FIRST CHOICE OF A MILLION READERS
WEEKLY
OCT. 1, 1927

# The Popular Stories

15 cts.

## BEGINNING "GUN SMOKE"

BY DANE COOLIDGE

STREET AND SMITH PUBLICATION

IT'S THE *YOUNGER CROWD* THAT SETS THE STANDARD!

GO to the younger crowd if you want the *right* word on what to wear or drive or smoke. And notice, please, that the particular cigarette they call their own today is one that you've known very well for a very long time.

# FATIMA


***What a whale of a difference just a few cents make!***

Next week's issue of THE POPULAR STORIES will be opened by a novel by William West Winter, called "Bride of the Tiger." The story is laid in the Sierras, and is about a young adventurer who, in the wilderness, comes suddenly upon the lair of an Aztec tiger-god and a mysterious and lovely girl whom the ignorant Indians have deified and wedded to the old idol.

Volume LXXXV Number 1

WEEKLY
# The Popular Stories

*Title Registered U. S. Patent Office.*



## CONTENTS FOR OCTOBER 1, 1927



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All manuscripts must be addressed to the Editors.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, $6.00 — SINGLE COPY, 15 CENTS

# Suddenly I Broke Away

## and Held Them Spellbound

**As I review that tense dramatic moment when I electrified that meeting, it all seems strange and weird to me. How had I changed so miraculously in three months from a shy, diffident "yes" man to a dynamic, vigorous he-man? How had I ever dared give my opinion? Three months before nobody ever knew I held opinions!**

ALL my life I had been cursed with a shy, timid, self-conscious nature. With only a grammar school education I could never express ideas in a coherent, self-confident way. But one day my eye fell upon a newspaper article which told about a wonderful free book entitled "How to Work Wonders with Words,"—a book that was causing widespread comment from coast to coast—a book that was being read not only by millionaires, but by thousands of others. It discussed men like me and explained how we could overcome our handicaps.

At first I was skeptical. I thought these defects were a part of my natural makeup—that I would never be able to overcome them. But some subtle instinct kept prodding me to send for that free book. I lost no time in sending for it, as I was positively amazed at being able to get cost free a book that made absolutely plain the secrets that most successful men have used to win popularity, distinction, money and success.

As the weeks wore on and I absorbed the principles of this remarkable method, I became conscious of new physical and mental energy, a new feeling of aggressiveness, and a resurrected personal power that I never dreamed I possessed. Then came that day in the general meeting when the president called on the assembled department heads and assistants for suggestions on the proposed new policy.

Three months previously, the forces of indecision, timidity, and inability to talk in public would have held me to my seat. But suddenly that new power took possession of me and drove me to my feet. That wonderful 20-minute daily training at home had taught me to forget myself and think only of my subject. Almost automatically the ideas which had heretofore lain dormant in a mental jumble, now issued with a vigor, clearness and enthusiasm that astounded me no less than my boss and associates. And I noticed with silent exultation the rapt, intent look on my audience as my story unfolded itself smoothly and eloquently.

To-day the men whom I used to greet deferentially I now meet with an air of cool equality. I am asked to conferences, luncheons, banquets, etc., as a popular after-dinner speaker. And my talents are not confined to business matters but have made me an interesting conversationalist at social affairs. I am meeting worth-while people, I own a good job, a good home, a good car. I am the happiest man that ever lived.

And I frankly and candidly admit that I owe all of these blessings to that wonderful little free book "How to Work Wonders with Words."

**What 20 Minutes A Day Will Show You**

How to talk before your club or lodge
How to address board meetings
How to propose and respond to toasts
How to make a political speech
How to tell entertaining stories
How to make after-dinner speeches
How to converse interestingly
How to write better letters
How to sell more goods
How to train your memory
How to enlarge your vocabulary
How to develop self-confidence
How to acquire a winning personality
How to strengthen your will-power and ambition
How to become a clear, accurate thinker
How to develop your power of concentration
How to be the master of any situation

### Send For This Amazing Book

This new method of training is fully described in a very interesting and informative booklet which is now being sent to everyone mailing the coupon below. This book is called "How to Work Wonders with Words." You are told how to bring out and develop your priceless "hidden knack" — the natural gift within you—which will win for you advancement in position and salary, popularity, social standing, power and real success. You can obtain your copy absolutely free by sending the coupon.

**Now Sent FREE**


North American Institute,
3601 Michigan Ave., Dept. 1757
Chicago, Illinois

North American Institute,
3601 Michigan Ave., Dept. 1757, Chicago, Illinois.

Please send me FREE and without obligation my copy of your famous book "How to Work Wonders with Words."

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

# GOOD READING

BY

## CHARLES HOUSTON

IF you were in the Chinese quarter of Pekin to-day and should go through the shadows of the queer little crooked streets and long alleyways that make up the Tung An Che Gor Market, you would come upon a room set down between the flower and the fruit stalls.

In that room you would find a group of men sitting about on uncomfortable benches with no backs to them, listening enthralled to one who stands in the middle. He is the professional story teller, and apparently his story is a thrilling one. Now he claps castanetlike pieces together in his hand and by this you are to know that horses are galloping through his tale. And now he thrums softly upon a stringed instrument and it is a love scene that he is enacting.

Apparently the story is a pleasing one, for his auditors throw him many copper coins. Here is a man well beloved by his fellows, this teller of tales with the gift of the artist to stir the imagination, to drown out sorrow, to make a new and fascinating world for those who would listen to him.

On the shores of all the Seven Seas to-day men are telling stories after their fashion. There is no language that does not contain the age-old words, "Tell me a story."

In America we meet this universal cry for the art of fiction in characteristic fashion. We call together artists of imagination and skill and provide for them, not an audience of a few men and women coming together in a market place, but an audience of thousands on thousands from one ocean to another, who are hungry for that which will stir their imaginations, make them forget and make them remember.

It is such a typically American service that is rendered by Chelsea House, one of the oldest and best established publishing concerns in this country when it sends out from its presses the best work of the best modern fiction writers at a cost that is within the reach of all.

Here are stories that have never before appeared within book covers, stories of love and adventure, of romance and mystery. You need not go to distant Pekin to know the lure of the story teller. You will find it at no more seemingly romantic place than the dealer just around the corner. Have you read, for example:

PETALS OF CATHAY, by Joseph Montague. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75 cents.

Two men sat together in a room and talked in lowered voices. One was Stuart McVea, a wealthy eccentric, who bore on his body the marks of hideous Tibetan torture. The other was King Keeler, courageous, quick-witted explorer, who knew his Tibet as an actor knows his Broadway.

It was the strangest of adventures that they planned. Somewhere in Tibet, eighty miles

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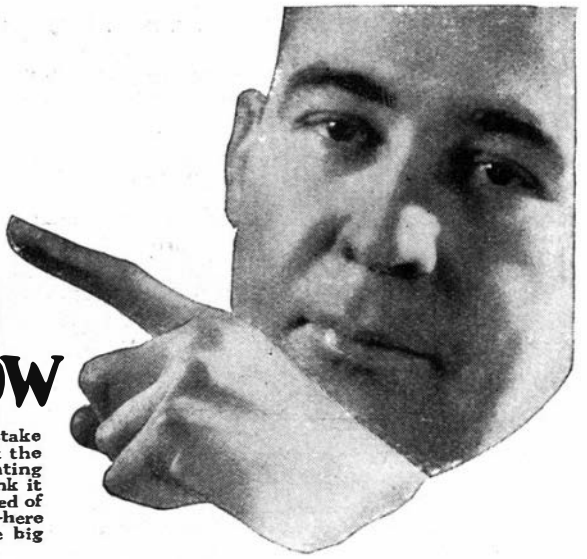


# IF YOU WERE FIRED TOMORROW

**If the boss came down with a grouch—or you made a mistake—And You GOT FIRED, could you get another job at the same pay right away? Or would you have to go job-hunting like any ordinary untrained man who gets fired? Think it over! If you are tired of being a cog in a machine—or tired of working in an uncertain, 2x4-inch job with no future—here is a real opportunity! Read about it—it may be the big turning point of your whole career!**

# Stop Gambling With Your Future and LEARN ELECTRICITY

## WHERE JOBS HUNT MEN AT $50 A WEEK AND UP

LET me make you a real money-maker. Let me take you out of the "hired-help" class—and start you on the road to real success, in 90 days. Make up your mind to say good-bye forever to precarious, tiresome, routine jobs—crabby bosses—and low pay that can never be more than $35 or $40 a week! You don't need to tolerate them any longer!

### Amazing Opportunity

Electricity is calling for trained men—and Coyne 12-week graduates are among the preferred class. Many of them have stepped out of our doors into wonderful jobs paying from $50 and up a week! And our free employment bureau gives life employment service.

### LEARN Without Lessons

Electricity is surprisingly easy to learn this practical way *without* books or lessons. That's the secret of Coyne training. All training consists of *ACTUAL* and *PRACTICAL* work on fine big electrical equipment—dynamos, transformers, etc. (Real ones—not models). You learn by *doing*—and experts work right with you every step of the way.

**Now in Our New Home**

This is our new, fireproof, modern home wherein is installed thousands of dollars worth of the newest and most modern Electrical equipment of all kinds. We now have the largest amount of floor space devoted to the exclusive teaching of practical electricity in the world. Every comfort and convenience has been arranged to make you happy and contented during your training.

### No Experience or Advanced Education Needed!

Practically any man can master the "ins-and-outs" of Electricity — as taught in the Great Shops of Coyne. You don't need one bit of previous experience or any more than common-school education. Some of our highly successful graduates never completed eighth grade.

### 2 Extra Courses Included

If you act now—I'll not only allow your railroad fare to Chicago—but I'll include two big, extra courses absolutely without charge—RADIO and AUTOMOTIVE ELECTRICITY. I also secure part-time work for many students. FREE employment service after graduation, too. We help place men in wonderful jobs every week!

### I Allow Your R. R. Fare

Right now I am making a special offer to allow any man's railroad fare to Chicago from any point in the U. S. upon enrollment. Send coupon for details.

### Send for FREE Book

Just give me a chance to tell you about the wonderful things that Electricity has in store for you after 12 happy weeks at COYNE. Send the coupon for my free, illustrated book containing over 150 photographs and details of my special offer. No obligation. Mail it today!

## Big Book Free

**COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL**

**H. C. LEWIS, President**
**Dept. 77-01**
**500 S. Paulina Street**
**CHICAGO, ILL.**

Coyne Electrical School,
H. C. Lewis, Pres., Dept. 77-01
500 S. Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

Dear Mr. Lewis:
Without obligation, send me your free illustrated catalog and details of your offer.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

south and west of Lhasa, in a glen nearly fourteen thousand feet above sea level, there was a cave, and in that cave a temple. There Keeler was to go and bring back to McVea a golden petal, which the latter had hidden thirteen years before the story begins. It was a talisman, and to McVea, the most precious thing in the world, for it contained one of life's most jealously guarded secrets.

Thus Mr. Montague's story starts and soon you are with the hero as he penetrates to the heart of mystic Tibet. A rare, strange story this, with the scents and sounds of the Orient permeating it throughout, a story you will put down with regret when you have finished it and turn to again and again.

THE GIRL FROM SHANTY CREEK, by Emart Kinsburn. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75 cents.

Under the stars of the California desert country, a camp fire, and beside it a girl playing upon a violin. Small wonder that when Sim Fannan, wanderer and explorer, came upon this scene he forgot the cold beauty of Eileen Calmar, who was waiting for him back in San Francisco, and fell head over heels in love with this girl of the desert places. For the musician had a haunting beauty of her own, very different from the artificial charms of the city girl, and she had courage, too, as she was later to prove when she and Sim faced a desperate band of plug-uglies.

Do you remember "Cudjo's Cave," one of the most thrilling books that ever kept a boy's heart thrumming? Well, there is a cave in this book, a cave apparently left by the Aztec Indians, where many an adventure befalls Sim and the girl of the violin.

There the two lovers were cornered by the hard-boiled members of the Oshanter Gang who were after the gold that the Indians had left, and the account of the defense of the cave will send your blood tingling as it did of yore.

Mr. Kinsburn, master weaver of adventure stories, has not written a more gripping yarn than "The Girl from Shanty Creek." Order it from your dealer to-day, if you want a real blown-in-the-bottle thrill.

POWDERED PROOF, by Madeleine Sharps Buchanan. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75 cents.

Nancy Barnes, wife of the loutish steward of the fashionable Dahlgren Country Club, was a wistful figure. Folks wondered what she could see in a man so obviously her inferior. And then one dawn, on the broad steps of the club's swimming pool, they found her body. She had been murdered. A slight burn in the palm of her little right hand was the only sign of any injury.

It was at this time that the neighborhood was being scoured in search of a mysterious holdup man who was known as "The Black Bandit." When Nancy was found dead, suspicion naturally pointed to him and also to various members of the club who had been attracted by Nancy.

Then Levering West, the noted detective, was called in on the case, and from that moment on, the story moves through a fascinating succession of clews, baffling even to the most inveterate lover of detective stories.

THE OUTLAW TAMER, by David Manning. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75 cents.

Dumb animals and a dumb man. That is the theme of Mr. Manning's latest Western. Only it turns out that neither man nor animals were so dumb as they appeared.

Sandy Sweyn was called "the idiot" by tempestuous Peter Dunstan, hard-boiled, scheming rancher, when first Dunstan saw him driving a power horse up and down along one track. But Dunstan soon had reason to change his mind, for Sweyn had a way with animals that was uncanny.

For all lovers of animals and the great West this saga of Sandy is written with a pace and go that makes most memorable reading.

# Classified Advertising

## Agents and Help Wanted

EARN $10 DAILY silvering mirrors, plating, refinishing metalware, headlights, chandeliers, bedsteads. Outfits furnished. Decie Laboratories, 1135 Broadway, New York.

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. Every owner buys gold initials for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. American Monogram Co., Dept. 170, East Orange, N. J.

AGENTS—$60-$125 A WEEK. Free samples. Gold letters for stores and office windows. Metallic Letter Co., 428 N. Clark, Chicago.

IF YOU ARE A MAN WORTHY OF THE name and not afraid to work I'll bet you $50.00 you can't work for us thirty days and earn less than $200.00. Think I'm bluffing? Then answer this ad and show me up. Openings for managers. Wonder Box sells on sight. The best selling proposition in America to-day. Write Tom Walker, Dept. 143, Pittsburgh, Pa.

WE START YOU WITHOUT A DOLLAR, Soaps, Extracts, Perfumes, Toilet Goods. Experience unnecessary. Carnation Co., Dept. 2860, St. Louis, Mo.

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, furnishing everything; men and women $30 to $100 weekly operating our "Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Booklet free. W. Hillyer Ragsdale, Drawer 29, East Orange, N. J.

AMERICA'S GREATEST TAILORING Line Free. 130 large Swatch Samples.—All Wool—Tailored-to-Order—Union Made—sensational low price. Get outfit at once. Address Dept. 194, Goodwear, 844 Adams, Chicago.

AGENTS—If you write at once we can place you as our local Representative. $15 a day for full time; $2.00 an hour spare time. Exclusive territory; automobile furnished. An exceptional opportunity—Investigate immediately. American Products Co., 9262 Monmouth, Cincinnati, O.

AGENTS: $13.80 Daily (In Advance) Spare time will do. Introduce 12 months' Guaranteed Hosiery. 57 styles, 39 colors for Men, Women, Children; including latest "Silk to the Top" Ladies' Hose. No capital or experience needed. We furnish samples. Silk hose for your own use free. New Plan. Milton Mathews, Road 45010, Cincinnati, Ohio.

## Agents and Help Wanted—*Continued*

AGENTS—New Plan, makes it easy to earn $50.00 to $100.00 weekly, selling shirts direct to wearer. No capital or experience needed. Represent a real manufacturer. Write now for Free Samples. Madison Manufacturers, 564 Broadway, New York.

MAN BETWEEN 25 AND 65 TO ACT AS manufacturer's agent. No investment necessary. A man with selling experience or willing to learn, who can command respect and who is willing to work, will find this a permanent business, with a steady income of from $175 to $425 a month. Write to Thomas P. Judy, Box 966, Dayton, Ohio.

## Detectives Wanted

MEN—Experience unnecessary; travel; make secret investigations; reports; salaries; expenses. Write American Foreign Detective Agency, 114, St. Louis, Mo.

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. Great demand. Excellent opportunity. Experience unnecessary. Particulars free. Write, George Wagner, 2190 Broadway, New York.

## Help Wanted—Female

$6-$18 A DOZEN decorating pillow tops at home, experience unnecessary; particulars for stamp. Tapestry Paint Co., 110 LaGrange, Ind.

## Salesmen Wanted

$40.00 SUITS FOR $23.50! All one price. Union made of finest quality Virgin Wool. You don't have to know anything about selling clothing. We guarantee your success if you are honest and willing to work. Write at once. William C. Bartlett, 850 Adams, Dept. 574, Chicago.

## Farm Lands

$10 IS ALL I ASK DOWN ON 20 ACRES in Mich. Potato Belt. Very easy terms. Near markets, lakes, and streams. Write for particulars now. G. W. Swigart, S-1276 First Natl. Bank Bldg., Chicago.

## Help Wanted—Male

EARN $120 to $250 monthly, expenses paid as Railway Traffic Inspector. We secure position for you after completion of 3 months' home-study course or money refunded. Excellent opportunity. Write for Free Booklet, CM-28, Stand. Business Training Inst., Buffalo, N. Y.

MEN, GET FOREST RANGER JOB; $125-$200 mo. and home furnished; permanent; hunt, fish, trap. For details write Norton, 268 McMann Bldg., Denver, Colo.

MEN WANTING OUTDOOR WORK, qualify for forest ranger position. Start $125 month; cabin and vacation; patrol the forests, protect the game; give tourists information. Write Mokane, Dept. M-10, Denver, Colo.

WANT GOVERNMENT SPECIAL AGENT (Investigator) Position, commence $200 to $250 month? "How to Qualify" mailed free. Write, Ozment, 308, St. Louis, Mo.

$158-$225 MONTH. Railway Postal Clerks. Men 18 up. 25 coached Free. Write immediately. Franklin Institute, Dept. P2, Rochester, N. Y.

## Patents and Lawyers

PATENTS. Send sketch or model for preliminary examination. Booklet free. Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 724 Ninth St., Washington, D. C.

INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED. Patented or unpatented. Write Adam Fisher Mfg. Co., 223, Enright, St. Louis, Mo.

PATENTS—Write for Guide Books and "Record of Invention Blank" before disclosing inventions. Send model or sketch of invention for Inspection and Instructions Free. Terms reasonable. Victor J. Evans Co., 767 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

INVENTORS—Write for our guide book, "How to Get Your Patent," and evidence of invention blank. Send model or sketch for Inspection and Instructions Free. Terms reasonable. Randolph & Co., Dept. 412, Washington, D. C.

# READ ABOUT THIS PLEASANT WAY OF MAKING MONEY

## NO OUTLAY—ALL INCOME

Here's the one real money-making line which involves no delay, no risk, no deliveries, no stock on hand to go bad or out of date—just immediate spot-cash profits.

Hundreds of men and women—office workers, school teachers, business men, housewives, stay-at-homes, factory employees, high school and college students (both boys and girls) have found our spare-time money-making plan a splendid source of extra funds or a second income. These people are all prosperous and happy because their spare-time incomes provide an extra margin of funds above their expenses—funds they can easily use to buy the luxuries they've always wanted but couldn't quite afford.

## SELL US YOUR SPARE TIME

We offer you the same money-making opportunity that is bringing such splendid prosperity to these people. Right in your own neighborhood there is a ready-made business waiting for you simply by forwarding to us the renewal and new subscriptions for Sport Story, Picture Play, Far West Illustrated, and Complete Stories, which you can easily pick up. We will pay you liberally in both commissions and bonus for the pleasant work of looking after this business for us during your spare hours.

Our plan in no way interferes with your regular business. It costs you absolutely nothing and you need no experience. Your spare time may bring you as much as $1.50 an hour—sometimes more.

So, as the first step toward your income—

**CLIP AND MAIL THIS COUPON TO-DAY**

**STREET & SMITH CORPORATION, 79-89 Seventh Ave., New York, N. Y.**

Please send me full details of your easy, spare-time, money-making plan, without obligation.

NAME .....

STREET .....

CITY ..... STATE .....


**$7,500 A Year!**

C. W. Birmingham of Dayton, Ohio, was formerly a clerk in a shop, earning $15 a week. Within a short time he has increased his earnings 900% so that, today, he is making $7,500 a year. The book — "Modern Salesmanship"—proved the first rung in his ladder to Success!


**$10,000 A Year**

C. V. Champion of Danville, Illinois, counts it a "red letter day" when he first read this remarkable book — "Modern Salesmanship." He says "It enabled me to learn more, earn more, and BE MORE!" Today he is president of his company and his earnings exceed $10,000 a year!


**$1,000 A Week**

O. D. Oliver of Norman, Oklahoma, was local manager of a mercantile business for 17 years —finally getting $200 a month. "Modern Salesmanship" opened his eyes and started him on the road to big pay. Today he earns more in a week than he previously earned in 5 months—or $1,000 in the last 7 days!


**700% Increase**

F. G. Walsh of Springfield, Mass., was a clerk earning $1,000 a year, and trying to support a wife and three children. He had to do something. N. S. T. A. training built up his income last year to $7,286 —an increase of over 700 per cent.

# —and They Started By Reading This Amazing Book!

**Now—For a Limited Time Only—This Remarkable Man-Building, Salary-Raising Volume Is Offered FREE to Every Ambitious Man! If You Ever Aspire to Earn $10,000 a Year or More, Read It Without Fail.**

## Where Shall We Send *Your* Copy FREE?

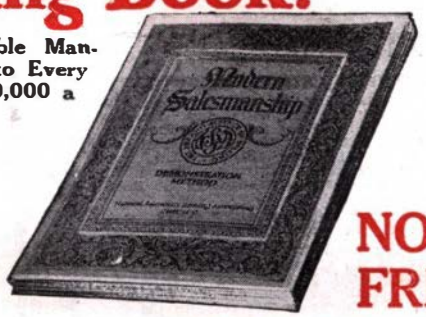
A BOOK! Just seven ounces of paper and printer's ink—but it contains a most vivid and inspiring message that every ambitious man should read. It reveals the facts and secrets that have led hundreds of ambitious men to success beyond their fondest expectations! So powerful and far reaching has been the influence of this little volume, that it is no wonder a famous business genius has called it "The Most Amazing Book Ever Printed."

This vital book—"Modern Salesmanship"—contains hundreds of surprising and little-known facts about the highest paid profession in the world. It reveals the real *truth* about the art of selling. It blasts dozens of old theories, explains the science of selling in simple terms, and tells exactly how the great sales records of nationally-known star salesmen are achieved. And not only that—it outlines a simple plan that will enable almost any man to master scientific salesmanship without spending years on the road—without losing a day or dollar from his present position.

### WHAT THIS ASTONISHING BOOK HAS DONE!

The achievements of this remarkable book have already won world-wide recognition. The men who have increased their earning capacities as a direct result of reading "Modern Salesmanship" are numbered in the thousands. For example, there is E. E. Williams of California who was struggling along in a minor position at a small salary. "Modern Salesmanship" opened his eyes to things he had never dreamed of—and he cast his lot with the National Salesmen's Training Association. Within a few short months of simple preparation, he was earning $10,000 a year! Today he receives as much in 30 days as he used to receive in 365!

And then there's E. G. Kinzie of Northville, Mich. He, too, read "Modern Salesmanship" and found the answer within its pages. He quickly raised his salary from $8 a week to $100 a week, and is now organizing a company of his own. L. A. Tinnes of Minneapolis made over $600 the first month after he had mastered Salesmanship. He had formerly been working as a machinist at $160 a month. And this amazing book led Robert Ellis of New Bedford, Mass., into three promotions and trebled his income.




## NOW FREE

### A FEW WEEKS—THEN BIGGER PAY

There was nothing "different" about these men when they started. Any man of average intelligence can duplicate the success they have achieved—for their experience proves that salesmen are **made**—not born, as some people have foolishly believed.

Salesmanship is just like any other profession. It has certain fundamental rules and laws—laws that you can master as easily as you learned the alphabet. And through the **National Demonstration Method**—an exclusive feature of the N. S. T. A. system of SALESMANSHIP training—you can acquire the equivalent of actual experience while studying. Hundreds of men who never sold goods in their lives credit a large portion of their success to this remarkable training.

### FREE TO EVERY MAN

If we were asking two or three dollars a copy for "Modern Salesmanship" you might hesitate. But it is now FREE. We cannot urge you too strongly to take advantage of this opportunity to see for yourself what salesmanship has done for others—and what the National Salesmen's Training Association stands ready and willing to do for you. Find out exactly what the underlying principles of salesmanship are—and how you can put them to work for you. No matter what your opinion is now, "Modern Salesmanship" will give you a new insight into this fascinating and highly-paid profession. Mail the coupon now!

**NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION**

WORLD'S OLDEST AND LARGEST Exclusive SALES TRAINING INSTITUTION

**Dept. R-320 N. S. T. A. Building, Chicago, Ill.**

National Salesmen's Training Assn.,
Dept. R-320,
N. S. T. A. Building, Chicago, Ill.

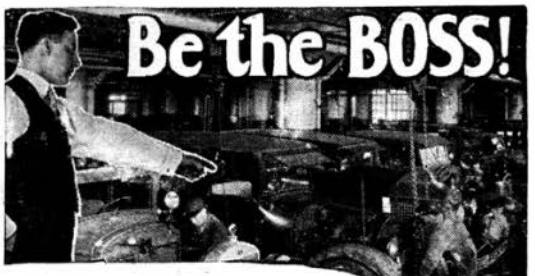
Without cost or obligation you may send me your free book, "Modern Salesmanship."

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

Age.....Occupation.....




## Make $40 to $100 a week in Auto "Up-Keep"

Any man who will take the trouble to expertly learn the mechanical and electrical end of automotive "maintenance" is **sitting pretty** these days. For **up-keep** has become the BIG-MONEY end of the great auto industry. They only build 3 million new cars a year, but there are 22 million autos, trucks, tractors, taxis and buses TO SERVICE.

### *Get away from the grease—* BE AN AUTO EXPERT!

Garages, Service Stations, Repair and Electrical shops are looking for **EXPERTS**—men who are worth $50 to $100 a week. So I urge you to aim for the job HIGHER UP. Be foreman, manager or superintendent. Or go into business for yourself. YOU CAN—if you're only willing to devote a part of your spare time to learning.

### LEARN AT HOME— *the quick, sure, easy way!*

No studying, no memorizing, no trade courses—no lessons or examinations. Here is a better way. You don't have to keep a million facts in your head—if you **know where to put your finger on them.** Eleven noted auto engineers have prepared this material, 2,300 pages, over 2,000 blue prints, wiring diagrams and illustrations. In 5 big volumes. Jiffy-indexed for instant reference.

### Start with the COUPON!

We'll loan you this AMERICAN AUTO ENGINEERING LIBRARY so you can see for yourself how other men JUST LIKE YOU have jumped to better-paid auto jobs. By occasional reading. By LOOKING UP the answer to problems as they arise in the day's work. By using our "question and answer" service. At a cost less than a fourth of the price of trade courses.

**AMERICAN TECHNICAL SOCIETY**
**Dept. A-710, Drexel Ave. & 58th St., Chicago**

Don't Send a Penny

## LOANED FREE!

**American Technical Society,**
**Dept. A-710, Drexel Ave. & 58th St., Chicago, Ill.**

Please loan me for 15 days, free, the 5 volume library of "Auto Engineering." I will pay the few cents delivery charges when books are received, and I have the privilege of returning them at your expense within 15 days, in which case I will owe you nothing. If I decide to keep them, I will send $2, after 15 days, then $3 a month until your special advertising price of $24.80 is paid.

Name.....

Address .....

**Attach a letter stating employer's and reference's names and addresses, or write same plainly in margin.**

## BE A JAZZ MUSIC MASTER


### PLAY PIANO BY EAR

Play popular song hits perfectly. Hum the tune, play it by ear. Self-instruction--no teacher required. No tedious ding-dong daily practice - just twenty brief, entertaining lessons which you master

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# THE POPULAR STORIES

VOL. LXXXV OCTOBER 1, 1927 No. 6


# A Silver Mine and A Widow

By A. M. Chisholm

*Author of "A Child Shall Lead Them," "Larry," Etc.*

**Old Sam Dobbs and "Skookum" Bill, that hardy pair of prospectors, come to town, in this story, well heeled in money and ambition, and have a dickens of a time to keep from parting with their bank accounts and bachelorhood.**

## CHAPTER I.

### THE MYSTERIOUS BOX.

AS Mr. William Hutchins—better and not too favorably known throughout a vast area of northern wilderness as "Skookum" Bill—strolled down a business street in the growing city of Vancouver, he was conscious of a vague feeling of dissatisfaction, of unsatisfied longing hard to define, but comparable, perhaps, to love, or to the desire for a smoke or a drink.

But Bill was not in love; he was smoking an excellent cigar which also was his eighth that day; and just before he had sallied forth from the apartment in the Hotel Vancouver which he occupied jointly with his partner, old Sam Dobbs, he had quaffed a sizable draft of a fluid smelling of smoke—or creosote—slightly wetted down with Capilano water. On the face of it, he should have been entirely content. But the sad fact was that, in spite of unwonted prosperity and the ability to satisfy all reasonable material wants, Bill was suffering from ennui.

In the interests of clarity, let us digress briefly. For years with little luck Bill and old Dobbs had prospected for placer gold. It had been a hard life—

for the glamour with which fiction surrounds the vocation of the prospector is for the most part confined to the fiction aforesaid.

For years, then, they had subsisted on a diet of beans, pork, sour-dough bread, and such meat as could be obtained by the rifle. They had been fly bitten, frozen, starved, and now and then nearly drowned. Occasionally they had found small pocket placers which kept them going; but year in and year out they had made no more money than had sufficed to outfit them scantily and send them forth again upon the long trail.

Then, by a stroke of good fortune, they had sold a silver-lead mineral claim, which they had held for years and considered worthless, to a wandering mining speculator. This claim was recorded as "Le Chien d'Argent," otherwise "The Silver Dog," and was referred to disrespectfully by the partners themselves as "The Dog." The sum obtained for it was small, merely five hundred dollars, but, under the circumstances, velvet. With that, plus the proceeds of a small pocket placer which they had worked out, they had come to Vancouver with the frank intention of "blowing" their stake in the good old-fashioned way.

And then Dobbs, by a phenomenal run of crazy luck at poker, ponies and a flyer in wildcat oil shares, had run their shoe string up to some seven thousand dollars before luck had left him.

By tacit consent they had then abandoned their original plans for getting rid of their money as fast as they could. There was now too much of it. To them, money in any quantity was a new thing, a new responsibility; and they had had a taste of the good things, the material comforts obtainable with it.

They had excellent quarters in a good hotel; they were clothed in the equivalent of purple and fine linen; and they fared sumptuously every day. By every rule of the game, they should have been content. Sam Dobbs was. Not so his partner.

On this particular afternoon Bill was bored. He did not know what to do. And so presently he turned aside and entered a resort euphemistically termed a "beer parlor," thoughtfully established by the province to assuage the perennial thirst of its citizens, to say nothing of that of hopeful and expectant visitors from regions of greater aridity, to whom the legal purchase of real beer by the glass is but a sweet, sad memory.

The parlor, like that of a certain Miss Murphy once celebrated in song, was neat and clean, and set with tables capable of accommodating foursomes. Bill seated himself and ordered a bottle of beer. He drank it and ordered another, merely to put in time. Beer was not Bill's drink. Like most of his kind, he preferred hard liquor which gave speedy action and more of it. He did not consider that drinking beer was drinking, in any proper sense.

When on a "bust" he was accustomed to use it as a chaser instead of water. His unvoiced sentiments as to it were in accord with those of the British innkeeper who indignantly denied that any of his patrons had ever got drunk on beer—though he admitted that occasionally one had burst. Bill merely dallied with this feeble beverage to put in time, as he might have chewed a straw or whittled a stick. It produced no uplift in his mood.

In fact, Bill was lonely, with the loneliness of the stranger in a city who lacks points of contact with its dwellers. So far he had made no acquaintances worth mentioning. Bill was a roughneck. His manner and speech were not in keeping with his excellent raiment.

Thus his own kind, in resorts such as he had been accustomed to frequent, shied from him on sight; and other kinds in other places on hearing him talk. His sole companion had been his partner, and recently that worthy ap-

parently had found interests of which Bill knew nothing. For some days he had seen little of him.

Bill, unconsciously so far, was beginning to long for the life he had been wont to anathematize with all the resources of a rich vocabulary. Though he did not admit it nor even know it, he longed for the freedom of shirt, overalls and moccasins, for the scent of wood smoke at dawn and dusk, the scents of tall timber and deep mosses, racing water and wet sands, and for the unmapped leagues of a wilderness as it came from the hand of the Creator.

No man may escape the influence of environment. For years these things had taken the place of more human contacts. Bill, in his bitter, roughneck heart, loved them. They were part of his life.

He wanted his hills, with their tumbling creeks and white water from the feet of hoary, old glaciers, his camps and the myriad things that went with them. He had lost them, and he had gained nothing to replace them.

This having money, he reflected as he sipped his beer, was not what it was cracked up to be. There was no kick even in getting drunk, because he could do so at any time.

The drunk with the real kick was the one you had after months of hard work and privation, of lip-licking anticipation. Bill did not want to get drunk, mostly because he could if he liked; but he reflected that he might have to do so in self-defense, merely to put in time.

He wondered what old Sam Dobbs was finding to do. For some weeks that worthy apparently had trod the Path called Straight without exhibiting any tendency to stray therefrom into the Primrose Way. This in itself, in him, was suspicious.

Bill's experience of his aged but erratic partner was that storm followed such deceptive calms. A virtuous mounting of the water wagon presaged a deep dive. Nor was it necessarily an alcoholic spree, though it might include one.

Dobbs, for all his years, got into mischief with the facility of a healthy boy. He had the rummaging curiosity of a terrier for the unknown, the unfamiliar; and he regarded Vancouver as his oyster, to be opened. Cunning as an old fox in some respects, beautifully unencumbered by principles, he was as simple as a child in others. He had no more self-consciousness than the child, and in some ways no more prudence. He was erratic enough when sober; but when inebriated he was thoroughly unreliable.

Since their arrival in Vancouver he had got into trouble several times, and out of it by sheer luck. In Bill's opinion, playing him on form, he was about due again.

Deciding against a third bottle of beer as too much liquid ballast, Bill lighted a fresh cigar and wandered forth aimlessly. Now and then he paused to inspect window displays. And thus, halting for an instant before a window of an establishment devoted to the sale of confectionery, he saw his partner within.

Dobbs was standing before the candy counter, behind which, seemingly at his behest, a young lady was filling a large and ornamental box with large and ornamental candies.

Bill stared at this astonishing spectacle. Dobbs was not a candy addict. It may be true, as learned men allege, that a craving for alcohol as contained in sugar is at the bottom of the candy habit. But Dobbs had always taken a shorter and more direct route to satisfy his alcoholic cravings. He had never turned his body into a distillery, though he had made manful attempts to turn the contents of various distilleries into his body. Why, then, was he buying candy? What for? Or for whom? Bill did not like the weather signals. They seemed to portend storm.

Restraining an impulse to enter and solve this mystery by direct question,

he went on unseen. But he halted a few yards down the street, and waited till Dobbs emerged, a parcel under his arm. Dobbs turned in the direction of their hotel. Bill trailed him for a block and then caught up. Dobbs' face at sight of his partner expressed no special pleasure.

"Oh, hello, Bill," he said. "I was just goin' back to the hotel."

Bill fell into step.

"What you got in that parcel?" he asked casually.

"In the parcel?" Dobbs repeated. "Oh, you mean in this parcel? Why, I got a pair of shoes."

Having seen what he had seen, Bill knew that his partner was lying. Suspicion deepened.

"You got a new pair the other day."

"What of it?" Dobbs wanted to know.

"Well, you ain't no centipede," said Bill.

"These city streets wear out your moccasins mighty fast," Dobbs explained plausibly. "And then, it's good to have a pair to change off with."

Bill let it go at that for the moment. In the privacy of their apartment which they shared for purposes of mutual support in strange surroundings, Dobbs poured himself a modest reviver from an extensive stock, absorbed it with satisfaction, lighted a venerable pipe, removed the shoes he was wearing and wriggled his toes in the larger freedom. Bill took advantage of this opening.

"Goin' to put on them new shoes?"

"I'm goin' to rest my feet. These hard pavements is giving me ringbone or something.

"Let's have a look at the shoes."

Dobbs shot him a glance of suspicion.

"What do you want to see 'em for?"

"I thought I might get a pair like 'em if I liked 'em."

"Well, you wouldn't like these," Dobbs assured him. "They ain't the kind you wear."

"Let's see 'em, anyway."

"Come to think of it," said Dobbs with candor, "I dunno's I'm goin' to keep 'em. They seemed to pinch me a little bit, and I b'lieve I'll take 'em back. No use unwrappin' 'em."

"You can do them up again."

"Not neat. They might kick at exchanging."

"Rats!" said Bill. "Let's have a look at them."

Dobbs, after brief hesitation, complied, with obvious reluctance. Slowly he untied the parcel and removed the wrapping. This revealed a highly pictorial box tied with bright ribbon. And his start and exclamation of amazement were of the highest order of art.

"Why, darn *me!*" he exclaimed, with every evidence of lively astonishment. "Them ain't my shoes, at all! Them's candy!"

It would have deceived anybody but his partner; and it might have fooled Bill but for what he had seen.

"Funny, how shoes turn into candy, ain't it," he observed with irony. "Just like one of them old miracles."

"By golly, I know how it must have happened," Dobbs explained ingenuously. "I laid my shoes down on the counter, and some feller must have laid this candy down alongside. Then I picked up his parcel, and he picked up mine. Simple, too. Might happen to anybody."

"Why, you darned old liar," his partner accused him, "you came out of a candy store just before I caught up to you."

"S'pose I did?"

"Didn't you buy this box of candy there?" Bill demanded.

"Me?" Dobbs exclaimed. "What'd I buy candy for?"

Bill shrugged.

"That's what I'd like to know."

"So'd I," Dobbs returned with grand sincerity. "The idea of *me* buyin' candy!"

"Then what were you doin' there?"

"I went in to get one of them ice-cream sodys."

Bill knew his partner for an able and resourceful liar, hard to corner. At times this ability approximated to genius. In the present case he had his reasons for refusing to admit that he had bought a box of expensive candies. Therefore, he was up to something. Bill did not think it advisable to tell his partner all that he had seen. It would not wring confession from him, however much it might strain his ingenuity. Bill used craft.

"Well, I feel like a feed of candy, and I'll eat some of this."

"It'd spoil your appetite for dinner," Dobbs objected hastily.

"I can fix that with a couple of drinks," Bill met this objection with antidotal wisdom.

Dobbs took high moral ground.

"And besides, it wouldn't be right. It ain't our candy."

"Some of it'll be mine," said Bill, and reached for the box. Dobbs swiftly removed it from the danger zone.

"No, it wouldn't be right. It might work a hardship on the owner. Maybe he bought it for his wife."

"Candy like that!" Bill scoffed.

"Well, for his girl, then," Dobbs accepted this reasonable amendment. "What's she goin' to think when she opens the other box and finds a pair of number tens! She'd have a right to claim he'd insulted her."

"She'll open it, anyway."

"Maybe the feller has found out his mistake by now," Dobbs suggested brilliantly. "He may have brought my shoes back and is looking for his candy. So I'd better take it back to the store right away."

"I'll go with you." Bill offered generously.

"You're tired, and you sit and rest," Dobbs returned, with unwonted consideration. "I'll be right back."

Bill did not insist. But that settled it. Dobbs wished to retain the candies intact. He would cache the candy in the check room, and go out and buy a pair of shoes, to make his bluff good. That was easy. But why should he wish to conceal the fact that he had bought candy?

Bill's mind went back to an occasion some years before, when, at a trading post on the outskirts of civilization, he had discovered his partner nicely illuminated, squatting on the ground before two squaws, to whom he was feeding candy from a wooden pail, inserting a fresh piece in the mouth of each with his own fingers as its predecessor gave way before grinding and suction.

These saccharine attentions to the two aboriginal ladies were entirely innocent. Further, the proprieties were safeguarded by the presence of an interested and applauding concourse, which included the ladies' husbands. The explanation was very simple.

Dobbs, following a difference of opinion with another gentleman as to the capacity and staying powers of the aboriginal stomach, had bet twenty-five dollars that two squaws of his nomination could and would consume the contents of a twenty-pound pail of candy in one hour, the loser to pay for the candy.

And he had won his bet handily with both ladies up and ten minutes to go. After which, as a mark of appreciation, he had treated them to candy, and had dismissed them with his blessing and a bottle of vinegar pickles.

But then, Dobbs' purchase of sweets and his conduct generally had been open and aboveboard. And he had been drunk like a man. Now it was different. He was cold sober, and he was trying to hide his trail.

Candy—this kind of candy—in Bill's mind, was associated with females; but Dobbs was not. Dobbs—at least as he himself stated, and so far as Bill knew his past—was a hardened bachelor, wont

to be cynical as to the alleged gentler sex, full of wise saws and modern instances touching their unreliability and the dangers attending association with them.

Not that Dobbs himself had not had love affairs. These were related by him when sufficiently inebriated for sentimental reminiscence; but they belonged to a vanished epoch, that of his youth, when, he admitted frankly, he had been "a young hellion without no sense." He was wont to ascribe his immunity for matrimony partly to sheer luck and partly to a merciful Providence. In all their years of association, Bill had not known him to exhibit serious interest in any woman. But now he was buying candy!

Bill reflected uneasily that since they had come to Vancouver a species of rejuvenation had taken place in Dobbs. He had spruced up wonderfully. He had bought fine raiment; he was barbered and even manicured; he had experimented with hair restorers, and as the process of restoration had proved slow he had bought a wig, around which clustered incidents that are elsewhere related.

It was a distinguished-looking wig, of an iron-gray or Percheron shade. Bill had withered it with scorn, but to no avail. Dobbs clung to it. Sometimes he wore it, and sometimes he did not, producing an effect of dual personality. At night he hung it on the bedpost above his head, whence it depended with the effect of a bird's nest partially dislodged from its limb. But for some days now Dobbs had been wearing this wig steadily.

All these things, possibly innocent one by one, taken together gave Bill uneasiness. They pointed to a perilous rejuvenation. Perhaps Dobbs had arrived at the dangerous age, at which even men of exemplary lives, husbands and fathers in Israel, sometimes make fools of themselves.

When Dobbs returned, he had a parcel under his arm.

"I had luck," he announced ingenuously. "The feller had just brought back my shoes, like I thought he might." In proof of veracity he exhibited a pair of tan shoes of good quality. "It was his girl's birthday, and he'd blew himself to that candy. He was glad to get it back. He said he'd have got in bad if he'd showed up without it."

"He wants to look out he don't get in worse," Bill suggested darkly. "First thing he knows, she'll make him marry her."

Dobbs looked thoughtful for a moment.

"A man don't have to marry a woman just because he gives her candy. I've gave lots of women candy."

"Squaws," said Bill. "Mary Flat Duck, and Susie—what—whatever her name was."

"I don't mean them two. I mean girls, when I was a young feller," Dobbs told him.

"It's a wonder you remember that far back," said Bill.

"A man is only as old as he feels, like Solomon said," Dobbs returned jauntily. "The way I feel, I'm just in my prime."

"Quit kiddin' yourself," Bill advised. "I'll bet them old girls of yours are gran'mas now."

"That ain't my fault," Dobbs returned. "And anyway, they married young back where I was raised. Since we've struck this town and been able to get white man's grub and licker I'm feelin' a lot younger—limber and spry, and diff'rent every way."

"You're actin' diff'rent, too," said Bill with meaning.

"That shows," Dobbs returned with satisfaction, "there's great stuff in us Dobbses, give us a chance. Of course, my dad was cut off sudden at eighty-four, breakin' in a team of colts; but my gran'dad was ninety-two when he was

taken. At that, it was a Jersey bull took him. I wouldn't wonder if I'd live to be a hundred or so."

"You won't have to live so darn much longer, either," Bill commented.

"If you feel as good as me when you're ten years younger'n what I am now, you'll be lucky," Dobbs retorted. "Let's have a drink and go somewhere to eat."

"Keep on drinkin', and you won't see no hundred," Bill warned.

"But I'll see a lot of other things," Dobbs returned optimistically. "This stuff about licker hurtin' you is ign'rant temp'rance superstition. Accordin' to science, the main thing is to be reg'lar in your habits and not to worry. A drink taken reg'lar keeps you from worryin'."

Having applied this scientific principle, they made an excellent meal, followed by a satisfactory smoke. Then Dobbs exhibited symptoms of uneasiness.

"Well, I'm goin' out. I promised a feller I'd meet him."

Ordinarily, he would have included his partner in his plans for the evening. It was plain to the latter that his company was not desired. Dobbs proceeded to don a fresh collar and a new tie, and to take pains with the adjustment of his wig. Bill watched these preparations sourly.

"Sprinkle some scent onto you, too, why don't you?" he suggested, with heavy irony.

"I don't like it," Dobbs returned. "I smell all right the way I am."

