this percentage amply repaid the agent, and furthermore, enabled him to save his customer all the detail of checking insertions, verifying space, etc. "In other words, Mr. Poynter," he wound up, "our wide experience in your particular field renders us, by all odds, the best qualified of any agency to render you exactly the service which you require."

"But," interrupted Poynter, "how can you take over our affairs while you are acting for the Trust?"

Brampton stiffened up with dignity. "We do not confine ourselves to any one house in any one line. Our corps of experts is so large that we are able to keep the details of every account entirely unknown to those who are handling corresponding appropriations. Our motto is, 'A bad memory for one client's affairs is the greatest safeguard to another's.' Now in a small agency, it would be impossible to segregate as completely as we manage—there you would have to contend——"

Poynter interrupted him and warded off another attack of verbosity. "I see," he said. "Then you would be willing to handle our business?"

"That is, of course, if we are satisfied as to your responsibility. The publishers look to us for the payment of all accounts and we cannot assume risks, as you will naturally comprehend. I shall be pleased to take up the general outline of your project now, and if you will furnish me with the necessary information concerning your company, our credit department will be able to render a report by the time we are ready to proceed."

"That will be unnecessary," lisped Poynter. "The International will pay in advance, according to monthly schedule. I have brought with me a list of the cities where we wish to advertise. Please submit your list of the best newspapers, selecting a morning and an evening daily at each point. I do not know when we shall be able to start, as we are waiting reports from our travelers and wish to make sure that our goods are placed everywhere before we begin to exploit them. We have several strong leaders, but I am not certain which will be the best goods to push until I am able to judge by the orders of the trade. Meanwhile, it may be a good idea for you to prepare copy for our 'Sure Death Roach Powder' and our 'Lumpkin's Lumbago Liniment.' I have already jotted down full explanatory notes upon both products, and will leave it to your judgment as to the best manner in which to bring out the illustrations and the wording."

He arose and started to leave. "You understand, of course," he remarked, "that we do not wish to have any word of our plans leak out of this office."

Mr. Brampton arose with a gesture of offended integrity, and protested that the injunction was unnecessary.

"By the way," remarked Poynter, as if struck with an afterthought, "if your copy is not satisfactory, you will have no objection, of course, to our sending out that prepared in our own office if we feel that we are better able to do justice to the 'Sure Death' and the liniment?"

"I hardly think you will find the expedient necessary," replied the advertising agent.

"Well," remarked Poynter, "I can't think of anything else just now. I shall expect to hear from you within a few days." He glanced at his watch. "Why, it isn't as late as I thought," he said. "I should like to see through your plant, if you have no objections."

Brampton eagerly assented to the request. As they passed through the various offices, the staff cast amazed eyes upon the visitor. Ferdy's advance advertising of his coming had aroused their expectation, which Poynter's appearance more than fulfilled. So that the impression created by the new client was one far from flattering to his ability or type. As they entered the art-room, Poynter quickly sized up the men until his eye took in a youth studiously lettering a cabalistic panel containing three letters. He studiously avoided glancing in the boy's direction, but slowly moved down the room, gazing at the opposite wall upon which were displayed specimens of the Brampton studios. When he had reached a point directly opposite the table of the youth, he bent over to pick up his dropped cigar, but upon straightening lost his balance and fell backward, striking against the artist, who jumped off his stool and helped him to rise.

"I beg your pardon," lisped Poynter; "how very clumsy of me. I hope I haven't spoiled your work."

"Not at all," answered the other, pointing to the lettering. Poynter verified his assurance by a careless glance at the cardboard.

"I am very glad." The accident was so possible that the advertising agent did not for a moment suspect that it had been deliberately planned. He showed Poynter his checking-room, and then taking him to the general offices, explained the system by which advertisements were ordered into the newspapers, illustrating his talk with an order-blank.

"I see," said Poynter, "that you write out the size of the space and the date. How can the newspapers tell what advertisement to print?"

"We number the pieces of copy and insert corresponding dates upon the proofs."

Immediately upon leaving the Brampton Agency, Poynter returned to the International drug-factory and called Manders upon a telephone which did not connect with the switchboard.

"We're certain now," he said. "I've just been through the Brampton offices and I've seen their system. Everything is exactly as specified in the letter. I managed to see one of the pages. Our plan is bound to go through."

It was more than a month before Poynter renewed his visit to the agent. "I'm very much disappointed," he said, "with the reports of our salesmen. The 'Sure Death' and the liniment will have to be pushed at once. Have you the copy ready?"

"Not for some days," said Brampton. "The matter has not been set up into type. You did not return proofs until yesterday and besides, the engraving can't be made for several days."

"But we must do something," remarked his client. "I can't wait. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll write the first advertisements myself, have them manifolded on my copying-machine and send them down to you this afternoon. That will save time. Make out your orders at once and enclose these emergency advertisements. I've checked off the newspapers and the list satisfies me."

At five o'clock Brampton's phone rang. "Hello, who's this?" he asked.

"The International Drug Company—Mr. Poynter wishes to talk to you. Hello, is this the Brampton Agency—how are you, Mr. Brampton? I'm very sorry, but I've just finished the advertisement and I can't possibly get the copies down to you before seven o'clock. We can arrange it if you will send out the orders telling the newspapers that we are mailing the copy under separate cover—that would save time. I have the list here and can start the girls addressing the envelopes now. You can do it? Good! I'm sending you a check at once by messenger. Make out the orders for full page and send the full contracts later. You say you'll have to figure the rates? Well, pay the card price with the understanding that we will receive rebates as we increase our insertions. Yes, I would prefer to have it that way. I can count upon you then? To-night? Surely—thank you."

During the five weeks that had elapsed since Poynter's first visit to Brampton, a series of mysterious advertisements began to make their appearance throughout America. Day after day, newspaper readers were faced by full pages of white space bearing a panel in the center with the mysterious letters "C. C. T." and just a single sentence besides. One day it would be "C. C. T. will make you better," another time, "C. C. T. You will be glad," or "C. C. T. Watch for it and wait for it," or "C. C. T. Get it and don't forget it," until the country was thoroughly mystified. No one knew what it meant—every one understood that it was the advertisement of something, but whether "C. C. T." advertised a cigar or a cook-stove—a corset or a facial cream—an automobile or a bottled beer, no one could state. The newspapers themselves were not in the secret. They had merely recived the order as to the identity of the promoter.

Therefore, when instructions came from Brampton to insert a full-page advertisement for the International Drug Company, "copy to be sent direct under separate cover," it was but natural

that the publishers should at once proceed to set the copy immediately into type and when, an average time having been calculated, four hundred dailies simultaneously disclosed the fact that "C. C. T." stood for "Climax Cough Tablets—on sale everywhere. The little pink pellets in the little pink box," an instant interest was aroused in this cough-drop, the virtues of which were so extravagantly exploited that one was sure the merit of a remedy was unquestionable to justify so much confidence on the part of the advertiser.

But this solution of the "C. C. T." mystery was far from satisfying to the officials of the United who had planned and paid for the cryptic pages to arouse enthusiasm for their "Cucumber Cold Tonic." There was consternation, amazement, rage, mystification, bewilderment and other full-flown emotions in ample profusion and a wild-eyed Brampton spent a torturing hour with a wilder-eyed Birmingham in an attempt to explain to the latter's satisfaction the innocence of his connection with the matter. And when under the grilling examination of the United's secretary, the full details of his transactions with Poynter were brought forth, and he was made to realize how many varieties of catspaw he had been made, his first impulse was to wreak summary vengeance upon a certain placid countenance. Reflection, however, brought to him a realization that he could do nothing. A conclusion that he and his clients were forced to accept, after a calm consideration of the situation.

Nor did his previous estimate of Poynter alleviate the gnaw of chagrin. To think that this nincompoop, whom he had half-openly despised and secretly ridiculed, had hoodwinked him into legitimatizing Poynter's direct orders to the publishers, shriveled his abundant self-esteem into nauseating disgust. He managed to cancel the next morning's copy, but his telegrams could not forestall the evening papers, and so the United first endured the abasement of having been outgeneraled and then suffered the humiliation of beholding their "Cucumber Cold Tonic" copy a whole day later than the announcement of "Climax Cough Tablets."

The public, quick to appreciate the ridiculous situation and as usual unsympathetic with corporate interests, chuckled with glee over the dilemma of the Trust and made of the incident such a topic of discussion that the word-of-mouth publicity which followed redounded enormously to the benefit of the "pink-boxed remedy." So instantaneous and continued was the sale of Climax Cough Tablets that distributors and retailers were both soon exhausted of their initial stocks and duplicate orders, insisting upon immediate delivery, poured into the International by every mail.

Having successfully carried off his coup, Manders allied his main laboratories with the other plant and assisted the overworked factory. But at that, only by running night and day could he cope with his orders.

The Fifth John James had come into his own. The joy of conquest exulted in him. These were mighty days and his enthusiasm was growing threadbare through overuse.

"Oh, you, Poynter!" he chortled. "You bantam-rooster—you're the concentrated essence of O. K.-ism. You're the capital 'I-T.' You've made me rich, but what's more—you've made me win, and still best of all—you made them cough up the cost."

His last words brought a twinkle to Poynter's eyes. "Cough—cough—that gives me an idea. Why not send each of the United's directors a box of 'Climax Cough Tablets' to soothe the irritation?"

Lost Cabin Mine

By Frederick Niven

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Francis, the young man who tells this story, in his quest for fortune in the West, finds himself almost penniless and without prospects in Baker City. He is lodging at the Laughlin House. The proprietor tells him the story of the "Lost Cabin Mine" up to date. It seems three prospectors had struck it famously rich in the mountains and had then run out of food. Two of them had made a desperate effort to get back to civilization but had dropped on the way. Mike Canlan, another prospector, had come across one of them half-conscious on the wagon-road to Baker City and started to carry him there. On the way he met Apache Kid, a picturesque Western character, and Larry Donoghue, his partner, a desperate, violent fellow. These two had volunteered assistance. They had brought the dying man to the Laughlin House. While Canlan had gone for a doctor, the man had muttered something about the Lost Cabin and Apache Kid and Larry Donoghue had heard. When Canlan had returned the man was dead. Evidently Canlan too had learned something valuable, for from that time he watched Apache Kid and Donoghue like a hawk and tried in various ways to find out how much they really knew. Francis meets the three of them at the Laughlin House. Donoghue tries to kill Canlan and Francis is instrumental in preventing the murder. Afterward Apache Kid and Donoghue propose to Francis to join them in a contemplated trip, offering him a salary he sorely needs. He accepts their offer. Apache Kid and he leave Baker City as secretly as possible. Arriving at Camp Kettle, Apache Kid tells Francis their destination is the Lost Cabin. They procure horses and rations and strike through the woods. Two men who have followed them hold them up in the forest and demand to be told the location of Lost Cabin Mine on penalty of death. Apache Kid parleys with them. Donoghue suddenly appears and shoots one of the men from behind a tree. Apache Kid kills the other. The three resume the journey. Mr. Pinkerton, proprietor of the Half-way to Kettle House, and a half-breed follow their trail, and warn them of another party coming to stalk them to the Lost Cabin and then kill them. This party now appears and in a pitched battle Francis is captured by the enemies. They torture him cruelly to make him divulge the location of the Lost Cabin, which he does not know. Finally Apache Kid rescues him by agreeing to join forces with the other party, and all go into camp together for the night. Farrell, leader of the newcomers, murders Pinkerton and wounds Donoghue. Apache Kid overcomes Farrell, who is hanged for his treachery. The others of Farrell's gang are killed or escape. After a long journey through the woods, Apache Kid, Donoghue and Francis camp beside a lake not far from Lost Cabin. Mike Canlan suddenly appears and shoots Apache Kid and Donoghue but spares Francis and forces him to accompany him to the Lost Cabin, which they finally reach with every indication of being the first to arrive.

CHAPTER XIX.

CANLAN HEARS VOICES.

YOU should have seen the way in which Canlan approached that solitary, deserted cabin. One might have thought, to see him, that he fully expected to find it occupied.

"Hullo, the shack!" he cried, leading his horse down from the rocky rib on which we had paused to view the goal of our journey. I noticed how the horse disapproved of this descent; standing with firm legs, it clearly objected to Canlan's leading. The reins were over its head, and Canlan was a little way down the rib hauling on them, half-turned and cursing it vehemently. It could not have been the slope that troubled the animal, for that was trifling; but there it stood, dumbly rebellious, its neck stretched, but budge a foot it would not.

At last it consented to descend, but very gingerly feeling every step with doubtful forefeet, and craned neck still straining against Canlan. Even when he succeeded in coaxing and commanding it to the descent it seemed very

This serial began in the October issue. The back numbers can be obtained from any newsdealer. Price, fifteen cents each.

doubtful about going out on the hollow toward the shack, and reminded me, in the way it walked there, of a hen as you may see one coming out of a barn when the rain takes off.

"What in thunder's wrong with you?" cried Canlan. "Come along, will you? Looks as if there was somebody, sure thing, in the shack. Hullo, the shack! Hullo, the cabin!" he hailed again.

"——The shack! Hullo, the cabin!" cried out the rib beyond, in an echo.

So Canlan advanced on the cabin, his rifle loose on his arm, right up to the door on which he knocked, and from the sound of the knocking I declare I had an idea that the place was tenanted.

He knocked again.

"Sounds as if there was somebody in here," he said, in a low, thick whisper, so that I thought he was afraid.

He knocked again, rat-tat-tat, and sniffed twice, and piped up in his wheezy voice: "Good day, sir; here's two pilgrims come for shelter."

It was at his third rap, louder, more forcible on the door, which was a very rough affair, being three tree-stems cleft down the center and bound together with cross-pieces, as I surmised, on the inside—just at the last dull knock of his knuckles that the door fell bodily inward, and a great flutter of dust arose inside the dark cabin.

"Any one there?" he asked, and then stepped boldly in.

"Nobody here," he said, bringing down his rifle with a clatter. "One has to be careful approaching lonesome cabins far away from a settlement at all times."

Then suddenly he turned a puzzled face on me.

"Queer that, eh?"

"What?"

"Why, that there door. Propped up from the inside. If there was any kind of a smell here apart from jest the or'nary smell of a log shanty, I'd be opining that that there number three o' this here *push* that worked the mine —— Say!" he broke off, "where in thunder is the prospect itself?"

And out he went of the mirk of the cabin, in a perfect twitter of nerves, and away across to the spur of which I told you.

There I saw him from the door—by which the pack-horse stood quiet now, the reins trailing—kick his foot several times in the earth. Then he turned to see if I observed him, and flicking off his hat waved it round his head and came posting back.

"There's half a dozen logs flung across the shaft they sunk," said he, "and they're covered over with dirt, to hide it like. Let's get in first and see what's what inside."

There was no flooring to the cabin and at one end was a charred place on the ground. Canlan looked up at the low roof there, and, stretching up his hands, groped a little and then removed a sort of hatch in the roof.

"This here," said he, "hes bin made fast from the inside too—jest like the door. Look in them bunks. Three bunks and nothin' but blankets. And over the floor the blankets is layin' too hauled about."

The light from the hatch above was now streaming in.

"Them blankets is all chawed up," he said.

"Heavens!" I gasped. "Were they driven to that?"

"What devils me," he said, not replying to my remark but looking round the place with a kind of anxiety visible on his forehead, "is this here fixin' up from the inside. There's blankets, picks, shovels, all the outfit; and there's the windlass and tackle for the shaft-head. No," he said, recollecting my remark, "them blankets wasn't chawed up by them. Rats has been in here—and thick. See all the sign o' them there?"

He pointed to the floor, but it was then that I observed, in a corner, after the fashion of a three-cornered cupboard, a rough shelving that had been made there. Every shelf, I saw, was heaped up with something—but what? I stepped nearer and scrutinized.

"Look at all the bones here," I said.

Canlan was at my side on the very words.

"That's him!" he said, in a gasp of

relief. "That's him. That's number three. That's him that stuck up the door and the smoke-hole."

I turned on him, the unspoken question in my face, I have no doubt.

All the fear had departed from his face now as he snatched up a bone out of one of the shelves.

These bones, I should say, were all placed as neatly and systematically as you could wish, built up in stacks, and all clear and clean as though they had been bleached.

"This here was his forearm," said Canlan, his yellow eyeballs suddenly afire with a fearsome light; and he rapped me over the knuckles with a human elbow.

"Ain't it terrible?" he said.

"It is terrible," said I.

"Ah!" he cried. "But I don't mean what you mean; I mean ain't it terrible to think o' that?" and he pointed to the cupboard, "to think o' comin' to that—bein' picked clean like that—little bits o' you runnin' about all over them almighty hills inside the rats' bellies and your bones piled away to turn yellow in a spidery cupboard."

I stepped back from his grinning face.

"But how do these bones come here?" I said.

"It's the rats," he replied, "them mountain-rats always pile away the bones o' everything they eat—make a reg'lar cache o' them; what for I dunno; but they do; that's all."

I stood then looking about the place, thinking of the end of that "number three," all the horror of his last hours in my mind; and as I was thus employed, with absent mien, suddenly Canlan laid his hand on my arm.

"What you lookin' that queer, strained ways for?" he whispered, putting his face within an inch of mine, so that I stepped back from the near presence of him. "That was a mighty queer look in your eyes right now. Say, do you know what you would make? You'd make an easy mark for me to mesmerize. You'd make a fine medium, you would."

I looked at him more shrewdly now, thinking he was assuredly loosing his last hold on reason; but he flung back a step from me.

"Oh! You think me mad?" he cried, and verily he looked mad then. "Eh? Not me. You don't think I can mesmerize you? I've mesmerized heaps—men too, let alone women," and he grinned in a very disgusting fashion. "Say! If we could only see a jack-rabbit from the door o' this shack, I'd let you see what I could do. I'd give you an example o' my powers. I can bring a jack-rabbit to me, supposin' he's lopin' along a hillside and sees me. I jest looks at him and *wills* him to stop—and he stops. And then I wills him to come to me—and he comes.

"Mind once I was tellin' the boys at the Molly Magee about bein' able to do it and they put up the bets I couldn't—thought I was jest bluffin' 'em, and I went right out o' the bunk-house a little ways and fetched a chipmunk clean off a rock where he was settin' lookin' at us—there weren't no jack-rabbits there—fetched him right into my hand. And then a queer mad feelin' come over me—I can't just tell you about it—I don't just exactly understand it myself. I closes my hand on that chipmunk and jest crushed him dead atween my fingers. And suthin' seemed kind o' relieved here then, in the front o' my head, right here. The boys never forgot that. They kind o' lay away off from me after that—didn't like it. Yes, I could mesmerize you."

He waved his hands suddenly before my eyes.

"Feel any peculiar sensation at that?" he said.

"Yes," said I.

"What like?" he asked.

"I feel that I'll not let you do it again," said I.

"Scared like? Feel kind o' slippin' away?"

"No," I said quietly; "not scared one little bit. But I object to your waving your hands within an inch of my face. Any man of grit wouldn't allow it."

"Well, well, say no more. We'd better be investigating this yere shack. God! If there was only a drink on the

premises. I tell you *they're* comin' on again, and when they come on I'm fearsome—I am."

He looked round the place again and then cried out in a voice of agony:

"Look here! I don't want to lose holt o' myself yet; perhaps a little bit of grub now might help me. I reckon I might be able to shove some down my neck as a dooty. You go and make up the fire outside, Francis, do."

He spoke this in a beseeching whine. To see the way the creature changed and veered about in his manner was interesting.

"We ain't goin' to sleep in here tonight, anyways, not for Jo, wi' them mountain-rats comin' in on us. It'll take quite a while o' huntin' to get all their holes filled up. You go and make dinner. I could do a flapjack and a slice o' bacon, I think, with a bit of a struggle and some resolution like."

Anything that might prevent my having a madman on my hands in that wilderness was not to be ignored, so I went out and ran down the slope to where the bushes climbed, and gathered fuel, a great armful, and so came back again and made up a fire.

Water was not so easy to find, but a muddy and boggy part of the hill led me to a spring, and I set to work on preparing food.

With all this coming and going I must have been busied quite half an hour before even getting the length of mixing the dough. Canlan, by that time, had got the windlass out and had lugged it across to the covered shaft beside the spur of outcropping rock that ran down parallel with the ridge in the lee of which I had lit the fire. He went back to the cabin and carried out the coil of rope, and had just got that length in his employ when I called him over for our meal; our evening meal it was, for, intent on our labors, we had not noticed how the sun was departing.

All the vasty world of hollows below us was brimmed with darkness. All the peaks and the mountain ridges marching one upon the other into the shadowing east were lit, toward us, with the last light when Canlan sat down to force himself to eat. But I saw he had difficulty in swallowing. The jerking of face and hands, I also perceived, was increasing past ignoring. So, too, presently became the fixed stare of his eye upon me as he sat with his hand frozen on a sudden half-way to his mouth.

"Listen! Don't you hear nuthin'?" he asked, hoarse and low.

"Nothing," said I.

"Ah! It's jest them fancies," said he, and fell silent.

Then again, with a strange, nervous twitch and truly awful eyes, so full of fear they were, he said in a whisper, "Say, tell me true! Didn't you hear suthin' right now?"

"I heard a coyote howl," I said.

"No, no; but somebody whispering?" he said. "Two or three people all huddling close somewhere and tellin' things about me. By gum! I won't have it! I dursen't have it!" he said in a low scream—which is the best description of his voice then that I can give you.

I shuddered. He was a terrible companion to have here on this bleak, windy hillside, with the thin trees below us marching down in serried ranks to the thicker forest below, and the scarped peaks, showing against the pale moon that hung in the sky awaiting the sun's going.

I shook my head.

"Sure?" he asked.

"Positive," said I.

He bent toward me and said in a small voice: "Keep your eye on me now. I ain't going to ask you another time, for I think when I speak they stop a-whispering; but I'll jest twitch up my thumb like this—see?—fer a signal to you when I hear 'em."

He sat hushed again; and then suddenly his eyes started and he raised his thumb, turning a face to me that glittered pale like lead.

"Now?" he gasped.

"Nothing," I said; "not a sound."

"Ah, but I spoke there," he said. "I oughtn't to have spoken; that scared 'em; and they quit the whispering when they hear me."

He sat again quiet, his head on the

side, listening, and I watching his hand, thinking it best to humor him and to try to convince him out of this lunacy.

But my blood ran chill as I sat, and his jaw fell suddenly in horror, for a voice quavering and ghastly cried out from somewhere near-by: "Mike Canlan! Mike Canlan! I see you, Mike Canlan!"

And a horrible burst of laughter that seemed to come from no earthly throat broke the silence, died away, and a long gust of wind whispered past us on the hill-crest.

It had been evident to me that though Canlan bade me harken for the whispering voices that he himself did not actually believe in their existence. He had still sufficient sense left to know that the whispering was in his own fancy, the outcome of drink and of—I need not say his conscience, but—the knowledge that he had perpetrated some fearsome deeds in his day, deeds that it were better not to hear spoken in the sunlight or whispered in the dusk.

But this cry, out of the growing night, real and weird, so far from restoring equanimity to his mind appeared to unhinge his mental faculties wholly. His eyeballs started in their sockets. And there came the cry again:

"Mike Canlan! Mike Canlan! I'm on your trail, Mike Canlan!"

As for myself, I had no superstitious fears after the first cry. Though I must confess that at the first demented cry my heart stood still in a brief savage terror. But I speedily told myself that none but a mortal voice cried then; though truly the voice was like no mortal voice I had ever heard.

It was otherwise with Canlan. Fear, abject fear, held him now and he turned his head all rigid like an automaton and, in a voice that sounded as though his tongue filled his mouth so that he could hardly speak, he mumbled: "It's him. It's Death!"

Aye, it was death; but not as Canlan imagined.

There was silence now, on the bleak, black hill, and though I had mastered the terror that gripped me on hearing the voice, the silence that followed was a thing more terrible, not to be borne without action.

Then suddenly the voice broke out afresh quite close and Canlan turned his head stiffly again and I also looked up whence the voice came—and there was the face of Larry Donoghue looking down on us from the rib of rocky hill under whose shelter we sat. There was a trickle of blood, or a scar—it was doubtful which—from his temple down his long, spare jaw to the corner of the loose mouth; the eyes stared down on us like the eyes of a dead man, blank and wide.

He stretched out his arms and gripped in the declivity of the hill with his fingers, crooked like talons, and pulled himself forward; but at that tug he lost his balance, lying on his belly as he was, and came down the slope, sliding on his face, the kerchief still about his head as I had seen him when I thought he had breathed his last.

In Canlan's mind there was no question that this was Larry Donoghue's wraith. He tried to cry out and could not, gave one gulping gasp in his throat, and when Donoghue slid down the bank, as I have described, Canlan leaped to his feet and ran for it—ran without any intelligence, straight before him.

I have told you that the next rib of rock broke off sheer and went down in a declivity. Thither Canlan's terror took him; and the last I saw of him was his legs straddled in the run, out in mid-air, as thought to take another stride; and then down he went. But it was to Donoghue I turned and strove to raise him. For one fleeting moment he seemed to know me; our eyes met and then the light of recognition passed out of his and he sank back. It was a dead man I held in my arms, and though I had never greatly cared for him that last glance of his eye was so full of yearning, so pathetic, so helpless that I felt a lump in my throat and a thickness at my heart and as I laid him back again I burst into a flood of tears that shook my whole frame.

A strange, gusty sound in my ear and the feeling of a hot vapor on my neck

brought me suddenly round in, if not fear, something akin to it. But I think absolute fear was pretty well a thing I should never know again after these happenings.

It was Canlan's horse, standing over me snuffing me; and when I raised my head he gave a quiet whinny and muzzled his white nose to me. Perhaps in his mute heart the horse knew that these sounds of mine bespoke suffering, and truly these pack-horses draw very close to men, in the hills.

But though the horse brought me back in a way to manliness and calm it was a miserable night that I spent there. I sat up and with my chin in my hands remained gazing vacantly eastward until the morning broke in my eyes. And behind me stood the horse thus till morning, ever and again touching my shoulder with his wet nose, his warm breath puffing on my cheek.

I was thankful, indeed, more than I can tell you, for that companionship. And now and then I put up my hand and when I did so the beast's head would come gently down for me to clap his nose and doing so I felt myself not altogether alone and friendless on that hill of terror and of death.

CHAPTER XX.

COMPENSATION.

From where I sat on the frontage of that hill, the black, treeless mountain behind me, the hurly-burly of the scattered, outcropping hills and tree-filled basins below me, as the sun came up in my face, my gaze was attracted to a bush upon the incline.

This bush stood apart from the others on the hill, like an advance scout; and as the sunlight streamed over the mountains I saw the branches of it agitated and a bird flew out, a bird about the size of a blackbird. I do not know its name, but it gave one of the strangest cries you ever heard—like this:

"Bob White! Bob White! Bobby White!"

And away it flew with a rising and falling motion and down into the cup below, from where its cry came up again.

It is difficult for me to tell you exactly what that bird meant to me then. My heart that was like a stone seemed cloven asunder on hearing that bird's liquid cry. That there was something eery in the sound of it, so like human speech, did in no wise affect me. To terror, to the weird, to the unknown I now was heedless. But at that bird's cry my heart seemed just to break in sunder and I wept again, a weeping that relieved me much, so that when it was over I felt less miserable and heart-sore. And I prayed a brief prayer as I had never prayed before, and was wondrously lightened after that; and turning to the horse, as men will do when alone, I spoke to it, caressing its nose and pulling its pricked ears. And then it occurred to me that if Donoghue had survived his wound, Apache Kid might still be alive. It had been for Apache, indeed, that I had entertained greater hope.

"Shall we go down to the valley and see if my friend still lives?" I said, speaking to the horse; and just then the beast flung his head up from me and his eyeballs started.

I looked in the direction of his fear —and there was Apache Kid and no other, climbing up from the direction of the bush whence the bird had flown away.

I rushed down the rise upon him with outspread arms, and at our meeting embraced him in my relief and joy, and dragged him up to my fire, and had all my story of my doings of the night, the day, and the night told him, and of Donoghue and of Canlan—a rattling volley of talk, he listening quietly all the while, and smiling a little every time I broke in upon my tale with: "You do not blame me, Apache?"

And then I asked him, all my own selfish heart being outpoured, how it was that I found him here alive.

"As for your accusations," he said, "dismiss them from your mind. In all you have told me I think you acted with great presence of mind and forethought.

As for my escape from death, and Larry's, it must have been due entirely to the condition of that reptile's nerves, as you describe him to me."

He had been standing with his back to where Donoghue lay, and now in the light that took all that black hillside at a bound, I saw a sight that I shall never forget. For there, where should have been the dead man's face, was nought but a skull, and perched upon the breast of the man and licking its chops, showing its front teeth, was one of the great mountain-rats.

Apache Kid followed the gaze of my eyes, looked at me again with that knitting of the brows, as in anger almost, or contempt.

"Brace up!" he said sharply.

"Brace up!" I cried. "Is it you who tell me to brace up, you who brought me into this hideous place, you who are to blame for all this! I was a lad when you asked me to accompany you that day at Baker City—it feels like years ago. Now, now," and I heard my voice breaking, "now I am like a man whose life is blighted."

When I began my tirade he looked astonished at first, and then I thought it was a sneer that came upon his lips, but finally there was nothing but kindliness visible.

"I was only trying the rough method of pulling you together," he said, "and it seems it has succeeded. Man, man, you have to thank me. Come," and taking me by the arm and I unresisting, he led me to the cabin.

It was curious how then I felt my legs weak under me, and all the hill was spinning round me in a growing darkness. I felt my head sinking and heard my voice moan: "Oh! Apache, I am dying. This night has killed me!" and I repeated the words in a kind of moan, thinking myself foolish in a vague way, too, I remember, and wondering what Apache Kid would think of me. And then the darkness suddenly closed on me, a darkness in which I felt Apache Kid's hands groping at my armpits, lifting me up, and then I seemed to fall away through utter blackness.

When I came again from that darkness, I stretched out my hands and looked around.

I had been dreaming, I suppose, or delirious and fevered, for I thought myself at home, imagined myself waking in the dark hours; but only for a moment did that fancy obtain with me. All too soon I knew that I was lying in the Lost Cabin, but by the smell of the "fir-feathers" on which I lay, I knew that they were freshly gathered, and from the bottom of my heart I thanked Apache Kid for his forethought. For to have wakened in one of these bunks would, I believe, have made me more fevered than I was already. It was night, or coming morning again. The hatch was off the roof, and through that hole a gray smoke mounted from a fire upon the earthen floor. The door was fastened up again.

At my turning, Apache Kid came to me out of the shadows and bent over me; but his face frightened me, for with the fever I had then on me it seemed a monstrous size, filling the whole room. I had sense enough to know from this that I was ill, and looking into that face—which I knew my fever formed so hideously—I said:

"Oh, Apache! It would be better to die and have done with it."

"Nonsense, man," he said. "Nonsense, man. There are so many things that you have to live for," and he held up his left hand, the fingers seeming swollen to the size of puddings, and began counting upon them. "You have a lot of duties to perform to mankind before you can shuffle off. Shall I count some of them for you?" And he put his right forefinger to the thumb of his left hand and turned to me as though to begin; but he thought better of it, and then said he:

"I know you have a lot to do before you can shuffle off. But if you would perform these duties, you must calm yourself as best you can."

"How long have I lain here?" I asked suddenly.

"Just since morning," said he. "A mere nothing, man. After another sleep you will be better, and then we ——" he paused then.

"We will do what?" I said.

"We will get out of here and away home," he said, and took my hand just as a woman might have done, and wiped my brow and kept smoothing my hair till I slept again.

From this I woke to a sound of drumming, as of thousands of pattering feet.

It was the rain on the roof. Rain trickled from it in many places, running down in pools upon the floor. The smoke-hole was again covered, the fire out, but the door was open, and through it I had a glimpse of the hills, streaming with rain and mist.

Apache Kid sat on one of the rough stools by the door, looking outward, and I cried to him.

He came quick and eager at my cry.

"Better?" he said. "Aha! That's what the rain does. And here's the man that was going to die!" he rallied me. "Here, have a sip of this. It isn't sweet, but it will help you. I've been rummaging."

"What is it?" I asked.

"Just a little nip of cognac. They had that left, poor devils. It's a wonder Canlan——" he continued, and then stopped; doubtless I squirmed at the name.

I took over the draft, and he sat down on the fir-boughs and talked as gaily as ever man talked. All the substance of his talk I have forgotten, only I remember how he heartened me. It was my determination to fight the fever and sickness that we had nothing in the way of medicines to cure that he was trying to awaken. And I must say he managed it well.

With surprise I found myself sitting up and smoking a cigarette while he sat back nursing a knee, laughing on me and saying:

"Smoking a cigarette! A sick man! Sitting up—and inhaling, too—and blowing through the nose—a sick man—why, the thing's absurd!"

I looked and listened and smiled in return on him, and some thought came to me of what manner of man this was who ministered so kindly to me, and also of how near death's door he himself had been.

"How are you?" I asked. "Where was it you said you had been wounded? I fear I was so sick and queer that I have forgotten everything but seeing you again."

"I?" he said. "Oh, I have just pulled myself together by sheer will-power. I have a hole in my side, filled up with resin. But that's a mere nothing. It'll hold till we get back to civilization again, or else be healed by then. Thank goodness for our late friend's shaky hand." And at these words it struck me, thinking, I suppose, how narrowly Apache had missed death, that Canlan might be alive despite his fall.

Apache read the thought before I spoke. He nodded his head reassuringly, and said:

"We are safe from him. He will trouble us no more. I have seen, to make sure."

"I think I should be ashamed of myself," said I, "for giving in like this."

"Nonsense," said he. "You were sick enough last night, but you are all right now. Could you eat a thin, crisp pancake?—I won't say flapjack. A thin, crisp pancake?"

I thought I could, and found that he had a few ready against such a return to my normal. As I ate, he meditated. I could see that, though he spoke gaily enough, there was something on his mind. He looked at me several times, and then at last: "Do you think you could stand bad news?" he asked.

I looked up with inquiry.

"It's a fizzle, this!" he snapped; and then he told me that sure enough the three original owners of the mine had "struck something." But the ore, according to Apache Kid's opinion of the samples lying in the cabin, was of such a quality that it would not repay any one to work the place.

"Oh," he said, "if there was a smelter at the foot of the mountains, I don't say it wouldn't repay to rig up a bucket-tramway and plant; it's not so very poor-looking stuff; but to make a wagon-road, or even a pack-road, from here, say, to Kettle River Gap or even

to Baker City and use the ordinary road there for the further transportation—no, it wouldn't pay. We might hold this claim all our lives and the country might never open up this way while we lived; and what would we be the better for it all?"

It mattered little to me. My soul was sick of it all.

"Of course, that's the black side," he broke off. "Again this valley might be opened up—other prospects put on the market, and down there in that valley you'd live to see the smoke of a smelter smelting the ore of this little place of yours." He paused again. "But I doubt it," he said.

"So it's a fizzle?" I said half-heartedly.

"Yes," said he. "That is, practically a fizzle. As the country is at present it doesn't seem to me very hopeful. But of course I am one of those who believe in big profits and quick returns. It is perhaps scarcely necessary for me to tell you of that characteristic of mine, however, unless the excitement of your recent experience has caused you to forget the half-told story I was spinning to you when friend Canlan interrupted us. Man, how it does rain! And this," said he, looking up, "is only a preamble. If I'm not in error, we're going to have a fierce night to-night The storm-king is marshaling his forces. He doesn't often do it here, but when he does he does it with a vengeance. I think our best plan is to get the holes in this roof tinkered. I see the gaps round about have been blocked up recently. Was it you did that?"

I told him that the tinkering was Canlan's doing, to prevent an inroad of the rats, should we have slept in the place.

"Thanks be unto Canlan," said he. "We'll start on the roof."

At this task I assisted, standing on the wobbly stool and filling up the crevices.

It was when thus employed that in a cranny near the eaves I saw a piece of what looked like gunny-sacking protruding and catching hold of it it came away in my hand and there was a great scattering to the floor—of yellow raindrops, you might have thought; but they fell with a dull sound. I looked upon them lying there.

"What's that?" I cried. But indeed I guessed what these dirty yellow things were.

Apache Kid scooped up a handful and gave them but one glance. He was excited, I could see; but it was when he most felt excitement that this man schooled himself the most.

"Francis," said he, "there is, as many great men have written, compensation in all things. I think our journey will not be such a folly after all."

"These are gold nuggets?" said I. "Our fortunes are——" and then I remembered that I had already received my wages and that none of this was mine. "Your fortune is made," said I, correcting myself.

He smiled a queer little smile at my words.

"Well," he said, "if this indicates anything, my fortune is made in the only way I could ever make a fortune."

"Indicates?" I said. "How do you mean?"

"Pooh!" said he, turning the little, brass-looking peas in his hand. "These would hardly be called a fortune. Even a bagful of these such as you have unearthed don't run to very much. There is more of this sort of stuff in our cabin," said he.

I was a little mystified.

"Search!" he said. "Search! That is enough for the present. If our labors are rewarded, then I will give you an outline of the manner and customs of the Genus Prospector—a queer, interesting race."

We thought little now of filling up the holes in that cabin. It was more a work of dismantling that we began upon, I probing all around the eaves, Apache Kid picking away with one of the miners' picks, beginning systematically at one end of the cabin and working along.

"Here," I cried, "here is another," for I had come upon just such another sack and quickly undid the string.

"Why, what is this?" said I. "What are these?"

He took the bag and examined a handful of the contents—the green and the blue stones.

"This," said he, "is another sign of the customs of these men. This was Jackson's little lot, I expect; the man the Poorman boys picked up. Jackson was a long time in the Gila country."

"But what are they?" I said.

"Why, turquoise," replied Apache Kid.

"Turquoises in America?" I said.

"Yes," said he, "and a good American turquoise can easily match your Persian variety."

He went over and sat down upon his stool.

"I don't like this," said he disgustedly, and I waited his meaning. "Fancy!" he cried, and then paused and said: "Fancy? You don't need to fancy! You see it here before you. When I say *fancy*, what I mean is this: Can you put yourself, by any effort of imagination, into the ego of a man who has a fortune in either of his boot-soles, a fortune in his belt, a fortune in the lining of his old overcoat, and yet goes on hunting about in the mountain seeking more wealth, groveling about like a mole? Can you get in touch with such a man? Can you discover in your soul the possibility of going and doing likewise? If you can, then you're not the man I took you for."

"They didn't get these turquoises here, then?" I said.

"Oh, no! I don't suppose that there is such a thing as a turquoise in this whole territory. Don't you see, we've struck these fellows' bank-accounts? Did you ever hear of a prospector putting his whole funds in a bank? Never! He'll trust the bank with enough for a rainy day. The only thing that he'll do with his whole funds is to go in for some big gamble, such as the Frisco Lottery that put thousands of such old moles on their beam-ends. In a gamble he'll stake his all, down to his packhorse. But he doesn't like the idea of putting out his wealth for quiet, circumspect, two-a-half per cent. interest. He'd rather carry it in his boot-soles than do that any day."

Up he got then, and really I must leave it to you to decide how much was pose, how much was actual in Apache Kid, when he said:

"I think we had better continue our search, however, not so much for the further wealth we may find as to satisfy curiosity. It would be interesting to know just how much wealth these fellows wouldn't trust the banks with. Let us continue this interesting and instructive search."

For my part, I who heard the ring in his voice as he spoke, I think he was really greatly excited, and to talk thus calmly was just his way.

CHAPTER XXI.

REENTER THE SHERIFF OF BAKER CITY.

"Pardon the question," said Apache Kid, looking on me across the hoard, he sitting cross-legged upon one side, I sprawled upon the other, "but do you feel no slightest desire stealing in upon you to possess this all for yourself?"

I started at him in astonishment, so serious he was.

"It does not even enter your head to regret my return from the dead?"

"Apache!" I exclaimed.

He chuckled to himself.

"I fear," said he, "that you are of too refined a nature for this hard world. I predict that before you come to the age of thirty you will be aweary of its cruelty—always understanding when I say world that I mean the men in the world. I have to thank you for not suggesting that that was the way in which I used the word. It wearies me to have the obvious always iterated in my ears. So you feel no hankerings to see me dead?"

I made no reply, and he chuckled again and then looked upon our trove.

We made certain we had found it all —the first bag of small nuggets that I told you of, the bag of turquoise, two more bags of larger nuggets, and three separate rolls of dollar and five-dollar

bills. The bills amounted to a hundred and fifty dollars—a mere drop in the bucket, as Apache said. It was the two bags of larger nuggets and the bag of turquoises that were the real "trove," but Apache Kid would not hazard a guess of their value. All that he would say then, as he weighed them in his palm, was: "You are safe, Francis—you need no more run with the pack." I did not at the moment understand his use of the word "pack," but his next words explained it.

"The only way," said he slowly, rolling a cigarette with the last thin dust of tobacco that remained in his pouch, so that he had to shake it over his hand carefully, "the only way that I can see to prevent that world-weariness coming over you is for you to acquire a sufficiency to live upon, a sufficiency that shall make it unnecessary for you to accept the laws of the pack and rend and tear and practise cunning. I think, considering such a temperament as yours, I should call off with our old bargain and strike a new one with you—half-shares."

I heaved a deep sigh. I saw myself returning home—and that right speedily—I saw already the blue sea break in white foam, the train journey north, the clean streets of my own town through which I hastened—home.

"Ah, these castles," said Apache Kid, after a pause which I suppose was very brief, for such thoughts move quickly in the mind. "They can all be built now."

Then he leaned forward; and he was truly serious as he looked on me.

"But one thing you will do in return," he said, and it was as the sign of an agony that I saw on his face. "You will do that little bit of business for me that I asked you once before?"

He paused, harkening; and I too was on the alert. The squelching of a horse's hoofs was audible without.

"Our pack-pony," said I; "it has come down for shelter, I expect."

He rose and walked to the door.

"Chuck that stuff under your bed!" said he suddenly.

I made haste, with agitated hands, to carry out the order, and as I bent to my task I heard a voice that seemed familiar say:

"Apache Kid, I arrest you in the name of——"

The remainder I lost, for Apache Kid's cheery voice broke in:

"Well, well, sheriff—this is an unexpected pleasure! Come in, sir; come in; though I fear we can offer but slender——"

"All right," I heard the sheriff say. "Glad to see you take it so well." And with a heavy tramp entered the sheriff of Baker City booted and spurred and the rain running in a cascade from his hat, the brim of which was turned down all around.

"Donoghue," he said, "Larry Donoghue, I arrest you in—say; where's Donoghue, and what are you doin' here, you, sir?"

This latter was, of course, to me.

"Donoghue you can never get now," said Apache Kid. "He will be saved the trouble of putting up a defense. But won't you bring in your men?"

"Is that your hoss along there on the hill under that big tree?" said the sheriff.

"That," said Apache Kid, "was Canlan's horse, I believe."

The sheriff hummed to himself.

"So," he said quietly, "just so. There ain't any chance o' Canlan dropping in here, is there?"

"None whatever," said Apache Kid calmly.

"So," said the sheriff. "Well, I guess them pinto broncs of ours can do very well under that tree. That bronc of Canlan's seemed some lonesome. Seemed kind o' chirped up to see others o' his species. They'll do very well there till we get dried a bit."

He looked again at me and shook his head mournfully.

"You look kind of sick," he said, "but it's all right. Don't worry. You'll only be in as a witness."

"Witness for what?" I asked.

"Murder of Mr. Pinkerton, proprietor of the Half-way House to Camp Kettle."

Apache interrupted:

"Do you happen to have such a thing as quinin about you, sheriff?"

"Sure," said the sheriff; "always carry it in the hills."

"Give my friend a capsule," he said, "and defer all this talk."

"Murder of Mr. Pinkerton!" I cried; but just then the sheriff stooped and lifted a slip of paper from the floor.

"Literature!" he said. "Keepsake poem or what?"

Then I noticed his firm, kindly eyebrows lift. He turned to Apache Kid.

"This," he said, "seems to have fallen out your press-cuttin' book. I see in a paper the other day where they supply press-cuttin's to piano-wallopers and barnstormers and what not. You should try one o' them. I disremember the fee; but it wasn't nothing very deadly."

Then I knew what the cutting was that he had come into possession of. It was the cutting Larry Donoghue had shown me in his childish, ignorant pride, the account of the "hold-up" by "the twosome gang." I must have thrust it absently into my pocket, hardly knowing what I was doing, when Canlan's shot interrupted the unusual conversation of that terrible camp.

The sheriff hummed over it.

"Kind o' lurid, this," he said; and at that comment Apache Kid's face became radiant in a flash.

"Sir," he said, "I am charmed to know you. You are a man of taste. I always objected to the way these things are recounted."

The sheriff rolled his bright eye on Apache, misunderstanding his pleasure which, though it sounded something exaggerated, was assuredly genuine enough.

"I guess the way it's told don't alter the fact that in the main it's true. It would mean a term of years, you know."

For the first time in my knowledge of him Apache Kid's face showed that he had been hit. He gave a frown, and said:

"Yes, that's the ugly side of it; that's the reality. It must be an adventurous sort of life, the life portrayed in that cutting. I fancy that it is the adventuring, and not the money-getting, that lures any one into it, and a man who loves adventure would naturally resent a prison-cell."

The sheriff, with lowered head and blank eyes, gazed from under his brows on Apache Kid.

"I guess it's sheer laziness, sir," said he, "and the man who likes that way of living, and follows it up, is liable to stretch hemp!"

"That would be better, I should fancy, than the prison-cell," said Apache Kid. "The fellows told about there would prefer that, I should think."

The sheriff made no answer, but turned to the door and bade his men unharness the pintos and come in.

"You there, Slim," said he to one of the two; "you take possession o' them firearms laying there. But you can let the gentlemen have their belts."

Apache Kid was already kindling the fire. The rain had taken off a little, and before sunset there was light, a watery light on the wet wilderness. So the hatch was flung off and supper was cooked for all. The sheriff and these two men of his—one an Indian tracker, the other Slim, a long-nosed fellow with steely glints in his eyes and jaws working on a quid of tobacco when they were not chewing the flapjack—made themselves at home at once. And it astounded me, after the first few words were over, to find how the talk arose on all manner of subjects—horses, brands, trails, the relative uses and value of rifles, bears and their moody, uncertain habits, wildcats and their ways. Even the Paris Exposition, somehow or other, was mentioned, I remember, and the long-nosed, sheriff's man looked at Apache Kid.

"I think I seen you there," said he.

"Likely enough," said Apache Kid, unconcernedly.

"What was you *blowing in* that trip?" asked the long-nosed fellow, with what to me seemed distinctly admiration in his manner.

Apache looked from him to the sheriff. They seemed all to understand

one another very well, and a cynical and half-kindly smile went round. The Indian, too, I noticed—though he very probably had only a hazy idea of the talk—looked long and frequently at Apache Kid—with something of the gaze that a very intelligent dog bestows on a venerated master—his intuition serving him where his knowledge of English and of white men's affairs was lacking.

They talked, also, about the ore that had gathered us all together there, and Apache Kid showed the sheriff a sample of it, and listened to his opinion, which ratified his own.

On the sheriff's handing back the sample to Apache Kid the latter held it out to the assistant with the bow and inclination that you see in drawing-rooms at home when a photograph or some curio is being examined.

There was a quiet courtesy among these men that reminded me of what Apache Kid had said regarding Carlyle's remark on the manners of the backwoods. And it was very droll to note it: Apache in his shirt and belt, and the long-nose—I never heard him called but by his sobriquet of Slim—opposite him, cross-legged, with his hat on the back of his head and his chin in the palm of his hand, the elbow in his lap, at the side of which stuck out the butt of his Colt, the holster-flap hanging open.

"I know nothing about mineral," said Slim, in his drawl. "I'm from the plains."

Apache Kid handed the ore over to the Indian, who took it dumbly, and turned it over, but with heedless eyes; and he presently laid it down beside him, and then sat quiet again, looking on and listening. Never a word he said except when, each time he finished a cigarette and threw the end into the fire, the sheriff with a glance would throw him his pouch and cigarette-paper. The dusky fingers would roll the cigarette, the thin lips would gingerly wet it, and then the pouch was handed back with the papers sticking in it, the sheriff holding out a hand, without looking, to receive it. And on each of these occasions—about a dozen in the course of an hour—the Indian opened his lips and grunted, "Thank."

Then the conversation dwindled, and the sheriff voiced a desire "to see down that there hole myself."

The Indian had risen and gone out a little before this, and just as the sheriff rose he appeared at the door again, and looking in he remarked:

"Bad night come along down," and he pointed to the sky.

"Oh!' said the sheriff, "bad night?"

"'Es, a bad mountain dis," said the Indian. "No good come here."

"You wouldn't come here yourself, eh?" said the sheriff, smiling, but you could see he was not the man to ignore any word he heard. He was wont to listen to everything and weigh all that he heard in his mind, and take what he thought fit from what he heard, like one winnowing a harvest.

"No, no!" said the Indian emphatically. "I think—a no good stop-over here. Only a damn fool white man. White man no care. A heap a bad mountain," he ended solemnly.

"Devils?" inquired the sheriff. "Bad spirits maybe?" and he looked as serious as though he believed in all manner of evil spirits himself.

The Indian seemed almost bashful now.

"Oh! I dono devil," he said, and then after thinking he decided to acknowledge his belief. "Ees," he said, and he looked more shy than ever, "maybe bad spirit—you laugh. Bad mountain, all same, devil o' no devil."

"And what's like wrong with the mountain?"

"He go away some day."

"Mud-slide, eh?" asked Apache Kid.

The Indian nodded.

"Oh! Heap big mud-slide," he said. "You come a look."

We all trooped on his heels, and then he led us to the gable of the shanty and pointed up to the summit.

"God preserve us," said Slim.

"Alle same crack," said the Indian. "Too much dry. Gumbo all right; vely bad for stick when rain come; he hold together in dry; keep wet long

time—all same chewing-gum," he added with brilliancy.

"But this ain't like chewin'-gum, heh?" said the sheriff, following the drift of the Indian's pidgin-English.

"Nosiree," said the Indian, "no hold together, come away plop, thick."

"It's a durned fine picture he's drawin'," said Slim. "I can kind o' see it, though. 'Plop,' he says. I can kind o' hear that plop."

Along the hill above us, sure enough, we could see a long gash running a great part of the hill near the summit, in the black frontage of it.

"Well," said the sheriff, "I shouldn't like to be under a mud-slide. But you'd think that them two ribs here would hold the face o' this hill together, wouldn't you?"