"You smell," said Bill, "like a distillery."

"How do *you* know?" Dobbs asked. Which made honors even, Providence having arranged that a man who has had even one drink may not detect the aroma of alcohol on his fellow. And having completed his sartorial arrangements to his liking, he went forth, leaving his partner flat.

## CHAPTER II.

### LADIES LIKE CANDY.

BILL was lonely. If he had been in a camp in the hills a hundred miles from any human being, with the hooting of a night-hunting horned owl and the belly-pinched complaints of coyotes blending with the steady roar of a glacier-fed mountain stream in his ears, he would have been quite contented with his own society; but with the racket of motor cars and trolleys and the ceaseless murmur of the night life of a city rising from the streets, he felt utterly alone and out of it.

In all Vancouver there was no human being on whom he might call for companionship. In these days there were not even sympathetic bartenders with whom the lonesome stranger might converse. Of course, there were plenty of bootleg joints and night clubs, but that evening they did not attract him. They had not the easy camaraderie of the old-time bar.

He lighted a cigar and wandered forth disconsolately. Emerging from the hotel he made his way down street, a lone fish in a swimming school composed in his opinion of suckers and sharks in about equal proportions. Bill had a profound contempt for and distrust of the city dweller. His suspicions were those of the range animal rounded up and corralled. Internally longing for companionship, he would have repelled it if offered, save by one of his own kind, with suspicion of ulterior motive.

He found himself in front of a movie house which that evening offered for the entertainment of a discriminating public a film drama of the North as it is understood in Hollywood. The selected decoy pictures decorating the foyer depicted a young gentleman, in costumes ranging from furs to evening clothes, engaged in defending or kissing a young lady who seemed to approve both processes.

Bill halted and scrutinized with a professional eye a depiction of a frontier rough-house wherein lumberjacks, trappers, miners, Indians and other tough birds mixed it bravely. In details of scenery, costume, personnel and action it differed from all rough-houses in his extensive experience. It intrigued Bill, and he went in to see how they got that way.

The opening scene of the drama filled him with forebodings, which were amply justified as it progressed. With tolerant pity he witnessed the preparation of a night camp by a bearded old trapper who seemed to have learned the art in a girls' school; viewed the construction of a pack and the loading and handling of a canoe with amazement; saw gentlemen cocooned in furs as for a cold sleigh drive start thus clad on a long snowshoe trip; and generally witnessed an alleged representation of life in the northern wilderness for home consumption in Alabama. When in due course the rough-house came along, he found its technic faulty; like unto none of a score of merry mix-ups in which he had played prominent if unpopular parts.

Bill snorted in scorn. The red-blooded novelist, plus the scenario writer, had created a North of their own. His attention wandered from the screen. And then he became conscious that a couple of rows in front of him was a masculine head in somewhat close proximity to another head obviously belonging to a member of the opposite sex. The latter did not interest Bill; but the former, in its distinguished iron-gray hirsute perfection, seemed oddly familiar, even in the semidarkness.

Bill craned sidewise for a better look. And that settled it. The distinguished-looking head of hair topped the bald cranium of Dobbs. The old hellion was with a woman at a movie!

Bill craned again, this time to survey his partner's companion. He could see little but the back of her head and the curve of her cheek. She was no flapper, but she seemed to have it on Dobbs in the matter of years by twenty-five, at least.

Having ascertained this much, Bill ceased to regard the screen and gave gloomy attention to the human element. Dobbs and his lady friend seemed not unduly interested in the play. And just then Bill saw against the screen the shadowy hand of his partner rise, holding a small, dark object in its fingers, which he advanced toward his companion's lips. These opened to receive it. History, say learned men, repeats itself. Dobbs was feeding the lady candy!

As the film drama gave signs of reaching its happy ending, Bill arose dazedly and withdrew. When he reached his room he took a stiff drink to neutralize shock, and grimly awaited his partner's return.

To Bill the outlook was cloudy. That this woman was a gold digger went without saying. But Dobbs was under the delusion that he still possessed a strong attraction for the ladies, and there was no fool like an old fool. Knowing his partner's methods, Bill had no doubt that he had represented himself as a wealthy mining man. Given this combination, anything might happen. It was a muddy crossing. Dobbs was a brand to be snatched from the burning.

When the brand came in, his bearing was jaunty. He was even humming what was obviously intended for a tune. With an airy greeting, he removed his outer garments, hung his wig on the bedpost, rubbed his bare poll in relief, and, attired in a union suit of cerulean hue, lighted his pipe and stretched himself at ease.

"By golly, it's good to get peeled down," he approved this general result.

"Well, you're peeled," Bill commented morosely. "Scalped, too. It's a pity you ain't got a glass eye or a wooden leg to take off. Then you might feel real free and unbelted."

Dobbs disregarded this persiflage.

"What you been doin' this evenin'?" he asked.

"Went to a movie."

"Good show?"

"Rotten. And," Bill added, taking advantage of this opening, "there was a couple in front of me carrying on scand'lous."

"Ought to have been put out," Dobbs commented virtuously.

"They ought to have been run in," Bill amended.

"What were they doin'?" Dobbs asked with interest.

"The feller was feedin' the woman candy," Bill replied.

Dobbs, who was drawing placidly on his pipe, suddenly exhibited symptoms of smoke strangulation.

His partner eyed him coldly

"Yes, sir," he asseverated, "he was feedin' her candy. Shovin' it into her face like an old bird with a worm. Right in public. What do you think of that, now?"

"Why—uh"—Dobbs seemed to have difficulty in formulating his thought, whatever it was—"it's pretty dark in a movie house. Maybe you're mistaken."

"Not a chance," Bill affirmed.

"Oh, well," Dobbs suggested, with large tolerance, "boys will be boys."

"Boys—blazes!" Bill snorted. "This bird was old enough to be a gran'pa. Wearin' a wig. And what," he now demanded in direct accusation, "have you got to say for yourself?"

Many a man, nervous and shaky before the event, is cool enough in the crisis itself. Thus up against the iron, Dobbs recovered poise.

"She's a darn' good-lookin' woman, ain't she?" he said, with brazen satisfaction.

"Is she?"

"You betcha. And she's a real lady, too."

"If she's a lady, what's she doin' with you?" Bill asked.

"You're insultin'!" his partner returned, with hauteur.

"I ain't started yet," said Bill. "A lady! Would a lady let you ram candy down her face like a squaw?"

"Ladies like candy," Dobbs returned, with comfortable conviction. "You don't know much about women, Bill."

"I don't, hey!" said Bill, who at least possessed experience which should have made for knowledge.

"Not a thing," said Dobbs, "if you think there's much diff'rence between women and squaws. All women is squaws at heart. They may make a bluff at bein' diff'rent, but when it comes to bettin' the hand, they know it's weak. They know that a man outholds 'em. So all a man has to do is to play his own hand like he has 'em, and they won't call. You act like a buck, and nine out of ten women will act like squaws. Providence fixed it that way."

Bill refused to debate the obvious wisdom of this alleged providential arrangement.

"All right," he said. "A squaw may slam a knife into you; but a white woman will roll you. And you want to remember it."

"The kind you know will," Dobbs retorted; "but I'm tellin' you this is a lady."

"Yeh, you're tellin' me," said Bill. "But you don't tell me where you picked her up."

"I don't like that there expression, 'pick up,'" said Dobbs. "It ain't refined."

"Are you?" said Bill. "As much as a bear. Where did you run into this dame?"

"I met her all proper at a dance."

"She goes to places like that, does she?"

"It wasn't that sort of a dance," Dobbs returned, with dignity.

"If it wasn't, how did you get in?"

"I can go to places that ain't rough when I get away from you," Dobbs re-

torted. "This dance was all tony and refined. Society folks go there. A professor runs it."

"What kind of a professor?"

"Dancin' professor. They teach dancin' there."

"Are you tellin' me," Bill demanded in amazement, "that you're takin' dancin' lessons?"

"Well, I'm sorter brushin' up a little," Dobbs admitted modestly. "I like to be up to date, and dancin' has changed a lot lately. It ain't near as stand-off a proposition as it used to be. You get closer to your work. And I like it better."

"And this dame was brushin' up, too, was she?" his partner snorted.

"That's it," Dobbs nodded. "We got introduced, and we danced together. That was how it started."

"How what started?" Bill demanded, startled.

"Oh, nothin'," Dobbs replied airily. "I mean, that's how we went and got acquainted."

"What's her name, and who is she?"

"Her name is Mrs. Tolliver."

"Where's her husband?"

"That's sorter hard to say," Dobbs replied, shaking his head. "She's a widder."

"Grass or sod?" Bill queried.

"Sod. Something fetched Tolliver off his limb a year or so ago."

"So now she's takin' dancin' lessons!"

"Well, why not?" Dobbs demanded impatiently. "You wouldn't expect her to shut herself up, would you? It's hard enough to be a young good-lookin' woman, left alone with a lot of responsibilities."

"Why don't she look after them instead of runnin' around to dances?" Bill commented severely. "How old are they?"

"I don't mean kids," Dobbs explained. "I mean property. She comes from California, and she has a lot of it back there. I've often thought," he added meditatively, "that I'd like to live in Californy."

"What!" his partner exclaimed.

"It's a nice climate," said Dobbs, refusing to meet his eye.

"Look a here, you old stiff," Bill exclaimed, "you don't mean to tell me you're thinkin' of *marryin'* this woman?"

"Well, I dunno's I'm exactly *thinkin'* of it," Dobbs replied. "I ain't made up my mind yet. Of course, I like my freedom; but maybe it's time I settled down."

"You'd better get religion, too!" his partner commented, with withering irony.

"I might, later," Dobbs returned. "I was brung up in a religious home, so I can pick it up again easy any time I need it. But there's no hurry."

"Lightnin' will hit you some day," the scandalized Bill predicted. "Who told you this dame had property in Californy?"

"She did."

"Uh-huh! And what did you tell her about yourself?"

"Nothin' much."

"You're a liar," said Bill. "I know your system. You told her you were a big minin' man, didn't you?"

"Well, I said I had int'rests."

"And there you are," said Bill. "She's out to trim you. I know that kind."

"And you sure ought to," was Dobbs' acid comment. "F'r instance, you knew a whole lot about them two society girls that claimed they was out slummin' with their shofer. And they took you for a ride in a stolen car, and slipped you some dope in a shot of hooch, and you woke up in the mornin' out under heaven in a vacant lot. Oh, yes, you're wise, all right."

Bill flushed. The episode thus brutally outlined was painful to recall.

"I was drunk, anyway," he submitted in defense. "And those girls didn't fool me for a minute, only for the hocused

drink. But you ain't drunk; you're just foolish. And the gall of you," he went on, with justifiable indignation, "to think that a young, good-lookin' woman with property—takin' your say-so for it—would marry a ringboned, spavined, busted-up, wigwearin', old mountain rat like you! Why, darn you, she wouldn't look twice at you, except that she thinks she can nick your roll!"

"Is that so!" Dobbs snorted, deeply stung by this intimate personal description. "If you think it's only big roughnecks, with heads of hair growin' on solid bone, that make a hit with women, you got another guess comin'. Lemme tell you, brains and manners count with women."

"And where do *you* win if they do?" his partner demanded.

"That's all right," Dobbs returned. with dignity. "I've forgot more about women than you ever knew. I was goin' around with gals before you were born."

"About forty years before," his partner suggested.

"You're a liar!" Dobbs retorted, with heat. "To hear you talk, you'd think I was a sort of Methusalem."

"You might be his uncle," said Bill. "You old stiffs ain't got no sense. You've been puttin' it up to this dame that you're worth a million or so. I'll bet you told her you owned the Premier Mine, and half the Sullivan."

"Well, you got to put up a front," Dobbs defended his alleged flights of fancy. "She has valuable Californy properties. And I thought if she had money lookin' for investment, I might sell her The Dog; so I ain't as crazy as you think."

Now The Dog, alluded to before, was the mineral claim which the partners had been glad to sell for five hundred dollars. Subsequent to their arrival in Vancouver, it had figured in a confidence game of which they were to be the victims, and might have been had the bait been any other claim on earth. The story of that has been related. Its bearing on the present situation was that the partners were in possession of a duly executed transfer purporting to convey to them this very claim, for a stated consideration of five thousand dollars. Dobbs, with an exhibition of manual dexterity highly creditable, had "pinched" this transfer in the confusion attendant upon the failure of the confidence game aforesaid, and now held it. As it was unlikely that it would be disputed by anybody, it constituted good prima-facie evidence of title.

In that respect it was so good that Dobbs, taking a leaf out of the con men's book, had endeavored to sell the claim to a trustful stranger—who unfortunately turned out to be a detective. This well-meaning effort had resulted in a visit to police headquarters, on a charge of attempting a confidence game. The charge had broken down in face of evidence of genuine ownership; but they had been warned to go easy in the future as to their selling methods. This admonition had slid off Dobbs as water from a duck; but it had made Bill a trifle gun shy.

"Have you forgot what that guy at police headquarters told us?" he now demanded.

"Talkin' through his hat," Dobbs returned scornfully. "He owned up we had a right to sell any claim we had. And The Dog is ours. We got the papers to prove it."

Bill took moral ground.

"Do you mean to tell me you'd sell that hole in the ground to a widow?" he demanded. For The Dog was high in the hills, remote from everybody and everything, and the sole development on it was their original prospect hole.

"Why not?" Dobbs returned.

"Why, darn it, because she's a widow!" Bill protested.

"There's a lot of sympathy wasted on widows," said Dobbs. "Most of them

are in luck, if they only knew it. And about sellin' her this claim, you can't tell. It might make her a million. And all I was goin' to ask her for it was ten thousand."

"All!" Bill snorted.

"Every last darned cent!" his partner returned magnanimously. "If a claim's worth anything at all, it's worth that."

"And we were glad to sell it for five hundred not two months ago," Bill pointed out.

"That was our innocence," Dobbs asserted. "We was simple, trustin' prospectors, and we got stung. We'd ought to have had more. This is the way to get it."

"I don't stand for sellin' The Dog to no widow," Bill announced. "You talk about marryin' this one and settlin' down! And you'd sell her a hole in the ground, forty miles from anywhere, so high up them angels has got to zoom to clear it with their wings, under snow most of the year, with no buildin's and no trails, and no timber and no nothin'! Ain't you got no conscience at all?"

"Too much conscience is as bad as a weak stomach," Dobbs returned. "I got all I can get along with, and sometimes more. But you don't savvy the play, Bill. Now look a here. If she can put up ten thousand, cash, it'd be a good sign, wouldn't it?"

"What d'yee mean—a good sign?"

"Well," Dobbs explained modestly, "it'd help me to decide how my affections was. And then if I married her, The Dog'd be in the fam'ly, sort of. So she couldn't lose."

Bill gaped at his partner.

"Do you mean to tell me you'd marry this dame if she can show ten thousand bucks?"

"Well, not just one ten thousand," Dobbs returned frankly. "It wouldn't be enough. I ain't that merc'nary."

"By gosh," Bill stated with conviction, "you ain't got no more principle than a wolverine."

"How much you got yourself?" Dobbs demanded, with some asperity and equal justice.

"If I ain't got none, I got double what you have," Bill retorted. "If ever there was a mean old rooster! And also one prize darn fool. Why, you old stiff, if you had the sense of a goslin', you know that dame is out to trim you—and if she does, you deserve it. But all the same I ain't goin' to see you rolled."

"I can look after my stack," Dobbs stated, with confidence. "I was born in a fox country."

"The last time I heard you brag how wise you were," said Bill, "you went out right after, and dropped close to fourteen hundred in one afternoon and night on ponies and poker."

"You can't win all the time," Dobbs defended this depletion of his exchequer. "I'd have got it back the next day on a seven-to-one swamp rabbit runnin' on a muddy track—only you wouldn't sign no check for bettin' money."

The reference was to a prudent arrangement insisted upon by Bill, whereby their capital had been deposited in a bank, whence it was withdrawable only by their joint check. This excellent arrangement still subsisted.

"I kept you from going broke," Bill returned. "Only for me, you'd have blown your whole stake goin' against brace games."

"I could have framed one myself," Dobbs pointed out sadly.

"Forget it!" Bill scoffed. "You had a streak of crazy luck, and it quit you. This town's too crooked for you, and you want to remember it."

"The town may be some crooked," was Dobbs' reluctant tribute, "but all the same I win about seven thousand in her. And before I quit I'll run it up to seventy. Or more. All I want is the chance. When it comes to bein' crooked, they got nothing on me. I'll frame something, and I'll clean 'em like a dog licks a skillet."

"You don't get no money to gamble on from me."

"I ain't asked you yet. Maybe I'll get it somewhere else.

"Where?" Bill wanted to know.

"From my wife—if things break right," said Dobbs beatifically. "Good night, Bill, and pleasant dreams."

Bill's response to this kindly wish, albeit couched in phrase distinctly personal, was balm to Dobbs' soul. He grinned in the darkness which followed a sudden throw of the switch. It was not so often that he got Bill's goat. More often, Bill got his. When the process was reversed he was especially pleased. Relinquishing his pipe with regret, since smoking in the dark lacks piquancy, he parked it on a chair by his bedside conveniently against his awakening, and passed into innocent slumber.

## CHAPTER III.

### DOBBS' NEW IDEA.

THERE is a hoary tale to the effect that an old prospector, noted on earth for mendacious statements, somehow reached heaven, and there from force of earthly habit started a rumor of a phenomenally rich gold strike in the nether regions. In a twinkling heaven was cleared of such prospectors as had attained thereto; and last of all the originator of the rumor himself joined the stampede, on the theory that, after all, there might be something in it.

Old Sam Dobbs was a remarkable liar when sober, and rather better when drunk. At the right stage of inebriety his flights of fancy occasionally had approached genius. There had been occasions when he had been so good that he almost believed himself. And there was this about it, that his best efforts were entirely impromptu. To adopt ring phraseology, he could start a fictional punch from any position, without telegraphing it.

In the present case, what he had told his partner concerning the lady from California had a very limited basis in fact to support the structure he had reared thereon. That is, he had met her much as he had stated, had learned that she hailed from the Golden State, and was more or less happily widowed; and that was really all he knew about her. Some casual remarks she had let fall might justify the inference that she possessed a share of worldly gear; but he had no definite information as to that. Before his partner's personal remarks had seemed to constitute a challenge to turn his fancy loose, he had never thought of matrimony, nor of selling her The Dog.

At an early hour he awoke from an untroubled sleep, and immediately reached for his pipe, lighted it, and grunted with satisfaction as he drew the invigorating smoke of the "heel" into his lungs. He lay smoking happily, mentally contrasting this pleasant awakening with those of years of casual camps, when he had thrown off a ragged blanket and risen stiffly in the chill dawns, shiveringly to kindle a fire, bolt a hasty meal of flapjacks and fat pork, and hit an ungodly trail again. No more of that life for him, if he knew it. Them days, in classic phrase, were gone forever.

Lying smoking in solid comfort, he reviewed his highly imaginative effort of the night before, and—here the analogy to the heavenly prospector comes in—he began to wonder if there might not be something in it.

A peculiarity of mankind is the dominance of any one angle of mental vision, and the large blind spots produced thereby. Change the angle a trifle, and the whole view becomes different. What was obscure may be clear; that which seemed trifling may suddenly loom as important. With a new idea things take on new values.

This was what happened to old Sam Dobbs; for as he lay smoking he chanced

to recall certain references the lady had made, unheeded by him at the time, to the remarkable development of California and the increase of real-estate values, due among other causes to recent oil discoveries. She had cited the case of a woman who had bought a few acres of land for a song, which were now worth as much as all the songs of the late Mr. Caruso.

He had thought nothing of it at the time. But now, because he had lied merrily to his partner, he got a new angle of vision. Was it possible that this case was the lady's own? She had been reticent; but this very reticence now intrigued Dobbs. Solid people didn't brag of their possessions. They didn't need to. Indeed, prudence counseled otherwise. He recalled other stray remarks. Was it possible that he had been entertaining unaware a widowed financial angel?

The more he thought of it, the more the possibilities seemed to go more than colors to the pan, to contain at least a few grains of fine gold. At the very least, it was worth looking into. He made up his mind to find out all he could without delay. What bearing, if any, this might have on his future relation to the lady, he left open, to be decided later.

Dobbs, as has been said, was a hardened bachelor. Marriage in his own case he had long ceased to regard as a possibility; but then, he had never considered the possibility of a helpmate with money. When Captain Cuttle uttered his celebrated dictum to the effect that the bearings of an observation depend upon its application, he said what is popularly termed a mouthful.

Dobbs was a gay old bird, still capable of flapping a strong wing in breezes of ladies' favors, which now unfortunately seldom blew. As to the ladies, like many gentlemen of mature years, he now preferred 'em in their twenties. He regarded the example of King David, who, according to unimpeachable authority, took a young wife in his declining years, as constituting an excellent and authoritative precedent, if one were required.

The widow, though undoubtedly out of the twenties, was a pleasant companion. For one thing, she made no tactless references to disparity in age, such as younger and more frivolous females had had the bad taste to indulge in, even when eating and drinking at his expense.

At any rate, having made the bluff to his partner, he would keep it up. He would keep Bill guessing.

At this point in Dobbs' construction of air castles, Bill awoke; and, as his cheery morning greeting took the form of a hearty curse directed at the universe in general, Dobbs recognized that metaphorically his partner was getting out of bed on the wrong side.

Bill possessed an uncertain temper, apt to explode at trifles, or, indeed, for no obvious reason at all. On the other hand, serious matters, crises, threatened disasters found him and left him coldly calm—an illogical combination by no means unusual in man, the logical. Occasionally, he acquired a grouch while he slept, and woke with it fully developed. This seemed to be one of the occasions.

"Good morning, Bill. Fine morning," Dobbs offered brightly, in an endeavor to check the rising tide—which was as successful as the fabled attempt of King Canute. Bill scowled at the sunshine which dared to invade his lair.

"The hell it is!" he observed, in tones of deep, personal injury, and looked around for something more tangible than the sunshine on which to fasten a temporary inward resentment against all created things. He found it in the ancient brier which fumed between his partner's lips. "What the devil are you smokin' that dash asterisk pipe in here before breakfast for?" he demanded, in effect.

Dobbs was surprised and pained at this unexpected and unkind reference

to his faithful companion and fount of solace. Never before had Bill complained of his early-morning habits.

"You smoke before breakfast yourself—when you don't chaw," he reminded him.

"I don't smoke a pipe like that," Bill returned. "The smell of it'd empty an Injun tepee."

"This pipe's as sweet as a nut," Dobbs maintained. "Take a draw of her, and see."

"It is, if a bum egg is," Bill growled. "'Take a draw of her!' Think I want to poison myself? It's a wonder it don't gas you and kill you. Ain't you got no nose, at all?"

"What nose I got, I keep out of other folks' business, anyway," Dobbs retorted, abandoning the defensive as useless. "You never kicked about this pipe before, and I've smoked her for years. Also, I'll keep on, and if you don't like it, you can move. You got a grouch, that's all. Take a drink, and run some water onto your hide, and forget it."

Bill's acknowledgment of this excellent advice was forceful rather than grateful. Nevertheless, he complied with the first two suggestions. Relations were still slightly strained as they descended to breakfast.

Dobbs ordered grapefruit. When it arrived, he scrutinized it critically.

"What kinda grapefruit is this, waiter?"

"Florida grapefruit, sir."

"Take it away," Dobbs commanded, "and bring me Californy. And in the future no other kind."

"The Florida fruit is considered superior, sir," the servitor ventured.

"By the lovely!" Dobbs roared formidably. "Are you tryin' to tell me what I want to eat?"

Bill eyed his partner as the waiter retired in disorder.

"Gettin' partic'lar, ain't you?"

"I want what I want," Dobbs stated succinctly. "Also, I git it."

"A month ago you didn't know what a grapefruit was."

"Like blazes I didn't!" Dobbs snorted.

"The first time you ordered them, you asked for a big bunch of them," Bill reminded him. "When the waiter brought you a whole one, you claimed it wasn't what you ordered. And you kicked because it wasn't sweet."

"That waiter was too fresh, and I was just kiddin' him," Dobbs stated resourcefully.

"What did you send back this Florida fruit for?"

"Well, I might as well get used to eatin' the Californy kind," Dobbs told him, with an attempt at coyness.

"Look a here, you old stiff," said Bill. "How much were you lyin' to me last night. I know you were lyin', but how much?"

"Lyin'!" Dobbs exclaimed, in accents of deep injury. "Me? You're my partner, Bill, and I wouldn't——"

"Cut it out!" Bill rasped. "Don't I know you? You lied about that candy, and about them shoes, and you tried to lie about bein' at that movie. You've got so's you can't tell the truth except by accident, and you don't have many accidents. I believe you lie to yourself Now, you tell me—is this dame a biscuit shooter or a manicure, or what?"

"Nothin' of the sort," Dobbs denied, with dignity.

"Has she got any money out of you yet?"

"Course not. She don't need to. Don't I tell you——"

"Well, she will," Bill prophesied, unheeding. "Old stiffs like you are easy. She's stringin' you like a fish. You watch your step. I'm tellin' you."

"Nobody can work them tricks on me," Dobbs scoffed. "And, anyway, she ain't that kind."

"They never are—till they spring it on you," Bill said cynically. He paraphrased the dictum of the late Mr. Fitzsimmons. "The older they are, the

harder they fall. Go to it. But don't say I didn't warn you."

"I won't," Dobbs assured him, with pretended gratitude. "It's mighty kind of you to wise me up to women, Bill. And I'll try not to lap up no doped hooch, and not wake up in the mornin' lyin' out on ash heaps alongside total strangers and dead cats. Is there any other pointers you'd like to give me?"

The additional pointers this reference called forth from the indignant Bill dealt with his partner's future, both mundane and eternal. Dobbs ignored their personal nature.

"It'd be a darned sight better for you," he said virtuously, "if you'd quit your drinkin' and gamblin' around in dives with strangers, and try to live a decent, respectable life, like me."

"When do you start it?" Bill asked.

"I ain't been drunk—that is, to speak of—for near a month," Dobbs stated, with modest pride.

"That means you're due," Bill told him.

"No, I ain't," Dobbs retorted. "Course, I expect to take a few drinks every day, like before meals and when I feel like 'em. But I ain't goin' to get drunk. I've cut that out."

"There's two times you pull that stuff," his partner told him from long experience. "One is just before you go on a bat, and the other is when you're gettin' over one. I remember once you sprung it when we come in from about six months up the Dease. And inside a week you had me barred out of our shack; and when I bust in the door, you were in a corner tryin' to stand off pink rats with a pick handle."

Dobbs did not deny this impeachment. He regarded the bygone temporary hallucination, thus succinctly outlined, merely as an interesting episode in a full life. As an experience, he considered it educative. Its only drawback in retrospect was that it seemed to constitute a reflection on his capacity, of which he was pardonably proud. He was of opinion that on that occasion he had not been at the top of his form.

"It was awful hooch I went up against that time," he admitted. "But all the same, if my stummick had been right, I wouldn't have been overrun by them colored rodents. Anyway, it learned me a good lesson."

"That you can't kill them kind of rats with a pick handle?" Bill suggested.

"Well, I guess you can't," his partner conceded. "You've just got to let 'em fade out. But I mean it learned me it's bad for the stummick to go six months without a drink. Since then I've been more careful of it."

"I'll say you have," Bill concurred. "It must be pickled good by this time. And so *you* will be before long."

"No, I won't," Dobbs affirmed, with confidence.

"How do you know you won't?"

"I guess maybe it's woman's influence," Dobbs stated reverently. "A woman's influence is a great thing, Bill. You ought to try it. It sort of stiffens a man against temptation."

"And it sends some old stiffs bughouse, if you ask me," Bill amended scornfully. "Woman's influence—huh! Half the time they drive a man to drink."

"That's when you're married to 'em," Dobbs qualified. "I'm speakin' of before. Why, a girl got me to sign the pledge once, when I was a young feller."

"You told me about that," said Bill. "You'd got throwed out of the bar the night before, and it made you sore at the liquor business. That was why you signed. And at that, you didn't stay with it. Where was this woman's influence you talk about?"

"Well, I'll tell you," Dobbs explained. "When she landed me with this pledge, she said for me to come to her any time I felt the mad cravin' for licker, and she'd help me to stand off the Demon Rum. So her and me stood him off the

next night mighty successful, till her old man hollered down to ask if that young squirt—meanin' me—had brought his blankets. He was a rough-tongued old rooster. So to play it safe I stayed away for sev'ral nights. But the next evenin' I dropped around, darned if she hadn't signed up another young drunkard, and he'd come for help, too. Split two ways like that, her influence wasn't long enough to go round. But till she overplayed her hand it was all right. She was a Meth'dist. Did you ever go around with a Meth'dist girl, Bill?"

"What's the difference?" Bill countered.

Dobbs shook his head sadly.

"I guess it's a matter of taste, like whisky. Most of it's good, but some brands hit you a little better and seem to have more kick, that's all."

"Is this darn widow of yours a Meth'dist?" Bill queried.

"By gum, she may be!" Dobbs replied. "That may account for it."

"For what?" Bill asked.

"For how we took to each other on sight," Dobbs explained. "Us Meth'dists——"

"You got your gall," Bill interrupted, "claimin' to be a Meth'dist—or anything else."

"I was brung up a Meth'dist," Dobbs stated, with pride.

"They'd hate to hear it," his partner commented.

"Well, you got to be somethin'," Dobbs put forward defensively.

"*I* ain't," said the unregenerate Bill. "I ain't nothin'."

"You're a scoffer," his partner told him; "and that's a darn sight worse than nothin', as you'll find out on the last day."

"At that," said Bill, "I'll take a chance on gettin' as good or a better break than you."

"I don't want you nowheres around me when that day comes," Dobbs retorted. "I hate to lay down on a partner, but that's one time when every gent paddles his own canoe. You bet, when I pull for the shinin' shore, I ain't goin' to be swamped by your load of sin."

"You'll be loaded below the gunwales with your own," Bill predicted. "The longer you live the worse you get. And the latest is tryin' to skin widows with minin' claims. I wouldn't stand for that if she was a genuine box-and-sod widow. But she ain't. She's a gold digger, that's what!"

"You don't know a darn thing about her," Dobbs pointed out. "Where do you get off at, makin' them cracks about a real, refined lady? I don't like 'em, I don't."

"Nobody wants you to," Bill returned. "If you ain't got sense enough to see that she's out for your roll, I can't help it. Instead of you takin' her with The Dog, she'll take you; and she'll take you for the count, if you ain't careful."

"When you come down to see us in Californy," Dobbs said hospitably, "I'll have a nice, shady spot fixed up in our orange grove, where you can sit and drink the best of bootleg and smoke my dollar cigars while you're watchin' my oil well spout. I'll sure use you white, Bill, and so will the wife."

With which enticing prospect he rose from the table, and, thoughtlessly leaving his partner to pay both breakfast checks, disappeared.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A SELLING TALK.

AT another Vancouver breakfast table two ladies discussed Dobbs with a frankness which would have amazed him and delighted Bill had either been privileged to overhear. The ladies were Mrs. Tolliver and a certain Mrs. Jackson.

Mrs. Tolliver possessed dark hair and eyes, rather pleasing features, and even, white teeth which seemed to have been bestowed upon her by a bountiful Providence, as did her complexion. Mrs.

Jackson was slightly older, fair, with a general air of knowing her way about.

"More coffee, please, Laura," said Mrs. Jackson. "Well," she asked, as she added sugar and cream, "how did you get along with old 'Wiggy?' "

Mrs. Tolliver thus familiarly addressed, frowned slightly.

"He's a funny old bird, May. I don't know just what to make of him."

"If he won't talk about himself, he's a new kind of man to me."

"Oh, he talks; but I don't know how much to believe."

"Get him soused," Mrs. Jackson advised practically. "Sometimes they spill a little truth that way."

Mrs. Tolliver shook her head.

"You can't tell what stuff an old Indian like him would pull. He always has a drink or two under his belt, but not enough to give him an edge. I told him I didn't approve of men who drank."

"Out-of-date stuff," Mrs. Jackson commented.

"I told you he was a funny combination," said her friend. "He's an old reprobate himself; but at that he doesn't approve of modern women—dress, cocktails or cigarettes.

"That's a man for you!" Mrs. Jackson exclaimed. "He wants to raise all the Cain himself. Well, what are you going to do with him—marry him?"

"That old roughneck! I tried one husband."

"I tried two."

"Well, both yours are dead," Mrs. Tolliver pointed out with slight envy. "They left you well fixed, too. You took a trip around the world, and now you winter in California."

"That was a crazy stunt of yours," Mrs. Jackson commented. "Why did you tell Wiggy you came from California, when you've never seen it."

"I don't know. Perhaps from hearing you talk about it. I never thought I'd see him again. He was talking about the mines he owned, and I thought I'd come back with something. You'd better give me some more dope on it, too. Maybe I can sell him that bunch of worthless California oil stock I got stung with."

"Do you think he has money?"

"That's what I don't know. I dropped a hint that I owned considerable California property, and he pricked up his ears. He's coming to take me for a drive this afternoon, and I'll try to get a better line on him. I might make an honest dollar. Who knows?"

"If you're short——" her friend began.

"I know you'd lend me money or give it to me. You're a jewel, May. But I make my own living. If I can get a few extra dollars out of this old roughneck, it will serve him right."

The equipage in which Dobbs arrived early in the afternoon glittered from a fresh wash and polish, and so did he. The lady was ready, a most commendable if unusual trait in woman, and Dobbs instructed the driver to head for Stanley Park and keep driving till further orders.

Having thus arranged the immediate future, he turned his attention to his fair companion, and presently exhibited a large curiosity as to California and its natural resources, slightly embarrassing to one who had no firsthand acquaintance with either. The information he received would have amazed even a California publicity bureau; but it went with Dobbs, who was merely making an approach to more personal information. When he judged the time ripe, he tactfully introduced the matter of the lady's bereavement.

"It must have been awful tough on you when your husband left shore," he observed, with tender sympathy.

Mrs. Tolliver with a sigh admitted that it had been.

"What fetched him off his limb?" Dobbs queried, with kindly interest.

"Was it sudden, or one of them lingerin' things?"

To save trouble, Mrs. Tolliver made it sudden. A car accident seemed as good a way out as any. That, she told Dobbs, was responsible for her widowhood.

"Well, it's better when it's sudden," Dobbs remarked, with comforting philosophy. "It may be more of a shock, but it's a darn sight less expensive; and if a gent is goin' to get the gaff he might's well get it good and have it over with. And then, if there's accident insurance, it helps a woman bear up under sorrow."

That, Mrs. Tolliver admitted with womanly resignation, was so.

"Man is as grass," Dobbs observed, noting with satisfaction this tacit admission, "and husbands ain't no diff'rent. 'Man wants but little here below, and don't want it so darn long,' like Solomon says. No, a man don't want so much for himself. He can make out with grub and clo'es and tobacker and a few drinks a day."

"My poor husband drank too much," Mrs. Tolliver said, with a sigh of regret for this lovable weakness of the departed.

"Some married men do," said Dobbs. "It ain't to be wondered at. I mean," he added hastily, "bein' so happy, married, they take itto celebrate a little."

"If I ever marry again," Mrs. Tolliver stated firmly, "it will not be to a man who drinks."

Dobbs, who had imbibed a generous jolt to fortify himself against an afternoon of drought, and had endeavored to camouflage the fortification aforesaid with peppermint, took another mint.

"I take these for my cough," he explained. "It's due to exposures and hardships in the hills, but it's clearin' up. I don't approve of licker myself, except as a medic'nal bev'rage. It's an awful habit when it gets a holt on a man, and a real curse if he's where he can't get a drink. How is it," he asked with lively interest, "down in Californy?"

"My poor husband got too much liquor without any trouble. I'm glad you don't drink, Mr. Dobbs."

"I used to, once," Dobbs admitted frankly. "Yes, I used to drink the stuff. But a girl got me to sign the temperance pledge."

"She must have had great influence with you," Mrs. Tolliver told him, with a shade of jealousy in her tone. "Who is she?"

"Why, I sort of forget her name," Dobbs replied. "I signed up more to oblige her than because I needed to. But, havin' signed, of course I stayed with it. This was quite a while back, when I was a young feller. It'd be pretty close to fort—er—that is, it'd be about fourteen years ago."

"Oh, as long as that!" Mrs. Tolliver sighed in relief.

"Or, longer," Dobbs affirmed. "But, to come back to what I was sayin', though a man don't want much but bare necessities for himself, it's diff'rent when he has a wife. It's his duty to provide for her. What's the use of him makin' the bluff of endowin' her with his worldly goods if, when he goes through them pearly gates, he leaves her outside to take in washin'?" And as Mrs. Tolliver concurred in this exposition of husbandly responsibility, he went on: "I sure hope Tolliver didn't drink it all up, but left you well provided for?"

Mrs. Tolliver admitted that though the deceased had his weaknesses, they were not financial. On that score she had no need to worry, unless cataclysmic disaster overwhelmed California.

"Now ain't that fine!" Dobbs congratulated her and himself. "But just the same, them properties and investments are likely a worry for you to look after. There's a lot of sharks ready to take advantage of an unprotected woman."

Several unprincipled individuals, Mrs.

Tolliver admitted, had endeavored to do so in her case. A woman was regarded as fair game, without the advantage of a close season. However, with the help of her lawyers' and brokers' advice, she got along—at which reference Dobbs shook his head.

"Lawyers just help you to go to law, and brokers just help you to go broke. What you'd ought to have is the advice of some disint'rested bus'ness man of experience, who has your int'rests at heart."

"But where can I find one?"

"Well, of course, you ain't known me long," Dobbs replied modestly; "but I've had consid'rable experience in big deals, and I'm always glad to help a lady. Now, since you ask my advice, speakin' offhand, I don't like the idee of you havin' all your eggs in one basket—the basket bein' Californy. They have earthquakes down there, and now they got prohibition, which may be mostly a bluff, but is unsettlin' to bus'ness, and makes capital shy and labor discontented. Them ec'nomic conditions has to be studied. I b'lieve you'd ought to copper some of them Californy investments—I mean pull out of 'em—and put your money into something up here in B. C."

"Buy Vancouver property, do you mean?"

"Gosh, no!" Dobbs disclaimed emphatically. "Whatever you do, don't let no one talk you into that."

"But isn't Vancouver growing?"

"She may be growing," Dobbs admitted, "but also she grows too many crooks. They've even tried to trim me, and you wouldn't last a minute. No, don't invest in no city property. It's too risky. Houses burn down and need repairs, and you can be taxed out of your boots on vacant lots."

"Perhaps I should invest in farm property."

"That's worse," Dobbs told her. "You talk to any farmer, and he'll tell you he's broke. Nothin' will grow right; and if it did, there's no market; and if there was, the freight rates wouldn't leave no margin; and if they did, the commission houses wouldn't. He'll tell you all he's stickin' to farmin' for is the hope that Providence'll send a sucker along to buy him out. No, farmin' property is a little the worst investment they are."

"Then what is there left?"

"Why, there's B. C.'s natural resources," Dobbs declared proudly; "and them's timber, fish, scenery and whisky for tourists, and minerals. But timber burns down and blows down; fish can quit runnin'; and the government gets the profits of the whisky, while as for scenery there's so much nobody can corral it.

"So all there is left of safe investments is minerals, but that's lots. Minerals is solid as the hills they live in. Nobody ever heard of ore movin' till somebody got ready to move it. It can't burn up or blow down. There it is, just waitin' to be mined. When you got a good, producin' mine, you got something that turns out millions.

"You look up a hill, and you don't see nothin' but rocks, and maybe a goat or two browsin' along the ledges, and an eagle flyin' over, and snow settin' on the peaks, and she's miles back from anywhere. Maybe you say to yourself: 'Gosh! this stuff ain't good for nothin'. What was she made for?' But there's where you'd be makin' a big mistake, and also doubtin' divine purpose, which is too big for us to savvy. Them hills was put there for something, and they was put there to hold ore.

"Pay ore as a rule ain't on the surface, but down a ways; and the reason is that if it was on top, where even a mininʼ expert could find it—providin' he'd know what it was if he did, which is more than most of 'em do know—it'd all have been grabbed long ago.

"Now, what was all them great pro-

ducin' mines at first? Just hills and rocks, like I've been tellin' you about, with a prospect hole put down by some ol' mountain rat of a prospector, livin' on beans and bannock and porkypine, durn near out of tobacker and dyin' for a drink, but stickin' to it in spite of them hardships. That's all them mines was at first. So, when you look at a claim, you don't want to see it the way it is. You want to think you see that bare hill buzzin' with industry, with buildin's and a compressor plant, and di'mond drills and maybe a tram and an ore dump. You want to have a lot of faith in that hill. The Good Book says that faith moves mountains; and that means ore, because it's the only thing in 'em worth movin'. And right there you got scriptural authority and encouragement to buy a mine in B. C."

"I never heard of that before," Mrs. Tolliver confessed, with truth.

"Lots haven't," said the commentator, with equal truth. "It's one of them parables that needs to be expounded to most folks. There's a lot about minin' in the Scriptures, like where it tells about a place called 'Gopher,' where Solomon got his gold from. Likely they called it 'Gopher City' in them days, and I'll bet she was a wide-open camp, judgin' from other towns we read of. She's like one of them lost mines, because nobody knows where she was located. Still, I'd like to have a try for her; and the next time I go over to the Holy Land maybe I will."

"Have you been in the Holy Land?" Mrs. Tolliver queried, with interest. "Do tell me about it."

And Dobbs, regretting his incautious remark, hedged.

"There ain't much to tell about it. It was hot and sandy, and the flies was bad, and so was the whis—I mean, it was hard to get a cool drink. So I didn't stay long."

"But of course you saw Jerusalem?"

"Oh, yes," Dobbs was forced to admit. "I seen her."

"What was it like? Do tell me," she urged.

"Well, Jerusalem ain't so much," Dobbs returned. "Fact is, she's a pretty dead town. A lot of the buildin's looked sorter old, and needed paint. She ain't much to look at, now."

"I am so interested in the Holy Land," said Mrs. Tolliver. "Of course you saw the River Jordan. Won't you tell me something about it."

Dobbs, unable to refuse, did the best he could. His description included a steamboat excursion, in the course of which numerous places of historical interest had been viewed. These included a rushy point where Pharaoh's daughter was alleged to have found the infant Moses; a landing and purchase of grapes at Naboth's vineyard; and a drink from the well celebrated in the triangular story of Leah, Rachel and Jacob. On the homeward way, in the moonlight, a negro quartet had rendered appropriate song, such as a ditty concerning Pharaoh's daughter and little Moses, and "Roll, Jordan, Roll." All this had cost but one dollar, American money. It was well worth it.

His auditor listened spellbound to this amazing travelogue.

"I have a friend who visited the Holy Land. But she didn't say anything about steamers and excursions on the Jordan."

"She may have been there in the winter," Dobbs returned resourcefully. "The boats are tied up then on account of the ice."

Mrs. Tolliver eyed him with admiration.

"You must have a talk with her about the Holy Land. You'd have so many things to compare notes on."

"Oh, sure," Dobbs agreed uneasily. "But, of course, I went through in a hurry."

"And where did you go when you left the Holy Land?"

"I came home," said Dobbs, anxious to get on familiar ground once more, and for once regretting his flights of fancy. "And you bet I was glad to get there. B. C.'s good enough for me—even Vancouver. I dunno's them Old Testament cities we read about had so much on her. But we were talkin' about minin' investments. All you got to do is to get you a good mineral claim and develop it, and you got something that's plumb safe, ain't no bother, and'll make you rich till you can't rest."

"And how much does such a claim cost?"

"Well, they ain't so easy to get, now —good ones," Dobbs returned craftily. "They been pretty well picked over and snapped up by capitalists. But it just happens that I know of a mighty good claim, with all the mineral there ever was on it right there and not mined out at all, and I think you could get it for about ten thousand dollars, cash."

The price appeared to impress the lady favorably.

"That doesn't seem so very much."

"It ain't," Dobbs agreed, regretting that he had not asked more. "In the reg'lar way, it's worth every cent of twenty, and you might have to go higher. We wouldn't sell to anybody else that cheap."

"'We?'" Mrs. Tolliver queried.

"Me and my partner," Dobbs explained. "You see, we got this mine in a deal; and, though it's a wonderful showin', we ain't got time to work it, account of bein' tied up in other things. Speakin' for myself, I'd be willin' to turn it over without much margin, especially to you. But my partner's diff'rent, though I think I can talk him into sellin'. He wants to keep it till we can develop it ourselves, account of this phee-nomenal showin' of ore."

"Is it a gold mine?"

"Well, no, not gold," Dobbs admitted. "You can't expect much gold for just ten thousand. This is silver-lead ore, not worth as much a ton as gold, but more of it. So it's just as good."

"I think I should prefer gold," Mrs. Tolliver stated. "It would be simply thrilling to dig my own gold out of the ground."

"Well, there may be gold there, too," Dobbs urged. "I wouldn't say there wasn't, if you went down deep enough. It's funny where you find gold. You run onto it where nobody ever thought it was." In proof he adduced half a dozen instances illustrative of the truth of the axiom that gold is where you find it. "So you may get gold in this claim of ours that you're buyin'," he concluded. "But primar'ly she's a silver-lead proposition. I wouldn't want to deceive you in the least."

"You're not," Mrs. Tolliver assured him. "I don't think you could if you tried. You're far too honest."