He looked up at the sky; sunset seemed a thought quicker than usual, and there were great, heavy clouds crawling up again, as last night, from behind the mountains.

Apache Kid had said not a word so far, but now he spoke.

"I've seen a few mud-slides in my time, sheriff," he said; "but this one would be a colossal affair. Might I ask you a question before I offer advice?"

"Sure," said the sheriff wonderingly.

"Is it only the charge of murdering Mr. Pinkerton that you want me for, or would you try to make a further name for your smartness by using that clue you got about the twosome gang—not to put too fine a point upon it?"

You would have thought the sheriff had a real liking for Apache Kid the way he looked at him then.

He took the cutting from his sleeve, and tore it up and trampled it into the wet earth.

"I guess the hangin' will do you, without anything else," said he; from which, of course, one could not exactly gage his inmost thoughts. But sheriffs study that art. They learn to be ever genial, without ever permitting the familiarity that breeds contempt—genial and stern.

"In that case," said Apache Kid, "I would suggest leaving this cabin right away. I want to clear myself of that charge; and if that crack widened during the night, I might never be able to do that."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MUD-SLIDE.

From our scrutiny of the mountain above us the sheriff turned aside.

"If we have to leave here, I reckon I just have a look at that hole o' theirs and see what like it is to my mind," said he, "with all due respect to your judgment, sir"—this to Apache Kid—"and out of a kind o' curiosity."

He bade the Indian go with him to tend the windlass and Apache Kid and I returned to the cabin, Slim following ostentatiously at our heels, and remaining at the door watching the sheriff.

I plucked my friend by the sleeve. This was the first opportunity we had had for private speech since the sheriff's arrival.

"Apache," I said, "what is the meaning of this arrest? Is it the half-breed that came with Mr. Pinkerton who has garbled the tale of his death for some reason?"

He shook his head.

"No," said he, "not the half-breed. I'll wager it is some of Farrell's gang that are at the bottom of it."

"But they," I began, "they were all——" and I stopped on the word.

"Wiped out?" he said. "True; but you forget Pete, the timid villain."

"But he," I said, "he was away long before that affair of poor Mr. Pinkerton."

"Yes, but doubtless the Indian made up on him, and whether they talked or not Pete could draw his conclusions. And a man like Pete, one of your coyote order of bad men, would just sit down and plot and plan——"

"But even then," I said, "they can't prove a thing that never occurred; they can't prove that you did what you never did."

He looked at me with lenient, sidewise eyes, not turning his head, and then pursed his lips and gazed before

him again at the door, where Slim's long back loomed against the storm-darkened sky.

"All this," said he, "is guesswork, of course; for the sheriff is reticent and so am I. But as for *proving,* I dare say Pete could get a crony or two together to swear they saw me. Oh! But let this drop," he broke out. "If there's anything that makes me sick now, it's building up fabrications. Let us look on the bright side. Gather together your belongings and thank Providence for sending us the convoy of the sheriff to see us safely back to civilization with our loot."

"You're a brave man," I said. But he did not seem to hear.

"What vexes me," said he, "is to think that Miss Pinkerton may have heard this yarn and placed credence in it."

The entrance of the sheriff, with a serious face, put an end to the conversation then.

"Well," said Apache Kid, "what do you think?"

"I think this is a derned peculiar mountain," said the sheriff, "and I reckon you boys had better pack your truck. That hole's full."

"Water?" said Apache Kid.

"No," said the sheriff; "full of mountain. You can see the upward side of it jest sliding down bodily in the hole, props and all. They must ha' had some difeeculty in it, the way they had it wedged. You noticed?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's just closed up now, plumb. Went together with a suck, like this yere," and he imitated it with his mouth. "Reckon we better get ready to pull out, if needs be. What in thunder——" he broke off.

Apache Kid, Slim, and the sheriff looked at each other. You should have heard the sound. It was like the sound of one tearing through a web of cloth—a giant tearing a giant's web and it of silk.

"The horses!" the sheriff cried; but the Indian had already gone. "How about yours, young feller?"

I made for the door to follow the Indian and catch the horses, out onto the hillside—and saw only half the valley. The other half was hid behind the wall of rain that bore down on us.

The Indian was ahead of me, scudding along to where the lone pine stood; but the terrified horses saw us coming and ran to meet us, quivering and sweating.

Then the rain smote us and knocked the breath clean out of me. I had heard of such onslaughts but had hardly credited those who told of them. I might have asked pardon then for my unbelief. I was sent flying on the hillside and was like a cloth drawn through water before I could get to my feet again. The Indian was scarcely visible, nor his three horses. I saw him prone one moment, and again I saw him trying to hold them together as he—how shall I describe it?—*lay* aslant upon the gale. I succeeded in quieting my beast, and then turned and signed to him that I would lead one of his beasts also, for when I opened my mouth to speak, he being windward of me, the gust of the gale blew clean into my lungs so that I had to whirl about and with lowered head gasp out the breath and steady myself. But he signed to me to go, and nodded his head in reassurance, though when he cried to me it went past my ear in an incomprehensible yell.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The Fleet With Salt On Its Tail

By Randolph Marshall

The American people have followed with interest and pride the round-the-world voyage of their great battle-ship fleet, ready for fight or frolic. There are both fight and frolic in this very out-of-the-ordinary naval story. The central idea is the development of a seriously considered tactical problem recently advanced by a noted officer of the United States navy

THAT I was a participant in the crushing deep-sea joke that paralyzed a world-power and left six continents in a state of laughing nervous hysteria I owe to a fact which I count as a source of worthy self-satisfaction—my friendship with John E. Odds, now full admiral, U. S. N., whose master mind ordered those stupendous events which rearranged the precedence of nations at the cost of a summer cruise. These personal experiences of the brief campaign I write as the preliminary to the pretentious record which, prepared with technical assistance, shall be my justification for my extraordinary privilege.

War, the result of German aggression in the Far East, had been the theme of the daily press for weeks, when one evening I availed myself of opportunity and called on my friend the admiral on his flag-ship the *Delaware* in the Upper Bay. We talked of men and women and war and in due course of time he took occasion to turn a deft compliment on my calling.

"My boy," remarked the amiable admiral, "there is no rule that can be drafted to insure the permanent enjoyment of health, wealth or love, but when glory lies within a man's grasp and he fails to hold it, the fault is his own, for the answer lies in a press-agent."

I bowed in modest depreciation. That I owned to some small skill in the line of endeavor so handsomely commended by the admiral it would be useless for me to deny.

"That little affair of the pearl-dust complexion-poultice," I murmured.

"Masterly, masterly," assented the admiral, with enthusiasm. "It was on a par, in a divergent line, with my little affair at Bombomgita—you recall the incident—which caused me to be tagged with that popular and endearing but abominable title, 'Eat-'em-up-Jack.'" And the admiral, eying me shrewdly, pressed his lips in a grim smile.

I was so far from falling in with his humor that fatuously I maintained the attitude which had provoked his quiet amusement.

"The matter of the pearl dust——" I began, when to my mind the admiral showed rather less than his usual kindly consideration by interrupting me with a trifling show of impatience.

"I know all that," he began. "That and the dyed dog and the other things by which you conferred all the fame that she could absorb on Mrs. Michael Dromedary, the eminent emotional actress. But that work was beneath your talents. When I consider what you have done for these mimic heroes of the stage, it convinces me that you are the man to attend to a real—a national hero in the making."

Knowing the admiral's trick of concealing, on occasion, his real thoughts by masking them with a jest, I glanced up and saw that while his cheeks were drawn to simulate a smile, there were

no answering wrinkles in the corners of his eyes. I held my peace, and waited.

"Within two months," he continued, "we shall have a declaration of war from his impetuous majesty. I shall command a fleet. I propose to win the most amazing victory in the annals of warfare. Am I to trust my fame to the perfunctory report prescribed by tradition, to be supplemented perhaps years afterward by a dreary autobiography that no one will read? Hardly. I can't take with me only one reporter, for that would put every paper except his in a frame of mind to picture me as a colossal sea fraud. If I loaded the fleet with reporters from every paper, each one would ascribe to me a different speech at the critical moment, thereby amusing my contemporaries and confusing what would otherwise be an admiring posterity."

The admiral by this time was smiling broadly, partly at his own grandiose burlesque and partly at what he took to be my bewilderment. With me there was no responsive evidence of merriment. I had gone a step ahead and was grasping at his idea.

"My plan," continued the admiral confidentially, "is to entrust to your skilled hand the embalming of my fame, and as you perpetuate that, so shall you have the proportionate distinction of the historian."

"To my skilled hand?" I inquired with amazement. "Why, my dear admiral, my knowledge of war is confined to repelling the occasional sallies of an offensive landlord or an impossible gas-collector."

"Just so," said the admiral with a quizzical air. "I want no technical, analytical exposition of a feat whose beautiful simplicity would be clouded by such a method of treatment. What I want will be a plain recital of facts, tempered with imagination. The occasion will inspire you to the creation of historic phrases, the value of which is known to none better than to yourself. It is plain to me that you are the man I need. You can enlist, and as a yeoman will be aboard this vessel on the great occasion. You shall witness the capture of a fleet," he cried with rising enthusiasm.

"But I never have heard a shot fired in anger. The thing would appal me, and I should be useless," I protested.

"You will hear few shots fired in anger or otherwise," chuckled the admiral.

"How do you propose to destroy the other fleet?" I demanded.

"I don't propose to destroy it. I propose to capture it—by putting salt on its tail."

And so it came about that two weeks later I was aboard the flag-ship in a uniform of blue, an untouched account-book before me and a pen behind my ear. To the world I was a yeoman; to the admiral and to myself I was the historian-to-be of the capture of a mighty fleet by the process of "putting salt on its tail."

As all the world knows, the ships of his impetuous majesty's navy sailed from Kiel on April 3. Fifteen battleships with trial-speed records that on paper guaranteed a fleet movement of more than seventeen knots, accompanied by a single scout ship and fourteen imposing colliers, steamed from the base under sealed orders. Amid the roar of guns and the shrieks of whistles his majesty uttered the historic words that were to be linked inseparably with the occasion, but in the tumult they were indistinguishable.

Meanwhile I had long been an interested witness of the ceaseless, calm activity that was putting our fleet in condition to execute the admiral's plan, of which at that time I had not the vaguest knowledge. I knew that his sixteen battle-ships were regarded, on the whole, as being nearly the equal of those of the enemy, for what was lacked in weight of defensive armor we made up in greater speed and an unbounded faith in our personnel. When the enemy's start was made, our fleet had been ready for six days to slip its leash the moment sailing-orders were received. The general understanding among the officers and men was that the

ships of his impetuous majesty designed to take a southern course, seize one of our insular ports, and there establish a temporary base for coaling, preparatory to the decisive engagement that was planned to cripple our sea-power.

Our speedy scouts swarmed in mid-Atlantic, ready to sound the alarm with the musketry-rattle of the wireless-telegraph. Nothing was to be expected from them for several days, however, and meanwhile we read with absorbed interest the newspaper reports of the leisurely progress of the enemy down the North Sea, through the Channel, and out into the North Atlantic. That last piece of information came in the late editions of the afternoon papers, and with it arrived the long-awaited word that cut us free for the morrow—free to seek the enemy.

There was work done that night, however, and from the talk of the veteran bluejackets concerned I judged that it was of a most astonishing character. With the fall of night a swarm of lighters put out from the Staten Island shore, some laden deep with bags of hand-picked coal, and others empty. They ranged alongside every vessel in the fleet, the coal-carriers discharging their cargoes into the battle-ships, and the other lighters receiving from the depths of the war-craft a corresponding amount of ammunition and supplies. As the understanding throughout the fleet had been that we were in perfect battle-trim before this proceeding, the whole affair gave rise to an immense amount of speculation among the fo'c'stle strategy boards.

Almost with the dawn came our tide, and with the tide we started, the *Delaware* in the lead. Of the roaring multitudes that gave us Godspeed I was not then nor am I now concerned. The fleets of little boats that followed us vainly seeking to judge our destination from our early course, soon were driven back by the bark of a six-pounder. The shores of New Jersey and Long Island dropped far behind, and we were at last untrammeled on our mission to make history. Far, far behind stretched the snaky column of the mighty fleet. As I watched it, its general direction began to change. The flag-ship's altering course threw her consorts into an arc-formation.

The sailors watched the maneuver with eyes practised to draw information from the nod of an admiral, the drink of a lieutenant or the turn of the helmsman's hand on the wheel. Our course had been a little east of south, and would have carried the fleet in the direction of the locality favored in the popular guessing as the probable scene of the conflict. With every nerve stretched these brawny pawns sought a clue to the opening move decided on by the master mind in this game of world-chess. Slowly the long line behind straightened out. The course was fixed. In close knots the men murmured among themselves. Finally one hoarse voice whispered above the others:

"By the great North American word, we're bound straight for Gibraltar."

This bit of information meant nothing to me, nor, in fact, did it to the others. On all the fleet more than seventeen thousand men were racking their brains to figure out the significance of the move, but I was content to await the explanation which I was sure soon would be coming to me from the admiral. So I returned to my desk and was in a fair way to win a summary derating from my immediate superior because of my inability to add a column of figures, when I received an order to report to the officer of the deck. He regarded me curiously as I made a halting salute. His eyes, roving over me from head to feet, seemed to find less cause for satisfaction the farther they went. I realized that a man who for some years has indulged his disinclination for athletics and his preference for late suppers is not likely to present the ideal figure of a trim man-o'-war's man, but I saw no occasion for such a painful scrutiny. The lieutenant sighed.

"Here, Cassidy," he called to a boatswain's mate, "make this man look something like a sailor."

So Cassidy went to work. He began at my hat, which he jerked to a different angle, and then went regularly

down my absurd attire, tucking in, pulling out and otherwise readjusting me to the satisfaction of the officer. One thing I learned, and that was that the ingenious corset-lacing affair in the back of the trousers was designed to obviate the necessity for suspenders, the lack of which was beginning to be to me a grievous source of worry. Cassidy finished his job, grinned, saluted and was dismissed. Then the lieutenant turned to me.

"You are a little more presentable now," he said. "You can go to the admiral's cabin. He wants to see you. Though," with an uncomplimentary gesture, "God knows why."

I took solace for all this in the secret knowledge of my friendship with the admiral, and started for his cabin with as much of an air of dignity as a man can assume while walking in a pair of cones. I was admitted to the presence of the commander-in-chief without parley. As I stood at attention, he dismissed his secretary and, with an air of embarrassment, invited me to be seated. I saw at once that his restraint was due to the fact that my position was anomalous. When he had concocted our little subterfuge, he had not calculated on the prospect of having to deal on intimate terms with an enlisted man in uniform. The situation thus created was not pleasant to me, and I determined to relieve it by taking refuge in my assumed character. So I saluted again, and remained standing.

"Sit down; sit down," the admiral insisted, repenting of his momentary thought. "We can play a play and be in earnest, too. It is time now that I should give you an outline of the game that we are to carry out. Open that drawer and help yourself to a cigar from the big box. Then listen to me, for what I am about to tell you contains the key to the things that you shall witness, if all goes well, and I may not be able to meet you again for further prompting."

The admiral also lighted a cigar, but in the absorbed attention that we gave to the subject, we both stopped smoking, and later when I carried my cigar back to quarters its evident quality aroused some speculation among my shipmates as to my source of tobacco supply.

"My fleet, as you know," began the admiral, "consists of sixteen battleships and three colliers, which latter need not enter into your calculations, for I shall lose them in mid-ocean, pick them up again at unimportant intervals and finally call them up by wireless when I want them. The enemy's fleet consists of fifteen battle-ships, a scout ship and fourteen colliers, which they must keep by them at all hazards, for they have to cross the ocean, seize a base, recoal and then begin their serious demonstration. I do not propose to let them carry out that plan or any part of it." And the admiral chuckled.

"The enemy's fleet, with its paper record of more than seventeen knots, cannot, in its present form, make more than sixteen. To develop that speed would of course involve casting off its colliers. My fleet, put to its best performance to-day can make eighteen. That gives us an approximate advantage of two knots an hour, or twenty-four knots in a day of twelve hours. I propose to meet the enemy on that spot in the Atlantic which gives us the greatest amount of sea-room—that is, about midway between the Azores and Bermuda. When Admiral Von Kirsch comes up with us, he will find, not an active enemy, but an escort. We shall be ready for battle, but avoiding battle. When we have accompanied him as far in one direction as we think desirable, we shall turn him around, willy-nilly, and make him go in another direction, and we shall continue that process until the heroic enemy is without strength, that is, without coal, and he will lie helpless on this ocean, waiting to be towed into harbor.

"My dependence in executing this plan rests on two things—more speed and more coal. Before the enemy comes in sight of this fleet it will have gone about twice the distance that we plan to travel. That will have depleted its coal supply, leaving to us all the advantage in that respect that comes from

our original overstocking and the economy made possible by our leisurely progress.

"When we come in sight of the enemy, they will of course believe that we have sought them out to engage at once, despite the unprecedented course of seeking a modern naval conflict in mid-ocean. When they line up, we too will line up; but there will be no fight.

"That, I think, is all I need to tell you. What follows will explain itself as the action unfolds before you. I have no wish to blunt the keen edge of your appreciation of a masterpiece. And above all, do not fail to get busy with historic phrases."

With this final pleasantry the admiral gave my arm a friendly squeeze, and so I was dismissed, a little more puzzled than before. My mind reverted to his final jocular injunction, and when I considered all that he had told me in our several conversations, I confessed myself unable to pick out a ground-plan for the building up of any utterance likely to inspire posterity. It was obvious that "A little more speed, Captain Blank," or "Damn the coal-bunkers, Lieutenant Dash," or "Heave the salt on their tails, Commander Stars," were hopelessly commonplace. But all the admiral had suggested pertained to speed, coal and salt.

At intervals the wireless was working on the flag-ship, even from the very start, but on the morning of the third day out the apparatus rattled away unceasingly. Though we were all trim and ready for emergency, some final touches were put upon the ship that indicated to the men of experience that the time of trouble was upon us. Evidently the scout ships were doing their work well. Hands were rubbed in the repressed excitement, and brows were furrowed by the intentness of the scrutiny that the men along the rail devoted to the horizon.

About ten o'clock in the forenoon there came what was to me an unintelligible cry from one of the tops, but every one else knew its significance and made a rush for the starboard quarter. For what seemed to me like ten minutes there was silence among the few men allowed to remain on the rail, though the officers were busy enough, in all conscience. Then came whisperings and pointings, but strain my eyes as I would, I saw nothing. Finally I caught the faint trace of a smudge on the horizon, and knew that we were in the presence of the fleet of his impetuous majesty, bound southwest, and steaming at a good rate.

About the time of my observation of the enemy, our course was shifted slightly to bring him on the port quarter, and we made as though to cross his path at right angles. To this there was an immediate response, for Admiral Von Kirsch, seeing in this a menace, by a magnificent sweep threw his line in a parallel column, ready for the opening of hostilities.

At this period, marking the beginning of what were to seem an endless series of maneuvers, the fleets were a little more than four miles apart, with the enemy to the northeast. Almost at the instant that Von Kirsch changed his course, the flags fluttered from the top of our flag-ship's signal-mast, and the American fleet turned around in its tracks, as it were, heading west, a little by north. This brought us parallel to and a little in advance of the enemy's line of battle. "We're going to throw the sun in their eyes," said Simpkins, a gun-pointer to whom I applied for information as to the significance of this movement.

"Why?" I inquired further.

Simpkins regarded me with an air of impersonal curiosity such as an entomologist might display on being confronted by a bug with conversational powers.

"When I was with Dewey at Manil——" he began, but broke off with a snort of disgust. "And they let the like of this take up a man's room aboard ship when there's work to be done. But listen. Lest you should disgrace the navy some day by asking that question in the hearing of a landsman, I'll tell you. Let down one of your long ears, and don't bray until I get through.

"Those ships that you see over there are more than seven thousand yards, or four miles, away. When Eat-'em-up-Jack wants to begin his meal, we'll go up to within about six thousand yards, and then, sonny, hunt cover, for the noise I'm going to help make might make you think that a fight was going on. Now, if we have the sun in our eyes, it will cut our hits down almost fifty per cent., but if we steam fast enough to keep the sun in their eyes, the pumpernickle gunners on those ships will think they are alone on the boundless deep, so far as a chance of hitting us is concerned."

With this bit of tactical information I was of necessity content, at least for the time being. The fleets maintained their same relative positions, although Admiral Von Kirsch evidently was drawing heavily on his coal supply in a vain effort to block the maneuver, the purpose of which he of course realized. The colliers of both fleets had speedily been lost to view. As the sun passed the meridian, throwing its baffling gleams past us and into his men's eyes, Van Kirsch sought to draw off a little, as though to study out a plan to overcome the advantage that lay in our superior speed.

But Admiral Odds had no idea of allowing the enemy to stretch his leash. The fleets moved like the parts of parallel rulers, always that disconcerting distance of seven thousand yards being maintained—just a little too far for the work of properly exchanging impersonal death and destruction. From the ranks of the fo'c'stle strategy board there began to come murmurs.

"Throwing away the advantage," was the bitter growl of the men. "We could 'a' finished 'em in two hours. When sailors was *sailors* they took what the good Lord sent 'em and used it to lick the other feller."

At thus hearing my admiral traduced, I burned with a desire to set him right, but even had I been at liberty to speak, I fear that I should have been unable to convey any justifying sense of his higher strategy. So I kept my own counsel and settled down to watch what I feared would be a wearying piece of business.

The afternoon passed, and with the dazzling sunset came revival of hopes among the men that the actual business of war had been delayed only until this propitious moment. But the sun sank and the search-lights began to blaze, and there was no change, except that we sheered up a little toward the enemy and settled down to a slow movement in the direction of nowhere. With the fall of darkness, the fleets had reduced speed.

Except that we were cleared for action, there was no change noticeable to me in the conduct of the men aboard the flag-ship. The watch below was kept as usual that night, and the petty officers saw to it that the men had the opportunity, at least, for their usual allowance of sleep. For my part, relying on my admiral's assurance, I had an undisturbed repose.

With the dawn, however, I was looking eagerly over the side of the ship to get a view of the enemy, and into my eyes was cast the glare of the rising sun, a condition that troubled me not a little, for what if Admiral Von Kirsch should in some way force us to engage now?

As if in answer to my misgivings, a signal was run up, the engines of the flag-ship began to send a keener tremor through the mighty vessel, and from all the funnels of the fleet poured billows of black smoke. There was an immediate response from the ships of his impetuous majesty, and "full speed ahead" was the order of the day. The enemy tried to close in on us, to take advantage of our altered situation regarding the sun, but we moved off a point or two likewise, and continued to use our superior speed to such good effect that at the end of three hours our leading battle-ship, obeying an order from the flag-ship, then at the rear of the line, began to lead the way across the bows of the vessel that headed the opposing armament. While I was speculating whether my admiral was not going to betray my trust and engage in a pitched battle, I heard my name

called, and turned around to salute the lieutenant who had previously superintended my first shipshape toilet.

"By direction," he began vaguely, "I am to supply you with these glasses and to fill up a part of your mental abyss. We are at present engaged in capping, or T-ing, the enemy's fleet. The enemy, as you may soon observe, will find himself the upright to our crosspiece, and in a serious predicament should he persist in that foolish course, for all our ships, should they so desire will be in a position to hammer his foremost vessels, while his rear vessels will be practically out of the action, to be attended to later. Then, too, if we begin unloosing torpedoes they can't help hitting something if they merely travel far enough. The alternative is for the enemy to turn in another direction, again present its formation in a column parallel to our own, and then," he added explosively, his mystified temper getting the better of his self-control, "begin all this damned rigmarole over again."

Even as he spoke, I saw through the lenses of my new possession the line of Admiral Von Kirsch shift to the westward and soon the war-ships were steaming along like two friendly excursion fleets, pursuing a course that was almost due south. By this time I concluded, Von Kirsch must have fathomed the full purpose of Admiral Odds, and been busy devising a definite plan to escape the situation in which he appeared to be hopelessly placed. However that might have been, he played no tricks when the sun, passing the meridian, gave the signal for the repetition of our turning maneuver. It was accomplished with precision, and now there began to spread through the fleet a rumor of our admiral's real intention, which gave a new turn to the enthusiasm of the men, for they were as ready for a frolic as for a fight, and this promised to be the colossal practical joke of the century.

Toward evening the wind began to freshen, and enough sea was kicked up to let a landsman know the feeling that comes with the first cousin of seasickness. In the absence of any duty, I was preparing to make myself as comfortable as possible in some secluded spot, when a cry from the lookout made me forget all feelings of squeamishness and run to the side with the others to see the cause of the alarm.

"Another fleet," was the first word that was passed around, and sure enough, soon on the horizon we were able to make out several vessels. It was not long, however, before the strangers were identified as the German colliers. They steamed around so as to give us a wide berth, and fell back in the rear of the enemy, a movement to which we interposed no objection, for the sea was far too rough to admit of any transfer of coal supplies.

Von Kirsch had slowed his ships down to not more than eight knots an hour, doubtless with the idea of conserving his fuel and staving off the inevitable, and we had of course accommodated our pace to his. So the colliers had no difficulty in maintaining their position, for all the world like a pack of pug-dogs trailing at the heels of a group of bull-terriers.

With the setting of the sun the rival search-lights of the opposing war-ships began their exchange of glaring challenge, and in the shifting gleams glimpses were won of low hulls and shadowy funnels. Occasionally a broad shaft of light was diverted from one of our ships to sweep after the colliers, and in one of these excursions, it was noticed that the vessels of the auxiliary fleet were creeping up on their fighting consorts.

Again I had a summons that led me to the admiral's cabin, and this time he greeted me with no show of embarrassment. "My boy, have you got all your historic phrases on tap?" he demanded. Then he continued:

"It's all over now. It is simply a question of time when they will be ready to eat out of my hand. Their coal will be gone, and all we will have to do will be to send to New York for tugs to pull them into harbor. Now I have done my part; tell me what you have done in your line."

But I was in no hurry to admit that the inspiration had not come to me. So I began to ask questions.

"Do you know that the colliers are moving up alongside the battle-ships?" I inquired.

"Yes, and they can move back again," said the admiral amiably. "It is impossible for them to coal in this weather, and if they want to get together and talk over their troubles, I am sure I don't care. But still, it is just as well to let them know that we are on the alert. It may keep them from playing some trick that will make it necessary to damage our ships, for I consider that all those vessels over there," indicating the enemy with a sweep of his arm, "belong to Uncle Sam." And the admiral, dismissing me, went to the bridge to see how his plan was progressing.

The play of the search-lights showed that the colliers were pretty well evened up with the battle-ships, and the fact seemed to spread a vague uneasiness among the men. The feeling in time was communicated to the admiral, and presently it found expression in a movement in the big forward turret. The warning word was passed, and in a moment more the twelve-inch gun belched forth its flame and smoke with awful roar. It was a notice of possible impending trouble, in which the presence of colliers among a fleet would be a fearful handicap. The possibility of an attack under such disadvantageous conditions seemed to throw Admiral Von Kirsch into a temporary panic, for there followed a more curious interchange of signals among the vessels of his fleet. One by one the search-lights on the enemy's ships blinked out, then in again, at irregular intervals. The scout ship and colliers seemed to be particularly anxious to get beyond the danger-zone, for within ten minutes fifteen shadowy forms, turning at right angles from their consorts, were steaming off. I watched them go with indifference, for I knew the admiral was not concerned as to the fate of that lesser game.

With glasses raised, however, I continued to let my abstracted gaze rest on the *Hannover,* Admiral Von Kirsch's flag-ship, speculating on the blasting passions which must rage behind those steel walls, built up in vanity, their ready thunderbolts made impotent by the mastery of a hostile mind and will. The stillness of the night, disturbed only by the monotonous dash of the waters and the low hum of the great bulk which held me, was conducive of reflection, and I know not what pleasing moral I might have drawn from the contemplation of our enemy delivered over into our hands, when that caught my eye which sent the blood surging back to my heart in suffocating volume. I tried to call out, and perhaps I did, but my voice was muffled in my ears. I had seen two of the giant funnels of the German flag-ship crumple and disappear. It seemed monstrous, as if the softer, farthest beams of our searching light, in sensate fury, had begun the disintegration of a foe too long spared.

In a few moments I became conscious that from our bridge came the sound of hurried trampling feet, hoarse voices and sharp commands. Night signals were run aloft; the ship trembled like an eager dog in leash as the engines throbbed with stronger life, and we turned bow-on toward the enemy's line of battle.

Straight ahead we rushed, and I noticed that the gun-crews were all at their stations. Here, then, was the end of all our deep-laid plans, and before us lay conflict with all the mystery and peril of night to add to the horrors of a mid-ocean death-grapple. The men were plainly nervous, but it was the nervousness of eagerness. Here was something that they could grasp and understand! Along this line had they been developed. No longer were they the supernumeraries in a drama of thought; they were come into their own part, where keen eyes, strong arms and ferocious action bring down the curtain.

I moved forward as far as was possible, and heard a lieutenant say to the captain of the lower turret: "If she

starts to move in on us, we'll sink her; and don't use more than one shot."

This order was puzzling, but there was no one to enlighten me. I looked for our consorts, and found that instead of advancing in a parallel order, they were trailing along in the line that had marked our course since the day we left port. No change appeared either in the position of the enemy. They steamed doggedly along in the familiar formation, and made no swerve when our course was laid to cross the bows of the leading ship.

Five minutes of steaming, and no sign. Ten minutes, and then a bark from one of the small guns of the starboard battery. The incongruity of firing a pea-shooter across the bows of the *Schleswig-Holstein,* then supposed to be leading the fifteen battle-ships of the German fleet, as if it were a recalcitrant tug at a cup-regatta, appeared to the men, and they laughed. Here was an endearing piece of "Eat-'em-up-Jack's" sublime impudence. But the wonder grew. Night signals passed down the enemy's long line and the great bulks lay motionless on the water. A moment more and the secret was out. In the play of the searchlights we saw on the nearest ship the trembling of the canvas funnels with which the clever foe had disguised his colliers, leaving them to grace our triumph while he sought to hide himself beyond the horizon.

Generous in jesting as in fighting, our men gave full credit to Admiral Von Kirsch for his joke, pregnant with disaster though it was. The fall of a block, the slipping of a halliard through clumsy fingers, or whatever the cause of the collapse of the false funnels which I had observed, was all that had prevented the immediate failure of Admiral Odds' plan.

The consideration that the collier fleet had won during the period of its masquerade was now lost to it. My friend the admiral had penetrated the disguise at the moment of the falling of the funnels, and his only subsequent concern was lest one of the ignoble hulks should aspire to a glorious end and cast herself to destruction before an American battle-ship in the hope of inflicting damage. It was for that reason that the gunners stood ready to sink any menacing vessel.

Exchanging no sign with the sullen tricksters whose dipping bows we passed at a distance of not more than five hundred yards, the *Delaware* and her following ships slid through the night in pursuit of our quarry. Within a quarter of an hour from the time we passed the colliers, the men on the lower deck were able to pick up the stern light of the next to the last of the enemy's fleet. No disguise was made of our pursuit, and long before dawn the enemy ceased its racking speed, and slowed down, like a mouse simulating content between the paws of its natural enemy.

On the eleventh day after its departure from Kiel the German fleet lay motionless on the ocean. The tiger was at bay. It had run far and its stomach was nearly empty. But not one of its claws had been clipped, and wo to the hand that yet essayed to adjust the chain. Around and around it had been pushed in its dizzying course, and the limit had been reached. What fuel remained must be conserved for the last great call, and oh! how pitifully small was that supply. Over on the sky-line was a smudge that told the presence of the collier fleet—faithful but impotent, hoping with its master for the miracle that would deliver them out of bondage.

Just out of range our fleet rested, sixteen ships opposed to the German's fifteen, and with still a quarter of our coal supply safely in our bunkers. It was no part of Admiral Odds' plan to sit tight and starve the enemy, however, and soon after he had become convinced that a new trick was not being executed, the wireless was set busy reaching out over the ocean to pick up our own scouts and colliers. The near presence of the enemy's devoted supply-ships was not a point to be overlooked, and the *Kansas,* the *Vermont,* the *Georgia* and the *Maine* were sent

off in pursuit. Before sundown they had returned with nine of the coal-laden ships, victims of their misguided belief that previous exemptions were a guarantee of perpetual immunity.

That night preparation was made for coaling on the morrow, and with dawn the slings and carriers were working as fast as human hands could guide them. I forbore to let my mind dwell on the feelings that must have choked Von Kirsch on this occasion. My sympathies were stirred.

Wind and weather were not entirely favorable to the work of restocking our yawning holds, and the operation was extended over four days. On the second day two of our colliers reported, with no word of the third, which they had outsteamed. Nor has any word been received to this day, and one theory is that she fell in with the enemy's scout ship which sunk her and went on—an act of cruelty that I would hesitate to ascribe to our unquestionably gallant foe.

During all this time Admiral Von Kirsch's fleet lay practically motionless, the thin line of smoke coming from one funnel of each ship, indicating the source of the feeble power maintained to keep steerageway enough to avoid drifting collisions and to operate the fighting-machinery.

It was on the fifth day that the American fleet divided. A squadron under Rear-Admiral Preston, consisting of the *South Carolina*, the *Michigan*, the *Connecticut* and the *Virginia* steamed slowly past the flag-ship and describing a great half-circle, rounded the head of the German fleet and ranged itself just out of range on the other side. The beginning of this maneuver had been the signal for increased activity on the part of the Germans. Again their fires burned with undiminished vigor, but the smoke seemed to be sticky and heavy, spreading over ships and sea in a languorous, murky pall. As I watched this manifestation of reserve power, Lieutenant Ankerly, who had been my mentor on previous occasions, spoke at my elbow. As I saluted, I noticed that he no longer regarded me with a gloomy eye, but seemed stirred with a spirit of almost boyish enthusiasm.

"Jepson," he inquired, "do you smell roast pork?"

"No, sir," I responded, sniffing obediently.

"Well, my man, you may if the wind shifts," he declared ecstatically, "for our friends the enemy are *burning ship stores*." And he walked away, talking to himself in a high degree of pleasurable excitement.

This piece of information indicated that the beginning of the end was at hand. For two days more Admiral Odds continued his operation of a menace and a withdrawal; another feigned assault, and another quiet return. But there came a time when from some of Von Kirsch's battle-ships came no defiant burst of smoke. Ponderous turrets no longer turned to follow the shifting positions of the maddening foe that always threatened, but never struck. At last came the hour when the strongest glass could not detect a haze at the funnel-top of any vessel in all the mighty fleet that the emperor had sent against us. Their fires were out!

It was at four o'clock on the afternoon of April 21 that a launch left the side of the *Delaware*, the white flag beside the stars and stripes indicating her peaceful mission. She bore Admiral Odds' demand on Admiral Von Kirsch for an unconditional surrender. The grizzled German's response was that he would fight his ships, if he had to do it with pistols and hand-grenades. Which was heroic, but did not alter his position in any way. He was reduced to a choice from three extremities. One permitted him to open his sea-cocks, and sink his ships, trusting to fortune that some of his men would be saved; he could lie still and permit his fleet to be battered to pieces like so many hulks, which probably would provoke mutinies; or he could ingloriously surrender.

That afternoon a general council was held on the *Delaware*, and the admiral's instructions as to the final stages

of the operation were imparted to the commanders. In the morning the *Nebraska* and the *Minnesota* moved from the rear of our line and steaming to a position on the port quarter of the German flag-ship—its "blind side"—advanced within range and hammered it with discretion for ten minutes. Only the smaller guns were used, for Odds had been most emphatic in his instructions that no irreparable damage be done. The *Hannover's* upper works were shot away, and to the dismay of our commanders, one or two shells went through the thinner armor perilously near the water-line. On the whole, however, it was a satisfactory demonstration, and we afterward learned, had accomplished its purpose of demoralizing the personnel of the German fleet. The hopelessness of their situation took strong hold on the minds of the men. To die fighting was one thing, to be passive spectators of their own destruction was another. And were not the ships lost to the fatherland in any event? And did not that end the war? To which the officers made stern response and pointed out the eternal reproach that would attend the fact of even one German war-ship being listed in the naval register of another power, ready to fight under an alien flag.

"To you, perhaps, yes," was the muttered answer. "But we have our wives and families to think of."

To save his men and lose his ships was the problem of the trapped commander. Such supply of ammunition as he dared expose had been carried up ready to serve the guns, but of what avail was it when the ponderous machines could not be pointed by hand-power with even approximately enough expedition to insure accuracy of fire? So, when our ships on the morning of April 22 moved up for a general assault, the Germans discharged a few futile shots and played their last card. While their superstructures were tumbling about their ears, the flag-ship and the *Schleswig-Holstein* prepared to lower boats. One crowded with men had reached the water at the side of the *Hannover* when I looked at Odds leaning over the rail of the bridge. His hands were clasped in distress and his face was drawn.

On the instant there came from our side the barking of the three-inch guns, and when I looked again, where the boat-load of men had been, it was not. Such was the fate also of the first and only boat that put over the side of the *Schleswig-Holstein*. It must have been about this time that Captain Schwartz, of the *Wettin*, far down the line from the flag-ship, and beyond my vision, went mad and having hoisted the white flag on his ship, ended his life.

The third ship in the German line was the *Pommern*, which, drifting in some cross-current, had been carried perilously near the *Hannover*, so that her works were plainly visible from the deck of the *Delaware*. I saw the flag of surrender raised and then her rails suddenly blackened with the forms of countless men. As I watched, scores sprang into the sea. More followed, until it seemed that a cataract of humanity was pouring from some inexhaustible reservoir. Then the flow slackened, and there came a space when in twos and threes the timid lingerers cast themselves into the waters.

"By God, he's sinking a ship belonging to the United States government!" Odds almost shrieked from his place on the bridge. And in his anger he added: "If I get him, I'll hang him for this."

But Captain Obermeyer never fell into our hands. While his men, in life-belts, were swimming desperately from the side of the *Pommern*, he and his chief officers, having opened the sea-cocks, were standing bareheaded on the bridge of the doomed ship, and we saw them there fifteen minutes later when the plunging monster went down, sucking back into the vortex her weaker sons who had not been able to breast their way beyond the danger-zone.

It was a battle of small guns that followed during the next hour, as though giants in conflict had thrown away their clubs to scratch and slap like children. To be sure, at intervals

there came from one or another of the German ships a roar that told of the enemy having grasped at a chance to discharge a turret gun when wind and tide had swung a hapless vessel into a more favorable position, but not one of these random shots did execution. Our fire was rapid and accurate, a hail of steel sweeping constantly over every one of the enemy's ships. Their decks were hampered with wreckage, and from three ships arose columns of smoke that told of the arch-enemy at work in our behalf.

It is not in human fiber to stand indefinitely the strain to which we subjected our beaten but snarling foe. The death of Admiral Von Kirsch, whom I suspect of having deliberately exposed himself to our withering fire, was the last straw, and ten minutes after he fell, as we afterward learned, the flag of surrender was run haltingly to the top of the signal-halliard. A mighty cheer, in defiance of naval regulations, swept along the line of our fleet, and one after another the other thirteen German ships hoisted the bunting that was a token of surrender.

Great as was our joy, there was no time wasted in self-congratulation. With all possible speed the prize-crews were rushed to the captured vessels, and it was a delight to the eye to see the men swarm up over the sides, eager to guard against damage being done to American property by some despairing prisoner. Meanwhile the swimmers from the lost *Pommern* were being picked up, and that work was still in progress when the stars and stripes broke from the mastheads of our new fleet.

The jubilant cheers of our men were sounding an hour later when I responded to a summons from the admiral's cabin. He was alone, with a sheet of paper before him. Without preliminary greeting he said:

"The scout ship *Salem* is now two-thirds of the way from here to Norfolk. A collier is one-third way. So that I can be in wireless communication with Washington. Here goes my report." And he wrote:

> The Atlantic Fleet under my command engaged the German fleet of fifteen battle-ships under Admiral Von Kirsch on April 22 in longitude W. 45° 32′; latitude N. 30° 10′, and fourteen of the enemy's vessels are about to be started as prizes of war for Hampton Roads under their own steam. Enemy's casualties, about 140 men drowned or killed in action. They sunk one of their own ships, the *Pommern*. On the United States ships, no lives were lost and the ships were damaged to the extent of $2,000.
>
> JOHN E. ODDS, Rear-Admiral.

"Is that complete?" inquired the admiral, passing the despatch over for my inspection.

"Well," I smiled, "you have said nothing of having put salt on their tails, nor is there a suggestion of an historic phrase."

"I had to leave something for you to put into your book," retorted the admiral, and he dismissed me, to see me no more until the time of our triumphant entry into our old Virginia harbor.

A GOOD HAND

HE had just returned from a Continental trip, and was telling his adventures.

"And, above all," he said, "I actually had the distinguished honor of playing poker with a king."

The man in the overcoat had listened in silence up to this point, and now his lip curled scornfully as he replied:

"That's nothing; I once played with four kings."

"Really?"

"Yes. Four kings and an ace."

Sextons of the Skeleton

BEING SOME ACCOUNT OF TOM QUERRIOT AND HIS UNUSUAL PROFESSION

By George Bronson-Howard

Author of "Scars on the Southern Seas," "Norroy, Diplomatic Agent," Etc.

I.—THE TEST

To keep the family skeleton hidden and prevent its rattling is not always an easy task in "high life." Tom Querriot becomes one of a secret service that very quietly and discreetly attends to the secure burial of any new or resurrected skeleton. The first of a series of original and surprising stories of crime-investigation

(*A Complete Story*)

AT the age of twenty Tom Querriot left college, a reckless reputation and the United States behind him; and, while his parents raged and talked theatrically of disowned sons, he demonstrated to the skipper of a Rio-bound tramp the value of the higher education in assisting to relieve overconfident mariners of accumulated wages and belief in their chess-playing ability.

With the events having relation to the ensuing seven years of Tom Querriot's life, his biographer has only to briefly comment that, from Terra del Fuego to Dawson City, the wanderer's name had been associated with every available occupation from river-pilot to pulpiteer. But for all his experience, he had patently acquired nothing more than a knowledge of the world and of human nature; since, at the time of his return to the United States, he stood, metaphorically, in the middle of a trunk, viewing the Manhattanese from the window of a hall-room in the Forties; and deciding that a man in financial straits was more fortunately placed in any other collection of people than those of self-centered New York.

He resolved into a condition of intimate thought, his eyes wide open under heavy brows, while he puffed at a brown-paper cigarette that had long since gone out. As he meditated he ruffled his mane of smooth black hair and came out of his absorption with a smiling, unvexed, but somewhat puzzled shake of the head. The leather wallet that he took from a locked drawer of the dressing-table contained, upon investigation, nine dollars and twenty-seven cents and his room rent due the next day would claim five of that.

He sifted some Bull tobacco into a wisp of brown paper and, though there was no necessity for it, rolled a cigarette with one hand, while the fingers of the other put back the "makings" and investigated one of his waistcoat pockets, drawing therefrom a notebook. He shook from its pages a little bundle of newspaper clippings.

"H'm! Advertisements calling for a Newtonian mind, a Spencerian hand and a frame lacking the necessity of rest, for which almost as much as fifteen dollars a week will be paid."

Riffling over the clippings like a pack of cards, he discarded the four to which his speech had reference.

"Fifth requiring capital and much resembling a bunco. Seventh, rodman with an engineering party at seventy dollars a month and a *chance* to learn the profession in four years. Eighth, Wanted gentlemanly chorus men who can sing; to be answered in person."

As he replaced the note-book, a hitherto unnoticed clipping fell to the floor.

He picked it up and read the advertisement carefully aloud, with ironical inflections.

WANTED: A man in every large city of the Union. Must have best social connections, and ability and inclination to mingle in all society affairs of the season. Must be more than the average in intelligence; and have mingled with world at large. Appearance must be pleasing, manners good, and he must know how to get the most display from the least money.

In replying give name in full and references as to social standing. Photograph must be enclosed; and also a three-hundred-word essay on "Society in America: the Real and the Imitation: How It Compares with Society Abroad." Three hundred words is the minimum; the length may exceed that up to three thousand, the maximum.

The accepted applicants will be paid a salary amply adequate for the needs of a gentleman in good society, with the chance of making considerably more.

Triflers will not be answered. State present financial condition and past record.

Address: GRAY BLACK, 762-X, *Herald.*

"And to think," he meditated, "that I spent three hours in framing up an answer to *that!*"

He gave his hat a solicitous brushing, donned it, and drew on his gloves. His poverty was not apparent; rather would he have been judged by the alert observer a young gentleman of leisure on his way to breakfast at his club. Pausing before the glass for a final twirl of his closely clipped mustache, his eye again took in the clipping.

"If there was anything to it," he assured himself with regard to the mysterious advertisement, "they'd have answered it before. I wrote my letter eight days ago. It's a joke and that's the end of it."

And as he dismissed himself from the room, he did a like service for the thought so far as his mind was concerned.

II.

It lacked a few minutes of nine as he emerged from the old house with the brownstone front where he had his room. His appointment with the manager of the new musical hash rehearsing at the Casino, where he expected to be taken on as a chorus man, was not until eleven; and he paused for a few moments on the step to consider how best he might kill, without mental effort, the elapsing time. As he reflected, a shabby-genteel person of inconspicuous appearance who had been patrolling the block for the past hour, injected a little spirit into his slouching walk and passed Querriot, giving him an alert glance which, in spite of its brief durance, would have enabled him immediately to tell another person that Mr. Querriot was in loose, gray clothes, worn but evidently cut by a good tailor; that he wore a tie of knitted white silk, pinned half-way down with a pin of green jade cut in the form of a rose.

Once around the corner, the shabby-genteel person became interested in a shop-window display of hosiery until Querriot crossed Fifth Avenue, continuing on his way to Sixth for a cheap breakfast. With his quarry within the restaurant and having given an order, the shabby-genteel person crossed to a drug-store and telephoned a number not listed in the book.

"9876-K Stuyvesant?" he inquired. "Yes; this is Jerome. Is Miss Lucie ready? Yes, please! Miss Lucie? The gentleman is waiting for you. Sixth Avenue, yes! He is wearing light-gray clothes, a white tie, and brown shoes. Yes, he has just ordered breakfast, and I don't think he can wait more than half an hour. Pardon me, Miss Lucie, if I suggest that you hurry. A cab will do it in ten minutes. Don't draw up before the restaurant. Good-by."

On leaving the drug-store, the shabby-genteel person recrossed to the restaurant and took a table which gave him unobstructed view of the street. His

order was given in the offhand, sleepy manner of a man who has not been to bed; the waiter gone, he simulated drowsiness, closing his eyes and leaning back in his chair.

A few more breakfasters dropped in, Tenderloin types to whom neither Querriot nor the shabby-genteel man paid any attention; but before twenty minutes had passed a well-gowned, beautifully hatted woman with piquant face and appealing eyes entered; and, glancing neither to right nor left, took a seat at the table directly opposite Querriot. As she sat down in the chair pulled back by a ready waiter who had approximated the value of her furs, she must have noted that Querriot's eyes showed surprise at seeing such a woman in a Sixth Avenue restaurant and particularly at so early an hour; but the look in his eyes was as nothing when compared with the stunned amazement in hers.

"Mr. Querriot," she cried as she half rose, pushing back the chair and involuntarily extending a slim, gloved hand.

His natural instinct put him on his feet and sent him forward to her table to clasp the proffered hand before he quite realized that the woman, while to all appearances well bred and most certainly worth knowing, had no features or mannerisms that evoked any memories in him; was one, in fact, whom he had assuredly never seen in his life before.

Looking at her and believing in the hall-mark of caste, he most naturally assumed that he had met her somewhere; and that, somehow, he had forgotten: but, as he had the full view of eyes, hair, and mouth, he finally decided in the negative.

"It is delightful to meet you so unexpectedly," he murmured in the conventional manner; and was about to utter further polite banalities when the surprise in her eyes went into shock and she wrenched away the hand he held.

"It's not Mr. Querriot," she said, and sank back in her chair, putting up her handkerchief to what he supposed to be cheeks reddening with confusion.

"But, my dear lady, that *is* my name," he assured her.

"I understand," she said, still from the depths of her handkerchief. "It is the likeness. I know your double, Walter Querriot, of Philadelphia. I thought——"

All his chivalric impulses stirred by the sight of a woman in distress, he came to her side, and so gently that it did not seem compulsion, compelled her to sit down.

"A most natural mistake," he assured her; "he is my cousin; they tell me we are as much alike as twins."

"They" had told him nothing of the sort; in fact, he was in possession of no facts regarding the appearance, habits, or general disposition of his Quaker City relative; knowing only that a cousin of such a name had residence in Philadelphia. But from tan shoes to waved chestnut hair, the woman was most unmistakably well bred, and, knowing the embarrassment of her kind in such a situation, he sought to relieve it; adding almost immediately, and this time from a purely selfish motive, the request that they might breakfast together.

"Knowing my cousin and my double so well," he smiled, "and breakfasting alone being generally considered stupid——"

"You *are*—Tom Querriot? Gwenny's brother?"

"You know little Gwen? Then it *is* all right. And Arthur? Yes? This is jolly. Good thing there weren't any more of the family. Think of a boy being named Galahad! Suppose you know dad was a crank on the Arthurian legend? Fact! His edition of the 'Morte d'Arthur' is supposed to have the most illuminating notes and glossary of all of them. Spent his life and most of his money doing it. So you know Gwen? They tell me she made quite a hit at the Mondays. No, I haven't been home for years. They couldn't afford to support me. I ate too much. And I suppose I know your people?"

"I am Mary Burden——"

"Bob's sister! The old doctor's

daughter? Well, most certainly we must have breakfast together. Waiter! Have my coffee served here. And Miss Burden—if I may suggest——"

He handed her the breakfast-card as he spoke.

"On one condition only," she insisted, blushing prettily, "and that is that you'll be my guest."

"But—really—Miss Burden——"

"Come," she insisted. "You came to my table. I am naturally the host. You *must* admit that."

He did, with a little smile; and the breakfast progressed with the usual idle chatter of those insufficiently acquainted to reveal intimate thoughts. She, it appeared from her conversation, had come in on the sleeper from Baltimore with her aunt; but the latter having an appointment for breakfast with some relatives whom Miss Burden cordially disliked, the young lady had remained away, making an engagement to meet her aunt at the Holland House for luncheon; after which both were to take leave of New York for Newport.

It was not until she opened her pocketbook to pay for the breakfast that the conversation developed any real interest; then her eyes grew big with incredulous surprise which was rapidly succeeded by dazed shock when her gloved fingers came out of the mesh receptacle with a handful of rings, several brooches, some stick-pins and a handful of bills most of which were yellow. Her fingers, seeming to have severed their connection with her will, unclosed, and, while most of the jewels and all the money fell back into the bag, several rings and one pin dropped to the floor. Querriot reached down and quickly restored them, noting however that any one of the stones would have freed him from the necessity of labor for several months even if his tastes ran to extravagance: one diamond ring marquise-cut, a diamond and sapphire set side by side, a blue and a white diamond similarly placed, and a pearl, pear-shaped, which could be no less than thirty grains.

"Hmh!" he commented, "I don't think I'd run the risks of showing those in a Sixth Avenue restaurant, Miss Burden. I think I'd better stay with you until you get them safely into some deposit-vault or safe."

The horror was still in her eyes as they met his; and now they appealed for protection!

"It's all right," he soothed. "I guess you've got them all. But don't take chances with a fortune like that again. Those stones must represent a fortune."

She opened her mouth several times unable to speak; then in a gasping whisper came words that he did not understand.

"What?" he asked, his tone alarmed.

"They—they aren't mine," she said wildly; "I've got the wrong purse. I never saw those jewels before in my life."

III.

The inquiry naturally consequent upon such a statement promptly made by Tom Querriot was left unanswered, the shock in the girl's eyes being replaced by a pretty, pathetic helplessness which seemed to throw the responsibility of the matter on Querriot's shoulders.

"They don't belong to your aunt? No? But are you sure?"

"She hasn't many," was the girl's dazed rejoinder, "and none like these at all."

"H'm! Is that your bag? No? Well, what was yours like?"

"It was just *like* this."

She viewed it dully as she surrendered it into his outstretched hand. Querriot examined the bag closely. It had no point of divergence from a thousand other such bags of the two-hundred-dollar variety. Covering it with one hand, he rolled a brown-paper cigarette and stared upward at the ceiling, eyes wide, pupils contracted. Then, placing a napkin in his lap and shading it from view with the hand holding the cigarette, he poured the contents of the bag into it, bringing his knees together to prevent the linen sagging. All the jewels were costly, many individual; but

no one of them gave a clue to the owner's identity.

He estimated the value of the collection, roughly, at twenty thousand dollars.

Unfolding the bill-roll in search of some hidden bit of paper, he saw at a glance that it totalled up to something near a thousand dollars. But even after turning the bag inside out and feeling into the corners, after examining the rings in search of hidden springs that might show miniatures or inscriptions under the setting, he found absolutely nothing to identify the owner of the small unclaimed fortune.

"What am I to do?" asked the girl hopelessly. "Turn it over to the police? They'll find the owner, won't they?" Her eyes were anxious.

"Find?" he echoed contemptuously. "They couldn't find the third rail in the subway—they'll put you through a lot of notoriety and questioning."

"You mean—I'd be in the papers?"

"Don't make me laugh," replied Tom Querriot. "You'd see your picture everywhere. Try and find the owner yourself, and if you can't—well, there's the police then."

"But how can I discover whom the bag belongs to?" she asked querulously, "and get my own bag? It had nearly a hundred dollars in it and some little things——"

Stripping off five of the bills, he pushed them across the table under a napkin.

"Reimbursement is the first law of nature," he said, smiling. "There's the ready money. I hope the other things weren't very valuable. No? Well, that's good. Now, let's see——"

He mentally considered the problem. It provided an excuse for not seeking the theatrical engagement. The money in the bag was at his service in his efforts to locate the owner; and, most certainly, on the return of the bag, a person in the possession of wealth so carelessly carried would reward him with no less than the amount which the bills represented. Moreover, the task had possibilities of bringing out the mechanical side of a logical mind; and although Querriot detested physical labor with a fervor amounting to frenzy, he was happiest when considering a problem and finding its solution even though it was but an abstract one that gave no promise of bettering him financially. It had been, in fact, this all-devouring, unsatiated desire to be informed as to the intricacies of things that interested him which had left him at twenty-seven in the possession of a few dollars and a vast knowledge of the world.

"Now, Miss Burden," he said, with an almost professional manner as he snapped the bag and slipped it into his pocket, "I suppose you want to restore this property to the owner, don't you?"

"Why, I couldn't rest until I did," she responded. "This is horrible. Why, some woman must be wringing her hands and crying out her eyes—think of how you'd feel if you lost those stones! Why, to lose the money is enough—— But I haven't any right to drag you into this!"

"I'm only too glad to get the chance, if you want me to be quite frank with you, Miss Burden," he replied. "At the present time if I told you my finances were even two degrees removed from a pauper's, I'd be giving points to the world's champion liar. I expect the owner to give me a reward. Meanwhile any expense I am put to will be defrayed from this roll in the bag. That seems fair to you, doesn't it?"

"Why, of course——"

"Well then," he interrupted, "let's consider the facts in the case. When did you open your purse last?"

"Last night before I undressed on the sleeper," she replied.

"Now then: Did you have an upper or a lower berth?"

"I had an upper; but the man who had the lower was kind enough to——"

"You slept in the lower then. Where did you put your purse?"

She started suddenly and then sank back in her chair. Immediately after she returned the five twenty-dollar bills with almost a shudder.

"I—I—I put it in my dressing-bag—and—and—that one—that bag"—

her fingers trembled as she indicated his pocket—"that one was in the little net over my bunk in the morning. I picked it up the first thing and then didn't think to look for my own in the dressing-bag. I forgot I had put it there even. And it's there now in the dressing-bag checked at the Twenty-third Street station. It's a spring-lock and this little gold key opens it; opens all the locks on my bags and boxes. I always wear the chain and the watch even when I sleep—you see?"

A finely linked chain was about her neck and fell to her waist. She revealed a tiny watch and key appended to it which she took from her belt as she spoke.

"It wasn't there in the net when you went to sleep?"

"No—no, I'm sure it wasn't. I put my combs and"—she paused, blushing—"and some other little things there," she finished hastily, adding almost immediately thereafter: "I had to twist the net around to get it straight and I'm sure there was nothing in it."

"Any disturbance during the night?"

"Only when the man in the upper berth got off at Wilmington."

"The man who surrendered his lower berth to you?"

"Yes."

"But Wilmington is hardly more than an hour's ride from Baltimore. People don't take sleepers for that little distance."

"Well, it *was* Wilmington, I know, because the porter told the man that if he had expected him to get off at Wilmington his luggage would have been all ready. He had quite a lot of it under the berth."

"Hmh! what made him get off at Wilmington, d'you know? Look here, Miss Burden, the only thing to do is to see the porter of that sleeper and find out from him how that man acted; why he wanted to leave the train without telling the porter so. Evidently he didn't have a ticket for Wilmington. If he had, the porter would have naturally prepared for his departure. I think that's where the solution of this affair comes in."

He was on his feet as he spoke, and had covered the check for the two breakfasts with some of his own money, nodding to the waiter to indicate the lack of necessity for bringing change.

"Are you ready to go down there now and cross the ferry? Those sleeping-cars are stalled in Jersey City until about midday and we can get hold of the porter this morning if we're quick."

She gave him a sidelong glance, some anxiety in it.

"But I can tell you why the man left the train," she said hastily. "The porter brought him a telegram. That's what woke me up. They had to hold the train while he got off."

"Good Lord! why didn't you tell me that before? The thing is getting simple. Waiter!"

The adequately tipped one, answering, was directed to bring three of the morning papers.

"Getting simple?" she echoed. "What do you mean?"

He did not answer her, turning over the pages of the papers which the waiter brought, looking up finally with an air of disappointment; and staring away, his brow unwrinkled but his eyes set and meditative. The fact that he had not found what he had expected for the moment gave him disbelief in his theory; and, as always when perplexed, he wrote his signature rapidly with the tip of his index-finger in letters fortunately invisible upon the table-linen.

And, his gaze diverted from the woman, she looked across at the shabby-genteel person and slowly raised her left hand, touching the tip of her ear with her thumb, a trick which seemed to find favor with the shabby-genteel man, since he imitated it for the benefit of those pedestrians passing the windows of the restaurant.

"That's something of a facer," commented Querriot, smoothing out the creases in the newspapers which had yielded him no aid. "And it looks like there's a hole in my theory."

"Your theory?" queried the woman breathlessly. "Then you think——"

She broke off as a third person came into ear-shot, a man in a light-tan rain-

coat who held a brown derby in his gloved hands, and paused expectantly at their table. Querriot, surveying him and lacking recognition, turned to the girl and found an equally blank look in her eyes.

"I beg your pardon!" offered the tan-coated one, as he bent a trifle. Querriot eyed him coldly. The stranger's tone was low and even; nor did he waste words. "The lady has some jewels and some money that do not belong to her——"

Querriot's face lighted up; his smile was one of welcome. He rose and indicated a chair for the stranger. The girl, however, was in the act of pulling the table-cloth to one side of the table so nervous was the clutch of her fingers upon it.

"Sit down," he said. "We're mighty glad to see you."

"I take the liberty of doubting that," replied the other man as he seated himself. "But at that, I think you're lucky to have a man on the case like myself. I am one of the Pinkertons and——"

For the moment Querriot started: then, smiling reassurance at the girl, he requested a sign of the official's badge. The question seemed to take the tan-coated one aback: at all events he declined to gratify the displayed curiosity. His tone, as he spoke again, while continuing low, held a menacing note.

"I wouldn't do anything to make a detective angry if I were you," he advised. "Now see here! I've trailed that lady from the train-shed and I've been outside for half an hour. I've seen the loot and I know you've got it. Now there's a reason, and a mighty good one too, why the news of this robbery shouldn't become public; and if you hand over the loot there won't be another word said and you'll go scot-free. But I warn you to get out of New York inside of twenty-four hours, you two. Now hand over and be quick about it!"

Querriot leaned back in his chair and regarded him admiringly. "I'd like to see that badge I spoke of a few minutes ago," he reminded him. The one addressed scowled.

"I'll give you five minutes to disgorge," he said and took out his watch. "After that I'll call two plain-clothes men outside and inside half an hour the pair of you'll be in the Tombs held for the Grand Jury on a burglary charge and with a chance of doing a ten years' bit apiece."

Querriot gave his laughter unrestrained freedom. "Too bad you didn't have that badge," he made comment when the laughter had subsided into chuckles. "Now you listen to me, my misguided friend! A child in a deaf-and-dumb asylum might fall for that preposterous bluff you're passing out; but nobody else. Like a good many crooks, your brain is in your hands and feet! You'd better use the latter and pass out of that door quicker than you came in, or what you said about the Tombs and the Grand Jury will go for you. You people took an awful chance and they sent the wrong man to stall. Miss Burden, isn't this the man who gracefully surrendered his lower berth to you last night?"

"I—I—don't remember," faltered the girl.

"Well, I don't insist on that, dear lady," conceded Querriot, "but I'm willing to make you my betting-commissioner with the first stake my life that if it isn't he, it's his best friend. If that wins, I'll bet something valuable. See here, Mr. Out-on-the-heel, I'm pretty fairly wise to how this thing came off. Those jewels were lifted in Baltimore or somewhere near there. The crook took the sleeper for New York. Some one inside tips him off by telegram that he's under suspicion and that when he reaches New York he'll be searched. He's got another pal on the train. He whispers to him that neither one dare carry the loot in New York as both their pictures are promiscuously scattered around police art-galleries. They pick out a 'stall' likely not to be suspected—a young society woman.

"The working crook steps off at Wilmington and, no doubt, into the hands of the police, who search him and don't find anything. The other crook on the

train follows the young lady who has the jewels and makes no funny moves until he's sure he isn't trailed. Then he comes in with a big bluff that he's a detective. Now I think that about cashes you in, Mr. Pinkerton. We'll keep the loot until we find whom it belongs to. Then we'll return it for the proper reward. No—I can see it in your eye before you speak—we won't split it or even third or fourth it. And don't threaten, because that is unladylike. Waiter!"

With that functionary's appearance, Querriot examined him quizzically. "We haven't the honor of this gentleman's acquaintance, waiter, and there seems to be lots of vacant tables and a quantity of agreeable air that he might please with his conversation more than the ozone hereabouts. Good-by, sir, and may Allah give you eloquence. It is a pleasure to have met you. It has raised my opinion of my own intellect."

The tan-coated one spoke in a low tone as he arose.

"We'll get you for this," he said.

"Don't make me laugh," rejoined Querriot. "You couldn't get the yellow jack on a fever-ship. See him to the door, waiter, and keep your hand on your watch." But the tan-coated one had opened the door before the last sentence reached him, and slammed out into the street.

Querriot took from his pocket the mesh bag and handed it back to the girl with a little sigh.

"You understand, of course," he said. "It's stolen property. The only thing for you to do is keep it and watch the papers—Baltimore, Washington, Norfolk maybe—and pretty soon you'll read of the robbery. Then do whatever you like."

Examining the cheap nickel-plated watch which had replaced his gold repeater, he found the time to be close upon eleven.

"I've an engagement in a very few minutes," he said, "and I'll have to go. Thank you for a very pleasant morning. It has been most interesting."

"I don't know how to thank you," began the girl, "and I don't know what to say——"

"Say nothing. But I'll have to ask you to hurry; for I want to land you safely at the Holland where you can have them lock up that bag in their safe and keep it there. It's very risky for you to be carrying it about, and the chances are that those crooks are going to some trouble to get it back. Keep your hand on it tightly while we're on our way."

The journey down on the Sixth Avenue car and the walk across to Fifth Avenue were taken up mostly by her expressions of gratitude and her questions as to how the trick had been accomplished. Querriot waved away the former, and answered the latter to the best of his ability, elucidating his theory of crime and its detection in general.

"This one was simple," he opined, "very clumsily executed. Why, any first-class crook would have gotten a police shield the first thing before he attempted to bull two people with twenty-one thousand dollars into giving it up. And—but here's the Holland and I must run. Give my regards to our mutual friends in Baltimore and tell them I'll likely see them before I die if not after."

"But," she protested, as she held his hand in a detaining grasp, "in case I should have any more trouble about these jewels! I'm fearfully worried. And you seem to understand things so well. Won't you give me your address and——"

He scribbled it on the back of a visiting-card.

"Any time you need me," he assured her, smiling; and, lifting his hat, strode back up the Avenue.

IV.

It was close upon seven o'clock when Querriot emerged from the Casino Theater and filled his lungs with long satisfying breaths of air. For nearly eight hours, broken only by ten minutes allowed for a sandwich and a cup of coffee at the nearest dairy lunch,

he had been rehearsing; and he was almost certain that it was better to break stones or act as stevedore than to be forced into constant companionship with inane persons of the chorus whose only gods were gentlemen with Pittsburg fortunes.

Returning home to change his collar he entered the hall and picked up the letters on the rack from force of habit rather than because he expected to find anything intended for him. Coming upon an envelope inscribed with his name in pencil, he surmised only that the landlady was anxious about her rent due the following day.

But when he had ripped it open and found that it was a message from the girl from Baltimore, he called loudly for the mistress of the house requesting information as to its delivery, since it bore no postmark. The landlady very surlily informed him that a boy had handed it in and had said nothing of an answer. The time? Perhaps three or four or five o'clock! She had something better to do than to be——

Querriot did not wait, but sprang up three flights to his room, unlocked one of his bags, and slipped from a holster into his pocket an ivory-handled .38, pausing only a second before extinguishing the light to make sure of the address given in the appeal for assistance.

The paper was coarse, the handwriting hurried and sprawling, the wording direct in the simplicity of desperate haste:

> MR. QUERRIOT: They are taking me to 181 Stuyvesant Square.
> Help me! MARY BURDEN.

There was no time mentioned; the note might have been written at noon for all he knew, maybe earlier.

He left the house and, almost at a run, reached Forty-second Street, taking a cross-town car and transferring down-town.

Rehearsal would be on in less than half an hour; but he had no room in his mind for cheap musical shows when there was the question of a woman's danger. He did not consider the risk: the end to be gained was big enough to give its attainment some dignity; and once more he felt himself a man of the world and of action.

It did not occur to him to warn the police until near his journey's end. When the idea suggested itself, he compromised, entered a drug-store, bought a sheet of paper and an envelope and in a few words explained the situation to Mulberry Street, enclosing the girl's note. He sealed the letter, addressed it to the chief of detectives, and gave it to the drug-clerk.

"Here's fifty cents," he said. "If I'm not back in a couple of hours—say eleven o'clock precisely—call a messenger and send that note. But not before that, because I may return and claim it. You understand?"

The drug-clerk, acquiring a sense of importance through the mystery of the directions coupled with the envelope's address, agreed with alacrity.

Reaching Stuyvesant Square, Querriot walked slowly along the odd-number side, noting Number 181 as a brownstone front of the fifties period, seemingly black in its unlighted state amid the glaring yellow that poured from studios and boarding-houses. Making sure of its identity, he ascended the steps as swiftly as was compatible with being unnoticed, opened the vestibule doors with a quick twirl of his wrist, and pressed the bell-button. As he passed into the vestibule, he closed the doors softly behind him.

A dim light came from the hallway; and he waited in the dark vestibule, the hand behind him holding the revolver, the other doubled up and swinging free as he balanced himself on tiptoe. As the knob rattled from within, he came a little closer and immediately the door was opened and a man's face showed itself, he swung from his heel to the point of the doorman's jaw, springing forward and catching the stricken one before he fell. It was too dark in the hall for Querriot to notice the man's features and he was taking no chances such as those involved by turning up the light. But the man lay limp in his arms and he

knew that he had achieved his purpose, the first move of the campaign: that of effecting a quiet entrance and rendering senseless the guarder of the door.

He let the man slip quietly to the floor, pushed the door to without snapping the catch; and made for the stairs. As he had accomplished half the distance, a door opened on the second landing, and a man came out into the hall.

"Who was it, Jerome?" he wished to know.

In the flood of light which came from the room, Querriot was aware that he could not escape detection. But, trusting to luck, he did not answer, continuing his way quietly until he had reached the landing; and then, with a quick spring, he forced the man back into the lighted room, and covered him with his revolver, while he jammed his back to the door.

"Sit down and keep your hands up," he said as he looked into the eyes of the man who had posed that morning as a representative of the detective force. Although now, as he noted the man without the showy tan coat buttoned to his throat, he saw that he was, apparently, a person of breeding, intelligence and taste, these facts being evidenced by his grooming, his general air of being at ease, the rugs, pictures, books, and soft lights of the room. Querriot had expected to find himself in a thieves' hiding-place, used only for purposes of laying low when some big touch had put the perpetrators under the suspicious surveillance of the police. Such a place, to his mind, would be naturally squalid and bare, presenting the worst side of the criminal life. But this room was furnished with an equal combination of money and taste, and could not be bettered in any house on Fifth Avenue.

The man obeyed instructions without hesitancy, seating himself in a great armchair of black leather, his fingers apparently reaching for the ceiling, his eyes calm. With weapon still in line with his prisoner's right eye, his captor twisted an arm behind him and shot the bolt on the door.

"Rather tiresome holding up my hands like this," suggested the man in the chair. "Give you my word of honor I won't attempt to fight, make a noise or get away, if you let me take them down."

Querriot shook his head, smiling.

"You don't trust me?" asked the other.

"I'd sooner carry a nest of baby adders around in a muff and not expect them to sting me," replied Querriot, taking a seat across the table from him. "But if you do what you're told you'll get the agony over quickly. I see a telephone over there. It suggests a house-telephone. Go to it, still keeping your right hand up, and telephone one of your pals to let the young lady you kidnaped, Miss Burden, go out of the house and to wait for me near the telephone-booth in the Holland House. When sufficient time has elapsed for her to reach there——"

"You'll have her call you up from the Holland and say she's safe?" asked the man with a show of eagerness.

Querriot smiled.

"Having a brain that hasn't yet reached a semisolidified state—no!" he replied, "for to the intelligence of a pear-faced baboon in exile, it is apparent that she could call up from the next room and tell me she was at the Holland House—with one of your pals at her shoulder, a gun in his hand, threatening to make her acquainted with the hereafter if she didn't say just what he told her to. No, the idea is for me to call up the Holland House—after first being sure to get Central instead of the house exchange—and ask her to come to the phone. When I've done that, I'll make a break to get away myself."

"Haven't figured out yet how you're going to do that, have you?" sneered the prisoner.

"No—ah!" returned the master of the situation reflectively. "I'm aware of the fact that there are a couple of thugs in the hall waiting to garrote me the minute I step out. You have all the mechanism of the obvious. But, with an average brain matched against

the superhuman intelligence you have already shown, I think I can give you twenty for ten and still take the best of it. Now go to that telephone and say exactly what I tell you to. If you don't——"

With his free hand he picked up an arrow-shaped steel paper-cutter of some length from the table and gripped the handle, trying it.

"A shot makes a noise," he said suggestively; "and I don't want to advertise that I've gotten rid of my hostage until I see my way clear to freedom. You grasp me?"

His eye wandered to the window and from there to a red silken cord from which hung suspended a Japanese executioner's sword. Shoving the revolver into his pocket, but keeping the steel paper-cutter in hand, he slashed across the sword's support, the cord severed, and the entire arrangement fell to the black-leather davenport beneath it. Shifting the paper-cutter to his left hand, he untied the knot and some twelve feet of cord swung free.

He looked from the cord to the unbarred window which faced Stuyvesant Square, smiling the while.

"Not very difficult to get away," he remarked. "Now go to the telephone and have Miss Burden released. If you say one thing I haven't told you to say, I'll plant this knife right between your shoulder-blades. We've wasted enough time. Go ahead!"

"Just a minute," said the unperturbed prisoner, not moving. "Look behind you!"

The adjuration came suddenly, but Querriot kept his mind calm, and leaped to the far wall, to which he put his back when he turned, his revolver again out and pointed. And immediately he saw that there was a third person in the room.

"Hands up!" he commanded sharply.

"Don't you know me, Mr. Querriot?" he got in reply.

Able now to take in the details of this new turn of the affair, he saw that where he had surmised solid oak paneling was an open door and, framed between silken curtains, a girl in evening dress, her waved chestnut hair reddish-gold in the electric light, a pair of long pink gloves between her hands; and showing signs of neither distress nor confinement.

"Miss Burden!" he said slowly, almost unbelievingly.

"Miss Harmison, please—Lucie Harmison. It's time for you to know the truth, I think. You have proved yourself. The gentleman in the chair is Mr. Arnold. And I think if you will look this over"—and she put into his free hand some papers—"you will begin to understand."

She was smiling and her look was reflected on the face of the man she had called Arnold. Statuelike in his astoundment, Tom Querriot looked from one to the other.

"The papers," reminded the girl.

Querriot unclasped his hand and saw therein the mysterious advertisement and the reply he himself had written eight days before.

V.

Following the natural impulse of a stupefied man, Querriot turned the two papers over in his hand: one the advertisement pasted upon a long strip of blank paper, the other the letter in which he referred to himself in glowing terms as the identical man for the desired position. His mind being in no condition to act other than mechanically, he read his own letter; and the blush which resulted from the cold perusal of his self-praise stung him into some mental activity.

He caught the man and the woman in an exchange of glances.

"Very diverting," he said bitterly, "but do you suppose all this preparation was worth while to hold up one poor fool to ridicule? Or are you jaded with the ordinary emotions to such an extent that a thing like this is as necessary to you as a cocktail to a Broadway rounder?"

"I'm afraid you don't understand, Mr. Querriot," said the girl sweetly.

"Well, I *am* blind," he admitted, in

the same acid tone, "but even my modicum of brain perceives direct cause and effect. I've been hoaxed! Why, I don't know. And my natural curiosity prompts me to ask the reason. I've got nothing. I'm nobody. Why should I have been made the victim of an elaborate trick?"

The man, Arnold, gave him a very quiet answer:

"It was more than a trick, Mr. Querriot. It was a test."

"A test?"

Arnold bowed. "If you will follow Miss Harmison," he added, "I think you will find some one who will explain."

The girl opened the hidden door in the oak paneling and pushed back the curtains, exposing a narrow passageway lighted by a single rose-colored electrolier hanging above.

"Have you got a crowd in there you want to exhibit the prize idiot to?" Querriot was sneering angrily. "Or haven't I yet reached the limit of asinine development?"

"I think, Mr. Querriot," said the girl, her tone soothing, "that you will be very agreeably surprised at the outcome of this affair if you will just do as I ask you and go in there."

"Without an explanation—a——"

"We are only subordinates," explained Miss Harmison. "The Chief will give you full details. You are keeping him waiting now and he is a very busy man. It seems a pity to spoil the favorable impression you have already made. Please go in."

"*Favorable?*" almost shouted Querriot.

Her eyes, meeting his, entreated him; and, falling unconsciously into the yielding deference instinctive with him toward women, he moved to the passageway, following the girl.

"I can't be made a bigger fool than I am," he said with a reckless laugh, as she pressed the black button beside an iron-hasped door at the other end of the passageway. The announcement was immediately honored, the door opening with the hand of the shabby-genteel man on the knob.

"Feeling all right, Jerome?" asked Arnold.

"A little jawache," replied the shabby-genteel man, forcing a wry smile. Querriot noted him as the door-tender below who had suffered from his fist; but the new surroundings in which he found himself called for attention to the exclusion of the injured one.

The room was in the form of a cathedral dome, having a curving roof of crenellated glass, which, while admitting light, was sound-proof and opaque. The walls were circled by book-shelves for one-half of the room's circumference, the other half being taken up by the cabinets of a reference-file. The fittings combined business utility with the artistic finish of a master cabinet-worker. The floor was covered by soft rugs, a greenish hue predominating as in all the draperies and furnishings of the place.

At a massive table of carved teakwood in the direct center of the apartment, thrusting back some papers into one of the fifty pigeonholes that faced him, sat a small, nervous-looking man with preternaturally bright eyes, who had an appearance suggestive of monasterial seclusion through his aloof and preoccupied gaze. The round bald spot in the center of his head, and his high-cut black clothes seemed to verify this first impression.

"Mr. Meynell!"

As Arnold spoke, the little man got to his feet and came forward jerkily, Querriot noting in addition that his legs were curved like a jockey's.

"Mr. Tomlinson Querriot?" he queried, as he bent over the hand extended to meet his own, peering at it with his little eager eyes. "Yes, of course! A good hand! A firm grip! Most gratifying."

He released the hand and stood off, rubbing his own hands and eying the new recruit in the manner of a grocer who had recently come into possession of a prize turkey for less than its worth.

"Jerome!"

The shabby-genteel man shuffled

across the room, and gave the little man an obedient lack-luster stare.

"Mr. Querriot will do you the honor of shaking your hand, Jerome."

"Yes, sir, your servant, Mr. Querriot," said the shabby-genteel person to the accompaniment of a limp handshake from a hand so dry that Querriot surmised it must be cracked. There was something so infinitely pathetic about the creature that Querriot, remembering the force he had put into the right-arm swing at the front door, was stricken into contriteness.

"I've seen you before——" he began a trifle ungraciously.

"Several times, sir," replied Jerome with reminiscent ruefulness, touching his cheek. "But the last time, sir——"

"Hope I didn't hurt you, Mr. Jerome——"

"Not *Mister* Jerome," interrupted the man with the tonsured head, "Jerome. Nothing more. Once a valet. Dyed in the wool. Very useful in the minor work of this profession but——"

It was Querriot to interrupt this time and very determinedly.

"See here, sir—I didn't catch your name—but I want to know what——"

"I am Meynell!"

From the tone it was apparent to Querriot that he was expected to be familiar with the patronymic.

"Meynell!"

"M-e-y-n-e-l-l!" prompted Arnold.

"The—ah!—detective?"

"Investigator, Mr. Querriot," replied the little man with some show of heat. "The name detective is distasteful. It suggests uniforms and the lower orders of crime!"

"Meynell!" meditated Querriot, his eye taking in somewhat incredulously the peering-eyed little man in black. The name had always been associated in his mind with the keenest brain, the most decisive judgment, all that was superlative in the logic of man. His difficulty lay in reconciling his knowledge of Meynell's past performances with the insignificant personality of the man.

"If you are Meynell, then," said Querriot stubbornly, "I have lost a great deal of my respect for your judgment. For I am guilty of nothing that would interest you and——"

Meynell smiled; and Querriot noted an amused look reflected upon the faces of the other three. With difficulty he restrained his temper.

"I think it's da—infernally bad taste to smile when I'm entirely in the dark," he said. "An explanation's due me and due me immediately."

Meynell patted his arm soothingly and addressed himself to Miss Harmison.

"You are overdue at Mrs. Van Cort's box-party," he reminded her. "And I think it is time, Mr. Arnold, that you made your appearance at Mrs. Ten Eyck's reception. Good night. Jerome will show you out. I expect Mrs. Laballere, Jerome. She has telephoned. Keep her below in the onyx room and give her the latest novel that has a pretty girl on the cover of it. She prefers cherry brandy. Now, Mr. Querriot, I think as you do—that you should have an explanation. And more! Sit down!"

Before Querriot found time to turn on his heel to make his adieus, he found himself alone with Meynell.

"Business, business, Mr. Querriot," explained the tonsured man, interpreting his glance. "Banal courtesies are dispensed with here. You have been subjected to a test. When I saw your handwriting and read your essay, I said you were very possible timber for this work! I looked at your photograph and became more convinced. Your social references were entirely satisfactory. Then it was necessary to try you: to find if you had a mind capable of making deductions and acting upon them. Your theory concerning the stealing of the jewelry was excellent; your conduct in refusing to surrender the considered loot to Arnold proved that you had the strength of your convictions. By entering this house tonight you showed me you were possessed of two other desirable traits: personal courage and a readiness to take the law into your own hands. Your last action in providing yourself

with a means of escape completed my subjection. You have come through the test with flying colors. Of the score people put to the test in four years—ten of whom have been since employed—you have made the best showing. It is most gratifying to welcome you among us."

He shook hands briefly and in businesslike fashion.

"Then," said Querriot, forcing self-possession of manner, "the entire affair from beginning to end was fictitious. Accidental meeting with the lady, jewels found, kidnaping!—eh?"

Meynell nodded. "Entirely. Jerome watched you until you came out this morning. You had been investigated and the statements made in your letter found correct. Having made an exhaustive study of your connections and friends in Baltimore, and knowing how little you had seen of them in the past seven years, it was not difficult to impose upon you, particularly when you were unaware of a reason for it. If you like, Arnold or Miss Harmison will go over the plot step by step, explaining how you were tricked. I have not the time. I am a very busy man. I have only a few minutes to spare to tell you that if you wish to enter my employ, I have a place for you. The remuneration we need not now discuss. Do you accept?"

Querriot took it very calmly. There was, he felt, nothing in the world which might surprise him now.

"I'll have to know what I'm expected to do, you know," he half laughed.

"And quite right, too," agreed Meynell. "Briefly then, you are to be an investigator. A detective if you will, although the word is odious to me. But ostensibly you are to have *no* occupation. The keynote of the work you are to take up is secrecy. The motto, 'Anything rather than publicity.' You will have nothing to do with the police. You are to handle the affairs of the upper classes in a way to keep the skeleton from rattling. It is imperative that no one should know of your connection with me."

"I've gotten some general sort of an idea, Mr. Meynell," he said, as he fished out his tobacco and papers and rolled a cigarette, "but I must confess I don't quite understand just why I should have been selected to do this sort of work—a man without any particular qualifications——"

"You have every qualification," said the other sharply. "You can think, you can act, you have courage. And besides, you have social position which will put you on the inside and make it possible for you to discover things that Jerome, for instance, could not. You are to represent me in Baltimore. Which is to say that Jerome will have charge of the office and receive the cases in my name; but he will be under your orders. Are you beginning to understand?"

Querriot nodded, his dilated eyes staring at the ceiling. "I prefer to hear all there is to hear, however," he suggested, "a sample of the kind of work I am to do, for instance."

Meynell consulted a gun-metal wrist-watch.

"I have ten minutes yet before Mrs. Laballere comes," he said. "I will try to make as much plain in that time as possible. The rest you will learn in good time. A sample case, you said? Well, take this for instance: A prominent woman whose husband is one of the best-known members of the Stock Exchange goes to one of the most exclusive balls of the season and steals a diamond collar worth perhaps twenty-five thousand dollars—not an expensive affair but an heirloom and very much valued. The owner comes to me for its return. I suspect the thief from the first, knowing her to be a kleptomaniac and succeed in proving the theft. I have her apartments searched but do not find anything.

"Now comes the difficulty. The woman from whom it is stolen does not wish the thief exposed. The thief denies having stolen it. Is insulted! Her husband is willing to pay a hundred times the value of the article stolen. But the owner has plenty of money, doesn't want anything but the heirloom. The case then resolves itself into: Get

back the diamond collar without exposing the thief. That was successfully done by the aid of Miss Harmison, Mr. Arnold, and the most valued of all my employees, Mr. De Lancey Spain——"

The tobacco which Querriot was sifting into another brown paper was spilt on the floor as he started in surprise at the name.

"De Lancey Spain?" he echoed. "Not the man responsible for most of the eccentric dinners of the too-rich New Yorkers?"

Meynell nodded.

"I imagined him wealthy," murmured the new employee.

Meynell smiled. "They will imagine that of you also," he said. "You will return to Baltimore as a man who has made a comfortable fortune from the diamond-mines at Kimberly. You will go out to-morrow and select beautiful furniture, pictures, statuary, etc., for an apartment which you will take in the new and fashionable apartment-house overlooking Mount Vernon Square in Baltimore. You will be par excellence a society man. You will give little dinners that will be unique and exclusive. You will make the newly rich believe that to be your friend is to have a patent of nobility. A snob of the first water, of course! If De Lancey Spain saw me on Fifth Avenue he would snub me. If you see Jerome on Charles Street, you will snub him."

The desk-telephone interrupting, Meynell took down the receiver.

"Mrs. Laballere restless, eh? How long? Nearly half an hour. Very well, Jerome. Come up and show Mr. Querriot out. Yes."

Resuming his former position he quickened his speech:

"Here is an envelope. It has some money in it. Collect your luggage and take it to the Twenty-third Street station. Check it; then go to the St. Regis Hotel, give them the checks, and register from Kimberly, South Africa. I will see that a newspaper reporter calls on you to-morrow and also that you have an interview ready to give him. I will call on you to-morrow, so will Mr. De Lancey Spain. In less than a week, you will be ready to take your part down in Baltimore. But Spain must see that you have something of a splurge in New York society before you return to your home town."

Jerome appearing at the door, Meynell gave Querriot his hand in token of dismissal.

"Take an expensive suite," he added, as Querriot turned, "and in unobtrusive fashion let it sift out that you have found much profit in diamonds. Don't be afraid to spend money. You will be well provided. There are but two things that I must caution you against —speech and drink! Good night, Mr. Querriot."

Jerome swung open the door and followed Querriot down the dark stairway to the front hall, where he let him into the street with a respectfully whispered "Good night"; and it was not until Tom Querriot had been jostled by a negro woman, hustled by a car-conductor, and insulted by a street gamin whose "extra" he did not wish to buy, that he realized he was in New York City and not the Caliphate of Bagdad; and, remembering, retraced his way to the drug-store and recovered his warning letter, to the very apparent disappointment of the dispenser of chemicals.

PARROTS AS ADVERTISING AGENTS

A NEW school has been started in the Grand Montrouge district of Paris. It is a school for the teaching of parrots, and specializes in making the birds of commercial value. It has occurred to the manager of the school that a clever parrot may be very useful as an advertiser, and he is at present teaching a number of them to cry aloud the excellence of various products. These birds will later on be hung in cages in prominent positions on the boulevards. The birds are being taught by a phonograph in dark rooms.

Shadow Reef

By Louis Joseph Vance

Author of "O'Rourke, the Wanderer," "The Private War," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

A homeless wanderer on the streets of San Francisco, a man of birth and breeding, at odds with fortune, is about to be arrested for vagrancy when suddenly he is accosted and rescued by a man who pretends to recognize in him a friend and takes him to his luxurious home. Here he is treated as an honored guest, clothed and groomed. At dinner he is drugged with brandy and wine and wakes up aboard a vessel, the *Lady of Quality*, on the Pacific. His quondam host, Dudley Secretan, is on the ship as owner. An Irishman named Brannan is mate. Secretan explains to Locke, the shanghaied man, that he has virtually lost his immense fortune and being of an adventuresome turn of mind is embarking in the South Sea Islands trade. The position and opportunities he offers Locke are acceptable to the latter in his penniless state and he becomes supercargo of the ship. A terrific gale drives the *Lady of Quality* hundreds of miles away from any port and into the vicinity of an island mapped as "Shadow or False Reef. Breakers reported in eighty-eight. Searched for in ninety-six. Not found." They direct their course in search of the place and soon come upon it, a small island surrounded by a coral reef. Secretan discloses that an uncle of his was a certain Captain Grimes, a pearl pirate, and from a memorandum left by him when he died, it would seem that Shadow Reef was the field of his operations and rich in pearls. In the night they all hear a strange, weird cry from the island and are terrified, as they had thought the place uninhabited.

(In Two Parts—Part II.)

CHAPTER V.

SUPERSTITION ISLAND.

THROUGHOUT the night the thunder muttered and boomed below the horizon, a grim accompaniment to my waking dreams. Lord, how demoralizing to man is the prospect of easy-come wealth! Hour after hour I lay awake staring up at the blank blackness of the roof of my berth, or out of the companionway at a star-studded patch of silver-blue, moonlit sky, dreaming my dreams of opulence; returning pearl-laden to my birthplace, righting wrongs I wotted of, rewarding virtues within my ken—principally, I admit, my own—meting out justice to evil-doers.

While overhead Secretan's boot-heels—or, perhaps, Brannan's—I forget which stood the early morning watch—drummed a monotonous tune upon the planks. I heard five bells before I dropped asleep, but—such was the spur of my anticipations—was up with the first sunbeams, and went on deck to find the *Lady of Quality* heeling over to a brisk breeze from out of the west as, standing well out, she rounded the eastern arc of the coral reef.

We had a sky clean and blue, draped with massive cloud tapestries, and air as clear and sparkling as the blue waters that hissed crisply beneath the schooner's bows. Brannan was at the wheel; and I noted with relief that he had fought down his imaginary fears; his eye was bright, his brow unruffled, he whistled a little tune as he handled the spokes.

Secretan hung over the rail, near at hand, devouring the island with the glasses. In his usual negligée he cut an attractive figure. Forward the cook and the Kanaka stood ready to jump at Brannan's words of command.

As, with wind abeam, we raced up past the eastern extremity of Shadow

Reef, the island disclosed itself in more attractive guise. The lagoon glowed blue beyond description, its clear and placid waters barely crimpled by the morning breeze. The long roll of the surf upon the barrier was like an organ peal, and the breaking waters glistened in the morning glow until the lagoon seemed a sapphire girdled with silver.

In formation the mainland—to dignify it so—proved long and narrow; little if anything less than the two miles I have set down as its east-and-west length, not over a mile in breadth at the eastern end, something less at the western. Northward the reef swung wide of the island, giving the lagoon a breadth of almost two miles.

With the wind ahead, as we beat down toward the northwest channel advised by Secretan's disreputable uncle, we had a longish passage of it. It was mid-morning ere we approached the break in the reef. Brannan, with set mouth and anxious eyes, took us through with a rush, and with consummate skill. I heard him mutter, one moment, as I stood near him, "Faith, 'tis nip and tuck now, and the Lord have mercy on our sowls!" and an instant later we were boning through a belt of foam, the roar of breaking waters like thunder in our ears; while, the next, the *Lady of Quality* was sedately footing it across the lagoon, heading directly for the sandy crescent of beach on the western margin of the island.

Brannan, still gripping the wheel, bent an anxious gaze toward the shore. Abruptly his mighty voice filled the strained silence.

"Stand by for a bump!" he cried.

A thought later the schooner grounded and I, who had disregarded the Irishman's warning, found myself flat upon my back, my head ringing from its smart contact with the deck.

When I had scrambled to my feet again the mainsheet was running free, the big sail a-flutter in the breeze, empty of wind; and Brannan and Secretan stood laughing at my mishap.

After breakfast we discussed at some length ways and means for getting ashore. Brannan was for constructing a raft, I for swimming—the water was not deep; a stroke or two would have taken us to standing depths on the sandy bottom. But Secretan opposed obstinately both suggestions; Brannan's since it involved delay, mine because he objected to the wetting.

Accordingly—since I stuck out for my bath—I swam ashore, carrying with me one end of a light line; with which, once landed safely on the blazing sands, I jerked ashore a small but stout cable, making the latter fast to a sturdy sapling on the edge of the beach. Hardly had this been done than Brannan and Secretan joined me, swarming down the cable with surprising agility. Secretan stalked ahead of us down the beach, leading the way on our rather aimless tour of inspection.

Aimless it was not to be for long, however. We had gone scarce a hundred yards ere Secretan came to a sudden halt.

"Oho!" cried Brannan; and we joined Secretan on the run.

We found him in a pose of perplexity, alternately staring down at the beach and inland at a dozen yards or so of clearly defined pathway that struck in from the sands, winding snakily to a terminus cloaked by the jungle of tropical undergrowth.

"I say, you know," he declared, "this *is* a bit odd!"

"Is ut now?" said Brannan solicitously. "And for pwhy?"

"Beyond," I chimed in, "that it's a path, I don't see anything so singular about it. You didn't expect to stumble across it, but here it is. Now what's the trouble with it?"

"The trouble, you fathead," returned Secretan with spirit, "is that it is a well-beaten path. You don't seem to appreciate, either of you, that such a footway doesn't keep clear if out of use over six months in this climate. There it is, as you say—a fine broad foot-path, trodden firm and as clear as if it had been in use only yesterday. Yet we believe the island uninhabited."

"And, be the powers!" ejaculated Brannan, "it was in use no longer ago than yesterday, if as long. See thot!"

"Yes; I noticed that, too," assented Secretan.

I followed the direction of Brannan's pointing finger and saw clearly that some strange body had passed that way not a great while since. The sand was heavily scored as if something had been dragged over it—say a weight in a sack, for a rough guess—right up from the edge of the water to the opening of the path, where the traces were lost upon the harder earth.

But this was not the strangest part of the discovery, by any means. What dumfounded us entirely was the fact that *no footprints were visible.*

"What do you make of it?" I asked Secretan at last.

"It's beyond me," he confessed. "And you, Brannan?"

"This," declared the Irishman, with sudden animation yet with a lowering brow, "that 'tis nothing natural. As I told ye last night. But we'll not bicker over thot again. Pwhat arre ye going to do now?"

"To see where this path leads," announced Secretan, fumbling with his monocle and peering uneasily in at the green and silent tangle.

"Ye're armed, I take ut, thin?"

"What? Bless my soul, no! Why should I go armed if you please?"

"'Tis loike ye," commented the Irishman sourly. "For mesilf, if I'm to go with ye, I prefer to do me investigating with a gun handy. If ye've no objection, I'll go back and look up a rayvolver."

"No," said Secretan; "I've no objection. Only I trust, Mr. Brannan, that you will not handle it carelessly. I have never used firearms and——"

But already Brannan was half a dozen yards away, lumbering heavily down the beach toward the cable; reaching which, he jumped up and began to pull himself out to the schooner, hand before hand, swinging along with ease and celerity. Ashore he was a hulking and clumsy chap, Brannan; but give him the end of a rope, and he was a monkey for agility.

Within ten minutes he had rejoined us, panting and perspiring but plainly with an eased mind. For that matter, I will freely own to a feeling of greater mental comfort when my eye fell upon the butt of the revolver in Brannan's hip-pocket; neither of us had spoken during his absence, and I had again been studying those inexplicable marks upon the beach; and the more I pondered them the less was my ease.

For some distance we proceeded without notable discovery. The wilderness hedged us in with green and glowing walls—an impenetrable tangle of brush and tree and verdure—brilliant with strange exotic blooms; through which the path wound hither and yon. Overhead the interentangled foliage was so thick that it shut out the clean sunlight; we walked in greenish gloom, our shoes sinking deep in moist mold; and the air was heavy, rich with the odor of decay mingled with the fragrance of those beautiful yet, one guessed, deadly flowers.

We were all glad to have come through it, when presently the trail took an upward slant and, after a minute or two of hard scrambling up a low, steep bank of slippery mud, we gained an elevation where the vegetation was more wholesome, the air more dry and cool. Here the trees were spaced at wider intervals, with less of that tangle of underbrush and creeper. We got along at a better pace, eyes eager to foresee the hidden goal of our adventure.

It burst upon us abruptly, without warning save that Brannan came to a quick halt on the edge of the woodland, and with lifted hand cautioned us to silence. Obedient to which, and expecting we knew not what, we ranged up beside him; and stood gazing down at a narrow crescent of beach between two sandy headlands, or capes, enclosing a bay of scant dimensions. Altogether it could not have been more than half a mile in width; and it was little more from the beach to the farthest extremity of the longest cape—circumstances which we took to excuse the fact that we had overlooked this natural and comfortable harbor in our hasty and incomplete survey of the island's externals.

But it was not upon the bay that our interest focused.

Nearer at hand, set well back from the sands, in a clearing partly natural, partly "made"—as was shown by the stumps and rotting boles of felled trees—stood a little collection of rude shelters. Cabins they could hardly be called; they were more like hovels—plain, flimsy boxes of rough but weather-stained boards, with unglazed windows and doorways that lacked doors—at least, so far as we might ascertain from our then position.

There were four of these buildings—a central one, boasting a rude porch, another a little distance removed, as like the first as one pea is like another, save that it was smaller; and at a considerable interval—some hundred yards—two long and rambling edifices. Near these a piece of rotten canvas, apparently an old sail, had been lashed between four trees, one to a corner; and beneath this wretched awning a long table had been built—rough planks upon a flimsy framework—with benches at either end. To one side of this, beneath a smaller canvas, stood an old stove—evidently a galley-stove, red with rust and falling to pieces.

That stove was the nearest thing of all to us, and got our first examination; it proved as cold as the rest of the little settlement. Over all hung an air of desolation and decay; it seemed plain beyond dispute that foot of man had never touched the spot for years untold; and the insidious and resistless jungle had crept into the clearing and needed but a year or two more of undisputed reign to reclaim it and altogether to obliterate the traces of man.

Already the rude planks of the cabins were rotting and falling apart, revealing portions of black and suggestive interiors. For all that the sunlight was full upon them, for all that the free trade-wind swept them with its bland, clean breath, the buildings stank of abandonment, and there was a chill in the air—such a chill as you have known in the darkened rooms of a long-disused mansion, perhaps. I remember shivering a trifle, instinctively; and when Brannan spoke it was in a lowered tone which we, in replying, unconsciously imitated.

"Faith!" was the Irishman's opening remark. "And pwhat, d'ye think, has become av thim all? Pwhy did they lave ut?"

"What?"

"This sittlemint av theirs," with a wave of his arm.

"Of whose?"

"The pearlers, av course. Who ilse? D'ye nade the stench av rotting oysters to tell ye that 'twas here they made their headquarters? Shure, they could not have fished ut dhry. They must have had a rayson for dayserting ut, and pwhat would thot be?"

"Maybe, if we investigate," I offered, "we'll find a clue to that."

"I'm believing ye. Come along."

We started again and followed the beaten path down to the huts, Brannan delivering a running commentary on the state of affairs as he understood it.

"Thot," he declared, indicating the larger of the central cabins, "would be the boss' headquarters, I'm thinking. 'Twas from there, no doubt, thot yer rayspicted but piratical-moinded uncle ruled the roost—peace to his black sowl!—Misther Saycretan. And t'other would be for his liftinint, so to spake. Thim long shanties would be where the hands slept—the divers; Kanaka byes, belike. Judging be the looks av things they wint at ut in a businessloike way, played the game for keeps, as the saying is. I'm thinking they must've made a big haul, between the lot av thim——"

I do not recall what else he said; for just at about that time we were arrived in the midst of that abandoned settlement, and our interest was for matters other than the Irishman's rambling reminiscences. The next was an hour of discoveries, beyond question.

The long shanties being the farthest removed from the beach were the nearest to us and therefore the first to undergo examination. In them, however, we found little of interest, beyond verification of Brannan's surmise as to their past use; they were barracks, crude

shelters, and little more, each affording sleeping accommodation in bunks for some six or eight men. In some of the bunks we found piles of decayed bedding, and littered here and there a miscellany of worthless and discarded objects; a case-knife, a string of colored beads, a battered tin tobacco-box that when touched fell apart with rust, and such uninteresting things. On the walls were a few crude woodcuts, or, rather, fragments of what had been such, yellow with age. An almost undecipherable head-line of one gave the name of a New York weekly and the date of 1867.

But the places teemed with vermin, and an unclean animal had for a time housed itself in one, and the rotting and mildewed bedding diffused an odor little to our liking; and we were nothing loath to turn away and devote our attention to the more substantial structures.

The first we encountered was the more solidly builded of the two, although the smaller. Closer inspection revealed the fact that it boasted no windows, but was blessed beyond its neighbors with a door. Age and weather, however, had disposed of this barrier effectually; it had fallen from its hinges and the sunlight had free access to a darksome interior. The place was bare enough, beyond a heap of pearl-shells in one corner; which but confirmed Brannan's deduction that the building had been used as a storehouse.

The other and last of the houses proved itself beyond doubt the residence of what white men had lived upon the island; and curiously enough gave evidence of having been abandoned in great haste.

It had two rooms, divided by a partition of scantling, of which the first had been the living-room. A deal table occupied the middle of the floor, and a number of chairs—mostly constructed of packing-cases or of barrels—were disposed without order, around the walls. An old coat and hat hung from a peg in one corner. In another was a heap of fish-net that crumbled to dust when we disturbed it. A number of shelves had been run across one wall and still supported a miscellaneous collection of earthenware and tin plates, table cutlery, glasses, bottles—mostly beer-bottles—tin cans—presumably containing food; we never investigated—with faded labels; a bundle of old newspapers, a wooden box half full of exploded shells for a large-bore shotgun, another containing unused cartridges for both the shotgun and, apparently, a Winchester rifle of obsolete type, and a few books. The latter were mostly novels, tattered, greasy, and dirty, and oddly enough, a handsomely bound copy of "Sesame and Lilies."

Secretan fairly pounced upon this latter, somewhat to my surprise; but we were enlightened in another instant, when, with the book open at the fly-leaf, he uttered a triumphant cry. "Look here!" he demanded excitedly. "My uncle had a craze for Ruskin."

And, peering over his shoulder, we saw the already familiar name of "George Vaughan Secretan."

"Now, what have you to say to *that?*" he demanded.

"The top av the afternoon to ut!" declared Brannan. "'Tis encouragement. Faith, we'll roll in pearls before another year is out! 'Tis dollars to doughnuts not an oyster has been lifted from this reef for nigh onto twenty year; we'll reap a harvest that'll set us all up for loife!"