Nobody save himself had attributed honesty to Dobbs for so long that he might have blushed, had not his ability to do so been left equally far astern in his voyage of life.

"It's my failing," he admitted; "and it's a drawback in some ways, specially in Vancouver. So mostly I leave these minin' deals to my partner."

"I'd like to meet him," Mrs. Tolliver suggested.

"That won't be necessary," Dobbs returned discouragingly. "You wouldn't like Bill. He's all right as a partner, but he ain't what you'd call refined. And then he drinks."

"I might persuade him to give it up."

Dobbs shook his head sadly.

"I've tried my best to show him the error of his ways, but it don't make no impression on him. I'm goin' to send him out into the hills to look over some properties, just to get him out of the way of temptation." And having thus

disposed of Bill, he returned to the charge. "This claim I was speakin' of would be a real good investment."

But Mrs. Tolliver did not close then and there. Instead, she embarked upon a search for personal information as to her companion, with special reference to the financial side.

The information she received was plentiful, and apparently given willingly, and was to the general effect that Dobbs and his partner after many years of hardships, privations and moving accidents by flood and field, had amassed wealth, plus extensive mining interests —which are not necessarily synonymous —and were on velvet. They were now preparing to look after their interests and direct extensive if slightly vague mining operations.

The trouble with this information was that in spots it bore a slight stylist resemblance to that supplied with equal readiness concerning the River Jordan. But, nevertheless, there might be a basis of truth. Without doubt Dobbs was an old prospector, the genuine article, who had seen the rough of it. Instances were not lacking in which members of his fraternity had struck it at last, or, clinging to a mineral property for years in spite of discouragement, had at last disposed of it for a fancy figure. This case might be such a case.

It being alleged that what is sauce for the goose should be the same for the gander, Mrs. Tolliver suggested that Dobbs consider an investment in California for himself, with particular reference to oil shares, which she knew to be good. She found him unreceptive.

"To tell the truth," he said, "at the moment I'm pretty well tied up, and so is my partner. We've gone into deals that's going to take about all the money we can raise. And, of course, I don't know these here Californy investments."

"And I don't know your B. C. ones."

"That's diff'rent," Dobbs maintained. "You have me to tell you about them."

Mrs. Tolliver did not press her argument.

"When you open the office you've been telling me about, I'll come in, and we can go into the matter of investments more fully. I'd much rather talk business in an office. And now let us enjoy the afternoon."

To Dobbs' disgust she seemed to consider the Holy Land an enjoyable topic, exhibiting a keen interest in it and pressing for details.

On his native heath Dobbs was an able and convincing liar. On mining generally and especially with reference to his personal experiences in placering, he could extemporize brilliantly and at length. But when he ventured farther afield, his data was limited, and his style speedily cramped. He had pretty well shot his imaginative bolt at the River Jordan, and now found himself at a loss.

When Mrs. Tolliver at last abandoned the topic, with a fresh reference to a traveled friend to whom she wished to introduce him so that they might compare impressions of Palestine, he breathed a sigh of mingled relief and misgiving.

On the homeward way he felt satisfaction with the information he had obtained as to the lady's financial status; modified, however, by the thought that he must steer clear of her friend, or in the alternative acquire more accurate data concerning the Holy Land than was contained in a sketchy and sadly tangled recollection of his childhood's grounding in biblical personnel and geography.

It seemed necessary, too, to make a bluff at establishing business headquarters in the form of an office. It would give tone, solidity. Yes, an office was a necessity—especially as he had told her that they were furnishing one.

When he parted from the lady he felt

a vague longing which was not a sense of loss of her companionship. It was less of the heart than of the stomach; though in the male these organs are said by cynics to be intimately connected. Be that as it may, Dobbs was conscious of a growing feeling of restlessness, of uneasiness. He felt the need of a change, of relaxation, of being braced up. Mechanically and automatically, his tongue caressed his lips. They felt dry.

He reflected that it was no wonder. Except for a few drinks a day, he had been strictly teetotal for almost a month. Not that this was a record; but it was a record for him in Vancouver. Bill had not hung up one anything like it. Dobbs felt distinctly superior to his partner. The more he thought of it, the more he admired his own self-control, his will power. There was no telling how far he would go now along the path of strict sobriety. He felt that he deserved congratulations.

"Pride goeth before a fall, and a haughty spirit before destruction." Dobbs, as his partner had succinctly put it, was "due."

## CHAPTER V.

### DOBBS THE SAMARITAN.

THE more Bill thought over what he had learned concerning his partner and the lady, the less he liked it. As to the bona fides of the gentler sex in general, Bill was a skeptic. In his experience, members of it having gained his simple, manly—if possibly alcoholic—trust, had purloined his money and vanished therewith; and some others had made most unladylike attempts to stick knives in him, or had incited their gentlemen friends to similar direct action. Hence Bill viewed all females with distrust, as predatory beings of man-eating proclivities.

Bill was under no delusions as to his partner. Whatever subtle charms the latter might once have possessed, had fallen from him with the years. His present attraction, if any, must be purely financial. The lady might even marry him, and trust in Providence for his early removal. Bill made up his mind to block her game. If he told her the truth about Dobbs' financial standing, that would do it.

As a first step, the lady's acquaintance was necessary; but to hints looking to this, Dobbs proved impervious; and when he put it directly Dobbs obviously stalled. Therefore, Bill made up his mind to introduce himself. But the back view of the lady in the semidarkness of the movie house was insufficient for purposes of recognition, and he did not know her abode. Nor would Dobbs supply this information.

The obvious course was to trail Dobbs, He tried twice to do so. On the first occasion he ran to earth in a cigar store an elderly stranger who wore a gray hat and possessed gray hair. Somewhere in the traffic he had lost Dobbs.

This had been in the evening. The next afternoon he tried again. In daylight the visibility was better, but unfortunately it worked both ways. On Hastings Street, Dobbs met a lady, presumably *the* lady. Bill, some fifty yards astern, was in doubt whether to keep on trailing or to overhaul them, in which latter event his partner could not very well refuse an introduction. But just then Dobbs chanced to glance behind him. Bill was not sure that he had been seen; but a few moments later the pair entered a department store, and so far as he was concerned vanished utterly. He prowled the crowded aisles in vain.

Dobbs came in in time to have dinner with his partner.

"Bill," he said as they sat smoking after the meal, "Bill, we ought to have an office." And, to forestall possible argument, he added: "So to-day I took one."

"You must have took something else," the amazed Bill commented, "and mixed what you took. Are you drunk or crazy —or both? What do we want of an office?"

"We want one to do our business in."

"What business?"

"If we don't do none we'll have all the more spare time," Dobbs replied optimistically if vaguely. "It looks better to have an office, and it'll be a place to go. We can put in an ice box there," he added as special inducement. "I'm having a sign put on the door, 'Dobbs & Hutchins, Minin' Investments and Securities,' and I'm gettin' writin' paper with the same printed onto it. And I'll get a typewriter, and then we'll be all set."

"You can't pound a typewriter," Bill told him.

"I don't want to," Dobbs responded; "nor I don't want you tryin' to flirt with her, neither."

"Holy mackerel!" Bill exclaimed. "Do you mean a girl?"

"Sure, I mean a girl. We got to have one to mind the office and write our bus'ness letters."

"Who to?" Bill asked.

"To any one we want," Dobbs replied. "There's no law against writing letters."

"There ought to be—against the kind you'd write," said Bill. But after brief reflection he added more cheerfully: "If you're bound to have an office, we may's well have a typewriter, too. Only pick out a good one."

"How do you do it?" Dobbs asked.

"Well, get one about twenty to twenty-five, blondy or runnin' to red," Bill advised expertly. "They're apt to be fast workers."

"And maybe you think you are," Dobbs returned. "The one I get will be about forty, and runnin' to iron-gray. There ain't goin' to be no bathin' beauties nor no nonsense around our office."

"How about widows?" Bill asked.

"That lady may call now and then to consult me about bus'ness," Dobbs returned, with dignity. "She wants me to manage her property for her."

"Then she's crazy," said Bill; "or else it's a frame."

Dobbs scorned to reply. He picked up a newspaper and began to browse through it. He speedily exhausted the general and sporting news, of which he read only the headlines, and turned to the page which contained advertisements of the evening's theatrical and other entertainments. There his attention was arrested by one to the effect that an illustrated lecture on the Holy Land, past and present, would be delivered by a gentleman who was a noted Egyptologist.

Dobbs read with interest. Since his rash reference to his travels in Palestine, Mrs. Tolliver had seemed to delight in bringing up that topic. This seemed to be an excellent opportunity to post himself in the premises. He had no engagement for the evening. He made up his mind to attend the lecture.

"Let's go to some show," Bill suggested at this point.

"I'm fed up on shows," Dobbs replied. "They ain't got no kick."

"I know where there's one with kickin', if that's what you want."

"Shucks!" Dobbs scorned.

"Well, outside of a show there ain't nothin' *to* do," Bill complained.

"There's lectures and concerts," his companion pointed out. "A man ought to think of more than just bein' amused."

"Why?" Bill wanted to know.

"Why, darn it," said Dobbs, "he'd ought to. He'd ought to improve his mind when he gets the chance."

"Some ought," said Bill, with meaning.

"And some," his partner retorted, with equal meaning, "ain't got no minds to improve."

"Well, you can't help it," said Bill soothingly.

Dobbs snorted, but forbore retort, principally because he could think of none sufficiently scathing.

"This paper tells about a lecture I've a notion to go to."

"Temperance?" Bill queried, with irony.

"No," said Dobbs. "I've heard lots of them."

"Nobody'd think it."

"Thinkin' 's too hard for some folks. This is a lecture on the Holy Land."

"What kind of land 's that?" Bill asked.

Dobbs was shocked.

"By gosh, it's a fright what you don't know! You mean to say you never heard of the Holy Land?"

"I may have heard of it," Bill replied, "but if I did it didn't stick. Is it one of them irrigation propositions?"

"The Holy Land," Dobbs explained, "is where folks lived along back in biblical times."

"Oh, that!" said Bill. "Where they dug up King Tut."

"Well, thereabouts," Dobbs returned largely. "Places like Jerusalem, and Babylon and the Land of Canyon."

"What do you want to hear about them for? Them old people are all dead, and nobody lives there now but them sheiks. She's a busted camp."

"She wasn't, once," Dobbs returned. "She was wide open. They rolled 'em high and hard in some of them old towns. You talk about your civ'lization, but I'll bet there ain't a town to-day—unless, maybe, it's Chicago—that has much on them. I've always been int'rested in them old times, and I b'lieve I'll take in this lecture. Better come along."

"Not me," Bill refused scornfully.

"Well, see you later," said Dobbs, and went forth.

Bill went to a show congenially devoid of mental-improvement features, and subsequently shot a few games of pool. When midnight came but Dobbs did not, he became suspicious. The attractions of the Holy Land seemed inadequate to account for his absence. Presumably, he had found others.

"I'll bet the old stiff has broke loose again," was Bill's deduction. "Well, he ain't got much money on him, and he was about due, anyway." With which philosophical reflection he went to bed.

Later—much later—he was awakened by voices and the glare of light in his eyes. Blinkingly he beheld his partner. Dobbs was not alone. With him was an individual strange to Bill. The stranger's garments were old, wrinkled and frayed, and his facial expression combined furtiveness with the shrinking appeal of a homeless dog. He bore most of the marks of the down-and-outer.

Bill regarded this derelict with scant favor, and his partner with rather less. Dobbs' appearance and first words confirmed his suspicions that somewhere between the Holy Land and the Hotel Vancouver he had acquired a velvet edge. Once more Pride had preceded a fall.

"Lemme," said Dobbs, with punctilious formality, slightly marred by decidedly slurred utterance, "interduce a partic'lar friend an' 'sociate, Misser—Misser—whazhoor name?" he asked the intimate associate aforesaid.

" 'Tink,' " the latter replied, glancing somewhat uneasily at the formidable bulk of Bill uprearing itself indignantly from the sanctity of repose. In spite of silken pajamas of lilac hue, Bill looked the roughneck he was.

"Yeh, Mink," said Dobbs. "Thank you, Misser Mink. Shake hands with my partner, Misser Hutchins. Misser Link's ol' friend of mine, Bill."

"He is, huh!" Bill growled, not extending his hand. "Did you find him it the Holy Land?"

"The Holy Land don't pan out," Dobbs admitted sorrowfully. "The professor don't have no inside stuff on the s'ciety life of them old cities. So I quit him, an' take a whirl out of Vancouver. Vancouver'sh great town, Bill. She's due to be great metrollopus. Put her down in Palestine an' she'd deliver the goods."

"So would you, you old stiff," said Bill. "Where did you pick up this bum?"

"Say——" the gentleman thus slightingly alluded to began in protest.

"Say—what?" Bill asked coaxingly.

"Nothing," Mr. Tink admitted prudently.

"Lemme explain, Bill," said Dobbs. "Misser Fink, here, is playin' in hard luck. So I brung him along. Rescue the perishin', like we're told to do. His story's awful sad one, Bill."

"I betcha it is," said Bill. "Them panhandlers can always spring one. Have you staked him to any money yet?"

"He don't want money," Dobbs replied. "He just needs a helpin' hand."

"He'll get a helpin' foot in a minute," Bill promised, scowling at the intruder. "Whatcha mean," he demanded of the latter, "by hitchin' onto this old souse? Think you were goin' to touch him, or maybe roll him? Well, you don't put anything over, here. I don't fall for no hard-luck spiels. Get out before I kick you out."

"It ain't my fault," Mr. Tink asserted. "Sure, I'm broke. I ain't got a dime, and I ain't got no job, and I ain't got no place to go. I told this old guy how I was fixed, lookin' for the price of a flop and cakes, and he tells me to come with him. So I come."

"Well, I've been broke myself," Bill admitted more kindly. "Here's a dollar, Beat it."

Dobbs with surprising manual dexterity intercepted the dollar in transit, and put it in his pocket.

"My partner," he informed Mr. Tink, "didn't mean to insult you by offerin' you money. I 'pologize for him. He's ign'rant as a pig, and he ain't got the finer feelin's like you an' me."

"He gimme that dollar," Mr. Tink pointed out anxiously. "It's mine."

"Hand it back to him, you old stiff," Bill commanded.

"You don't need money," Dobbs informed the donee. "Likely it'd ruin you, like it has lots. You might be tempted to spend it on strong drink. When you ain't got no money you got fewer temptations. It stands to reason. Did I offer you money?"

"No," Mr. Tink replied reproachfully, "you didn't."

"When you told me your sad story," Dobbs went on, "I offered you a helpin' hand. As man to—hic!—man. I offered you real human sympathy, by gum!"

"I can't eat on sympathy," Mr. Tink pointed out practically. "It don't get me no breakfast to-morrow."

"Take no thought for the morrer," Dobbs returned, with superiority, "and you'll get along. Do *I* think of breakfast? Cert'nly *not*. Chances is, I won't want none, anyway. Consider the sparrers, like we're told to. They toil not, neither do they spin; and they pick up a livin'. A sparrer is a real moral lesson. You go learn from them sparrers."

The remains of an excellent early training were most visible in Dobbs when he was very drunk. In this condition, but seldom otherwise, he abounded in scriptural quotations, often somewhat tangled, and high moral reflections conspicuously absent in his daily life.

"I ain't no sparrow," Mr. Tink objected plausibly.

"Don't brag about it," Dobbs reproved him. "You may be one yet. You may be a sparrer, sittin' starvin' on a telefome wire watchin' the gas buggies go by. You can't tell what you'll be. Why should the spirit of moral be

proud?'—like Solomon said. Be meek, like you're told to be, and you'll inherit the earth—or six foot of it, anyway. Broke like you are, you better be damn meek."

"Shut up, you old stiff," said Bill. "Give him back his dollar, or I'll soak you in the bathtub till you sober up. Quick, now!"

And Dobbs, drunk as he was, realized that his partner would do as he threatened. He held out the dollar.

"Take her," he said grandly, "with my sympathy. Sit down, Misser Clink; you're among friends."

"You got your dollar," Bill amended. "Beat it."

"Ain't you got no heart?" Dobbs mourned. "He's a human being, Bill!"

"The devil he is!" remarked Bill skeptically.

"Yes, sir," Dobbs affirmed, "he's a human being. Not only that, but he had a mother. Hadn't you?" he appealed for corroboration to Mr. Tink.

"Yes," the latter replied, without special conviction.

"You hear that, Bill!" said Dobbs tearfully. "He's a human being, and he had a mother. Ain't that awful sad? Ain't that hard luck?"

"For his mother. maybe," Bill admitted.

"Looka here——" Mr. Tink began.

"Bill sympathizes with you, Misser Tink," Dobbs interrupted. "I'm goin' to tell him your sad story. Once, Bill, Misser Mink was a happy, innocent child. He was brung up in a r'ligious home, same as me.

"You both look it," said Bill.

"In a Meth'dist home," Dobbs went on, in tender reminiscence, "with a bath ev'ry Sat'day night."

"I'll bet he hasn't had one since," said Bill.

"I have, too," Mr. Tink asserted with spirit.

"He's had two," Dobbs repeated. "That's lots. That's what early training does. When he got old enough Misser Mink left home."

"I'm goin'," said that gentleman to Bill. "Thanks for the buck. Soak this old souse for me."

The latter sentiment struck a responsive chord in Bill. For the first time he regarded Mr. Tink without hostility. The remark seemed to substantiate to some extent Dobbs' statement that he was a human being.

"I'll give you a drink first," said Bill. "I been broke, myself."

"You're a white man," Mr. Tink acknowledged gratefully. "This old pelican don't hand a broke guy nothin' but hokum."

"You're ungrateful as the devil," Dobbs told him. "'A thankless bum is sharper'n a serpent's tooth,' like the Good Book says. I'm a notion to slam you one."

"Shut up, or I'll crown you!" said Bill.

"This is what I git," Dobbs mourned, "for bein' char'table. My partner's agin' me. The whole durn world's agin' me. Human nature's rotten. I'm goin' to git drunk!"

"Going to?" said Bill.

"Le's make Misser Link drunk, too," Dobbs suggested generously, forgetting his grievance. "Le's all get drunk," And he began what he intended for song:

"Come, round up your pack horse, your shovel an' pan,
Pull out from that city—they call it Cheyenne;
The Sioux an' Comanche are lurkin' to kill—
An' they'll lift up your hair, in them dreary Black Hills.
Say good-by to the girls, an' the barkeep al-so,
For——"

This enlivening ditty was brought to a sudden stop by Bill, who heaved a pillow with the full force of his good right arm. The songster, reared back in his chair, in much the attitude of a dog which bays the moon, struck full in the face by this missile, went backward with

a crash. He registered disapproval by a wild yell which would have done credit to any Comanche war chief.

"Shut up!" Bill commanded. "We'll be fired out of this hotel if you howl like that."

"Who throwed that piller?" Dobbs demanded fiercely. "I can lick him. An' I will!"

"I did," said Bill.

"Tha's diff'rent," Dobbs admitted. "What d'you mean by laughin'?" he demanded of Mr. Tink. "I'll lick *you!*"

"Dry up!" Bill commanded once more. "First thing you know you'll have the house detective up. Keep your trap closed and I'll give you a drink."

From long experience he had found that the easiest way to manage his partner when the latter had reached a certain stage, was to give him more liquor. Then he would become tractable and go to sleep. Bill produced an unimpaired quart of the anæsthetic. Dobbs treated his long-suffering interior to a generous jolt, and, his grievance forgotten, beamed upon Mr. Tink.

"Tha's better," he announced. "Ain't that better, Misser Pink? Good S'maritan, tha's me. You'd ought to be grateful to me."

"This big guy," said Mr. Tink, who had imbibed an equal jolt with relish, "gimme a dollar and a drink. What did you gimme? Hokum, that's all."

"I cast my pearls before swine," Dobbs retorted. "You was a stranger, an' I took you in. What you kickin' at? You got money an' a drink. It's all the angels have."

"You didn't give 'em to me," Mr. Tink insisted.

"Have 'nother drink," said Dobbs. "You need it."

"Maybe I do," Mr. Tink admitted, mollified. "You ain't such a bad old guy, I guess."

"I been a sinner," said Dobbs with pride. "I could tell you things I've done that you wouldn't believe."

"Nor anybody else," Bill concurred.

Dobbs' mind, wandering in an alcoholic daze, stumbled upon his original determination to relate Mr. Tink's life story to his partner.

"I was tellin' you about this man," he said. "He left his childhood's home an' run with the wild bunch. Bad comp'ny was his downfall. Also licker. An' women."

"Women, huh!" said Bill, with a skeptical glance at Mr. Tink's outward attractions.

"Women," Dobbs repeated firmly. "They're wreckers. Always was. Look what Cleopatra done to Samson! All wreckers. An' they wrecked Misser Mink."

"How did they wreck him?" Bill asked.

"They married him," Dobbs replied tragically. "At least, one of 'em did."

"What did she do besides marryin' him?" Bill wanted to know.

"My gosh! ain't that enough?" Dobbs replied. "She broke his spirit, an' she broke his health. Why, Bill, that woman actually made him go to work!"

"Well, why shouldn't he?" said Bill densely.

"An' then she framed him into jail," Dobbs went on. "Not satisfied with that, she quits him cold."

"He's all tangled up," said Mr. Tink. "I could tell you the straight of it, if I had another drink."

"Well, take one and let's hear you," said Bill. "There's no sleep comin' to me to-night, I see that."

## CHAPTER VI.

### MR. TINK'S SAD STORY.

"IT was this way," Mr. Tink began, when he had fortified himself for narration: "I had a job in Winnipeg, and I married a woman there that kept a high-grade boardin' house and did a good business.

"When I married her, I quit my job,

to help her out by keepin' the books and seein' that the boarders paid up prompt, and doin' the buyin' and so on. But after a while she said she'd done all that herself before we were married, and she wanted me to get a job. She said she didn't want me around the house in the daytime. I tried to tell her there wasn't many places worth goin' to in the daytime; and, anyway, I went out every night. She said it'd be better if I was out days on some job, and in nights. She was unreas'nable and narrow the way some women are when you're married to 'em. Maybe you're married?"

"No," said Bill.

Mr. Tink sighed.

"Is he?" he asked, pointing to Dobbs, who had entered upon a trancelike state in which he stared straight ahead.

"No," Bill replied. "At least, not that I know of."

"I thought he might be, the way he was drinkin'," said Mr. Tink, and resumed: "I tried to smooth my wife down; but you can't smooth 'em, not when you're married to 'em. She said I had to get a job outside; so to keep peace I went lookin' for one. I found a good one, too. It was sellin' socks, if she'd knit 'em on a machine in her spare time, and it was a sure money-maker. But when I brought the machine home and tried to tell her about it, she picked it up and fired it at me. It hit me, too. So, to give her time to remember she was a lady, I went out. I stayed out late to give her better nature a chance to work."

Mr. Tink sighed at a bitter recollection.

"She hadn't got no better nature," he went on, after a brief pause. "When I come home, account of other places closin' up, every door was locked and bolted. Of course, I was sore, as I had a right to be, and I hammered on the door. A window went up, and down come a lot of dirty water on top of me. She must have saved the dishwater for that. As man to man, I ask you, is that carryin' out a promise to love, honor and obey? Well, I can stand just so much, and then I get mad. So I started in to bust down the door.

"Then a cop come along and collared me. I told him I was locked out of my house and was tryin' to get in. She stuck her head out of the window and hollered down that I was a man that had been annoyin' her for a long time; and then she shut the window.

"The cop took me along, and I spent the night in jail. They had me up in the morning, and the cop said I was drunk and disorderly, maliciously destroyin' property, and I got thirty days."

"Have a drink, Misser Fink," Dobbs proffered, coming out of his coma sufficiently to set a generous example. "Didn't I tell you his story was sad, Bill. By gosh, it's heartrending!"

Mr. Tink accepted John Barleycorn's solatium.

"When I got out at the end of the thirty days, I started for home. I had a few drinks on the way, and do you blame me? I was goin' to read the riot act to that woman. I opened the front door and walked in, and not seein' her I went on up to my room. When I opened the door of that, up jumped a strange, red-headed woman with a face like a battle-ax.

"I backed out quick, but she let a screech out of her, and a big guy come bouncin' out of another room, and the battle-ax female hollered to him to grab me, and he done so. I tried to explain. I told him that was my room and my wife's. He cracked me one on the jaw, and said he'd learn me to call his sister my wife. I said that'd be the last thing on earth I'd want to call her, and he cracked me again. He says I'm a second-story worker from Minneapolis he's been layin' for, and he tells his battle-ax sister to phone for the wagon.

"It turns out he's a plain-clothes bull, and I ain't got a Chinaman's chance. At

the desk, he says he's caught me red-handed workin' the house where he boards. And some more bulls and dicks come in, and they all take a slant at me and talk about me bein' this Minneapolis bird. When I tell 'em the truth, that I've been in jail right here for thirty days and couldn't have burglarized nothin', they give me the laugh. One guy says that thirty won't come off my next stretch.

"Seein' the truth is no use, I tell 'em I want a lawyer. When one comes, the first thing he asks is how much money I got. I ain't got none, and he walks out on me. I get another, a young feller that ain't so strong on professional etiquette, and he lets me tell him how it is, without wantin' cash.

"He says I don't seem to have no legal defense, but he'll do the best he can if I'll be honest enough to pay him out of my next burglary if he gets me off. After a while I get him to see that what I've been tellin' him ain't a legal defense at all, but just the truth, which he tells me ain't admissible in evidence, as bein' irrelevant to the issue. But he agrees to go and see my wife and get his fee from her, and find out what the battle-ax party and her brother is doin' in my house.

"When he comes back, he tells me that my wife has sold out the house and business, lock, stock and barrel, to the battle-ax for cash, and pulled out. Nobody knows where she's gone. And he wants to know where his fee is coming from.

"I tell him I give it up, too, and he's awful mad. He says the penalty for obtainin' legal advice without money ought to be twenty years' hard labor, and would be if the legislature was all lawyers like it ought to be, instead of a lot of farmers. But finally he cools down and tells the bulls how it is. And when they check up they turn me loose with a warning.

"So I get out of jail again, but I ain't got no wife, nor no job, nor no home, nor no money. The last two is serious. I tried to get work that wasn't too hard and paid enough; but most of the jobs I found fell down on one or other of them requisites. When a man's in hard luck, he don't get no good breaks at all."

"The world," Dobbs interjected, making a second sortie from his meditations, "ain't run right. No, sir, she ain't. Recent, she's going plum' to the devil."

"So are you," said his partner.

"She's gittin' wickeder," Dobbs mourned. "Folks is gittin' careless about how they live. There ain't no home life no more. First thing folks know, there'll be another flood, just to show 'em. What we need is the old-time standards, an' cheap whisky like my gran'father had. An' his years in the land was ninety-two. Only for a Jersey bull——"

"Cut out the bull!" Bill commanded. "I thought you was asleep. For Pete's sake, have another drink of the kind of whisky we got. Ain't there no fillin' you up so's you'll go to sleep?"

"I gotta capacity," Dobbs announced proudly. "I got ex'lent capacity. An' I gotta heart. Don't worry, Misser Dink. You're hired right now. You gotta good job, an' consid'rate employers. Dobbs & Hutchins. He's Hutchins. But he don't count. He's silent partner. He ain't got no brains."

"You crazy old stiff——" the indignant Bill began.

"You ain't got nothin' to say about it," Dobbs interrupted. "You're silent partner, so shut up. Misser Mink can run typewriter. He's hired. Give him week's salary, Bill. I would, but I've spent my money."

"By glory!" said the exasperated Bill. "I've a notion to shake the very Judas outa you!"

"Shake!" said Dobbs, extending a wavering hand. "Shake, ol' partner! Maybe I'll be quittin' you. Maybe we

split the blankets. Goin' to Californy. Or the Holy Land. Maybe. But always 'member dear ol' partner!"

With this touching sentiment, his head drooped and he passed into childlike slumber. Bill picked him up as if he had been a child, deposited him on the bed and removed his shoes with the facility of practice.

"Well," he said, regarding the sleeping warrior, "I guess he's in for the night."

"He can sure lap it up," was Mr. Tink's admiring tribute. He regarded Bill uncertainly. "How about that job he spoke of? Is there anything in it, or was he just drunk?"

Bill reflected. His original hostility had evaporated. Mr. Tink took his liquor like a man, and, though presumably on an empty stomach, without visible effect. It was a strong point in his favor. Bill had been broke, himself.

"Well, this old stiff got us an office we don't need no more'n a catfish needs matches," he said. "But I want to know more about you. What have you been doin' since you got out of jail in Winnipeg?"

The Odyssey of Mr. Tink included a variety of jobs throughout the West, of urban varieties, ranging from dishwashing in restaurants to employment with a private detective agency.

"Are you tryin' to tell me you're a detective?" Bill asked incredulously at this point.

"I was what they call an 'operative,'" Mr. Tink explained. "This agency was mostly a bluff. Maybe a woman would get the notion that her husband should be watched; or a man would want his wife watched. My job would be to watch. I'd keep tab on the parties, find out what they did, and where they went, and who they met."

Here a positively brilliant idea occurred to Bill. It burst upon him like an unclouded sunrise. He wondered why he had not thought of it before. If he had been given to belief in Providence, he might have regarded Mr. Tink as its manifestation.

"Were you pretty good at keepin' tabs on folks without lettin' them know it?"

"It was the best thing I did," Mr. Tink replied, with becoming modesty.

"Do you disguise yourself, or anything?" Bill queried further.

"You been readin' crime stories," Mr. Tink responded. "Disguises are the bunk. You can change your hat or coat, and that's about all. The main thing is not to get yourself noticed, and there's nothing special to notice about me. F'r instance, you wouldn't pick me out in a crowd."

"I guess I wouldn't," was Bill's tribute to his guest's low visibility. "You mean you sort of blend with the bunch, like a deer in the brush."

"That's the idea," Mr. Tink nodded. "You might meet me on the street a dozen times, and unless I did something to make you notice me you wouldn't know you'd seen me before."

"All right, then," said Bill; "you're hired. You're workin' for me now—me, personal, see? Forget that job this old stiff was talkin' about. There's more money in this. Have a drink, and I'll spread out the hand for you."

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MORNING AFTER.

BILL arose at his usual hour; but Sam Dobbs did not. A tentative morning greeting elicited no response whatever. Temporarily, he was dead to the world. Bill breakfasted alone, and subsequently met Mr. Tink, who, endued with new if inconspicuous raiment and brightened by a shave, was almost unrecognizable.

"He's asleep yet," said Bill. "I'll give him another hour and then wake him up. Stick around and be ready."

And, when the specified time had elapsed, he sought his room and partner.

Dobbs still lay like a warrior taking his rest, one arm and part of the bedding thrown across his face to protect his eyes from the unwelcome light of day. So, perhaps, has many a spent hero lain recuperating his exhausted forces the morning after a stricken field. His partner, however, eyed him with scant sympathy.

"Hey, Sam!" said he. When body and mind are exhausted, reveille may sound in vain. "Sam!" Bill repeated; "time to make it!"

Dobbs sighed deeply. A repetition by Bill merely caused him to dig in more deeply.

Bill knew of two methods which, though sharply contrasted in type, were almost equally effective in arousing his partner when that gentleman seemed disinclined to face the stern realities of life. These, for want of better terminology, may be styled respectively the "fortiter" and "suaviter" methods. The former consisted in rudely ripping the bedding from the sleeper and yanking his feet to the floor. The necessity to curse his assailant adequately then awoke him completely. The latter and gentler method, however, Bill had found almost equally efficacious. Now he adopted it.

Taking a bottle and a glass, he brought one against the other in a musical tinkle. At the same time his tongue and throat combined to produce sounds of a gurgling nature. *"Tinky-tinkle!"* said bottle and glass; *"ug-glug, glug-ug!"* said Bill. This suggestive symphony was warranted to bring Dobbs out of any state of coma short of his last, long sleep. And so it proved now.

The warrior's ear, struck by these familiar sounds as by a clarion call to duty, conveyed a message to his brain. He stirred, groaned, and, feebly uprising on his elbow, surveyed the field on which he had fallen.

The view comprised several of those pathetic casualties technically termed "dead soldiers" awaiting the burial squad. However, their pathos did not appeal to Dobbs. Bowing his head humbly upon his hands, he uttered a clucking or croaking sound suggestive of the warning note of a broody hen; and having thus limbered his vocal organs he addressed his Maker in the vocative and possessive cases, in accents of mingled remorse and reproach, the latter predominating.

"How'd you like some breakfast," said Bill, "startin' with Californy grapefruit?"

Dobbs' reference to breakfast, California and its products, was scathing. Bill proceeded to render practical first aid in the form of a reviving draft composed of ice, soda, lemon and dry gin. Dobbs watched its preparation at first with slight interest, and then with more. He quaffed the restorative appreciatively, and suggested a repetition. Bill refused.

"One is lots. Think of that 'woman's influence' you were talking about the other day. Maybe that'll brace you. You and your talk about bein' on the wagon!" he added scornfully. "Didn't I tell you you were due?"

"Well, maybe I was," Dobbs admitted sadly. "Still, I guess I had a good time —if I could only remember it. What happened to me, anyway?"

"How do I know?" his partner replied. "You went to some darn lecture on the Holy Land. The Holy Land! And look at you! You come in about three G. M., tanked to the guards. 'S all I know."

Dobbs made an effort to reconstruct the golden past. Beyond a certain point his films ran poorly.

"I remember the Holy Land," he said. "I had a reason for going there. She don't pan out, so I got up and left. So did another feller. He'd been fooled on her, too. He thought she was an auction or something. Later on, he told

me he'd been looking for a crowd to do some bus'ness in. I guess maybe he was a pickpocket."

"More'n likely—if he hooked up with you," was Bill's polite comment.

"Well, of course, this is Vancouver," Dobbs returned tolerantly. "If you're too partic'lar about your company, you're apt to be lonely. Anyway, this feller said he knew a place where we could get a drink, and I needed one. So I went with him. He bought and I bought. And then a sailor come along—that is, he said he was a sailor—and he bought. So me and my friend bought another apiece to make it even; only it didn't, because that made two the sailor had had on us to one we'd had on him. So he bought. He was real gentlemanly—for a sailor—and he had a wad of money. That made about eight drinks we had, all in a row."

"Six," Bill checked this mental arithmetic.

"Maybe I missed one or two somewhere," Dobbs admitted. "I lost count after that. Then this sailor wanted to sing. He had a nice, strong voice, that you could have heard for blocks. But they wouldn't let him sing; and he had a nice song, too."

"What was it?" Bill asked.

"One of them sea songs, I guess," Dobbs replied. "It started off pretty good, but they shut him up. When they wouldn't let him sing, he said he'd dance. He was accommodating, all right. But they wouldn't let him dance, either—that is, not the way he wanted to."

"And a wonder, too," Bill commented, with irony.

"It was a pity," said Dobbs. "He said this dance of his was all the go in Zanzibar, or maybe it was Singapore. One of them hot countries where the dances come from nowadays. I'll bet society folks will be dancin' it, soon as they get to hear of it. It didn't seem right that a sailor home from the sea shouldn't have his innocent amusements; so naturally I sided in with him, and I told them he could dance that dance if he wanted to, or I'd know why. It's a good dance, worth seein'."

"Did he dance it after all?" Bill queried.

"Not in that place," Dobbs replied. "The waiters was a tough bunch. I wisht you'd been along; you'd' have enjoyed yourself. After they'd throwed me and the sailor out, my friend come after us and apologized for takin' us there. He said there'd been a change of management, or, anyway, of waiters, and he'd never go there again. And he took us to another place where he said they was lib'ral minded and anything went.

"There was a colored orchestra in this place, and a big darky poundin' a big drum. The sailor went up and took a look at him, and claimed he'd met him on the Congo. The darky said he didn't know them Tennessee towns, and he come from Waycross, Georgia. The sailor said he was a liar and a cannibal; and he wanted to open his mouth to look at his teeth to see if they was filed. They got into an argument that interfered with the music, and the drummer pulled a razor out of his pocket. It wasn't no safety, neither. But the head guy butted in, and simmered the drummer down; and the head guy took the sailor and introduced him to a lady, and he did his dance with her.

"It was a good dance, like I tell you; and pretty soon everybody was tryin' to dance it. The sailor was real popular. Only just then my friend got a message from his wife to come home because the baby was sick, so he 'pologized for leavin' so early, and went. And when the sailor come to pay for his next drinks, he didn't have no money. I guess maybe my friend had got it. With a sick baby, he might need it."

"How about *your* money?" Bill asked.

"I lost what I had in my pocket," Dobbs admitted philosophically, "but by

that time it wasn't much. I had my roll next my hide in a money belt, like it's wise to do in this town. And, of course, I wouldn't see a sailor stuck, because where would we be without sea power. I was goin' to stake him if I could get at my belt without undressin' too much, 'cause I wasn't out to show no one where my roll was—but while I was thinkin' about it, the sailor got into an argument with the head guy about where his money had went to.

"They both got a little excited, and the sailor said the place was a robbers' roost, and he slammed the head guy. Then he picked up a bottle and heaved it at the music, and it went right through the darky's big drum. Then he threw bottles with both hands, bein' amphibious that way, till he run out of ammunition. By that time he'd lost most of the popularity he'd won with his dance."

"'Sailors don't care,'" Bill quoted appositely as Dobbs paused in his Odyssey of the doughty mariner's exploits.

"He didn't seem to," Dobbs concurred. "He picked up a table and heaved it into the Congo drummer that was comin' for him with his razor, all but one leg that he kept to use, and he done the best he could with that. You'd have liked that sailor, Bill. He had class. I wisht I knowed where to find him."

"He sounds all right, "Bill vouchsafed expert approval. "Me, I'd rather work with a good, solid chair than a table leg. It seems to swing better. Still, you can't always get what you want, and I guess he was a good man."

"While he lasted," Dobbs agreed. "Sailors is only human—or partly so—and Providence is with the most guns, like Solomon says. They was too many for him. And they throwed me out, too, because I was with him. That made twice. I think there was another time, later, but I ain't sure. Anyway, he had a good, hard head; and when he come to we dusted ourselves off and went on to see the sights. And somewhere along the line I lost him or he lost me. And after that," Dobbs concluded regretfully, "it don't seem so clear."

"It's a wonder you didn't wind up in a hospital or twenty foot of water," Bill told him severely. "Where did you pick up that bum?"

"What bum?"

"The one you brought home with you."

Dobbs struggled with a poor film, sadly underexposed, and finally got a faint outline.

"Oh, him! Now you mention it, I remember something. He must have come later. I brought him up here, you say?"

"'S what you did," Bill confirmed. "He struck you with some hard-luck spiel, and you fell for it."

"I must have been awful drunk," Dobbs admitted on this last evidence. "I wonder if I gave him any money? I'm too darn generous; that's my failing."

"You didn't give him a nickel," said Bill. "You wanted me to stake him."

"Then I couldn't have been so bad," Dobbs deduced, with satisfaction. "What become of him."

"I fired him out," said Bill, now satisfied that his parter would not recognize Mr. Tink.

"You done right," Dobbs approved. "These panhandlers take advantage of kindness. Well, I b'lieve I'll get up. Fix me another of them drinks."

"A darn small one," Bill conceded.

Thus fortified, Dobbs arose. Groanings and splashings from the bathroom gave evidence that he was experimenting with the water cure. He emerged, wrapped in a pink crash bath robe, and proceeded to endue himself with more formal raiment. This process partially accomplished, he turned with confidence toward his bed. As he did so, his expression changed. He glanced around the room, and then with deep suspicion at his partner.

"Look a here, Bill," he said sternly, "is this a joke?"

"Is what a joke?" Bill asked, puzzled.

"Where in the devil's my toopy?" Dobbs demanded.

"Your—what?" Bill queried.

"My wig," said Dobbs, who had recently partially discovered the word "toupee," and adopted it as having class, with the pronunciation indicated above. "What you done with it?"

Bill stared at the bedpost where this article was wont to be parked at night. It was bare; so was his partner's cranium.

Now, as has been said, sometimes Dobbs wore his wig, and at other times he did not. One never knew when his cranial baldness would be on exhibition. True, recently he had worn the wig steadily. But Bill for years had been accustomed to his partner's lack of hair. It was his natural condition, as Bill knew it. The wig was merely an innovation. So that if Dobbs had come in wigless the night before, he had not noticed anything lacking. Dobbs had looked natural to Bill. For that matter, he looked natural now. Bill did not consider himself his partner's wig keeper.

"I ain't done nothing with your darn wig," he denied. "Ain't she around somewhere? Look under the bed."

Dobbs made search.

"She ain't here," he announced.

"Then I guess you've lost her at the lecture, or in some of them low dives you was at," Bill deduced, without sympathy. "Maybe your pickpocket friend has her. Or the sailor. Do you remember any one pattin' you on the head, or runnin' their fingers through your hair and callin' you their curly-headed boy? A woman's influence——"

"You go to the devil!" said Dobbs. "I want my wig."

"Well, I ain't got her," Bill returned convincingly; "nor I ain't seen her."

"My gosh!" said Dobbs.

To appreciate his feelings, it should be said that he had an appointment with the charming widow for that very evening. It was an important one, covering dinner and a dance. But the lady had never seen him wigless; and Dobbs cherished the touching belief that it was not distinguishable from natural hair. To keep this appointment bareheaded, as it were, was unthinkable. The recovery of his wig or the purchase of another became imperative.

Either solution presented difficulty. The trail of the night before had been long and rough. At a certain point of recollection it vanished. No landmarks stood out beyond. There was merely a general idea of direction as a guide.

As to another wig which should match the original in fit, contour, hirsute splendor and shade, it might be hard to obtain. Wigs in ready-to-wear styles did not offer a large choice. They did not, as it were, come in hair lines and pin checks, in short stouts, erects and stoopings. The better wigs as a rule were custom made. The vanished one, though a hand-me-down, had been a perfect fit purely by chance. It had been purchased through the medium of a most personable young saleslady known as "Mademoiselle Lucille," who had found favor in Dobbs' eyes so far as to sell him a heavy bill of goods as well as the wig. He had even taken her to lunch, with the result that she had told him a touching story of an invalid brother who required an expensive surgical operation to restore him to health. The story was touching; but the "touch" had failed, Dobbs having felt that he was being crowded; and since then he had seen no more of the young lady. But it was unlikely that this establishment would possess a duplicate of the wig.

"You got along all right without a wig," Bill told him. "Anyway, you can buy another."

"You're sure I didn't have it on when I came in?"

"I never noticed. If it ain't here, it's

a cinch you didn't. You ought to have wore it in your money belt."

"They'll steal even your hair in Vancouver," Dobbs said sadly. "I wonder if I could find them places I got throwed out of?"

"Maybe a bird took your scalp to nest in," Bill suggested unfeelingly. "Look up in some trees." And leaving his partner to complete what in Dobbs' opinion must be an incomplete toilet, Bill descended to the waiting Mr. Tink.

"He's getting dressed, and he's going out," he informed that gentleman. "He don't remember you, at all, so he won't know you. Did he have any hair on his head when you hooked up with him last night?"

"Bald as a coot," Mr. Tink replied. "When did he have hair?"

"He had a wig, and he's lost it in the shuffle."

"Well, I didn't pinch it."

"Nobody said you did. You keep case on him, and let me know every darn thing he does."

"Leave it to me," said Mr. Tink, with confidence.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ON THE TRAIL OF DOBBS.

BILL left it to Mr. Tink. From concealment, he saw Dobbs leave the hotel, followed discreetly by the sleuth. He saw no more of either till nine o'clock that night, when the latter appeared. He seemed weary and footsore, as if the trail had been long and rough.

"Well?" said Bill.

"You ain't got a drink, have you?" Mr. Tink asked pathetically. "I sort of need one." He absorbed the restorative gratefully. "Well," he confessed, "I lost him."

"You're a hell of a detective!" was Bill's comment.

"You need bloodhounds to keep track of that old bird," Mr. Tink returned, with conviction. "At that, I stayed with him pretty good."

"Let's hear you," said Bill.

Mr. Tink produced a notebook, and from it, plus memory, took up the fascinating story of Dobbs' wanderings:

"At eleven thirty a. m. Dobbs appeared in the hotel lobby, wearing a gray suit and gray soft hat. Appeared to be slightly nervous. Probably hangover. Took chew of tobacco and left hotel by Granville Street exit.

"At eleven forty-two, he paused before a notice board of hall used for public meetings, and appeared to read notice of previous evening's entertainment—same being an illustrated lecture on 'The Holy Land, Past and Present.' Chose this moment to pass close behind him, and distinctly heard him mutter: 'This is what started the whole thing!' He then threw his chew of tobacco into the middle of the poster, and went on.

"His next stop was before a store bearing the sign: 'Professor Edouard Cassay et Cie., Tonsorial Specialists; Cosmétiques.'

"This professor's real name," Mr. Tink explained in parenthesis, "is Eddie Casey; and him and his wife Lucy Casey run the dump single-handed up to a week ago. Then he went broke against the races, his creditors grabbed his stock, and his wife skipped. I found this out later." He referred to his notebook:

"If Dobbs had date there, he was disappointed. This may be explanation of his expression of disappointment, for again, passing close to him, heard him say: 'No darn luck at all!' He seems to have habit of talking to himself, which may be due to alcoholism or senility."