"Before we go any further with this room, let's have a look at the next," I suggested; and being nearest the door, laid fingers on the handle and turned it.

The next moment I had started back with a cry—a cry that was echoed by each of my companions.

As I swung the door wide there was a subdued rattle, a puff of dust like smoke, and a number of bones, which had apparently been supported against the door, fell at my feet. Prominent among them a human skull bounded and hopped across the floor for a yard or two.

"Good God!"

I don't know which of us was responsible for the ejaculation; but it relieved

temporarily the tension of our nerves. Secretan began to giggle in a rather timorous fashion; Brannan swore, not loud but deep; and I was at pains to wipe my forehead on the sleeve of my pajamas.

While I was about it, Brannan bent forward and picked up something from the little pile of bones, exhibiting it mutely to each of us in turn, as it lay in his palm; an old clasp-knife with a long and once keen blade now eaten to a filigree of rust.

Secretan nodded his comprehension. "Yes. I suppose that tells the story." He shuddered slightly and grimaced his disgust. "But one doesn't like to think of it. That chap, knifed as he lay in his bunk, summoning enough strength to get to the door and dying there. Ugh!"

"Yes," said Brannan. He jerked the knife through the open window at his elbow. "I told ye there was something wrong with their deserting this place. I mane no disrayspict, Misther Secretan, but I'm thinking that if yer uncle's ghost walks this spot he's be way av having a loively toime av ut, now——"

As he spoke—and I would have you comprehend that we were all more or less stirred by this gruesome discovery, keyed up to a nervous tension beyond the common—there rang upon the noonday stillness of that deserted spot a laugh.

To me at that moment it sounded as if it came from the adjoining room, so near, so clear, so high it was; a screech of fiendish and maniac mirth. I lay no claim to courage, but in two strides I was in the middle of the next room; and there was nothing there—nothing beyond two empty bunks, and a litter of rags that had once been clothing.

The sunlight was streaming in a golden flood at the window. There was naught amiss, naught to strike fear into my heart. But I was back with Secretan and Brannan more quickly than I can account for; and, at their heels, was running out of that unholy cabin, as though the devil himself were at our heels.

After a dozen yards or so, however, shame pulled us up. Secretan halted, and I did likewise to avoid running into him. Brannan ran on for a few feet, then turned and slowly rejoined us. I remember that his face had gone white as a sheet and that it was with wild eyes, like those of a startled horse, that he glanced around him, sweeping the amphitheater of the clearing for the source of that bloodcurdling sound.

"*Holy!*" he said briefly. And since we had no words wherewith to do justice to the situation and the emotions it roused in us, we stood silent.

After a while Brannan again: "Will ye put a name to thot?"

"I've heard," suggested Secretan, though without deriving any apparent satisfaction from his theory, "that there is a bird—a bird called the laughing jackass—that laughs hideously. I do not know that it is a native of this clime."

"Burrd!" cried Brannan, in a tremor of contempt. "Was ut a burrd thot howled like a sowl in phurgathory last noight? Was ut a burrd thot made thim marks on the beach?"

"I do not know; I merely make the suggestion for what it may be worth. There *must* be some explanation——"

"Faith and 'tis John Brannan'd be grateful for ut, thin! Come! Burrd or beast or divvle, I'll wring the neck uv ut for scaring me hearrt into me mouth loike thot—if," contemplatively, "I ever lay me two hands on ut."

Silently, with no appetite for further research, we returned to the *Lady of Quality* by the route we had come; and not until I was safe upon these friendly decks did I experience relief from the chill that seemed to have settled in my blood. For an hour afterward my flesh crept at every unusual sound. And I believe that the same was true of us all.

CHAPTER VI.

FIRE.

If there was one quality in the man more than any other that endeared him to us, it was Secretan's admirable fortitude. Not that his heart was impregnable to fear; but that he would never

yield to his fears. Now, I knew that he was mortally afraid of firearms—as is not infrequently the case with men who have led secluded and bookish lives; but the following morning the owner of the *Lady of Quality* was up with the sun, and got us all awake with his revolver-practise. It was early enough by the time I got on deck, sleepy but anxious to know what was the matter; and I found him in the bows, a smoking weapon in his fat hand, resolutely perforating the scenery of Shadow Reef.

He greeted me with the ghost of a smile. "It's just as well to know how to handle one of these things," he said, unlimbering the weapon and ejecting the empty shells. "Really, you know, it isn't so hard; I believe I am learning quite rapidly."

"But what for?" I demanded.

"You never can tell what may happen," he replied philosophically. "I have been thinking that it would be best to go ashore this morning and explore the island thoroughly."

Not until breakfast was over did he announce his determination to Brannan. Much to my relief the Irishman fell in with the proposition without argument. "I was thinking that something av the soort sh'u'd be done, meself," he agreed; "I'm with ye. Was ut for this ye were practising with the pistol?"

On Secretan's replying in the affirmative, "I'm thinking ye'll nade a silver bullet in yer pistol," said Brannan with a sheepish grin. And, rising, he went on deck.

But Secretan was not yet through with the man; the worst was to come, from Brannan's view-point. The two of us followed him up into the sunlight, and Secretan desired him to have Ptarmigan and Pitti Sing prepare a raft.

"And *what* for?" demanded Brannan. "Isn't the cable good enough for ye?"

"Locke and I are going to sleep ashore to-night, and we'll want some things to make us comfortable. My own notion is," said Secretan, "that my uncle, of pious memory, had a poor conception of comfort."

"And be thot same token his nephew's bitten be the same madness. F'r why will ye be slaping ashore?"

"Tired of our berths. The change, I conceive, should prove pleasant."

"Hmmm. I don't envy ye the night's rest."

"Then you won't join us?"

"Hiven forbid!"

"You don't mean to tell us," I put in banteringly, "that you're afraid of the voice of a laughing jackass?"

"'Tis meself who's heard tell of laughing jackasses thot were not burrds," said Brannan with meaning.

But whether he was thinking of my humble self, or still harking back to the ghostly origin he assigned to the sounds that had twice disturbed us, I could not determine. He rolled off the minute the words were out of his mouth, to give the crew their instructions; and when he again joined us, Secretan had —he asserted with a giggle—cabled himself to the beach, while I, following my preference, had got ashore by the water route.

Brannan, dropping to the sand from the cable, handed me a revolver. "I have another in me pocket," he said; "and belike it may be useful. Ye have yer own, Misther Saycretan, I take ut?"

"You don't take it, but I have it," retorted Secretan, immensely pleased with himself. And led the way inland.

Striking through the swamp-belt, we made direct for the abandoned camp, with purpose to take up our investigation where we had left off. "There should be other paths," said Secretan sagely; "and naturally they will all converge upon this clearing. It will be easier to cover the island by those paths, rather than to force our way through the underbrush."

We entered none of the shanties, when we came to them—merely peeped inside to assure ourselves that nothing had changed in them since our investigation of the previous day. I think we were half disappointed to find all as we had left it; we were still, to some ex-

tent, affected by Brannan's hints of the supernatural, however boldly we derided them.

As Secretan had prophesied, we found three other paths, less boldly marked than the first, however, leading inland from the camp; and chose the most easterly one for exploration, as that most likely to lead us to the eastern end of the island. Hardly, however, were we clear of the settlement, than we were brought to a halt, and that by a discovery that flavored the rest of the trip unpleasantly—for me, at least.

It was nothing less than a small graveyard; a little glade in the woods which nature had left clear through her own inscrutable design, which man had appropriated for the last resting-place of his fellows.

We stumbled upon the spot unexpectedly, and paused, a little dashed of our high spirits. One fancies that a solemn peace broods over such places; we did so fancy, at all events, and were oddly moved by the experience. The sunlight seemed to strike more softly through the foliage, the singing of the boisterous trade-wind to be subdued to a more reverent note. We stood in silence for a space, finding no words.

For myself I was counting the grassy mounds and wondering. There were twelve of them, and somehow I could not conjure up a satisfactory reason for the death-roll of Shadow Reef being so large. I thought there must have been war, a civil war among the former possessors of the island, to have brought this number of men to their deaths. And Secretan's uncle, the piratical Grimes, became a figure more sinister in my imagination.

I was roused, presently, by Brannan's voice. "Faith!" he was saying. "And here's a thirteenth grave—left open!"

He had wandered away from us to the farther edge of the glade. When we stood by his side, we found ourselves looking down into a long, narrow trench, its bottom hidden by a drift of dead leaves. The earth that had been thrown up to make the grave was grassed over at one side. There could be no doubt but that it had been dug to hold a thirteenth body. And never used?

Since the path went no farther than this graveyard, we returned by it to the camp and, choosing the next trail to the west, again attempted to gain the interior of the island; this time more successfully. Within the quarter of an hour we stood upon the crest of the middle hill. Here Brannan climbed a tree, sweeping the horizon from its top branches, and returned to earth to announce a sea bare of sail. "We're lonely enough," he commented grimly.

We pushed on eastward, following a trail that by degrees grew dimmer and more dim, until at length it vanished altogether in the hollow between the hills. It was here that I fancied that I heard the voice of a man crying aloud, shrilly; but though we listened, there came no repetition of the sound, and we were content to lay it to the seabirds or the wind.

The latter part of the journey was hard climbing. It was some time after midday ere we stood upon the verge of the eastern cliffs and watched the gulls wheeling and screaming in the void that lay beneath us.

Then came a discovery, as I filled my lungs, that set me to the right-about in an instant and turned my mind completely from the contemplation of the sweetness of nature.

"What is ut?" demanded Brannan, seeing me start and turn.

"Smoke!" I said. "I smell smoke!"

He turned and sniffed incredulously. "Right ye arre. But the galley-fire would not carry so far, even on this wind."

"That's wood smoke!" declared Secretan sharply, at the same instant.

We stopped for no more words; the same fear struck in at all our hearts simultaneously, and the rest in my memory is a confused recollection of a frantic rush down-hill and up and down again, through forest and jungle and clearing and swamp, with the perspiration pouring from my face in a blinding stream, my heart hammering within its

cage of ribs like a mad thing, my lungs aching.

The smoke reek grew stronger, heavier as we proceeded; it filled the aisles of the trees with mist, clouded the distances, drew smarting tears from our eyes. If we needed any spur, it was supplied by that smell of burning wood.

Madly we labored on, panting, stumbling, falling, recovering, taking up again our furious pace. Now one led, now the other; but generally it was Brannan's broad shoulders that swayed before me; Secretan, for all his fat, kept up marvelously, but in the rear, as a rule.

It seemed an age ere we burst from the swamp-lands upon the beach and stopped exhausted and aghast, our direst apprehensions confirmed to the letter.

Before us the *Lady of Quality* was aflame—from truck to keelson, as the saying goes.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMING OF "THE MONSTER."

How long we stood rooted in inaction, our minds overwhelmed by the horror of the catastrophe, I cannot say. It is true, at least, that for a considerable space we stood huddled together, like frightened children, staring out at the terrible spectacle presented by the *Lady of Quality*.

I have no words powerful enough to make vivid to your minds our grief and despair. You may conceive something of it when you consider that, by the loss of the *Lady of Quality*, we lost all hope of leaving an island so unknown as to be barely charted by the British admiralty. And that was our chiefest concern, though we became sensible, presently, that while we watched, we were losing more than that—losing, practically, the whole of our fortunes, leaving ourselves penniless outcasts, broken men even should we succeed in escaping to the haunts of men.

And when that realization struck us with full force, we moved almost as one man; the trio of us breaking into a run down the beach, toward that spot where Pitti Sing and Ptarmigan should have been landing with the raft.

I think I have mentioned that a little ridge of land ran down out of the jungle, forming a break in the semicircular contour of the beach, hiding the end of our cable from any one standing at the entrance to the path. If I have not described this—it was so. And so it happened that without warning we pounded round this jutting point and stumbled upon the crowning horror of the day.

I was leading, and the first to see it. I pulled up with a cry of consternation, astonishment, and fright; which immediately was echoed at my shoulder by my companions.

Directly in front of the little tree to which I had attached the end of the cable, there was heaped upon the sands a considerable little collection of articles which Secretan had requisitioned for our purpose of making the cottage in the abandoned camp habitable for the night—bedding, cooking-utensils, and a pair of hammocks, together with a case or two of tinned food—assorted cans. For we had contemplated making the larger shanty our headquarters until such time as the *Lady of Quality* might be successfully careened and made sound.

This in itself was evidence that our servants, the Kanaka and Chinaman, had not been inactive while we were away. They had obeyed orders to the letter and in so doing death had come to them—death in a form the more terrible to us since we could by no means explain it.

Under the peaceful blue sky, stark on the shimmering gold of the sands, the sunlight falling upon them mercilessly bright, they lay, Ptarmigan and Pitti Sing. If ever I knew their rightful names I have forgotten them. They must go down to history beneath the mask of Secretan's facetious nicknames, poor devils!

The Chinaman on his back, face to the skies, the Kanaka prone, they lay at some distance apart, in a space of trampled sand that evidenced to the fact

that a struggle of some duration had taken place.

Ptarmigan's body was the nearer; and one judged that he had met his fate without warning. He had been struck down from behind, with a knife that, aimed with deadly skill, had found a way to his heart beneath his left shoulder-blade. He had no other wound, we later discovered, and from that deduced the fact that he had been the first to go.

Pitti Sing, on the other hand, must have fought like a wildcat for the right to live. The sand for a space of twenty feet about his body was stained with his blood, and I think he had died from the loss of that as much as from any mortal wound. For he had been stabbed and slashed fiendishly in a score of places. His face, unlike Ptarmigan's, which was quite expressionless, was horribly distorted, frozen stiff in a grin of terror and despair; the sightless, open eyes were staring with horror.

The roaring of the flames that were devouring the *Lady of Quality* brought us out of the stupor with which we had been contemplating this unexpected and overwhelming tragedy. Utterly dumfounded and aghast, we stared speechlessly at one another with pallid faces and frightened eyes. And then, with one consent, we turned and looked out toward the burning ship, as if seeking there some clue to the authorship of this infernal crime.

My first discovery was that the cable was no longer connected with the ship, and I got the impression that it must have been burned away and fallen into the water; for the bows were one mass of flames, growling, leaping, and crackling. I noted, further, that the raft the crew had used was no longer at the beach; it was floating quite half a mile out in the lagoon. And I wondered dumbly at the circumstance, quite as unaccountable as all else.

I next remember standing chest-deep in the water and turning to look back at the beach in response to frantic cries from both Secretan and Brannan. They were gesticulating and shouting, beckoning me back; but able to compass only the one motive that had taken me from their sides—the necessity of saving the basis of our fortunes from the holocaust—I merely shook my head, took a couple of steps more, and began to swim.

A little later I was clambering in over the stern of the vessel, coughing and spitting, half blinded by the smoke, and feeling as if afire with the heat of the blaze.

There was yet a chance that I might gain and leave the cabin alive. Somehow I found myself down there, tugging at the sea-chest wherein Secretan kept the ship's papers, the log, and the currency with which we had financed our operations in the island trade.

I had thought to save it all, but the imminence of the conflagration forbade the attempt; I could by no means in that grilling heat and stifling smoke get the chest on deck and overboard—it being my thought that we could afterward get it ashore.

But, as I say, that proved out of the question. I knew, however, that there was a small hatchet in one of the lockers; to which I groped my way. In a breath I was back at the chest, hacking and prying at the lock.

Twice I had to run on deck to get my breath and see how much more time I dared spend below. But at the third attack the lock yielded, the lid of the chest came up in my hands. Thus I was enabled to get the major part of the contents of the chest on deck.

Returning to the cabin for the final time, I dumped whatever it held of no value out of the chest and carried the empty box on deck, throwing it over the side, after securing a short line to one handle. It was stout, of light wood, and water-tight enough for the brief service I demanded of it.

Holding it close beneath the side I dropped in the log, the papers, Secretan's tin despatch-box, and the money—fifteen thousand dollars, partly in gold, but mostly in Bank of England notes. And so, a thought later, found myself in the water, swimming ashore and pushing the chest ahead of me.

It was no easy task—guiding that heavy-laden chest in to the beach. Mercifully Secretan swam out to aid me; but even then it was a desperate struggle. Exhausted by our long, hard run, scorched by the hungry flames, I felt my strength slipping from me moment by moment, as sand will slip through your fingers. By the time we were near enough inshore for Brannan to wade out and catch me I was half-fainting. Consciousness left me altogether for a space, when he had dragged me out upon the beach.

When I came to—the interval could have been not more than five minutes—Secretan was sluicing my head and shoulders with hatfuls of water from the lagoon. I sat up and felt ashamed of myself, for some unknown reason—probably because I had fainted. Otherwise I had reason for patting myself on the back, for I had succeeded in rescuing the most valuable part of our belongings; which was all that I had set out to do.

For support I put my back to the chest that contained the money; and looked about.

Brannan was standing with his back to the sea, his face to the jungle, staring inland. To one side the two dead bodies were still sprawled in hideous postures. Secretan was sitting on an edge of the chest, his expression serious—for a wonder—his fat little hands busy with his revolver, which he was drying out with a bit of dirty cloth. To seaward the *Lady of Quality* was more than ever sheeted in flame; and the heat of the conflagration was unpleasantly perceptible, even at that distance.

We exchanged no remarks, at first—the situation was one cruel beyond the power of tongue to express. There was nothing to say.

Presently Secretan finished his job of cleaning the revolver, and having wiped off the cartridges carefully, replaced them in the cylinder and closed the breech. "Go ahead, Brannan," he said soberly. "I'll stand watch."

Brannan nodded. For the first time I noted that he was holding his own revolver ready in his hand. He moved off down the beach toward the bodies, without verbal reply to Secretan. The latter assumed a pose similar to that Brannan had held—standing and staring intently at the jungle. It was plain that he played the part of sentry, but I was just weak and thoughtless enough to put the obvious question.

"We're not going to be surprised," he replied without turning his head, "like those poor devils—not if we can help it. Brannan thinks that—whatever it was that did this—is still lurking hereabouts. And the man, or thing, that was unafraid of two will show no fear of three."

"But it must have been a man," I argued. "The island must be inhabited—by savages."

"Yes," he returned dubiously. "But Brannan doesn't believe it."

"What does he think?"

"What need to ask? The man's a fool for superstition, and conceives that the Powers of Darkness are leagued against us."

"And you?"

"Don't ask me. I'm—frightened."

"You're both idiots," I contended. "Ghosts don't knife people."

A shadow fell upon the sand by my side and I looked up with a start to find that Brannan had returned. He stood over me for a moment, glaring down, his face black, features working.

"What d'ye know av thim?" he demanded fiercely. "I've heard things that would make ye sing another chune. Far the matther of thot, what have ye to say to this?"

He unclosed his palm and displayed an old and rusty clasp-knife, crimson with blood.

"'Twas thot done ut," he said, voice aquiver.

"Well?"

"And I saw it no longer since than yesterday, on the flurr in the big shanty. 'Tis the wan that fell out av the bones. 'Tis doomed we arre, Gawd help us! For why did we iver set fut on this damned island? 'Twas through no wish av mine."

"Oh, cut it out!" I cried. "You're

making a fool of yourself and trying to make cowards of us all. There *must* be some natural explanation——"

But my voice failed me as, from far in the interior of the island, there rang out that harsh, mad, jarring laughter. Weird and inhuman, like the exultant and ironic shriek of a malignant spirit in very truth, it was a sound that seemed to chill the blood in my heart; and one to galvanize us all with instant fear.

I started to my feet, forgetting my weakness and exhaustion. Secretan involuntarily stepped back a pace or two from the edge of the jungle, and uttered a low cry of alarm. Brannan I did not look at; but I could see from his shadow at my side that he was trembling violently; and his breathing sounded very quick and loud.

"Come!" cried Secretan, breaking the silence that fell after the cry had died. "We must get out of this."

"Pwhere will ye go to be safe?" demanded Brannan. "Pwhere in this hell-sphot——"

"We'll go to one of the buildings in the camp, over there," said Secretan—his voice none too steady. "It's the only thing we can do. We've got to have some shelter. And afterward we—well, we are three armed men, as against something—I sha'n't try to put a name to it. It must be a savage——"

"Did ye ever hear a savage laugh like thot?"

"I don't know—no. But it will be strange if we can't run it to ground. My God, Brannan, we must! Don't stand staring there, like a coward. Catch an end of this chest and help me with it. We'll take possession of the biggest house and then have a conference. Locke, you get your revolver ready and be our rear-guard."

I was too weak for words; it was Secretan who stormed and shamed the Irishman into action. A few moments later we were in motion, leaving the beach, for the third time attempting the journey through the swamp.

Never shall I forget the next three hours. The weight of the chest and its unwieldiness hampered Brannan and Secretan beyond belief. A dozen times they were forced to stop and rest. We progressed at a snail's pace, exasperatingly slow, and with our nerves all aquiver.

Whether it was so or not, I believed, as did my companions, that our every step was dogged, our every movement watched, our every word overheard by an unseen enemy. The walls of the jungle were close, dense, impenetrable, on either side of the path. What went on behind them we might not see. But our ears were sharpened to supernatural acuteness, and our imaginations quickened to terrifying conjectures. And we interpreted every rustle and sigh in the foliage as a menace or a signal for attack.

It was late in the afternoon, very close upon night, when we got to the cabins in the clearing; the light of the setting sun was striking ruddy upon the tree-trunks, deluging the whole scene with the hue of blood. The place was quite as we had left it, deserted and quiet.

Sighing with relief, Brannan and Secretan put down their burden in the larger room of the large cabin, then stepped outside, joining me to discuss our next and most advisable move.

Secretan opened the conversation with a remark of which I have no clear memory. His words were cut short by a cry from Brannan—and this time a cry of joy, startlingly out of tune with the tenor of our thoughts.

"Now, God be praised!" he bellowed. "Look—*look!*"

He was pointing seaward with an arm that shook with excitement. I turned and looked.

In at the entrance to the little cove I have described, a ship was standing—a topsail schooner of, if anything, a slightly greater tonnage than the *Lady of Quality*. With all sails set, and barely full in the falling breeze, she glided slowly and silently over the dark waters of the lagoon, her canvas gleaming like gold in the evening sunlight.

I cannot begin to convey the emotions this sight roused in us. It was all a daze of joy and relief. Brannan I

remember as openly weeping with thankfulness, Secretan as being the first to set the example of running down to the water's edge to greet the ship which we were regarding as our salvation.

She came on with stately grace, finally luffing and anchoring with a rattle of chains loud upon the evening silence, while we three stumbled and tripped and lumbered on, thoughtless of all else, straggling out upon the western sand-spit, at length arriving at the nearest point to the vessel, too breathless to hail her.

For some seconds we stood there, panting, devouring the arrival with our eyes. I have a picture of her very clear in my memory—a picture of a vessel with a long and low freeboard, a sharp stem, towering, graceful masts, and, clear and bright upon her bows, in gilt letters, her name and port of hail: *"The Monster, of Liverpool."*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SILENT DEATH.

At first glimpse of the captain of *The Monster*, as he stood upon his deck, I was conscious of a feeling of repugnance; intuitively I divined a harsh and unyielding nature in the square, rigid set of his shoulders, in the somewhat finical nicety of his attire, in the pugnacious and protruding lower jaw.

To this sensation was added a mystery by his attitude toward us. There is no comradeship so genial as that of sailors, no sympathy for the unfortunate and distressed more ready and sincere than that given freely by those who follow the sea. No men are more gregarious, company-loving, none more eager to have speech with their fellows.

Yet to our repeated hails the captain of *The Monster* vouchsafed no more than one curt response: a boat would be sent ashore in due time. Beyond that acknowledgment of our existence he paid us no heed, until in the fulness of his own sweet will he came ashore. Long before that had happened, the exultation to which Secretan and I had been a prey, had disappeared, engulfed in gloomy anticipations; while Brannan, the volatile, his terrors forgotten for the nonce, was cursing the captain right heartily for a sour and surly dog.

Under this depressing influence, as I have indicated, we subsided into a dull and apprehensive temper, but contained our impatience, forced ourselves to wait. And the master took his time.

The tropic night had fallen black upon island and lagoon ere the keel of his boat grated on the sands. But we had been warned by the sound of oars as well as by the steady approach of a lantern in the bows of the dingey, and were ready enough to seize the bows and pull the boat ashore, you may believe—as well as dashed enough when the occupants of it remained stolidly in their places, without moving—save that from the stern a tall, black figure arose and made its way forward over the thwarts.

In the bows the man halted, standing with his legs astraddle and peering at us as we stood ranged in the lantern's circle of light. I remarked a cold and austere cast of countenance that fitted well with the man's words, when he spoke.

"You may give an account of yourselves," he said crisply. "I should prefer that one of you do all the talking—the rest will only confuse, if they insist on speaking. And, by the way, it may be well for you to understand that I am armed."

As he spoke he lugged a rifle into sight, cradling it in the hollow of his arm as though in anticipation of an attack.

"Now you may speak," he said evenly, in the tone of one who is absolute master of the situation.

Unbending as had been his attitude from the beginning, there had been nothing in it to prepare us for such an introduction. It struck us speechless for the moment—as well it might. Finally, while still I groped vainly for words to phrase my amazement, Secretan stepped a pace forward, taking the onus of spokesmanship.

"I do not," he said calmly—and I loved him for his composure, in the face of that frigid and inhuman greeting—"I cannot understand just why you have adopted this attitude toward us. Indeed, I am entirely unconscious of our having done anything that would lead you to believe that you had aught to fear from us."

"I may suggest," cut in the cold voice, "that you have done nothing to make me believe that you are honest and God-fearing men."

"I fail to see," returned Secretan, on his mettle, "that the question of religion has entered into or has anything to do with our case. You discover us upon this island, very evidently men in sore distress——"

"Possibly the result of your own evil designs," said the captain acidly.

"I am afraid I do not follow you."

"I am afraid you must. I discover you three here, as you state, under what I may term the most suspicious auspices. What do you suppose brought me out of my course, this day, to visit this uncharted island? What but the smoke of the vessel you have burned. May I inquire if you consider it characteristic of honest men, to burn a vessel in an out-of-the-way spot—undoubtedly with purpose to collect the insurance?"

Brannan began to swear beneath his breath, and would have stepped forward and made his violent temper a factor in the situation, had I not caught his hand and almost forcibly restrained him.

Secretan remained the coolest of the three.

"Why," he inquired calmly, "do you think us capable of such villainy? What is it that makes you believe that we would deliberately run our vessel aground here, and, by burning her, make ourselves voluntary prisoners on a deserted and unknown island?"

The captain of *The Monster* laughed briefly and with sarcastic appreciation.

"I sighted the smoke," he said, "shortly after noon. At eight bells I sailed into the lagoon, making directly for the burning ship."

"Thot," Brannan whispered, "was while we were in thot domned swamp. 'Tis why we didn't see the black-hearted divvle——"

"Hush!" I said.

The captain continued:

"It was unnecessary to land—besides being dangerous. The glasses were powerful enough to show me that you had murdered at least two of your crew upon the beach—presumably to eliminate them as witnesses against you, and that you had landed supplies sufficient to keep you from hunger for some time. Oh, I am not a fool!" he said, betraying impatience. "I can see through a millstone with a hole in it. It is patent enough that you act under instructions from the ship's owners, with whom you have, beyond doubt, an understanding that you are to be rescued within a reasonable length of time.

"My men," he continued, "I have seen this thing done before, and—I am an honest man. My ways are not your ways—nor will they ever be, please God! I see before me a trio of brazen scoundrels and murderers. Am I to treat with you as with honest men?"

Again I had trouble to restrain Brannan, but at length he allowed himself to be quieted.

"Then," said Secretan after a brief silence, "I gather that you refuse to have anything whatever to do with us? You refuse to help us escape from this island?"

"I doubt your need of my help. However," with another maddening, short laugh, "I will confess that I am somewhat curious to hear the story you have manufactured."

Secretan visibly hesitated; and I followed the little man's mental processes clearly. The captain of *The Monster* had drawn a damning indictment against us, and we had no defense beyond a bare recounal of the facts—and to narrate a story so incredible as ours was but to invite derision and to damn us yet more thoroughly in the mind of the self-righteous person in the bows of the dingey.

"If you can satisfy me," proceeded

the captain with cutting significance, "that the dead men on the beach, over yonder, met their deaths through no act of yours, I will consider the advisability of giving you passage."

There was another pause, during which I managed to get Brannan's revolver from his pocket before he was aware of my intention. He turned upon me in a rage, but I stepped aside and told him in a whisper that I would knock him senseless if he did not contain himself. Grumbling, he subsided.

"I am afraid," said Secretan at length, "that nothing I can say would tend to remove the prejudice in your narrow mind, my dear sir. Permit me," he said, with a scornful ring in his voice, "to thank you for your courtesy in affording us, by this interview, an opportunity to meet the most intolerably self-sufficient and contemptible prig that was ever born of woman. I think that I speak for my companions when I say that we would rather starve than be beholden to you for the least courtesy."

"*Ah?* I thought as much!"

"Your thoughts," continued Secretan, "are of no earthly importance to any one save yourself, whom they fit admirably. I bid you good evening."

He turned on his heel and stalked away into the darkness. Gripping Brannan's arm, I dragged him after Secretan. The Irishman fought me like a devil unchained, and filled the night with insults which he hurled at the head of the captain of *The Monster*. I was fortunately able to hold him until the boat had been pushed off, else he had undoubtedly gone to his death in an insane attempt to slay the man with his bare hands.

Disconsolately we made our way back to the cabin in the camp, for the time forgetful of the danger that stalked us at every step—the unknown death that lurked in the fastnesses of the island. Oddly enough, in the light of our afterknowledge, we went unmolested, found the cabin untouched, with not a thing out of place so far as we could determine by the light of the fire we built in front of the door.

It was nearly midnight ere we were able to take some rest. Much had to be done, to our way of thinking, to insure us against assassination in our sleep. We barricaded the windows thoroughly, turned out the bedding in the bunks of the inner room and swept them with a broom of twigs. Then we scooped a shallow hole in the ground, outside the cabin, and—somewhat unceremoniously, I fear, for we were sick with fatigue—bundled into it the bones that had tumbled out of the inner room. After that we had to gather enough wood to maintain a roaring fire throughout the night.

Food we had none, and half famished though we were, we willingly did without it, rather than face the tramp through the swamp to the beach where our scanty supplies were. As soon as possible we set watches for the night, Brannan taking the first, while Secretan and I bundled into the bunks. Secretan stood the second watch; it was perhaps a little over four hours, though it seemed no more than a minute, ere he shook me awake.

I got up, noted the unmistakable sounds of Brannan's snoring from the opposite bunk, and drunk with sleep stumbled out to join Secretan, whom I found seated in front of the open doorway, nursing his revolver and staring out into the darkness, made ruddy by the flicker of the firelight.

"Well?" I said.

"It will be daylight soon," he returned, rising. "Is your gun all right?"

I assured first myself then him of this fact. "Nothing has happened?" I asked.

"Nothing," he replied, yet doubtfully; "nothing, at least, that I could pin a suspicion to.

"Some time ago I heard a racket down on *The Monster*. I don't understand it—sounded as if the watch were quarreling. Some one got hurt, I suppose, for I heard him cry out. But they quieted down.

"About half an hour later I fancied I heard footsteps in the back of the cabin; for that matter they seemed to be making the round of the place—very light and stealthy; and I either saw,

or thought I saw, something move on the other side of the fire, just at the edge of the trees. I had a notion that it might have been that righteous soul, the captain of *The Monster,* making a tour of inspection."

"Probably," I grumbled. "I fancy he is made of such stuff as sneaks are. But you need the sleep. Go on to bed."

"Good night," he said; and passed into the inner room.

I heard him lie down in the bunk I had vacated, and his sigh. And after that no sound beyond the crackling of the fire for what seemed a very long time.

I remember wondering at my wakefulness; I had a sense of being very high-strung and vigilant and nervously alert. But this must have been factitious; for somehow I must have slept at my post.

All I know of it is that one moment I was seated quietly before the door, as Secretan had been, blinking out into the darkness and thinking lazily that I should arise, go out and replenish the fire. The next—the interior of the cabin was filled with a cold and ghostly light, and something had struck me a heavy blow upon the chest and I had fallen out of the chair. On the heels of that, before I had by any means recovered my senses, I was conscious of an exquisite thrill of pain in my shoulder, as if it had been bored through with a white-hot iron; and at the same time was grappling furiously with something slippery, cold, and damp—a heavy, clammy, squirming thing that fought and bit and kicked and wriggled from my grasp, enveloping me in a whirl of rough-and-tumble fighting beyond which naught is clear.

During the course of it I must have screamed. Brannan and Secretan tell me that they were awakened by an unearthly yell, and tumbled out of the inner room to find me fighting on the floor with a naked, white, mad thing, that was sinking its teeth in my shoulder and jabbing at me with a very long and shiny knife.

My only warning of their advent came like a clap of thunder—a revolver-shot seemed to lift the roof of the cabin; and at the same instant the thing on top of me ceased struggling and threw itself, or was lifted, off.

Quivering and panting, and torn with pain, I got to my knees, stumbled to my feet, and staggered to a chair. Somebody's arm was around my shoulders, supporting me. Afterward I found it was Secretan's. Brannan was busy seeing that the thing did not get at me—for it was by no means dead: Brannan's bullet had merely grazed its skull, momentarily stunning it.

I call the thing "it" instinctively. But when my brain was quite clear and I was able to see what went on, despite the pain in my shoulder, I discovered Brannan standing over the crouching figure of a white man, quite nude, in a corner of the cabin. The thing—the white man—was resting on his haunches and clawing at the floor in a particularly unpleasant fashion. He had very black eyes, aflame with insanity, and badly bloodshot; which he maintained fixedly upon my face.

His age one could never guess. He was painfully emaciated, his ribs standing out like the rounds of a chair, and very dirty. His hair was a matted mane at least a foot in length, and hung down over his forehead almost to his eyes; his face was the color of lead, cheeks sunken, nose thin and prominent, lips thin and colorless, his mouth a cavern of filthy teeth.

"What," I gasped, as soon as I could breathe, "what, in God's name, is that?"

"Brannan's ghost," said Secretan, with a short laugh.

"Cut ut," cried Brannan, stepping forward as the thing showed signs of renewing its activity. "Come along and lend me a hand while I bind this divvle!"

Between them they had him trussed up in a twinkling; and then stood back, like myself fascinated and repelled by the picture he presented.

But I was beginning to suffer acutely from my wound, as well as to be aware of a weakness that grew out of my loss of blood. Accordingly I demanded help, and my companions were

gentle and tender and skilful enough in washing and binding up the ugly cut that they found in my shoulder.

Meanwhile the object in the corner was having what appeared to be a fit—a series of convulsions, graduating to a climax. I am not going into particulars, for I have never known anything more terrible and revolting than the picture he presented. But from a moaning and shuddering he passed into spasm after spasm of writhing and foaming at the mouth and straining at his bonds. In the course of some fifteen minutes these passed, and he subsided into a sort of excited loquacity. He crouched there, mowing and bowing, jabbering at top speed, mad eyes flitting from one to another of our faces as we watched him and listened.

At first I made nothing of it, and was inclined to believe that he was merely mouthing inarticulate nonsense, after the manner of insane people. But a hushed exclamation of Brannan's, "Be the powers, ut's speaking English!" apprised me of my mistake, and by bending a more attentive ear, I managed to follow the course of a more or less connected narrative.

And of all the strange events and scenes that made up the story of Shadow Reef, I recall none more strange than the one within that cabin, where we three sat and listened to the ravings of a maniac, while the dawn grew and flamed in the skies without, and the island awoke to another day.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ROUND-UP.

His name was Benjamin. So much we gathered from its frequent repetition. He never used the personal pronoun, but always seemed to refer to himself as "Benny," or "Poor old Ben." And this is what we gathered from his gibberish:

Benny had discovered an island, somewhere, called False Island, which was rich with pearls. He kept his secret for a time, then confided it to some one named "George," and there doesn't seem to be any doubt that this person was George Vaughan Secretan, alias George Grimes.

The two, George and Benny, associated unto themselves a third, whose name appears to have been Billy Castle; and the trio took ship, with eleven sailors and divers, and went to False Island, and there settled.

For three years they stayed there, fishing for pearls and accumulating a fortune. Toward the end of the third year there came trouble—a mutiny among the divers—presumably natives from the east coast of Australia—who wanted to return to their home; also a quarrel between George and Billy Castle.

George appears to have been a violent and bloodthirsty individual. He killed Bill Castle with a knife, and, either before or after that crime, shot three of the natives—effectually nipping the mutiny in the bud, but simultaneously creating a new complication.

It was time to go away from Shadow Reef—or False Island, as Benny consistently termed it; and they dared not risk either leaving or taking the natives. If George and Benny left the natives in possession, they might return to find their treasure-house in the possession of others, their secret known to the world. If they took them along in the ship—which seems to have been George's property—the white men ran the hourly risk of being knifed at any hour of the day or night, or hanged as soon as they got to port, as common murderers.

Altogether, one gathers, the force and applicability of the adage that "dead men tell no tales" seem to have appealed to George and Benny very strongly. They armed themselves and went forth. The killing began immediately. Some of the natives escaped and had to be hunted; in a struggle with one of them Benny was wounded. He did not say so, but one presumes that he got the crack over the head which deprived him of his reason. At all events, he seems to have made a murderous attack on George.

George must have escaped without

hurt, for Benny told us quite simply that George went away then, and left "poor old Ben." Somehow, single-handed, Secretan's disreputable uncle must have navigated his schooner out through the reef and over the countless leagues of sea to Honolulu—or nearly that far, eventually abandoning the vessel and continuing his voyage in the open boat in which he was picked up. It was no mean feat.

As for poor old Benny, he was naturally lonely. Except at nights. Ghosts of the murdered natives appeared to him at night, for a long time, until in his mad humor he was inspired to gather together the bodies and bury them. All but that of Billy Castle. The latter appears to have been the man killed in his bunk. Benny didn't bury him, although he had dug a grave, because he wanted the company of Billy's ghost. He seems to have derived a great deal of comfort from Billy. It gave him counsel and stayed by him for a long time, living with him in the den he had made for himself in the jungle.

Counselor and guide, this ghostly visitant, conjured up by the enfeebled and unsteady brain—I fancy that the man had almost lucid intervals, at times—seems to have inspired the murder of Ptarmigan and Pitti Sing; which appeared to have been accomplished half in revenge for the disturbing of Billy Castle's bones. Benny told quite clearly how he had sprung upon the Kanaka and the Chinaman from the jungle, killing Ptarmigan at a blow. Pitti Sing he disposed of after a struggle.

And then, because Brannan and Secretan and I were also marked for assassination, and it was unwise to leave us any means of escape, Benny went off to the *Lady of Quality* on the raft, fired the ship, turned the raft adrift, and swam ashore. I suppose he must have gone around the point to do this, for we had found no traces of his landing, just as I have concluded that the queer marks we discovered on the sands that first morning on Shadow Reef were made by the maniac dragging himself up out of the water, his insane cunning having dictated that ruse to bewilder us.

At this point the man's story began to deal with events that we knew not of; it became rambling and disconnected, yet through it all there ran a suggestion that struck us cold with horror. Midway in it Secretan got up and walked to the door.

"Come on, you fellows," he said faintly. "I can't stand any more of this. Good God, he must be lying—it can't, simply can't be true. I am going to see."

Brannan helped me out of the cabin, and put me down where I could rest my back against the walls and, bathed in the comfortable glow of the sunlight, watch Secretan trotting down to the beach.

The Monster lay where she had anchored the previous evening, moving very slightly to the slow rise and fall of the lagoon. She was a beautiful craft and made a picture of peace; yet Brannan and I, with the sound of that maniac's monologue still in our ears, watched her with crawling terror.

As for Secretan, he did not hesitate. In fact, he has confessed that he dared not stop to think. We saw him reach the place where we had held our conference with the captain of *The Monster,* strip, and plunge boldly into the water. He swam very well, as stout men generally do, and reached *The Monster* without delay, climbing aboard by the jib-stays.

His stay was brief. I do not think he spent ten minutes on board. When again he came into sight, he was hurrying, as if to escape an evil sight. He dived immediately over the side and, coming up, struck out for the land.

Brannan went to meet him. But before I heard it from his own lips, I knew that it was true.

The maniac, swimming silently, had made his way on board, some time during the previous night, surprised and butchered the watch—there was only one man, an anchor-watch, awake—and then without waking any of the others, save perhaps the last—a surmise based on Secretan's assertion that

he distinctly heard the sound of scuffling and a cry during the night—slain every soul aboard *The Monster*.

There were six, in all. Secretan says that the cabin was like a slaughter-house.

I cannot say, for he and Brannan cleaned the place out thoroughly while I was convalescent.

Two months later, from the midship thwart of a long-boat whose stern was so charred by flames as to render her name illegible, I saw the last of *The Monster, of Liverpool*.

Like the only other vessel that, within our knowledge, had visited Shadow Reef since George Vaughan Secretan, alias George Grimes, had sailed away from that island, *The Monster* went up in flames.

It was close upon dawn. We lay upon our oars, Brannan, Secretan and I, about half a mile away, and watched the flames lick up her masts and roar through her decks. She burned very brightly—we had seen to that; determined men with an ample supply of kerosene can make a ship very inflammable, if such is their design—and we did not leave her neighborhood until the last tongue of fire had hissed out as the sea received the blackened hulk.

Not until that happened were we safe. The mind of man is prone to swift judgment on circumstantial grounds. We had had one experience of that, and were hungry for no more.

But with the lunatic "Benny" at last at rest beneath the sod—he occupies the thirteenth grave in the little graveyard—with *The Monster* a charred remnant beneath the waves, we were free to turn our long-boat's bows to the west, to hoist sail and shape our course for the Marquesas, one hundred miles away, there to declare ourselves the sole survivors of the lost *Lady of Quality*.

Which we did.

Later, at our leisure, we bought and fitted out another vessel, and returned to Shadow Reef; and this time even Brannan was eager to raise her peaks, for the ghost was laid, the shadow lifted; the reef remained—a lordly treasure-house, the richest pearl reef in the South Pacific.

And we three were, and are, its lords.

IN SEARCH OF THE POLE

COMMANDER PEARY, the courageous leader of the expedition now in search of the Pole, has explored the fascinating frozen North no fewer than eight times; and on this, the ninth occasion, he is particularly sanguine of success, for there is luck in odd numbers—at least, in Commander Peary's case. It will be remembered that it was three years ago he began his last journey, and nine months later—on April 21, 1906—that he planted the American flag on a mountain of ice only one hundred and seventy-four nautical miles from the North Pole. It was at a higher degree of latitude than anybody had reached before, beating Nansen and the Duke of the Abruzzi by fifty-five and thirty-five English miles respectively. He is carrying a flag this time presented by President Roosevelt, and if his aspirations are realized, he will unfurl it at the North Pole, or as near as he can get to it. By the way, it is well to mention that on one of his previous Polar expeditions Commander Peary was accompanied by his wife, who was eagerly welcomed by the Eskimos, and went through all the hardships of the journey with wonderful fortitude, and without experiencing the least ill effects. The commander himself, however, has not always been so fortunate. He has lost some of his toes through getting frost-bitten, and on more than one occasion he has been at death's door through cold and starvation.

First Blood

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "Under the Great Bear," "Raw Gold," Etc.

A simple and powerful tale of the grim North where men trap animals for their furs and where men themselves are sometimes entrapped in their own primitive passions

FURS and barter brought the Ancient and Honorable Company of Adventurers to Hudson Bay, from which bleak landfall they speedily overran the Northwest. And furs have continued to be the prime object of the Company during the two centuries of its existence. Ethical problems concern it not. Certain primitive conceptions of justice are laid down, and by these the agents of the Company are guided in the trade. If a Factor is shrewd, a peacemaker with the Indian and half-breed hunters, a getter of furs, his morals are of little moment. At any rate, the Company ignored certain matters in connection with Armand Pelisse, and he rose in their service in proportion to the profits he brought them. Finally he became Factor at the Landing—which, as any Hudson Bay runner can tell you, squats at the base of the Rocky Mountains on the bank of a big river that has seen many a great canoe-flotilla slip away toward the rising sun. The Landing taps a grand fur country, and Pelisse was become a great man. But for all that, he was not long at the Landing before the simple voyageurs wished him gone again. He bred heart-burnings. And, for a time, the fiercest of these fires glowed in the bosom of one Colin MacRae.

Colin was born at the Landing, grew up there, and expected to die there—or at least he would have said so if one had asked him. There are two combinations of blood prevalent in the service of the Company. One is French and Indian—volatile, quick to anger, and as quick to forget offense and injury when the anger has died. The other is Scotch and Indian—and in all things it is the reverse of its fellow hybrid. For the dour Scots who wandered overseas, and mated with red women because there were no white, were peaceful men and long-suffering, but terrible when aroused. Thus Colin's very name indicates his type and nature. He was a young man when Pelisse came to the Landing, and he had just taken to himself a wife—and a "debt" to the Company, for the making of a wedding-feast. Also he had a sister.

She was a girl of some beauty. The blood of her paternal ancestors had triumphed over the red, and wavy brown hair, a smooth, clear skin, faintly touched with olive, were hers. The large, dark eyes of her mother's people looked coquettishly out from under perfect eyebrows. Few would have guessed the mixed blood—and few men would have cared, if she smiled as sweetly on them as she did on Armand Pelisse. For in his way, this debonair breaker of hearts was as physically perfect as she. But where she was almost ignorant in her virgin innocence, he—well, he was a typical male.

MacRae the first had quit the Company's service by way of an overturned canoe, and the mother of the girl and Colin had long since been laid in a

tree-top, after the manner of her people. So Christy and Colin stuck together, even after Colin took to himself a fat, round-faced bride from a Cree teepee. Pelisse saw Christy first when Colin stood up before the priest. By way of keeping up an appearance of patriarchal interest the Company requires the Factor to unbend and lend his presence on such occasions, if no more than to drink a cup of tea with the simple folk. There was Hudson Bay rum, and whisky that had paid no revenue to the queen, at Colin's mating, as well as the tea.

It was a big spread, and it stood Colin a good share of his next winter's prospective fur catch. No matter, though; the Company was generous if the year was bad. So the priest blessed them, and everybody sat down and ate and drank and wished them several lifetimes of happiness. Armand exalted them with his honored presence. He gave the bride a splendid tartan shawl, and Colin a hunting-knife, and he drank tea with them. When the tables were cleared and thrust ingloriously outside and the fiddlers hunched themselves and scraped till sweat ran down their dusky brows, he opened the ball and the eyes of the Company underlings by treading a measure with Mrs. Colin. After that he had time for none but Christy. The soft little heart of her rose high with pride to think that she was esteemed in the sight of the Factor, the big man of the Landing. The hearts of certain young men, wiry traversers of long, desolate trails, also beat high—but with jealous anger. Much more desirable did Christy seem to them, since Pelisse had singled her out for his ardent wooing.

If the good father who tended the souls of these folk had been about the Landing much he would likely have put a different face on the matter. Christy would have obeyed him implicitly, and even Armand Pelisse, arrogant and hot-headed as he was, would have been slow to call upon his curly head the execration of the Church. But the father was prone, indeed it was his mission, to flit from post to post, tarrying here a day, there a week, as need arose. At the best he had little more than time to marry them and bury them. The church, in that far region, must needs be peripatetic if it would keep in touch with the faithful. So, with the understanding eye of the wise old priest not upon them, these two passionate creatures played the game that is old as life itself, and sometimes as sad.

This began in midsummer, and when the southern flight of the wild goose took place, the hunting-ground beckoned to Colin with the hand of necessity. He now was become a man of family; the woman must be provided for; the Company "debt" must be paid. Strangely enough, the Factor had bade him procure all that he needed, had helped him with a lavish hand, even urging upon him things that he did not need but greatly desired; and with it, gave assurance that the Company would not press hard upon a hunter who had bad luck. Colin watched the two, Armand and Christy, walk along the river-bank in the cool of the evening, and dreamed of his little sister a Factor's wife, a great lady. Likewise he saw himself risen to importance as a Company man—for without a doubt a smart one like Pelisse stood well with the Company, and why should not one's own kin lend a hand?

Thus building fine air-castles Colin made ready for his annual pilgrimage to the Big Stick country, where the mink, the marten, the cross-fox and suchlike fur abounded. The flour and tea and sugar, a scanty enough store to last them the winter; the traps for the sly things of the forest, the powder and ball for his medieval trade-gun; snow-shoes and clothing of buckskin for himself and his mate; all these were stowed carefully in Colin's canoe. His dog-team, the best in the Landing, lay sleepily on the bank, cocking its several knowing eyes at what was to the fore. And when all was prepared Christy staggered her brother—a little. When he had time to think, it did not seem so strange.

"Thank ye, Colin dear," she said

sweetly—and stubbornly. "But I'll no be a burden ta ye an' Gracie. Ye ha' your wife, an' three's no good company in such time. I'll bide here."

"Bide here?" Colin echoed perplexedly. "An' wi' who will ye bide? There's room aplenty for ye. I've laid in grub to spare, an' Gracie's no the lass ta mak' ye feel discomforted. What's took ye? Whaur wad ye bide if no wi' your own brither—at any rate, till ye ha' a hoose an' man o' your own?"

Christy tossed her head. "I'll bide here just the same," she returned. "Kerry Michelson's man is off ta Slave Lake for the winter. She's lonesome, an' she's for havin' me stay an' keep her company—seein' ye dinna really need me."

"Tut, tut, come on wi' us, Christy," Colin urged.

But Christy was not to be persuaded, and Colin ceased his importunity, having glimmerings of the why. He saw to it that she was well settled with Mistress Michelson, and bade her good-by. Being powerless to do aught else, he washed his hands of her till spring.

Colin and his woman left the Landing one smoky Indian-summer afternoon. North by west they journeyed for a matter of three weeks. A deluge of snow caught them, and held them back somewhat, but at length they reached the Big Stick country and made themselves cozy in the log cabin Colin the first had built and handed down to his son. They set their house in order and while they were about it winter shut down as suddenly as the sinking of the sun. The North unmasked its batteries of frost and snow. Great guns of blizzards assaulted them. The old, old struggle between elemental forces and creatures of flesh and blood was waged right merrily.

In *parka* and moccasins, begarmented in buckskin and fur, shod with the webbed, seven-leagued boots of the North, Colin daily made the round of his traps. Moose and caribou fell to his gun, giving them ample supply of meat. The pelts he took were stretched on shaping willows, and the slow-voiced Cree woman toiled faithfully through the daylight hours working the green moose-hide into pliable buckskin. Through the long evenings, with a flickering grease-light at their elbow, they would sit by the cheery blaze that glowed in the stone fireplace at the cabin-end; she patiently sewing intricate designs of beads and colored porcupine-quills on moccasins for her man; he humped on a bearskin, pipe in his mouth, torturing Scotch and French folk-songs on the strings of an ancient fiddle.

Thus the winter passed, and with his woman, his traps, and his fiddle Colin was very well content. He gave little thought to Christy, being too much engrossed with things nearer at hand. When he did think of her it was generally to wonder if they would have the "gran' weddin'" before he returned in the spring—for that it would be otherwise never once entered his head. He was no fool, this somewhat primitive son of the wilds; he had truly fathomed Christy's real motive for staying with Kerry Michelson, and to him it seemed only natural. There was only one possible outcome, judging by Armand's open attentions and the usual result in such cases. And Colin hoped to shake a foot at Christy's wedding in the spring.

Just before the lengthening days and the reviving sun drove the storm-sprites back to their Northern lair Colin loaded his goods on a sled—and some portion on the stout backs of himself and wife also—hitched the dogs thereto, and began the long journey to navigable waters. Timed to a nicety, with that instinctive gaging of the seasons common to men of the North, they reached a southbound stream with the passing of the snow. There they cached the sled in a tree-top, according to custom, and took to the canoe that had awaited them in its clump of trees since the fall before.

By devious windings they came to the broad channel of the Athabasca. Down this they floated, homeward-bound with a fair catch. As they swung

down the silent river, here and there canoes slipped unexpectedly out of far-reaching arms of the main stream. Sometimes one, sometimes two, again it might be a dozen, or the brigade of a tribe, they came steadily down from the hunting-grounds till the procession was a goodly one. At dusk the glimmer of their supper-fires along the bank was like the bivouac of an army. Paddling with the current by day, sleeping with faces bared to the sky at night, the returning hunters chansoned and fiddled and recounted desperate exploits in lonely places till the Landing hove in sight, with those who had remained at the post gathered on the bank to greet them.

Strangely enough, Christy was not of the number. Colin beached his canoe high and dry. Among those who shouted welcome to him he espied a juvenile Michelson. To this youngster Colin beckoned.

"How's a' the folk at the hoose?" he queried tentatively. "Did ye winter good?"

"They're all right," the boy answered. Then, after a pause, he volunteered in the brutally frank manner of a child another piece of information. "I think Christy's sick. Mother says she isn't, but she wouldn't sit round an' cry if she wasn't sick, would she, Colin?"

"Eh?" Colin stared at the boy. "Thank ye, laddie; rin along."

"Stay ye here, Gracie, an' keep off tha thievin' dogs," he said presently. "I'll be goin' up ta Michelson's for a minute."

He left the chattering flock on the river-edge and ascended the bank, walking quickly toward the cabins that clustered a respectful distance from the rambling Company store. As he passed the more pretentious building that housed the Factor two men and a woman came up from the opposite direction. One of the men was Armand Pelisse. The other was old, a bent, shriveled-up figure in ill-fitting broadcloth. Each spring, as far back as he could remember, Colin had seen him about the Landing when the furs came in, and he knew him for a pillar of the Company before whom even Factors bowed down. He came, lingered a week or so, observed everything in impassive silence, addressed none but the Factor, and went his way again in a cushioned buckboard drawn by blooded horseflesh. But it was on the woman that Colin's attention centered—on her, and the deferential, almost tender bearing of Pelisse. *She* owned no Indian blood. Blue-eyed, skin pink and white like the June roses of the North, she seemed to Colin the creature of a dream. Her hair—she walked bareheaded—glimmered in the sunshine the color of a ripened wheat-field. Certainly she was a striking figure—to a man who could count on the fingers of one hand the number of pure-blooded white women he had ever seen.

To Colin's "Good day ta ye, Factor," Pelisse merely nodded acknowledgment. He passed on, wholly engrossed with his companion. Colin whirled on his heel and stared after them; watched them go into the house, the girl laughing merrily at something Armand said, and Armand bowing and bowing in his effusive Gallic way. Last of all entered the old man, austere, silent, a physical nothing, yet giving the impression of vast power and authority. Then Colin resumed his way to the Michelson cabin, uneasy without knowing why.

Kerry Michelson was hard at the noon dish-washing when Colin walked in. Christy stood at the far end of the room, her back to him, staring out the small window.

"How are ye, Mistress Michelson—an' ye, Christy?" he greeted.

An atmosphere of constraint seemed to rest upon the three of them. Christy turned slowly from the window, and Kerry laid down her dish-cloth as she returned his salutation. For a second or two brother and sister looked searchingly at each other. Then Colin walked over to Christy, laid a hand on her shoulder, and stooping, kissed her gently. At that she burst unaccountably into tears and slipping past him flung herself into the other room, clo-

sing the door with a slam. Colin sat down. Mechanically he took out his pipe and filled it. A hot flush of shame and anger mounted to his brown cheeks.

"Dinna look sa glum, man," Kerry made attempt to smooth the matter. "The lassie's made a bit blunder—there's been plenty others did the same. There's little use cryin' over spilt milk."

"Do ye see me cryin'?" Colin returned testily. "What has *he* ta say—or does he say aught? Ye ken who I mean."

Kerry shook her head. "He hasna spoken ta her this two-month, that I know. Maybe when tha father comes he'll mak' it right."

Colin grunted, and abruptly rose and left. Shame and a feeling of helplessness sat heavily on his shoulders. The Scotch of him glowered and bade him put the thing behind—it was a matter he could not mend. But the Indian blood, untamed and passionate for all its stoicism, urged his fingers to the haft of his skinning-knife in the name of primordial justice. The canniness of the MacRae, however, asserted itself. Mayhap it would yet be well. At least, one must wait a bit and see.

So he went back to his canoe, and his patiently waiting woman. Between them they bore the winter's gathering of pelts to the family cabin. Their bedding and simple cooking-utensils and food came next. By sundown their house was set in order. Then Colin went over to Kerry Michelson's and brought Christy home.

In the morning he took his furs to the Company store and traded them in. When the "debt" of the previous season was wiped out there was little left, and that little Colin put into certain articles of food for the summer—and sundry foolish gewgaws for his woman and Christy and himself. Like the forest creatures that he hunted, he gave little calculation to the needs of the future. Always it had been the custom that the Company outfitted the hunters with powder and ball, with certain grub. That was the hunter's "debt," annually contracted, its repayment sure as the rising of the sun or the coming of the snow—only death or pelts could wipe it out.

When the trading was completed Colin and his mate, childishly elated, carried home the meager stock of goods. Pelisse had not appeared at the store. The girl with the violet eyes and wheat-colored hair had been an interested onlooker. She, as Colin had guessed, was the daughter of the gray-haired visitor.

A week later the bay team was hitched to the cushioned buckboard, and the two departed southward, Armand Godspeeding them unctuously, the girl waving a dainty hand, her father huddled in the seat, bent and coldly reserved. Next day came Father Latour from a wearisome journey through the Nation River country. Colin sat morosely in his cabin while the priest made the round of the post. At length the black cassock darkened the door, and Colin cried: "Come in, father, come in." The Cree woman looked up from her seat on the floor and smiled welcome to the fat little priest. They exchanged greetings, and spoke of the winter. Presently Father Latour glanced about him.

"Ah, where is the little sister, m'son? Well, I hope?"

For answer Colin arose and opened the door that led into the other room.

"Christy," he said, "here is the good father. Will ye no speak a word wi' him?"

There was no audible reply. Colin stood a moment, then beckoned Father Latour.

"Go you in, father," he said. "She'll no stir for me."

The little priest stepped to the doorway. Christy sat on a stool by the window, her face hidden in her hands. He murmured some Latin exclamation to himself, and going to her touched her gently on the shoulder. Colin resumed his seat and his pipe.

Father Latour came out at last, and closed the door softly behind him. His round, good-natured face was flushed, a sparkle of anger lit up his eyes.

"M'son, m'son," he muttered, "this is a blow. Now I will speak a plain word with Armand Pelisse."

"I will be going with you," Colin declared.

"Is it wise, m'son?" the father asked. "I think not. Leave it to me."

"I will go with you," Colin nevertheless repeated. And the priest accepted his company with a gesture of resignation, as one who humors a child.

At once they set out for the Company store. Not finding Pelisse there, Father Latour turned to the Factor's dwelling. At that Colin's determination weakened. The dominant strain in him was that of a class which has for generations bowed to constituted authority. Certainly he did not fear Armand Pelisse—nor any other man—as an individual. But bearding the Factor in his private den put a damper on Colin. After all, maybe the father could do more if he were not by.

"Go you ahead, father," he suddenly decided. "I'll leave it i' your hands."

The little priest nodded comprehension, and Colin turned back. The father entered the Factor's house. Armand himself bowed him into a big armchair and set out a treasured bottle of wine. What they said to each other in the next hour is neither here nor there. But the priest left the house in a sober mood, with something of disappointment in the set of his cassocked shoulders. And that was the end of it, so far as Father Latour is concerned. Within a week he was on his way to posts farther down-river, and Colin went about his daily affairs in fatalistic calm.

Summer wore on. The June roses flowered for a brief span. About the Landing the monotony of an inactive period reigned unchallenged. Then one evening Christy MacRae threw a shawl over her head and slipped out of the house at dusk. Night fell, and Christy did not return—nor was she at Kerry Michelson's when Colin went to look for her. Two days went by. Then they found her body cast up on a sand-bar five miles below the Landing.

Colin walked before the others when they carried her home on a rude stretcher made of pine saplings.

"This way," he said, when they were about to turn into his cabin. "Set it there," he commanded, pointing to the broad stoop that ran across the store front. From about the post others came stealing up. And presently the Factor stepped outside. At sight of Armand, Colin threw back the blanket that covered the dead girl's face.

"Look you, Factor," he said, speaking in Cree so that all might understand—for it was the tongue of their nearest kin. "This is your work. Look well. Fine, is it not?"

Armand paled a shade, and then his swarthy face burned. He caught his under lip in his teeth, and glared.

"What is all this about?" he cried savagely. "Get out of here—quick. All of you." And with that he swung around and went inside.

"Ye ha' gotten first blood, as my father would say," Colin cried after him. "I wish ye joy of it, Factor. God send her face spoils many a night's sleep for ye."

Then they carried her to the cabin and laid her on a bed. Next day she was buried. Soon the wonder of it died down. Life at the Landing droned on in the accustomed way, and Christy bade fair to be forgotten.

Midsummer passed; autumn came treading hard on its heels, and at the turning of the leaves the hunters prepared to flit. Near the time of the fall outfitting Armand left for Edmonton to hold council with certain Company chiefs. His absence was of no concern to the fur-getters, however, for the Factor seldom took active part in the issuing of supplies. That was prearranged. On the books of the Company each hunter was rated—as a commercial agency rates a merchant's standing. So much would be given him, no more.

Among those who came first to be served was Colin. That there was bad blood between himself and the Factor troubled him not. The "debt" was to the Company, not to Armand Pelisse. Colin was not made of the stuff that

asks a favor of an enemy. But this matter of powder and ball, of flour and salt and tea, was an ancient, tacitly understood agreement, crystallized into a right by generations of observance. So much of a "debt" in the fall, so many furs in the spring—thus it stood. And whereas the Company made no bargains by which it did not strictly abide, so the several tribes and half-breed hunters of the North would as soon flout the Great Spirit and the lesser gods of river and woodland as break faith with the Company. Hence, it was like a blow in the face when a clerk told Colin that for him there would be no "debt."

"For why?" demanded Colin, resting his hands on the counter, worn to glassy smoothness by countless packages of furs and merchandise.

The clerk, old in the service of the Company, knowing Colin and his father before him, answered patiently:

"The Factor so ordered, and MacPherson passed it on to me. And it is not me that can change it. I would if I dared, and you know it, Colin MacRae."

"But—but—that is not the way of the Company," Colin protested. "How can a man hunt without powder and grub?"

"I cannot help it," the clerk returned, and fumbled uneasily at a parcel. "Here the Factor's word is not to be gainsaid. And it is the order of Pelisse that you get not an ounce of anything."

Without another word Colin stalked out and away. He could not believe. Surely there was some mistake. And so he would wait till the Factor returned, and demand that which was his right so long as he served faithfully. The spite of a Factor should not deprive him of his living—surely not. After all, what was this Pelisse but a higher servant of the Company? *He* made no laws.

The last of the hunters was gone when Pelisse returned to the Landing. The sun dipped farther and farther south, no longer warming one at noon, and white frosts bit hard at night. A premonitory chill was in the air. Armand got out of the Red River cart and hurried into his house. The stove glowing in his sitting-room was welcome. Barely had he removed his buffalo-coat and his mittens of beaver when a rap sounded at the door. And at Armand's "Come een," entered Colin MacRae.

"What now?" Pelisse growled. He was sore from the jolting of the cart on the long journey, and his temper was short at all times.

"In the matter o' the grub an' powder an' suchlike," Colin said coldly. "There is a mistake which ye must see ta. 'Tis late. I should be now i' the Big Stick country."

"Get you there, then," Pelisse grunted contemptuously. "What care I for your comings and goings? An' now, m'sieur, I like the room of you better than the presence."

"The Company never bade ye refuse me," Colin declared soberly, though he flamed beneath his coolness. "I will have——"

"I am the Companie, *here*, by the seven virgins!" Pelisse interrupted stormily. "Malcontent—you are the trouble-maker. Therefore you get not one smell while I am Factor. Leave the pos'—hunt an' be damn'—I care not!"

In his fine simulation of wrath Pelisse overdid the thing. He was a big man, thewed like a wrestler, and when he shoved his dark face before that of Colin it was a challenge—and the Scotch-Indian fighting blood leaped to the surface.

"Ye dirty dog!" cried Colin, and lashed out with his fist.

The unexpectedness of it, coupled with the vicious force of the blow, flattened the Factor on his own floor. And the timely entrance of Jean Grois, Armand's man-of-all-work, alone preserved the Factor's head—for Colin at once laid hold of a stool to finish what his fist had begun. Jean clutched him, and this diversion gave Pelisse a chance to scramble up. Between them he was thrown bodily out of the house.

All that afternoon Colin brooded by

his fireplace, and the next day also, and for a week. Then he set to work and fashioned a stout dog-sled. This done, he sat down to glower in the fire again. There was little food in the cabin. His woman cast wondering eyes at him from time to time, but said nothing. He was her man, and lord of his own actions as well as hers.

By and by a lowering bank of cloud-drift discharged its burden of snow upon the land, to the accompaniment of a screeching wind from out the northeast. Still Colin sat morosely by his hearth. A week of tolerable weather ensued, clear and cold; then another storm, this time from the northwest, swirled over the Athabasca. It began in the morning. At dusk Colin went outside and walked here and there, testing the snow with his moccasined foot. It was packed firmly. He smiled. Returning to his cabin, he drew the dog-sled close by the door and began stowing certain articles on it. He was busy at this when the impenetrable gray-black of a stormy night completely enfolded the Landing.

At daybreak MacPherson, the storekeeper, battered loudly at the Factor's door. Armand left his breakfast to let him in. The storm still whooped boisterously.

"Factor," MacPherson declared, when he had freed his beard of some clinging icicles, "last night the store was entered an' robbed."

"*Sacré.*" Armand swore. "Next, then, ees to catch the thief. Did he leave a mark? What think you? Who ees he?"

MacPherson answered him reluctantly.

"It stormed a' nicht—it storms yet, ye see," he said, "an' so tracks are no easy ta follow. But there is a trail in the sheltered places—an' Colin MacRae's cabin is empty, his woman, his dogs, his gear an' himself is gone complete. I dinna like ta think it o' him—but a thief's a thief."

Pelisse thought a minute, absently touching a tentative finger to a bruised place on his cheek-bone. Then he spoke to MacPherson:

"Send me Black Angus and Philip Beaupré. First tell them of the thieving. I will see to the rest."

MacPherson left, and Pelisse resumed his breakfast. By the time he was done, the two men came in, shaking the snow from their clothing, ill at ease.

"MacPherson told you?"

They nodded.

"Ver' good. Now, then, here we are. Thees man ees married to a woman of the Saskatchewan Crees. He will go south, to the buffalo country. He has stolen and in the North he will be caught. Thees he knows—so do I. He will go south I theenk sure. Take you, then, grub, dogs, what you need. Go west to Dead Wolf, then south twenty-four hours, if thees storm las' that long, then turn east. You will strike hees trail. Follow it. Bring heem to me. That ees all."

Within an hour Black Angus and Philip Beaupré set out on the man-hunt; went striding away up the river, with a wild storm buffeting them at every step. A little past noon, however, it faired, the swirl of loose snow settled to a gentle drift. Then the wind died, and the drift ceased altogether.

"Hee's one dam' smart man, dat Pelisse," Beaupré declared, the afternoon of the second day. Before them the trail of a dog-team and two pair of snow-shoes lay straight as a taut-drawn thread across the white waste.

Three more days they followed it. Then, topping a low ridge at noon, they came upon Colin's camp. It was an odd thing for his lodge to be pitched at midday—and Black Angus noticed that the trail was made overnight. But there was his camp, and they went down to it. The dogs set up a yapping as they drew near, but neither Colin nor his woman looked out. A thin wisp of gray trailed from the smoke-blackened apex of the lodge.

"One damn bad place eef hees mak de fight," Beaupré complained.

"Shut your mouth an' come on," Black Angus growled.

The racket of the huskies hushed as

they reached the lodge, and the stillness of the vast snowfields, barren of tree or shrub, closed down awesomely. They stood before the lodge door a moment, glancing furtively at each other. Black Angus bent suddenly and lifted the circular flap. Within, Colin sat facing the door, but his gaze merely rose to their faces for an instant, then went back to the figure stretched between the fire and the lodge wall.

"Ah," Black Angus breathed. "How is this, Colin?"

"She is dead. She died in the night. Yes, in the night," he muttered.

"We are after you, Colin," Black Angus went on, after a minute of uncertain silence. "So now we shall go back to the Landing. Let us haf no trouble."

"I will mak' ye no trouble," Colin returned simply.

So they disarmed him, taking his gun and hunting-knife. Then they cooked food, which Colin would not eat. When they had finished the meal they tore down the lodge. Philip Beaupré took the lead. Behind him came Colin, with his dead woman lashed on the sled. Black Angus plodded in the rear. At night Colin slept between them. Thus they made their way back to the Landing. When they struck the first timber south of the post Colin wrapped his wife's body in a bearskin robe and lashed her in a tree-top, after the tribal custom.

It was mid-afternoon of a bitter cold day, the snow crunching under foot like dry salt and the air asparkle with minute frost atoms, when the three drew up at the Factor's door. Black Angus stepped up to knock, but the door was opened and Pelisse bade them enter. When they were in and the door closed, he seated himself.

"So," he said, "you are back again, m'sieur? Theenk you it pays to steal from the Company?"

"I dinna ken, an' I dinna care," Colin returned indifferently. "For if I stole the Company black i' the face, I wad still be less of a thief than ye are."

"By the Lamb of God, I weel mak' you care." Pelisse sprang from his seat and snapped his fingers in Colin's face. "You shall——"

He did not finish the sentence. Colin had stood before him the figure of dejection, and neither Pelisse nor the others noticed him fumble within the breast of his *parka*. In the instant that Pelisse faced him Colin lunged vindictively. The bare steel flashed once in its short journey, and the Factor straightened up and stood there, swaying slightly, dying on his feet.

Colin was out from between Beaupré and Black Angus even as he made the thrust. On the wall behind the Factor's chair hung a Henry rifle and a belt full of cartridges. Colin swept it from its resting-place. As he did so the Factor collapsed into the seat from which he had leaped.

"I am for the woods," said Colin to Black Angus over the muzzle of the gun. "I ha' paid a debt. An' I will not be taken again."

He buckled the belt about him, and went out. Deliberately, like one who is sure of himself, he took up his whip and spoke to the dogs. And neither Black Angus nor Philip Beaupré nor any other man made a move to halt him as he passed out of the Landing and bore away to the north.

AN EASY SOLUTION

AN Irishman who had started photography went into a shop to purchase a small bottle in which to mix some of his solutions. Seeing one he wanted, he asked how much it would be.

"Well," said the chemist, "it will be five cents as it is, but if you want anything in it, I won't charge you for the bottle."

"Faith, sor," said Pat, "then put a cork in it!"

Beyond the Yelps

By B. M. Bower

Author of "The Boss of the Two-pole Pumpkin," "Pirates of the Range," Etc.

Wherein we renew our acquaintance with the "Happy Family" cowboys and join in their laugh at the expense of Slim when he more or less unconsciously would marry for money

"IF anybody had told me," Weary remarked in a particularly hurt tone, "that Slim was one of those soulless fortune-hunters you read about, I'm awfully afraid I'd have called him a liar right to his face—and maybe have got myself into a scrap. I'd have banked heavy on Slim's dyed-in-the-wool honesty, and——"

"Well, by golly, you're liable to have a scrap on your hands right now," cut in Slim belligerently. "I don't stand for nobody telling me to my face I ain't honest. By golly, if me and Mis' Bixby wants to get married, I guess it ain't anybody's business but our'n. By golly, it looks to me like a lot uh you geezers was jealous!"

"Oh, mama!" Weary murmured, quite overcome by the accusation—as would any one be who knew well the "Countess" Bixby.

"Well, by golly, I say it *looks* that way," Slim reiterated.

"Uh course," Pink put in with deep sarcasm, "there ain't one of us that don't lay awake nights mourning because the countess don't love us to speak of; you might get it into your block some time, Slim, that you're dead welcome to her. If any of us wanted her right bad, I reckon we wouldn't have to throw our loops so awful cunning to get her."

"It isn't the mere fact of your marrying the countess," Weary went on reproachfully. "It's the fact of your waiting till the man she discarded was polite enough to die and leave her a wad of money. Put it in thousand-dollar bills and it would choke a cow—and the bigger it is the poorer showing you make, Slim. What gets me is to think the countess didn't hand you one on the jaw for waltzing up and asking her. It looks pretty coarse, to me."

Slim, like many another, was stung by injustice into making an unwise confession. "Well, by golly, that's all you know about it!" he raged. "You're so blame smart, it's a wonder you don't savvy I ast her more'n a year ago, and she wouldn't have me because we didn't neither of us have nothing. And I ain't no fortune-hunter, Weary Davidson; Mis' Bixby come to me herself, when she heard about getting the money left her, and said we could get married now like a charm and have it easy. She said she's always heard that beyond the Yelps lays It'ly, and we could go and find It'ly now. She said she's been climbin' Yelps all her born days, and I had, too, and if ever anybody had It'ly comin' to 'em, it was us. She says we've clumb Yelps all we're going to, and it's It'ly for us from now on, and she don't have to work over a hot stove no more, and I don't have to straddle no cayuse for forty dollars a month, neither. By golly, she's about right, too—and the hull bunch of yuh can go plumb to—granny."

"Hell," corrected Irish gravely. Irish hated to see good, strong English thrust aside for makeshift profanity.

Slim blushed, and once started on the

pernicious path of confession walked still farther therein. "I promised Mis' Bixby I'd quit swearin'! She says maybe it ain't so bad whilst you're climbin' Yelps to beat four kings, and slippin' back three feet to every one yuh climb, like the mule in the well; it helps some, she says, and when yuh have to live right with a bunch uh savage cannibals that swears every breath uh life they draw, Mis' Bixby says, a man can't help gettin' in the habit. But folks that has money left 'em and is going to have It'ly all the rest uv their born days, ain't got no use for cuss-words. And, by golly, she's about right, too."

The Happy Family accepted indulgently the aspersion cast upon them; of a truth they had upon occasion been called worse things than savage cannibals. Happy Jack rolled over on his bunk and yawned unbecomingly.

"Say, Slim," he questioned, "what *is* the Yelps? Sounds to me like whipping a pup."

Slim hesitated. While he had an excellent memory and could recount almost verbatim the wisdom of the countess, he was at times a bit lazy as to her meaning. "Well, by golly! if I was so da—blame ignorant I didn't know, I'd keep still about it," he evaded. "It ain't whipping a pup, anyways. Mis' Bixby was saying the other day that yuh can't squeeze blood out of a rutty beggar, and she says it's harder yet to squeeze any brains out uh Happy Jack. Don't know what the Yelps is! Well, by golly!" With which bit of withering repartee Slim began looking for his hat.

"Well, I'll betche you'll have use plenty and constant for cuss-words before yuh git there," Happy Jack prophesied relishfully. "It'ly is a long ways off and they don't savvy white-man talk there; that's where all the furriners come from. You just ask the countess if she can talk Eyetalian, and if she can't, what the dickens you're going to do in It'ly? Maybe I ain't got much brains, but I can think all around *some* folks."

Slim, having no imagination with which to grasp figures of speech, had all along been secretly uneasy over their avowed destination. He had great faith in the countess, and when she repeated the axiom of the sweet girl graduate, and had announced relishfully that beyond the Alps lay Italy, Slim had accepted the statement without question; it is even possible that, had the countess really said Alps, he would have understood. But as has been explained, Slim was quite without imagination. "Yelps" was utterly beyond his interpretation. The countess asserted that they had both been climbing Yelps all their born days; Slim, although he had never before suspected such a thing, believed. Whatever the countess said was right; the countess had imagination.

Slim waddled up the path to the White House, his round face and his rounder eyes filled with perturbation. The countess was frying doughnuts; he could smell them long before he reached the kitchen, but his mood did not brighten. He went in and accepted a hot doughnut almost mechanically. For the first time in their acquaintance, he was about to question the wisdom of the countess.

"Say, by golly, I dunno as we'll have any such great time in It'ly after all," he began constrainedly, because of his inward conviction of treason.

The countess strung three deliciously brown doughnuts on her fork and held them, dripping, over the kettle while she regarded Slim fixedly. "Well, as the sayin' is, you can know a man's face but yuh can't know his heart," she retorted, and Slim winced. He had heard that "sayin'" many times before, and even he knew that it expressed strong disapproval.

"If you're stuck on stayin' here climbin' Yelps all your born days, and never getting any pleasure or comfort out uh life, I guess you're welcome. I guess I can find my It'ly alone, if it comes right to a show-down. I never seen the man yet that I'd let make or mar my life for me. I guess you can keep right on climbin' Yelps from time to eternity, if you want to. I ain't going to climb 'em with yuh; my It'ly's

in sight, and my Yelps lays behind; I ain't going to turn my back on It'ly and go climbin' them Yelps again—not if I know it." She slid the doughnuts dexterously into the pan with the others, and took up four fragile dough-rings and slipped them skilfully into the smoking fat. Then she turned over some others that were growing bubbles around the edges and that showed a swollen, brown surface when they were capsized.

Slim watched her uncomfortably. The very ease with which she performed all those delicate operations filled him with apprehension of her great superiority and general unattainableness. And her Italy was in sight, she said. Slim wondered vaguely how that could be, but it never occurred to him to doubt.

"Well, if yuh want to go, by golly, I'm willin' to go with yuh," he retracted. "I was only just thinking maybe we wouldn't——"

"As the sayin' is, a man's mind is like the shiftin' sand that no man knoweth where it comes from or where it goeth," declared the countess sententiously. "If you want to climb Yelps, you can *climb* Yelps. Nobody ain't going to snake you into It'ly by the hair uh the head, if yuh don't want to go."

"I never said I wanted to climb no Yelps," Slim defended weakly. "I'll go to It'ly if yuh want me to. I was just thinkin'——"

"When a man thinks, as the sayin' is, yuh want to stand from under, because what he thinks is pearls uh wisdom is liable to turn out rocks." The countess turned her back upon him and proceeded to roll out more dough and cut more doughnuts. "You can know a man's face, but yuh can't know his heart," she reiterated scornfully, and Slim retreated awkwardly upon his toes.

The Happy Family, keen upon the scent of a man's secret trouble as a wolf-pack upon the trail of its quarry, wondered among themselves and even inquired openly into the cause of Slim's gloom. Slim told them all to go to granny, and relapsed into silence.

They inquired delicately—for them—when the wedding-bells were scheduled to ring. Slim told them indelicately to keep their clothes on and not to get excited; it wasn't *their* wedding. They worried audibly because there were in reality no wedding-bells within ringing-distance, and ostentatiously unearthed an old bell that was cracked almost beyond sound. This, they told Slim gravely, they meant to drape with wild sunflowers and hang directly over the head of the countess. Slim grunted profanely and went out and slammed the door.

Of a truth, Slim's trouble was real and poignant. He had offended the countess and was too unversed in the ways of women to know the best way of winning favor; he had a secret repugnance toward the prospect of sojourning for the rest of his life in Italy, and he did not know what were the Yelps. A man hates to be climbing things like that and not know it. Slim was worried. His appetite suffered, and his sleep.

It was the countess herself who solved the problem by simply neglecting to remember that Slim was in disgrace. She called to him as he was on his way down to the lower pasture, and Slim rode shamefacedly up to the kitchen door.

"Where under the shining sun have yuh been these days?" she wanted to know when he stopped before her. "A body'd think you had the world and the moon on your shoulders and was President besides. My samples has come, and I thought maybe you'd want to have some say about the picking-out. A man always has his say afterward, all right, if things don't suit, and if he says it beforehand that saves time and breath, which I ain't got any to waste. Do yuh think blue would be more suitable and becoming than champagny?"

Slim, taken unaware and not having the faintest idea of what she was talking about, grew red and fumbled the mane of his horse. "I'm willin' to do whatever you say," he temporized guardedly.

"Well, I never asked yuh to do noth-

ing," snapped the countess. "The mind of man is about the emptiest void I ever see. I just merely and simply asked yuh what yuh thought about it; *you* don't have to wear it."

Slim stared. "Wear what?" he gasped faintly, but not so faintly that Pink, coming by just then, failed to hear.

"My wedding-dress; did yuh think I was going to stand up in a calico wrapper? If yuh like me in blue, I dunno but what I'll get blue—though they do say champagny"—the countess pronounced it just that way—"is awful stylish."

Slim, the abashed, unconsciously did the right thing. "I like yuh any old way," he asserted bluntly. "A calico wrapper or blue silk or—or—well, by golly, *anything*, so long as you're inside of it."

The countess beamed upon him and Pink went off with the dimples standing deep in his cheeks, to relate relishfully what he had heard to the Happy Family. The Happy Family straightway fell into the way of discussing colors and fabrics within the hearing of Slim, although they considerately refrained from becoming personal. They could not take Slim and the countess seriously, nor bring themselves to believe that they would actually marry.

"Learnt any Eyetalian yet?" Weary would inquire sympathetically of Slim. "And mama! a man that hates macaroni as bad as you do is sure going to be up against it in Italy. That's all they eat, over there."

"I'll betche Slim gets knifed before he's been there a week," put in Happy Jack. "Them furriners is sure great on paring away a man's ribs and prying 'em loose from his backbone. Yuh want to pack your six-gun constant, Slim."

"Slim hates water, too," put in Jack Bates. "A fellow told me it took him four months and a half to come across from Italy. And along about this time of year five boats out uh four gets shipwrecked."

"Say, old Slim would sure be pickings at a cannibal blowout, wouldn't he?" Cal Emmett contributed. "He looks like good eating; he'd beat roast missionary."

"The countess——" began Happy Jack, and was frowned into silence by Weary. The countess was tall and gaunt and generally weather-beaten and untempting from a cannibalistic view-point, but she was a woman and so immune from discussion of that sort. "The countess," Happy Jack finished hastily, "would make a dandy queen. I'll betche the old head push marries her after he's eat Slim."

"Well, by golly, you're doing a lot uh worrying beforehand," Slim growled. "I ain't shipwrecked yet."

"Well, but on the square, Slim, you had really ought to learn Eyetalian enough to swear with when you get there," Weary protested. "Cadwalloper wintered with an Italian—reformed—once. He can learn yuh what he knows, I guess——"

"Oh, teach him yourself," Pink objected guilefully. "It's too hard work, and besides, I'm busy."

Slim rolled a cigarette with fingers not quite steady, and searched all his pockets for a match. "By golly, I ain't asked for no lessons yet," he asserted. "I guess Mis' Bixby knows what she's doing. How do you know she can't talk it herself?"

They did not know, and they refused to argue the question further. They contented themselves with advising Slim to eat a little macaroni every day so that his digestive organs might grow accustomed to the diet, and they urged him anxiously to buy a knife and carry it in his boot.

All of which did not make Slim's dreams the pleasanter, or cause him to long with any degree of impatience for the wedding-day.

With the desperation born of much unhappy meditation, Slim approached the countess upon the subject of languages. Did she know any language besides English? The countess replied with many words purporting to be English, to the effect that anybody ought to be ashamed to go around gabbling like a band of geese; and for her

par., English was plenty good enough for her, and if she couldn't find words for all she wanted to say, she was ready and willing to act the rest. Actions, she asserted, could talk up louder than any words you was a mind to name over. She believed in actions, and she hadn't much use for people that depended on foreign words to finish out what they were trying to say.

From that, Slim gathered laboriously that she did not speak the tongue of Italy, and he went straightway to Pink. Pink, for the reason that he knew not a word of Italian, was exceeding reluctant, so that Slim had promised his silver-mounted spurs and his horsehair hackamore before Pink consented to give him a few lessons.

Thereafter the Happy Family found much amusement in sneaking down in couples to the far corral, where in the shade of a sweet-scented stack of new-cut hay, Slim roosted solemnly and uncomfortably upon a corral rail and twisted his tongue into giving accent to strange-sounding words, the like of which he had never before heard. The Happy Family would listen as long as their glee could be repressed, and then they would steal back where they might laugh without restraint. Slim, had he but known it, was not learning Italian. He was learning all the Japanese which Pink had caught from his "ju-jutsu sharp," together with an assortment of words gathered from Pink's promiscuous acquaintance with men from other lands. And there were a few of Pink's own invention.

But though Slim studied laboriously the language Pink taught him, and though he ate heroically and surreptitiously of the hated macaroni that he might, perhaps, learn in time to find it endurable, he could not bring himself to long with any degree of sincerity for the coveted Italy of the countess. Every failure of Chip and the Little Doctor to find some one to take the place of the countess in the White House kitchen, Slim looked upon guiltily as a reprieve. It was treason to the countess, and it was not at all the proper mood in which a man is supposed to look forward to his marriage, and Slim knew it and hid the disgraceful truth jealously.

He talked loudly and defiantly of the joys in store. He had heard somewhere that in Italy grows the grape which becomes wine, and prated of the barrels he would drink. The Happy Family listened and did not deny. They were wondering how long it would be before Slim learned the truth. They sighed daily over the Yelps they were compelled by an adverse fate to climb, and wished openly that somebody would die and leave their best girls a fortune.

"The way you've blowed yourself lately, on gold watches and diamond rings and things," Cal Emmett reminded Slim unfeelingly, "you'll just about have enough left to pay the preacher. And darned if *I'd* want to run ask my wife for a nickel every time I wanted to buy a sack uh Durham."

"They don't sell tobacco in Italy," Pink asserted in the tone of one who knows. "It's against the law there to have it in your possession, even. 'Mucky-dub-dab-galore,' which I've been trying to beat into Slim's head for a week, means 'I never use the vile weed in any form.' You want to sure remember that, Slim, and say it to any gilt-edged stiff in uniform that heads your way; because if yuh fail to convince, they'll confiscate you and deport the countess to Turkey. And yuh know what happens to Americans in Turkey. They're sure strict, over there, on the tobacco question."

Slim looked not quite convinced. "Well, by golly, I've saw lots of Eyetalians smoking, over here," he objected.

"You've also seen 'em running for office, maybe," Pink returned unmoved. "That's why they come over in bunches; they can do a good many things here that would mean chop-off-your-head over there. You'll have to cut out the cigarettes before you reach the sunny skies of Italy, old boy, or, as I said, be confiscated. And," Pink added in a deep tone, "you know what *that* means."

"No, I don't!" snapped Slim, whose education was confined mostly to range lore.

Whereupon the Happy Family proceeded with one accord to enlighten him. Before they had really begun to open up the horrors of the subject, Slim gathered that being shipwrecked among cannibals would be bliss when the alternative was being confiscated in Italy.

That night Slim dreamed unpleasantly, with the result that the Happy Family was awakened to a man, and was forced to pile three-deep upon the sleeper while Pink dribbled water into his face from the leaky tin dipper. Slim, once aroused, shivered unashamed and explained that he was dreaming of being confiscated. And the Happy Family grinned and went back to bed. Their elucidation had been quite as complete as even they could possibly desire.

Came a day when the countess once more lifted up her voice from the door of the kitchen and called shrilly to Slim, and Slim went, inwardly reluctant, to where she stood waiting.

"Well, Chip's got a girl to come and do the work," she announced. "It's Mame Beckman, and how under the shinin' sun they expect to git along with her and eat the grub she spoils and calls cooking, is a plumb mystery to me. It'll take all the medicine Dell's got to cure up their dyspepsia, and I told her so. But she thinks they can make out to stand it till they can find somebody else, and if they want to tackle it I dunno as it's my funeral. I'll bake up enough cake and bread to last a week, and that's all I can do for 'em. I guess we can git married any time now, Slim. But you needn't think I'm going to have a big wedding and the hull neighborhood in so's they can make remarks afterward. I'm four inches taller than you be, good and strong—but I ain't going to give Mis' Pilgreen a chance to size us up together and tell everybody so. And I ain't going to have the boys up to no shivaree tricks, neither, and you can tell 'em I said so. That Pink and Weary and Irish is liable to do anything short uh bloody murder, and the rest ain't far behind. You'll have to give up all idee of a big spread, Slim. I won't stand for it."

Slim had never had any idea of a "spread," but he hated to tell the countess so. "Well, anything you say goes," he remarked dully. He was busy wondering why it was that he felt exactly as if he were about to be hanged, rather than married. He was even guilty of regretting ever asking the countess to marry him, and of thinking fleetingly and longingly of the freedom he was about to lose.

"As the saying is, the mind of man is like the shifting sand, and I didn't know what yuh might have your heart set on. We can do like Chip and Dell done, and go up to the Falls and get married there, and then go on our tower. I feel like towering for about a year, after being pinned down to a kitchen and cooking three meals a day rain or shine, all my life. I always did have to work like a dog, with nothing more than a picnic and a few dances to make yuh know there was such a thing as pleasure. I do hope we don't get mixed into a wreck; they're awful common. Every paper you pick up is full of wrecks and murders."

"They say shipwrecks are thick, this time uh year," Slim gloomed.

"Well, I don't care nothing about shipwrecks; you couldn't drag me onto a ship with a six-horse team. We'll do our towering on dry land or we won't do none. I guess, if Mame Beckman comes when she says she will, we can go some time next week. But you can make up your mind to one thing, and that is we won't have no wedding here, and we won't go anywhere on no ship. I'd ruther be hung than drownded to death."

Slim went away down to the stable and meditated deeply and uncomfortably. The countess was going to Italy, if one might believe her; and also, if one might believe her, she would not, under any circumstances, go sailing over the ocean. Slim puzzled over the problem, and in desperation sought out Pink.

"On the dead, is Italy on the other

side of the ocean, or this side?" he asked confidentially.

Pink assured him that, unless it had been moved in the last six months or so, it was on the other side.

"Well, by golly, I'd like to know how you can git there without crossing the ocean," blurted Slim, and Pink declared that the thing was impossible and not to be thought of. Not only must one cross the ocean, but one must run the gantlet of the cannibal islands as well.

Slim smoked many cigarettes and pondered the subject. If his faith in the countess was dying, of a truth it was dying hard; and it is an unfortunate thing when one's faith dies so early a death.

Weary asked him that night why he looked so like a funeral, and Slim replied, without attempt at evasion, that they were to be married next week, and that they would be married in Great Falls and then go to Italy. He did not say that he was pleased over the prospect; the Happy Family might think what it liked.

That night also, Slim's dreams were troubled and at times audible, so that after breakfast, when he and Weary were riding up on the benchland alone, Weary made bold to inquire into the cause of certain sleep-muffled remarks he had overheard.

Slim rode for five minutes in gloom and silence. "You fellows are so blame free to roast a man," grumbled Slim, "that yuh can't expect to know anything that can be kept from yuh. But if I want to talk in my sleep, I guess, by golly, I've got cause enough."

Weary, though inclined ever to tease, was also capable of becoming extremely sympathetic upon occasion. Something in the dispirited droop of Slim's flesh-rounded shoulders, and the somber gaze of him, moved Weary to compassion. Slim was awkward and slow-witted and at times dull, but he was whole-hearted and honest to the bone; and he was one of the Happy Family. Weary felt a certain glow of affectionate solicitude when he looked at him, humped in the saddle and staring moodily at the ears of his horse.

"I know we josh and devil each other a lot," he admitted penitently, "but we generally stick by a man that's in trouble, and you know it, Slim. You know there isn't one of us that wouldn't fight for you if the play come up that way. Throw it out uh yuh, and you'll feel better, anyhow. And maybe," he promised kindly, "I can help yuh out."

Slim rode for another five minutes. "Well, by golly, I'm in a hole, all right. What would *you* do, Weary, s'posin' you was due to get married to somebody"—Slim turned red and gulped—"and found out you'd ruther go to the pen for life? I ain't," he added hastily, "sayin' anything agin' Mis' Bixby. I just said *s'posin'*."

Weary hurried to reassure him, though the inference was painfully clear. "Uh course you don't mean the countess. I savvy the deal, all right." Then he took time to think seriously.

"Well," he decided after a bit, "it's a delicate question, any way you look at it. A man is supposed to make his word good, and if he sets into a game when his pockets are most empty, he's no call to whine if he gets up busted. But, mama! this getting married——"

"It's hell, by golly!" interjected Slim, with much emphasis.

"If a man feels that way about it," said Weary calmly, "looks to me like he's playing pretty crooked if he goes on and lets a woman marry him under the impression that he wants her. If I was a woman, and a man married me reluctant and I ever found it out, the chances is I'd drop a dose of something in his coffee. I reckon," he added whimsically, "a woman is taking long enough chances when she ties up to a fellow that cares."

"Well, what would yuh *do,* s'posin' she was plannin' things out to suit herself? How would yuh head her off? Walk up, by golly, and—and *tell* her yuh don't want her?"

The eyes of Weary laughed, but the face of him was grave. "It's a hard proposition, Slim, and that's a fact. But I reckon that's about the only respectable thing a man in your—in such a fix could do. Only, if the woman was

anything like the countess, say, I'd make blame sure the trail was clear for a quick getaway."

"I never said it was Mis' Bixby," Slim quelled sullenly.

"Or," amended Weary after a minute, "a man could write her a note."

That night, Slim hunched himself over the box-table in the bunk-house and wrote laboriously for half an hour. Still the result was a missive brief and blunt, as were the speeches of Slim. Weary, yielding to temptation sufficiently to glance over Slim's shoulder, read:

DEAR MRS. BIXBY: I have changed my mind. I guess I dont want to get married. Itly dont look good to me and Ide ruther clim Yelps. Yours respy, JOHN C. BLOOM.

With that in his pocket for use in case he lost his nerve at the crucial moment, Slim went up to the White House and rapped mildly upon the kitchen door. He was not in the habit of knocking before he entered the domain of the countess, but upon this occasion he felt that a bit of ceremony was required.

The countess was sitting beside the table with a sheet of typewritten paper in her hand, and her eyelids were suspiciously red. She did not welcome Slim with a torrent of words, as was her custom, and Slim halted involuntarily just inside the door.

"Well, come in," snapped the countess. "And for mercy sake wipe your boots on that rug. How did yuh hear I'd got this?"

"I didn't——" began Slim, bewildered.

"Well, I might just as well tell yuh now as some other time; you'll begin that much quicker to get over the shock of it. This is a letter from that lawyer in Seattle, that wrote to me first about Bixby dyin' and leavin' me a gold-mine up in Klondike. As the sayin' is, there's many a chance to slop your cup before yuh git to drink out of it, and I guess it's so. My cup has sure—s-slopped!" She sniffed. "Men are all alike, and there ain't no use dependin' on nothing they say or do." Slim winced guiltily and felt the note in his pocket.

"You can't even," scolded the countess, "depend on their dyin' when they say they are goin' to. They're like the shiftin' sand—now just look at Bixby! I might uh known he wouldn't be dead, no matter if he swore to it on a stack uh Bibles high as your head. He never did do nothing without makin' a botch of it. This lawyer says Bixby ain't dead after all, and he's turned up again from somewheres and claims that mine; and he's gone and married a show girl in Dawson, and the will ain't any good at all, and I ain't got any gold-mine. And yuh needn't stand there gawpin' at me like that. If you think I'm going to marry yuh now, you're fooled. I ain't. I was a poor man's wife once, and I said then that I never would be again. They say that beyond the Yelps lays It'ly, and I did think my It'ly was in sight. I did think I was through climbin' Yelps. But if I ain't; if I've got to buckle down and go on climbin' the rest uh my born days, I ain't goin' to have no man to bother and pester the life out uh me. You can have your di'mond ring back again, Slim. They's no use me keepin' it if I've got to sozzle around in the dish-pan all my life. I couldn't wear it except to dances."

"Well——" Slim began fruitlessly.

"You can't make me change my mind," cut in the countess, "so you needn't to try. When you've saved up five thousand dollars, maybe I'll marry yuh if I ain't dead and buried long before; you ain't one uh the savin' kind, anyhow. I'm goin' to tell Dell she don't have to git Mame Beckman, so you might as well go back down to the bunk-house. What's goin' to be's got to be, and there ain't any use kickin'.

"Anyway," finished the countess as she folded the letter, "I did git a squint of It'ly, and that's more than some folks git."

Slim went out and shut the door carefully behind him. His face, in the moonlight, was dazed, but he was smiling broadly. "Well, by golly!" he was saying to himself, over and over again.

The Mafia and the Contessa

By J. Kenilworth Egerton

Author of "Queen Draga's Cape," "The Perfume of Madness," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Van Osten, Servian conspirator and criminal, is in jail in Palermo, awaiting trial. Tommy Williams, dilettante artist and detective, who was instrumental in the capture of Van Osten, is occupying a studio in that Sicilian city waiting to testify against the Servian. Lady Diana, companion of Princess Sonia, claimant of the Servian throne, has returned to Malta and gone thence on a mission which she has kept secret from Tommy because she does not want him to risk his life by following her. Ernesto Cambioni, an official of the Italian secret police, comes to Tommy's studio and warns him to leave Italy, otherwise that his death is decreed by a band of anarchists. Tommy refuses to go and forces Cambioni to admit that he has come from Van Osten. A young girl who calls herself Elisa Drago, daughter of Baron Drago, comes as a messenger of the Mafia and conveys a warning similar to Cambioni's. At the Café Progresso, where he is dining, the leader of a Hungarian gipsy orchestra comes to Tommy's table and plays the Servian national anthem and insinuates he has a message for Tommy from the Lady Diana. They arrange to meet the next day on Monte Pelligrino. As Tommy leaves the café he notices the so-called Elisa Drago at another table. While waiting for the Hungarian gipsy on Monte Pelligrino, a girl in *contadina* costume, remarkably resembling the Draga girl, passes by Tommy in haste and warns him to escape as he is in serious danger. The gipsy appears, and haggles over the money he is to receive for the message he claims to have. He is about to stab Tommy when he is shot from some sheltering rocks above. Williams runs to find the one who shot and is in time to see the *contadina* girl pursued by some men. She has almost reached the face of a protecting cliff, when a bullet seems to strike her, for she falls and disappears.

(***In Two Parts—Part II.***)

V.

OUR surprise was only exceeded by our relief that we made our way to Palermo without molestation and, in fact, until we reached the broad plain of the Conca d'Oro at the foot of the mountain we did not meet a human being. There, at the beginning of the bridle-path, a half-dozen *carabinieri* under the command of a non-commissioned officer were stationed and I breathed a sigh of relief at the sight of their cocked hats and red-faced uniforms.

"I am an American artist, my name and address are on this card and I am personally known to your commanding officer," said Tommy to the corporal, who eyed us closely as we approached and seemed half-inclined to question us.

"I have been sketching on Monte Pelligrino, a half-hour's walk from here. If you walk up this path you will find my sun-umbrella and easel which I have left there."

"I think they will be perfectly safe, Mr. Williams," answered the corporal after glancing at the card.

"I should doubt that—knowing the customs of the Sicilians; but that is not what I am worrying about," answered Tommy dryly. "Beside the umbrella you will find the body of a man with a bullet-hole between his eyes, and if you desire any information about how it all happened——"

"That will certainly require explanation," interrupted the corporal curtly, and at a sign his men sprang to attention. "It is my duty to detain you gentlemen until we have investigated."

"Then I demand that we be taken

at once before your commanding officer," remonstrated Tommy and the corporal nodded.

"That is the usual procedure," he said. "I shall send you to him under escort. Unfortunately the nature of the duty upon which I am assigned makes it impossible for me to spare more than two men; so I trust that you will be considerate enough to go quietly and not so foolish as to try to elude them. A *carabiniere* who loses a prisoner is severely punished and——"

"I understand. You regard us as prisoners, then?" interrupted Tommy.

"Only temporary ones, I trust," replied the corporal civilly enough. "I should have detained you in any case, Mr. Williams; for my orders were to arrest any one coming down this path. There has been a lot of shooting up there." He was apparently curious to know what we had seen; but Tommy was not inclined to be very communicative.

"There has been a good deal of general deviltry up there to-day," he said. "I am willing to give our parole to report at headquarters if you think you need your men here."

"And I regret that I cannot accept it," replied the corporal. "My orders are definite and you are technically under arrest. The men will simply follow behind you; but I trust that you will do nothing which will lead to action we should all regret." Tommy grinned as he looked at the two men who had stepped forward to accompany us; their short carbines held loosely in the crooks of their elbows.

"I have seen your men shoot before this and I can assure you that we shall not give the slightest trouble," he said. "I only wish that they had been with us an hour ago." I heartily echoed that wish; but as we walked toward Palermo I was as happy a prisoner as the *carabinieri* had ever escorted; for I felt that for the moment our lives were safe.

"We're doing pretty well for simple-minded gentlemen who wished to mind their own business and keep out of trouble," said Tommy grimly as we paced ahead of our escort. "If we believe all we hear, we have been threatened with obliteration by the anarchists, and the Mafia, of which we know nothing except from hearsay, are after our scalps. We have seen a man murdered and may have the deuce of a time explaining that we didn't do it and it's a cinch that we'll be drilled if we make a move to escape from those men behind us. Take it altogether and I believe we lived a quieter life when we deliberately butted into all the trouble that came our way."