"It's the hills," said Bill. "When you're alone a lot, you get to thinking out loud. But you're away off, feller. That store is where he bought his wig. Fire ahead."

"Well, then," Mr. Tink related, abandoning his notebook for freer narration," he turned east and went away down along the water-front district. He went into a short-order place and got a plate of ham and eggs, and coffee. Then he goes into a dump they call The Chilkoot Pass. Maybe you know it."

"I've seen it," Bill replied conservatively.

"It's a sort of a bluff at bein' a cabaret," Mr. Tink went on. "Mostly it's a night joint. They seemed to know him there, because as soon as he got inside the door the head waiter called up two others, and they blocked him off from a table. But after they had talked for a while, he handed the head waiter a bill, and they let him sit down. He had a highball—they call it 'iced tea' there—while he talked with the head waiter. Then he had another and bought a cigar and left. I found out afterward that him and another guy had pulled off a rough-house there the night before. It took seven waiters to throw them out.

"The next place he called at was a joint they call The Skidroad, run by a guy called 'Silver Ike' Smith, and believe me, it's one hard dump. It's a dance hall and speak-easy, and a sort of waitin' room for the morgue unless you watch your step."

"Well, the old hellion!" said Bill. "He was there, was he?"

"You know the place, do you?"

"I had to shovel my way out of it with a chair, one night," Bill admitted. "Somebody tried to knife me, too."

"They seemed to know him there, too," Mr. Tink resumed, "because when he showed up the bouncer took one slant at him and got up to do his stuff."

"How did this bully's face look?" Bill queried, with interest.

"He has a hard map. Sort of worked over in spots. Why?"

"I just wanted to know," said Bill. "I jumped on it, the night I was tellin' you about, and I thought I felt something give. Maybe it was only his teeth. Fire ahead."

"Well, your partner made the peace sign, and handed the bully a bill, and they seemed to get along all right after that. They had a drink together. I noticed your partner reached over and took the bully's glass and drank that; and the bully, after lookin' at him hard for a minute, emptied out the other glass and got another. A waiter come along and I got talkin' to him. He told me your partner and a sailor had put the place on the blink and ruined the orchestra last night, before they were fired out."

"Check," said Bill. "That's what he told me. And it's the last thing he remembers."

"Well, your partner had a couple of drinks, and he went on to a Chinese hotel that has a smoke room beneath it. He lapped up a shot or so of *sam shu* or something there. Next he landed into a place called 'Queen Anne's,' that's a sort of sailors' boarding house. Anne's as black as a gum boot and weighs about three hundred; but she's a good old soul. She keeps order with a baseball bat when she has to, and sells as good whisky as you can expect.

"But you put even good whisky on top of the kind they give you at The Skidroad, mixed up with a few shots of *sam shu,* and you'll know it. So when your partner come out of Queen Anne's he had a risin' gauge, and he was steppin' high and walkin' a little wide.

"He stopped in front of a junk shop, and then he went in. I looked in through the window. The boss of the shop was an oldish bird with a fine mop of gray hair. He used to be an Armenian or a Syrian or a Turk, I'm told. When they had been talkin' for a few minutes, your partner, who had been pointin' to this old bird's head, reached over the counter and grabbed him by the hair back of the ears, and near pulled him off his feet. Then he let go, and seemed to want to explain. But the old feller wouldn't listen. He grabbed up a sword bayonet off a shelf back of him, and come a-boilin'; and your partner didn't wait for him.

"That whisky," said Mr. Tink reminiscently, "may have interfered a little with your partner's walkin', but it sure helped his runnin'. His acceleration was real good. He come out of that

shop like he was shot out of a gun. The folks livin' in that district are sort of blasé about ordinary scraps. But, of course, no one wants to miss a good knife murder if there's one comin' off; and when a man with a bayonet in his fist is chasin' another and yellin', it draws spectators. So they begun to pick up a procession.

"There was a cop standin' on a corner ahead, but when he saw this Armenian with the bayonet, he looked up the side street and he saw a couple of boys throwin' rocks at a hydrant, so he went after them to protect the city's property.

"A block farther on, a car comes out of a cross street just in front of your partner; and he jumps into the back seat and yells to the driver to step on it, or he'll be murdered. The driver took one look at the bird with the bayonet, and he stepped on her. He went up that street like a bat outa Hades.

"That left the bayonet boy and the crowd flat, and everybody was disappointed, specially them that had never seen a murder real close. It looked like a good thing gone wrong. There was a good deal of unfav'rable comment on your partner, though some thought the bayonet boy should have run faster.

"I beat it after the car. I figured the driver would stop in a few blocks and get rid of his passenger; but I guess I was wrong, or I took the wrong turn, for I never laid eyes on him again. So I went back over the ground and got what information I could at the places he'd been at. And that's all I know. I'm sorry I lost him, but that's how it was."

"You done the best you could," Bill admitted. "When he gets going, there's no telling what sort of stuff he'll pull. What I really wanted was to find out about a woman he's been going around with—where she lives, and who she is, and so on. You be around to-morrow, and go after him again. He's due to show up some time between now and morning if something don't happen to him, and I guess nothing will. When he's drunk, he has the luck of a dog with two tails."

After Mr. Tink had gone, he smoked a cigar in the lobby, awaiting the possible advent of his partner. That worthy not appearing, he ascended to his room. When he switched on the light, he beheld Dobbs. That gentleman was cosily tucked in bed, sleeping the sleep if not of the just at least of the profoundly wearied. Above him, depending from its accustomed bedpost like a guardian angel of his slumbers, hung his wig, somewhat disheveled but still of noble hirsute appearance. On closer inspection of his partner, Bill saw that his facial epidermis bore numerous scratches.

As Dobbs did not awake, Bill shook his head, called it a day, and switched off the light.

## CHAPTER IX.

### CATS AND WIGS.

THE car which opportunely bore Dobbs away from the avenging gentleman with the sword bayonet broke all traffic rules in a straightaway for several blocks, swung to the right for several more, turned hither and yon a number of times, in a manner which argued a certain experience in the art of baffling pursuit, and finally came to a stop in a street which, as it merely divided vacant lots, afforded an unobstructed view for a long distance.

The driver turned to his self-invited passenger.

"All out!" he said; and when this suggestion had been complied with, he queried, not unnaturally: "Well?"

Dobbs, recovering his wind which had been somewhat exhausted by his safety-first efforts, which also had sobered him, extracted largess from his pocket.

"You saved my life, partner," said he. "Here's a dollar."

The driver gazed at him in stupefaction.

"No, no!" he said. "It ain't worth it."

"I know how you feel," said Dobbs appreciatively. "I got the same delicacy. It's a credit to you, and I won't try to force money on you." He returned the dollar to his pocket. "Have a cigar, anyway."

The driver accepted the cigar dazedly, bit off the end, and inserted the weed between his right molars.

"Don't give me a match, too," he said. "Gen'rosity like this always affects me. I got a mushy streak."

"You got a good heart," Dobbs complimented him. "You're a white man. You wouldn't see a feller-bein' slaughtered."

"Not in my bus," the humanitarian admitted. "I got new upholstery. And now," he added in brisk, businesslike manner, "come through. We'll split right here."

"Huh?" the startled Dobbs ejaculated.

"Fifty-fifty on your haul, whatever it was," the driver elaborated. "I ought to have more, but that'll do."

"Why, darn you," Dobbs exclaimed indignantly, "what do you take me for?"

"Cheese, cheese!" the driver chided gently. "You been stagin' a holdup back there, and I want mine."

"I ain't neither," Dobbs denied.

"Don't lie about it," said the driver earnestly, "not to me. Don't make me lose my faith in human nature. Don't try to hold out on me. Where's your gratitude? I save your life—and you offer me a dollar and a cigar! I thought you was kidding me at first, but now—by the glory!" said the driver violently, overcome by a sudden full realization of this base ingratitude. "By the glory, I ought to turn you up!"

"I tell you, I ain't a holdup," Dobbs insisted.

"You may be a Sunday-school superintendent," the driver conceded, with deep irony, "or a traveling evangelist. You ain't a bad front runner, neither, for an old guy. But it beats all what a judge won't believe. You'll get ten years; and at your age that's close to life. Do you want to die in the pen? Be reas'nable."

It took several minutes of heated eloquence partially to convince him that he had not opportunely assisted in a getaway following robbery with violence; and he seemed bitterly disappointed.

"My luck always was dead rotten," he said. "But if you wasn't pulling off a holdup, what was that guy after you with the bayonet for?

"Last night," Dobbs explained, "I was out seein' the sights, and in the shuffle I lost my wig. You can see I'm a little shy of hair. To-day I started out to look for it in the places I'd been at—that is, as near as I could remember. Comin' by that murderer's junk store I saw him, and the head of hair he was wearin' looked to me like my wig. I didn't remember bein' there; but a feller can't remember everything, so I went in to see about it.

"The closer I looked the more it looked like my wig, so I told him to give it to me. He wouldn't, and he jabbered some sort of lingo at me; so I reached over and caught him by the hair back of the ears to pull it off. And darned if it wasn't his own nat'ral wool. And then, instead of apologizin' for deceivin' me, he grabs up that sword from a shelf back of him, and comes for me. So I beat it, and jumped in your bus. And do you blame me?"

The driver looked at him and shook his head. Still shaking it feebly, he got into his seat and started his engine.

"They say," he observed, "that there's one born every minute, and the old ones are the worst; also that it takes all sorts of folks to make up a world. Ain't it the truth?" With which philosophical reflections he let in his clutch and rolled sadly out of Dobbs' life.

The latter, left alone in a part of Vancouver to him, surveyed his suburban surroundings with disgust. The Skidrod and *sam-shu* beverages dying in him, together with his physical exertions, produced an effect of lassitude and a taste that almost bore fur. He felt cast down, discouraged. His search for his wig seemed futile. The only thing to be done was to have another made to match it, as closely as his recollection of its vanished glories would permit. Sorrowfully he turned toward the more inhabited sections of Vancouver.

He had no desire to retrace the route he had followed that afternoon. In the zigzag course taken by the rescuing car, to some extent he had lost his bearings. He knew he was headed for home, and that was all.

Thus he began to traverse a section of the city inhabited by the proletariat. The humble homes of workingmen clustered thickly, as did their progeny. The latter were amusing themselves with the happy abandon of innocent childhood. As Dobbs took a short cut through a lane behind a back yard surrounded by a high board fence, a fiendish caterwauling, mingled with shouts of youthful glee, assailed his ears. He looked over the fence. From a clothesline, tied together by their tails, depended two cats, which were making earnest efforts to disfigure each other with their claws, to the edification of a mixed company of half a dozen small boys and girls, devotees of "clean sport."

Dobbs was largely tolerant in matters of amusement, both youthful and adult, and conceded, as he demanded, a reasonable freedom in the pursuit of happiness. But he felt that this was going too far.

"Hey, you little devils, take down them cats!" he commanded.

"They ain't your cats," a spokesman volunteered; and added appreciatively to a friend: "Gosh, 'Slimer,' lookut the fur fly."

Time being of the essence of rescue, Dobbs went over the fence with an agility highly creditable to his years. The group of spectators scattered. Grasping the cats by the tails he endeavored to lift them from the supporting line. He created a diversion to the extent that one of the felines, a large, black male, twisted upward and let go what technically may be termed a right hook, raking the rescuing hand with a set of highly efficient claws. Dobbs jumped back, wringing his hand, to the unstinted applause of the spectators.

"Serves you darn well right, ol' buttinsky," the same spokesman voiced public opinion. But he listened with respect to Dobbs' outspoken comment, as opening vistas of verbiage theretofore concealed from his youthful ken.

Dobbs opened his knife and cautiously endeavored to sever the unblest tie which bound the felines' tails. In this, after several attempts, he was successful. The cats, loosed, fell. One darted for safety; but the black, falling in contortions, chanced to strike his rescuer's leg above the knee.

Without delving deeply into the psychology of the cat, it may be said that, if not arboreal, it is at any rate a climber. When assailed, it turns instinctively to higher things. Altitude to the average cat connotes safety. Again, a cat, though normally calm and dignified, viewing life with inscrutable eyes, may be shaken from its wonted poise by an event cataclysmic, so to speak. To be suspended by the tail in an enforced twosome with a fellow-feline is such an event. A cat, in fine, may become rattled and act on impulse rather than on matured judgment. That cat did, to Dobbs' sorrow.

Possibly it took Dobbs' leg for a tree. At any rate it took to it like a tree. Digging four sets of climbing irons into Dobbs' bark, it ran aloft nimbly to his

right shoulder, and around his neck to his left shoulder.

To employ ring phraseology, Dobbs was short with a left swing. The cat put a right to the ear and a left to the head without a return. Dobbs broke ground, and the cat forced the fighting. The cat opened a cut above Dobbs' eye, and hooked a left to the nose. Dobbs bleeding badly. The cat's round.

They went to a clinch, and the crowd went wild. On the breakaway—which was accomplished by Dobbs tearing his assailant loose and hurling it violently from him—the cat landed a long farewell left and hit the ground running, its tail as big as a fox's brush and its opinions of mankind in general rising to high heaven.

So did Dobbs' opinions concerning cats. In an inspired outburst of imagery highly instructive to the young who gleaned several priceless rhetorical jewels therefrom, he voiced his sentiments as to all felines as he endeavored to stanch his wounds.

"Hey, mithter," offered a youthful toxicologist to whose speech the recent loss of two upper incisors imparted a fetching lisp, "a cat'th bite'th poitthon. Tho'th itth clawth."

"Maybe he'll die," a golden-haired damsel of eight suggested hopefully. "Maybe we'll see him do it."

"They won't let him die here," a masculine wet blanket interposed. "They take them to a hospital to croak."

"When folks die of dog bites they bark," the young lady stated expertly. "I betcha he'll meow an' spit. I hope we hear him."

Further prognostications were cut short by the appearance of the gentleman who owned the house appurtenant to the back-yard arena. He was a very large and solid gentleman of viking mold as well as ancestry. He was in his shirt sleeves, and he was smoking tobacco in a pipe and chewing tobacco in the form of snuff. There was an air of primal calm about him, as of mountains. He ran a cold-blue eye over the intruder.

Dobbs returned this gaze with some apprehension. To Dobbs' eye he bore an unwelcome resemblance to another gentleman of berserk tendencies who had swept out an entire camp in the Cariboo, using an ax as a besom. The viking spoke. His voice was a rumble as of distant thunder in the hills.

"Hey, you faller, vat in hal you ban do in my yard?"

"Them young hellions," Dobbs explained, with what he felt to be feeble description, "had tied two cats together by the tails."

The viking considered this evidence of youthful genius calmly.

"Dey ban your cats?" he inquired.

"Course they wasn't," Dobbs returned. "I'm tellin' you they'd tied their tails together and hung 'em up on your clothesline."

The viking eyed the line critically.

"She ban gude strong line," he asserted with confidence. "She hold up more as two cats."

"Goldarn it!" the exasperated Dobbs elucidated; "them cats was rippin' each other to pieces!"

The information made little impression.

"Cats ban cats," the viking announced incontrovertibly. "You gat your face scratched bloody. Vat you butt in for?"

"Great Pete!" Dobbs exclaimed in disgust; "ain't you got no common humanity?"

The viking scratched his head doubtfully, and seemed to receive inspiration from Dobbs' scratched visage.

"Ay tenk mebbe de voman gat some in de house," he said. "You come in and vash, and she rub it on."

Dobbs gave it up. But he accepted the invitation to cleanse his wounds. This he accomplished at a tin basin on the back porch, his ablutions being watched hopefully for signs of rabies by

a concourse of the young. However, he balked at the alleged healing balm tendered him by the viking's wife.

This ointment, evidently a home brew, was in a tin can which originally had contained salmon. Apart from the container, doubt seemed to be cast upon the antiseptic properties of the contents by finger marks, edged with stove blacking, and by the further circumstance that it held a dead mouse. Dobbs delicately pointed out the corpse.

"Yohn Vesley," the lady accused one of the youthful concourse, "you put dead mice in de salve by?"

"Didn't," the accused John Wesley denied succinctly.

"Val," the lady accepted this denial, "den mebbe I guess de mice he et some. She ent to eat; she's to rub in. You tek some off de side vere de mice isn't, meester."

But Dobbs refused as tactfully as he could, and left the premises by the back way. He passed down a lane with back yards and vacant lots on either hand.

His soul which should have been singing over a good deed accomplished, was bitter within him; and his face and hands smarted. He felt that the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals should specifically state that cats were outside its scope. Divine purpose, if any, in the creation of cats, Dobbs felt, was obscure. They might, indeed, be proper subjects for vivisection, and might with advantage be substituted for guinea pigs and rabbits for inoculation with diseases in the interests of science; but otherwise, in Dobbs' view, cats lacked raison d'être.

He felt so strongly on the subject that, seeing a large, fat, yellow tabby roosting comfortably on a board fence, he looked around for a missile with which to register his disapproval of the entire feline genus, and found a section of a brick.

The cat was sleeping in the sun, high above canine perils, perchance dreaming of succulent mice. Dobbs took a careful stance, went back slowly, and let the brick go with a perfect follow-through. If anything, there was too much follow through, which is said to impart punch and give distance. The missile topped the cat, little more than grazing its fur, and went on its way, even, to Dobbs' startled eyes seeming to rise in flight with a slight hook, which brought it in line with a kitchen window.

As the cat, aroused from dreams, sprang high in air and vanished, there was a crash of glass and a bloodcurdling feminine shriek. Above the fence, with the sudden effect of a jack-in-the-box, appeared a gardening trowel clutched in a muscular hand, followed instantly by the visage of a gaunt and angular and highly indignant lady whose tongue, even as she appeared, was framing phrase of bitter reproach to small children. But, seeing a male of mature years, she hastened to amend this accusation.

"You miserable, low-down old brute, what do you mean by it?" she demanded.

"Me, ma'am?" Dobbs returned, with the best simulation of innocence he could produce in this sudden emergency.

"Yes, you!" the lady returned, with energy. "I thought at first it was one of them boys."

"So it was, ma'am," Dobbs assured her earnestly.

"Then where is he?" the lady demanded, glaring around.

"He run away," Dobbs extemporized brilliantly. "I tried to catch him, but he was too quick for me. He was a young tough with freckles and a dirty face."

"I don't believe you," the lady told him. "You threw a stone at my Flora, and you broke my kitchen window, and I'll have you jailed for it."

"You're mistaken, ma'am," Dobbs pleaded. "I love all animals, 'specially cats. My poor, dead sister taught me

to love 'em. I'd be the last man on earth to heave rocks at 'em."

"He's lyin', Miss Crull," a childish voice piped behind Dobbs. "He t'run a brickbat at your cat. I seen him."

Dobbs turned and beheld a loathsome little girl of years some nine or ten. She held a dilapidated doll upside down by one leg, thus early in Dobbs' view, betraying a tendency toward infanticide. With her was a male of about equal age, of a low and lowering countenance. A slingshot protruding from his pants pocket indicated that in later life he might become a gunman and perhaps end in a wired chair. Dobbs hoped so. This male now confirmed the girl's testimony:

"I seen him, too."

Dobbs surveyed these voluntary witnesses with repulsion. He felt that King Herod, and, in a lesser way, the Prophet Elisha, had the right system in dealing with children. In his opinion, instead of reprobation through the centuries, that monarch deserved a stately monument. At the moment he would have been willing to contribute to one.

But as the weight of evidence seemed to be against him, he had recourse to a plan sometimes efficacious with hostile witnesses.

"You're a pair of da—er—that is, you're mistaken, my little dears," he amended his original statement. And he craftily exhibited to their innocent gaze a half dollar lying surreptitiously in his palm.

The reaction of the female to the sight of real money was instant, feminine and satisfactory.

"It wasn't him, after all, Miss Crull," she changed her testimony promptly. "It was just a man that looked like him."

But the male, naturally lacking in this fine intuition, with the characteristic obstinate density of his sex, stuck to his original statement.

"It was too, him! I seen him pick up the brick and let ding at your cat. There wasn't no other man at all. And you're a little liar, Hetty Maguire!"

"You're another!" his companion retorted. Having adopted a new faith, she pursued it with fervor and evangelical ardor, as well as highly creditable invention. "Don't you believe him, Miss Crull. I seen the man. I seen him fire the brick and run. He was a big man with black whiskers, and he looked like a tramp. And you were going to plug Miss Crull's cat, yourself, with your slingshot, Mike Brady. You know you were! You're a fibber, and a bad, bad boy, and you'll go to the bad place, and I'll laugh! So there. Mister Mike Brady!"

"You wanted me to plug the cat, you little tattletale," Mr. Brady accused the betrayer. "You seen it on the fence, and you come and told me now was a good chance to plug the old maid's cat. But, of course, I wasn't going to," he concluded virtuously.

"You were, and you're a fibber," Miss Maguire contradicted him flatly. "Fibber, fibber! You were, you were, you were!" And, swinging the unfortunate doll as a flail, she brought it with force against Mr. Brady's ear, while at the same moment she kicked him violently on the right shin. Mr. Brady thereupon cast chivalry to the winds, and battle joined. They went to it viciously, with a technic which argued experience.

"Are you going to let them little children kill each other, you old brute?" Miss Crull demanded.

Dobbs, who was enjoying a ringside position and cheering on his suborned witness, felt himself forced to interfere. He caught Mr. Brady by the scruff of the neck and shook him.

"What do you mean by hitting a little girl, you young beast?" he demanded. "You'd ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"An' fwat do yez mane be batin' up me la-ad, yez ould blagyard?" a hoarse voice behind him demanded. "L'ave him go, now, or I'll alter th' map iv yez!"

Dobbs let go promptly, and beheld a red-faced and red-headed female of truculent mien, decidedly in the heavyweight division, who furthermore comported herself as a champion.

"You, wid th' hamburger face," the lady further addressed him—"fwat do yez mane by ut?"

"He was beatin' up this little girl," Dobbs explained.

"An' fwat av ut?" the lady returned, with maternal tolerance. "Growin' lads must have some divarsion. An' annyways, she's a Maguire. I'm a notion to slam ye one."

"Do, ma!" Master Brady encouraged her. "He fired a rock at Miss Crull's cat, and bust her winder."

"Shut up!" his mother commanded, enforcing discipline with an open-handed box on the ear. "Fwat's the rights of this, Mary Crull?"

She got them, so far as Miss Crull knew them. Miss Crull, on the principle that the weight of evidence was nearly even, and that a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush, demanded indemnity for her window from Dobbs. This was enforced by Mrs. Brady in no uncertain terms.

"Yez'll pay her, or I'll get a cop," she announced.

Thus outheld, Dobbs surrendered.

"All right, I'll pay to save trouble," he agreed. "How much is your winder worth?"

"Ten dollars," Miss Crull replied.

"Ten blazes!" Dobbs protested. "The pane's worth about fifty cents."

"Make it twinty, Mary," Mrs. Brady advised. "He's got the money."

"Twenty," Miss Crull amended.

"But——" Dobbs endeavored to expostulate.

"Me cousin's on this beat," Mrs. Brady cut him short. "An' then ye t'run the rock at her cat, causin' her mental anguish, like the law says. A judge'd give ye sixty days; but us women is weak enough to be mercifuller. Call it twinty-five, Mary!"

But Dobbs settled at twenty, and departed, breathing maledictions. Around a corner, he heard a patter of childish feet behind him, and turning beheld Miss Maguire, brandishing a sad fragment of her doll.

"Where's my half dollar, mister?" she inquired. "I fibbed the best I could for you."

Dobbs, looking at her youthful innocence, was touched.

"So you did," he admitted. "Angels could do no more. Here's a whole dollar, sissy. Darn it, here's two dollars. You're the only human being with a heart in Vancouver. Keep on as you're going, and some day you'll drag down big money—if nobody catches you at it." And, with this word of kindly encouragement in the right path, he went on.

Several blocks farther on his way, he passed by a vacant lot between two humble residences. On this lot several small boys were disporting themselves in what to Dobbs was a new game, presumably invented since his own youth.

One boy was crouched on hands and toes near another, who, crouched likewise in this posture, pranced about uttering sounds of which "Ba-a-ah! ba-a-ah!" is a fair phonetic rendering. This second youth's chin was adorned by some grayish material fastened to his head by a string. He now shook his head threateningly, and plunging forward butted the first youth violently. This youth, though shaken, maintained his poise. He then arose, shook himself, and addressed his assailant.

"My turn!" he cried joyfully, and reached for the whiskers.

Dobbs addressed a smaller boy, an envious bystander.

"What are they playin'?"

They were, he learned, playing a game known as "Goat-in-the-ring." The ring was drawn in the dirt. If the boy in the ring was butted out of it or overthrown, he had to stand a second assault. If not, he himself donned the goat's whiskers and did the butting.

At this moment a certain familiarity in this appendage, which was now being donned by the second boy, struck Dobbs. Only the vivid imagination of childhood could have endowed it with capricornian resemblance. As its new owner crouched for attack, Dobbs sprang forward, seized him, and snatched the appendage from his chin.

It was sadly disheveled, somewhat muddy, and burs and foreign material clung to it; but even in its fallen estate it was recognizable. Dobbs identified it beyond doubt. But his action brought a howl of indignant protest.

"You gimme that back!" its quondam wearer demanded.

"Where did you get my wig, you young cuss?" Dobbs asked.

"It ain't yours—it's mine," the youth insisted. "You gimme it back!" And, stooping, he grasped a stone.

His example was contagious. Since the time of David, and likely prior thereto, boys have been handy with stones. Dobbs had no desire to emulate Goliath.

"Here's ten cents for it, sonny," he offered practically if frugally.

"I don't want no ten cents. I want my goat's whiskers!"

"Well, here's two bits," Dobbs raised the ante.

"I want them whiskers."

Dobbs might have raised again, but for precipitate action on the part of a youth who lingered on the outskirts of the discussion. This youth, when the clan had armed, had chosen for his missile a handful of Vancouver's real estate, which, as it chanced to be mingled with a recent rainfall in natural proportions, he had molded expertly into a true sphere the size of a baseball. This he now projected at the interloper.

The ball of mud struck Dobbs in the neighborhood of the right ear, with a soggy sound, and distributed itself shrapnel-wise over the surrounding area of his person. Besides being high in cohesive qualities, its fragments also were adhesive, and it made a mess of Dobbs.

In the West, in the days when every gentleman went armed, a single shot sometimes provoked a fusillade. It did so now. Dobbs found himself the target of a general bombardment by expert gunners.

Instant retreat from an untenable position is sound strategy. There are times when even the bravest may run like a man. To fight a gang of small boys is much like standing one's ground against a disturbed nest of wasps. It may be magnificent, but it is not war.

For the second time that afternoon, Dobbs ran. Like the unfortunates condemned to run the gantlet, he was pursued by a yelling horde. And he ran directly into the arms of the law, as personified by a gentleman known officially as Police Constable Flaherty, No. 28, who was related in cousinly degree to the mother of Master Michael Brady.

Constable Flaherty barred Dobbs' strategic retreat with a blue-clad arm.

"Now then, now then," quoth he, going to the very kernel of the situation with keen intelligence, "what th' devil is this about?"

"Them young cusses are rockin' me," Dobbs complained. "One of them busted a mud ball onto me. Don't a man git no protection in this town?"

"He stole my goat's whiskers," was the counter accusation. "He grabbed them and run."

"Oho!" said Officer Flaherty sternly. "A goat's whiskers, is ut! That's croolty

to animals, and assault, besides larceny, as well. Where's th' poor goat, b'ys?"

"What he calls his goat's whiskers is my wig," Dobbs stated. "I lost her last night, and they've darned near ruined her, playin' some fool game."

"A wig, is ut?" said Officer Flaherty, bending a stern gaze upon it. "It looks more like a burrds' nest, an' a last-year's wan, at that. An' how come ye to lose it offa yer bean?"

"I was takin' a little walk last night," Dobbs stated candidly, "and I took my hat off to cool my head, and right then some feller snatched off my wig and run."

"How did yeez lads come by the wig?"

"We found it lyin' in the street."

"On yer say-so the wig may be yours," Officed Flaherty admitted to Dobbs regretfully. "But how come yer map to be all scratched up?"

"A cat done that."

"A cat!" Officer Flaherty exclaimed, with sudden enlightenment. "So you're that felly! I've been hearin' iv yez. There's an alarm out f'r yez. Yez tried f'r to hold up a Syrian or the likes, named Bananas or the likes, an' yez made yer get-away in a high-powered car dhruv be a confed'rit. We'll get him later. Then, yieldin' to a maniacal impulse to croolty, yez catched two poor cats, an' hung them over Ole Swenstrom's clothesline. When detected, yez tried to blame it on innocent childher. After that, yez t'run a brick at another cat, an' bust a taxpayer's windy. Like enough yon wig is a disguise, enablin' yez to lead a double life. Come along. There's a free ride comin' to yez."

Dobbs' explanations and entreaties were unavailing. So was an enticing offer of currency.

"You're a devil of a cop!" he voiced amazed disgust at what he considered an abnormal attitude. "But then," he added bitterly, "you ain't got no sense, so I guess you qualify."

He eyed the "wagon" when it arrived, with deep repulsion. It put him in mind of a dog catcher's van. The fact that it had running rights over everything but the fire department, brought no solace. In unwelcome state he rode to police headquarters, where after a long wait he was paraded, luckily for him, before the gentleman who had investigated the charge of attempting to promote a confidence game when he and Bill had tried to sell The Dog to a detective.

"What, again!" said this gentleman, with an air of pleased surprise. "And to what do we owe the pleasure of this second visit?"

He heard the conflicting stories of captive and captor, with a twinkle of amusement in his cold eye. He already had checked up on Dobbs and Bill, and accepted the former's explanation nearly at par.

"Boys will be boys," he said genially. "But, Mr. Dobbs, doesn't it occur to you that a gentleman of your years, who presumably carries money on his person, would be well advised to avoid places such as you say you were in last night?"

"It took seven waiters to throw me and that sailor out of one of them," Dobbs stated with modest pride; "and they were husky waiters, too."

He left police headquarters without a visible stain on his character, and having fortified himself with a meal at the nearest café, decided to call it a day. It was then night, and he had broken his engagement with the widow, but that could not be helped.

A cautious survey of the hotel lobby disclosed Bill in converse with a stranger whose face seemed vaguely familiar, though he could not place it. Not wishing to be confronted by his partner just then, he dodged around to another entrance, and unobserved ascended to his room. There he inspected his features, and once more voiced his opinion of cats.

He took a hot bath and two mansize drinks, and laid him down to rest wearily but triumphantly. He eyed with satisfaction the retrieved wig, pendent above him on the bedpost. He felt the satisfaction of the soldier who has saved the regimental colors. Something attempted, something done had earned a night's repose.

"By gum, I got her!" he muttered, as he relaxed with a deep sigh. "There ain't nothing that beats perseverance—except luck." With which philosophical reflection—which is strongly recommended as a practical variant of the "Labor omnia vincit" maxim of our youth—he passed into innocent slumber.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE FRAME-UP.

BILL awoke in the morning to see his partner before the mirror making careful survey of his features. He shook his head sadly at the result of this inspection, and, turning his attention from his natural attractions to the artificial, began to pick foreign material from his wig.

Bill yawned mightily and sat up in bed. Then he got a full view of his partner's countenance.

"What in thunder you been doin' to your face?"

"She is scratched up a little," Dobbs admitted.

"You look as if you'd been tryin' to kiss somebody, and picked the wrong person," said Bill. "Or was it your darn widow?"

"I got these scratches tryin' to stop a runaway," Dobbs informed him.

"A runaway lion?" Bill inquired.

"A runaway horse."

"How could a horse scratch you up like that?"

"It wasn't the horse. He drug me through a bunch of bush with thorns on it before I could stop him."

"Well, what did you want to stop him for?"

"There was a girl ridin' him," Dobbs confessed, with modest reluctance, "and he'd got plumb away from her. As a man, I couldn't do no less."

"Just like a movie!" said Bill in admiration. "Was the girl hurt?"

"Not to mention. Just shook up a little."

"Did she kiss you?"

"That's all you think about," Dobbs reproved him, with dignity. "She was mighty grateful. She said I'd saved her life; and maybe I did."

"You ought to get a medal for it," Bill commented, with irony.

"That's what her old man said," Dobbs returned.

"Did you save his life, too?"

"No, I didn't. Him and his daughter had been out ridin' in Stanley Park, but he wasn't right with her when her horse bolted. When he come up, he was as grateful as she was. Nothing would do but I must go home with them."

"Of course, he wouldn't let you walk," said Bill. "He pulled a cayuse for you out of his pants' pocket, didn't he?"

"You think that's bright, don't you?" Dobbs retorted. "If you had brains, it might strike you he could phone for his car."

"Was it a horse car?"

"Not so's you'd notice. It was about the size of a Pullman. The shofer was dressed up like a French general, and he brought out an English-lookin' flunkey with him to take the horses."

"Was this flunkey sittin' up in the front seat with the shofer?" Bill asked with interest.

"I guess so," Dobbs returned, slightly puzzled. "Why?"

"I thought he might have been sittin' back with the butler," said Bill. "Go right ahead and tell me some more. You're doin' fine."

"I won't tell you another darn' word,"

Dobbs refused, in dudgeon. "Only that them people live in a big house up on Shaughnessy Heights. And the old man has the best whisky I've tasted in years."

"All right," said Bill. "And now tell me how you got your face scratched." But he wrung no confession from his partner, who admitted nothing unless caught with the goods, and then but seldom.

"If you don't believe me, I can't help it," the latter returned, with the sad dignity of the misunderstood, and resumed the task of cleaning his wig.

"Well, where did you find your darn wig, then?" Bill asked. "Perhaps you can tell me that, without lyin' like a government witness."

"I won't tell you nothin'," Dobbs replied, and stuck to it.

Bill, baffled, dressed with speed and descended to the ground floor, where he found his special investigator awaiting his appearance.

"I told you he'd show up all right," he informed that gentleman. "When I went up to the room about an hour after you'd left, there he was in bed and asleep. He wasn't drunk to speak of, because he'd taken off his boots and clothes. He has his wig back, and his face is all scratched up, and he lies about how that happened. You go after him to-day, and see if he meets that darned woman. Find out all about her you can, and let me know."

Dobbs, after breakfast, took it easy in the seclusion of their apartment, apparently recuperating his forces. He seemed disinclined for further conversation, and Bill let him alone. At the end of an hour he sallied forth without announcing his destination. Nor did he return.

Bill put in the day.

About nine o'clock that night Mr. Tink appeared. He seemed even more weary and discouraged than on the preceding evening.

"You look as though the whisky had run out," said Bill. "Have you lost him again?"

"I got him spotted," Mr. Tink replied. "He'll stay put for an hour or so. After to-day, I guess I'm through."

"You're gettin' paid," Bill pointed out. "I'll raise the ante, if it ain't enough. Only I want some action for my stack. I want some dope on this widow."

"I guess there ain't no widow," Mr. Tink returned wearily.

"Course there is," Bill insisted. "I saw him with her."

"You might have thought you did," Mr. Tink admitted. "This is two days I've been shadowin' that partner of yours, and I'm free to confess he surprises me."

"What did he do to-day?" Bill asked.

"I better tell you the whole thing, startin' from the beginnin'," said Mr. Tink. "When I tagged onto him this morning, he went down street sort of keepin' track of the window signs like he was lookin' for some place, and at last he turned into a map institute."

"A what?" Bill queried.

"A beauty parlor," Mr. Tink interpreted. "They got a professor there that's a wiz on camouflage, like paintin' out shiners, and trimmin' cauliflowers, and so on. He used to be a bartender, and he does a good trade among the leather pushers. So your partner went in there, and when he come out he had a nice three-coat enamel job, natural finish, over them scratches, so that they didn't show at all; and his wig had been vacuum cleaned or something. It was fluffy and pretty like a squirrel in the spring. Takin' him all in all, the old feller looked slick and smooth as a spring bird. Science sure has made great strides."

He shook his head solemnly in mute admiration of recent scientific advances, and resumed:

"He went on down street, lookin' at

himself in the store windows like a woman with a new dress, and the next place he hit was a hotel where they've moved the bar, all but the brass rail, up to a back room on the fourth floor. He had two gin fizzes there, and a rickey for luck, and he come out bright eyed and steppin' high. He went in to a gents' furnishin' store, and bought himself a cane and a pair of red gloves, and a new necktie, yellow and red with a green stripe runnin' diagonal, and put 'em all on. Then he hit a cigar store, and come out smokin' a cigarette in a holder a foot long."

"Cig'rettes!" Bill gasped. "Him?"

"Well, he was chewin' tobacco, too," Mr. Tink put forward in extenuation. "He went along and come to an office buildin' and took the elevator. I took it the next trip and got off at the floor the elevator boy told me that necktie had got off at, and there was an office with, 'Dobbs & Hutchins, Minin' Investments,' on the door. Is that your office?"

"I guess so," Bill replied. "I've never seen it. It's another of his crazy notions."

"It looked to me like it was headquarters for a woman's convention of some kind," Mr. Tink went on. "The cage I come up in was full of girls, all headed for this office. So I asked one of 'em what was the idea. She showed me an 'ad' clipped from a paper. This is it."

Bill read:

Wanted—Experienced female stenographer able to work a typewriter and fix up business letters to look right, also to spell good. Good pay for a good one. Apply in person personally to Room 512, Helmer Building, between 11-12 o'clock, Wednesday.

"They applied, all right," said Mr. Tink. "They crowded the office and overflowed into the corridor. Pretty soon they begun to go as well as to come; and then they all went in a bunch, all but that cute little thing I spoke to. She landed the job."

"And he told me," said Bill thoughtfully, "that the stenographer he'd hire would be old, and a little gray."

"You ought to see this one," said Mr. Tink.

"Maybe I will," Bill returned hopefully. "Fire ahead."

"I stalled around," Mr. Tink went on, "and after a while she come out. 'So you made it, sister,' I says. 'What sort of a job is it?' "

" 'What's it to you?' she says. So I showed her a five.

" 'Well,' she tells me, 'the boss is an old gink dressed up like a spiced ham and smellin' of gin. He's either a nut or a crook, so I don't know how good the job is. And if you're a dick, I've never seen him or it before to-day.'

" 'Never mind what I am,' I says. 'what has he given you to do so far?'

" 'All I've done so far is to take some dictation,' she says. 'It was fierce, the worst ever. Part of it was to people like the Guggenheims and Consolidated Smelters about minin' properties he wanted to sell 'em. There was some letters to private parties, offerin' them minin' claims or shares in minin' companies. I guess he must have a sucker list, but he ain't workin' Vancouver with it. The letters was all to points outside. But he gave me instructions that when a certain lady comes in to see him, I'm to butt in with phony messages about big minin' deals. And if you're goin' to make a pinch,' she winds up, 'tip me off so's I can do a fade-out first. It don't do a workin' girl no good to be mixed up with these here Wallingfords.'

"I told her it was all right, and to keep copies of a few letters, 'specially any to women. She went out to lunch, and I stuck around pretty close to the door, and I heard your partner usin' the phone. Then he come out and headed for a café, and there he met a woman.

What sort of a looker," Mr. Tink asked, "did you say this widow was?"

Bill described the lady as accurately as he could from his limited opportunity for observation.

"I guess it's the same party," said Mr. Tink, with a sigh. "I can tell you all you want to know about her."

"Good work," Bill congratulated. "Spill it."

"Well," said Mr. Tink, "I told you there wasn't no widow. And there ain't. This woman, if it's the same one you mean, is my wife."

"What!" Bill exclaimed. "Are you sure?"

"A man is darn apt to know his own wife. Sure, she's my wife."

"Well, thank the Lord for that!" Bill commented, with unwonted piety.

"I don't know why," said Mr. Tink gloomily, "and diff'rent here. When I come to check up on my blessin's lately, she ain't been in the rack."

"I mean," Bill explained, "that if she ain't a widow he can't marry her."

"I wouldn't be so darn sure," Mr. Tink doubted pessimistically. "He looks to me like a man that'd commit bigamy. If he hasn't, it's likely because he's overlooked it."

"It ain't bigamy unless you're married already," said Bill; "and he ain't married."

"How do you know?" Mr. Tink returned, with deep suspicion. "I'd say he had most of the white man's vices. And, anyway, my wife's married."

"You ain't dead," said Bill; "so she won't marry him. Not reflectin' on her at all, my tumtum is she's just playin' him for a sucker. He told her he was a minin' millionaire; and she told him she was a rich widow from Californy. That way, it's a stand-off. He's tryin' to sell her a mineral claim we own; and I'll bet she has somethin' worth about as much that she's tryin' to sell him."

"She had a lot of bum California oil shares once," said Mr. Tink. "She paid two hundred good dollars for 'em, at ten cents a share. And I wanted to put that money on a horse at the time," he added sadly.

Bill thought it over. With a perfectly good husband among those present, he felt relief. The situation, however, seemed to hold possibilities.

"Now look a here," he said at last, "I want to learn this old rooster a lesson. This is a good chance. Now, here it is. Your wife run out on you back in Winnipeg, and you find her here in Vancouver runnin' around with him to movies and cafés, and so on. Naturally, you s'pose he's responsible for alienatin' her affections, bustin' up your happy boardin' house, and so on. Anyway, you got a right to s'pose it. You're a wronged and desp'rate husband, see?"

"Am I?" said Mr. Tink doubtfully.

"Sure you are," Bill affirmed. "So what you do, you watch your chance, and then you stick a gun against his stomach and tell him to pray and make it snappy."

"You don't mean me," Mr. Tink objected. "I ain't no gunman."

"When you got a gun against a guy's belt you can't miss him," Bill pointed out. "He knows it, too."

"It might go off," said Mr. Tink, with apprehension. "The darn things do. And then it'd be murder. They hang folks for murder in this country," he added, with regret for this shortcoming of the law as administered in Canada.

"It couldn't go off, because it'd be empty," said Bill. "I wouldn't have the old stiff hurt for a million dollars, of course. I just want him scared, to have the laugh on him and learn him some sense. All you do is put the fear of the Lord in him."

"I ain't no evangelist," Mr. Tink objected further. "You don't stack me up against a rough old bird like that with no empty gun. Look at how many wait-

ers it took to throw him out of them dumps."

"And look how he run from that old rooster with the bayonet," Bill pointed out encouragingly. "And, besides," he added, "he'd have a guilty conscience."

"Conscience!" said Mr. Tink. "Him?"

"Well, anyway," said Bill, "a gun proddin' your stomach makes you stand without hitchin', take it from me. And he's scared of guns, same as any man that's seen 'em work. All you got to do is to carry a hard face. It's a cinch."

"S'pose I do this," said Mr. Tink, weakening slightly—"what happens then?"

Bill, whose plans had gone no further than the discomfiture of his partner, reflected.

"You can shake him down if you like," he suggested. "I'll see that he has a hundred in his clothes, and that'll be your rake."

"You don't get me holdin' up nobody for money," Mr. Tink objected, with decision. "If he makes a squeal I land in the pen."

"Well, I'll pay you a hundred for the job myself," Bill offered generously. "That's good money. And when your wife sees you with this gun——"

"My wife!" Mr. Tink exclaimed.

"She's going to call at this office he's got, to talk business with him," Bill returned. "That gives you a good chance. You throw down on him with the gun, and ask him where he wants his body sent; and if she tries to talk, you shut her up."

"Did you ever try shuttin' up a woman you're married to?" Mr. Tink asked pathetically.

"The trouble with you," Bill told him, with the superiority of bachelorhood, "is that you've played the wrong system. From now on, you want to deal 'em out like a buck to his squaw. He does the runnin' around and the thinkin'; and she stays in camp and does the work, and everybody's happy. If she ain't, he beats her up a little, and it's all right. Women like the rough stuff. So when your wife sees you with a gun, she'll know you're a hard guy, and she'll want you back."

"She might take it away from me," Mr. Tink suggested contra.

"My Lord!" Bill exclaimed in disgust. "Are you a man or a mouse? I tell you, all you have to do is to carry a hard face, and she'll be beggin' you to eat her cookin' again. We'll pull this in the office, because nobody'll butt in there; and besides, I want to see the fun. When we find out when she's comin' there, I'll tell you how to work it."

"That stenographer of his'll tip us off for a five-spot," Mr. Tink suggested brilliantly.

"Stake her to it," said Bill. "It'll be money well spent."

## CHAPTER XI.

### SOLOMON SAID IT.

OLD Sam Dobbs having consumed an excellent if lonely lunch, turned toward his office, with the brisk step of the hustling business man. So far nobody had called there save gentlemen selling insurance and sets of the world's best-bound literature. But, though from a business standpoint the office seemed to lack raison d'être, Dobbs liked it. Its possession gave him a sense of importance; and then, it was a place to rest his feet.

Further, he liked his stenographer, Miss B. Cooney. As yet he had not ascertained what given name this initial indicated. He intended to find out. "Miss Cooney" seemed too darned formal. Miss Cooney, besides being able to make a typewriter talk, and being a good speller—at least so far as Dobbs was able to check up on that attainment—

was a nice bit of scenery, restful to his aged eyes.

So far, Bill had not visited the office, and Dobbs hoped he would not; for a visit would explode a fiction to the effect that the stenographer was a lady of mature years, with a grayish bob, slightly lame, with eyes a trifle on the bias. This information apparently had discouraged Bill.