"I don't think a nice comfortable jail will make a bad place of residence until you come to your senses and decide to leave Sicily," I retorted. "The climate is all right and I have no kick coming on the scenery; but I've seen enough to-day to convince me that it isn't a good health-resort for people who managed to get on the Mafia black-list."

"My dear boy, there are more ways of killing a cat than choking it to death with cream," replied Tommy thoughtfully. "If it were simply a question of killing us those men who were shooting at the girl could have potted us from the place that Cambioni killed Boris and no one would have been the wiser. Just the same, that would have helped Van Osten but little; for it would have substituted Le Garde's testimony for ours. If they bring a charge of murder against us it will discredit us and be of far more service to him than our deaths would be. Remember that they can procure false witnesses even easier than they can remove those who can't be corrupted, and I'm afraid that we're in a peck of trouble. The worst of it is that I'm almost guilty in intent; for I should have killed that man myself if I had found it necessary to get his message. Now I'm doubtful if he had one to deliver and I believe the whole thing is a put-up job."

"And the murder of the girl?" I suggested.

"Removed a credible witness who might have been able to testify to our innocence," he continued quickly. "I

believe that she saw the shot fired and could have identified the man who fired it." It seemed a far-fetched theory; but I was accustomed to see most of Tommy's guesses prove correct and I walked on in silence, gloomily reflecting upon the discomforts of an accusation in a country where bail is not permitted and the action of the law is interminably slow. It was a good two hours before we reached the *carabinieri* headquarters at Palermo and there was little conversation between us en route; for Tommy was thoughtful and a trifle absent-minded, while, with the disagreeable prospect which his remarks had conjured up ahead of us, I was getting as much comfort as possible out of the open air which I hardly expected to breathe again for a considerable time.

The expression on the face of the captain when we were herded into his presence by our escort immediately suggested trouble; for it was in marked contrast to his usual cordiality. It was the same officer who had commanded the *carabinieri* at the time of Van Osten's capture and we had become very friendly; but now, while he listened to the report of his subordinates he watched us suspiciously.

"There is something going on here that I do not understand; but I hope that you can give me a satisfactory explanation," he said to Tommy when they had finished. "I received orders to picket all the roads leading to the Monte Pelligrino and to arrest any one coming from it. You would have been detained, in any case, until the death of this Hungarian gipsy had been investigated; but I have also received positive orders to keep my men off the mountain itself."

"You know who the man is who was killed, then?" asked Tommy quickly. He had not identified him in his report to the corporal nor had the *carabinieri* been able to supply the information in making their report.

"Unless there has been more than one man killed there I assume that it is the man Boris, whose death was reported to me a half-hour since by two of his musicians," replied the captain. "They not only reported the death; but supplied me with the full details of it and I am sorry to find you in this position, Mr. Williams."

"From your expressed regret, I judge that they accuse me of killing him?" said Tommy interrogatively and the captain nodded.

"Most explicitly, with full details," he said. "I trust that you can give me proof of provocation."

"I had provocation enough; but I didn't yield to it," answered Tommy grimly. "Your information is correct in a few details; but not in the most essential one. The man Boris is dead; but I didn't kill him."

"These two witnesses swear positively that you did," asserted the captain. "With me your word would go farther than theirs; but you understand that there is nothing for me to do now but to detain you."

"I appreciate that; but there is something worth looking into which apparently has not occurred to you," suggested Tommy quietly. "If these two precious witnesses were on the mountain and saw Boris killed, how did they elude your pickets and get here ahead of us?"

The captain pulled his mustache thoughtfully and hesitated. "That's a question that my men will have to answer, Mr. Williams," he said finally. "The mountain has been picketed for five hours; but some of the pickets must have been negligent."

"Captain, there is more in this than either of us knows about," said Tommy seriously. "You will find that Boris was not the only one who died on Monte Pelligrino to-day, and I don't believe that your precious witnesses ever set foot on it. They knew that Boris went to the mountain and they knew when he went that he was surely going to his death. They allowed a sufficient interval to elapse and then reported the crime and tried to fasten it on me."

The captain stared at Tommy in blank amazement. "This seems incredible, Mr. Williams; it would indicate a

plot laid carefully to incriminate you and the man who would be capable of such a thing is in solitary confinement."

"Which does not prevent him from sending messages through the usual underground channels, however," said Tommy confidently. "I have had practical demonstration of that, for I have been approached by one of his emissaries." The captain looked at him doubtfully and shook his head.

"I can hardly credit that, Mr. Williams," he said incredulously. "He is kept in strict seclusion and no one but the prison and police officials has access to him."

"But admitting that that is a fact, it does not make my statement unworthy of belief," replied Tommy. "I have received a proposition of compromise from him."

"Through one of my men?" demanded the captain.

"Hardly, but from a man holding an official position in the police," said Tommy placidly. "Italian police methods are peculiar, captain, and I take it that there is not entire sympathy between the *carabinieri* and the local officials. A district like the Monte Pelligrino should be within your province, however, and there have been strange occurrences there to-day. I saw Boris killed and I saw a girl hunted like vermin. I believe that you will find her body in the sea at the foot of the south cliff."

"I am not responsible for the Monte Pelligrino to-day," replied the captain half apologetically. "I received definite orders to keep my men off the mountain and to arrest all who come from it."

"Then you should get the murderer of Boris and of the girl if your pickets are faithful," answered Tommy. "I suppose that we shall have to submit to detention until this thing is cleared up."

"Unless you can bring proof of your assertion and point out the man who killed the gipsy," assented the captain. Tommy was facing the door through which we had entered and luck threw in his way the opportunity for a dramatic accusation; for as the captain spoke Cambioni entered. His face was flushed from exertion and his clothes were disordered and torn. Tommy took from his pocket the empty cartridge-shell and placed it on the captain's desk.

"The bullet which came from this you will find in the head of the dead man," he said quietly. "I did not see the face of the murderer; but I saw the hand which held the pistol. Captain, if you will place this man under arrest and search him I believe that you will find the Colt automatic from which this shell was ejected and I am prepared to swear that it was his hand which held it when the shot was fired." The captain looked from one to the other in amazement and Cambioni drew the pistol from his pocket and laid it beside the empty shell.

"It will not be necessary to search me," he said sarcastically. "Mr. Williams is entirely truthful in his statement. I shot the man you know as Boris and I threw out that cartridge because I needed every shot for other game." His frank admission took the wind from Tommy's sails, but it was a great relief to me for I had expected a denunciation. "Have you further grave charges to bring against me?" he continued, glancing from one to the other of us. I shook my head; but Tommy walked over and faced him defiantly.

"I take it that the 'other game' was a defenseless girl in *contadina* costume who was shot down at the edge of the south cliff?" he exclaimed and Cambioni nodded.

"You are partly correct," he said, grinning. "She was the one I was after; but she was not shot, I regret to say. She fell as she reached the beginning of that goat-path and was caught and helped away by those who were waiting there for her." Tommy gave an exclamation of relief and Cambioni looked at him gravely.

"Mr. Williams, everything which I have done to-day has been done as an official of the secret police," he con-

tinued. "I am under no obligations to answer to you for my conduct; but I would remind you that I saved your life when I shot the Tzigany. I am sorry that the girl escaped; but I hope to have her in custody before morning. You might assist me if you told me what you know about her." I saw that Tommy was impressed by the captain's deference to Cambioni and that he appreciated that his theories were crumbling like a house of cards; but it was not easy for him to overcome his distrust of the detective.

"I am under no obligation to supply *you* with information," he answered. "I was in no danger from Boris and your shot prevented me from learning from him much that I wished to know." Cambioni shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"I offered you authentic information on the same subject and he was attempting to swindle you!" he exclaimed. "My information is still available—at a price, Mr. Williams."

"At a price I do not care to pay, though," answered Tommy. "Captain, now that there is no accusation against us, I assume that we are at liberty?" The captain glanced at Cambioni for instructions and the detective motioned to us to be seated.

"I may have overstated the case when I said that I saved your life, although that knife looked sufficiently menacing to justify my shot," he said to Tommy. "That man was sent to dispose of you. His intention was to rob you by selling you false information. The man who sent him counted upon one of two things: that he would kill you in a fit of passion or that you would kill him—and I might remind you that the latter result would have placed you behind the bars for a considerable time, no matter how great the provocation might have been; for there would have been witnesses aplenty provided. The details were carefully worked out, from the moment his playing of the Servian anthem in the café attracted your attention—as it was meant to do."

"And the man who discovered all this could not discover the identity of a girl?' said Tommy incredulously.

"I discovered enough about her to justify me in ordering my men to shoot when she would not surrender," retorted Cambioni impatiently. "Assuming that you are an honest man, Mr. Williams, I doubt if you are aware of her identity; but it might aid me in securing a person whom it is dangerous to leave at liberty if you would tell me at once what you do know of her." From Cambioni's earnestness I knew that he attached great importance to the arrest of the girl and even Tommy was impressed by his sincerity.

"I really know very little of her, except that she, too, seems cognizant of the doings of the Mafia," he said. "Perhaps it would simplify matters if you could tell me something about the family of the Baron Drago."

"The man who is opposing Nasi at the coming election?" asked Cambioni.

"Yes, how much of a family has he —how many daughters?" said Tommy, and the captain and Cambioni looked at each other and smiled.

"*Che lo sa!*" answered the detective with a significant twinkle in his eyes. "All that I can tell you is that the Baron Drago is a bachelor!"

VI.

For a moment Tommy's face was a picture of perplexity and there was a suggestion of triumph in the Italian's eyes. He looked at him expectantly, as if confident that his announcement would force an admission; but Tommy was evidently busily employed in finding his own solution of the puzzle and paid no attention to him.

"I have answered your preliminary inquiry, Mr. Williams," suggested the detective finally. "Is there anything else you would care to know before giving me the information which I wish?"

"There is; a great deal," replied Tommy, his voice betraying an unusual irritability. "I am not asking favors and I am not volunteering assistance to any one. For some reason which I cannot understand there seems to be

a net of conspiracy and mystery woven about us and I'm tired of it. If you are willing to put your cards on the table and drop all of this romance which you are stringing me with, I'll give you all the facts I know; but I don't care to hear a lot of rot about anarchists and the Mafia."

"You are simply getting back to the position you took at our interview yesterday and I think you will admit that you did me an injustice," replied Cambioni quietly. "Mr. Williams, I give you my word that my warning was sincere. You were threatened by the anarchists and I believe that you will find in the events of the past twenty-four hours a confirmation."

"You mean that Boris was an emissary of theirs?" asked Tommy skeptically and Cambioni shook his head.

"The man you knew as Boris, a Hungarian gipsy, was in reality a Servian," he replied. "He would have delivered a message which would have purported to have come from the Lady Diana and I have no doubt that it would have accomplished the object if the other plan had failed. You would have gone to Servia on a wild-goose chase and I doubt if you would have returned. There is one of my cards and I have told you the absolute truth."

"You play them too much like a conjurer, Cambioni," answered Tommy indifferently. "According to the story you told me yesterday, there could have been nothing which would have suited your book better; so I doubt if you would have interfered if that had been so."

"It would have suited me perfectly if you had been willing to follow my advice; for I should have gained much from having gained the credit; but your obstinacy made that impossible," admitted the Italian. "I suppose that you mistrust me because I do not let you see all of the wheels go round; but this is a simple matter. Boris was sent against you by the friends of Van Osten and it was all planned by him. I couldn't afford to have him succeed without my assistance, Mr. Williams; it was a question of a bargain between us or you would have been eliminated."

"Are you still bargaining with him?" asked Tommy quickly and Cambioni laughed and shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"I believe that I have found a better customer for my wares," he answered. "Don't make any mistake about my principles, Mr. Williams. I reiterate what I said yesterday—I consider the protection of the royal family of Italy the most important thing in the world and I am willing to make almost any concession to insure its safety. Yesterday Van Osten could have given me information which would have been of value; but he demanded a price which I was unable to pay. He attempted to carry out his plans in another way, and I was fortunate enough to obtain some of the information which he could have given through other channels. When I tell you that I have already ordered the deportation of most of the members of Boris' orchestra and that those who remain are under arrest, you will believe that I am not playing into his hands. I will give you another piece of information, Mr. Williams, and I know of what I speak. The Lady Diana narrowly escaped capture in Servia yesterday; but she did escape. She is safe in Austria now. Is that card good for the trick?"

"Thank you—it will be credited to your account," answered Tommy gratefully. "Is it necessary that we should play at cross-purposes, Cambioni?" The detective glanced significantly at the *carabinieri* captain.

"I would suggest that you gentlemen return to your apartment," he said. "There are a few matters of detail which I must arrange which are important; but I will join you there in a half-hour." It was evident that he did not wish to continue the discussion in the presence of the other official and we left them; the captain congratulating us heartily on having been so quickly cleared of suspicion.

"And I wish I could as easily lose suspicion of Cambioni," said Tommy when we were outside. "The man puz-

zles me as much as the mix-up we have tumbled into. What do you think of him?"

"I think that he saved your life this afternoon, which predisposes me in his favor," I said and Tommy laughed.

"Admitting that he did, he is frank enough to acknowledge that he would have taken little bother about me if there had been anything to be gained by my death," he answered. "If we take him at his word he is a man of one idea and—hello! he told the truth about the girl anyway; for there she is!" A light mail-cart drawn by a spanking pair of Sardinian ponies had passed us rapidly; but not before we had recognized the girl whom we knew as Elisa Drago sitting beside the man who drove and whom I believed to be the same one who had dined with her at the Café Progresso the previous evening. If she saw us she gave not the slightest sign of recognition, and after the cart had disappeared around the next corner Tommy turned to me with a quizzical grin on his face.

"For a young woman who was so vitally interested in my welfare yesterday and so solicitous again this morning, she is rather indifferent and casual," he said laughingly. "By Jove, old chap, if we hadn't seen Boris get his and the pursuit of that girl on the mountain I should begin to suspect that some one was trying to play horse with us."

"In spite of what you have heard concerning the Lady Diana?" I asked and the smile left his face.

"That is the only consideration which induces me to take the slightest interest in it," he said gravely. "Cambioni will find me as incredulous as the veriest Missourian when he comes; he has got to show me, or I drop the whole business." We walked on in silence until we reached the studio; for Tommy was absorbed in his own thoughts and I was sufficiently under the influence of the succession of mysterious happenings to see a possible enemy and menace in every man we met.

Hardly had we settled ourselves comfortably in the studio when we were interrupted by the sudden and abrupt entrance of Cambioni, who burst through the door without the formality of knocking.

"I can't recommend your hallway, Mr. Williams!" he exclaimed. "This may have been meant for you; but it nearly landed me. Will you rip up my sleeve and see what it amounts to?" I noticed that he was clutching his left arm tightly just below the elbow and as he spoke a few drops of blood trickled down the back of his hand and dripped from his finger-tips. Tommy picked up a knife from among his box of artist's tools and cut away the sleeve of the coat, revealing a long clean cut in the muscles of his forearm.

"I'm enough of a surgeon to dress this; it isn't serious," he said. "You received the wound in this house?"

"Not more than ten feet from your door," answered Cambioni as Tommy deftly washed away the blood and drew the edges of the cut together. "I could not recognize my assailant and I was more interested in preserving my own life than in capturing him; so he got away from me." Tommy finished his "first aid" application and arranged a comfortable chair for our visitor before speaking.

"Was that blow meant for you, or for one of us?" he asked after he had lighted a cigarette, and Cambioni shrugged his shoulders until the pain from his wound brought a grimace to his face.

"*Che lo sa,* signor?" he answered. "It was struck in the dark; for your porter has been negligent about the hall-light."

"It was lighted when we entered ten minutes since," said Tommy suspiciously. "This is not a farce, Cambioni?"

"I would hardly make it so realistic," answered the detective with a significant glance at his bandaged arm. "Mr. Williams, from lack of mutual confidence we are both as much in the dark as I was when I received this wound. I have been enough in England and America to know that the Anglo-Saxon instinctively distrusts the Latin; but I wish that in this particu-

lar case you would forget the racial prejudice. Our standards are not entirely the same; but I assure you that I am entirely sincere and that above all else I place my duty."

"I am beginning to suspect that," admitted Tommy, smiling. "You were frank enough to acknowledge that it led you to make unholy alliances."

"Mr. Williams, it is your turn to be perfectly frank with me!" exclaimed Cambioni. "Your question concerning the Baron Drago suggests that you have had previous communication with the Mafia; can you tell me of it?"

"There is no reason for making a secret of it, and it injures only my pride to tell of it; for I was taken in," replied Tommy, shaking his head. "Yesterday afternoon a very handsome young woman visited this studio and warned us that we were in grave danger unless we fled from Italy and never returned. She hoodwinked me to the limit; for I believed in her sincerity when she told me that she was Elisa Drago, a daughter of the man who is running against Nasi at Trapani. I'm a little out of my reckoning when I find that he has no daughter and I can only believe that she was a clever actress."

"Possibly more than that!" exclaimed Cambioni, drawing a bundle of papers from his pocket. He selected one and from it read a detailed description of a woman which tallied in every particular with the appearance of the girl who had called on us the day before.

"That tallies but I can do better," said Tommy, taking a sketching-block from the table. "A verbal description isn't worth much unless there is some marked and striking peculiarity about the subject." He busied himself with his pencil for a few minutes and the result was a striking likeness of the girl who had delivered the warning so dramatically. Cambioni examined it closely and there was a puzzled expression on his face when he finished and handed it back.

"I am glad to have this; but while I seem to recognize the face I cannot place it," he said thoughtfully. "I have every reason to believe that this is the girl about whom I received information through the office at Rome this morning. She is supposed to be actively engaged in this anarchistic plot and I hoped to arrest her on Monte Pelligrino this afternoon. She slipped through my fingers for the moment; but I shall get her; for the whole place is surrounded and she can't escape."

"She can't, because she already has," said Tommy quietly. "We saw her in Palermo when we were walking back to the studio." Cambioni looked at him incredulously.

"You are sure of that?" he asked.

"As sure as I am that a written description isn't worth a hoot for identification," asserted Tommy positively. "If you had seen that sketch yesterday you might have saved yourself a deal of trouble to-day; for the girl whom it represents dined at a table near you in the Café Progresso last evening." The detective gave an exclamation of satisfaction and laughed.

"My dear Mr. Williams, you have given me the hint which solves one of my perplexities," he said. "The likeness puzzled me; but now I have it. There is a strong resemblance to the Countess Ferara who was dining with her husband at the table on the opposite side of the door."

"Her husband is a tall, handsome man who wore an order in his buttonhole?" asked Tommy.

"Yes, the red ribbon which represents the order of the Crown of Italy," assented Cambioni. "He is a member of the king's household and has come to Sicily to arrange for the ceremonies in connection with the reception of the Emperor of Germany, who is expected to stop here on his return from Corfu next week."

"Then I can assure you that you were taking pot-shots at his wife dressed in a *contadina* costume this afternoon on the Monte Pelligrino," said Tommy. "She passed us only a few minutes before Boris arrived and even repeated the warning of yesterday and added another—to fly from the mountain." Cambioni shook his head.

"You are mistaken, Mr. Williams,"

he said. "At what time did your visitor call yesterday?"

"Within a quarter of an hour after your departure and she was here perhaps half an hour."

"Then I can personally furnish an alibi for the countess!" replied Cambioni triumphantly. "I went directly from here to the count's apartments on official business and was with him for an hour, at least. During all of that time she was in the room with us or in the adjoining one with the door open between."

"I suppose that we shall have to accept that, despite the proof of our own eyes; for it is manifestly impossible that she should be in two places at once," said Tommy reluctantly. "Where is their apartment, Cambioni?"

"Five minutes from here—in the Piazza Marina," answered the Italian. "I will answer for the countess, Mr. Williams; it is impossible that she could be in any way connected with this business and she would never have come to your studio alone."

"There is always a possibility of troubles being thrust upon one—as our own particular case demonstrates," replied Tommy and from his tone I knew that he was not prepared to disregard the evidence of his eyes for the detective's testimony. "Perhaps we can find an explanation which will reconcile the divergent theories if you will tell us the true inwardness of what went on on the mountain this afternoon." Cambioni fidgeted uneasily and it was evident that the question caused him considerable embarrassment.

"I may as well make a clean breast of it," he said slowly. "I shall have to ask you to remember that conditions in Italy are different from those in your own country and more especially that the class of people that I am concerned with are little better than wild beasts. You can imagine that they are watched closely by all of the political police of Europe, and from all the frontiers we have received reports of those who were known to have anarchistic affiliations flocking to Italy. Three of the rulers of Europe have signified their intention of visiting the Mediterranean within the next few weeks and beyond doubt the unprecedented influx of adventurers and blacklegs is due to these prospective visits. Among them was that man Boris, whom I shot to-day, and his alleged orchestra was largely composed of men of his own stamp. He has been under observation from the moment he entered the country; but it was only when I heard him playing for your benefit last night that I guessed that he was acting as an agent of Van Osten."

"He had a wonderful talent," said Tommy and Cambioni nodded.

"Many talents," he agreed. "He was a remarkable violinist; but he was an equally clever actor and he has carried on swindles successfully in every capital of Europe. After he made that appointment with you—which was immediately reported to me by your waiter—I determined to be present at the meeting. That determination was strengthened when I learned through the ordinary police channels that there was to be another meeting on Monte Pelligrino to-day and that several of the men whom we had been warned against were to meet a young woman who has arrived from America within the past week and whose description I read to you."

"What is there about her, Cambioni?" asked Tommy and the detective referred to the paper which held her description.

"That is what I hope to discover when I get my hands on her," he answered. "This information comes from one of my men in New York and was communicated to him by Inspector Clancy. She was known there as Gilda Massa and her lover, Antonio Massa, was sent to Sing Sing about six months ago for complicity in a murder in Mulberry Bend. After that she took up with another Italian who was closely associated with the anarchistic group and about three weeks ago she disappeared from New York. Massa sent for Clancy, who had arrested him on the murder charge, and under the influence of jealousy betrayed all that he

knew about her. He asserted that she had become an active agent of the anarchists and that she had gone to Italy with money and other sinews of anarchistic warfare to perform her share in a great plot which had been arranged in America. That's why we wanted her, dead or alive, and it was unfortunate that she escaped temporarily."

"See here, Cambioni; why are you trying to drag me into this thing?" demanded Tommy suddenly.

"For two reasons; first because I know enough of you to believe you could be of great value to me if you would; second, because the anarchistic brethren seem so interested in you and I want you to help me find the reason."

"You have, I believe, been frank with me," Tommy acknowledged finally. "There seems to be a great deal that you don't know, so perhaps that accounts for your reticence on subjects in which my personal interest is greater than it is in the Mafia and the anarchists, in spite of the alleged interest which they take in me."

"Mr. Williams, I have been absolutely frank with you," Cambioni said quietly. "I have told you that I place the protection of those whose safety depends upon my vigilance above everything else. To insure it I should hesitate at nothing and I would sacrifice my own life as willingly as I would compound a felony." Tommy looked him squarely in the eye for a moment and then extended his hand.

"Each of us has his own conception of duty, Cambioni," he said. "I confess that I was half-inclined to believe that you were a rascal; but I have come to the conclusion that you are only as great a fanatic as any of the men you are fighting against. I don't know that my assistance will be of any real value; but such as my talents are they are at your disposition until this thing is cleared up." The eagerness with which Cambioni grasped his hand and his quick acceptance of the offer showed how much he valued it and he was tactful enough to make me an unwilling ally by including me in his thanks.

"And now I want a little time to think this over, Cambioni," continued Tommy. "It is long past our dinner-hour and I'll take the evening to myself; but to-morrow we'll put our heads together in earnest."

VII.

"You can save your breath if you intend to reproach me for volunteering in this thing and hauling you in with me!" exclaimed Tommy, turning to me after Cambioni had left the studio. "I'm not above acknowledging that I'm scared blue; for I believe that we are in serious danger; but the way to get out of it is to fight back as hard as we know how and not by running away."

"I haven't any reproaches to make, for I agree with you," I replied. "I wish that we were not in it; but now that we are I'm with you and I'll fight as hard as any one." Tommy gave a nod of approval; but I hastened to impose a condition. "If I'm sharing the fight, I claim the privilege of knowing what I'm fighting about. I am not to be kept in the dark that you may show me in the end what a wonder-child you are."

"I'm a blamed poor imitation of a wonder-child at this particular moment," acknowledged Tommy, grinning. "There are two suspicions which are very strong in my mind; but I couldn't prove 'em from anything I really know. The first is that there is—in spite of Cambioni's disbelief—a connection between the anarchists and the powers that be in the Mafia. The second is that the Countess Ferara and the girl we knew as Elisa Drago are one and the same. Whether the girl on the mountain is another impersonation of the same character or not I'm not so sure; but I'll do my best to find out."

"There has been impersonation, Tommy," I agreed and in a moment his wits seemed to go wool-gathering and I knew that he was unconscious of my presence as he paced rapidly up and down the room.

"By Jove, we've hit it!" he exclaimed after making a few turns.

"There's the key to it—it's impersonation; but I don't know the reason for it!" He made a gesture of impatience when I protested that I could not follow his reasoning. "It isn't reasoning; it's a hunch!" he continued; but I knew that his inspirations usually had solid deduction behind them and I told him so.

"There isn't this time, unless it is subconscious," he replied and his sincerity was unquestionable. "That word which you repeated after me seemed to supply the link; but I can't tell you why. There has, of course, been impersonation; the impersonation of two daughters of the Baron Drago, who has none, and that's as far as we can go. I am going to find out if there is more than one woman concerned in this before I do anything else. If there isn't, then the Countess Ferara, Gilda Massa and the mythical daughters of the Baron Drago are one and the same person. Come on; we'll never discover anything here and I'm hungrier than a hunter." There was no resisting his impetuosity; but he did not forget caution and he walked warily through the hallway where Cambioni had been attacked.

"That was a clumsy sort of a miscue," he said when we had reached the street in safety. "Cambioni must be close on their heels that they were desperate enough to attack him."

"And while you are figuring out the mystery we are taking the wrong turning for the Progresso," I said and he laughed and persisted on going ahead.

"I'm not making a mistake; I'm trying to rectify one," he said. "I want to satisfy myself that Cambioni's estimate of the time between the Piazza Marina and our quarters is correct." That estimate was reduced to three minutes for a rapid walker when we stood across from the building which contained the Count Ferara's apartment, and we had turned to go back to the restaurant when Tommy seized me by the arm. On the other side of the street, walking rapidly and glancing furtively about to see if she were followed, was the girl who had given us the warning on the mountain, her *contadina* costume torn and bedraggled, her bare feet bruised and cut. She dodged into the doorway of the building we had been watching and Tommy turned to me with an expression of triumph.

"Now, old chap, I think that we shall have another puzzle for our friend Cambioni!" he exclaimed. "If his Gilda Massa isn't also the Countess Ferara, what in the deuce is she sneaking into that house for?" It was a question which I could not answer and we walked to the restaurant in silence; each trying to find a solution and both of us watching every one we passed for a possible enemy. We were so late in reaching the Café Progresso that most of the diners were already drinking their coffee; but the head waiter had reserved our table for us and Tommy glanced at me significantly when we noticed the chairs turned up against the table which the count and countess had occupied the night before.

"Ladies who get lost on the Monte Pelligrino are apt to keep their husbands waiting for dinner," he said as he moved his chair so that we could both watch the vacant places. "I am curious to see if he takes it patiently." We had not to wait long for an answer to his question; for ten minutes later they entered; the countess smiling and very evidently trying to make herself especially agreeable to her companion, who was obviously cross and ill-tempered.

"That woman is a good actress—whether she is the Countess Ferara, Gilda Massa or a mythical daughter of the Baron Drago," said Tommy after watching them closely during the dinner. "She is conscious that I am watching her and she is dining with a man who is cross and perturbed; but she behaves as if she hadn't a care in the world."

"I should say from her expression that she was rather enjoying the situation and laughing over our mystification," I added as we saw her making laughing retort to some remark of her companion. "Tommy, it doesn't seem

possible that that woman was hunted like a wild beast on the mountain this afternoon."

"I am almost prepared to doubt the evidence of my own senses," he acknowledged. "If we had not seen the *contadina* girl enter her apartment an hour since, I should be inclined to accept Cambioni's guarantee of the countess. I suppose that in fairness we should hunt him up and tell him what we saw; but I know that he would laugh at the statement."

His long fingers were playing idly with a half-dozen matches spread out on the white table-cloth, arranging them in different designs and moving them about aimlessly. Gradually he became absorbed in them and oblivious to the people we had been watching and he added a lump of sugar and a spoon to the collection; moving the different articles about and substituting one for another as if he were working out a puzzle. I watched him in silence for a good half-hour until a question from the head waiter aroused him from the brown study.

"Yes, there are many things which I desire; but I fear the Café Progresso could not supply them," he answered absently. "Only the check now, Carlo." He left the payment to me and swept the things with which he had been playing into a heap.

"Each of those matches had a personality for the moment," he said when we left the restaurant. "I was trying to construct a scenario which would fit this game of hide-and-seek and I'm going to complete the labor with the solace of tobacco in the quiet of the studio. Confound it, the thing was under my finger-tips a dozen times there and just eluded me. It's ten to one that when we do find the solution it will be so simple that we shall be ashamed of ourselves for having overlooked it."

I did not share his confidence; but his absorption in the problem was so complete that I felt it incumbent upon me to keep watch for both of us to guard against mischief. It was that anxiety which led me to call a halt and draw my pistol when I saw a man standing in the shadow of our doorway as we approached the studio; but my exclamation of warning was answered by a laugh which I recognized as Cambioni's.

"I am glad to see that you are vigilant; but don't shoot a friend by mistake," he said in greeting. "I am ahead of time in looking you up, Mr. Williams; but I have news which necessitates a change of plan and immediate action."

"Well, what is it?" demanded Tommy after he had switched on the electric light. "You have not caught the girl of the mountain?"

"No, but my news makes it necessary for me to redouble my efforts," replied Cambioni. "There has been an entire change in the arrangements for the reception of our royal visitors. The German Emperor has been called back to Berlin earlier than he expected, and he arrives in Palermo to-morrow instead of next week. I shall even call the *carabinieri* to my aid in searching Monte Pelligrino; for I shall not feel safe until she is in custody. Have you learned anything?"

"Enough to be able to inform you that your effort will be wasted, for the girl is in Palermo," answered Tommy and the detective smiled incredulously.

"I suppose you mean the Countess Ferara, who dined at the Café Progresso to-night?" he said interrogatively.

"I don't care what you name her; but the *contadina* girl entered the building where Count Ferara lives a half-hour before the countess came for a very late dinner to the restaurant," retorted Tommy impatiently. "Cambioni, unless you are positive that the countess was in sight during your entire interview with her husband yesterday, there is nothing to disprove that she did not slip out and visit this studio."

"She was not actually in sight all of the time; but I supposed she was in the adjoining room," admitted the detective.

"And it is significant that they were very late at dinner to-night and that the count was very cross about it," continued Tommy. "We are both positive

that we saw the *contadina* girl enter that house and she had just time to slip into a bath and a change of costume before the countess appeared at the Progresso."

"I can give you another reason for the count's tardiness," objected Cambioni. "I detained him at home discussing the arrangements and precautions for the emperor's reception to-morrow."

"And during your interview was the countess present?" asked Tommy sharply.

"Only at the very end of it, when she came in to protest about being kept waiting," answered Cambioni after a moment's hesitation and Tommy gave an exclamation of triumph.

"Then you have not located your Gilda Massa!" he said. "There may be such a woman in Palermo; but I am pretty well satisfied that the one you were chasing on Monte Pelligrino is identical with the Countess Ferara and the girl who gave the name of Elisa Drago when she called upon me yesterday." Cambioni's shoulders eloquently expressed his disbelief.

"You are incorrigible, Mr. Williams," he protested laughingly. "The countess is of one of the best families of Tuscany and her sympathies are all with the royal family. It is not credible that she should be mixed up with the anarchists. Italy is not the same as Russia, you know."

"No, but it is not necessary to assume that a young and handsome woman is connected with the anarchists, just because she happens to walk in disguise on the Monte Pelligrino," suggested Tommy. "Have you any reason to believe that she might have other reasons?"

"*Che lo sa?*" replied Cambioni. "I am satisfied that you are mistaken, however. We know where the girl Gilda Massa lodged in Palermo and she was seen coming from that house when she started for the mountain. That is positive, Mr. Williams." Tommy's theory seemed to be crumbling and without speaking he walked to the table and thoughtfully moved about another bunch of matches. Cambioni watched him intently, instinctively recognizing the significance of what he was doing; but after a few minutes Tommy gave an exclamation of impatience.

"I can't get it!" he exclaimed. "See here, Cambioni; if this thing is connected with the visit of the emperor, there is no time to study over Chinese puzzles in identity of mysterious females. The action can't be long delayed and the only safety lies in meeting the emergency when it arises. What are the arrangements for the reception to-morrow?"

"We have adopted every precaution which we could devise," replied the detective. "Every soldier in the garrison, every police officer and every available *carabiniere* will be on duty."

"Give me the exact details, please; the part which each of the prominent characters will play," insisted Tommy.

"Owing to the sudden change in the arrangements the king will not be able to be here to receive the emperor," answered Cambioni. "The *Hohenzollern*, the royal yacht, is expected at three o'clock. Count Ferara, representing the king, will immediately go on board to extend a welcome and he will accompany the royal party on shore. They will be received at the landing by the civic authorities and the Countess Ferara, representing Queen Elena. I shall accompany the count on board and take a half-dozen of my best men and it is needless to tell you that we shall guard the emperor unceasingly while he is here. The landing will be surrounded by a cordon of troops through which no one will be permitted to pass without a special order, and the streets will be lined with troops. Thirty feet has always been considered the margin of safety in previous visits; but with the knowledge that a conspiracy exists we have increased it to sixty, and no one except the officials will be permitted to come closer than that to the royal party. If I had been fortunate enough to capture this Massa woman to-day, I should have little anxiety."

"Who has authority to issue those passes?" asked Tommy.

"The count and the *sindaco* of Palermo; but every one of them must be countersigned by me, and I can assure you that the list will be closely scrutinized," replied Cambioni and Tommy smiled.

"Nevertheless, I trust that you will not exclude our names from it," he said. "I want passes for both of us, and I want them so plain and distinct that there will be no delay in accepting them." Cambioni looked at him sharply.

"Mr. Williams, you are not withholding information from me with the idea of pulling off a sensational coup?" he said suspiciously, and Tommy shook his head.

"My dear fellow, I should as soon think of monkeying with a buzz-saw," he protested. "I have given you all the information I possess and you don't seem to value it. One good turn deserves another, and I owe you one for a certain warning you conveyed. If it were not for that I should wash my hands of the whole business as a punishment for your incredulity; but now I am willing to do all that is in my power to prevent a tragedy. You give us those passes and I'll promise you to make good use of them."

"May I ask what it will be?"

"That's a question I would answer willingly if I could; but I shall have to play with my matches until I get a hint," replied Tommy, smiling. "I have a suspicion that they will point to close attendance upon the Countess Ferara, though; so be sure that the papers are in such form that they will permit it."

"I wish that you would accept my guarantee for the countess," said Cambioni irritably. "I value your assistance so much that I hate to see it misdirected and I should prefer that you do not waste your time in watching her."

"My dear man, you are wasting *your* time when you argue with me about one of my hunches!" he said. "You see that those passes are in order and I'll promise to do the best I can." Cambioni would have protested further but Tommy told him flatly that he wished to be left alone and that argument would be useless; but when we were left alone he did not return to his play with the matches.

"It's our turn for the heavy melodramatic," he said, grinning as he slipped off his coat. "There is no use in trying to disguise ourselves; for our talents don't lie in that direction. We'll just hunt up some duds in our wardrobe that don't scream 'United States' and then we'll spend the rest of the evening in watching what goes on in the Piazza Marina. If Cambioni were not so obstinate he could send some one who would do it better; but I can't trust him." Our transformation was not great; but it was sufficient to lose the aggressiveness of the American type, and we passed through the streets where triumphal arches were being erected, without attracting attention.

The windows of the count's apartments were ablaze with lights and a stream of people were entering and leaving the main entrance; officers of the garrison, policemen, *carabinieri* officers and the officials of the municipality; but through the long evening we saw no woman. Tommy watched it all in silence until the lights were extinguished, one by one, and as the last window became dark he motioned to me to join him in the obscurity of a deep doorway.

"If anything is going to happen it is getting close to the time," he growled. "Some one has been signaling with the shade from that dormer window at the top of the building. There it goes again!" The shade was quickly pulled down and only for a moment a bright light appeared behind it; but that moment was sufficient for both of us to recognize the sharp silhouette of the Countess Ferara which was cast upon the shade. I could hear my heart thumping as we waited for an answer to the signal; but everything about the house was dark and silent.

The only person in sight upon the piazza was a belated drunkard meandering across it with unsteady feet. He was whistling discordantly the latest popular song, but when he reached the

front of the building his poor attempt at music ceased abruptly, his whole bearing changed and with suspicious steadiness for one who had been so evidently intoxicated he slipped in at the great main door, which opened at his touch and then closed silently behind him. A few minutes later there was a dim illumination behind the shade which had been used in signaling; but it was quickly lost and although we watched attentively until the eastern sky became rosy red we saw no further sign of life about the house.

"I don't think that our night was lost," said Tommy thoughtfully as we made our way back to the studio. "Perhaps it may be only a lover; but the Countess Ferara receives some one who has to come by stealth. That light was in the servants' quarters, too, so I doubt if the count knows all that goes on under his roof."

"I wonder who it could have been, Tommy," I said. "Surely every man who is known or suspected as an anarchist would be under observation by Cambioni's people." Tommy looked at me curiously and shook his head.

"I wonder if you have any suspicion as to his identity," he said. "I would have given a good deal to have seen his face; for in just the moment that he straightened up before he entered the house it struck me that there was something familiar in his movements."

"You would say that I was afraid of my shadow if I told you whom the set of his shoulders reminded me of," I answered evasively. Tommy shook his head with greater emphasis.

"No, I shouldn't; for it would be necessary to admit that I, too, feared shadows," he said gravely. "There was a resemblance to Van Osten; but it must be only a resemblance. The man is safe enough, and they would guard him even more carefully at this time. Take a couple of hours' sleep, old chap, while I play my match-game again and see if I cannot find the solution of this riddle."

Sleep seemed far enough from my eyelids, but nature asserted herself and when they closed Tommy was intently studying a new arrangement of the little pieces of wick and wax.

VIII.

It was nearly noon before Tommy awakened me and from the expression of his face I knew that he had arrived at no satisfactory conclusion.

"I've moved 'em about and formed every possible combination; but I can't satisfy myself that all of the lady matches don't represent one and the same person," he said ruefully. "So far as we know, there is no convincing proof that any two of them were seen at different places at the same time, while we do know positively that the Countess Ferara came out of the same house into which the *contadina* girl, who is presumably Gilda Massa, went a few minutes earlier. Cambioni's testimony is not convincing enough to prove that she did not visit us in this studio at the time he believed her to be in the adjoining room to him; so I am not at all sure that she won't prove to be also the quondam Elisa Drago."

"But all of that is negative; you have no positive evidence and so far as I can see you are no further advanced from having spent a sleepless night," I objected and he bowed assent.

"I am sorry to say that your observation is entirely correct," he admitted. "In the absence of positive evidence I shall accept the substitute of negative testimony, however, and your Uncle Thomas and yourself will stick close to the skirts of the fair countess until we do know something definite or the Emperor of Germany is safely out of Sicily."

"Tommy, you are playing fair and according to our agreement?" I demanded suspiciously; for in spite of the lack of evidence he seemed entirely confident that he was on the right track.

"I am concealing nothing; it is a plain case of playing a hunch," he answered, laughing. "There is nothing definite to go on, so I'm following the lead which seems the most promising. I'm open to conviction if you have anything better to propose. If not, I would sug-

gest that you hustle into your glad rags."

Cambioni had sent the passes and we had early necessity to use them when we passed into the gaily decorated streets; for every point of access to the route to be traversed by the royal procession was already guarded by troops and police. They were readily honored, however, and we approached the landing-place where the reception was to take place as the boom of the saluting cannon on the forts and the guns of the cruisers in the harbor announced the arrival of the *Hohenzollern*. Outside of a double cordon of troops was a dense mass of people; good-natured, laughing and light-hearted, and had we not known that secret danger threatened we should never have suspected it from the gathering; for the troops seemed only a necessary appanage of royalty. Tommy turned and looked back on the sea of merry faces after we had gained admission to the charmed circle inside; but his expression reflected none of their merriment.

"It is a mercurial crowd," he said gravely. "They are here for a *festa;* but a tragedy would turn them into savages. Remember that, old chap, if we are called upon to act; for they would kill first and only stop to ask why the next day. By Jove, the big show seems to be opening."

"And I don't see the lady to whom you were to devote your attention," I said. Tommy pointed toward a raised platform near the landing-stage.

"She will come there, I expect, and we can depend upon her being in time," he answered. "We'll take our place near it." Our passes were honored even there and on reading our names the officer in charge consulted his list and pointed out two places close to the front.

Spread out before us was the magnificent panorama of Palermo harbor; all of the ships dressed gaily in bunting and in their midst the great white hull of the *Hohenzollern*. Her rigging was almost hidden by the pall of smoke from the saluting cannon; but high above it floated the German flag, the imperial standard, and the green, white and red of Italy. Count Ferara had already gone on board and, just as the royal barge drew alongside the side stairs of the yacht to embark the royal party, his wife drove to the reception-platform in one of the royal carriages, drawn by four horses with postilions and outriders.

She was received with all the honors which would have been accorded to the royal mistress whom she represented, and as she stepped from the carriage I acknowledged to myself that the queen could have selected no more graceful and regal substitute. I even whispered that comment to Tommy and he turned on me with flashing eyes.

"Confound you, why couldn't you have used that word instead of 'impersonation' yesterday!" he exclaimed so vehemently that those about us looked at him curiously. "I've got it, by all that's holy!" I would not have been more surprised if he had struck me; but there was no time for explanation, as the barge was rapidly approaching the landing and the countess was advancing to her place at the head of the reception-committee. She was dressed in an elaborate afternoon costume and carried a magnificent bouquet of orchids, and in spite of my bewilderment I found time to admire her beauty and the graciousness of her acknowledgment of the formal salutations. Just for an instant she paused when she came opposite to us, and it struck me that her smile was a trifle forced as she bent her head to acknowledge our low bows; but a violent nudge from Tommy reminded me that I was staring at her and he whispered a caution in my ear.

"Stand fast, old chap!" he said, and I saw that his face had turned pale and his lips were firmly set. "Remember what I said about that mob and back me up; for the life of the emperor is in danger!" He pushed his way rudely through the crowd of decorated and uniformed people on the stand until he was close behind the countess, and I followed him. The emperor was just stepping from the barge in which he

had been accompanied from the yacht by Count Ferara and the members of his staff, and all eyes were turned toward him while a deafening cheer went up from the dense crowd. He had landed and was advancing up the strip of crimson carpet to the stand before the cheering stopped, and it was a shout of warning from Tommy which broke the strange silence which followed it.

"Cambioni! Be careful! I've got her!" he called, and then with a sharp command to me to seize the countess' bouquet he sprang forward and pinned her arms to her sides. Mechanically I obeyed him and tore the bunch of orchids from the hand which had held them at her shoulder, and warned by the heavy weight of my capture I guarded it in the surging throng which gathered about us while the countess fought Tommy with teeth and nails. Everything was in immediate confusion, and it was the sharp command of the emperor himself which saved us both from being exterminated by the sword-thrusts which were directed at us by the Italian officers. Cambioni, who had been in the emperor's barge, forced his way through them and tried to tear the struggling woman from Tommy's arms.

"Good God, Williams, are you mad!" he exclaimed fiercely. "Let go, man, or I'll kill you!"

"Look in that bunch of orchids which she carried and if you don't find my excuse I'll take the consequences!" panted Tommy, and again it was the emperor who saved him from the furious attack of the Count Ferara. The crowd on the outside of the cordon could not see what was happening; but they noted the confusion and a hoarse murmur was coming from them which reminded me of Tommy's warning; but the emperor's raised hand and stern command brought quiet to every one but the woman, who still fought and struggled in Tommy's grasp.

"This is not the action of a madman, gentlemen!" said the emperor quietly, but there was that in his voice which imposed silence and obedience. "Come here, sir; give me that bunch of orchids." The officers who had seized me released their hold and I stepped forward.

"Be careful, your majesty," I said, without offering them to him. "I don't know what is hidden by the flowers; but the weight suggests that——"

"Give them to me!" he interrupted imperiously. "They can be no more dangerous in my hands than in yours." The Italian officers and Cambioni's men started a murmur of protest; but the members of his own suite were better disciplined, and while they gathered about him closely to share his danger or protect him they remained silent when he took the bouquet carefully in his own hands. In all of that assemblage he was apparently the calmest and least perturbed as he examined it and, spreading back the fragile blossoms one by one, disclosed a round globe of steel the size of a baseball, its surface thickly studded with detonating caps. The woman still struggled in Tommy's firm embrace, and when the justification of his arbitrary action was established the eyes of every one turned to the Count Ferara, whose face was as colorless as chalk.

"Your majesty—I can't explain—I don't know—this is some terrible mistake," he faltered and the emperor turned from him with a gesture of impatience and looked searchingly at Tommy, who was rearranging his disordered clothing after Cambioni and two of his men had relieved him of his prisoner.

"Perhaps this gentleman, whom I judge is an American, can explain the meaning of this," he said, and Tommy smiled as he looked significantly at the bomb which the emperor still held in his hand.

"That is my justification, your majesty; but this is hardly the place for an explanation," he answered. "It is not fair that an honest gentleman should rest under suspicion, however. The Count Ferara knows nothing of this; for this woman is not his wife."

"You lie!" shouted the count, stepping forward to take his place beside her. "I am guiltless of knowledge of this terrible affair; and I would swear

on my honor that my wife knows no more of it than I." Tommy accepted the epithet calmly and without looking at the count addressed the emperor.

"The count is truthful in everything but his assertion that I am not," he continued quietly. "I believe the Countess Ferara to be as innocent as he is himself; but this woman is not the Countess Ferara. She is——"

"Shut up, you devil!" screamed the woman, struggling uselessly in the strong hands of her captors. "You have cheated and——" Cambioni's hand over her mouth silenced her tirade and Ferara turned and looked at her in bewilderment.

"English!" he exclaimed. "My wife knows no word of that language."

"Confound it, man, I tell you that she is not your wife!" exclaimed Tommy impatiently. "I can't explain this thing here; but a blind man could see what has been done. Your wife has been detained and this woman, who is so like her that even you were deceived, had no difficulty in imposing upon those who knew her less intimately." The emperor nodded and, handing the bomb to his adjutant, who received it gingerly, he advanced and laid his hand gently on Count Ferara's shoulder.

"You are relieved of your attendance upon me, count," he said kindly. "Through the vigilance of this gentleman I have escaped a grave danger; but I would remind you that the countess may need your assistance." The count was too bewildered to understand and again Tommy came to the rescue.

"I believe that the countess is in her own apartment, your majesty; for it was in her house that the substitution must have been made. In a half-hour we should be able to get to the bottom of the whole affair."

"Then in an hour I shall expect you," answered the emperor, extending his hand and motioning to his staff he left the platform and made his way to the waiting carriages. As he drove away in the midst of a strong escort of cavalry Tommy turned quickly to Cambioni.

"Is this the result of a further bargain with Van Osten?" he demanded fiercely and Cambioni looked at him in astonishment.

"I know nothing of him; I heard of his escape only an hour ago!" he protested.

"And when did that escape take place?"

"Early last evening," replied the detective, and Tommy turned to the count, to whom the conversation was so much Greek.

"Then I would remind you of the emperor's suggestion; for the most dangerous man in Europe spent the night under your roof last night," he said, and grasping him by the arm he hurried him to the carriage in which Gilda Massa had arrived in state. Cambioni and I were close on their heels and under the count's strong urging the postilions whipped up the horses and plunged recklessly through the crowd. In five minutes we whirled into the Piazza Marina and the carriage pulled up with a jerk in front of the count's residence just as another with a *carabiniere* on the box beside the driver came into the square from the other direction. It, too, drew up in front of the house and from it the *carabiniere* lifted a half-fainting woman. With a cry of relief the count sprang forward and took her in his arms; but when we would have followed them into the house the *carabiniere* beckoned to us and pointed to the carriage.

There stretched out limply on the seat was Van Osten; his wrists manacled in spite of the fact that the peculiar pallor of his face told of approaching death.

"We overhauled this carriage on the Conca d'Oro," reported the *carabiniere* curtly. "This man resisted and we were obliged to shoot him. The Countess Ferara was his prisoner, bound and gagged, and we thought it best to bring her home before returning him to the prison." Cambioni nodded and looked at Tommy inquiringly.

"Is there anything you would like to ask him, Mr. Williams?" he said. In spite of all that had gone before Tommy looked pityingly at the man who

was soon to pay his last reckoning and Van Osten returned the look with a smile in which there was much of his old defiance.

"You win the trick, the game and the rubber, Williams," he said feebly. "You have been too much for the anarchists, the Mafia and the only man who was ever worthy of your steel."

"Can you tell me of it, Van Osten?" asked Tommy gently.

"You must have guessed; for you are the only man I have ever known who could add two and two together," answered Van Osten. "You were the only one I feared and if Gilda had killed you instead of trying to frighten you, there would have been no failure. I played both the Mafia and the anarchists; the one to abduct the countess for ransom; the other to substitute her double for their own purposes. We had taken the apartment directly over the count's, and when he left the house this morning we broke in and seized the countess. Gilda dressed in her clothes and left for the reception, and I tried to take the countess to a place of safe hiding that I know of; but the stupidity of my driver aroused suspicion. I am going out, Williams, and my only regret is that I am not taking you to hell with me." His voice had grown weaker as he spoke; but at the last it strengthened and there was hatred in the glazing eyes which looked at Tommy.

"You *are* going out, Van Osten," he replied gravely. "Is there anything I can do for you?" His lips moved as if he would speak and Tommy bent over him to catch his words; but he drew back quickly as the prisoner with his last remaining strength raised his manacled hands and tried to strike him in the face. The *carabiniere* stepped forward to seize him; but Van Osten sank back limply, a torrent of red came from his mouth and we knew that the arch-criminal of his generation would never sin again.

Tommy held out his hand significantly to the *carabiniere* and when he received from him a small key he gently removed the handcuffs and straightened the limbs already stiffening in death.