On this particular afternoon the existence of the office was to be justified by a visit from the widowed Mrs. Tolliver. Dobbs hoped she would come prepared to talk turkey. Anyway, he intended to talk it. He was going to make a manful effort to sell her The Dog, whether he sold her himself or not; and so when he reached his office he proceeded to arrange his stage setting.

"The lady I told you about will be here at three o'clock," he told Miss Cooney. "When she comes, you tell her I'm mighty busy signin' dividend checks for the shareholders of one of my mines, but that I'll see her. Did you fix up them checks to read like they was for a dividend, like I told you?"

"Yes, Mr. Dobbs."

"That's a good girl," her employer approved. "Sort of scatter them around on my desk so she'll see them, and put some more papers there to make it look like bus'ness. When her and me have been talkin' a few minutes, you come in and tell me those parties in Seattle is callin' me up on long distance about that big deal for that group of mines."

"Ten minutes—Seattle—group of mines," she said, taking notes. "Yes, Mr. Dobbs."

"Then after a few minutes more, you bring me in that option for fifty thousand I agreed to give that English syndicate on that placer-dredgin' proposition."

"Yes, Mr. Dobbs."

"Well, then let it ride for a while," Dobbs instructed, after some thought. "And last of all, bring me in that telegram offerin' fifteen thousand for The Silver Dog mineral claim."

"Yes, Mr. Dobbs. Is that all?"

"It ought to be enough, I guess," Dobbs decided. "Don't forget any of it."

"I don't forget much, Mr. Dobbs."

"You're a good girl," said Dobbs, "and you'll get along."

"I'm working for you," said Miss Cooney humbly, "and, of course, I want to do as I'm told."

"That's right," said Dobbs. "You're an intelligent young woman."

'I want to do as I'm told," the intelligent Miss Cooney repeated, "even to phony calls, and options and wires. I'm just a poor working girl, Mr. Dobbs, but I gotta conscience."

Again to quote the dictum of Captain Cuttle, the bearings of an observation depend upon its application. Eye met eye. Miss Cooney's expressed a simple trust in human nature—that is, in Dobbs' human nature. Dobbs' expressed pained disillusionment. After a long moment devoted to practical mind reading, he laid a five-dollar bill upon Miss Cooney's desk. The young lady beamed.

"Oh," she said, in childlike surprise, "is this for me? Thank you, Mr. Dobbs."

"Don't mention it—or anything else," said Dobbs. "You was born hereabouts, wasn't you?" he queried, with apparent irrelevance.

"They tell me so," Miss Cooney admitted, with the proper pride of a native daughter.

"I can tell it without being told," said Dobbs; and he entered his own office to await the arrival of his fair visitor.

When the latter at last was ushered in by the native-born Miss Cooney, he welcomed her cordially, but with the slight abstraction proper to one im-

mersed in large affairs on which his mind had been concentrated.

"Don't let us be interrupted, Miss Cooney," he instructed. "If that English syndicate's engineer comes, tell him to call to-morrow."

"Yes, Mr. Dobbs. Shall I mail the dividend checks now?"

"I'm not quite through signin' them," Dobbs stated. "Let 'em wait."

Miss Cooney closed Dobbs' office door and went directly to the telephone, where she called a number. Getting her connection, she uttered but two words, "All right," and, returning to her desk, began to type industriously.

Dobbs with few preliminaries went directly to business. The preliminaries included directing his visitor's attention to the dividend checks, as being proof of material rewards for trust in his investments. He then proceeded to give authentic instances of mineral claims which had turned out to be bonanzas, and arguing from the general to the particular, endeavored to convince his client that The Dog was such a claim.

Though the lady listened, she did not jump at the chance to become the owner of this potential source of wealth. Even when Dobbs exhibited a substantial fragment of silver-lead ore—procured at a junk shop at a cost of fifty cents—she did not enthuse. Indeed, she showed a disposition to stray from minerals to oil, with particular reference to certain valuable shares of the latter which she held.

Miss Cooney as per schedule announced Seattle upon the phone, and brought in an option for signature. Dobbs met these interruptions with businesslike brusqueness. Then he spread a map upon his desk and pointed out the precise location of The Dog in the exact center of a rich—if so far unproved—mineral belt. In close proximity to his companion, he bent over it.

At the sound of an opening door he turned his head, expecting to see Miss Cooney, who was about due with the fifteen-thousand-dollar telegram. But instead of the scenic Miss Cooney, he beheld a stranger whose features somehow were vaguely familiar. However, his eyes did not dwell upon the stranger's physiognimy, but focused instead upon the latter's hand which seemed entirely full of gun. It was a very large and very long gun, and it seemed to bear directly upon that spot in Dobbs' physical structure where reposed his recent lunch. Dobbs was seldom the prey of indigestion, but at the sight he felt a decidedly gone and sinking feeling.

"S-stick 'em up!" the intruder ordered. His voice was slightly shaky.

But Dobbs did not cavil at that. His hands shot ceilingward with celerity. His fair companion emitted a stifled scream.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "It's him!"

"Shut up!" said the holdup man thus flatteringly addressed.

"I won't shut up. How dare you speak to me like that? Put that nasty gun down!"

Instead of obeying, the intruder took a slightly hesitant step forward and prodded Dobbs ungently in the stomach with the muzzle of the weapon. This human contact appeared to inspire him with more confidence. It inspired Dobbs with decidedly less.

"Uh!" he acknowledged the prod. "Is this a holdup, or what?"

"You'll see what it is," the other returned ferociously. "I'm goin' to blow your heart out."

Now, though this sanguinary prediction was uttered in a manner which Bill would have described as "hardened," somehow it fell short of carrying complete conviction to Dobbs, whose background contained varied experiences including knowledge of men who had been rightly considered "bad." He had seen gunmen, and crazy men with guns, and

this one did not ring quite true for either.

Dobbs possessed nerve enough on occasion; but like most men who have an intimate knowledge of firearms he had a heartfelt respect for them. Though this holdup man did not look like a killer, neither for instance did Billy, "the Kid," nor a number of deadly gentlemen celebrated in history, to say nothing of more modern homicidal practitioners. True, his voice had been a trifle shaky, and so was the hand that held the gun. But a shaky hand may possibly indicate a twitching trigger finger. Dobbs would have preferred more steadiness all around. In his view, a nervous man wasn't fit to be trusted with a gun.

"I wisht you'd point that thing some other way," he suggested.

The holdup man laughed a bitter stage laugh.

"You think you can bluff it out, do you, you old home wrecker?"

"What d'you mean — 'home wrecker?' " Dobbs asked.

"You wrecked mine, and bust up my married life!" the holdup man declared.

"I never seen your darned home, nor your married life, neither," Dobbs disclaimed indignantly.

But here the lady took a hand.

"Joe Tink," she exclaimed, "you listen to me!"

"Less outa you, woman!" Mr. Tink ordered roughly, to her manifest amazement. "I'm runnin' this show, and I'm doin' the spielin', see? You're my wife, ain't you? And you run out on me in Winnipeg, didn't you? And I find you here with this old rascal, don't I? There's only one thing to do, and I'm goin' to do it." And to indicate possible action, he prodded Dobbs again.

"Set your brakes a minute," that gentleman pleaded, "and quit jabbin' me with that gun. There's cards missin' outa this deck. Do you claim this lady is your wife?"

"And darned well you know it!" Mr. Tink replied.

Under the circumstances, Dobbs considered chivalry incompatible with safety.

"You claimed you was a widow?" he said to the lady, reproachfully.

"Well, I might have been, for all I knew," she replied casually. "I was trying to look on the bright side. A married woman has to, now and then."

"Is that so?" snapped Mr. Tink, momentarily forgetting his rôle of avenger in natural husbandly annoyance. "You hoped I was dead, did you?"

"I wouldn't say I really hoped it," the lady replied conscientiously; "it looked like too long a shot. And now you've found me," she went on with bitterness, "I s'pose you figure to live off of me without working, same as you did back in Winnipeg."

"Livin' with you was work enough, and no union hours, neither," Mr. Tink retorted.

Dobbs, who had been inclined to consider himself the victim of a frame-up, began to revise his opinion in the light of this exchange of amenities, which seemed to point to genuine marital relations. In his view, they were behaving like a real married couple. But a more important thing was that, in his natural indignation, Mr. Tink had allowed his attention and the gun's muzzle to stray from Dobbs.

This was decidedly faulty technic. Though the years had stiffened and slowed him, Dobbs was still fast enough on occasion; and his ability to make quick decision and act on it was quite unimpaired. His sinewy old hand shot out and grasped the gun barrel, jerking it aloft while his other hand caught the wrist. With a twisting wrench he gained possession of the weapon, and promptly reversed it upon its late possessor.

"You may be a genuwine husband,"

he said, "but you're a devil of a gunman. You sit down and behave yourself while we talk things over, or you'll have a real widow."

"Not outa that gun," Mr. Tink returned sulkily. "There's nothing in it."

Dobbs verified this statement by immediate inspection, and experienced lively disgust. To be held up and prodded with an empty gun hurt his dignity. In the society he had been accustomed to frequent, such things were not done.

"Don't you never do nothing like that again," he said sternly. "It's no better than suicide. I might have had a gun myself. Now tell me what you were doin' this on. If your wife run out on you in Winnipeg, I may's well tell you I ain't been there since 1890, and I ain't never seen this lady till a week ago."

"You don't know your own luck," said Mr. Tink gloomily.

"And I didn't either—till I married you," the lady put in, with equal pessimism.

"Well, what are you doing in Vancouver, and what are you doing in this old bird's office?"

"I'm keeping a boarding house, same as I did in Winnipeg," the lady informed him, with a defiant glance at Dobbs. "I changed my name, too, so you wouldn't be apt to find me. As for what I'm doing in this office, this nice old gentleman deals in oil shares as well as mines, and he's going to buy those California oil shares I've had for so long. You said you would, didn't you?" she appealed for information to Dobbs.

"Why—uh—maybe I said I might," Dobbs admitted reluctantly. "That is, if you don't want too much."

"You can have them for what I paid—ten cents a share. And I've only two thousand shares."

If there is a subtle difference between a prudent and a safe investment, this looked to Dobbs like the former.

"Well, I guess I'll take them," he decided.

"And you can pay me for them now," the lady suggested briskly, producing a package of certificates from her hand bag.

The only bank account Dobbs had was a joint one with Bill; but that could not be helped. He began to make out a check.

"Why don't you married folks fix up your troubles and go to housekeepin' again?" he inquired.

"I might—if he'd go to work at something," the lady returned.

"I'm working now," Mr. Tink returned, glancing longingly at Dobbs' check book.

At this juncture Bill entered. He had intended to do so before. As he had planned the campaign, he was to come in when Mr. Tink had had time to scare Dobbs thoroughly. But owing to the unexpected scenic attraction of Miss Cooney, his entry was not as prompt as he had planned. Indeed, it was considerably delayed. Now, to his unspeakable disgust, he beheld what was apparenty a friendly disarmament conference, with the armament reposing peacefully upon his partner's desk.

Dobbs' expression when he beheld his partner was slightly startled. He shot him a glance of deep suspicion. Then he rallied his forces.

"Come in, Bill," he said cordially, "and shake hands with my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Tink, from Winnipeg."

"Pleased to meetcha," said Bill, looking the reverse.

"You're just in time to sign a check with me," Dobbs went on cheerfully. "I'm buyin' a few oil shares."

"What!" Bill exclaimed, favoring Mr. Tink with a dark scowl.

"Just a little flyer," Dobbs stated carelessly. "Sit down here and sign."

"What's that gun for?" Bill asked, to gain time for thought.

"That's a paper weight," Dobbs replied. "There's nothing in it. Sign here, Bill."

Bill signed dazedly. Dobbs presented the check to Mrs. Tink with a flourish.

"Well, good-by, folks," he said kindly. "Now things are all right, and I hope that you'll be as happy as you deserve to be."

Still dazed, Bill watched the withdrawal of his ally with the lady. Somehow, his plans had gone wrong. There seemed to have been a reconciliation. Had Tink sold out to Dobbs? But he could not inquire without revealing his own part in the affair, which, under the unexpected present circumstances, would make him look foolish. He was forced to maintain a front of ignorance.

"Who were them people?" he ventured.

"Just a couple I've met," Dobbs replied airily. "They've been fussin' a little, the way married folks do; but I've give 'em some good advice, and it's all fixed up now."

"It looks more like they give you a con talk about them oil shares," Bill suggested darkly. "Have you sold The Dog yet?"

"I'm afraid that sale has fell through," Dobbs admitted with regret. "Fact is, that lady got a sudden call back to Californy."

"It must have been a darn sudden one," Bill commented.

"She got a telegram her sister was dyin'," Dobbs returned sorrowfully. "It's awful sad. They was right fond of each other."

"Was her sister a widow, too?" said Bill.

"No," Dobbs replied; "she was just engaged to be married. Well," he went on, as Bill allowed this interesting information to sink in, "it's gettin' late. I'll tell my typewriter she can go home; and then we'll go."

"She's gone," said Bill. "She wanted to get away early because she has a party to-night."

"She never said nothin' to me about it," Dobbs observed, with suspicion.

"Maybe it was sort of sudden—like your widow's telegram," said Bill. "Didn't you tell me," he accused, "that your typewriter was an old girl with gray hair?"

"I had to let that one go," Dobbs explained. "The work was too hard on her eyes."

They walked homeward, each busied with his own thoughts. As they passed a confectionery store, Bill suddenly checked.

"I want to get something in here."

Bill's purchase was a five-pound box of the most expensive chocolates. Dobbs stared at him.

"What you goin' to do with them candies?"

"They're for Bee?" Bill replied carelessly.

" 'Bee?' " Dobbs queried, at a loss.

"Miss Cooney," Bill elucidated. "Her front name is Beatrice, and I call her Bee for short."

"Why, darn you, you never seen her before to-day!" Dobbs exclaimed.

"Well?" said Bill calmly.

"You better have them candies sent—if you know where she lives," Dobbs suggested. "They might come in handy for the party she has to-night."

"They will," Bill returned. "The party's with me, and I've heard you say that ladies like candy."

Dobbs that night sat in lonely state. He was in undress uniform; his wig adorned the bedpost; his faithful pipe was between his teeth, and he was thinking hard. From time to time he stimulated his mental processes with a reviving draft, and from time to time he shook his head.

"I been double-crossed, somehow," he said aloud, in the habit he had acquired

of years in the hills, as the result of his lucubrations; "and Bill, he knows about it. But he ain't sayin' a word, and that means he's been crossed, too. It's darn funny. I wisht I could remember where I seen that Tink's face before." And after some moments' concentrated thought, faint recollection came to him, gradually clearing. "By gum, I got it! Now I got the hock card. I seen him talking with Bill in the hotel lobby. But how did Bill get hold of him? Darned if I know. But that explains the empty gun, too. When I took that away from Tink, naturally the deal come to a full stop. Bill horned in just a minute too late. And now he can't say nothing."

He grinned with satisfaction and helped himself to a generous liquid reward of merit.

"Anyway, I'm out of it good," he reflected further. "All I'm shy is a little money, and it was worth it. But Bill, he's sittin' into a hard game, if I know the signs. That young woman ain't nothin' short of merc'nary. I'd fire her, but it wouldn't do no good. Bill's plumb obstinate when it comes to women.

"Solomon sure gave the right steer to Samuel," he soliloquized thoughtfully. " 'Samuel,' he says, 'you beware of the widders, grass or otherwise!' And if there'd been typewriters in them days, I'll bet that sagacious old king would have dropped the loop of his wisdom over them, too."

*Next week there will be a novel that will entertain you as much as this one, though in a different field. "Bride of the Tiger," by William West Winter, is laid amid the mysterious wildernesses of the Sierras. In interest, in action and in beauty it excels. Next week—October 8th*—THE POPULAR STORIES.

## OH, RATS!

IN Bournemouth, England, a health resort, they take rats seriously—to the extent of offering twenty-eight cents for each rat killed. One of the city employees last year earned four hundred and thirty-five dollars in this rather unpleasant but highly laudable manner.

## THE VITAL SPOT

THE other day in Lexington, Kentucky, a young colored man so seriously displeased his girl friend that the lady up and shot him through the heart. Yes, literally and actually through the heart. The bullet entered the organ through the front wall of the left ventricle and passed out through the rear wall.

But did that stop Doctor Waller O. Bullock from doing everything possible, and even something one would not think possible? Not in the least. A blood clot temporarily impeding the hemorrhage, Doctor Bullock went right ahead and sewed up the wounds, and the next day the patient was conscious and taking nourishment.

# The Progress of Peter Pratt

By Fred MacIsaac

*Author of "The Count of Ten," "The Rebellious Pawn," Etc.*

## EPISODE II—THE DOG STAR

**Scene: Hollywood. In the first episode, Peter Pratt, unsuccessful as a prize fighter, became chauffeur to Abe Gooltz, a film producer of the pirate class. Peter met Annabel Green, Gooltz's little star, who urged him to educate himself. Peter, in love with Annabel, is doing his best. These episodes are separate stories, each showing, however, Peter Pratt's progress in life and love.**

MR. ABRAHAM GOOLTZ, president of Epitomy Films, was in conference with his scenario editor, Mr. Peter Pratt. It was what is called in Hollywood a story conference, and the subject was the plot of the film soon to be made with the dog star, Napoleon.

"Now, Pete," said the producer. "We got to get a story, see? In the big studios they have a lot of high-priced bums to bring in scenarios, and they pay them awful prices. I heard of one that got twenty thousand dollars for a story he made up out of his head, and then the supervisor threw it in the wastebasket and fixed up a good one himself. We got a dog, see? He's the hero. All we hev to do is think up a yarn, a good exciting story about a feller and a girl, only we let the dog do the big stunts the hero does when it ain't an animal pitcher."

Mr. Peter Pratt nodded gravely.

"I get yuh," he declared.

"The hero owns a dog that is a wonderful dog, and it's the dog that saves the girl from the railroad track, and drags her out of the river and goes for help when they have her tied up in the

burning house. So she marries the fellow in the end."

"Seems to me the dog should get the credit."

"Don't be funny. Now I got some ideas, and you tell me how you like them."

He began to read from a typewritten sheet, while Peter Pratt leaned his chair back against the wall, tucked his feet in the rungs, and half closed his eyes. He was very tired, for he had been working from twelve midnight until eight a. m., and had reported at the studio at nine. To-night he would secure a few hours' sleep, unless Annabel Green permitted him to spend the evening with her.

Peter Pratt had been a preliminary fighter until he had been knocked out in the first round three times in succession; and then he had worked as a chauffeur for Abe Gooltz, until Annabel Green, a beautiful little picture actress with whom he had fallen in love, had shown him plainly that she could not associate with a menial. Ambition had sprouted in the soul of the youth. To be worthy of Annabel, he would pull himself up in the world by his boot straps, so he resigned his job as Mr. Gooltz's chauffeur, for which he had been paid wages, and became an official in Mr. Gooltz's one-man film company, which gave him social standing but no remuneration.

Thus it happened that he worked on the night shift as dishwasher in Tommy's lunch room on Hollywood Boulevard for twenty dollars per week, which enabled him to pose as a critic while Mr. Gooltz read him dog stories. He was a very sleepy critic.

Abe droned on and on, and Peter dozed. Suddenly a line penetrated his consciousness.

"The villain pointed his gun at the noble dog, but he fell down and pretended to be dead as the shot was fired; so the villain went away. Then the dog lifted his head and smiled at the audience."

"How could a dog smile, Abe?" he demanded.

"Gee, that's so!" said the producer. "You see, I made this up out of a book by just crossing out the name of the hero, 'Marchmont Meadows,' and writing in 'dog;' but, of course, the dog couldn't smile. I stick in that he wagged his tail. You're a good editor, Pete."

Peter Pratt beamed and determined to listen closely. Maybe he could demonstrate his value some other way.

"Then the villain got the girl and the dog in a cabin. He blocked all the windows and nailed the door and set it on fire. But the dog climbed up the chimney, got on the roof and came back with the United States cavalry."

"Aw, say, Abe," objected the critic, "that don't make sense. The dog ought to get the fire department. What good are the cavalry to put a fire out?"

"They look better, riding to the rescue, and all they got to do is bust in the door and save the girl."

"Well, you got the dog climbing up the chimney. Dog's can't climb."

"That's all you know about it. This one can. I show him going into the chimney"—he pronounced it chimley—"and then I show him coming out on the roof."

"But they ain't got sharp claws. Everybody knows that."

"The people ain't intelligent. If they see a thing, they believe it. I can make this dog climb a tree."

"You can't."

"Sure. Lay the tree on the ground and make him walk on the trunk, and then up-end the pitcher."

"What kind of a dog do you s'pose they think it is?"

Abe grinned.

"A wonderful dog. A movie dog. They don't want to see ordinary dogs. I'm going to make this one leap from

the ground to the top of a three-story building. Tie a wire around his body and then paint out the wire."

"When you going to start?"

"We ain't got the story yet. Don't you ever have any ideas, Pete? All you do is knock—a reg'lar editor. Say, here's a couple of dollars. Go down to the butcher's and buy three pounds of sirloin. We got company for dinner. That's why Minnie, my wife, ain't here to-day. She's house cleaning."

So the scenario editor turned into an errand boy and went out to buy three pounds of steak. He was profoundly dissatisfied with his situation, but he didn't know what he could do about it. Peter was in the film business because Annabel Green was a picture girl. He was working for Abe Gooltz because Abe had promised to engage Annabel to play the feminine lead in the dog film, whenever that masterpiece was ready for shooting, and Abe's reason for keeping him around was not in the least complimentary.

The crafty little Russian believed that the patrons of the sort of picture houses where his economical films were shown, were completely lacking in intelligence, and he considered Peter Pratt a magnificent example of the moron mind. What pleased Peter would please the public; what Peter didn't like was not apt to go well.

There are several amazingly intelligent dogs in the film business; but their owners sell their services for very high prices. The dog star, Napoleon, had to be an ordinary dog, and he wasn't always the same dog.

Abe had found that the dog owner, after a picture was made, demanded a living wage for his beauty; so it was more profitable to dismiss him and hire a new dog. Napoleon was a trade name that belonged to Abe Gooltz. It had to be a collie; but Hollywood was full of collies, and Abe was full of tricks by which a common or garden variety of collie could blossom forth as a marvel on the screen.

Of course, it took a long time to get results with an untrained dog. An enormous amount of footage was wasted; but film was cheap, his camera man was non-union and earned fifty dollars a week, and Abe directed his own picture.

One week after the story conference which has been reported, the cast of "Almost Human" was called together in the office of the Epitomy Film Corporation. Annabel Green was there. She wore a cunning little dress of brown silk, sheer silk stockings, and a pair of adorable, tiny brown slippers. On her head was a large, brown straw hat, beneath which her thin, eager, fascinating little face peered out. A rather cynical smile rested upon her pretty lips.

Peter Pratt was there in a blue suit which was beginning to be shiny; but he wore a clean collar, polished tan shoes, a yellow necktie, and his face was no longer disfigured by the marks of the fist of Mickey Murphy, who had ended his career in the ring. Annabel occasionally glanced at him with partial approval.

The leading man was Arthur Rex, who was handsome in the rather effeminate manner so admired by many lady patrons of picture theaters. If Arthur had had an opportunity to appear in a few important pictures, no doubt he would have been insufferably conceited. As it was, he was only mildly objectionable.

Peter Pratt glowered at him and wished Mr. Rex would say something which would give him an excuse for beating him up. It was intolerable that this pup would be permitted to embrace Annabel Green in the film that was to be.

Abe sat at his desk, with his straw hat

on the back of his head, in what is a dignified position for a producer—stretched back in his swivel chair with his feet upon the shelf of the desk. Before him was a typewritten manuscript. Mrs. Gooltz, who had typed it, sat with dignity at her machine, thin-lipped, alert, watchful; Abe, unguided, might do or say something he would be sorry for. The dog star, Napoleon, was not present; but his owner was there, a shabby man in clothes spotted with automobile grease—for his business was operating a gasoline station.

Annabel, Rex and the dog were the permanent cast of "Almost Human." Other actors, when needed, would be hired by the day. Peter Pratt would make his screen début in the great prize-ring scene when he fought the hero and was knocked out by that gentleman, despite the fact that Arthur was twenty pounds less hefty.

"We start shootin' Monday," said Abe. "You furnish your own wardrobe, Annabel, and you got to have an evening gown."

"I haven't got an evening gown," replied the girl. "If you'll give me something on account of the last picture, I'll get one."

"I'll lend you one of mine," said Mrs. Gooltz quickly.

Annabel lifted her eyebrows and regarded the rather plump figure of the producer's wife.

"It wouldn't fit, Mrs. Gooltz. I need fifty dollars."

"I know where we can get one for twenty-five," the lady replied. "I'll go with you, dearie, and pick it out."

Annabel threw a whimsical glance at Peter, then nodded.

"I got to get an advance of fifty dollars," declared Arthur Rex, "because my room rent is due to-night."

"So?" asked Abe. "We got a vacant room in my house. You move in till the pitcher is finished, and I'll only charge you ten dollars a week and take it out of what's coming to you."

The gasoline man coughed suggestively.

"I got to be shown you ain't goin' to hurt my dog. I got to be with him all the time, and you got to pay me what I lose at the station."

"Peter," said Abe plaintively, "they're all trying to hold me up. "You go down to Los Angeles and buy me a better dog than he's got for ten dollars."

"I might send my wife with the dog," reflected the gasoline man.

"For the pup you get twenty-five dollars a week, and your wife's time ain't worth nothin'," Abe assured him. "Take it or leave it."

"I take it."

"Do I get paid for being an actor?" demanded Peter Pratt.

"Oi, oi," groaned Abe Gooltz. "*You* turn on me now. You get five dollars a day every day you work. Now, folks, I ain't made of money; but I got a great story here that I fixed up myself from a book, and this fillum is going to be a knock-out. When the pitcher is shown, you'll all get good jobs, and your hound, Mr. Wilkins, will probably get hired for big money. Anybody that ain't satisfied, say so, because Hollywood Boulevard is full of actors out of work, and as for dogs, they ain't enough fleas to go on them all."

"Where do we work?" asked Arthur Rex.

"Venice. We shoot some scenes on the beach in the morning and we use the Egyptian ballroom in the afternoon for the swell society scenes. Don't forget bathing suits."

"It costs money to get to Venice," Annabel informed him.

"You report here at seven thirty and I take you all down in my car."

"Can I get ten dollars?" demanded Arthur Rex.

Abe drew a small roll of greenbacks

from his trousers pocket and handed it to the leading man.

"Give me twenty-five cash and I'll buy my own gown," Annabel suggested. At a nod from Mrs. Gooltz, the producer accommodated her.

"How about me?" queried the gasoline man.

"When the week is up, your dog gets his."

Peter Pratt did not ask for money, he knew better.

"Venice," on the ocean front of Los Angeles, fifteen miles, incidentally from city hall, began as a real-estate scheme to build a city of canals in the manner of the Bride of the Adriatic, but after the name had been registered and one canal dug, the promoter gave up, and the place developed as a regulation beach resort, with a pier, bathhouses, an ocean boulevard and a multitude of hot-dog and hamburger-sandwich stands.

Almost any fine day one may see motion-picture cameras grinding on the beach and beautiful young women in bathing suits, with movie make-up disfiguring their classic features, romping upon the sands to the orders of directors. There are also regular bathers who try to break into the pictures, but are gruffly shooed away unless mob scenes are desired.

On Monday morning the antique but expensive car of Abe Gooltz, driven by Peter Pratt, containing Abe, who wore a golf suit and a white sport shirt; Annabel Green, lovely as usual; Arthur Rex, very distinguished; the gasoline man, who took the first day off, and Napoleon, the dog star, arrived in Venice.

Napoleon was a large collie, reddish brown, who thrust his pointed nose over the door of the open car and barked at all and sundry passers-by.

Following in a flivver came Jake Linder, the camera man, also in golf suit with loud stockings, his box reposing on the floor of the car, his tripod neatly folded, his spectacled eyes glued to the road as he drove, his ear alert for strange rattles in his ancient vehicle. It was evident that the Epitomy Film Corporation meant business.

Annabel and Arthur went at once to their respective bathhouses, where they got into their bathing costumes and painted their faces—"putting on beach make-up," they called it. Peter Pratt was used to carry suit cases to a secluded spot on the beach where Jake Linder was setting up his camera upon a low, wooden platform. Abe turned his golf cap to the rear, magically produced a small megaphone from the ether, and was at once a motion-picture director. He also donned smoked glasses because the glare of the sun upon the water was almost blinding, then rolled up his sleeves almost to the elbow.

Napoleon, the dog star, curled himself up in a big ball and shut his eyes, betraying all the nonchalance of an experienced actor.

"Jake," cried Abe, "get that pose. We may need it."

Peter Pratt threw himself upon the warm sand, pulled his hat over his eyes and dozed.

Presently he stirred, and sat up. Annabel, who had just come from her bathhouse, was seated beside him. She wore a green bathing suit.

"How do you like me?" she asked, with a shy smile.

"My gosh, Annabel!" he exclaimed. "You're grand."

"Peter, your expressions!" She sighed. "When are you going to give up that dishwashing job?"

"When I get something better. I got to eat."

"But if you found some decent, honest work in the daytime——"

"Then I couldn't be around the studio."

"You're wasting your time. Abe is just using you for a man-of-all-work.

You'll never get anywhere with him, and you'll never earn a decent living."

"I ain't got no trade. I'm a bum fighter; you won't let me be a chauffeur, you don't want me to work in a restaurant. I thought maybe I could be an actor."

"You've got to educate yourself, Peter. Your grammar gives me creeps. I'm awful grateful to you for the way you came to my rescue outside the restaurant the other night, but I really can't be keeping company with a shiftless person like you. I'm saying this for your own good. You'll never make an actor; you're not handsome enough, and you're not ugly enough."

"What am I going to do, then," he groaned.

"Hey, Annabel," cried Abe through the megaphone. "Come over here and pat the dog."

The actress rose obediently and approached Napoleon. She patted him and he lifted a sleepy face, gazed at her indifferently, and thrust his nose between his legs again. Camera working.

Arthur Rex now joined the party. He wore a two-color bathing suit, white shirt and black trunks with a white belt. Peter noted with pleasure that his shoulders sloped a trifle, though his arms were muscular and his legs looked strong. But his painted face caused Peter to curl his lip in disgust. Until now it had not occurred to him that a picture actor must plaster himself with cold cream and mascara.

Rex tossed Peter a bath robe as he passed.

"Take care of this for me, Pratt," he commanded, and did not give the young man time to resent it. Continuing, he joined Annabel and, quite unnecessarily, for the camera was not working, passed his arm about her waist. Peter crouched for a spring; but Annabel smiled up at the leading man, then quietly released herself from the embrace.

"I got to kill that guy," Peter Pratt assured himself, with a ferocious scowl.

Making a picture, except when an elaborate set and a multitude of performers are being used, is a very tedious business, and when it depends largely upon the vagaries of the canine mind, it is infinitely more dreary. With a trained dog it would have been bad enough, but Napoleon had no notion of what it was all about, and nobody except Abe Gooltz would have had the patience to work with him at all.

Many hours passed, and the temper of all was affected by the hot sun and the monotony, including Napoleon's, who had the natural snappish disposition of a collie.

Annabel grew weary, Arthur Rex became ugly, Abe's fatigue took the form of insulting his actors and camera man, and only Peter Pratt was happy, because that man-of-all-work, half dead for lack of sleep, had dropped into a deep slumber on the warm sand and had rested peacefully for four hours.

Voices close by awakened him, and through half-closed eyes he saw Annabel and Arthur Rex standing near him and discussing him.

"What on earth do you see in that oaf, Annabel?" the actor was asking. "He's just a sodden brute, and he wasn't even a good prize fighter. I saw him knocked out in the first round at the Hollywood Stadium by three different pork-and-beaners. I could beat him myself, though he's a bigger man than I am."

"I wouldn't be so sure of that," she countered.

"I think you've got a crush on him."

Annabel laughed scornfully.

"You're crazy," she declared. "I'm just sorry for the poor child. He's pathetic. Stupid, but very good-hearted."

"I saw you walking with him one night."

"I couldn't help it. I didn't want to

hurt his feelings when he happened to come along. You see, he had done me a favor."

"A girl with your beauty could go a long distance in this game if you met the right man."

"I have my eyes open," she said. "Do you think you are the right man, Arthur?"

"I'm going up to the top and nothing can stop me," he said grimly. "Come on. Abe is calling us."

For a long time after they had walked away, Peter Pratt lay there and suffered. So that was what Annabel really thought of him. He was a poor child, dumb, pathetic. Although they were good friends, she had been ashamed to admit it; despite the fact that she allowed him to spend evenings in her home, she pretended that it was a casual meeting that Arthur Rex had happened upon. He groaned. Probably she was right. He was ignorant, uneducated, unable to make anything of himself. unworthy of the friendship of a rising young film star. But he didn't think he was stupid. He had never had a chance—that was it—but some day he would show her.

As for Arthur Rex—Peter wasn't so stupid that he didn't see his game. He was just one of those sheiks, and he was making up to Annabel. So he thought he could beat up Peter Pratt. Peter, badly as he felt, grinned. He knew that he had been the toughest rough-and-tumble fighter on the San Francisco water front, a demon in a street fight, with a punch which had laid out two-hundred-pound bullies off the sailing ships.

Something happened to him, though, when he stepped into a prize ring. The bright lights bothered him, the crowd distracted him, and he could not help listening to the comments of the audience.

But to get Arthur Rex alone, with or without gloves—what a glorious thing that would be! He would fix Arthur so that he would have to play heavies instead of heroes in the future. Even an audience wouldn't take his mind off the business of mussing up that conceited and evil-minded sheik.

A shout from Abe recalled him to his situation, so he climbed to his feet and slouched after the little company which had packed up and was going. A dozen boxes and suit cases had been left for him to tote. "Man-of-all-work" was right. Abe was kidding him calling him "scenario editor" and promising to make an actor of him. He was a porter and without pay.

Annabel had vanished into the bath-house to change, and Rex had gone into the men's bathing pavilion. Napoleon was curled up on the sand asleep, his owner a dozen feet away, also sound asleep. The camera man was well down the beach, and Abe was waiting for Peter.

"Look here, Abe," the put-upon one protested. "If you're going to use me for a stevedore, you've got to give me money, see?"

"Sure, I'll give you money. You get five dollars for the day just the same as if you was an ector," replied the producer, grinning. "Now hustle them bags. We got some good shots on the beach. It's too bad there wasn't a drowning accident while we was here, but I ain't always lucky."

There is no use in following the career of the picture during the next few days. Abe had a genius for finding free sets. He invaded a palace in Beverly Hills, whose owner happened to be absent, by bribing the caretaker with a ten-dollar bill, and thereby secured some scenes of what the French call "grande luxe."

He found an abandoned cabin in the woods in Laurel Canyon, shot his celebrated chimney-climbing act and then set the cabin on fire, being fortunate that he didn't also burn up the vegeta-

tion of the entire canyon. From a piece of discarded film he got his ride of the rescuing cavalry—it had cost the company which originally made it a lot of money to shoot that scene—and gradually he accumulated rolls of film that might be cut and pieced into a semblance of a melodrama.

Willy-nilly, Napoleon was getting on the film as a wonderful acting dog, despite his intense dislike of his alleged master, Arthur Rex; and Annabel was doing better acting than she realized.

To Peter Pratt, Annabel had been very distant lately, and the boy grieved but followed like the dumb animal she had told Arthur Rex that he actually was.

He informed himself that she was heartless and cold and mercenary. Yet how sweet she could be when she wished. She had declared to him he must cease his visits to her home because it made people talk. He knew he had Arthur Rex to thank for that deprivation; but it enabled him to enter the night school in Hollywood, where he frowned three evenings a week over rules of English grammar, American history—he was shockingly unfamiliar with the deeds of his own ancestors—spelling and arithmetic.

He was the only native-born American in the class, which was composed of Greeks, Italians and Japanese, and this spurred him on to harder study. Sleep? He snatched an hour here and there and slept twelve hours on Sunday. With his marvelous constitution, this sufficed.

Arthur Rex picked on him; and Peter, fearing that Abe would send him about his business if he laid hands on the actor, suffered this, also; for he would have died if he could not follow Annabel.

Despite the fact that she had turned against him, he did not blame her; for he saw no reason why such a girl should reciprocate the affection of such a person as himself. When the chance came, he would show her—but where was the chance?

The day finally approached when Peter would make his début in the films. For a few dollars, Abe had secured the privilege of using the ring of the Hollywood Stadium. From an ancient news reel, the astute producer had secured several hundred feet, showing the Stadium packed with people and fighters weaving in and out upon the distant ring. These shots he would alternate with close-ups of the fighters.

For the sake of the girl he loved, Arthur, "champion amateur" of the State, was going up against the "middleweight champion," Peter Pratt. Laugh that off! For once Napoleon would play a secondary rôle, but in the last round the dog star would come into his own to save the occasion.

A heavy man, who had bet everything upon the champion and who saw him about to be beaten, would draw a revolver and point it at the hero. But Napoleon, who was present with the heroine, would leap at the man's throat and disturb his aim. Then the hero would proceed to pulverize the big professional. That was the way Abe had laid it out. Poor Peter would have his wish to get Arthur Rex alone in a ring, but he would be an actor, not a fighter. It would be his business to permit the leading man to use him for a chopping block and finally flop on the floor in the presence of Annabel. He was on the point of rebellion, but he couldn't throw Abe at the last moment. He liked the little man.

The day before the Stadium scenes, they were again in the woods of Laurel Canyon, and it was the lunch hour. He saw Annabel stroll out of sight among the trees, then he saw Arthur Rex arise and follow stealthily. To his distress Abe had been compelled to hire a score of extra people for the woods scenes; and so their departure was noticed by

none but Peter, whose eyes always followed Annabel.

Peter rose, laying down a half-eaten hamburger sandwich, and trod in the footsteps of the leading man. Even if the girl had discarded him, he was still watching over her.

A hundred yards into the woods and he heard a stifled scream, whereupon he broke into a run. He stopped short at a small clearing.

There Arthur Rex had grasped Annabel in an embrace, while he was attempting to kiss her upturned face. As Peter gazed in dismay, she uttered again a smothered protest, whereupon Peter plunged down upon them like a furious grizzly.

A mighty hand grasped the collar of the leading man and tore him from the girl, a second hand seized the seat of his trousers, and then he was lifted and thrown a dozen feet, landing in a heap. Annabel had toppled over upon being suddenly released.

"Get up, you!" cried the infuriated Peter Pratt. "Get up and get the beating of your life."

"Why you gutter pup, you miserable dishwasher!" snarled Rex, leaping to his feet. "I'll knock you for a goal, you, with your glass jaw!"

Annabel sprang between them.

"No, no!" she exclaimed. "You must not hit him, Peter. You might mark him and ruin the picture."

"To hell with the pitcher!" shouted Peter Pratt. "I'll show that four-flusher that he's got to keep his hands off you."

He pushed her to one side and bore down upon the actor, who stood in proper defensive position; but Annabel rushed in again.

"You mind your own business, Peter Pratt!" she exclaimed. "I can take care of myself. How dare you interfere?"

"He was kissing you, and you was yelling for help," said Peter heavily, puzzled.

She placed both her hands on his chest and pushed him away from his antagonist.

"Peter," she said, in a low tone. "Perhaps I wanted him to kiss me."

The boy's hands fell to his side.

"Oh," he said heavily. "Oh, was that it?"

Annabel was blushing like a peony, but she nodded her head vigorously.

"Let him come on, Annabel," urged the angry Arthur Rex. "I can knock him out with one punch."

"You be still," she commanded. "Peter, clear out of here."

Peter Pratt thrust his big fists in his pants pocket, hunched his shoulders, and moved disconsolately away. Annabel's eyes followed him, and there were tears in them which, unfortunately, he couldn't see.

"Darling!" exclaimed Arthur Rex, from a few feet behind her. "You should have let me punish the brute."

Annabel swung around on the ball of her foot, and the fury in her face caused the actor to step back in astonishment.

"You!" she snapped. "You thing! Peter would have cut you to pieces and ruined the picture. I wish I had let him."

"You told him you wanted me to kiss you," he protested.

"It was the only way to save your life. He would have murdered you, and it would serve you right, you beast!"

Rex lifted expressive eyebrows.

"So that's it?" he returned. "You *have* got a crush on him. Well, Annabel, darling, when I get him into the ring to-morrow, I'm going to show you what a hunk of cheese he is. I'm no pugilist, but I know how to use my hands, and I'll lay him out so cold that it will take six doctors to revive him."

Her answer was a laugh, and she fled back to the company which was still lolling on the grass. Rex followed slowly and thoughtfully.

The Hollywood Stadium—an area of vacant seats, save for the two rows at the ringside, filled with volunteers who gave their services for the sake of seeing a fight. Cameras on an improvised platform level with the ring. Klieg lights. Annabel, holding Napoleon by the collar, in the front row. A few seats away a heavy, hired for the day. The gas-station man beside Annabel to sic the collie on the heavy. Abe, himself, officiating as referee. The buzz of the working camera.

And then came Peter Pratt, a shabby, blue bath robe over his shoulders, followed by two louts in shirt sleeves, his face sullen and heavy, a pair of eight-ounce gloves on his big hands. He swung himself into the ring and dropped upon the three-legged stool thrust under him. Minus make-up, in the glare of the lights, Peter was ghastly and incredibly ugly.

There followed Arthur Rex, handsome as a statue, who also lifted himself into his corner with ease, a black robe, gold embroidered, over his shoulder, his make-up as effective as always. The cameras shot them both, then were silent.

"Now, listen," commanded Abe, who was a grotesque figure as referee, in shirt sleeves and white duck trousers. "You boys mix it, 'cause this has to look like a real fight; but you pull your punches, Pete, and don't touch his face. Mind what I tell you."

"All right," mumbled Peter, who kept his eyes upon the canvas and refrained from glancing at Annabel.

"You can hit him as hard as you like, Arthur," said Abe. "But be careful not to touch his jaw. He goes out easy."

There was a titter around the ring at that, and Rex grinned wickedly.

"I'll say he does," he sneered.

Peter made no reply. How he longed to go after the grinning dog. But Annabel was fond of Rex, and even if she had thrown him, Peter, down, he couldn't do anything to hurt Annabel.

They boxed about a minute, and Arthur landed heavily with his left upon Peter's stomach. Peter hit him a dozen times, but pulled his punches.

The champ has to take the first rounds," Abe instructed. "Just in a minute, Arthur, let Pete hit yer in the solar plexus and dive. The bell saves yer. "Don't hit him hard, Pete."

The second round was also Pete's, according to the scenario, but he winced at the weight of the blows which he had to allow Rex to land. The fellow was striking him with all his might while he was supposed to pull his punches. For this there would be a reckoning some day.

The bell saved Arthur, according to schedule, at the end of the round, and there was to be one more with its dramatic climax.

From his corner the leading man suddenly cried:

"The lace on my right glove is broken. Get me another glove or fix this lace."

One of his seconds promptly pulled off the glove and replaced it with a new one. Peter sat like a log, utterly uninterested.

"Now, when I say the word, Pete, you stick out yer chin and let him hit you. Then you go down and out. All ready with Napoleon. This is Artie's round, Pete. He plasters yer." This from Abe.

Bell. Cameras. Arthur rushed his antagonist and began to jab him in face and stomach, always with his left. Peter, by amazing self-control, did not hit back, though Rex was always wide open and didn't seem to know how to use his right. He heard Napoleon snarl, Annabel scream, and knew the business with the pistol was coming off according to schedule.

"Now!" called Abe. "Chin out, Pete." Arthur drew back the right.

*Slam!* Everything grew black for Peter Pratt. In the regulation manner, he crumpled up and hit the floor with a resounding thwack.

He didn't hear Annabel scream: "Oh, you coward!" Nor Abe shout angrily: "What was the idea of hitting the kid like that?"

"He has a glass jaw," Arthur Rex retorted. "Here, you fellows; take these gloves off."

He leaned over the ropes and his seconds pulled off the gloves. And Napoleon, who had done his stunt and was loose, suddenly snarled, leaped for one of the gloves, tore it from the second and ran with it to Annabel, whose eyes were glued upon the recumbent figure of Peter Pratt. The dog was nudging her hand, and, mechanically, she took the glove from his mouth.

"Here, give that back," commanded Arthur's second, who had followed the dog.

Annabel held the glove in her hands, and suddenly she screamed.

"Abe!" she cried. "There is something hard in this glove."

"Give it to me," commanded the second; but she thrust it behind her, while Arthur Rex grew pale beneath his make-up.

"Oi, oi!" cried Abe, dropping over the ropes. "Let me see it. "Out of the way, you bum!" he exclaimed to Rex's second. He grasped the glove, felt of it, and emitted a yell. "You lowlife! You had a hunk of lead in the glove. Catch him, fellows——" For Arthur Rex was getting out of the ring.

"Maybe he killed the poor boy," cried Abe. "And he put out his chin so you could hit it. No, he didn't kill him——" For Peter Pratt was sitting up, but looking around in a daze.

"I'm all right," stammered Peter. "That was a terrible blow I got."

"Bring that bum back in the ring," commanded Abe Gooltz. The little man seemed to have grown a foot, so great was his purpose. He helped Peter to his feet, where the young man swayed unsteadily.

"Did he break yer jaw?" asked Abe solicitously.

Pete felt of it and shook his head.