"You were a bad man, but a good hater, Van Osten," he said, and there was a trace of regret in his tone. "Cambioni, I'll pay for decent burial for this man. I don't suppose that the law pursues a criminal to the grave?" Cambioni shook his head and gave brief directions to the *carabiniere*.

"You are charitable, all things considered, Mr. Williams," he said. "I honestly believe that you are more than half sorry that the man is dead." Tommy flushed and I knew that the detective had hit the mark; but with an evasiveness which would have done credit to an Italian he simply shrugged his shoulders and murmured *"Che lo sa?"*

TWENTY-NINE THE AGE FOR CRIME

IF a man is going to commit a crime during his lifetime the chances are that he will do it at the age of twenty-nine. It is a curious fact that statistics have shown that man is more dangerous at this period of life than at any other.

The general supposition is that men have attained the highest development of their mental and physical powers at twenty-nine, and they are supposed to be able to distinguish between right and wrong and to realize the consequences liable to follow the indulgence of either.

Next to the age of twenty-nine the greatest number of criminals have been aged twenty-one, twenty-seven, or forty-five years. The intervening years, in which men do not commit as many crimes, have not been explained by expert criminologists who have made investigations proving the above statement to be true, and who are still working on a solution of the problem.

Crawling Cassidy's Strategy

By Frederick Ferdinand Moore

A humorous story of regular-army life, voicing a decided objection to anything in the nature of patent tabloid foods. The squad agrees that experiments in that line should be confined to guinea-pigs and rabbits

"THE newspapers want to know what's the matter with the army," said Sergeant Henderson, speaking to anybody in the squad-room who wanted to listen. "The reason they don't find out," he continued, putting a fine polish on the hilt of his saber as he spoke, "is because they ask some chair-galloper down in Washington. Funny how the scrub civilian thinks a fat staff-officer is the army, just because he wears a shield on his collar and has his clothes made by a military tailor and the plugs in his club call him colonel. When a file of militia marches up the street on the Fourth of July the people think it's the army, and the band that sells collars and hat-pins on week-days plays 'Tramp, tramp, the boys are marching.' Doggone my sister's black cat, why don't they ask your Uncle Dudley what's the matter with the army?"

"What's the grôwl now?" demanded Private Parker, otherwise known as "Boston Joe." Parker was sitting on his bunk, putting new strings in his inspection leggings.

"That's it!" exclaimed Henderson. "When a man opens his grub-trap to stick up for your rights, he gets the grand throw-down. That's the way with you high privates in the rear rank—you work fourteen hours a day as chambermaid for a hundred government horses, the next day you are down in the basement sawing wood for the cook, the next day you wash dishes and wait on the troop like any Maggie in a 'draw-one' joint, the next day you dig ditches and the next day you work in the garden, and so on until pay-day, and then you put on your uniform and draw your measly thirteen dollars a month and take it over to the canteen and spend it for saddle-polish and other stuff to keep the government's leather equipment in good shape.

"When you get a few minutes to yourself you have a picture took with a saber in your hand, and the folks at home think you are a soldier, when you are nothing but a liveryman, or a farmer, or a scullery-maid, on the pay of a Rooshan Finn in the old country. What's the matter with the army? Why don't they ask me? I could tell 'em more in five minutes than a general could in a day. There ain't *nothing* the matter with the army, if you're a general. Let 'em ask me—I'll tell 'em—ask Sergeant Henderson of the Twenty-fifth United States Cavalry, fourteen years in this Yankee Doodle army, eighteen years counting double time for retirement, what I got in the Philippines. Ask me—why in the name of our cross-eyed goat don't they ask me, and leave them muzzlers in Washington draw their salary and tell about what they done at the battle of Boiling Water and why they didn't catch Aguinaldo?"

The squad-room grinned and went on cleaning carbines and spurs. Everybody knew it was no use to try and stop Windy Henderson; he would have his

say, and it was rather nice to be entertained while working to get ready for heavy-marching-order inspection.

"Grin your ears off, ye plow-pushers," said Windy, applying his emery-cloth spitefully to his saber-blade. "Go right on and grin in sets of fours—all reformers gets laughed at. When I quit the service I'm going to put a bug in some of them newspapers' ears, and when you soldierlike gentlemen get what's coming to you, you'll remember what old Windy said, back in Fort Myer that day before inspection."

"They won't have newspapers when you get out. I saw in the paper where they will have phonographs to hand out the news by the time you retire." The remark was made by Frog Mouth Johnson of the Second Squad.

"I told you to keep out of the Third Squad," said Windy. "This is my last hitch in the army, and when my four months is up no more for me—good pay and good grub for me, and you flannel-mouths can have the glory. No more 'I'll save the flag, captin' in it for your little Willie. Me to the gas-works."

"You must have something on your mind," said Trumpeter Wilson.

"On my mind!" snorted Windy. "Yes, I've something on my mind, and what's more, I'll have something on my stomach that won't set well in a few days, and so'll the whole blasted troop."

"A dollar a quart," suggested Wilson.

"I don't mind soldiering," went on Windy, disregarding the trumpeter's insulting remark. "I can soldier clean around the clock with the best of 'em, and if you don't believe it, there is my medal of honor in my locker and a bundle of non-com. warrants and discharges with 'Excellent' on 'em under the John Henry of the Old Man. I can eat grub that would stick in the gizzard of an ostrich, but I didn't hold up my hand and swear to honor the tail feathers of the American Eagle, and then have 'em turn my inwards into an experimental station—that's what gets my goat."

"A padded cell for you," said Wilson mournfully. "I believe your Philippine service has run you off your nut—you're loco, that's what, sergeant."

"I reckon you ain't heard what the troop is up against," said Windy, rubbing his thumb along the saber-blade.

"What is it?" asked Wilson, and the squad-room was all attention in a minute.

"Ever hear how doctors in colleges take guinea-pigs and rabbits and squirt poison into them to see if they'll stand it? If they croak, all right—if they don't, all right. That's what this troop of cavalry is up against, beginning Monday morning."

"What have we to do with squirting poison into guinea-pigs?" asked Boston Joe.

"Yes—what—tell us what?" demanded the Third Squad.

"All right, you pie-faced dudes. If you can't listen to what your squad-leader tells ye, go ahead and be pizened—at thirteen dollars a month. You'll wish you was all back on the farm, before muster comes around again."

"But we are listening—go ahead and tell us," insisted the squad.

"The Old Man has invented a new kind of emergency ration, that's what, and the troop is going out on a hike for fifteen days to try it—no more beans, no more bacon—just that patent chicken-feed for the troop. He'll weigh us when we leave and weigh us when we get back and report to the War Department. Not a man will leave camp while out, not a man can buy so much as a ham-sandwich. We won't even take our mess-kits, and the cook will stay behind. Rations for one day make a chunk about the size of your thumb, and a pack-mule could carry enough grub to last an army-corps a year. I saw it over in headquarters—looks like brown shoe-polish what's been baked. You mix it with water when mess-call goes and by the time the windjammer blows the last note, it's gone and there ye are."

"Utterly absurd! Preposterous!" exclaimed Boston Joe.

"I'll cut a lung out of you!" said Windy, reaching for his saber which was now laid out on his bunk.

"I refer to the emergency ration," Boston Joe hastened to explain.

"Lucky you didn't refer to me," and Windy put the saber back tenderly, giving the scabbard a final rub with the polishing-cloth.

"That all the grub we'll have?" asked Fatty Richards, who was partial to baked beans and boiled beef.

"It's up to the troop," said Windy. "I remember once——'

"Don't we even get government straight?" demanded Fatty pugnaciously.

"I reckon ye don't. How could the Old Man try out his newfangled ration if you had government straight? I remember once when——"

"That ain't right," persisted Fatty. "We are entitled according to law to the ration the government provides, and my uncle is a legislature, and he'll make a kick about it, you see if he don't."

"Ain't you been in this army long enough to know that ye takes what ye gits? You ain't no business to say what you want. You ain't no business to think, in this army. The government makes lieutenants at West Point to do your thinking for you, and you take my tip and obey orders, or ye'll get twenty years for mutiny. And don't you go gitting no legislatures pulling strings for you—read what the Blue Book says about that. I remember once when we——"

"Not even no coffee?" asked Fatty.

"Shut up. How many times I told you not to talk when I'm talking?"

"You talk all the time," said Fatty doggedly.

"You scrub the squad-room floor this afternoon. I remember once when we were in the Philippines, they come that emergency-ration game on us. I was a corporal in the Twenty-second then. Old Bull Carrington was troop commander—you remember Old Bull, Wilson.

"Well, Old Bull made an emergency ration. Used some flour that had been condemned because sea-water got in it, and some meal and some commissary lard and some other dope he sent down to Manila for. He and the post doctor powwowed over it for a couple of weeks and had Kelly boil a lot of it and then dry it in the sun.

"They made a big batch of it and put it out on an old tent to dry. The troop goat got into it and eat about a peck and swelled up fit to bust. It made him dry, ye see, and he drank a lot of water on top of it and for three days he looked like a balloon. The saddler used to kick him in the stomach, and it sounded like an empty rain-barrel, and we had a lot of fun.

"There was a scout company went out on a hike about that time and the old man fitted 'em up with a beltful of his emergency ration. The stuff looked like cough-drops and one drop was supposed to be a meal. Three of 'em was wrapped with surgeon bandage and made a roll about the size of a Springfield cartridge and they fit into the belt fine.

"The native lieutenant commanded the bunch of blacks, and he couldn't talk much United States, but the Old Man thought he had him savvy enough about what the patent grub was for, and the lieutenant said he'd have the scout company try the stuff.

"They was gone two weeks and then they blew back into the post. Old Bull went out to meet 'em and he pretty near throwed a double-jointed fit when he saw that all the emergency rations were sticking out of the back of the fellows' belts.

"'Here,' said Old Bull, 'why didn't you use them emergency rations of mine? There ain't been a darned one been et.'

"'No one was *seek,* sir,' says the lieutenant, and Old Bull was so mad he come back to the post and turned out the whole troop for fatigue, and he cussed a blue streak from drill-call to tattoo. The lieutenant thought the dope was medicine, and he explained how the fact that the doctor was telling him what to do, made him think it was stuff for the jungle-fever.

"Of course it was a great joke for the troop, and the whole regiment used to guy us about the patent grub. That

made Old Bull mad and he asked permission of the colonel to take the troop out on a practise-march and let us try the cough-drops. 'Oracker demonstration' he called it. Nobody knew what the 'oracker' part of it meant, but there was a recruit who had worked in a grocery-store in St. Louis and he said a demonstration was what they had when they wanted to test hair-grower in front of the women customers.

"It was a pretty scared-looking bunch left that post. There was only two pack-mules, and they carried the grub for the officers—the Old Man didn't want no oracker in his.

"We left the cook behind and didn't take no field-stove nor mess-kits nor nothing. Every man had fifteen of them little pill-boxes stuck in his saddle-bags. They wouldn't fit in a Krag belt, and the Old Man said if the experiment come out all right he would have the government make cartridge-belts with big holes in the back to carry the 'Carrington Patent Emergency Ration,' as he called it.

"We wanted to smuggle the goat along, but of course, not having no escort wagon, it couldn't be did. The rest of the regiment turned out to see us off, and we felt like a funeral-procession what had lost the corpse.

"Old Bull hit right into the hills, and after we got away from the post he had an inspection of saddle-bags and blanket-rolls to see that there was no bacon or hardtack stowed away. He even made us throw away the candles we had for the pup tents, for fear we'd make wax soup.

"He made a little speech to us, saying as how we would all be famous if we stuck to the patent grub and how we would revolutionary warfare and put the United States far ahead of all foreign armies in the way of subsistence in the field, and how his honor and the honor of the regiment and the honor of the army and the honor of every private and non-commissioned officer was at stake.

"Dismal Smith said something under his breath about how he would like to be at a steak, and the quartermaster-sergeant grinned in ranks and the Old Man swore he'd court-martial the first man Jack that indulged in any levity, and told the trumpeter to blow forward-trot.

"He kept us going until dark. I heard him tell the first loot that he wanted us to be good and hungry at the first demonstration, and how if he thought we'd stand for it he'd let us go until the next night without any cough-drops.

"The second loot kept in the rear and watched to see that nobody grabbed so much as a green mango, and we had to ask him to take a chew of tobacco, so's he'd know what we was working our jaws on.

"Was we hungry when we made camp? Say, you gazabes was never hungry! To me, there was only two kind of things in the world—them what looked like they might be good to eat, and them I knowed as wa'n't. I felt like the biggest hole in the Grand Cañon, and I come mighty near taking a bite out of one of the pack-mules, court-martial or no court-martial.

"It just made me sick to see them horses eat grass. Old Bull and the two loots opened some cans of tongue and Nevermind biscuit and had twelve-year-old whisky and water to wash 'em down. I smelled that canned tongue all through my enlistment in the Twenty-second—the smell of it went clean into my shin-bones.

"Old Bull buried the tins on the picket-line himself, for fear we'd play monte for 'em and suck the labels off. Then he had us fill our canteens and fall in line. He give the command to open ration-cases, take out ration, put ration in mouth and chew and swallow it, drink half-canteen of water, wait five minutes and then drink the rest. Which we did, feeling like we was being pizened, and cussing our heads off—from the inside, of course. It's a wonder to me the troop didn't mass-a-cree him and the other two where they stood.

"The top sergeant gave out word as how no one should leave camp or start any fires and anybody caught eating anything between meals, so to speak,

would get a month and a month when we went into the post again.

"After retreat Old Bull came around and wanted to know how we felt. Everybody said they felt fine and licked their chops and Old Bull was tickled until he asked Crawling Cassidy how he felt, and Cassidy said the stuff made him feel swelly.

"'You're insubordinate,' yelled Old Bull. 'What do you mean by giving me such an impudent answer?'

"'I thought you wanted to know,' says Cassidy, and Old Bull flared up like a Roman candle at that and said he'd put him in the mill when he got back to the post.

"'I'll put you on half-rations,' says Old Bull, forgetting about his patent grub.

"'I'd about as soon starve to death as to be pizened, sir, if it's the same to ye,' says Cassidy, and then he kicked himself for being so outspoken. Crawling never did have no di-plum-acy when it come to talking to an officer, much less Old Bull.

"The Old Man stomped away like a mustang with the spring-halt at that, and the loots snickered, and the troop tightened belts and wondered if they'd be alive at first call in the morning.

"We non-coms. held a sort of council of war that night in the top's tent, but we was all so hungry we couldn't think of nothing to do to help the situation. Crawling Cassidy was for swiping the Old Man's grub, and the saddler wanted to kill a spare horse and let on as how it broke away, but a man has no courage when he's starving to death.

"Crawling Cassidy was in the tent with me, and you can hamstring me for a maverick mule if he didn't grit his teeth all night in his sleep and talk about T-bone steaks, done medium, and ham and eggs, sunny side up. He said it was a nightmare, and it was sure a nightmare for me, swelling up like a pizened pup and so hungry I could eat my saddle-pad.

"In the morning we had another elephant pill, as Cassidy called 'em, and a canteenful of water for a chaser, and all hands let out their belts so as not to interfere with their infernal organs.

"Old Bull and the loots had fried bacon and flapjacks for breakfast, and you could just *see* the smell of bacon in the air. It floated around in waves, and when a man got into a zone of bacon smell he just drew a long breath and held it as long as he could. Suffering piutes! What a job the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals could have grabbed up there in the Island of Luzon that morning! There wa'n't no Columbia's spar-strangled-banner hymns in that camp, you bet!

"The Old Man heard some of the growling and he passed the word along that if he caught any man or non-com. making a kick about the food that it would go hard with the growler. After that there wasn't a word said until boots-and-saddles went.

"Dismal Smith started to hum 'Good-by, Dolly,' as he come into line and the blacksmith caught him behind the ear with a length of lariat. There was a small-size arbitration court there for a minute and a whole lot of talk with blood and relations mixed in, and then they cooled down.

"About the only excitement on the march that morning worth mentioning, was that the kid trumpeter found some scattering peppermint-drops in his pants pocket and had a banquet all by himself. He had to give two of 'em to Cassidy, or the harp would have put the Old Man wise to the feed.

"Hungry? My whole inwards was yelling murder for something to eat. Dismal Smith asked to be put out of misery, but the blacksmith looked like he was in an accommodating frame of mind, so he cinched up his mouth and made some smart remarks about what he could do to a boiled ham, and said he could remember just how his mother's biscuits used to taste.

"We just et tobacco that day—anybody who chewed had a subverted taste—I said *sub*-verted, Parker—don't you interrupt me again.

"That afternoon we come to a small native town and a battalion of infantry was camped there. Old Bull moved the

column through the town, and went into camp about a half-mile beyond. He put on a double guard and handed out orders that any man caught outside camp would have to carry his packed saddle three days, and then we had another pill.

"Some of the dough-boys came out, but Old Bull made the guard drive 'em back and one of the loots went back to explain why we was quarantined. That night Cassidy and I fixed it with the guard and we raided every chicken-roost in town, fighting cocks and all, and swiped two young pigs from the priest.

"We smuggled the Old Man's zinc wash-pail out and boiled chickens and pigs all night in a little gully about a quarter of a mile from camp on the safe side. We packed chickens through the lines, the guard helping, and you could just hear jaws working all night. When we come into camp along toward daylight, the troop pretty near give us away from shaking hands with us and weeping on our shoulders.

"To this day I think Old Bull smelled boiled chicken when he washed his face the next morning. Didn't he notice it was burned? You poor recruit! There was a horse took sick just before daylight, so the farrier said, and he had to boil some hot water for him —easy enough to see you never been in a tight place and needed strategy to pull out.

"That was all right, and the Old Man was real pleased to see how willing the troop was to take their breakfast on pills in the morning. Cassidy allowed the patent grub might not work well on a full stomach, and some of the boys smuggled them out of their mouths again and threw them away.

"Cassidy looked at me funny like when we was saddling up, and I was afraid he was sick.

" 'What's the matter?' says I.

" 'I'm thinking,' he said.

" 'I thought it was something serious like that,' says I, and he kicked backward at me, having his spurs on.

"We was in column of twos and Cassidy rode with me. He went a couple of miles without letting out a word, and I thought then he was sick for sure.

" 'Windy,' says he after a while, 'I've an idea.'

" 'Eat it,' says I. 'The chicken won't keep you alive forever.'

" 'You got any government soap?' he says.

" 'Small piece. You're not a-thinking of anything as rash as a bath, are ye?'

" 'I'm going to have a fit,' says he, looking at me real solemn.

"I was afraid the emergency rations was going to his head, but I thought I'd wait and see what sort of a lunatic he'd make, being as I was always interested in crazy folks and funny diseases.

" 'There ain't no doctor along,' he says. 'That's the first time I thought of it. The infantry ain't got none neither, and they are going into the post. I'm going to be took sick and the whole troop is going to be sick and we've got to go back. Savvy?'

"Well, I reckon I did savvy. The plan struck me like a six-inch shell and I saw it all in an instant.

" 'Cassidy,' says I, 'I always thought you was crazy or a jeen-us, or something like that, and now I'm sure of it. If the soap will make you sick you can eat it.'

"When we made camp that afternoon we put the troop wise. When they understood that they only had to put a small piece in their mouth and work up a lather, they stood for it. They let Cassidy try it first to see if it would kill him, and after a while they all began to turn theirselves into human shaving-mugs.

"Cassidy said he'd play it first on the Old Man. You ought to see him! Honest, I thought he *was* going to croak right there, and I knew it was a bluff, so what did the Old Man and the loots think?

"First he went up to the Old Man's tent. The captain was sitting in a camp-chair smoking two-fers, and he didn't notice Cassidy until the harp was standing right by him. Cassidy had his

mouth clean across his face and he was groaning and blowing soap-bubbles.

"'Capting,' he says, 'I'm sick,' and then he throwed a back-flip and plowed up the ground and bit himself in the leg like a rattlesnake, and blowed a stream of soap-froth up in the air that was a fine imitation of the beer-fountain in the Palm Garden saloon.

"That was the signal for the troop. Everybody commenced to groan and holler they was pizened. The troop clerk took a mouthful of red ink and run up and spit it on the Old Man's tent, and the rest of the troop was rolling on the ground tying theirselves in double-bow knots.

"Old Bull turned pale and cussed for a minute and then he begun to git scared proper. He give Cassidy a tin cup full of salts before the poor harp knew what was doing, and then Cassidy sure did yell.

"'The whole outfit will die,' yells Old Bull. 'Blow boots-and-saddles, trumpeter. We've got to git into the post if we kill every horse in the bunch. That's what comes from not having a sawbones along.'

"The kid trumpeter blowed his horn full of soap-suds and managed to get enough of boots-and-saddles through so everybody knew what was up.

"I never want to mix up with no pay-gent like we made going into the post. It was just walk, trot, gallop, over and over, until we hit the post, and all hands groaning like they was going to dig their own graves the next minute.

"Slam we went into the hospital and was on liquid diet for three days. Infestinal poisoning, the doctors called it, and we had to drink milk and take medicine every four hours, and keep up the groans so the Old Man wouldn't get next.

"Well, you ought to see the ripping up the back he got from division headquarters. The colonel got called down for letting Old Bull go out on such a march with a lot of poison, and the doctors was in a turrible hole making themselves solid with Washington. The chief surgeon come up from Manila and burned all the emergency rations and took some of 'em down to Manila to anny-lize 'em. His official report said the stuff was lousey with pot-omains. It was most a year before the excitement died down, and Old Bull was meek as a lamb for a long time.

"No more emergency ration in mine. I'm going on sick-report in the morning if I have to drink a bottle of horse-medicine. What's the matter with the army? Why don't they ask Windy Henderson?"

GREAT MINDS THAT HAVE THOUGHT ALIKE

FEW aspects of the march of thought are more interesting than those cases, by no means few or far between, in which leading pioneers in the world of scientific discovery or philosophical thought have worked out great ideas on independent lines, and communicated the results to the world at the same time, in some instances even on the same day. We are too apt to treat this, even where experiments were not carried out by men known to one another, as mere coincidence.

But looking at these remarkable synchronisms it cannot be lightly dismissed as mere coincidence that the world-famous memoirs of Darwin and Doctor Wallace on the heretofore little understood subject of natural selection should both have been read before the Linnæan Society on the same day.

The same may be said of the originator of the telephone, Graham Bell, who applied for the patent of that marvelous invention, at once the scourge and blessing of our busy life to-day, on February 24, 1876, only earning his immortality by a very narrow squeak, since barely two hours later another inventor, Elisha Gray, was applying at the Philadelphia patent-office for a similar protection.

Tono-Bungay

By H. G. Wells

Author of "The Invisible Man," "The Time Machine," "The Wheels of Chance," "The War of the Worlds," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

George Ponderevo is apprenticed to his uncle Edward Ponderevo, proprietor of a chemist's shop in Wimblehurst. He finds his uncle and his Aunt Susan most interesting characters. The former wants to be where things happen—London—America—any place where people "rush about—do things." In the excess of his ambition he invests on margin his own savings and a small trust-fund placed in his charge for George. The stock tumbles and he is forced to sell his shop and get a position in London as assistant apothecary. George stays a while in Wimblehurst and then goes to London as a student of pharmacy. He visits his uncle and finds him and his wife in poor quarters, but Ponderevo is still full of his schemes for amassing wealth. He whispers "Tono-Bungay" significantly as the great secret that will make them all rich, but won't vouchsafe any explanation. Later his uncle sends for him and tells him Tono-Bungay is a new patent medicine. The "medicine" strikes George as being a "fake" concoction and he is not inclined to accept his uncle's offer of a position and a share in the business of booming it. After some thought and persuasion he "comes in." They advertise "Tono-Bungay" broadcast and reap a tremendous harvest of money for "bottled faith," for the concoction is really without medicinal value. Other preparations and businesses are added and exploited with the result that Edward Ponderevo becomes a Napoleon of commerce and a power in London. People come to him with all sorts of new ideas and schemes, begging him to finance them. Among these is the enterprise of Gordon-Nasmyth to steal an immense heap of "quap," a conglomeration of radium, thorium, canadium and other rare and precious elements, to be had for the taking at Mordet Island on the west coast of Africa. They hold him off because of the doubts and difficulties of the undertaking. Meanwhile Ponderevo and his wife and nephew are living in ever increasing luxury. Ponderevo plans and begins the building of a stupendous residential palace, Crest Hill. George is interested in aeronautics and devotes most of his time to inventing and experimenting with flying machines and navigable balloons. While soaring his machine meets with disaster and he is badly hurt. Beatrice Normandy, a childhood sweetheart, who has again come into his life, nurses him to recovery. Their early romance is resumed and they confess to each other their love. Newspaper stories and rumors indicate that the Ponderevo financial bubble may soon burst. His uncle tells George the situation will be saved by Gordon-Nasmyth's "quap." The latter has been fitted out for his expedition by Ponderevo, but at the last moment meets with an accident. George volunteers to conduct the enterprise. In a brig, the *Maud Mary*, with a captain and crew, he sails for Mordet Island. They find the mysterious quap, and after innumerable difficulties and delays, they load the brig with a considerable quantity.

CHAPTER IX—(*Continued*).

ONE day the men came aft, with blistered hands and faces, and sullen eyes. They proclaimed through Edwards, their spokesman: "We've had enough of this, and we mean it."

"So have I," said I. "Let's go."

We were none too soon. People had been reconnoitering us, the telegraph had been at work, and we were not four hours at sea before we ran against the gunboat that had been sent down the coast to look for us and that would have caught us behind the island like a beast in a trap. It was a night of driving cloud that gave intermittent gleams of moonlight, the wind and sea were strong and we were rolling along through a drift of rain and mist. Suddenly the world was white with moonshine. The gunboat came out as a long

This serial began in the September issue. The back numbers can be obtained from any newsdealer. Price fifteen cents each.

dark shape wallowing on the water to the east. She sighted the *Maud Mary* at once, and fired some sort of pop-gun to arrest us.

The mate turned to me.

"Shall I tell the captain?"

"The captain be damned!" said I, and we let him sleep through two hours of chase till a rain-storm swallowed us up. Then we changed our course and sailed right across them, and by morning only her smoke was showing.

We were clear of Africa—and with the booty aboard. I did not see what stood between us and home.

For the first time since I had fallen sick in the Thames my spirits rose. I was seasick and physically disgusted, of course, but I felt kindly in spite of my qualms. So far as I could calculate then the situation was saved. I saw myself returning triumphantly into the Thames, and nothing on earth to prevent old Capern's Perfect Filament going on the market in a fortnight. I had the monopoly of electric lamps beneath my feet.

I was going back to baths and decent food and aeronautics and Beatrice. I was going back to Beatrice and my real life again—out of this well into which I had fallen. It would have needed something more than seasickness and quap fever to prevent my spirits rising.

And then, you know, as we got out into the Atlantic this side of Cape Verde, the ship began to go to pieces. I don't pretend for one moment to understand what happened. But I think Greiffenhagen's recent work on the effects of radium upon ligneous tissue does rather carry out my idea that emanations from quap have a rapid rotting effect upon woody fiber.

From the first there had been a different feel about the ship, and as the big winds and waves began to strain her she commenced leaking. Soon she was leaking—not at any particular point, but everywhere. She did not spring a leak, I mean, but water came in first of all near the decaying edges of her planks and then through them.

I firmly believe the water came through the wood. First it began to ooze, then to trickle. It was like trying to carry moist sugar in a thin paper bag. Soon we were taking in water as though we had opened a door in her bottom.

Once it began, the thing went ahead beyond all fighting. For a day or so we did our best, and I can still remember in my limbs and back the pumping—the fatigue in my arms and the memory of a clear little dribble of water that jerked as one pumped and of knocking off and the being awakened to go on again, and of fatigue piling up upon fatigue. At last we ceased to think of anything but pumping; one became a thing of torment enchanted, doomed to pump forever. I still remember it as pure relief when at last Pollack came to me pipe in mouth.

"The captain says the damned thing's going down right now," he remarked, chewing his mouthpiece. "Eh?"

"Good idea!" I said. "One can't go on pumping forever."

And without hurry or alacrity, sullenly and wearily we got into the boats and pulled away from the *Maud Mary* until we were clear of her, and then we stayed resting on our oars, motionless upon a glassy sea, waiting for her to sink. We were all silent, even the captain was silent until she went down. And then he spoke quite mildly in an undertone.

"Dat is the first ship I haf ever lost. And it was not a fair game! It was not a cargo any man should take. No!"

I stared at the slow eddies that circled above the departed *Maud Mary*, and the last chance of Business Organizations. I felt weary beyond emotion. I thought of my heroics to Beatrice and my uncle, of my prompt *"I'll* go," and of all the ineffectual months I had spent after this headlong decision. I was moved to laughter at myself and fate.

But the captain and the men did not laugh. The men scowled at me and rubbed their sore and blistered hands, and set themselves to row.

As all the world knows we were

picked up by the Union Castle liner, *Portland Castle*.

The hair-dresser aboard was a wonderful man, and he even improvised me a dress suit, and produced a clean shirt and warm underclothing. I had a hot bath, and dressed and dined and drank a bottle of Burgundy.

"Now," I said, "are there any newspapers? I want to know what's been happening in the world."

My steward gave me what he had, but I landed at Plymouth still largely ignorant of the course of events. I shook off Pollack, and left the captain and mate in a hotel, and the men in a sailors' home until I could send to pay them off, and I made my way to the station.

The newspapers I bought, the placards I saw, all England indeed resounded to my uncle's bankruptcy.

CHAPTER X.

THE STICK OF THE ROCKET.

That evening I talked with my uncle in the Hardingham for the last time. The atmosphere of the place had altered quite shockingly. Instead of the crowd of importunate courtiers there were just half a dozen uninviting men, journalists waiting for an interview. Ropper the big commissionaire was still there but now indeed he was defending my uncle from something more than time-wasting intrusions. I found the little man alone in the inner office, pretending to work but really brooding. He was looking yellow and deflated.

"Lord!" he said at the sight of me. "You're lean, George. It makes that scar of yours show up."

We regarded each other gravely for a time.

"Quap," I said, "is at the bottom of the Atlantic. There's some bills. We've got to pay the men."

"Seen the papers?"

"Read 'em all in the train."

"At bay," he said. "I been at bay for a week. Yelping round me. And me facing the music. I'm feelin' a bit tired."

He blew and wiped his glasses.

"My stomach isn't what it was," he explained. "One finds it—these times. How did it all happen, George? Your marconigram—it took me in the wind a bit."

I told him concisely. He nodded to the paragraphs of my narrative and at the end he poured something from a medicine-bottle into a sticky little wine-glass and drank it. I became aware of the presence of drugs, of three or four small bottles before him among his disorder of papers, of a faint, elusively familiar odor in the room.

"Yes," he said, wiping his lips and recorking the bottle, "you've done your best, George. The luck's been against us."

He reflected, bottle in hand. "Sometimes the luck goes with you and sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes it doesn't. And then where are you? Grass in the oven! Fight or no fight."

He asked a few questions and then his thoughts came back to his own urgent affairs. I tried to get some comprehensive account of the situation from him but he would not give it.

"Oh, I wish I'd had you. I wish I'd had you, George. I've had a lot on my hands. You're clear-headed at times."

"What has happened?"

"Oh! Boom!—infernal things."

"Yes, but—how? I'm just off the sea, remember."

"It'd worry me too much to tell you now. It's tied up in a skein."

He muttered something to himself and mused darkly, and roused himself to say:

"Besides—you'd better keep out of it. It's getting tight. Get 'em talking. Go down to Crest Hill and fly. That's *your* affair."

For a time his manner set free queer anxieties in my brain again. I will confess that that Mordet Island nightmare of mine returned, and as I looked at him his hand went out for the drug again. "Stomach, George," he said.

"I been fightin' on that. Every man fights on something—gives way somewhere—head, heart, liver—something.

Zzzz. Gives way somewhere. Napoleon did at last. All through the Waterloo campaign, his stomach—it wasn't a stomach! Worse than mine, no end."

The end of depression passed as the drug worked within him. His eyes brightened. He began to talk big. He began to dress up the situation for my eyes, to recover what he had admitted to me. He put it as a retreat from Russia. There were still the chances of Leipzig.

"It's a battle, George—a big fight. We're fighting for millions. I've still chances. There's still a card or so. I can't tell all my plans—like speaking on the stroke."

My perception of disastrous entanglements deepened with the rise of his spirits. It was evident that I could only help to tie him up in whatever net was weaving round his mind by forcing questions and explanations upon him. My thoughts flew off at another angle. "How's Aunt Susan?" said I.

"She'd like to be in the battle with me. She'd like to be here in London. But there's corners I got to turn alone." His eye rested for a moment on the little bottle beside him. "And things have happened.

"You might go down now and talk to her," he said, in a directer voice. "I shall be down to-morrow night, I think."

He looked up as though he hoped that would end our talk.

"For the week-end?" I asked.

"For the week-end. Thank God for week-ends, George!"

2.

My return home to Lady Grove was a very different thing from what I had anticipated when I had got out to sea with my load of quap, and fancied the Perfect Filament was safe within my grasp. As I walked through the evening light along the downs, the summer stillness seemed like the stillness of something newly dead. There were no lurking workmen any more, no cyclists on the highroad.

Cessation was manifest everywhere. There had been, I learned from my aunt, a touching and quite voluntary demonstration when the Crest Hill work had come to an end and the men had drawn their last pay; they had cheered my uncle and hooted the contractors and Lord Boom.

I cannot now recall the manner in which my aunt and I greeted one another. I must have been very tired then, but whatever impression was made has gone out of my memory. But I recall very clearly how we sat at the little round table near the big window that gave on the terrace, and dined and talked. I remember her talking of my uncle.

She asked after him, and whether he seemed well. "I wish I could help," she said. "But I've never helped him much, never. His way of doing things was never mine. And since—since—since he began to get so rich, he's kept things from me. In the old days—it was different.

"There he is—I don't know what he's doing. He won't have me near him.

"More's kept from me than any one. The very servants won't let me know. They try and stop the worst of the papers—Boom's things—from coming upstairs. I suppose they've got him in a corner, George.

"Poor old Teddy! Poor old Adam and Eve we are! 'Ficial Receivers with flaming swords to drive us out of our garden! I'd hoped we'd never have another Trek. Well, anyway, it won't be Crest Hill. But it's hard on Teddy. He must be in such a mess up there. Poor old chap. I suppose we can't help him. I suppose we'd only worry him. Have some more soup, George—while there is some."

I have never been greedy for money, I have never wanted to be rich, but I felt now an immense sense of impending deprivation. I read the newspapers after breakfast next day—I and my aunt—and then I walked up to see what Cothope had done in the matter of *Lord Roberts b.* Never before had I appreciated so acutely the ample brightness of the Lady Grove gardens, the

dignity and wide peace of all about me. It was one of those warm mornings in late May that have won all the glory of summer without losing the gay delicacy of spring. The shrubbery was bright with laburnum and lilac, the beds swarmed with daffodils and narcissi and with lilies-of-the-valley in the shade.

And suddenly I found myself at the cross-drives where I had seen Beatrice for the first time after so many years. Suddenly I was filled with the thought of her and a great longing for her. What would she do when she realized our immense disaster? What would she do? How would she take it? It filled me with astonishment to realize how little I could tell.

Should I, perhaps, presently happen upon her?

I went on through the plantations and out upon the downs and thence I saw Cothope with a new glider of his own design soaring down wind to my old familiar "grounding" place. To judge by its rhythm it was a very good glider. "Like Cothope's cheek," thought I, "to go on with the research. I wonder if he's keeping notes. But all this will have to stop."

He was sincerely glad to see me. "It's been a rum go," he said.

He had been there without wages for a month, a man forgotten in the rush of events.

"I just stuck on and did what I could with the stuff. I got a bit of money of my own—and I said to myself: 'Well, here you are with the gear and no one to look after you. You won't get such a chance again, my boy, not in all your born days. Why not make what you can with it?'"

"How's *Lord Roberts b?*"

Cothope lifted his eyebrows. "I've had to refrain," he said. "But he's looking very handsome."

"Gods!" I said, "I'd like to get him up just once before we smash. You read the papers? You know we're going to smash?"

"Oh! I read the papers. It's scandalous, sir, such work as ours should depend on things like that. You and I ought to be under the State, sir, if you'll excuse me——"

"Nothing to excuse," I said. "I've always been a socialist—of a sort—in theory. Let's go and have a look at him. How is he? Deflated?"

"Just about a quarter full. That last oil glaze of yours holds the gas something beautiful. He's not lost a cubic meter a week."

Lord Roberts b, even in his partially deflated condition in his shed, was a fine thing to stare up at. I stood side by side with Cothope regarding him, and it was borne in upon me more acutely than ever that all this had to end. I had a feeling just like the feeling of a boy who wants to do wrong, that I would use up the stuff while I had it before the creditors descended. I had a queer fancy too, I remember, that if I could get into the air it would advertise my return to Beatrice.

"We'll fill her," I said concisely.

"It's all ready," said Cothope, and added as an afterthought, "unless they cut off the gas."

I worked and interested myself with Cothope all the morning and for a time forgot my other troubles. But the thought of Beatrice flooded me slowly and steadily. It became an unintelligent sick longing to see her. I felt that I could not wait for the filling of *Lord Roberts b,* that I must hunt her up and see her soon. I got everything forward and lunched with Cothope, and then with the feeblest excuse left him in order to prowl down through the woods toward Bedley Corner. I became a prey to wretched hesitations and diffidence. Ought I to go near her now? I asked myself, reviewing all the social abasements of my early years. At last about five I called at the Dower House. I was greeted by their Charlotte—with a forbidding eye and a cold astonishment.

Both Beatrice and Lady Osprey were out.

I mooned for a time in our former footsteps, then swore and turned back across the fields, and then conceived a distaste for Cothope and went downward. At last I found myself looking

down on the huge abandoned masses of the Crest Hill house.

That gave my mind a twist into a new channel. My uncle came uppermost again. What a strange melancholy emptiness of intention that stricken enterprise seemed in the even evening sunlight, what vulgar magnificence and crudity and utter absurdity! It was as idiotic as the pyramids. I sat down on the stile, staring at it as though I had never seen that forest of scaffold poles, that waste of walls and bricks and plaster and shaped stones, that wilderness of broken soil and wheeling-tracks and dumps before. It struck me suddenly as the compactest image and sample of all that passes for Progress, of all the advertisement-inflated spending, the aimless building up and pulling down, the enterprise and promise of my age.

3.

I was roused from such thoughts by the sound of footsteps behind me.

I turned half-hopeful—so foolish is a lover's imagination—and stopped amazed. It was my uncle. His face was white—white as I had seen it in my dream.

"Hullo!" I said and stared. "Why aren't you in London?"

"It's all up," he said.

"Adjudicated?"

"No!"

I stared at him for a moment and then got off the stile.

He stood swaying and then came forward with a weak motion of his arms like a man who cannot see distinctly, and caught at and leaned upon the stile. For a moment we were absolutely still. He made a clumsy gesture toward the great futility below and choked. I discovered that his face was wet with tears, that his wet glasses blinded him. He put up his little fat hand and clawed them off clumsily, felt inefficiently for his pocket-handkerchief and then to my horror, as he clung to me, he began to weep aloud, this little old world-worn swindler. It wasn't just sobbing or shedding tears, it was crying as a child cries. It was—oh, terrible!

"It's cruel," he blubbered at last. "They asked me questions. They *kep'* asking me questions, George."

He sought for utterance, and spluttered.

"The bullies!" he shouted. "The bullies!"

He ceased to weep. He became suddenly rapid and explanatory.

"They sprung things on me this morning, things I didn't expect. They rushed me! I'd got it all in my hands and then I was jumped. By Neal! Neal I've given city tips to! Neal! I've helped Neal.

"I couldn't swallow a mouthful—not in the lunch-hour. I couldn't face it. It's true, George—I couldn't face it. I said I'd get a bit of air and slipped out and down to the Embankment, and there I took a boat to Richmond. Some idee. I took a rowing-boat when I got there and rowed about on the river for a bit. A lot of chaps and girls there was on the bank laughed at my shirt-sleeves and top-hat. Dessay they thought it was a pleasure trip. Fat lot of pleasure! I rowed round for a bit and came in. Then I came on here. Windsor way. And there they are in London doing what they like with me. I don't care!"

"But——" I said, looking down at him perplexed.

"It's abscondin'. They'll have a warrant."

"I don't understand," I said.

"It's all up, George—all up and over.

"And I thought I'd live in that place, George—and die a lord! It's a great place, reely, an imperial place—if any one has the sense to buy it and finish it. That terrace——"

I stood thinking him over.

"Look here!" I said. "What's that about a warrant? Are you sure they'll get a warrant? I'm sorry, uncle; but what have you done?"

"Haven't I tole you?"

"Yes, but they won't do very much to you for that. They'll only bring you up for the rest of your examination."

He remained silent for a time. At last he spoke—speaking with difficulty.

"It's worse than that. I done something. They're bound to get it out. Practically they *have* got it out."

"What?"

"Writin' things down—I done something."

For the first time in his life, I believe, he felt and looked ashamed. It filled me with remorse to see him suffer so.

"We've all done things," I said. "It's part of the game the world makes us play. If they want to arrest you—and you've got no cards in your hand—— They mustn't arrest you."

"No. That's partly why I went to Richmond. But I never thought——"

His little bloodshot eyes stared at Crest Hill.

"That chap Wittaker Wright," he said, "he had got his stuff ready. I haven't. Now you got it, George. That's the sort of hole I'm in."

4.

That memory of my uncle at the gate is very clear and full. I am able to recall even the undertow of my thoughts while he was speaking. I remember my pity and affection for him in his misery growing and stirring within me, my realization that at any risk I must help him. But then comes indistinctness again. I was beginning to act. I know I persuaded him to put himself in my hands, and began at once to plan and do. I think that when we act most we remember least, that just in the measure that the impulse of our impressions translates itself into schemes and movements, it ceases to record itself in memories. I know I resolved to get him away at once, and to use the *Lord Roberts b* in effecting that. It was clear he was soon to be a hunted man, and it seemed to me already unsafe for him to try the ordinary Continental routes in his flight. I had to evolve some scheme, and evolve it rapidly, how we might drop most inconspicuously into the world across the water. My resolve to have one flight at least in my air-ship fitted with this like hand to glove. It seemed to me we might be able to cross over the water in the night, set our air-ship adrift, and turn up as pedestrian tourists in Normandy or Brittany, and so get away. That, at any rate, was my ruling idea.

I sent off Cothope with a dummy note to Woking because I did not want to implicate him, and took my uncle to the pavilion. I went down to my aunt, and made a clean breast of the situation. She became admirably competent. We went into his dressing-room, and ruthlessly broke his locks. I got a pair of brown boots, a tweed suit and cap of his, and indeed a plausible walking-outfit, and a little game-bag for his pedestrian gear; and, in addition, a big motoring-overcoat and a supply of rugs to add to those I had at the pavilion. I also got a flask of brandy, and she made sandwiches. I don't remember any servants appearing, and I forget where she got those sandwiches. Meanwhile we talked. Afterward I thought with what a sure confidence we talked to each other.

"What's he done?" she said.

"D'you mind knowing?"

"No conscience left, thank God!"

"I think—forgery!"

There was just a little pause. "Can you carry this bundle?" she asked.

I lifted it.

"Tell me again what I ought to do," she said after a silence.

I went over the plans I had made for communicating, and the things I thought she might do. I had given her the address of a solicitor she might put some trust in.

"But you must act for yourself," I insisted. "Roughly," I said, "it's a scramble. You must get what you can for us, and follow as you can."

She nodded.

She came right up to the pavilion and hovered for a time shyly, and then went away.

I found my uncle in my sitting-room in an armchair, with his feet upon the

fender of the gas-stove, which he had lit, and now he was feebly drunken with my whisky, and very weary in body and spirit, and inclined to be cowardly.

"I lef' my drops," he said.

He changed his clothes slowly and unwillingly. I had to bully him, I had almost to shove him to the air-ship and tuck him up upon its wicker flat. Single-handed I made but a clumsy start; we scraped along the roof of the shed and bent a van of the propeller, and for a time I hung underneath without his offering a hand to help me to scramble up. If it hadn't been for a sort of anchoring trolley device of Cothope's, a sort of slip anchor running on a rail, we should never have got clear at all.

5.

The incidents of our flight in *Lord Roberts b* do not arrange themselves in any consecutive order. To think of that adventure is like dipping haphazard into an album of views. One is reminded first of this, and then of that. We were both lying down on a horizontal plate of basketwork; for *Lord Roberts b* had none of the elegant accommodation of a balloon. I lay forward, and my uncle behind me in such a position that he could see hardly anything of our flight. We were protected from rolling over simply by netting between the steel stays. It was impossible for us to stand up at all; we had either to lie or crawl on all fours over the basketwork. Amidships were lockers, and between these it was that I had put my uncle wrapped in rugs. I wore sealskin motoring-boots and gloves, and a motoring fur coat over my tweeds, and I controlled the engine by Bowden wires and levers forward.

The early part of that night's experience was made up of warmth, of moonlit Surrey and Sussex landscape, and of a rapid and successful flight, ascending and swooping, and then ascending again southward. I could not watch the clouds because the air-ship overhung me; I could not see the stars or gage the meteorological happening, but it was fairly clear to me that a wind, shifting between north and northeast, was gathering strength, and after I had satisfied myself by a series of entirely successful expansions and contractions of the real air-worthiness of *Lord Roberts b,* I stopped the engine to save my petrol, and let the monster drift, checking its progress by the dim landscape below. My uncle lay quite still behind me, saying little and staring in front of him, and I was left to my own thoughts and sensations.

My thoughts, whatever they were, have long since faded out of memory, and my sensations have merged into one continuous memory of a countryside lying, as it seemed, under snow, with square patches of dimness, white phantoms of roads, rents and pools of velvety blackness, and lamp-jeweled houses. I remember a train boring its way like a hastening caterpillar of fire across the landscape, and how distinctly I heard its clatter. Every town and street was buttoned with street-lamps. I came quite close to the South Downs near Lewes, and all the lights were out in the houses, and the people gone to bed. We left the land a little to the east of Brighton, and by that time Brighton was well abed, and the brightly lit sea-front deserted. Then I let out the gas-chamber to its fullest extent and rose. I like to be high above water.

I do not clearly know what happened in the night. I think I must have dozed, and probably my uncle slept. I remember that once or twice I heard him talking in an eager, muffled voice to himself, or to an imaginary court. But there can be no doubt the wind changed right round into the east, and that we were carried far down the Channel without any suspicion of the immense leeway we were making. I remember the kind of stupid perplexity with which I saw the dawn breaking over a gray waste of waters below, and realized that something was wrong.

I was so stupid that it was only after sunrise I really noticed the trend of the foam-caps below, and perceived we were in a severe easterly gale. Even

then instead of heading southeasterly, I set the engine going, headed south, and so continued a course that must needs have either just hit Ushant, or carry us over the Bay of Biscay. I thought I was east of Cherbourg, when I was far to the west, and stopped my engine in that belief, and then set it going again. I did actually sight the coast of Brittany to the southeast in the late afternoon, and that it was woke me up to the gravity of our position. I discovered it by accident in the southeast, when I was looking for it in the southwest. I turned about east and faced the wind for some time, and finding I had no chance in its teeth, went high, where it seemed less violent, and tried to make a course southeast. It was only then that I realized what a gale I was in. I had been going westward, and perhaps even in gusts north of west, at a pace of fifty or sixty miles an hour.

Then I began what I suppose would be called a fight against the east wind. One calls it a fight, but it was really almost as unlike a fight as plain sewing. The wind tried to drive me eastwardly, and I tried to get as much as I could westwardly, with the wind beating and rocking us irregularly, but by no means unbearably, for about twelve hours. My hope lay in the wind's abating, and our keeping in the air and eastward of Finisterre until it did, and the chief danger was the exhaustion of our petrol. It was a long and anxious and almost meditative time; we were fairly warm, and only slowly getting hungry, and except that my uncle grumbled a little and produced some philosophical reflections, and began to fuss about having a temperature, we talked very little. I was tired and sulky, and chiefly worried about the engine. I had to resist a tendency to crawl back and look at it. I did not care to risk contracting our gas-chamber for fear of losing gas. Nothing was less like a fight.

I must have dozed, and it was still dark when I realized with a start that we were nearly due south of, and a long way from, a regularly flashing lighthouse, standing out before the glow of some great town, and then that the thing that had awakened me was the cessation of our engine, and that we were driving back to the west.

Then, indeed, for a time I felt the grim thrill of life. I crawled forward to the cords of the release-valves, made my uncle crawl forward too, and let out the gas until we were falling down through the air like a clumsy glider toward the vague grayness that was land.

Something must have intervened here that I have forgotten. I saw the lights of Bordeaux when it was quite dark, a nebulous haze against black; of that I am reasonably sure. But certainly our fall took place in the cold, uncertain light of early dawn. I am, at least, equally sure of that. And Mimizan, near where we dropped, is fifty miles from Bordeaux, whose harbor lights I must have seen.

I remember coming down at last with a curious indifference, and actually rousing myself to steer. But the actual coming to earth was exciting enough. I remember our prolonged dragging landfall, and the difficulty I had to get clear, and how a gust of wind caught *Lord Roberts b* as my uncle stumbled away from the ropes and litter, and dropped me heavily and threw me onto my knees. Then came the realization that the monster was almost consciously disentangling itself for escape and then the light leap of its rebound. The rope slipped out of reach of my hand.

I remember running knee-deep in a salt pool in hopeless pursuit of the airship as it dragged and rose seaward, and how only after it had escaped my uttermost effort to recapture it, did I realize that this was quite the best thing that could have happened. It drove swiftly over the sandy dunes, lifting and falling, and was hidden by a clump of wind-bitten trees. Then it reappeared much farther off, and still receding. It soared for a time, and sank slowly, and after that I saw it no more. I suppose it fell into the sea and got wetted with salt water and heavy, and so became deflated and sank.

It was never found, and there was never a report of any one seeing it after it escaped from me.

6.

But if I find it hard to tell the story of our long flight through the air overseas, at least that dawn in France stands cold and clear and full. I see again almost as if I saw once more with my bodily eyes the ridges of sand rising behind ridges of sand, gray and cold and black-browed with an insufficient grass. I feel again the clear, cold chill of dawn, and hear the distant barking of a dog. I find myself asking again: "What shall we do now?" and trying to scheme with a brain tired beyond measure.

At first my uncle occupied my attention. He was shivering a good deal, and it was all I could do to resist my desire to get him into a comfortable bed at once. But I wanted to appear plausibly in this part of the world. I felt it would not do to turn up anywhere at dawn and rest, it would be altogether too conspicuous; we must rest until the day was well advanced, and then appear as road-stained pedestrians seeking a meal. I gave him most of what was left of the biscuits, emptied our flasks, and advised him to sleep, but at first it was too cold, albeit I wrapped the big fur rug around him.

Presently the sun rose over the pines, and the sand grew rapidly warm. My uncle had done eating, and sat with his wrists resting on his knees, the most hopeless-looking of lost souls.

"I'm ill," he said, "I'm damnably ill! I can feel it in my skin!"

Then—it was horrible to me—he cried: "I ought to be in bed; I ought to be in bed—instead of flying about," and suddenly he burst into tears.

I stood up. "Go to sleep, man!" I said, and took the rug from him, and spread it out and rolled him up in it.

"It's all very well," he protested; "I'm not young enough."

"Lift up your head," I interrupted, and put his knapsack under it.

"They'll catch us here, just as much as in an inn," he grumbled, and then lay still.

Presently, after a long time, I perceived he was asleep. His breath came with peculiar wheezings, and every now and again he would cough. I was very stiff and tired myself, and perhaps I dozed. I don't remember. I remember only sitting, as it seemed nigh interminably, beside him, too weary even to think in that sandy desolation.

No one came near us, no creature, not even a dog. I roused myself at last, feeling that it was vain to seek to seem other than abnormal, and with an effort that was like lifting a sky of lead, we made our way through the wearisome sand to a farmhouse. There I feigned even a more insufficient French than I possess naturally, and let it appear that we were pedestrians from Biarritz who had lost our way along the shore and got benighted. This explained us pretty well, I thought, and we got most heartening coffee and a cart to a little roadside station. My uncle grew more and more manifestly ill with every stage of our journey. I got him to Bayonne, where he refused at first to eat, and was afterward very sick, and then took him shivering and collapsed up a little branch line to a frontier place called Luzon Gare.

We found one homely inn with two small bedrooms, kept by a kindly Basque woman. I got him to bed, and that night shared his room, and after an hour or so of sleep he woke up in a raging fever and with a wandering mind, cursing Neal, and repeating long inaccurate lists of figures. He was manifestly a case for a doctor, and in the morning we got one in. He was a young man from Montpelier, just beginning to practise, and very mysterious and technical and modern and unhelpful. He spoke of cold and exposure, and grippe and pneumonia. He gave many explicit and difficult directions. I perceived it devolved upon me to organize nursing and a sick-room. I installed a *religieuse* in the second bedroom of the inn, and took a room for myself in the inn of Port de Luzon, a quarter of a mile away.

7.

And now my story converges on what, in that queer corner of refuge out of the world, was destined to be my uncle's death-bed. There is a background of the Pyrenees, of blue hills and sunlit houses, of the old castle of Luzon and a noisy cascading river, and for a foreground the dim stuffy room whose windows both the *religieuse* and hostess conspired to shut, with its waxed floor, its four-poster bed, its characteristically French chairs and fireplace, its champagne-bottles and dirty basins and used towels on the table. And in the sickly air of the confined space behind the curtains of the bed, my little uncle lay with an effect of being enthroned and secluded, or sat up, or writhed and tossed in his last dealings with life. One went and drew back the edge of the curtains if one wanted to speak to him or look at him.

Usually he was propped up against pillows, because so he breathed more easily. He slept hardly at all.

I have tried to make you picture my uncle, time after time, as the young man of the Wimblehurst chemist's shop, as the shabby assistant in Tottenham Court Road, as the adventurer of the early days of Tono-Bungay, as the confident, preposterous plutocrat. And now I have to tell of him strangely changed under the shadow of oncoming death, with his skin lax and yellow and glistening with sweat, his eyes large and glassy, his countenance unfamiliar through the growth of a beard, his nose pinched and thin. Never had he looked so small as now. And he talked to me in a whispering, strained voice of great issues, of why his life had been, and whither he was going. Poor little man! that last phase is, as it were, disconnected from all the other phases. It was as if he crawled out from the ruins of his career, and looked about him before he died. For he had quite clear-minded states in the intervals of his delirium.

He knew he was almost certainly dying. In a way that took the burden of his cares off his mind. There was no real Neal to face, no more flights or evasions, no punishments.

"It has been a great career, George," he said, "but I shall be glad to rest. Glad to rest! Glad to rest."

His mind ran rather upon his career, and usually, I am glad to recall, with a note of satisfaction and approval. In his delirious phases he would most often exaggerate this self-satisfaction and talk of his splendors. He would pluck at the sheet and stare before him, and whisper half-audible fragments of sentences.

Sometimes he raved about Neal, threatened Neal. "What has he got invested?" he said. "Does he think he can escape me? If I followed him up. Ruin. Ruin. One would think *I* had taken his money."

And sometimes he reverted to our air-ship flight. "It's too long, George, too long and too cold. I'm too old a man—too old—for this sort of thing. You know you're not saving—you're killing me."

Toward the end it became evident our identity was discovered. I found the press, and especially Boom's section of it, had made a sort of hue and cry for us, sent special commissioners to hunt for us, and though none of these emissaries reached us until my uncle was dead, one felt the forewash of that storm of energy. The thing got into the popular French press. People became curious in their manner toward us, and a number of fresh faces appeared about the weak little struggle that went on in the closeness behind the curtains of the bed.

The young doctor insisted on consultations, and a motor-car came up from Biarritz, and suddenly odd people with questioning eyes began to poke in with inquiries and help. Though nothing was said, I could feel that we were no longer regarded as simple middle-class tourists; about me, as I went, I perceived almost as though it trailed visibly, the prestige of finance and a criminal notoriety. Local personages of a plump and prosperous quality appeared in the inn making inquiries, peo-

ple watched our window, and stared at me as I went to and fro.

An English clergyman from the adjacent village of Saint Jean de Pollack called and talked with my uncle.

It may have been these talks that set loose some long dormant string of ideas in his brain, ideas the things of this world had long suppressed and hidden altogether. Near the end he suddenly became clear-minded and lucid, albeit very weak, and his voice was little, but clear.

"George," he said.

"I'm here," I said, "close beside you."

"George. You have always been responsible for the science. George. You know better than I do. Is—is it proved?"

"What proved?"

"Either way."

"I don't understand."

"Death ends all. After so much—such splendid beginnings. Somewhere. Something."

I stared at him amazed. His sunken eyes were very grave.

"What do you expect?" I said in wonder.

He would not answer. "Aspirations," he whispered.

For a long time there was silence.

Then he made a gesture that he wished to speak.

"Seems to me, George——"

I bent my head down, and he tried to lift his hand to my shoulder. I raised him a little on his pillows, and listened.

"It seems to me, George, always—there must be something in me—that won't die."

"Yes, I think so," I said stoutly.

I think he tried to squeeze my hand. And there I sat, holding his hand tight, and trying to think what seeds of immortality could be found in all his being, what sort of ghost there was in *him* to wander out into the bleak immensities. Queer fancies came to me. He lay still for a long time, save for a brief struggle or so for breath, and ever and again I wiped his mouth and lips.

I fell into a pit of thought. I did not remark at first the change that was creeping over his face. He lay back on his pillow, made a faint zzz-ing sound that ceased, and presently and quite quietly he died—greatly comforted by my reassurance. I do not know when he died. His hand relaxed insensibly. Suddenly, with a start, with a shock, I found that his mouth had fallen open, and that he was dead.

8.

Last, belated figure in that grouping round my uncle's death-bed is my aunt. When it was beyond all hope that my uncle could live, I threw aside whatever concealment remained to us, and telegraphed directly to her. But she came too late to see him living. She saw him calm and still, strangely unlike his habitual garrulous animation, an unfamiliar inflexibility.

"It isn't like him," she whispered, awed by his alien dignity.

I remember her chiefly as she talked and wept upon the bridge below the old castle. We had got rid of some amateurish reporters from Biarritz, and had walked together in the hot morning sunshine down through Port Luzon. There, for a time, we stood leaning on the parapet of the bridge and surveying the distant peaks, the rich blue masses of the Pyrenees. For a long time we said nothing, and then she began talking.

"Life's a rum Go, George!" she began. "Who would have thought, when I used to darn your stockings at old Wimblehurst, that this would be the end of the story? It seems far away now—that little shop, his and my first home. The glow of the bottles, the big colored bottles! Do you remember how the light shone on the mahogany drawers? The little gilt letters! *Ol Amjig*, and *S'nap!* I can remember it all—bright and shining—like a Dutch picture. Real! And yesterday. And here we are in a dream. You a man—and me an old woman, George. And poor little Teddy, who used to rush

about and talk—making that noise he did—oh!"

She choked, and the tears flowed unrestrained. She wept, and I was glad to see her weeping.

She stood there leaning over the bridge; her tear-wet handkerchief gripped in her clenched hand.

"Just an hour in the old shop again—and him talking. Before things got done. Before they got hold of him. And fooled him.

"Men oughtn't to be so tempted with business and things.

"They didn't hurt him, George?" she asked suddenly.

For a moment I was puzzled.

"Here, I mean," she said.

"No," I lied stoutly, suppressing the memory of a foolish injection-needle I had caught the young doctor using.

"I wonder, George, they'll let him talk in heaven."

She faced me. "Oh! George, my dear, my heart aches, and I don't know what I say or do. Give me your arm to lean on—it's good to have you, dear, and lean upon you. Yes, I know you care for me. That's why I'm talking. We've always loved one another, and never said anything about it, and you understand, and I understand. But my heart's torn to pieces by this, torn to rags, and things drop out I've kept in it. It's true he wasn't a husband much for me at the last. But he was my child, George, he was my child and all my children, my silly child, and life has knocked him about for me, and I've never had a say in the matter; never a say; it's puffed him up and smashed him—like an old bag—under my eyes. I was clever enough to see it, but not clever enough to prevent it, and all I could do was to jeer. I've had to make what I could of it. Like most people. Like most of us. But it wasn't fair, George. It wasn't fair. Life and Death—great serious things—why couldn't they leave him alone, and his lies and ways? If *we* could see the lightness of it——

"Why couldn't they leave him alone?" she repeated in a whisper as we went toward the inn.

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE AMONG THE WRECKAGE.

When I came back I found that my share in the escape and death of my uncle had made me for a time a notorious and even popular character. For two weeks I was kept in London "facing the music," as he would have said, and making things easy for my aunt, and I still marvel at the consideration with which the world treated me. For now it was open and manifest that I and my uncle were no more than specimens of a modern species of brigand, wasting the savings of the public out of the sheer wantonness of enterprise. I think that, in a way, his death produced a reaction in my favor, and my flight, of which some particulars now appeared, stuck in the popular imagination. It seemed a more daring and difficult feat than it was, and I couldn't very well write to the papers to sustain my private estimate.

There can be little doubt that men infinitely prefer the appearance of dash and enterprise to simple honesty. No one believed I was not an arch-plotter in his financing. Yet they favored me. I even got permission from the trustee to occupy my chalet for a fortnight while I cleared up the mass of papers, calculations, notes of works, drawings and the like, that I left in disorder when I started on that impulsive raid upon the Mordet quap-heaps. I was there alone. I got work for Cothope with the Ilchesters, for whom I now build these destroyers. They wanted him at once, and he was short of money, so I let him go and managed very philosophically by myself.

On the second morning, as I sat out upon the veranda recalling memories and striving in vain to attend to some too succinct pencil notes of Cothope's, Beatrice rode up suddenly from behind the pavilion, and pulled rein and became still; Beatrice a little flushed from riding and sitting on a big black horse.

I did not instantly rise. I stared at her. "*You!*" I said.

She looked at me steadily. "Me," she said.

I did not trouble about any civilities. I stood up and asked pointblank a question that came into my head.

"Whose horse is that?" I said.

She looked me in the eyes. "Carnaby's," she answered.

"How did you get here—this way?"

"The wall's down."

"Down? Already?"

"A great bit of it between the plantations."

"And you rode through, and got here by chance?"

"I saw you yesterday. And I rode over to see you."

I had now come close to her, and stood looking up into her face.

"I'm a mere vestige," I said.

She made no answer, but remained regarding me steadfastly with a curious air of proprietorship.

"You know I'm the living survivor now of the great smash. I'm rolling and dropping down through all the scaffolding of the social system. It's all a chance whether I roll out free at the bottom, or go down a crack into the darkness out of sight for a year or two."

"The sun," she remarked irrelevantly, "has burnt you. I'm getting down."

She swung herself down into my arms, and stood beside me face to face.

"Where's Cothope?" she asked.

"Gone."

Her eyes flitted to the pavilion and back to me. We stood close together, extraordinarily intimate, and extraordinarily apart.

"I've never seen this cottage of yours," she said, "and I want to."

She flung the bridle of her horse round the veranda post, and I helped her tie it.

"Did you get what you went for to Africa?" she asked.

"No," I said, "I lost my ship."

"And that lost everything?"

"Everything."

She walked before me into the living-room of the chalet, and I saw that she gripped her riding-whip very tightly in her hand. She looked about her for a moment, and then at me.

"It's comfortable," she remarked.

Our eyes met in a conversation very different from the one upon our lips. A somber glow surrounded us and drew us together; an unwonted shyness kept us apart. She roused herself, after an instant's pause, to examine my furniture.

"You have chintz curtains. I thought men were too feckless to have curtains without a woman. But, of course, your aunt did that! And a couch and a brass fender, and—is that a pianola? That is your desk. I thought men's desks were always untidy, and covered with dust and tobacco ash."

She flitted to my color prints and my little case of books. Then she went to the pianola. I watched her intently.

"Does this thing play?" she said.

"What?" I asked.

"Does this thing play?"

I roused myself from my preoccupation.

"Like a musical gorilla with fingers all of one length. And a sort of soul. It's all the world of music to me."

"What do you play?"

"Beethoven, when I want to clear up my head while I'm working. He is—how one would always like to work. Sometimes Chopin and those others, but Beethoven. Beethoven mainly. Yes."

Silence again between us. She spoke with an effort.

"Play me something." She turned from me and explored the rack of music-rolls, became interested and took a piece, the first part of the Kreutzer Sonata, hesitated. "No," she said, "that!"

She gave me Brahms' Second Concerto, and curled up on the sofa watching me as I set myself slowly to play.

"I say," she said when I had done, "that's fine. I didn't know those things could play like that. I'm all astir."

She came and stood over me, looking at me. "I'm going to have a concert," she said abruptly and laughed uneasily, and hovered at the pigeonholes. "Now—now what shall I have?" She chose more of Brahms. Then we came to the Kreutzer Sonata. When I had played

the first part of that, she came up to the pianola and hesitated over me. I sat stiffly—waiting.

Suddenly she seized my downcast head and kissed my hair. She caught at my face between her hands and kissed my lips. I put my arms about her and we kissed together. I sprang to my feet and clasped her.

"Beatrice," I said. "Beatrice! Do you dare?"

"My dear," she whispered, nearly breathless, with her arms about me. "Oh! my dear!"

THE END.

GIBBS WAS SURPRISED

GIBBS was a commercial traveler, and had gone on a journey to the North. A few days afterward the Gibbs household was increased by one—a boy.

As the mother was very ill, the doctor was requested to write out a telegram informing Gibbs of the addition to his family, and also his wife's illness, and asking him to return home with as little delay as possible.

This was done, and the telegram was given to the servant to send off. That intelligent girl, being unable to read, put the message in her pocket and forgot all about it. The next day Gibbs paid a flying visit home, and was gratified to find his wife and family going on nicely. After staying at home a few hours, he took his departure without anything having been said about the telegram, which his wife naturally supposed he had received.

A day or two later the servant found the message in her pocket, and she decided to send it off at once without saying a word to any one about the delay. That night Gibbs, upon returning to his hotel, was horrified when the following telegram, bearing that day's date, was placed in his hand:

Another addition, a son; your wife is very ill; return at once.

"Another!" he gasped. "Great Jupiter! impossible!"

He rushed to the station and took the next train home, and, dashing into the house in a state of frenzy, demanded to know what had happened. The servant confessed all. The next day there was a vacancy for an intelligent, honest girl at Gibbs' establishment.

APPLYING THE CLOSURE

HE was one of those long, sad-faced men who never seem to be able to resist talking to their fellow passengers in a train or any similar conveyance, and, seating himself next to an inoffensive individual smoking a big black cigar and reading a paper, he at once began to worry him with questions.

"Sir," he said, "will you allow your boy to smoke cigarettes when he grows up?"

"I've never given the question a minute's thought," replied the other.

The other man panted for breath.

"And," he went on faintly, "will you allow him to drink?"

Again the smoker answered that he had never thought about it.

"Oh," gasped the sad-faced man, "can such people exist? To think——"

But then the other man interrupted him.

"Look here, sir," he said. "You mean well, no doubt, but let me tell you that I've been a confirmed bachelor for the last thirty-five years!"

Then, at last, the sad-faced man was silent. He had something to think about.

A Chat With You

IF you like this number of THE POPULAR we think that you are going to like the February number even better. We can't promise an improvement in quality every month. If you get the best that can be secured at every possible expense of money, work and thought, you can't expect to better it at regular intervals a month apart. This time, however, although we didn't promise it, we *have* done it.

FRANCIS LYNDE has written the complete novel that opens the magazine. It is called "The City of Numbered Days." It tells of a great dam built across the breadth of an arid valley by the U. S. Government for the purpose of irrigating and making fertile a country larger than many kingdoms; of the men, good and bad, who went to build the dam, of their loves and hates; of the city that grew up under the shadow of the dam, and its wickedness. This novel pictures vividly a stirring episode in the progress of the American people, an episode that is of the life of to-day and that is not yet become a thing of the past. No one can read it without a stir of patriotic feeling. It is a big, real, moving drama of our time. Its background, with its mingling of East and West, of savagery and civilization, is as interesting as we can conceive. The splendid love-story that runs through it, the manliness and virility of its characters, make it a novel the reading of which is an event to be remembered. This, complete in one number, is only one of the features of next month's POPULAR.

RALPH D. PAINE'S college story, "Jim Stearns, Director of Destinies," follows Lynde's complete novel in the February POPULAR. It is long enough to be called a novelette and good enough to win attention anywhere, no matter what its length. Jim Stearns, stroke-oar, is already familiar to you. In this story he receives the agreeable commission of teaching a crew of nice girls at a ladies' school the rudiments of oarsmanship. Incidentally he runs into various complications—a projected elopement, an irate father in pursuit of the eloping pair, a belligerent big brother, and several other exciting characters.

HERBERT KAUFMAN has contributed to this number of the magazine an interesting business story. He continues the series next month in "The Gifts of the Greeks." There are many tricks in the modern business

world and the best of them are known only to a very few. This story tells of one of the best and how it worked. Any one reading it has the satisfaction of feeling that there is a background of reality and truth behind the story.

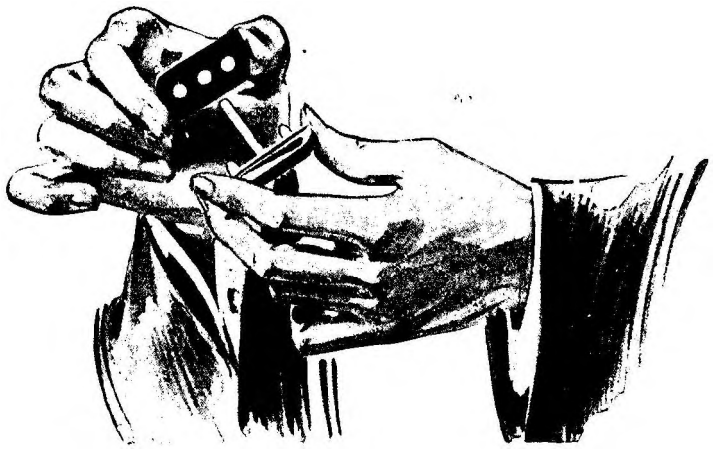
DON'T fail to read Bertrand Sinclair's story, "The Lake of the Dead Men's Bones." It is a tale of the far northwest, the country in which the finest of this author's tales have been laid. A. M. Chisholm's story, "The British Investor," is another business story. The principal figures in the tale are one or two interesting Americans who live by their wits and live well.

FOR a long time we have been receiving letters from various readers asking for more "Happy Family" stories by B. M. Bower. Next month's issue will contain a new tale of the old "happy family" crowd. "Ananias Green" is its name. Don't fail to make the acquaintance of Ananias. He appears in later stories, and is not only funny and interesting in himself but interesting because of the adventures into which he leads his companions.

NEXT month you must read the first instalment of Howard Fielding's serial, "Bill Harris—His Line." The second instalment is even better. In it you will learn something of the stock-jobbing schemes of Farnsworth, the broker; a wonderful scientific discovery on the part of Bill Harris, the burglar; and the coolness and resource of Newberry Newcomb, the philanthropist. This is a remarkable story and one that grows more and more interesting as it progresses.

THERE are many other splendid things in the February POPULAR. The concluding instalment of "Lost Cabin Mine" will bring to its end one of the most remarkable books of the year. "An Affair of Jewels," by George Bronson-Howard, will tell another of the exploits of Querriot, the society man and detective. Then there is "The Price of a Head," a Western story with pathos, human interest and excitement, by Roland Ashford Phillips; and a Wall Street story, "Haskell of '97," by Charles W. Cooke.

DON'T you agree with us that the present number of the magazine, the number which you now hold in your hands, is an unusual collection of stirring fiction? Arthur Stringer, whose complete novel you have read this month, becomes a regular contributor to the magazine with the March number. In that number will start a new series of tales of adventure, intrigue and excitement which are better and more thrilling than anything that Stringer has ever written heretofore. For a year, at least, Mr. Stringer will be a contributor to every number of the magazine. We have made an agreement with him by which we secure practically all of his new work. If you enjoyed "The Gun Runner" you will like his new series even better.



The Positioning Pins and Perforated Blade

A SAFETY razor should be *safe*. You can't have safety if there is any way for the blade to slip. The blade must be absolutely secure.

With a "safety" razor you have a removable or interchangeable blade. You can slide it in position—the difficulty is to keep it there!

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A GILLETTE blade has three round perforations. When you drop it over the three positioning pins it can't slip. It can't get away. The blade is in perfect alignment. You can't place it out of position if you try.

How it is held there in a vice-like grip we shall explain another time.

There is no razor like the GILLETTE—no handle, no blade like it. Any man can use it. It makes shaving easy no matter how tough the beard or tender the skin. No stropping, no honing.

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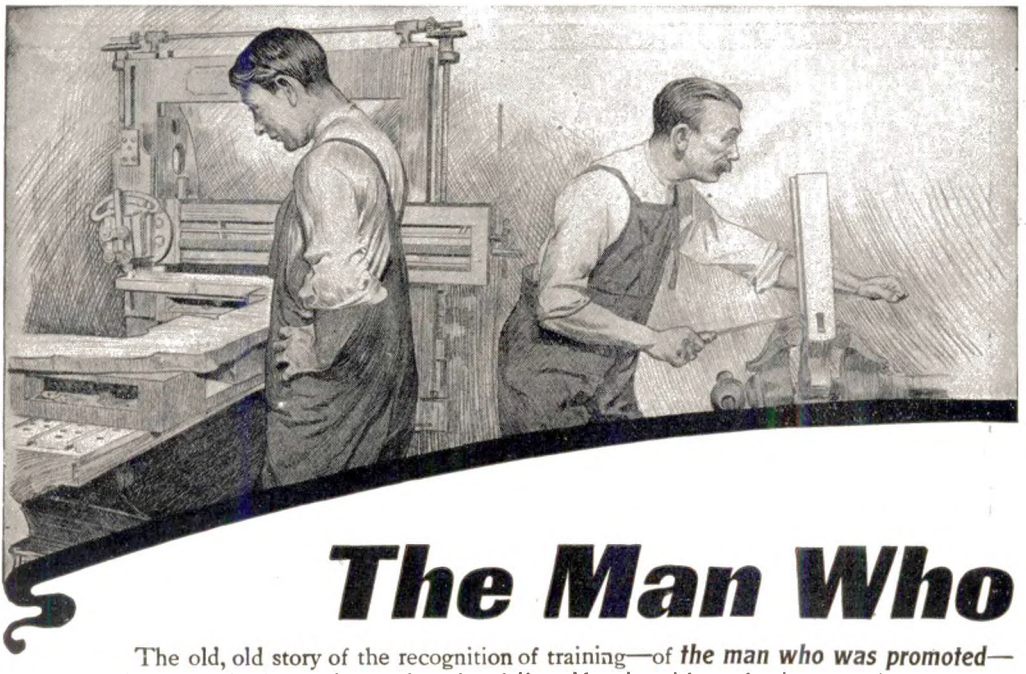
Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



The Man Who

The old, old story of the recognition of training—of ***the man who was promoted***—of the man who jumped over the other fellows' heads, without having to wait ***years*** for a chance, which, without training, might never have materialized.

You can't dodge the truth that to advance you ***must*** be able to do some ***one thing*** better than the other fellow — that your work ***must*** show originality — that you ***must be prepared*** to "step up" when Opportunity comes along. The International Correspondence Schools of Scranton will place at your disposal the very means by which all this may be accomplished. It costs you nothing to find out how it can be done. Simply mark the attached coupon opposite your chosen occupation and mail the coupon ***to-day.***

To acquire an I. C. S. training does not mean that you must leave home, stop work, or buy a single book. The I. C. S. goes to you — trains you in your own home — in your spare time—***and in the shortest time.*** Everything made so clear that the only requisite is the ability to read and write. Marking the coupon costs only the postage and ***places you under no obligation.***

Some Other

I took out my I. C. S. Course when I was working in a small country town. I am now Draftsman with the Postal Telegraph Cable Company, of New York City, and have increased my earnings 500 per cent. I recommend the I. C. S. to all ambitious young men.

H. S. GRIFFEN,
190 A Decatur St.,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

My I. C. S. Course enabled me to advance my position from that of lineman and troubleman to Superintendent of Construction for the Frederick Telegraph and Telephone Company and to double my earnings. I recommend your schools to any ambitious man.

ELMER BRENGLE,
81 E. Fifth St.,
Frederick, Md.

My course in the I.C.S. has been a great help in enabling me to advance my position from a laborer to that of Assistant City Engineer for Battle Creek and to double my earnings. I believe your system of instruction to be excellent in every respect.

EDWARD HOYT,
City Hall,
Battle Creek, Mich.

My I. C. S. Course of Instruction is largely responsible for my advancement from working as a common laborer and teamster to the position as Deputy City Engineer for the city of Eureka. My income has also been very largely increased. I recommend the I. C. S. to all who wish to advance in their calling.

R. L. THOMAS,
Eureka, Cal.

I have the highest opinion of I. C. S. instruction. I enrolled for my Course when I was working on a farm. I am now Foreman of the Electrical Department for the Ozone Generator Company and my earnings are three times what they were when I enrolled.

C. H. H. Hardacker,
4534 Blaisdell Ave.,
Minneapolis, Minn.

When I enrolled in the I. C. S. I was employed as electrician at a salary of $600 a year. At present I am employed as Superintendent of the Canadian Electric Light Company with a salary of $1500 a year. I feel that I owe the greater part of this success to your schools.

JOHN DORAIS,
22 Wolfe St.,
Levis, Quebec, Can.

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

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Read the unsolicited testimonials printed below. Then you'll understand what an I. C. S. training really means. Remember that these are but a few picked at random from thousands of others equally and ***even more*** interesting. Bear in mind that hundreds of I. C. S. men who have risen in the world could only read and write when they enrolled. That some lived thousands of miles away. That men with long hours and short pocketbooks have qualified for advancement without interference with their daily work — and without financial embarrassment. Some were young. Many were old. The I. C. S. has no age limit. There ***is*** a way for YOU. Mark the coupon.

On an average, 300 students every month ***VOLUNTARILY*** report salaries raised, positions bettered and drudgery left behind as the ***direct result*** of I. C. S. training. During September the number was 228. What ***better*** proof could you wish of the ability of the I. C. S. to raise ***your*** salary—to put ***you*** in the lead—to make ***you*** the big man when a big man is wanted. If you really want promotion and a better salary, mark the coupon. Do it *NOW.*

Promotions

I cannot recommend the I. C. S. too highly. My course with your schools has supplied me with a thorough technical education impossible to obtain at the bench, and has enabled me to advance my position from carpenter work and to open an Architectural Office of my own. My earnings of course have been very materially increased.

C. H. CHANDLER,
611 W. 8th St.,
Topeka, Kan.

When I began my Course with the I. C. S. I was employed by the Whiting Foundry Equipment Company as a helper. At present I hold a position as Assistant Superintendent of Construction for the Union Electric Company, and my earnings have increased 200 per cent. The treatment that I. C. S. Students receive at the hands of their instructors cannot possibly be excelled.

ROLLIN H. NICHOLSON,
3534 Nebraska Ave,
St. Louis, Mo.

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Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for employment or advancement in the position before which I have marked X

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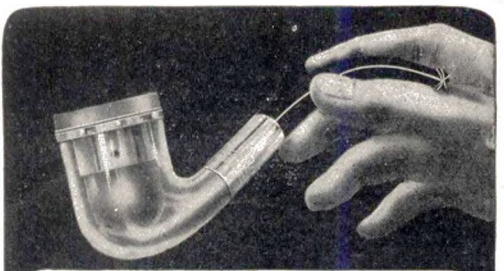
Stenographer	Telephone Engineer
Advertisement Writer	Elec. Lighting Supt.
Show Card Writer	Mech. Engineer
Window Trimmer	Plumber & Steam Fitter
Commercial Law	Stationary Engineer
Illustrator	Civil Engineer
Civil Service	Building Contractor
Chemist	Architect' Draughtsman
Textile Mill Supt.	Architect
Electrician	Structural Engineer
Elec. Engineer	Banking
	Mining Engineer

Name _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

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



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NOT Pipe Odor

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Smokes cool and sweet and clean. It has two bowls. An inner one of fine meerschaum, from which the smoke is drawn through vents into an outer one of tough, annealed, non-absorbent glass. Here the moisture and nicotine collect **and remain.** *That's why only cool, clean smoke reaches the mouth—why the pipe never bites.*

Every grain of tobacco burns to a white ash. No wet residue to throw away and the last whiff is as sweet as the first. Easily cleaned and leaves no offensive smell in rooms or clothes. Send for one. **Smoke it a week and if not satisfied money will be refunded.**

Pipe with handsome, durable case, $2.00. Without case, $1.50 (postpaid). State preference for straight or curved stem. Send for *Free* booklet *"History of Smoking."*

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A Practical Novelty for Cigarette Smokers

One Complete Nickled

TURKO CIGARETTE ROLLER

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Heel Cushions

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Relieve the jar on your spine and brain. Make walking a pleasure. No rubber to sweat the feet. No "stealthy tread." Wore *inside* the shoe. At shoe, drug and department stores or by mail, postpaid 50c. **Be sure to get Gilbert's.**

SHORT PEOPLE MADE TALL

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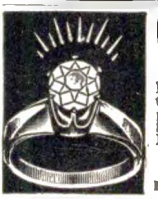
Booklet on Request

E. T. GILBERT MFG. CO., 235 South Ave., Rochester, N. Y.



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Small Imitation Leather—25c—Large Leather—50c—Special Xmas Styles, Grain Seal or Snake—$1.00 Postpaid At druggists or tobacconists. If yours does not handle send purchase price to

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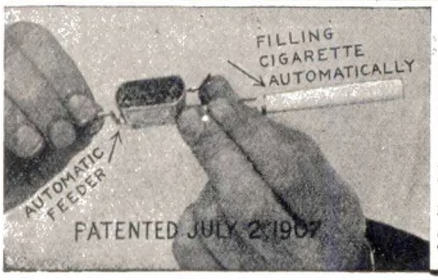

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Nickel or Gunmetal Finish, 50 cts. | *Prepaid.*
Sterling Silver, - - - $5.00 |

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AGENTS WANTED—EXCLUSIVE TERRITORY.

Esrich Mfg. Co., New York. Oct. 19, 1908

Gentlemen—The cigarette machine received today, and, without exception it is the best little cigarette maker I ever saw—so simple and complete.

Canby Steel, Pinehurst, N. Car.

Esrich Mfg. Co., New York City. Oct. 29,'08.

Dear Sirs—I received your patent cigarette maker today and was delighted with it. It certainly is a wonder

Thomas McLauchlin, Carthage, N. C.

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

25c

Now—for a Pair of Genuine Holeproof Sox

Those who have heretofore paid 25c for inferior goods can now have the best at that price. For you can now buy six pairs of "Holeproof" Sox (formerly $2) for $1.50.

We are now able to give you the same sox and save you 50c on the six pairs. Yet we don't have to alter our quality, nor change our expensive process. The reason is this:

The Best Yarn Now Costs Us 10c Less Per Pound

We now pay an average of 63c per pound for our yarn. Before, we paid 73. The best Egyptian and Sea Island cotton yarn—the softest and finest—now costs us 10 cents less per pound. So the saving is all in the market price of yarn—and that's a real saving because you get the same quality though you pay less. The saving is yours—not ours.

All makers now pay less for their yarn. But they're not cutting the price of their sox. They are simply making more profit. We are using this opportunity to reduce our *price*. So the best sox now cost no more than brands of inferior grades.

It remains for you to take this advantage—to ask for the best, and insist on it.

31 Years to Make the First Pair

It took 31 years of constant improvement to perfect "Holeproof" Sox.

"Holeproof" are the original "guaranteed-six-months" sox.

You cannot get more for $1.50 than you get in six pairs of "Holeproof." They are the most satisfactory sox that are sold today.

Over 100 imitations have been placed on the market since "Holeproof" became a success. So don't think for a moment that all guaranteed sox are genuine "Holeproof Sox."

Nearly all the other names sound like ours, so you must needs be careful in choosing. Else you may get the inferior grades—the stiff and harsh kind—the kind that get fuzzy and fade.

FAMOUS

Holeproof Hosiery

FOR MEN WOMEN AND CHILDREN

"Holeproof" never wrinkle, stretch, crock, fade nor rust. And they are comfortable, because of our extra fine yarn. We could buy coarse yarn for less than half what we pay. We could then charge less still for the sox. But you wouldn't wear such sox more than once. It's far cheaper to buy the best.

Please compare "Holeproof" with the best unguaranteed sox. Then let them show how they wear.

That will prove more than we can say in this ad.

See if any sox you know are one-half so good.

Our guarantee in each box of six pairs of "Holeproof" Sox reads:

"If any or all these sox comes to holes or need darning within six months from the day you buy them, we will replace them free."

And we mean that exactly. Try "Holeproof." You'll see then how we can afford this. See what you save and gain when you wear "Holeproof." Once know and you'll always wear them.

If your dealer does not have genuine "Holeproof" Sox, bearing the "Holeproof" Trade-mark, order direct from us. (Remit in any convenient way.)

Holeproof Sox—6 pairs, $1.50. Medium and light weight. Black, light and dark tan, navy blue, pearl gray, and black with white feet. Sizes, 9½ to 12. Six pairs of a size and weight in a box. All one color or assorted, as desired.

Holeproof Sox, (extra light weight)—made entirely of Sea Island cotton. 6 pairs, $2.00.

Holeproof Lustre-Sox—6 pairs, $3. Finished like silk. Extra light weight. Black, navy blue, light and dark tan, and pearl gray. Sizes, 9½ to 12.

Holeproof Stockings—6 pairs $2. Medium weight. Black, tan and black with white feet. Sizes, 8 to 11.

Holeproof Lustre-Stockings—6 pairs, $3. Finished like silk. Extra light weight. Tan and black. Sizes 8 to 11.

Boys' Holeproof Stockings—6 pairs, $3. Black and tan. Specially reinforced knee, heel and toe. Sizes, 5 to 11.

Misses' Holeproof Stockings—6 pairs, $3. Black and tan. Specially reinforced knee, heel and toe. Sizes, 5 to 9½. These are the best children's hose made today.

Holeproof Trade Mark Hosiery

Reg. U. S. Pat. Office, 1906

HOLEPROOF HOSIERY COMPANY, 253 Fourth Street, Milwaukee, Wis.

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

Pabst Extract Rose Girl Calendar for 1909

It is impossible to describe in mere words the subtle charm of this artistic triumph. The accompanying photographic reproduction fails to give any real idea of the indescribable sweetness and womanly beauty which the handsome face of this girl shows in the original. Although the Pabst Extract calendars have long been famed for their artistic beauty, our 1909 creation (7 inches wide by 36 inches long, and printed in 14 rich colors) entirely surpasses anything we have yet offered. No more beautiful panel could adorn the walls of any home, den or office, and we want to see one of them in every home in America—a constant reminder to all that

Pabst Extract

The "Best" Tonic

"Brings the Roses to Your Cheeks"

It is a builder of health, strength, vigor and vitality—a tonic that enriches the blood, steadies the nerves and rebuilds the wasted tissues of the body. Embracing in its component parts the bracing, soothing and toning effects of choicest hops, together with the vital, tissue building and digestive elements of pure, rich barley malt, it is at once a tonic and a food.

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This Calendar is Free

All we ask you to do is to send us ten cents in stamps or coin to cover cost of packing and mailing. Write today.

Pabst Extract Dept. 3 **Milwaukee, Wis.**

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

HOW TO GET THESE 5 ARTICLES for XMAS.

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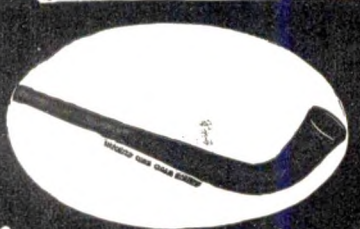

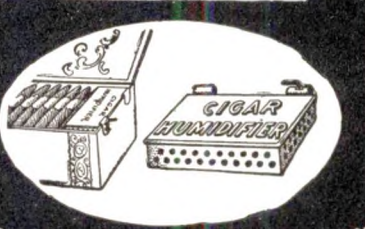

I am willing to lose money to "get acquainted"

I DEPEND for your patronage entirely upon your first order. Wouldn't it be foolish then to send you anything but a cigar that will "make good." It's worth while to get a chance to "show you"—and that's why I'm willing to lose on your initial order.

If I were a retailer and wanted 10c. or three for a quarter for my Panatelas, I wouldn't be overcharging you—that's the price you pay every time you buy a cigar of same quality at retail. I sell more cigars than 1000 retailers combined—make every cigar I sell, and sell them direct to you—the smoker, at factory prices. The fact that I am doing by far the largest "direct to the smoker" cigar business as is generally admitted, is pretty good proof of the quality I deliver.

I want you to get 100 of my Panatelas—and if it's your first order, I'll send you the above five articles with my compliments of the season. If the cigar won't make a customer of you, I'm "stung."

MORTON R. EDWIN PANATELA

is five inches long, made of the choicest Havana tobacco. And when I say Havana, I mean just what I say. It is one of those cigars that makes you hate to throw away the butt, and you can take my word for it, you never smoked anything like it for less than 10c.

There is another reason why I can sell you 100 Morton R. Edwin Panatelas at $2.40. I do a cash business. If I sent my cigars on credit to thousands of individuals throughout the country, I suppose I would have to charge you something like $5.00 instead of $2.40. There would be enough people taking advantage of me to force me to add to the price of your cigars, the amount I lose on somebody else's.

THIS XMAS OFFER HOLDS GOOD UNTIL DECEMBER 31st, 1908.

The five free articles go only with your first order—be that for 100 or 1000 cigars. I will, however, fill an additional order and include the five Xmas gifts if I am instructed to ship direct to a friend of yours. Of course—you know my object.

You can return any cigar you buy from me if you don't like it. My cigars are never fully sold until you have smoked them. It's easy to get your money back—just ask for it.

Morton R. Edwin

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Make remittance payable to Edwin Cigar Co.
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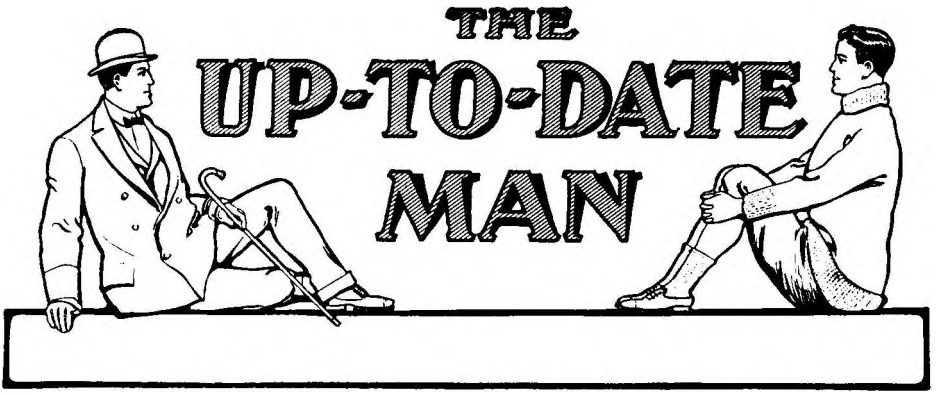
416 BROOME ST. NEW YORK

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



FEW marked departures in the cut of clothes are noticeable this winter. In colors, however, there is a sheaf of novelties, as blue-green, moose, elephant, écru, snake, drab, Austrian olive, and the like. Green alone is a difficult color to wear, but when it is mixed with a dark blue a very winsome effect is produced. To be precise, the new "colors" are not really colors, but tints. Many of them shade almost imperceptibly from one hue to another, according as the light shines upon them. Brown is not as much favored as it was last autumn, but the introduction of fresh colorings, like "Rembrandt" and "Coco," help to sustain its vogue. "Smoke" is a shade of gray that promises to be notably "smart." After years of monotony in colors, we are to have a season of sprightliness. The new cloths are very handsome and the wide choice of shades in each color renders it possible for every man to follow his fancy, be it grave or gay.

As I have said, the cut of clothes has changed but little. Most of the characteristics of last season's garments are preserved, including the soft-roll lapel, the loosely draping back, the sloping shoulder, the wide-edged stitching and the front buttons set high and close together. Many tailors have discarded the cuff-finish and returned to the plain sleeve. Others still indorse the folded-back cuff or the welt. A novel idea, though a bit "gingerbready," is to have a narrow strip of braid serve as a cuff decoration just above the sleeve buttons. The cuff usually buttons through; mock buttonholes are not good form and, indeed, never were, for shams are foreign to the virile spirit of the day. The sleeve is cut a trifle wider than last season, with more of a tapering effect toward the wrist. The lapels are well curved and, whenever possible, the bottom of the coat is cut to conform to them, lending a symmetrically rounded effect to the whole garment. This applies—optionally—even to the breast pocket, which also follows the angle of the lapel.

Undoubtedly the gray frock suit is quite the "smartest" thing this season. The fashionable shade is not light, but dark—"fog," "smoke" or "mist," as it is variously called. Coats are both braided and braidless, with lapels less high and skirts less flaring. The waistline, however, still has a pronounced inward curve. Accompanying the modish frock suit is a gray waistcoat of decidedly lighter shade, for contrast's sake. The gloves, to be sure, match the Ascot; the boots, of buttoned patent leather, may have dark gray uppers. Fashionable Londoners have recently adopted pleated shirts for afternoon wear, but the American has more cere-

A beautiful lounging robe.

monious notions and clings to the plain white shirt bosom adorned, if at all, with a delicate stripe or figure.

Green and gray share the honors for business suits. Brown can no longer claim "smartness." Such mixtures as blue-green, gray-green and the like, in faint stripes or indeterminate criss-cross patterns, are much favored. The distinguishing badges of the well-cut autumn coat are higher lapels with less of a roll, a straight hanging back having the merest suggestion of accentuating the figure, and the absence of ornate cuffs, pockets, flaps and similar eccentricities.

Shadow and hairline stripes in evening clothes are patterns which some tailors are again recommending. Two

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

uncommonly "smart" fabrics are black-gray worsted and blue-black worsted. In each black is, of course, the predominating color; and only enough of the other is introduced to lend luster and richness. The cut of the fashionable evening suit does not differ noticeably from that of last spring. Trimness of air and softness of outline are still the attributes most sought. The waist of the coat fits snugly, the skirts extend slightly below the bend of the knee, and the lapel is long and rolled. Instead of the usual peaked effect, one sees quite a few lapels with corners rounded off. The sleeves are cut wide over the wrist and a trifle shorter than hitherto, to show more of the shirt-cuff. The welted or "mock" cuff has been discarded for the through-buttoning cuff.

Lamb's-wool is the favorite material this season for the frock coat. It is cut much the same as last season, save that the waist-line is not so sharply defined and the skirts are a bit fuller. Only the two lower coat-buttons are fastened. The partiality of many men for the morning coat or semifrock is marked. Besides black, there are Oxford and Cambridge grays and mixtures of black and gray with a faint pattern in the cloth. The correct morning coat should be well curved in the back and roomy in front, with shoulders moderately broad. If braiding at the edges is used, it should be narrow and inconspicuous.

In business suits, green and "smoke" cloths are the vogue for autumn. Soft olive shades of green and very deep grays are most indorsed. The sack suit is cut shorter than formerly, with a fairly loose back and full skirts. The lapels are higher, finished with a soft roll and may be peaked or rounded. Coats are wide-stitched along the edges and usually have three buttons which are set high and close together. Excessively long coats with creased side-seams are no longer the mode. The upper-class tailors have also relinquished the folded-back cuff in favor of the plain through-buttoning cuff. Trousers are still cut short, so as to hang straight from the knee. They may be worn with bottoms turned up or down.

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Are you prepared for this short Span of Life ?

20 to 60

YOUNG MAN! Are **you** content with your present position? Is it secure against the fellow who plans and studies after office hours? Have **you** a good firm hold on a big, life-long job? Are you fortified against the "age limit"?

Sit down and think these questions over seriously. Don't try to **fool** yourself. Your inner consciousness will find you out and tell you **what** you really are.

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At **20** plan for **60** or you will find yourself in the **"rainy days"** of life without a cent **laid by**. Make the most of your youth—become an expert so that age will not affect your earning capacity, so your salary will be more at **40** than at **20** and as much at **60** as at **40.**

The **training** you receive from our Home Study Courses will so increase your value to the firm that you will be proof against age limitations—the years beyond 60 will be provided for before you reach the "three score" period.

Write for our valuable 200-page bulletin describing our complete Engineering Courses—sent free for the coupon. There is no obligation attached to this. We employ no agents.

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Pop. Mag 1-09

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The Stolz Electrophone—A New, Electrical, Scientific and Practical Invention for those who are Deaf or Partially Deaf—MAY NOW BE TESTED IN YOUR OWN HOME.

Deaf or partially deaf people may now make a month's trial of the Stolz Electrophone at home. This personal practical test serves to prove that the device satisfies *with ease*, every requirement of a perfect hearing device. Write for particulars at once, before the offer is withdrawn, for by this *personal test* plan the *final* selection of the *one completely satisfactory hearing aid* is made easy and inexpensive for every one.

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This new invention, the Stolz Electrophone (U. S. Patent No. 763,575) renders unnecessary such clumsy, unsightly and frequently harmful devices as trumpets, horns, tubes, ear drums, fans, etc. It is a tiny electric telephone that fits on the ear and which, the instant it is applied, *magnifies* the sound waves in such manner as to cause an *astonishing increase* in the *clearness* of *all sounds*. It overcomes the buzzing and roaring ear noises and, also, so constantly and electrically exercises the vital parts of the ear that, usually, the natural unaided hearing itself is gradually restored.

What Three Business Men Say.

The Electrophone is very satisfactory. Being small in size and great in hearing qualities makes it preferable to any I have tried and, I believe, I have tried all of them. M. W. HOYT, Wholesale Grocer, Michigan Ave. and River St., Chicago.

I got so deaf I could not hear with my speaking tube and was advised to try the Electrophone. After fifteen years of deafness, discomfort and worry, I now hear perfectly at church and at concerts. W. R. UTLEY, Sales Mgr., S. A. Maxwell & Co., Chicago.

I have now used your Electrophone over a year, and know that it is a first-class, scientific hearing device. Without it people have to shout directly in my ear to make me hear. With it, I can hear distinctly when spoken to in an ordinary tone. Best of all, IT HAS STOPPED MY HEAD NOISES, which were a terrible aggravation. LEWIS W. MAY, Cashier, 100 Washington St., Chicago.

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Stolz Electrophone Co., 1552 Stewart Bldg., Chicago

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Send a lock of your hair, and we will mail a 2¼ oz., 22-in. short stem fine human hair switch to match. If you find it a big bargain, remit $1.50 (in ten days, or sell 3 and **get your switch free.** Extra shades a little more. Inclose 5c postage. Free beauty book showing latest style of hair dressing—also high grade switches, pompadours, wigs, etc.

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You see, years ago I was deaf myself—people had to shout at me. It was so embarrassing that I was avoided.

I doctored for two years—but with no avail. So in sheer desperation I resolved to help myself.

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My efforts were more than repaid, for when I perfected my device so I could wear it myself, my hearing came back. People no longer shunned me. It was marvelous—I could hear as well as anybody.

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I can make you hear again

Yet what it costs me in years of struggle I let you have for five dollars.

Don't send me the money now—I want you first to read my book. It goes into detail about this wonderful device.

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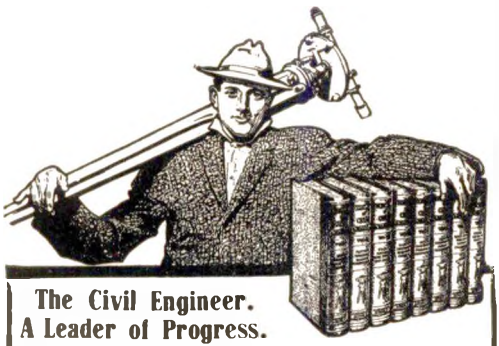

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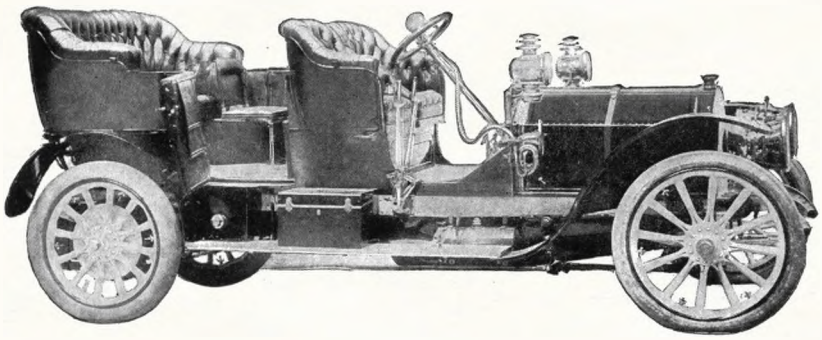

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