"It's pretty tough," he said. "I'm feeling better, though."

"He had a hunk of lead in the glove," said Abe. "Pete, can you go on fighting?"

"He did?" exclaimed Peter Pratt. "Give me a chance at him!"

"Listen, folks," said Abe to the small but excited audience. "You just seen a dirty trick. Now, we took all the sequences of this fillum, and Arthur Rex ain't needed no more. He hit Peter with a hunk of lead in his glove, and murder ain't enough for him. How'd yer like to see a finish fight?"

"No, no, Peter!" cried Annabel, trying to climb into the ring. "You're badly hurt."

"The man is at least twenty pounds heavier than I am," growled Rex. "I won't fight him."

Peter walked unsteadily to the ropes, where he saw the white face of Annabel Green.

"Are you afraid I'll hurt him, Annabel?"

"No!" she cried. "I'm afraid he'll hurt you, Peter."

The boy threw back his shoulders, drew in a breath of air, and grinned a slow smile.

"Let me at him," he commanded.

"I protest!" came from Arthur Rex.

A snarl from the little audience silenced him.

"All right," said the leading man, making the best of it. "I can lick him without a loaded glove."

"Jake," commanded Abe, "camera! We may need this. Ring the bell."

The two men were not so unevenly matched, despite their difference in

weight, for Rex was quite fresh, since Pete had pulled all his punches—while Pratt was battered from three rounds of punishment and still groggy from the wicked blow of the loaded glove. If he had really had a "glass jaw," that blow would have smashed it.

In desperation, Arthur Rex forced the fighting, and for the first round landed three blows to Peter's one; but Peter Pratt's head was clearing and the minute's rest was just what he needed.

When the bell rang, he leaped into the center of the ring, and then the little throng saw an exhibition of jabbing and thrusting which thrilled them to yells. Peter was blocking the blows of his adversary and contenting himself with left pokes, nearly all of which landed upon the countenance of the horrified actor. When the round ended, he protested to Abe Gooltz.

"Make him stop hitting me in the face," he demanded. "It'll ruin me for pictures."

"I should worry," Abe returned, grinning. "I can't use you any more."

The third round was a repetition of the second, until Arthur, without the blow landing, threw himself upon the floor.

"Get up," commanded Abe. "You wasn't even hit."

"I was, I'm knocked out," the actor protested.

Peter Pratt reached over and lifted him to his feet.

"Now put up your hands," he commanded.

Arthur, seeing his guard down, suddenly swung an uppercut which landed flush upon the other man's jaw, and waited to see him topple over. But Peter shook his head and grinned his slow, steady grin.

"I'm beginning to like it," he said. "Set?"

Arthur Rex threw himself into an attitude of defense; and then a big glove, driven with terrific force by a right arm, crashed through his defense and smashed into his perfect Grecian nose, flattened it upon his face, and felled him as a butcher fells an ox with a sledge hammer.

"Call it off, Abe," said Peter. "I'm satisfied. That guy's profile won't ever be any good any more."

The delighted crowd carried him on their shoulders to the dressing room—as it happened, the same room he had occupied upon the night of his last unfortunate fight. And while he got into his street clothes, the door opened and in came the manager of the Stadium, who had banished him from the fight game a few weeks before.

"I saw it all, Pratt," he said. "You're there. The trouble with you was stage fright, I guess, when those hams knocked you out in the first round. Now, if you'll sign up with me as your manager, I'll put you in charge of a first-class man and make a champion out of you."

Peter Pratt shook his head.

"No, sir," he replied. "I'm very much obliged to you, but I've fought my last fight."

"Man alive, I'll make you a champion!"

"No, sir. I don't want to be a champion. I'm going to make good some other way."

"You're a fool!" snapped the manager.

"Tell me something I don't know," he said, with a characteristic smile.

The next visitor was Abe Gooltz.

"Vell," he said, "I s'pose I got to say good-by to you. The manager told me you was going to be a champion."

"Nope. I turned him down. I ain't interested in that kind of money."

"Any kind of money will buy things, Pete."

"I'm going to stick at being a scenario editor," he persisted.

"You're a fool," said the producer.

"Sure I am. I like being a fool."

"Vell, come around to-morrow and I'll show you the rushes of this fight. So long, Pete. Oi, what a scrap that was! If I could only have sold admissions."

When he was washed and dressed, he started to leave the Stadium, but was delayed by having to shake hands with most of the persons who had witnessed the massacre. Standing in the entrance, tapping her little foot impatiently upon the ground, was Annabel Green.

"Oh, Pete, I'm so proud of you!" she exclaimed, when he went over to her.

"Hum!" he grunted. "Thought you said prize fighting was brutal."

"It is, but it's fascinating when the one you like wins."

Pete stared at her in wonder.

"But I thought you liked him."

"You're a fool, Peter Pratt," she said.

"Yeh? That's what everybody says. You told me you wanted him to kiss you."

"Well," she said slowly, "I didn't."

"But if you didn't, why didn't you let me murder him yesterday?"

"It was the picture, Peter. If you had marked him up, it never could have been finished."

"The pitch-picture," he said, beginning to grin. "Say, Annabel?"

"Yes, Peter?"

"Can I come up to see you to-night, Annabel?"

"You're going home with me now to dinner."

"But you can't be seen walking up Hollywood Boulevard with a dishwasher."

"You are a fool," she smiled, as she took his arm. "Mother has been wondering where you were. She'll be glad to see you."

"Gee, that'll be great," said Peter Pratt.

And they walked the length of the boulevard in broad daylight, and stopped in Paulais', which was full of picture people, for an ice-cream soda.

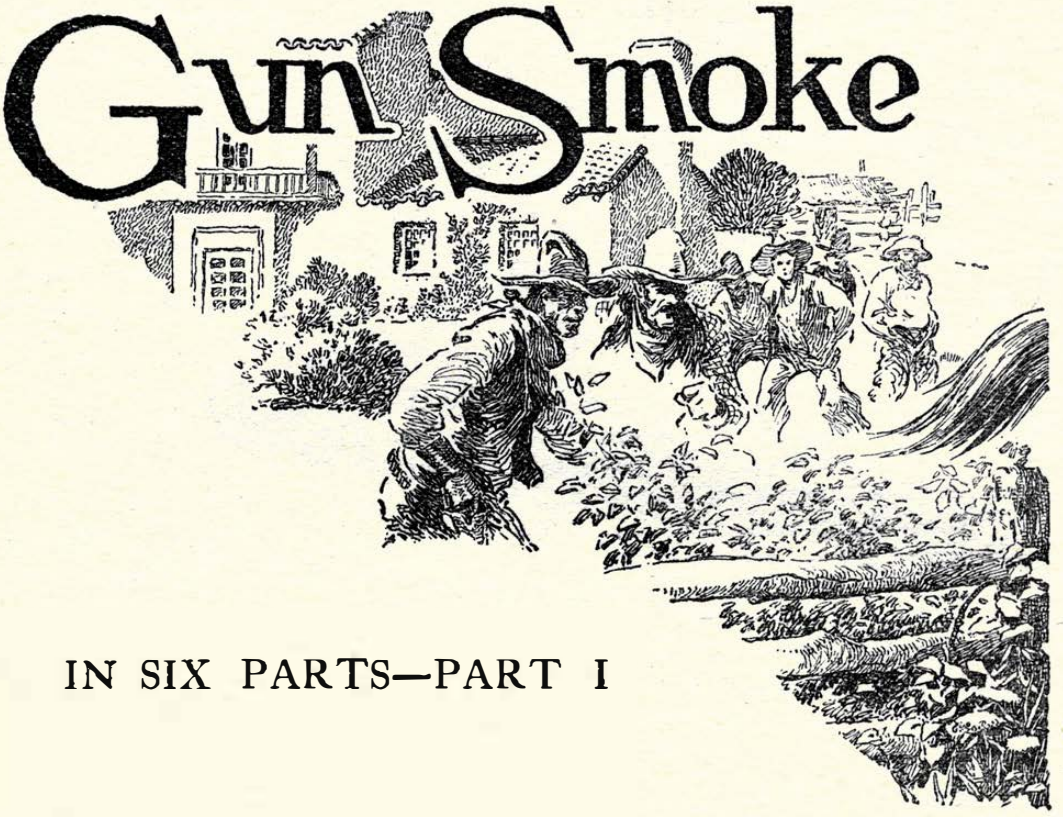
*Follow Peter's progress in the next episode, "The Man-eater," in the next issue of* THE POPULAR STORIES—*October 8th.*

## GIDDAP!

SOME people have been speculating on the possible results of Edsel Ford's purchase of an old-time surrey. One of the ideas is that the horse might come back into favor, after all, but that, if he does, new and separate highways will have to be built, for the automobile roads are not good for hoofs.

The horse, though, has seen its day. To-day we want speed. The machine has been started and it can't stop, any more than education can stop. Mankind, in the last hundred years, has stepped on the accelerator, and we're on our way, though gosh only knows where to. The horse will be used in many places, where automobiles are useless, for some time yet, but it is a safe bet that Dobbin will not come back. Entirely outside of any sentimental consideration, the horse is nothing more than a means of locomotion, and the engine has supplanted that means so superbly that, out of sheer necessity, we must keep to the engine. There will be horse lovers for years and years, but there is no question that transportation by animal power is primitive, unsatisfactory, and doomed to a swift end.

# Gun Smoke



IN SIX PARTS—PART I

*Author of "The Gateway of the Sun,"*

**Gun Smoke and his horse, Watch-eye, jump the gate and get away with their strong-arm cheating. Had it not been for the low-down ambush shooting**

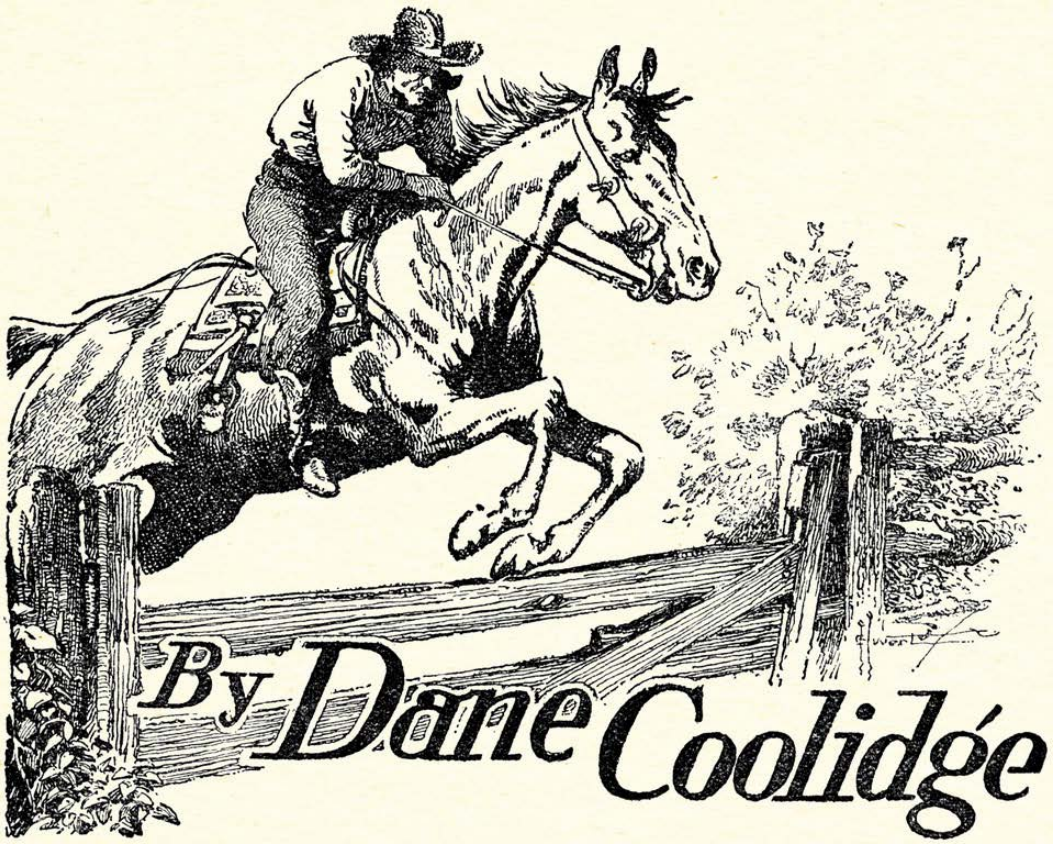
## CHAPTER I.

### THE RACE TRACK.

A LINE of gaunt ponies stood drooping in the sun before the saloon at riotous Portales. There the mountains, stretching wide arms, had inclosed in a broad valley miles and miles of the grassy plains; and at the entrance "Scorp" Plunkett had built a fence and a gate, as a symbol of his power. A huge log, counterbalanced and held down by chain and padlock, blocked the road in front of his house; but to those who rang the bell and asked leave to pass he gave his consent—at a price.

The trail came winding down from the high summit of Horse-thief Pass, worn deep by the feet of many fat steers pushed over the divide at night; but at the head of the broad canyon, and from there to Portales, it led off as straight as a race track. All the pebbles had been picked from this mile-long strip of straightaway, so smooth and pleasing to the eye. And few there were who, coming on it mounted on a good horse, could keep from testing the animal's speed.

Across the road from the saloon, on the gallery of the "Big House," where Scorp Plunkett dwelt in state, a surly mastiff lay watching the trail; and, at a thudding of flying feet, he raised his head inquiringly, barked once, and glanced at the door. It opened and a long, bony nose was thrust out. Eyes as hard as granite sought out the clatter up the road.




*"Money-getter Number 45," Etc.*

**winnings, after "Scorp" Plunkett and his foreman, Murrah, try to do a little done by "Cutthroat" Charlie, Gun Smoke would have made a clean get-away.**

A cowboy on a pinto horse was riding down the track, putting his mount through its paces as he came. He trotted, he single-footed, he broke into a canter; then, with a rollicking yelp, he jumped his horse into a gallop and set him up with a flourish before the gate. The dogs behind the house came rushing out to bark, the mastiff skinned his teeth and rose up; but not a soul stirred or came out to make him welcome, and the stranger reached for the bell.

At its jangle the saloon door showed a flash of staring faces, which disappeared as quickly as they came; then Scorp Plunkett stepped out on the gallery of the Big House and eyed the newcomer appraisingly. He was a young man—almost a boy, except for his size—and everything he had on spoke of money. His hat was clear beaver, pressed down over yellow locks that had been spared the shears overlong. His boots were alligator topped. Bridle and spurs alike were heavy with silver ornaments. Only his six-shooter was wooden handled and plain.

"Hello, thar, 'Big Boy!'" hailed Plunkett, summoning up a jocular smile. "Whar you goin'?"

"Down the road, uncle," answered the stranger genially, "down the road toward the setting sun. So if you'll kindly raise your gate I'll be on my way. Or, if that's too much trouble," he added, "I'll just ask Mister Watcheye if he can jump it."

At these words the attentive pinto nosed forward and sniffed the gate, then backed up and nodded his head.

"You see?" grinned the cowboy. "He says he can do it." But Plunkett stepped waspishly forth.

"Jest a minute, young man," he said, as the saloon door became suddenly full of heads. "What's yore name, and whar'd you *git* that smart hawse?"

"Name's 'Gun Smoke,'" answered the stranger. "There's my card." And he flipped a big cartridge from his belt.

"Oh, I see," sneered Plunkett, thriftily picking up the cartridge, "you're one of these ba-ad men that's been drifted out of Texas, a jump or two ahead of the sheriff. But you ain't told me whar you got that hawse yet."

"Oh, that's a secret," laughed Gun Smoke; "but he's mine, all right. Ain't you, Watch-eye?" he inquired indulgently.

The pinto, whose glassy eyes seemed always on the watch, nodded his head and arched his neck, and Gun Smoke patted him proudly. But Plunkett turned toward the group of hard-looking cowboys, and at a signal their leader stepped forth.

He was a tall, swarthy Texan with the still, dark eyes which so often go with Indian blood; and he moved with the agile swiftness of a panther as he strode over and inspected the horse.

"What you think, 'Quick?'" demanded Plunkett significantly. "That hawse ain't got a brand on him."

"Well, maybe that shows," put in Gun Smoke, "that he hasn't been stole. I raised him, myself, from a colt."

"Can he run?" inquired Quick Murrah, with a dubious smile; and Gun Smoke's jovial mood returned.

"Can you run, Watch-eye?" he asked solicitously. The pinto nodded and pawed the ground.

"Huh! Some trick hawse!" jeered Quick contemptuously. "Never did see a pinto that could run. They're all inbred; got no staying power. Gimme a solid-colored hawse, every time."

For the first time the laughter died out of Gun Smoke's gray eyes; but he answered the gunman quietly.

"All right, pardner," he said. "You can have all you want of them, as long as you leave my pinto alone. And now if you gentlemen will step away from that gate I'll hop over it and be on my way."

"What's your hurry?" demanded Quick Murrah insolently. "Having a long-distance race with the sheriff?"

"Is that any of your business?" retorted Gun Smoke belligerently. "You may be out here for your health, yourself."

"I'll make it my business," flashed back Murrah, "if you give me any more lip. But it's the custom with us, when a stranger comes through, he's expected to buy the drinks. Otherwise, we turn him back and the sheriff gits him, shore."

He burst out into a hectoring laugh, in which all the others joined, and Gun Smoke saw he was caught.

"All right," he said, and swung down and dropped one rein to the ground. But as he started toward the door of the saloon he saw one of the gang lingering behind. He was a small, wizened-up man whom Gun Smoke had marked from the first; for, half hidden beneath his gray beard, there was a sinister white line, the mark of a hangman's rope. He was "Cutthroat" Charley, a horse thief, driven out of Colorado for his crimes.

"Keep away from that horse," warned Gun Smoke. "He looks gentle, but he'll eat you alive."

Then with a last swift glance at Watch-eye, who stood as if nailed to the ground, he led the way to the bar. At his elbow lounged Quick Murrah, a glint of mischief in his eyes as he turned to squint down the line; and his two brothers beyond, both small and swarthy men, answered his wink with knowing smiles. There was

something in the wind, perhaps only another sly trick such as they practiced on unwilling guests; but as they drained their glasses Gun Smoke looked them over warily, dropping a bill on the bar as he finished.

"Drink that up, boys," he said, turning quickly toward the door. "I'm due in Las Vegas, right now."

"No! Have one on me!" protested Quick Murrah insistently. Before Gun Smoke could answer there was a yell from outside that made every man whirl about.

"I knew it," grumbled Gun Smoke, and as he hurried out the door he saw Cutthroat Charley on the ground.

"What'd I tell you?" he demanded as the horse thief jumped up and broke for the door. Behind him, his ears set back, his teeth snapping viciously, the gentle-appearing pinto followed close on his heels, and even Scorp Plunkett laughed.

"The chalk-eyed devil kicked me!" cried Cutthroat, as he turned back, cursing, at the door. "I didn't go near him, but he——"

"You're a dad-burned liar!" blazed back Gun Smoke. "You tried to steal him, you whelp. Now git! I told you to look out."

He started toward the horse thief, and, as that one turned and fled, Gun Smoke whirled and swung up on Watch-eye. In that moment the savage creature had changed to his former self, a gentle, well-trained horse, and Gun Smoke reined him toward the gate.

"I'll pay you fer that!" howled a voice from behind the house; but Gun Smoke only smiled.

"You tell your dog," he said to Plunkett, "if he goes to barking at me I'm liable to ram *this* down his throat—and pull the trigger."

He patted the holster of his wooden-handled pistol, but Quick Murrah only laughed.

"Aw, that's old Charley," he explained. "He's kinder touched in the haid. Ain't never been quite right since they hung him, up at Pueblo, for riding off on another man's hawse. But say, pardner, before you go, that's another custom we have. When a man comes through hyer on a running hawse like yourn we like to match a race."

"Seems to me," complained Gun Smoke, "you folks are full of customs. But Watch-eye ain't no quarter horse, and I can't stop, nohow."

"Yes, you can," broke in a voice from the top of the gate; and Gun Smoke saw that Murrah's brothers had perched themselves on top of it, to keep him from attempting the jump.

"You got lots of time," advised Quick. "I reckon we can match you for a half, then."

"No, my horse can't run," protested Gun Smoke. "I'd be glad to accommodate you, but the best he can do is a mile."

"All right!" agreed Murrah. "Anything for a little excitement. I'll match you for fifty dollars."

"With what?" inquired Gun Smoke cautiously.

"With that little old roan, right out thar in the corral. John, bring up Lightfoot, will ye?"

He turned to his younger brother, who dropped down off the gate, and Gun Smoke ran his eyes over Lightfoot. He was a long-legged, rangy animal, built for speed rather than endurance, and at sight of him Watch-eye snorted and pawed the ground

"Can you beat him, old-timer?" inquired Gun Smoke; and Watch-eye nodded violently.

"Come on! I'll bet ye fifty!" urged Quick Murrah.

Gun Smoke looked about at the hard-faced gang of cowboys and scratched his yellow head dubiously.

"Suppose I'd happen to win?" he suggested. "Would you let me go out the gate?"

"Like a bat!" laughed Quick. "And take yore money with you—I don't care if it's a thousand dollars. We'll jest ask Mr. Plunkett, owner of the Z I P outfit, to hold the stakes. All right?"

Gun Smoke surveyed the rugged countenance of Zimiriah Plunkett and nodded assent, though reluctantly. He had heard of the cattle king, whose herds grazed from the Rocky Mountains to the line of the Panhandle in Texas; but, seeing the man himself and the cowboys he had gathered about him, some inner prompting bade him beware.

"Now here," he spoke up. "I'm game to bet on my horse, but it's got to be on the square. If I win I want my money. And I figure on getting it, too. So let's come to an understanding, right now."

"Aw, sho, sho, boy!" spoke up Plunkett. "I reckon you've heerd my name. You leave the stakes with me and you'll git 'em—if you win. These boys is only funnin'!"

"Good enough," agreed Gun Smoke. "I'm full of fun, myself; so I'll raise you to a hundred dollars."

He drew out a roll, and Quick Murrah's eyes snapped.

"I'll see you," he mocked, "and raise you a hundred more. You can't run no sandy on me."

Gun Smoke peeled off two bills and handed them over to Zim Plunkett, better known as "Old Scorp" by his enemies, and Quick Murrah counted out his own. Then, hastily thumbing over the remnant, he placed it in the hands of his boss.

"Thar's two hundred and sixty more," he stated, "if you figger you're due to win."

"I certainly do," responded Gun Smoke, "or I wouldn't bet a cent." And, with the battle lust in his eyes, he covered the bet and turned to the staring gang.

"Step up, gentlemen," he said, "if you happen to be feeling lucky. I'll back old Watch-eye, in the mile, up to the last dollar I've got."

He counted the rest of his money; and, after a conference among themselves, the Z I P punchers matched it.

"That's a good gun you got thar," suggested Murrah, as Gun Smoke stripped down for the race. "How'd you like to put it up against mine?"

He unbelted his ornate six-shooter and passed it over for inspection, but Gun Smoke had already observed it. The head of a long-horned steer was beautifully carved on the mother-of-pearl handle, the guard and lock were inlaid with gold; and yet, for a moment, Gun Smoke hesitated.

"You cain't ride with it, nohow," went on Murrah. And, impulsively, Gun Smoke agreed.

"All right," he grinned. "I'll bet everything I've got, except my horse."

"You bet hawses with me and you'll leave hyer afoot," bantered Quick as he swung up on his mount, "because I'll tell you, right now, this nag is a racer. He's never took nobody's dust."

"He'll eat mine," promised Gun Smoke, as he started Watch-eye up the track; and Murrah looked back and laughed. The pistols and the money were in Gun Smoke's big hat, but it was not the custom with the Z I P outfit to let strangers decamp with the loot, especially when they bet their guns. Win or lose, thought Murrah, the stakes were as good as his; and he rode rollicking up the course.

"How'll we start?" he asked. "Suit yourself."

"Makes no difference to me," boasted Gun Smoke. "Down at the finish is where I win. Come on! Let's whirl and start!"

They were riding neck and neck, a good mile from the gate where Plunkett and his cowboys stood watching; and, like the flash of a gun, Quick Mur-

rah whirled his roan, leaving Watch-eye twenty feet the first jump. He gained twenty feet more in the next few jumps, and, although Watch-eye struggled valiantly, he was far behind at the quarter post and farther yet at the half. Murrah looked back and whooped hectoringly, the cowboys took up the cheer; but to stout-hearted Watch-eye the race had just begun, and at a word from Gun Smoke he started.

For the first half mile he had run a steady pace, while the roan had been fully extended; but now, when Gun Smoke shouted his war whoop in his ears, the pinto seemed to find his strength. Looking back as he passed the three-quarter post, Murrah was astounded to see Watch-eye close behind him. He was running like the wind now, his great nostrils flaring wide as he came hammering down the course; and, grinning confidently through the dust, Gun Smoke was riding like a boy.

With a curse Quick Murrah applied whip and spur at once. The roan jumped and broke its pace. Then, with a rush, Watch-eye closed up the gap, and they were running neck and neck. Murrah was beaten, and he knew it, for Lightfoot had shot his bolt, but there was still one tricky chance. Reining his horse over suddenly, he hurled its shoulder against the pinto, hoping to knock him from his feet in mid-air; but the sturdy Watch-eye gave back buffet for buffet, and the next moment went thundering past.

The race was won, but at every stride Watch-eye uncorked new sources of speed. With his neck stretched out, his glassy eyes gleaming wildly, his feet drumming a victorious tattoo, he came flying down the track toward the disgruntled group of cowboys, while Gun Smoke still urged him on. Behind, eating the dust that the pinto flung back, Lightfoot labored beneath whip and spur; but the heart had gone out of him, and he quit before he finished, a good hundred yards from the line.

Cowboys scattered right and left as Gun Smoke set up his horse and dropped off before Zimiriah Plunkett.

"All right," he said, "gimme that hatful of money." But Old Scorp held up his hand.

"Jest a minute. Jest a minute," he answered. "Mr. Murrah seems to have something on his mind."

"He Navajoed me!" accused Quick, flogging his horse up to the crowd. "Run into me—knocked me plumb off the track. I claim that money on a foul."

"Foul, nothing!" flared back Gun Smoke. "You run into *me*. And I beat you, fair and square."

He reached out to grab the stakes and make his escape, for it was evident he had fallen among thieves; but Zimiriah Plunkett pushed him back.

"Navajo ridin' is barred," he said. "You lose, Mr. Gun Smoke." And he looked up at him with a leering smile.

Gun Smoke glanced about swiftly at the crowd of grinning cowboys, the high gate, and his waiting horse. But his pistol was in the hat, along with Quick Murrah's, and he knew now why Murrah had bet it. Yet, guileless as he seemed, Gun Smoke had foreseen this very thing, even before he put up his gun. He had sensed from the start that the gang was out to trick him, and he had taken a few precautions of his own. Slipping one hand under the Mexican sash which he had worn for riding, he whipped out a short, flat pistol.

"I'll just take those stakes," he stated; and when Plunkett jerked back he slammed him over the head with his gun. Then, with one swift grab, he snatched up both the six-shooters, throwing his pocket pistol into the dirt.

"How about it?" he inquired, turning their muzzles on the gang; and the cowboys stood rooted to the spot.

Gun Smoke thrust the two guns into the slack of his waistband, while he slung the two belts over one arm. Then ramming his hat, money and all, firmly down on his head, he swung up on Watch-eye, keeping them covered all the time.

"The first yap that shoots, I'll shore git 'im!" he warned, and turned the dancing Watch-eye toward the gate.

He bounded toward it in crouching leaps, gathering speed as he approached, and plunged over it as lightly as a bird. Gun Smoke turned, gun in hand. But the cowboys had had enough.

"Ah-hah, hah!" he laughed. And with a whoop he galloped away.

## CHAPTER II.

### SANCTUARY.

GUN SMOKE'S hat was full of money, he was over Scorp Plunkett's gate, and the road lay open to the south. But as he galloped away, Watch-eye shied at a low bush, almost throwing his rider to the ground. Gun Smoke rose up, clutching the horn, and over the top of the bush he caught the sinister gleam of a gun; then something struck his leg, knocking his boot from the stirrup, and he grabbed for the horn again. Some assassin, lying in wait, had shot him from ambush, but his leg seemed as good as before.

Gun Smoke rose up in the saddle and saw Cutthroat Charley, the horse thief, crouching behind the bush. The pistol was still smoking, and, as he looked, it spat again. Then Gun Smoke fired twice, and the horse thief went sprawling, flapping his arm like a bird with a broken wing. He leaped up and grabbed his gun again, as if preparing to shoot left-handed, and Gun Smoke swung low and rode.

Back at Portales he could see the gang running out with their rifles. There was the whine of bullets going past. But Watch-eye never faltered, and Gun Smoke rose up, laughing, as the last of their rifle shots ceased. The gate had been thrown open, and horse after horse came galloping in his wake. Gun Smoke reached down and patted Watch-eye on the neck, and the horse fell into a long, easy lope.

"Stay with it, boy," he said. "They can't ketch you, and I know it. We'll show that bunch of hounds they can't ride or shoot or nothing! And come sundown we'll lose 'em, to boot."

He glanced up at the sun, which had descended in the west until it almost touched the top of the mountains. In an hour it would be down, and, as darkness mantled the plains, he could circle and throw off his pursuers. They came on, now, in a compact body, instead of stringing out down the road, and, though at the end of every mile they were farther and farther behind, they did not abandon the chase. Gun Smoke had never heard of Zim Plunkett's night riders, who scoured the plains to wipe out his enemies, but there was something about their confidence which somehow dashed his spirits, and he searched the rugged canyons as he passed.

Each was formed like the gateway at treacherous Portales—a narrow opening between low cliffs, then a broad, inclosed park, and, beyond, the shadowy ridges of the heights. Trampled cow trails led up the washes, which meandered out across the plains, to be lost in the coulees below; but the main road led south, skirting the edge of the hills, and Gun Smoke held resolutely on. For what had he to fear, with Watch-eye between his knees? On the trail he was tireless as an antelope.

The sun set in splendor behind the jagged peaks. But as Gun Smoke scanned the heights a sudden weakness came over him, his brain whirled, and he felt himself swaying. He recovered himself instantly, then, with growing

alarm, he ran his hand down inside his left boot. In the chase he had barely noticed the bullet hole through his boot top, the sting which had turned to an ache. But as he felt the warm wetness his senses reeled again—he was hit; his boot was full of blood.

Gun Smoke came to, clutching the pommel, the faithful Watch-eye swaying under him to keep him from falling to the ground; and, as he saw in the distance the bobbing heads of his pursuers, he held fast and urged his horse to a gallop. If he halted by the wayside he would be beaten and robbed, perhaps killed, by the vengeful riders. It was necessary to quit the road and seek out a hiding place where he could rest and bind up his wound.

An open trail appeared before him, leading off up a canyon, and he took it on the run, regardless. Then a fence appeared before him, across the neck of the entrance, and he braced himself for the jump. Watch-eye hesitated, for he was tired, then bounded nimbly over it, his hoofs touching the upper bar as he passed. They were in a pasture now, where a stream ran down through the willows, and, though the shadows were gathering fast, Gun Smoke could see a slab cabin, set back against the slope of the hill.

He reined toward it and shut his eyes, holding fast with both hands; but, as he came up at a lope, there was a sharp challenge from the doorway, a woman's scream, and the flash of a gun. It blazed out in his very face, and, at the roar, Watch-eye shied. Then, with a heart-breaking thump, Gun Smoke landed on his head, and the world became a blank.

It was light when he came to, and soft, unfamiliar hands were brushing the matted hair from his eyes. He stirred, then lost consciousness again, and at last, far away, he heard a woman crying.

"What's the matter?" he muttered, and suddenly two scalding tears splashed down on his grimy cheek.

"Are you dead?" a small voice faltered. He looked up quickly, then moaned and closed his eyes. Above him there hovered a face such as he had seen in pictures of angels, a woman with broad brows and an aureole of dark hair, and her brown eyes were infinitely sad. Perhaps he *was* dead and this fairest of all angels was ministering to his needs. He moved his dry lips and whispered for water. A cool gourd was pressed to his mouth. He drank then, slowly, rolling his eyes as he looked around, and sank back with a sigh. Everything that he saw was strange, and a great weariness held him in its thrall.

"I—I thought you were dead," spoke up the tragic voice again, and Gun Smoke summoned a smile.

"Nope," he answered. "Thought I heard the angels singing, but——"

The frightened face moved closer, her fragrant hair brushed his cheek, and suddenly the angel smiled.

"Then you're going to get well," she said; and Gun Smoke felt water on his brow. His head seemed big and very sore, and the sting of open wounds suddenly aroused him.

"Say, where am I?" he demanded, trying in vain to sit up. He was inside a cabin made of hewn stakes, set side by side, and the girl who leaned over him, searching for wounds on his bloody head, was not an angel at all. She was frowning now, though her eyes were still tearful.

"You're in Heck Blood's cabin," she answered vindictively, "and I shot you. Why didn't you stop?"

"Search me," grumbled Gun Smoke. "Who the hell is Heck Blood? I don't remember this place."

"Well, Heck Blood," she informed him, "is the man you came to kill. But daddy had gone to town, and I got you

in the door. I can't find that bullet hole anywhere."

"It's in my leg," protested Gun Smoke. "What you want to shoot me for? I was hurt, and I came here for help."

"Which leg?" she demanded, and when she jerked off his left boot she gave a cry and sank to the floor. "Oh, I've killed him!" she moaned. "But why didn't you stop? Your boot is full of blood!"

"Never mind," mumbled Gun Smoke. "Tie a rag around the hole. And, say, what'd you do with my horse?"

He sat up quickly, his eyes rolling wildly, but she pushed him resolutely back.

"You lie still," she ordered, "if you don't want to die." And, gazing at him sternly, she opened up his bloody wound and bound it tight with a cloth. "Now," she said, "who are you, anyway? And what are you doing up our canyon?"

"Name's Gun Smoke," he stated. "I got shot, back at Portales, and come up here for help."

"Got shot!" she repeated, looking him over in dismay. "What—again? Oh, now I know he'll die!"

"Something hit me in the head," he responded dully. "But, say, I want my horse!"

She felt his head over anxiously, then stepped to the door as the hounds bayed a fresh alarm.

"Somebody's coming," she announced. "Down at the gate."

"It's them Z I P cowboys," he said. "I remember, now—they chased me down the road. Then I turned off up this canyon—but, say, can you see my horse?"

"He's right out there," she answered. "Aren't you one of Scorp's night riders? I took you in the dark for Quick Murrah!"

"No!" he burst out peevishly; but, with a quick, triumphant movement, she dangled an ornate pistol before his eyes.

"Where'd you get this gun, then?" she demanded. "That belongs to Quick Murrah, and I know it!"

"I won it in a horse race," he replied. She tossed her head, smiling dubiously.

"And I suppose," she went on, "you won this hatful of money, too? Not that *I* care!" she ended defiantly.

"Sure, I won it," he cried. "But they wouldn't give it up. So I hit Scorp over the head and took it away from him. Then I jumped over the gate and was making a get-away when some feller shot me from the brush."

"You lie down," she ordered, laying a hand on his brow; but Gun Smoke was not to be denied.

"No!" he insisted. "I want my horse in here. Them fellers will steal him. Open the door and he'll come right up."

He put his finger inside his mouth and gave a long, shrill whistle, and the next minute there was a thud outside the door. The girl peered out the keyhole, her face set in disbelief; then she sprang to a loophole and looked out.

"They're coming," she said in a hushed voice. "It's the night riders, to burn our cabin."

"Well, let my horse in," he clamored, "and I'll whip the whole shooting-match for you. Here, Watch-eye! Now, open the door!"

For a moment she hesitated; then, at a snort by the keyhole, she snatched open the door and stepped back. Like a soldier under orders Watch-eye paced soberly in, and she slammed the door behind him and grabbed her gun, a huge repeating rifle. She thrust it out the loophole just as the horsemen came galloping up.

"Hello, thar!" hailed a voice.

"Hello, yourse'f!" she answered back defiantly, "and don't you come no nearer! I know you, Quick Murrah, so look out!"

"Aw, sho, sho, Johnsie!" appealed Murrah, from the darkness. "We ain't come to burn down yore house. We're after a hawse thief, and we're going to git him, too, so you might as well open up."

"You keep away!" she shrilled, "or I'll fill you full of lead! And when my daddy comes back he'll sure make you hard to ketch, if you try any foolishness with *me!*"

She pulled back the hammer, and at the click of the lock there was a startled silence outside.

"All we want is that man," spoke up a placating voice. "We seen him go in thar, Johnsie."

"You did not!" she replied. "And you can't have him, anyway. I don't care if he is a horse thief."

"And we want that hawse," added Murrah.

"You tell her to go to hell!" admonished Gun Smoke, from the bed. But Johnsie answered never a word.

"He's a bad man from Texas," went on Murrah, after a pause. "Done shot one of the boys up at Portales and hit old Zim over the haid."

"Good for him!" applauded Johnsie. "I hope he kills all of you."

"Ain't liable to," responded Quick, "because we aim to string him up. He robbed Mr. Plunkett of a whole hatful of money, and rode off on his black pinto hawse."

Johnsie glanced over at Watch-eye, who was black with white markings, but she kept her gun out the loophole.

"We seen you lead his hawse in," ended Murrah, "so you might as well give him up."

Gun Smoke woke up suddenly to the fate which was in store for him, if this woman yielded to their demands. He would be hanged as a horse thief, strung up to some tree by Quick Murrah and his lawless gang, and yet he was too weak to move. On his bed lay the pistol he had taken from Murrah, but his hand was too weak to lift it, even when he summoned all his strength. He fell back, half fainting, and, like a man in a dream he heard the angel voice speak.

"You git out of heah," she cried in the softest of Southern accents, "or I'll shoot every one of you—you cowards! This man is in our house, and what would daddy say if he heard I'd given him up?"

Gun Smoke drifted away, then, into a land where ghostly voices came dimly to his ears; but the sweetest voice of all had a soft, Virginia accent. And he knew that one angel was his friend.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE RUSTLER'S DAUGHTER.

GUN SMOKE was roused from his faint by a low snort in his ear, the anxious nudge of a velvety nose. It was Watch-eye, standing over his bed. In the light of a tallow dip Johnsie Blood regarded them curiously, her hair thrown back, her hands leaning on the gun which had made the dreaded night riders retreat.

"Hello, Watch-eye," he muttered, and at the sound of his master's voice the pinto whinnied and shook his head joyously.

"He seems to like you," spoke up Johnsie, and Gun Smoke stroked his nose.

"Bet y'r life," he murmured. "We're pardners."

"Quick Murrah claims you stole him," she said; but Gun Smoke only grunted.

"Keep away from him," he warned; "he's a one-man horse. If you touch him, he'll eat you alive. I know that horse."

"Oh, no," she laughed, "he wouldn't bite me." And she laid a small hand on his neck.

Watch-eye threw back his ears, and his glassy eyes gleamed wickedly, but

Gun Smoke spoke sharply from the bed.

"Watch!" he commanded, "don't bite the lady. She's our friend, and a danged good friend. You'd better go away, ma'am," he added.

"Not much!" answered Johnsie, her hand still on Watch-eye's neck; and, while he snorted and snapped his teeth, she patted his neck. "Now *you* go away," she ordered, and Watch-eye reluctantly obeyed.

"He's been standing there," she smiled, "ever since I lit the candle—but I've got to find that other bullet hole."

She flexed his arms experimentally, then examined his broad chest and felt of his other leg.

"Where does it hurt?" she questioned anxiously.

"It's my haid!" he insisted, and she burst out laughing.

"I reckon you're from Texas," she said.

"Of co'se I am," he answered, "but how did *you* know?"

"When you talked about your 'haid,'" she mimicked. "I've heard 'em say," she went on, as she felt his bruised scalp, "that you Texans can't be hurt in those parts, and now I surely believe it. Because I'd swear that's where I shot you."

"Maybe your shooting isn't so good," he suggested maliciously. "I've seen girls that couldn't hit nothing. Most of 'em are like that."

"Don't you worry about my shooting," she retorted. "I noticed that Quick Murrah and that gang of night riders were glad enough to let me alone. But, say, I know you're going to recover—you're able to talk back to your nurse."

"Heh, heh—yes," mocked Gun Smoke, "and I know where *you* came from, too. I can tell by the way you say 'about!'"

"Well, where *am* I from?" she answered tartly. "That is, if it's any of your business."

"You're from Virginia," he stated confidently. "That is, if you're not one of these F. F. Vs. from Missouri."

"Now you quit mocking me," she warned, "or I'll put your old horse out and make you lie down and keep still. But I might as well tell you we *are* one of the 'first families'—and we're not from Missouri, either."

"Just water-bound in Arkansas for a couple of years, eh?" he jested. She laughed as she shook her head.

"No," she said, "we're from Texas, ourselves; but my dad is one Texan that won't admit it. The worse they are, it seems, the prouder they are of it. Look at old Zim Plunkett and Quick Murrah!"

"That's a hard outfit," admitted Gun Smoke. "If it hadn't been for my horse I'd never got away from there alive. But old Watch-eye took one jump and crow-hopped over that gate. And me with all their money and everything."

"Yes, and Quick Murrah says you done *stole* that horse," she repeated; but Gun Smoke pretended not to hear.

"First they made me buy the drinks," he ran on garrulously, "and then they tried to rib up a horse race. But, nope, there was nothing doing. I told 'em Mister Watch-eye couldn't run, except a mile. Well, all right, they'd run me a mile, then; and when we got through betting all our money was in my hat. Then I put up my six-shooter against Quick's little piece of jewelry, and old Scorp held the pot.

"But I knowed all the time they were figuring to rob me, so I tucked a little pocket gun right down inside my belt here. And, sure enough, they claimed a foul. I just tapped old Zim over the coco with my pistol, grabbed the stakes, and swung up on my horse. And the next minute old Watch-eye was plumb over the gate and running

like a bat out of hell. I'd've made a clean git-away, only that feller with the cut neck laid in wait for me and plugged me from behind."

"Do you expect me to believe all that?" she inquired sarcastically. "Then you lie down, while I bathe your 'haid.' Because I know very well you couldn't jump their gate. And Quick claims you *stole* that horse."

"All right," returned Gun Smoke, turning ugly, "you show me the man that can lay a hand on Watch, and I'll make him a present of the horse. But until then I don't make no apologies to nobody. You're *my* horse, ain't you, Watch?"

Watch-eye came over promptly and laid his head on Gun Smoke's shoulder, and Johnsie almost believed him.

"Well, all right," she said. "What's your name, then? I know it isn't Gun Smoke."

"You wait till I get well and go back to Portales. I'll show 'em if that ain't my name!"

"Yes, but you won't show me," she reminded him; but Gun Smoke did not seem to care. He moved about uneasily and glanced around the room, then coughed and came to the point.

"Excuse me for mentioning it," he said, "but I haven't had anything to eat since yesterday. And losing that bootful of blood has sure left me hungry. Have you got a little something you can spare?"

"Why, sure!" she answered quickly, and then she checked herself. "That is," she qualified, "if you don't mind beef, straight. We haven't got another thing in the house."

"Oh, that's all right," agreed Gun Smoke, with another glance at the barren room. "I could eat a roast mule, stuffed with firecrackers."

She smiled at him half-heartedly and hurried into the other room, where he heard her fanning up a blaze.

"You see," she apologized, "dad has got lots of enemies, and—and he doesn't go to town very often. But to-day he took mother and they went down to Barcee. Zim Plunkett is trying to move us."

"What for?" demanded Gun Smoke.

"Oh—because he doesn't like us," she answered evasively. "We had trouble with him, back in Texas."

"That old wolf is sure bad; and he's going to come to a bad end," predicted Gun Smoke, as he listened to the popping of grease. "Is that some of his beef you're cooking?"

"Sure is!" she responded easily. "Dad won't eat any other kind. He says it doesn't taste the same."

"Uh-huh!" grunted Gun Smoke, and nodded his head sagely. So Heck Blood was a rustler, and his dark-eyed daughter had been raised on company beef. He sighed, for only a short time before he had thought that Johnsie was an angel. True, she had received him as rustlers' daughters were likely to do—with the whang of a gun when he charged—but she had more than made up for that trifling discourtesy by the way she had stood off Quick Murrah. She was the fighting child of a fighting sire, and pulling yearlings from old Scorp was hardly in the category of stealing. It was almost commendable, considering the circumstances—and yet he sighed again.

Like all true cowmen, he had an aversion to petty larceny and the small-scale pilferings of nesters. It was the resort of sordid minds, untuned to the high emprise which builds up big herds with the running iron. To ride forth on the range and brand mavericks and *orejanos* smacked of the days when cattlemen were kings; but to camp down in some canyon and kill a cow at a time, for beef, was too much like common stealing. But while he sighed for her, Johnsie was sighing for him—because she knew Gun Smoke couldn't be his real name.

"Here it is," she announced, as she brought in a broad platter; but as Gun Smoke wolfed down the meat she regarded him sadly, for he did not look like a horse thief. His brow was high and wide, his bruised features clean-cut and regular, and there was a look in his eyes that stirred something within her, a dim longing to protect him from harm.

"Where'd you come from?" she asked at last; and he gave her an impish grin.

"Where do all cow thieves come from?" he parried.

"What do you mean?" she flared up fiercely. "Are you hinting that my dad's a cow thief? He never did a crooked or dishonorable thing in his life. These cattle that he takes are his!"

"How do you mean?" inquired Gun Smoke, working away at the juicy steak. "You mean they're his when he gits them?"

"No; they're his already!" she stormed. "Zim Plunkett stole them from him!"

"I see," smiled Gun Smoke. "He's just stealing them back again." And she gave him a look to smite him dead.

"A man in your line of business," she said at last, "and traveling under a flag, to boot, ought to pick and choose his words a little more. My dad is a gentleman, I'll have you to understand, and he never stole anything—ever!"

"My mistake," bowed Gun Smoke. "I stand corrected, madam. Proceed, and let's get this thing straight."

"You think you're smart, don't you?" she commented acidly. "But I'll tell you, all the same. My folks moved from Virginia after the war, but dad had a little trouble out in Kansas when Quantrell's guerrillas got after him. So we moved down into Texas, and dad had lots of cows—only nobody would come and buy them. We just couldn't find a market, at any price. Well, it was three years ago that Zim Plunkett came through the country, hunting up old Confederate soldiers and buying their cattle, cheap. Dad had been a soldier, too—he was a colonel under Lee—and when Plunkett came to the house and said he'd served the Confederacy, why, naturally there was nothing too good for him.

"Poor dad," she sighed, "he'll never make a business man! He puts too much trust in strangers. Anyway, he sold old Scorp two thousand head of cattle for ten dollars a head, and took his note. And what does Plunkett do but move them up to the Panhandle, and then across the line into New Mexico! He bought cattle from everybody—forty-five or fifty thousand—and now he won't pay the notes."

"Why not?" demanded Gun Smoke innocently.

"Why, because the notes are outlawed! He's moved out of the State of Texas. And he intended to do it, all the time!"

"I see," nodded Gun Smoke. "You can't collect."

"That's just what we're doing!" she stated savagely. "And it makes me so mad when some stranger, like you, says my father is stealing beef. These steers that he kills have got his own brand on them, and I'd just like to ask you if you consider that stealing? Well, of course not! He's taking his own!"

"Why, sure!" shrilled Gun Smoke. "More power to his elbow! I'd like nothing better than to take on as a cow hand and run off a few, myself."

"And we settled right here," continued Johnsie vindictively, "although dad just hates a nester. But we've been here for two years, and Quick Murrah and all the rest of them can't make us move—not an inch! They've murdered those poor homesteaders and run off their stock and burned down their cabins by the hundred; but they

can't move my dad, because he knows he is right! And, what's more, he's a fighting Blood!"

She nodded her head vigorously, and Gun Smoke glanced at her rather quizzically.

"And I reckon," he added, "you're a fighting Blood, your own self. Well, there ain't any colonels in my family, but I'm a first-class fighting man, myself."

"Either that or a first-class liar!" she answered, and then she broke down and laughed.

"Well, there's no use pretending," she said. "We've stuck here, but we haven't enjoyed it. And old Scorp will get us yet. We're the only homesteaders that have settled on his range that the night riders haven't moved. But we're trying to hold on until the railroad comes through, and maybe that will tame things down."

She sighed and turned away to peer out through the loophole, and Gun Smoke gazed at her in silence. She was not the kind of woman that was found in two-roomed cabins, with gun holes under the eaves. There was, indeed, something very appealing and feminine in this daughter of bold Colonel Blood.

"Say," he said at last, "if there's anything that I can do for you, don't hesitate to say the word. And if those night riders come back, you just help me outside the door and I'll smoke 'em up with these."

He patted the two six-shooters, but she only smiled wryly.

"I don't need any help," she said. "I just hate that Quick Murrah, and if I ever get a bead on him—that's how I came to shoot you. But when I turned you over and saw it wasn't Quick I—I couldn't help it—I cried."

"You sure did me a good turn," he nodded, "when you saved me from that bunch of killers. They'd've plugged me in a minute if I'd fell by the road—that's why I turned up your canyon."

"I—I'm glad you came, anyway," she stammered at last. "It gets kind of lonely, sometimes."

"Well, I'm gladder than you are," he answered, noting the blush that crept to her brow. "Because I might have rode by here and never knowed you were in the world."

She glanced at him shyly, then turned back to her loophole, and Gun Smoke bit his lip. Something told him that if he talked he was more than likely to say something which on the morrow he would bitterly regret. But she was really such a wonderful girl! And as he watched her he wondered if, after all, the words were better unsaid.

There was a shot from down the canyon, then the rattle of pistol fire and a terrific baying of hounds.

"Oh, they're trying to kill daddy!" she screamed, and Gun Smoke grabbed for his guns.

"Pack me out there!" he shouted, "where I can get a clean shot at them. I'll watch your cabin. You jump up on Watch-eye and ride down and give 'em hell!"

"No! They're coming!" she replied. "You stay where you are. I can tend to those cowards alone!"

He listened, and above the chorus of baying hounds he could hear the rush of galloping hoofs. But just as he heaved up and went hobbling toward the door she leaped down and snatched him back.

"It's daddy!" she cried. "Can't you hear him cuss?" And Gun Smoke dropped back on his bed.

The cursing of Colonel Blood, which was of the frontier variety, was brought to a sudden stop by the appearance of his daughter, who bounded out the door into his arms.

"Hello, daddy!" she cried. "I'm all right. Hello, mother! Did you bring

the things? And, oh, Quick Murrah was here. They were chasing a horse thief!" she whispered. "And he's right inside!" she added.

"A hawse thief!" repeated the colonel in a voice that shook the timbers, and the next moment he strode through the door.

"Well, by thunder!" he stormed, as he saw Gun Smoke reclining on his bed. "It seems to me, for a total stranger, he's making himse'f strictly at home. And what the devil is this? Has he moved in, hawse and all?" And he stood staring at the nonchalant Watch-eye.

"Keep away from that horse," warned Gun Smoke belligerently, "or he's liable to take an arm off. And if I ain't welcome, I'll sure make myself scarce—I don't let no man call me a horse thief!"

He faced the bearded colonel, whose bleak, stone-gray eyes were fixed on him with arrogant scorn; but before her father could speak Johnsie flung herself between them and came to Gun Smoke's defense.

"That's just what Quick Murrah called him, when he wanted to string him up. But I told him you'd never forgive me if I gave up a man that was our guest."

"Certainly not!" asserted the colonel. "But how come he's a guest heah? Did you invite him into our house?"

"No, I—I shot him! But I thought it was Quick Murrah! And then—can't you see?—I was sorry!"

"Why, yes, yes, my little dove," soothed Blood, patting her head. "I'm very sorry if the gentleman is hurt. But what was he doing heah to make it necessary to shoot him? Now tell me the truth!" And he smiled.

"Well, he claims," she faltered, "that he got in a fight at Portales and they shot him in the leg when he left. And when he was riding by he got weak—and they were after him. So he turned off up our canyon. But I didn't know that, and when he rode charging up, I shot him, but I didn't mean to."

"You never shot me at all!" protested Gun Smoke stoutly. "I got this leg up at Portales. And, since the fireworks are all over and nobody hurt, I think I'll just bid you, one and all—good-by!"

He hobbled over toward his horse, his eyes blinking angrily, but the colonel waved him back.

"Never mind, young man," he said. "You are welcome to remain heah. But that hawse will have to go."

"If he goes, I go!" answered Gun Smoke defiantly. "I don't want Quick Murrah to get him."

"Is it necessary," demanded Blood, "to turn my house into a stable? Heah's my wife, suh, and my daughter——"

Gun Smoke bowed to Mrs. Blood who met his glance with a quick smile, and bowed again, but sulkily, to Johnsie; but as he took Watch-eye by the bridle and started for the door the women both spoke up at once.

"Very well," assented the colonel, with a snort, "the law of hospitality is sacred. You can keep your hawse, young man, any place you damn please, as long as my womenfolks are satisfied."

He glanced at his wife, a small woman with soft, brown eyes and a tired, but appealing, smile; and she patted his hand approvingly.

"We are sorry," she said, "that our accommodations are so meager, but you are very welcome, Mr.——"

"Er—Gun Smoke," replied the stranger, and, after a startled glance at her husband, Mrs. Blood extended her hand. Gun Smoke bowed and shook hands in silence, then turned his sullen eyes to the man who had called him a horse thief. The colonel blinked, then gravely offered his hand while he murmured welcoming words.

"My daughter," he added. "Mistuh ---er---Gun Smoke. I judge you're already acquainted."

"Yes, sir," he responded; but Johnsie came bravely forward and offered her lily-white hand.

"You'd better lie down," she suggested, and pointed to fresh blood on the floor.

"Just throw me down a robe," objected Gun Smoke. "I don't want to occupy your bed."

"No, suh!" protested Blood, suddenly recovering his poise, "our bed is none too good for a guest, and especially for one who is hurt." And, drawing Gun Smoke's arm over his shoulder he helped him back to the couch.

It was made of rawhide thongs, stretched tight over a hewn frame; but as Gun Smoke sank back it seemed like a bed of down, and already Mrs. Blood had taken charge. Heating water over the fire, she washed the throbbing wound, where the bullet had passed through his leg, and before Gun Smoke knew it he had sunk into a slumber from which he did not awaken until dawn.

*To be continued in the next issue of* THE POPULAR STORIES—*October 8th.*

## A STRANGE FAMILY

ON Fifth Avenue, New York, in the heart of the ultra-fashionable and expensive shopping district, there stands an old-fashioned residence, entirely surrounded by business houses. For years real-estate men have made strenuous efforts to buy the place, so that they might tear the house down and put up a modern commercial structure. They have offered enormous prices---the land occupied by the house is assessed, for tax purposes, at over a million dollars, and the yard is put down for a million more—but always they have been met with a very definite refusal. The family policy, they were given to understand, was to *buy* real estate, not to sell it.

What about the family that has this one-sided policy? There were six sisters and one brother. The latter died many years ago. To-day there are three sisters left, only one of whom resides, during part of the year, in the Fifth Avenue house. One of the others, a widow and the only one of the sisters who ever married, is blind and lives in the utmost seclusion on her Long Island estate. The remaining sister has been for some time an inmate of a private sanitarium for the mentally unbalanced. These three aged women own together real estate worth nearly one hundred million dollars.

In the Fifth Avenue residence there is no telephone, no electricity, no elevator, or any new-fangled device whatsoever. We recognize an exaggeration, which, nevertheless, points a truth when we hear that, with the exception of the one who married, none of the sisters ever went to the theater, rode in an automobile, or used a telephone. The whole family, it is said, were always extremely aloof, and seemed to desire the least possible contact with the world and with their fellows.

Here, surely, is a terribly strange little clan. Something plainly went wrong, very wrong, somewhere. One wonders what. But, wishing to be happy, one had better not wonder too much why.

By James Sayre Pickering

# The Princess AND THE Pearls

*By the author of "The Fowler String," Etc.*

**Silas Tipping not only knew jewels, but he knew men and women. Nor did his judgment fail when the Princess Piritoff came to him to sell some pearls.**

THERE is somewhere in the make-up of every man an instinct, some vestigial trait which has descended to him from the days when he wandered, a hairy and fearful being, through the primeval jungle, depending on his sixth sense to warn him of approaching danger when none was apparent to any of the other five. In Silas Tipping this sense had been strongly developed during his more than forty years in the business of purveying jewels to those fortunate enough to be able to afford them, and he had had cause, more than once, to bank heavily upon this instinct and to thank it heartily when it had brought him out of some threatening difficulty. In a business where trifling errors may mean so much, either in dollars and cents or in personal and commercial reputation, in a business of necessity so dependent on a belief in the other fellow's honesty, he had unconsciously brought this instinct to a high degree of efficiency, and its slightest warning was enough to send him, metaphorically speaking, well into his shell.

Silas' appearance belied, in almost every particular, this strange sensitiveness of his. To the eye, he was the type of solid citizen—good natured, jolly, easy going, bearing his sixty years with a genial dignity that never rose to the superficial level of pomposity, and heavy, in a comfortable, dependable way, with a weight that belied his height. Above the honest squareness of his face his gray hair, still plentiful for all his years, was brushed into a careful part; his eyebrows, thick and bushy, overhung blue eyes that had the faculty of changing from their usual kind wisdom into accusing flames before which the flaw in stone—or in man, for that matter—could not remain hidden. A gray mustache, severely cut, lent a false seri-

ousness to the pleasant smile that rested habitually on his lips. The impression which was gained by one who saw Silas Tipping was one of squareness, physical and moral. One saw the uncompromising honesty of the man, his absolute dependability, in a trade which insisted upon that quality—made it the one essential for success. And it was upon this rock that Silas had founded his house.

His dress was unobtrusive and rarely varied. Quietness and quality in adornment was the rule of his business, and his clothes bore out this principle. His shirt was white and spotless, his suits dark and well tailored. His one luxury was a starched bosom and cuffs, which he always wore, except on the warmest days. He rather liked the bulge of the front of his shirt as he sat down, and he preferred the formality of the stiff cuff and the freedom it gave to his wrists.

Silas' store was furnished and decorated according to the same rule of dignity and restraint. Nothing in its scheme of things detracted in any way from the splendor of the wares which he had to sell. The walls were paneled in soft, rubbed walnut; walnut chairs, upholstered in tapestry, were provided for the comfort of his clients, and walnut tables covered in black broadcloth, the better to set off his brilliant commodity, were placed in the most advantageously lighted spots. Gray chenille covered the floor, and gray curtains hung at the windows. The cases of jewels, lighted by hidden flood lights, were ranged round the walls, leaving the greater part of the floor space free.

Silas' clerks were trained to keep out of sight when not actually engaged in waiting on their customers, and the only person constantly in view was a modestly uniformed giant who tended the door, passing in the worthy, and ready, at all times, for any emergency.

One November morning one of Silas' floor clerks, a smiling and eager youth named George, welcomed a lady near the door, and, at her request, sped across the showroom into Silas' compact little private office, where the old gentleman was sitting in his swivel easy-chair, drumming with his broad, carefully kept fingers on the edge of his table. George handed him a large, white visiting card. Silas took it and read, in fat script across the middle: "Princesse Piritoff."

He looked up at George inquiringly.

"What's she like?"

George bubbled and gestured to show the futility of mere words. Silas smiled, and requested that she be admitted. He stood beside his table and welcomed a woman who fitted George's eloquent picture to a T. In his years of interviewing beautiful women, Silas had seen many who beggared description, but the Princess Piritoff left that word destitute indeed. A close, blue toque permitted devastating glimpses of a perfect complexion, perfectly applied upon perfect features; a rich sable stole was thrown back to permit a firm, white column of throat to be seen; and an orchid made a pastel foil for the rich warmth of the princess' coloring. She smiled as she swept into the room, radiating an aura of some exotic and tantalizing perfume. She flashed upon Silas a row of even teeth, white and gleaming between richly crimson lips, and a glance from her violet eyes—long. lashed and dreamy eyes, able to entangle weak man in their rays and to draw him, unresisting and eager, into their bottomless depths. He bade her be seated, with all the courtesy at his command, and she sank gracefully into a chair across the table from him, crossing her knees and drawing Silas' eye with the flash of her gleaming slipper.

She placed a small and exquisite portemonnaie on the table before her

and, throwing back the sables from her lovely throat, leaned toward Silas, who had resumed his own chair. She was a beautiful, colorful, and altogether alluring vision in the soft grays and browns of Silas' office. Her beauty was reflected from the cheval glass in the corner, and was perfectly framed in this place designed with artful care to set off the quality of Silas' gems. He watched her, fascinated at first; but, in the midst of his fascination, and like an electric shock, he felt the prod of his faithful warning instinct so keenly that he almost exclaimed aloud. He looked at her more closely and with a keener perception, as he asked her in what manner he could be of service to her. She was perfection—almost. Somewhere—in the angle of her eyes, in the lips—somewhere there was Circe and Lilith. Silas nodded, inwardly, to himself, and patted his instinct on the back. She spoke with a voice that was gentle and cultured, in perfect English, but with just a trace of accent that defies transcription.

"Mr. Tipping, some friends have recommended you to me. I have not come here for myself, but for my sister. She has had misfortunes, and is forced to sacrifice some of her things to have money. I have offered to help her myself, but she will not hear of it. She has most of her jewelry from her husband, whom she has left, and she will not really miss it. She will sell it all, rather than accept our aid. These friends, they tell us that you are a gentleman and honest, and will give us the best treatment. My poor sister—she cannot leave her house. And I have come to you for her. Will you help us?"

All this was said in the most appropriate manner. A lift of the wonderful violet eyes; a pleading look cast into Silas' own kind blue ones; a pursed lip; a splendid, outflung, open-handed gesture of great-hearted charity; and a turn of the wrist which changed it into an entreaty—all formed a plea to soften the heart of the most stony. It was a performance of high order, and Silas watched it carefully, to the accompaniment of the ceaselessly reiterated warning of his still, small voice.

"May I see the pieces, princess?"

"But yes! I have them here!"

Hastily, enthusiastically, she fumbled with the small bag and laid a silk handkerchief, rolled up into a clumsy package, on the table before him. He undid it, while the princess waited.

The handkerchief contained a pearl necklace and an emerald ring. Silas picked up the necklace first, and, though his examination of it was casual in the extreme, to all appearances, yet every detail of it was being impressed on his busy mind as his eyes and fingers went easily over it. He counted the pearls visually, without the aid of a checking finger, a most difficult and uncertain proceeding. He made the tally eighty-three. They were fairly large, the center one weighing, to that eye long trained to associate size and mass, about sixteen grains. The ends looked to be about three grains. The whole string should weigh four hundred grains. Not gem quality by any means, but heavy. Many of the pearls were pitted and dimpled; some had become worn slightly barrel shaped, some were irregular; and Silas thought the thing should average about twelve dollars base. The clasp was a small marquise diamond, weighing perhaps a carat, surrounded by a row of tiny, brilliant-cut stones set in platinum. One of the small diamonds had been lost from the setting, leaving a small hole about the size of a pinhead, which showed black in the gleaming metal. He noted in his memory all the facts which he would have to use later in the intricate calculation necessary to determine its value. and turned to the ring.

It was a ring of gold, very evidently manufactured abroad, for the ornamentation of the mounting was in rose diamonds, and no American jeweler will use even the smallest of the duller rose-cut stones, when he can get a brilliant to put in its place. The emerald itself was of a fine color, but badly flawed. It was an almost square stone, with the corners deeply cut. It had several scratches on the table and showed other signs of wear, but none of sufficient consequence to injure materially the worth of the stone. It weighed—Silas tossed it in his hand unconsciously to determine by the feel of it how much of the weight was mounting and how much emerald—about eight carats. It would bring somewhere in the neighborhood of six—no, the color was good—seven hundred a carat. Say, six thousand for the ring. The necklace he would have to figure later.

He laid the pieces down and looked up at the princess. He was a little in the dark as to why his instinct had warned him. He had expected to be shown something of indifferent or no value, for it had been his experience that when one of these people had little to sell and hoped to get much for it, their sales talk was usually accompanied by the allurements which the princess had thrown out. The jewels were usable and good. There must be some other reason. He banked on his instinct.

The princess was still fishing. She folded her hands on the table, twisting her fingers in a very pretty gesture of supplication and suspense. She leaned toward him, so close that he could see the soft down upon her cheek. He rubbed the side of his nose with his finger and looked beyond her. He must get away from that perfume and those eyes and all the rest of it, to some place where his thoughts could function unhampered.

"Can you help us, Mr. Tipping?" breathed the princess, very near his cheek.

Silas was silent for an instant. The necklace was an extremely tempting piece. It could be resold quickly and easily, either as it was or broken up, pearl by pearl. The ring was as good, of its kind. Large stones of fine color are always in demand. It was a strong temptation to close what would be a very advantageous deal then and there, but he could not disregard the warning of that drumming little voice in the back of his head.

"My dear princess," he said finally, "in a matter of this sort I really hesitate to make up my mind so quickly. Won't you give me a day or two to think it over? If I may have a little time, I can very probably make you a much better offer for the pieces than I can now. That will give me a chance to review the possible markets for such things and to find out that one which will give you the most for your sister's jewels. Leave them with me, if you can, or, at any rate, let me look about a bit before I decide."

The princess' face fell. She was evidently very near to tears.

"Oh, Mr. Tipping! I am so disappointed! I really could not leave them! If you are not able to help me, of course I shall try somewhere else."

"Please do not take my refusal as final, princess. All I ask is a few days. Take them with you, if you wish. I can describe them sufficiently to interest any one who might be looking for such things. Leave me your telephone number, and I will get in touch with you as soon as possible. That is a much more satisfactory method. If you are unsuccessful in disposing of them advantageously anywhere else, call me up, and I will try a quicker way. Won't you do that?"

"If you are sure that is the best way,

I suppose I must. What is your telephone number, Mr. Tipping?"

Silas reached into his card pocket, the upper right-hand pocket of his vest, where he kept his cards loose, ready for just such occasions as this, and handed the princess one. She nodded, and a smile brightened her violet eyes once more. She asked for his pencil, took it, with a touch of her fingers on his, and wrote a number on the corner of her own card, which was still lying on the table. Silas rolled the jewels up again in the handkerchief, and she tucked them and his card into her bag and rose.

"I am really disappointed, Mr. Tipping, but I'm grateful, too." She laid her hand on his arm, and his warning voice faded, for an instant, under the anæsthesia of her touch. It did not quite die, however. "I know you will help us if you can. Won't you?"

Silas was voluble in his assurance, and bowed her sympathetically from the store, noting with mild amusement the look of mute adoration on the face of the stalwart who kept the door. Then he went back to his office, shaking his head to clear it from the influence of perfume and violet eyes and feminine charms in general. He thanked his gods for that saving instinct of his, realizing that his doorman, to judge from his expression, was ready now, on the shortest of acquaintance, to do or die for the princess. He sat down at his table and drew a sheet of paper from the drawer, for he had two problems to work out—the value of the necklace and the motives of the princess.

Working quickly, but with that deadly accuracy which must be acquired by every successful jeweler, he set down the figures he had gained from his examination of the necklace, in the intricate calculation which he had to make to determine its value. He looked at the result with a curious pursing of his lips. Of course, his figures were approximate, his weights were only estimated, and his judgment of the base price of the necklace might have to be changed upon further examination; but he set down thirty thousand dollars for the necklace, added six thousand for the ring, and arrived at a grand total of thirty-six thousand dollars—a sum which would probably be of great help to the princess' unfortunate sister.

Now, why had his instinct warned him? He went over the scene. Here was the woman, beautiful beyond words, to start with, perfectly gowned, appealing, alluring. What was wrong with her? Of course, she used her charms; but then, many women did that with no wrong intent. Something else, there was. Her story! Of course! It was full of holes! Suppose she did have a sister who was hard up? Then, why did she not buy the necklace herself, if she had the money to offer her sister in the first place? Silas sat up. That was it! That story, which was much too well and glibly told, was a fake!

Granted that, what was the real reason she wanted to sell the goods? Stolen goods? Not likely! They would have been offered loose, one at a time, and the emerald would have showed signs of having been recently cut, in an effort to change its weight and appearance. Besides, there were too many places where she could have sold the things, and no questions asked, without coming to him. Smuggled? Perhaps. Very likely. Yes, by gum! Smuggled stuff! The whole thing was clear to him now. She had smuggled them in to wear, had been frightened, somehow, and was desperately trying to dispose of the evidence. She was not a regular, or the same rule would have applied as to the stolen-goods hypothesis. He shook his head, thinking of the futility, the smallness, of such

a creature; and, having solved the problem to his satisfaction, dismissed the whole matter from his mind. He had almost succeeded in forgetting the necklace entirely when, not three days later, it was laid on his table by Tom Harris, his stone buyer.

In every establishment such as Tipping's there is a rear entrance, more closely watched and carefully guarded, perhaps, than is the front. Here, through steel grilles, the salesmen for importers and manufacturers come all day long, one after the other, to show their goods and to solicit orders for the making and repairing of pieces. It was Tom Harris' job to see these salesmen, and to weed out of the goods they had to sell whatever he considered suitable for his immediate needs or otherwise worthy of a place in Tipping's stock. These things he took, either buying them outright or on a memorandum bill, showing them first to Silas, whenever possible, for the latter's final approval. He had received the princess' necklace from a young man on the other side of the grille, had carried it over to the light of one of the great windows that brightened the working space of Tipping's, and had examined it with interest. Then, with his expressionless buying face, he had asked the price, had told the salesman to wait, and had carried the necklace in to Silas.

Silas looked up at his entrance. Harris came in and slid into the chair opposite his employer with that easy informality that grows out of long and pleasant association. He laid the necklace on the desk and pushed it over to Silas with his finger. Tipping picked it up, looked at it, looked at Harris, and again at the necklace; then laid the string down and rubbed his eyes. He picked it up again and examined the clasp carefully, turning it over and over. He looked up at Harris once again. His face was inscrutable.

"Whose stuff is this, Tom?"

"Bob Ashe brought it in, Mr. Tipping. It's the first thing he's shown me that I think we might use. It's a good buy at the price, and it's full of usable stuff."

At the sound of Bob Ashe's name, Silas Tipping had given a deep gasp, as of fear and pain; but he had quickly controlled himself, and Harris had been so interested in the piece he was showing that Silas' involuntary movement had escaped him. Silas gripped his soul with the iron hand of his will, and spoke again in his normal voice, fingering the necklace.

"Bob Ashe, eh? Yes! What does he want for it?"

"He wants twenty-two thousand for the string. That figures out around ten dollars base."

"Yes. Not so bad." Now that he had brought his mind back to its regular channels of consideration again, his attitude was one of speculation. How had Bob Ashe got hold of this thing? The poor kid! He frowned and rubbed his nose, settling himself so far into his chair that the bosom of his shirt rose in a beautiful arc over his chest.

"Listen, Tom. Tell Bob I'd like to keep this for a few days. And find out whether he's had any repairs made on the clasp, will you?"

Harris hurried out, leaving the necklace with Silas. Tipping looked at the cursed thing again, and groaned. It was the same necklace—no possible doubt of it! Same markings on the pearls and all. Now, how in thunder!

The very morning of the princess' visit, Robert Ashe, the son of Silas' oldest and best friend, had called upon him to announce that he was about to enter the trade on his own account, and Silas, one of the trade gods, had made him heartily welcome. Ashe, young and very self-confident, had sat across the table from Silas, prattling of his new office, his prospects, his vast experience, and the worlds he expected

to conquer. He was a pleasant fellow, but very young, very callow, and Silas had heard him and welcomed him more for the sake of his father than for any great benefit to the trade which he might bring. Silas had sat back, his square chin resting on the upper segment of his shirt bosom, big, bushy brows drawn down over his kindly eyes, and had regarded the venturesome youth from the eminence which had only been reached by a long and uphill road that had been forty years in the traveling. He nodded occasionally, and threw a word now and then into the steady flow of Bob's talk. He could not but admire the supreme confidence of the youth.

"You see, Mr. Tipping, here I've put in six good years working for somebody else. Started in running errands, learned to string pearls, kept the registers, handled the stock, and finally went on the road for 'em. I don't deny that it's a good firm. But, thunder! they don't pay a man near what he's worth. I figure I know the game now about as well as most men, and I'm out to make money! In and out! That's me! Buy it quick and sell it quick! Small profits and lots of 'em! Ain't that right?"

Nod.

"I'll run up and see you often. I know the kind of stuff you want. Fine goods, and a good buy when it's right. Ain't that it? Let me in on the calls, will you, Mr. Tipping? Loose stones and pearls. No mêlées or other small goods. I haven't got the capital to tackle that long-time stuff yet. Think I'll take a flyer in the secondhand line, too. Lots of money in that. Buy stuff from estates and people who need ready cash. Get it cheap and sell it cheap. That's the ticket, eh?"

Silas nodded and straightened in his chair. He could wish old Rob Ashe a bit better boy, perhaps. But, Lord, he'd grow! He'd grow!

"All right, Bob, I'll keeep in touch with you. Where are you going to be?"

"I haven't got a card yet, but, here, give me one of yours and I'll write it down."

Silas fished a card out of his pocket and tossed it over. Bob wrote his name, his new address, and telephone number on it, and passed it back. Silas scanned it, and thrust it again into his pocket. The men rose, and Silas walked back with Bob to be sure that Tom Harris knew of his advent into the trade.

Now, still fingering the necklace of the Princess Piritoff that had been brought to him by that same Bob Ashe, Silas came out of his reverie with a start that brought his swivel chair down to level with a bang. He thrust his hand into his card pocket again, and drew out all the cards that were there. He shuffled them, and found the back of every one blank.

Then, with a quick throb that set the skin of his back tingling and brought perspiration out on his glowing forehead, he knew what had happened. He had put back into his pocket the card upon which Ashe had written, and had given it to the princess not an hour later, on that same morning. Now he almost groaned aloud. Poor Bob! And, worse, he thought of the crime he had unconsciously, or, rather, carelessly, committed against the trade. For the honor of the trade, which had been Silas' father and mother, the provider of his bread, and the mainstay of his whole existence for forty years, had been violated, and through him!

The standards of that broad control, that irresistible current which draws those bits of stone and color from the far corners and the dark depths of earth and ocean, had been broken! Rob Ashe's son was one who deserved well at the hands of Silas, particularly at the start of his career, but the trade—what he had done there was crime un-

speakable! Silas thought of his carelessness and groaned aloud, a bitter sigh. Smuggled goods are contraband, anathema. Their acceptance constitutes that letting down of the bars which the trade is united to fight with its last breath. Silas imagined the princess and Bob Ashe together. Why, the boy must have been like a bird under the hypnotic eye of a snake! If certain things could only be learned otherwise than by experience! He straightened up, his mind busy. It wasn't too late yet. He sat, with wrinkled forehead, the necklace dangling from his fingers. Harris stood again in the door.

"Here's Bob's memo on the necklace, Mr. Tipping. He says he had a small diamond set in the cluster of the clasp. He's tickled to death to leave it."

Silas nodded.

"All right. I've got a lead on a string like this. I think I can sell it. I'll let you know about it later on."

Harris went back to his work, and Silas laid the necklace on the table and studied it with unseeing eyes. He shook his head slowly. No! there wasn't any doubt about it. The thing was queer. His instinct hadn't served him so well for forty years to go back on him now. It was too bad that Bob Ashe was mixed up in it, but it was worse that he, Silas Tipping, had let down the trade so carelessly. How easy it was! Well, Bob, had taken a flyer in the secondhand line with a vengeance! Silas searched in his desk drawer for the card of the Princess Piritoff, and, in a few seconds, was talking to her over the telephone. Her voice sounded soft and cool in his ear.

"This is Mr. Tipping. Can you come to see me this afternoon? I have some word for you about your things. Oh! I see! You still have the ring, though? Good! Then I may expect you? Very well. Good-by!"

He hung up the receiver for an instant, then called Ashe's number, leaving word for that young man to call upon him right after lunch. After that, with his plan ripe in his head, he went to his own lunch, feeling greatly at ease. He returned just in time to meet Bob in the elevator. They went into Silas' office together, and sat down at the table. Silas went directly to the point as soon as they had settled themselves.

"Bob," he said, "I'm afraid I've gotten you into a peck of trouble."

Ashe looked up in surprise.

"You've gotten me into trouble?" he asked. "How?"

"That necklace you showed me this morning. You bought that from a very beautiful woman with a Russian title, didn't you?"

Ashe nodded, a strange look on his face. Silas noticed this, and interpreted it to indicate a growing uneasiness, natural in one who has just gone into the trade, and who should be a little suspicious of every transaction. Ashe did not speak, however, and Silas went on:

"Now, I'm very much afraid that this necklace you bought from the princess was smuggled. I haven't any proof, just my idea, but I've been fooling with this stuff for so long that when I feel this way about a thing it generally turns out to be so."

Ashe sat quiet, his hands clasped tight upon the table. He looked at Silas obliquely, from under his lowered eyelids. Silas thought he was taking it very well, and admired him for it. Then the young man spoke, with an apparent effort.

"Well, suppose it is smuggled. Where do you come in?"

Silas had dreaded this question. Answering it involved making a confession which he dreaded, for he knew that it was going to lower his prestige in Ashe's eyes. Quietly Silas told him of giving the princess the card upon which Bob had written his address. "So, you see," he concluded, "it's really

my fault that she came to you, and if the necklace is smuggled, it's up to me to get you out of it."

Ashe sat through this recital, tapping the table. When he spoke, his voice was faintly sarcastic in tone.

"I'm sure it's kind of you, Mr. Tipping, to take such an interest in my affairs, but I really think I can take care of myself. If the necklace seems so queer to you, just give it back to me, and I'll get out of my troubles without bothering you."

A touch of pride, perhaps commendable; but Silas disregarded it, driving right on:

"The princess will be here any minute now, and I'm so sure of that stuff that I'm going to put it right up to her. She'll either have to produce a customs receipt or buy it back from you."

Ashe rose. His expression showed that he was annoyed.

"Mr. Tipping, you've had a wonderful time butting into my affairs, haven't you? I think I can still do one or two things for myself, thanks. That necklace is all right. Women like the Princess Piritoff don't smuggle."

Silas rose with him, his voice still calm.

"Sit down, Bob. I'm not trying to make a fool of you. If that necklace isn't smuggled, I'll apologize handsomely to the princess and to you, and I'll buy her emerald ring from her in the bargain. I'm butting into your affairs because they became mine when you tried to sell that necklace to me. Isn't that so?"

Ashe nodded, seating himself again.

"All right," Silas continued. "Now, if that necklace is smuggled, whoever has it is in for some serious trouble, isn't he? I suspect that I've gotten you into this mess, indirectly and unintentionally, and I intend to get you out or eat crow myself. Don't you see, Bob, too, what it means to the trade to have that stuff floating around? It means that you and I and the princess are all crooks, and I don't want that possibility hanging over me, at any rate, nor you either. That's why I'm butting in." He looked up as George appeared in the door and signaled that some one was waiting. Silas nodded and rose. "Here she is now. Just sit tight, and we'll straighten this out."

The princess entered and, though for just a moment a little taken aback, greeted each with a friendly and enthusiastic handclasp. "My two friends!" she cried, with a happy lift of the brows over those bewitching violet eyes. Silas acknowledged her greeting with a bow, Ashe with a smile and a look which was intended to mean volumes. Silas seated the princess, and the two men resumed their chairs.

"Princess," said Silas, "I have had a grave suspicion about the jewelry you showed me the other day. If I am wrong, I am ready to apologize humbly. Tell me, frankly, was duty paid on them when they were brought into this country?"

The princess looked up, astonished and a little hurt.

"Why, Mr. Tipping! Of course! They are my poor sister's things. I told you that!"

The violet eyes were brimming. The little blue toque tilted back so that the full battery of those destructive features could be trained on Silas, who, impervious to their attack, pressed his question.

"Are you sure? Can you prove it? Have you the customs receipt?"

He leaned forward as he spoke, sending his words home forcefully.

The princess drew back, even her trained composure slightly shaken by the suddenness and power of his onslaught.

"Why—why——"

Ashe broke in, protector of womankind!

"Never mind all that! Remember that the Princess Piritoff is a lady and not to be spoken to in this fashion!" He rose, and was about to suggest that the princess do the same. Then Silas, too long confined within the grip of his control, thundered:

"Sit down!" He threw into his voice a rasp that the most hard-boiled drill sergeant would have envied. Bob sat.

"It was smuggled, wasn't it?"

The princess fought against the inevitable. She drew herself up, regal in her rage.

"I am not here to be——"

"All right! I haven't finished yet, by a long shot. If that necklace is all right, then you will have no objection to going with me to the customhouse and checking up your receipt. If necessary, we'll go with an officer. I'm willing to take a chance on a lawsuit. What do you say?"

The princess relaxed. She sank back into her chair with a little shrug and a one-sided smile of resignation. Ashe sat very still and was very pale.

"Of course, Mr. Tipping, they were smuggled! I really had no intention of selling them when I brought them into the country, but"—a gesture—"things happened! You would not buy, but you very kindly gave me the name of Mr. Ashe, so I went to him."

Silas frowned. "I'm sorry you did that. Mr. Ashe happens to be a protégé of mine, and the fact that you went to him makes it necessary for me to take steps which I might not otherwise take. I shall tell you now, my dear princess, that I intend to prosecute."

"Just a moment, Mr. Tipping!" The princess' face lost some of the soft bloom that graced it. "Your innocent young protégé knew all about it!"

Silas swung around to Ashe, deep color flooding his face for an instant and then fading, leaving it a hard, strange, marbly white. His eyes lost their smile and became two brilliant points before which Ashe's eyes wavered and slowly dropped, while the young man's own color grew until his face was crimson to the roots of his hair. Silas fought his way through the fog of surprise and pain that enveloped him.

"You knew this, Bob?"

Ashe nodded.

Silas' head was beginning to clear. His anger and pity struggled within him. What a fool! What a shame! He got firm control of his tongue, and spoke in a quiet voice, but one which penetrated like a steel drill.

"Well, Bob, you've had a short but very interesting career as a jeweler, haven't you?"

Ashe looked up, startled

"'Have had?' Why?"

"Because you're all through now!" Silas leaned forward, driving his words home without gesture of any sort, but each one seemed to leap across the table. The princess sat, an interested spectator. "You don't think for a minute that I'd let you get away with this, do you? I admit I innocently started you in this mess; but if you didn't have the sense to drop it, when you knew about it, you're through!"

Ashe sat, stunned. He spoke, and his voice and manner were far from his cocky, self-assured air of a short while ago:

"Listen, Mr. Tipping, nobody knows about this but us three. Can't we forget it? That necklace is a good buy, and we'll all make a profit."

Silas leaned back, scarcely able to believe his ears.

"You mean you want me to keep my mouth shut and buy the necklace? Are you crazy?"

"No! No one on earth would know! How could any one ever find it out?"

Silas sat for an instant, looking down at his hands as they lay on the table. He was having trouble keeping his temper within bounds. He looked at Ashe

again, and Bob quailed under the hard brilliance of those blue eyes.

"Bob, you don't know what you're talking about! This deal is crooked and nasty! Because you're Bob Ashe's son, I'll get your money back for you and fix it so that you can give up your business quietly; but you must leave the trade. I owe the trade even more than I do your father. No, Bob, you're through!"

"Wait a minute! Suppose I don't quit?"

"If you don't, I'll spread the word among the big stores on the Avenue, and they'd just as soon have a raving maniac with a gun in their offices, after that, as they would you. No man can exist without their trade. You promise me that you'll start cleaning up your business within twenty-four hours and I'll keep my mouth shut. I'm only giving you this chance because of your father. Otherwise, I'd be at the phone right now!"

Ashe sat, still sulky, and with a look of righteous martyrdom on his face. The princess gathered her things about her and made as if to rise. Silas turned to her more swiftly than one would have suspected possible in a man of his age and bulk.

"My dear princess," he said, "you will please keep your seat. You do not go out of here until I am through, unless you go with a policeman. Do you understand?"

The princess subsided, thinking of the uniformed giant at the door; but her eyes glowed red for an instant.

"Now," he said, "what have you done with the money he paid you for the necklace?"

"Ah!" It was a quick-drawn breath. "I shall not tell you!"

"My dear princess! I'm not bluffing you!" Silas smiled, a queer little one-sided smile. "You answer my questions, and you may go home with your necklace. You refuse, and we shall all go down to Bowling Green. And you can imagine what would happen there. Make up your mind!"

The princess caught her lip between her teeth, and looked long at Silas, a look in which there was none of the honey which had sweetened her glances when she had tried to sell him her jewels. Her face was now white, save where her carefully applied complexion made red blotches on her cheeks. She looked at Ashe, in a despairing hope of getting help from such a broken reed, and got only a pleading grimace in reply. She clasped and unclasped her hands nervously, and finally, dropping her eyes, she whispered the name of the bank. Silas tipped back his chair and took a book of blank checks from his table drawer.

"Good! Now we're getting somewhere! Please fill out a check for the amount. I have a fairly wide acquaintance at that bank, and I can easily get the cash. Make the check out to 'Cash,' by the way, princess."

He sat, smiling his little, impersonal smile, while the princess wrote, her pen scratching viciously into the paper. She finished, and Silas drew the book toward him. He tore out the check and passed it over to Ashe.

"That right?"

Ashe looked at it and nodded. Then, urged by some last forlorn hope of saving himself, he said pleadingly:

"See here, Mr. Tipping, can't we straighten out this matter? I tell you, the whole thing would never have been known at all if you hadn't happened to be mixed up in it. I hate to give up my business just at the start. You'd never tell about this, would you, princess?" He turned to her with a smirk of conciliation.

She looked at him, contempt in every line of her.

"Do you think I'm a fool?"

"There! You see, Mr. Tipping, the princess can be trusted. Take back

this check and give me the necklace, and no one will ever know! What do you say?"

Silas sat, listening, his head sunk on his shirt bosom. He looked first at Bob and then at the princess, and the fact of his silence and something about his expression gave them hope. They sat tense, all eager to hear him accede to Ashe's plea. He straightened up, finally, with a sigh, and dropped his hands to the arms of his chair.

"Bob, I told you that this was a rotten mess. It would still be one if we three were the only ones that knew about it. You don't seem to care whether it's dishonest or not. I'll show you that it's dangerous, too. If this became known, you and the princess would both be liable to fines, and perhaps other punishment, and your reputation would be ruined. Now, some one does know of this, besides us. I don't know who it is, but I'll prove that to you, and, if I can, I'll prove to you that the way out that I'm offering you is the best thing in the world you can do." He turned to the princess. "Now, please answer my questions. A moment ago you said that you had no intention of selling the necklace when you brought it into this country. What changed your mind? Some one threatened to give you away, didn't he?"

The princess hesitated, looked quickly at Ashe, and nodded.

"Who was that?"

"My maid."

Ashe sat up suddenly.

"Why didn't you tell me this?"

"You never asked me!"

"Very well," Silas went on. "Your maid knew. Then what?"

"I had to discharge her. She threatened to tell, then. But"—and here the princess smiled a small smile of triumph—"yesterday morning I took her back! And now we are good friends again! She would not tell for the world! So, you see——"

"There you are, Mr. Tipping!" Ashe broke in. "Now everything is all right! See? I knew it would be!"

Silas went on, disregarding Ashe.

"Is this maid of yours where she can be reached? All right! You get her on the phone and tell her to come down here. I want to talk to her."

He handed the telephone across the table to the princess, who got her number and began to chatter in French. Silas touched her arm. "English, please!" The princess glanced at him contemptuously and asked, in tones of great affection, some one whom she called Melanie to come down to Mr. Tipping's right away, like a good girl.

Silas settled back in his chair and rocked gently.

"Bob," he said, "here's my proposition: If I can't prove to you that this thing would ruin you far worse than ever I could, I'll shut up and let you get away with it. I'll turn crook myself, because I'll know the whole world is wrong. The maid will be here in ten minutes, and then you'll either leave the trade and the city, or you'll walk out of here with the necklace and I'll never breathe a word to a soul."

He reached into the drawer again and drew out the necklace as he spoke. He laid it on the table and looked at it, a grim smile on his face. He poked it with his finger and looked up at Ashe.

"Hardly worth while chucking yourself away for that, is it?"

Ashe said nothing, but rose and walked moodily to the window, where he stood with his hands clasped behind his back, looking out. The princess sat silent, her eyes cast up at a corner of the ceiling, avoiding the glance of Silas, who amused himself by playing with the necklace. The princess drew a compact from her bag and patted her nose with a tiny puff. They waited in silence for a long quarter of an hour before George ushered in a tiny, neat brunette, who looked inquiringly at the

princess, one hand resting against the edge of the door. Silas rose.

"Come in." He pointed to the chair from which Ashe had risen, and the maid slipped into it, while Ashe moved over and stood at the end of the table.

"Melanie," said Silas, "I want to ask you some questions, and madame has been so kind as to permit you to answer them. Is that not so?"

The princess nodded, smiling gently at Melanie.

"Good! Now, Melanie, the princess has told us that there has recently been some unpleasantness between you two. Is that right?"

Melanie looked at the princess in surprise, and then at Silas, who nodded encouragement. As the princess gave her no sign, the maid answered:

"But yes, monsieur!"

"But that is all over now, isn't it?"

"Ah! Yes! Madame has taken me back! I am so glad!" Melanie reached over and touched the princess' hand with adoring fingers. Ashe, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, smiled and rocked back and forth on his heels.

"You threatened to tell that the princess had smuggled some things into this country, didn't you, Melanie?"

"Yes, monsieur!" It was a whisper of contrition and shame. "But not now! Oh, no!"

"That's a good girl! It would have been very easy for you to do that, you know. Just go to the customhouse, tell your story, and that's all. Then, if they found that what you told them was true, they would even give you a reward for telling them. But you will never tell, will you?"

"But no, monsieur!"

"Good! Now, Melanie, I want you to tell me just what it was that made the princess discharge you. What did you do?"

"I—monsieur—I——" She looked up quickly to meet the princess' gaze, which had suddenly lost its charm for the second time that afternoon. She looked again at Silas, and hesitated.

"Go on!" He nodded.

The princess spoke: "Melanie!"

Silas touched the princess on the arm, and crinkled the check which she had written and which he held in his fingers. "Go on, Melanie!"

"Keep still, Melanie!" said the princess.

Silas half rose from his seat and looked steadily at the princess, who met his gaze for an instant and then dropped her eyes. "Go on, Melanie!"

Ashe had ceased to rock, and stood, transfixed, his mouth open.

"Monsieur, it was because of monsieur, the brother of madame. He lives with madame, and it has been his pleasure lately to annoy me with his attentions. It is not I who am fooled by them, monsieur! I am no innocent to believe that anything is meant by these pleas. I protest to him. I—I have done more, on occasion. I have slapped. Unfortunately, madame chanced upon us just as monsieur had succeeded, after some difficulty, I can assure you, in kissing me. She judged, perhaps, hastily—and I—well, it was no fault of mine from the start!"

"That is not so!" The princess, who had sat with waning color and waxing choler through this story, leaned suddenly toward the maid and swept the table with a gesture. "It was all your fault, *salope!* Ever leading him on! Seriousness! No! Money! Money! *Mon Dieu! Petite——*"

*"Ah, non! Ah, non! C'était lui, voilà! Madame est bien injuste! Ah, non! J'en ai eu trop, moi! Je suis fini! Et cette fois——"*

"Silence!" The princess had risen and towered over her servant. Her rage destroyed every vestige of the carefully compacted loveliness she had worn. She caught Melanie by the shoulder, and would have shaken her

had not Silas intervened. Ashe, rooted to the spot, looked on with bulging eyes. Silas stepped between the two women.

"It is enough!" cried Melanie, breaking again into English and on the verge of angry tears. "I will not be called so! He is a pig! A pig! I would not go back there for millions! He shall not touch me again!"

"And the jewels?" said Silas quietly.

"Ah! I shall tell! I shall tell every one! Madame, a smuggler! A thief! Madame, a——"

"Silence! Little beast!"

Silas seized them each by an arm.

"There, there! Calm down! Calm down!" He looked at Ashe, who seemed to come rapidly out of the daze into which the scene had cast him. He stepped forward and picked up the check where it had fallen on the table.

"You win, Mr. Tipping!" he said, his voice low, his eyes fixed on the floor. "I'll get out! What do I do with this?"

Silas seated the two women, the maid by placing her bodily in the chair, the princess with a look.

"Go back and tell Tom Harris to come in here!"

Ashe left and returned with Harris, who looked in inquiringly.

"Tom," said Silas, "I've just made a cash transaction for Bob, here. He's got a check for the amount of the deal on the Citizens' National. Go down with him and get the money, will you? They know you down there, don't they? I've got to entertain these young people for a while. Come right back here, Tom, when you get the money. Give it to Bob at the bank, because he's going on a trip, and he hasn't much time to get ready. Good-by, Bob Ashe! Good-by, and good luck!"

Silas smiled up at Ashe, a smile of infinite sadness and pity. "I'm sorry, Bob," he said, when Harris had gone for his coat and hat. "I had to do it. It was either you or the trade, you know. I wish it had been any one else in the world, and that's straight!"

Ashe stood in the doorway, fingering the check. He nodded.

"Mr. Tipping, I guess—I don't know but I ought to thank you for this. Will you shake hands?"

Silas jumped up and went to him, grasping his hand in a tight clasp.

"Of course! Keep in touch with me! I'll help you in any way I can, but one. Good-by, boy! You'll forgive me, some time!"

"Yes, sir! I—I guess I'm sort of a fool!"

Silas smiled. "Sort of, maybe! But, Bob, you're a long way from being entirely one! Go on and make good, but not in the trade!"

"No, sir! Good-by, Mr. Tipping!"

Silas sat and smiled at the princess and her maid. They sat rigid. Silas looked from one to the other, and began to speak, addressing neither.

"If a person smuggles goods into this country," he said, in the manner of a professor expounding an axiom, "and later repents, she may declare the articles and retain lawful possession of them by paying the duty and a small additional fine." He turned abruptly to the maid. "Melanie, I hope you remember what I told you a moment ago. The customhouse is downtown, at Bowling Green, and can be reached by taking the subway to Bowling Green station, or by taxi. I don't know which would be the quicker way. Now, I have some work to do, and I must bid you ladies a good afternoon!"

He rose, and the two women, pushing each other in their eagerness to get away, crowded through the door. Silas sighed and sat down again, settling the bosom of his shirt in a beautiful curve. Then, throwing back his head, he laughed aloud to himself.

"That'll be quite a race to the customhouse! I'd like to see it! And, by gum, I hope Melanie wins!"

By W. B. M. Ferguson

# The Dollar GOD

IN SIX PARTS—PART II

*By the author of "Lightnin' Calvert," Etc.*

**The dramatic story of Bolt Gary, tornado of the gridiron!**

The college town of Bolton had contributed a president, an ambassador to a European court, and many other notables to the United States. Time was when Bolton College held its own both in scholarship and athletics. Back in '96 Bolton's prestige had been at its height, for then the great Humph, superstar of the gridiron, had made the name ring across the country. But Humph had gone to war and had been killed. Now Bolton had slowly settled into the position of a fresh-water college, in scholarship mediocre, in athletics negligible. Still, however, a few scions of the old families held to the old traditions, and strove to raise their college to its former standing. But the old spirit was dormant. Judith Dearing, a girl of fifteen, and a member of one of the old families, felt the spirit keenly within her, as did her brother, Tony, and Tony's friends, Joe Blackstock and Rex Huneker—also of the ancient stock. Now Judith, out driving with her friend, Marie Burdet, ran out of gas; and suddenly along came a ridiculous-looking young man on a bicycle. She stopped him and sent him for gas, and learned that he was a "sandlotter," a nonuniversity football player, one of those who play merely for fun when not working. Some time later, Judith witnessed such a game. The ridiculous young man, whose name, she learned, was Bolt Gary, was one of the leading players. Judith resolved to tell her brother, Tony, about him. Tony was on the Bolton team.

## CHAPTER VI.

### GARY COMES TO BOLTON.

SEVERAL days later Dearing and Blackstock drew up at the Empire with a flat tire. It was the lunch hour and Gary was alone, in a little workroom off the main building, tinkering over the model of a carburetor. Trade did not seem too flourishing. He was in greasy overalls, sleeves rolled high, and a primitive lunch lay half eaten on the table.

Most of Dearing's preconceived opinions and prejudices went overboard right there. This man was neither the vil-

lage Lothario he had imagined, nor the oaf Marie had pictured. And, if physique went for anything, he was born for the gridiron. Dearing saw with admiration the perfect combination of speed and strength it denoted. Nor was there anything loutish in Gary's speech or manner; he chatted with them, answering the impersonal questions of chance visitors, without embarrassment or forwardness.

And while he talked, he worked, jacking up the car and ripping off the tire with expert ease. He did not volunteer any information, but he was neither taciturn nor talkative. He conveyed the impression of being very sure of himself, of knowing what he wished to do and doing it. And, whatever his years, he also conveyed the impression of age. Dearing suddenly began to think of himself as very young, which was a decidedly novel sensation.

"Your name's Gary, isn't it?" he said, when the tire had been replaced. "We're from Bolton College, and one of our scouts saw you play the other day. How'd you like to play for Bolton? Let's talk it over." Dearing had had no intention of approaching the matter in this blunt fashion; he had meant to probe and cross-question and then, if properly satisfied, confer the great honor with an appropriate gesture.

Gary did not seem unduly impressed nor even greatly astonished. He looked at them in his steady unwinking way, finished wiping his hands on a piece of waste, and then led the way to the little workroom.

"That all depends," he said. "Are you members of the team?"

"I'm Dearing, manager of the varsity, and this is Blackstock, the captain," said Tony, with proper importance. "We're taking the word of our scout that you're a pretty good player; but you'd better understand right at the start that we aren't offering any monetary inducements. Bolton never did that sort of thing. If you come at all, you must come as a genuine student."

"How much would it cost?" asked Gary.

"Why, that all depends, too," replied Dearing.

"We heard," said Blackstock, "that you wanted to go to college. That right?"

Gary nodded.

"Well, and we heard," continued Blackstock, "that your circumstances would now permit it. I mean that now you've no one to consider but yourself."

"You mean you heard of my mother's murder?" said Gary, flushing darkly. "If I ever lay hands on those responsible——" He checked himself, and continued quietly: "Yes, now I've no one to consider but myself. I want to go to college, but I've no money except what I earn."

"Well," said Dearing, "Bolton can offer you no inducements but itself. That may mean nothing to you, but it means everything to us. And maybe some day it would mean a lot to you, too. There's a scholarship in engineering, but the exam is pretty stiff. I guess we could manage to have you sit for it if you thought there was any chance of your passing. Anyway, if you aren't afraid of work, we could get plenty for you to do."

"You want me to come and play football for Bolton?" said Gary. "And in exchange you give me a free scholarship, a first-class technical education? I've heard of the Bolton engineering course. Well, that seems a fair bargain."

Dearing was nonplused by this blunt statement.

"We don't know that you'll be able to make the varsity," he said. "Anyway, you couldn't play for a year. We don't know if you're even good enough for the freshman team. And there's no free

scholarship about it; you'll have to earn it. We don't play ringers in any shape or form. If you don't pass, you don't get it."

"I'll pass," said Gary. "I meant to try for it, anyway, next year. If I can sit for it now, so much the better. I'm twenty-three, and I'm not getting any younger. And I'll make the varsity, too. I'd play this year only for the rules. One dollar and a half, please, for the repairs."

That was practically the whole of the interview, and Dearing was at a loss whether to laugh or swear. He compromised by doing both.

"Judy made one mistake at any rate; there's no fear of that fellow being snapped up before he knows his own value. If he's half as good as he thinks, I'll say he'll do. And, darn it, he charged us top price for those repairs! He should get on in the world. You'd think he was doing Bolton a favor by coming to it!"

"Well, maybe he is," said Blackstock, with a rueful smile. "I guess even a sandlotter, if he's anything of a player, wouldn't consider it a treat to be beaten by Merton and Stevenson year after year. I don't size up this hombre as a bluff and braggart, 'Runty,' even if he isn't all he thinks. It doesn't do any harm to have confidence in yourself, and I guess we could do with a lot of it in the team. We've got into the way of thinking we're only fit to be beaten. You can't do much if you don't think you can. I like this hombre."

"So do I," admitted Dearing. "Of course, he won't win the scholarship, and he mightn't pan out good enough even for the scrub, but we want him, anyway. A fellow like that should be helped along. He's ambitious. But the idea of speaking of it as a business proposition!"

"Well, stripped of its nice covering, that's what it is, isn't it?" asked Blackstock, grinning. "Gary's a business man, accustomed to earn his living since he was a kid. I guess that's what makes him so old in ways. We must seem like kids to him, in a way. He means to get on in the world, and he has the sense to see that education pays. He wants an engineering degree and he'll earn it any way he can. Evidently, since his mother's death, he had it figured out about coming to Bolton. It's purely a business proposition with him, and maybe we're buying a pig in a poke. But anyway, I bet he lives up to his end of the bargain. He seems that kind."

There is only one more upsetting character than the man who boasts about what he can do, and that is the man who carries out the boast. Martin Gary did not boast but he had no claims to false modesty; he said he would win the Humphry Bolton scholarship, and he did. Not only that, but he won it with the highest percentage in the history of the college—and it was a very difficult examination that year.

Sturges had turned a sympathetic, but just, ear to the representations of the three musketeers.

"There is nothing in the conditions," he said, after due scrutiny, "prohibiting sitting for the scholarship this term. The point has never been raised, but it has become a matter of precedent that the entries should close in June. Still, if the scholarship is open, there is nothing in the letter of the law, though there may be in the spirit, against holding the exam when, and as often, as we choose during the college year.

"But, gentlemen, let me say that if this candidate should win it, he will be worthy of it. I am more than willing to do all I can for athletics, and especially the football team, but, of course, it must be consonant with the spirit of Bolton. There must be no weakening of our traditions. It is far better to have

no athletic reputation than one that can be called in the slightest question.

"I need not say this to you gentlemen; but the varsity as a whole must understand that football, though every legitimate endeavor shall be made to further it, has not become the sine qua non. Members of the team who are conditioned in their studies shall not be eligible to play."

Thus, if Prexy considered he was stretching a point in the interpretation of the law, he squared his conscience by having the exam uncommonly stiff. He was delighted at the result; while Professor Amery, of the engineering course, was enthusiastic.

"The best papers I've seen since I took this chair," he pronounced. "Mr. Gary should make a very brilliant student. He has more than a touch of genius, I may say, and his range of knowledge covers a field far outside the questions. Where does this young man come from, and who taught him?"

Gary received the news of his great success with obvious pleasure but little surprise. Dearing was vastly more astonished than he, Blackstock far more excited.

"Thanks very much," he said, in answer to their hearty congratulations. "I'm mighty glad, but I thought I'd pass. I didn't see how I could help it, after the work I'd put in. I guess you can get most things if you keep after them hard enough."

When the news became known generally in Mercersville, he received more than congratulations. Success is never an unmixed blessing. The proprietor of the Empire Garage, Job Samuelson, came to him in astonishment and indignation. The garage had never been a success until Gary took hold, but his emoluments had not kept pace with his employer's prosperity. Samuelson considered that because he had been the first to give Gary a job that he held a sort of lien on his services for life. Now he grudgingly offered an increase in salary and, when he found it vain, burst into a torrent of abuse.

"Only for me," he said, "your ma would have starved when you was in the army. Yes, she would—no matter what pay you sent her. I seen to it that she always had plenty of work to do. And you'd have starved, too, when you come back. Yes, you would. I gave you a job, learned you all you know. And now, by heck! you leave me flat, kick the ladder from under you at a moment's notice. That's all the gratitood you have, all the return I get for all I done for you and your ma. You mean to get on, and you don't care who gets off."

Gary listened attentively, looking at the other in his steady, unwinking fashion.

"I guess you exaggerate what you did for my mother and me, don't you? She earned her money, just as I earned mine, didn't she? But you were kind to her, she said, and for that reason I've taken less money here than I could have got other places. Don't think I didn't know my own value, Samuelson. I stayed because I wanted to help you out. Now my mother is dead, this business is paying, and we're quits. You know I can leave at a week's notice, just as you can fire me, and I'm going to. You didn't teach me anything. I taught myself. I don't see any reason for you to take it this way, or why we shouldn't part friends."

"There ain't no other way to take it!" snapped Samuelson. "You ain't the character I thought you was, Bolt Gary. You ain't got no loyalty nor gratitood nor nothin'. All you think about is gettin' on, of gettin' somethin' for nothin'."

Gary laughed.

"Well, I never got it here, Samuelson. And I'd be a fool to pass up this chance."

Next there came a deputation from the Mercersville Athletic Club, headed by Elijah Somers. The iron molder had accepted his broken collarbone with philosophy, in the same spirit that he had blacked Gary's eye, but now he was decidedly upset. What was all this blah about getting a free education at Bolton? Of course, there couldn't be anything in it.

"What! You really mean it?" he barked, in answer to Gary's rejoinder. "Say, what kind of a deal is this? Ain't you signed on with us to play the season? Well, what if there ain't no contract? Mean to say you're gonna quit us cold, leave us flat——"

"I couldn't play this season anyway, Lige."

"Rats! Mean to say you won't be playin' football at Bolton? Ain't that what they got you for?"

"I'll play on the scrub later on, but that won't be a regular game in public. I wouldn't think of doing that. I'm in mourning. Work on the scrub will just be part of the college course. They're making athletics obligatory again."

"Yah!" said Mr. Somers. "Tell that to Sweeny. You've run out on us, Gary; sold out. You're lettin' us down just when you're most needed."

"I don't look at it that way."

"Ain't no other way to look at it," said Somers, unconsciously echoing Samuelson. "This scholarship stuff is all bunk, and you know it. You couldn't win nothin' like that, no more'n I could teach a goldfish to knit. How much are these rah-rah boys payin' you?"

"Not a cent, Lige, believe it or not. And I won the scholarship fair and square. Well, laugh if you like. I've done what I can for the Comets, helped develop a team that will whip Four Corners and Willow Hollow, and now I'm through."

"And we're through with you," declared Somers. "If we win this season, it won't be because of anythin' you done. You're some loyal member, Gary. You been bought, and that's all there is to it. I don't mind a fella makin' all he can on the side honest, but he had ought to have some loyalty. The Comets was good enough for you——"

"That's enough," said Gary. "You may think what you like, but you can't say it here. Clear out or I'll hammer the lot of you!"

There were few who saw his side of the matter or realized the honor that had been done the town by his winning of the Bolton scholarship. There was envy and jealousy. Those who thought or knew that the winning of it was genuine, found other points on which to indict him. Mercersville was no longer good enough for him. He was trying to be a college boy; he was the silk purse and sow's ear. The little town hummed with all sorts of ridiculous stories. The real reason he had got the scholarship was that he had saved the daughter of the president in an automobile wreck.

It was Gary's first taste of the price demanded of success. In a small, a very small, way, he had dared to emerge from the ruck, raise his head above the common herd, and all the envious and malicious took a crack at him as though striving to beat him back into obscurity. Former friends seemed to become enemies for no reason at all.

"I helped Samuelson a lot. I helped the Comets a lot," he thought. "I did all I could as long as I could. And now you'd think I'd been trying to ruin the town for years. It's funny."

There were few to see him off at the station, and there was more than one ironic cheer or sneering observation as the train pulled out. The adherents of the Comets who had bet on them beating Four Corners and Willow Hollow, were especially virulent. Mr. Higgins was one of the few sincere friends, almost the only person Gary was sorry to see

the last of. Thus had his former popularity waned.

He came to Bolton with a reputation, not as a gridiron star but as a "greasy grind." The three musketeers had said nothing of his alleged football prowess, except to Sturges, nor could they believe that his success in this respect would measure up to anything he had shown in the classroom. They simply mentioned casually to Traynor that the new freshie might prove material for the scrub. And Traynor laughed.

Every winner of a scholarship attracted a certain amount of attention, but there were special features in Gary's case that aroused more than the usual interest. Professor Amery was not given to enthusiasms, and even Prexy had made public mention of the brilliance of the achievement. Nor is it common for a son of the forge to display such brilliance. Report had it that he was a blacksmith. Plenty of men had worked their way through Bolton, in one capacity or another, but they had never had a blacksmith.

Gary caused much curiosity and talk, so much that Marie Burdet found it necessary to modify her original attitude somewhat. No one had been more astounded at Gary's success, but now she said that she had fully expected it. She sought to make capital out of her chance meeting with him, even intimating that it was she who, recognizing his ability, had suggested his trying for the scholarship.

"But, of course," she finished, "he's socially impossible. Wait till you see him." Gary was merely a temporary topic of interest, and he could never be in her set, but she could afford to patronize him for a time.

The curious were disappointed when they did see him, Marie further surprised. Curiously enough, he did not wear overalls nor a leather apron, not even jazz clothing. Of course, he could not indulge his fancy for lurid colors, common to his class, because he was in mourning. But somehow, he looked actually distinguished, far from the clown she had seen in the makeshift football togs.

Marie, who just "happened" to be passing the station at that hour, considered that she could safely venture on a bow. She did so want to know, to be the first to know, if it was true he meant to shovel coal in order to help out with his living expenses. Of course, the scholarship could pay for little more than his fees. Well, she could play Lady Bountiful with the family furnace.

But Gary did not see her. He saw Dearing, who had come to meet him, and Dearing took him over to the car where Judy was sitting.

"This is my sister," he said. "I believe you've met before. In fact, it was she who put us on to you."

"You said that some day maybe you'd come to Bolton and put it back on the map," said Judy, as she offered her hand. "Well, now you're here."

"And only for you I shouldn't have been—at least not so soon," replied Gary, in his sober fashion. "I guess you've a lot to forgive me for, Miss Dearing. I said things that day—of course, I knew from the start you were going to the Hightstown game——"

"Of course you did. But I'll forgive anything—even being called 'Johnny'—if you play for Bolton like you did that day for the Comets."

"My sister is very young," said Tony tolerantly. "She'll grow up some day. Stick your things in the rumble and I'll take you to Chatterton's Block. Next year maybe you can get a room on the campus. We'll see."

Chatterton's Block on College Street was to Bolton what Old Brick Row is to New Haven. Presumably, it was once occupied by a gentleman by the name of Chatterton, but for years and years it had been occupied by Tom, Dick and Harry, become the official

domicile of the genus freshman and upper classmen too poor or obscure for better quarters. But many considered there could be no better anywhere. This old rookery, in spite of its many material drawbacks, contained the essence of, not only college life, but that of the world in general. Here freshies, whatever their standing, were pitchforked into the hurly-burly and had to make good their footing.

"You'll have the honor of rooming with a second-year man, Jack Ransom," said Dearing. "He's on the varsity this season, too. He doesn't mind a freshie who has won the Bolton."

There was no question if Gary minded. He was in a new world of new values. In spite of his winning the Bolton, of what he could do or could not do on the gridiron, his own utter insignificance as a freshie was impressed on him, nicely but emphatically. And Gary accepted it as he had accepted the army discipline. He fully realized the honor Dearing was doing him by showing him round like this, introducing him here and there, taking him over the college grounds.

And Dearing spoke of it later to Blackstock and Huneker.

"It must be awfully hard for him because he has never been to prep school, never been farther than the fourth grade in the grammar, and so he doesn't know the ropes. He has been out in the world so long that it must seem to him like learning the rules of a kid's game. But he's anxious and willing to learn, enter into the spirit of the thing. And he has an appreciation of things I never expected; it's not all mechanics with him. The place has made a great hit with him. He appreciates its beauty far better than many who have been born here. You know the view you get of the Old Town from the quad? When the sun is sinking and the mist creeps up, and the lights in the crooked streets begin to flicker like fireflies, and——"

"Order! Order!" said Huneker sternly. "None of that burbling. Have you caught the flu?"

"Well, darn it," continued Dearing apologetically, "you know how I love the old place, but that chap somehow made me see things about it I'd never seen before, or that I'd taken too much for granted. 'It's great!' he said. 'Simply great!' And then he quoted a lot of stuff from 'Sesame and Lilies.' To hear him spouting Carlyle like that——"

"Carlyle didn't write 'Sesame and Lilies,' you fathead," said Blackstock. "You're a whale of a junior! Everybody knows it was Emerson. Well, maybe it wasn't, but, anyway, it wasn't Carlyle. He only wrote stuff like 'The American Commonwealth.'"

"You're mixing him up with Gibbons, brother of Mike, the boxer," said Huneker.

"Shut up," said Dearing. "I'm telling you about Gary. He said the Old Town reminded him of Stevenson's description of Edinburgh in 'St. Ives.' I think that was the book. And then he pointed out what I'd never thought of before—that it's the only place of its size built entirely of brick and stone. He'd never been here before, of course, and he'd never seen anything but wooden houses. And then, as we stood there, the chimes started and he took off his hat. It was just as if he was in church. Honest. 'I've heard about them,' he said, 'but they're more beautiful than any words. I've heard about Bolton, enough to make me want to come here. It's a great privilege to be identified in any way with such a place. It's not merely what you learn; it's the atmosphere, traditions.'

"He's a queer mixture," finished Dearing. "For the next minute I spoke about reporting for the scrub, and he said 'To-morrow I'll set about earning my right to stay here.'"

"But he earned it by winning the Bolton."

"No," said Dearing, "he doesn't look at it that way. I suppose he'd have won it next year, anyway, but, owing to us, he has saved a year. And he looks on years like money. I suppose you do when you get along in the twenties. We've saved him that, and in payment he has to play football. That's his end of the bargain. It's on a business basis, and I guess everything is business with him. He seems to have the soul of a poet, the mind of an engineer, and the heart of a financier. Maybe his mother wrote sonnets and his father belonged to the railroad union."

"No," said Blackstock, "his mother took in washing and his father hammered horseshoes. So they say in Mercersville. This tale of him being a blacksmith didn't come entirely from Ad Steen. Of course, it doesn't matter who or what they were."

"Not a rap," agreed Dearing. "I like this chap more, the more I see of him. The funny part of it is that he thinks —no, *believes*—that he'll make the scrub hands down. And it isn't just brag like I thought. Anyway, if he doesn't, if he's a football dud, we're the better for having him. He has the makings of a true son of Bolton."

## CHAPTER VII.

### A GLORIOUS DAY FOR THE SCRUB.

GARY'S first day at Bolton was memorable in several ways. Many different and wonderful stories have been told about it, just as there have been many different accounts of how he first came to the college. For he was destined to become, not merely the most talked about man in the town or State, but the whole country.

His roommate, Ransom, had instructed him in many of the mysterious rules of this new college game, talking far into the night, for they had taken to each other from the start. Both were poor, both from little manufacturing towns, and Ransom also was determined to get on in the world. But he was not clever like Gary; his studies came hard, and it was not for nothing that he was willing to room with the winner of the Bolton. This freshie could help him, and he had pictured a spectacled physical weed who, in exchange for being taken under his wing, should clear up many a dark spot acquired in lecture hall and classroom. This highbrow should become a sort of private tutor or grind.

But Ransom had soon found himself talking as one man of the world to another, adopting an attitude he had never contemplated, just as Dearing had done in his first interview with Gary. But there were one or two things he forgot to mention, and Gary learned them for himself the following morning.

Gary was walking alone across the campus, when some one bellowed: "Hey, you, frosh!" But, not associating this name with himself, Gary continued blithely on his way.

He was overtaken, whirled roughly about by a very large young man who was built like a cube. He had blue eyes, red hair and a temper. He was indulging the temper.

"What d'you mean by steamin' ahead like this?" he demanded. "When I tell you to stop, freshie, you *stop*. Hear me?"

"Oh, were you speaking to me?" said Gary.

"You're a mighty fresh freshie, aren't you?" demanded the other. "But you'll lose some of your bloom. What do you mean by coming on the campus with that collar?"

Gary fingered the stiff-starched article in question.

"What's the matter with it? Isn't it good enough?"

"No more of your cheek! Go home and take it off or I'll do it for you!"

"The devil you will," said Gary; and the next moment they were at it.

It was Beach, the varsity center, and

his nickname was a snare for the unwary. He was not blubber but good, hard beef, and rough-house was his middle name. But he did not succeed in removing the offending collar, though it soon ceased to be an article of adornment. It was a fierce encounter, while it lasted, and nothing like it had ever been seen on the Bolton campus. That a freshie should dare dispute the authority of an upper classman, let alone black the eye of a star member of the varsity!

Beach was down for the second time when a crowd of scandalized juniors and the warning cry of "Tutors!" hurriedly shifted the scene elsewhere. There followed explanations, with Dearing and his friends comprising the court.

"I didn't know. I didn't mean anything," said Gary earnestly, when he understood the situation. "I didn't know he was an upper classman. I didn't know it was the rule that freshmen must only wear soft collars on the campus. I thought he was just trying to razz me. I wouldn't knowingly do anything against the college rules and discipline. I want to play the game as it should be played, but I'm darned ignorant. I apologize, Mr. Beach, and I hope you'll forgive me. I'm ready for all the punishment that's coming to me for striking a superior officer in barracks."

"You mean in the eye," said 'Fatty' amiably, as he applied a cold knife blade to the swelling optic. "And I guess you were the one that displayed superiority, forget it, big fellow; it was as much my fault as yours—mebbe more. See that you report for the scrub this afternoon. I guess you could win a scholarship at slugging."

Thus Gary leaped into further prominence, ere he had been twenty-four hours in Bolton, and he was hailed as a hero by his class when the news got about. But he was humiliated, distressed over the incident.

"I acted like a roughneck," he said to Ransom. "I should have known that the campus was like the parade ground. This scrapping, anywhere and everywhere, has been paved into me with the dirt of the gutter. I wish you'd told me about that collar. It's a darned good thing they didn't make a rule that freshmen mustn't wear pants."

"There'd be as much sense in it," said Ransom. "It's hard to remember all the fool rules and regulations. I'll tell you another, while I think of it; no freshie's allowed to attend a hop at Mike's. That's a cabaret where the village dames do their entertaining. I've told you the rules about the Bolton Inn. We're plastered all over with fool rules, not only freshies but everybody."

"The rules aren't so foolish, though," said Gary. "Sentry go seems silly, but it's a necessary part of the army discipline. It's not the rules themselves that matter, but what they stand for. A new man ought to be put over the jumps or he'd never learn his place."

Ransom laughed.

"Well, you're lucky to be able to see it that way. I call most of them a darned nuisance. We shouldn't be treated like kids. Nobody obeys any more than he can help. Rules were made to be broken, anyway. You seem to take everything too seriously, including this scrap with Beach. Why, you've made a friend for life! Anybody who can whip Fatty may have his shirt."

"He's a fine sport," said Gary; "but that doesn't excuse me. College is like the world, Ransom; it's meant to fit you for the battle of life. But I'm learning the lesson backward. I never was at school like you. Its laws should be taken seriously, like the laws of the bigger world. I've a lot to unlearn in ways. I want to be a good citizen here, and you can't be a good citizen anywhere if you don't obey the law. That's first principles."

Ransom laughed again and slapped him on the back. His handsome face expressed genuine liking, if derision.

"You'll get over this, old 'Sobersides,' when you've been here a while and begin to feel the pricks of some of the fool rules. You're a queer duck, Gary—winning the Bolton and flooring Fatty Beach! And, even if you can't see it, one is as big an honor in its way as the other."

"They're college boys; I'm a man. Where's the honor in that?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Ransom. "Gee, but you're old! Methuselah had nothing on you. But you're not too old for the scrub, I hope. I suppose you've never had a chance to play football?"

"No, not much."

"Well, if you want to make the scrub—and every one does—I'll teach you all I know, give you the individual coaching that Traynor can't or won't. And in exchange you can shed some of your light on my class work. I never pretended to be long on the white matter."

"I'll do what I can for you," said Gary, "in every way. Aren't you my bunkie?"

His first appearance on North Field was in the regalia known to Higgins' pasture, for he claimed with pride that he had come prepared with football togs. He was early, and he raised a laugh from those who failed to recognize him as the hero of the morning. The varsity regulars had not appeared, and Traynor was trying to show the prospective fullback candidates how to drop kick and punt. His remarks were as bitter as his face. Females were not admitted to the field—Traynor's language alone would have barred them—but Judith Dearing had a recognized seat in the bleachers which she now occupied. Rain or shine, closed gates or open, she never missed a practice. No one considered her a female.

"Ye gods!" said Traynor, wiping his perspiring face. "You couldn't kick a hole in a doughnut! Not one of you. What have you been doing all your life? You've got nothing but wooden legs—and heads, too. Haven't I shown you a million times how to put the pep in it, time the——" He paused as Gary wandered up.

"What circus are you from?" asked Traynor, surveying him from head to heel. "This isn't the diamond nor yet an aviation field. Where's your airplane?"

"I came to play football, Mr. Coach."

"You don't say! What position do you play?"

"Well, half back and tackle, but I can play most any if I have to."

"You're the most modest guy I ever met," remarked Traynor. "Still, it's a breath of air to meet somebody who even *thinks* he can play. For I don't. Here, let's see you drop a goal. Don't be shy about it."

He suddenly flung the ball full bang at Gary, an old trick, but the latter caught it with expert ease between chest and arm. Then, with the same mechanical ease, his toe crashed against the pigskin and it shot in a long, mounting curve straight over the distant posts. They were decidedly distant. This kick was on the forty-something-yard mark and against the wind, and Traynor's command was in the nature of a joke. It was a good joke, and Miss Dearing hugged herself in silent appreciation.

"Say, what's your name?" asked Traynor, with suddenly narrowed eyes.

"Gary."

"Well, Gary, do you always kick like that?"

"When I get a chance."

"You needn't worry about chances," said the coach grimly, and turned to Dearing who had come up. "Here's a scorer, a lad who can kick if he can do nothing else. That's something. He says he can play anything, and we'll soon see."

They saw sooner than they expected;

saw as the whole country saw subsequently. The stories told of that day have not been exaggerated. It was the most memorable day North Field had ever known and it marked an epoch in the history of Bolton. For a great diamond of the first water is not discovered every day, nor every year, whether at Kimberley or Yale. And in Humphry Bolton's case it had been expected, while here it was not, not by any but a girl of fifteen who sat in the bleachers and hugged herself.

First they put Gary in at tackle, and what had been a paper defense of the scrub suddenly became a stone wall on that wing. Then they shifted him over against Ransom, and the same thing happened with that seasoned gentleman. On every drive aimed at him, Gary spilled Ransom, broke through and smeared up the play before it was well started. The varsity had practically no backfield to cope with, even though Dearing himself had gone in. Next they gave the scrub the ball and shifted him behind the line, first at full back and then at right half, and the futile scrub offense immediately became a menace.

By this time every regular was in line against him, and Traynor, yelling instructions right and left, seemed dying to get into the battle himself. And it had become a battle royal, of one man against eleven. There was no one to open holes for him, but he tore them open himself, widening a crack into a gash; and, once in, he screwed and bored his way as long as he was able to wiggle an arm or leg.

He crashed between Beach and Ransom and made his gain, and, with the poorest sort of interference, skirted the ends against two such capable men as Blackstock and Huneker. He straight-armed clear, and, once clear, nothing could stop him. Ransom was very fast for his weight, but Gary infinitely faster. No one had the heels of him, not even the ends. Nor was this all; he instilled a new spirit into the scrub that it had hitherto woefully lacked. Here was something to rally round, a center of attack and defense, an example to follow. They developed initiative, a spirit of fight, the will to win. Shattuck, his running mate, brought out hitherto unsuspected qualities, and Rogers, the quarterback, became a strategist, now that he had such a weapon to use. Even the threat of that weapon proved a great asset; for Rogers soon discovered that the enemy was so busy watching Gary, fearful of him getting clear, that Shattuck and the full back received less and less attention. Consequently, they were able to make gains, on delayed passes and fake plays, that otherwise would have been impossible.

That was a glorious day for the scrub, now for the first time welded into something approaching a coherent whole, and they drove the varsity down the field time and again. Gary went over the line seemingly at will, once on an end run of seventy yards, and kicked two field goals. It was a glorious day for everybody, for Bolton's star that had waned and set, gave promise of a brilliant resurrection.

"He's as great as Humph Bolton!" exclaimed Dearing enthusiastically.

"Greater," pronounced Traynor. "Bolton was a one-position man. This fellow's great at everything, though half back is his best. He's the greatest all-round player I've ever seen, and I've seen some. He's a natural-born star of the first magnitude. He has a nose for the ball. Why has he never been heard of?"

Dearing explained the circumstances.

"It's no disgrace to be scored on by him," said Traynor. "Given any sort of help and he'd score on any varsity. He's so good that we daren't let him know just how good he is."

"You'd be some twenty-odd years too

late if you tried," said Dearing. "I guess he was born with a knowledge of his own value."

"Not much! He wouldn't be wasting his time here if he knew how good he was. There'll be no keeping him, once the big universities see him. I could get him with the best to-morrow, and with the biggest inducements."

"No, you couldn't, Traynor, so you needn't try. Gary isn't that kind. He wanted to come to Bolton in the first place because he had heard a lot about it. But even if he didn't like the college, it wouldn't matter. He has made a bargain and he'll stick to it. That's his style."

"Well," said the coach, "we'll see. I tell you he's the greatest natural player I ever saw, and, if he gets half the recognition he deserves, he'll be mighty hard to keep. If we could only play him this year—I suppose there isn't a chance?"

"Not an earthly. Rules are rules at Bolton."

"Well, then we've got to keep him under our hat. He's a gold mine, anyway, even if we can't work him in public right away. He has put life into a corpse. That guy Shattuck's a comer for one. Things are looking a lot better, and next season we ought to clean up. You can make the schedule anything you like. That's the value I put on this fellow. But I'd like to know where he really learned to play football. A man can't be born with *everything*."

Gary laughed when they asked him. He was the only one who saw nothing marvelous or mysterious in his performance.

"It's funny," he said, using his favorite expression. "They said it was astonishing when I won the Bolton. Everybody did. You spend a lifetime learning to do something the best way it can be done, and then they say: 'It's queer how some people have the knack of doing things.' Old Samuelson, my boss, said that the first time I took down an engine. Just because he had never taught me, he thought I couldn't teach myself."

"But you can't have been playing football all your life!" protested Blackstock.

"It depends on what you call playing," replied Gary. "Some folks might call it work. I studied it, rigged up a tackling dummy, practiced all the angles of it—but it was play to me. And, in one way or another, I've been playing since I could walk. I was crazy over the game, just as all kids are crazy over some game. I wanted to be a great football player some day when other kids wanted to be firemen or cowboys. That's all there's to it. I guess you can make yourself most anything if you try long and hard enough."

"Not only yourself, but others," said Ransom. "You made a proper fool out of me. You're the one I was going to teach football to!"

Dearing was so elated that he hugged his sister before quite realizing the enormity of the action.

"I take it all back, sis. You were right; that day at Mercersville was the best you ever spent in your young life. You're a great scout, even if you are only a kid girl. I'll *give* you that old sweater of mine. Honest. You deserve it. I guess it isn't too much to say that you've saved Bolton like the geese saved Athens, or whatever the blooming town was."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE STIRRING OF THE CORPSE.

THE big team was only in embyro, but already it was being spoken of in the college among the knowing, as though it were the famous team of 1896. "Next year, when Gary can play." That was the slogan. "We don't care what happens this season, but just wait until next!"

Yet they did care what happened dur-

ing the present season, and it mattered a great deal, seeing that the child is the father of the man. It mattered that they actually beat those doughty foes, Stevenson Tech, six-nothing, and held Merton to a tie. Nothing like it had happened for years. People were amazed at this sudden stirring of the corpse, yet there was little that was amazing about it. Miracles have a way of looking very commonplace when properly analyzed and understood.

Gary had brought the old spirit back to Bolton; not only that, but a genius for the game that was far more than physical. He proved a greater coach than 'Pug' Traynor, and the latter was a big enough man to be the first to admit it.

"You really don't need me here," he told Dearing, with a wry smile. "That fellow knows as much as I do, and then some. What's more, he can get it over better. For one thing, they'd break their necks trying to please him."

This was true, popularity is a great lever, and already Gary was becoming the most popular man on the campus. Nor was this due simply to his football prowess. A man may have all the ability and fame in the world and yet be the most hated. He often is. Perhaps the keynote of Gary's popularity—for he certainly spent no more money than he could help, and was even regarded affectionately as something of a tightwad, a name that never earns affection anywhere—was his understanding of, and sympathy for, the under dog. He had been an under dog himself so long that he knew all about them.

Then he had a patience and toleration that was almost middle aged. Traynor was an admirable coach in many ways, and, of course, there was no thought of letting him go, but he lost his temper and called names when some struggling aspirant failed to learn quickly enough. He tried to get by invective what Gary got by encouragement. Gary never lost his temper, never ran out of patience; he was never too tired nor busy to go over the same thing time and time again.

Even giving Traynor and everybody else their due, which is considerable, it is impossible to overestimate Gary's influence on what was to be the team of the next year. Every afternoon he was among the first to appear on North Field, the last to leave. He was keeping his part of the bargain; if he could not play football that year, he could teach. And teach he did. He became the supreme sacrificial goat for the varsity, laughing at the danger of injury or being preserved in a glass case. His value as a trial horse was incalculable; if an attack got past him it was good, if a defense failed against him, it was bad. He was the test of failure or success.

Then he labored with individual members and at the end of the long day—he had stoked a line of furnaces at six in the morning—would go grimy and happy to the gym for a shower and rubdown before starting the mental work of the evening. And this work embraced more coaching, hammering higher mathematics into the handsome wooden head of Jack Ransom.

It was Gary who saw Ransom's real football strength, and suggested his being switched behind the line.

"He's a good enough tackle," he said to Traynor; "but don't you think he'd make a better half? He's got the speed and punch. We could develop a tackle easier than fill that hole."

Traynor was not the sort to reject this suggestion, and it proved a huge success, like the finding of Shattuck, who had been promoted from the scrub. These two, under intensive coaching, became the two best halves that Bolton had known for years, while they found a capable full back and had another—Cummack, the freshman—in the locker. There were other experiments, many

others; but this was by far the most important, Ransom especially promising brilliance.

Thus the miracle was wrought, and those who saw the despised Bolton beat Merton that year would not have wondered had they seen all that preceded it on North Field. It was wrought by patient, but intensive endeavor and cooperation. Somehow the spirit of Bolton had returned, and it imbued the highest and lowest. Football was once more popular, thanks to Sturges, and the college had one of the greatest players that ever lived. They believed that, from the janitor and groundkeeper to the faculty and president. Let State talk of Ad Steen, other big universities of their All-American stars, but next season they would see something.

And next year the team would be in being, a tried machine without flaws and with Martin Gary the driving force. It should be a great year. Traynor believed this, too, and worked his hardest to bring it about. If he had not the spirit of Bolton, he had one that served him just as well. He had his daily bread to earn, and he was out to make a reputation as a coach. He saw himself hailed as the discoverer or developer of Gary, another Fielding Yost. Dearing had promised to reëngage him the following year, if the present season's results justified it. After seeing Gary in action, Traynor had doubly determined that they should.

The season closed with the drawn Merton game; and Gary, in recognition of his services and the position he had attained in the college, was made a member of Alpha Delta Phi.

By this time Marie Burdet had discovered that, whether socially impossible or not, he was a person worth cultivating, not for his own sake but that of the reflected glory. Other people were taking him up, even if he did stoke furnaces, and it was her ambition to be in the forefront of every popular event.

But it was easier to "take up" Gary in theory than practice; he had little time for social diversions, less talent, and no inclination to be patronized by anybody. He did not act the clown, however, at such functions as he could not avoid; indeed, he further astonished those who said: "Wait till you see him in a Tux."

But he did not look like a waiter nor bear himself like one. He did not say, "I don't dance," but, in his blunt fashion: "I can't dance." He joined the "stag line" with dignity, but palpable boredom, and made his escape as soon as possible. But if Judith Dearing was there, he sat out most of the program.

Judy could dance, and dance well; but there were few to ask her. Joe Blackstock always did as a matter of pleasure, a few others as a matter of duty or policy. Marie's card was scribbled full, half a dozen aspirants for every number, while Judy could count herself lucky if she got six, all told. She did not mind, nor, indeed, did she care to dance with everybody. And she minded less if Gary were there. Everything has its compensations.

They talked of many things, Gary and she, but never of themselves. It was mainly of football and the team, then sober discussions about books and automobiles, politics and the law of gravity and if the moon really was inhabited.

Those, including Marie, who wondered what they could find to talk about, would have been surprised, as no doubt they themselves were. But they gradually passed this stage; and Gary, when he wished to tease her, called her "Johnny." He became an occasional informal visitor at her home, at Blackstock's and Huneker's, but nowhere else. Even these visits were very occasional, and he never went to Mike's or the Bolton Inn.

Ransom could not understand this, being essentially the close-harmony, ukulele type of undergraduate. His singing and dancing were on a par with his

undeniable good looks; he was high spirited and very likable in many ways. College, he considered, was a place for play as well as work, and he meant to get all the fun out of it he possibly could. What if the hops at Mike's were given by girls from town, waitresses and such? Weren't they as good as any one else? Couldn't a fellow have good fun with them? Everybody was entitled to a bit of fun, waitresses included. It was their only chance of mixing with the college set. "The Lord knows," he said, "that this place is a monastery enough without shutting yourself up in a cell. Come out of it, old Sobersides."

"I'm too old, for one thing," said Gary. "I'd like to kick up my heels at times and cavort about like a young ass, but that's a part of college life I can never know. We're only at that age once. Yes, I'm only two years older than you; but years don't make age. And I was never cut out for this gay life, like you."

Ransom sniffed.

"Piffle, grandpa, all piffle. Why, all the flappers would lose their hearts to you, if you'd only give 'em half a chance! Aren't you the big, strong, silent guy they see in the movies—where they have to be silent? They keep asking me all the time why I don't bring you. I'm not kidding. And they aren't the only ones, either. It's mighty decent of you to play wall flower with Dearing's kid sister, but you've paid off any obligation there long ago."

"It has nothing to do with any obligation," said Gary. "I like Miss Dearing a whole lot."

Ransom laughed.

"Oh, sure. But you could meet a real looker if you wanted to. Why, there's Marie Burdet, the queen of the bunch! Money and looks, too. You even turned down an invitation to her home, didn't you?"

"I can't play bridge, any more than I can dance. I never had the time or chance to learn."

"You could learn soon enough if you wanted to. Haven't I offered to teach you?"

"I've no time for those kind of lessons."

"You'd think you were going to drop dead of old age at any moment," said Ransom. "You're some queer duck, all right. I only wish Marie Burdet had handed me such an invitation; I've been fishing for one long enough. You know she doesn't care a hoot if you don't play cards or dance. A girl doesn't want you for that, stupid."

"Maybe I know what she wants me for better than you."

"I guess you're becoming infected with this Old Town complex," said Ransom. "You don't turn down an invitation from the Dearings or Blackstocks or Hunekers and that crowd, but you give North Bolton the air. Just because Miss Burdet's old man made his dough in sausages——"

"That's claptrap," laughed Gary. "If I prefer the Old Town to North Bolton, it has got nothing to do with Miss Burdet or anybody there. I'd be a fine one to look down on a man who made sausages, when my own father made horseshoes. If he made *good* sausages, more power to him."

"Then it's true your old man was a blacksmith? I suppose that's where you get your shoulders. Well, between you and me, my old man peddled collar buttons. But it's just fellows like you and me, who come from nothing, who fall for this aristocracy bunk. We pretend to despise it until some blue blood takes us by the hand, and then we become more snobbish than the worst of them. That's the danger I want to warn you against, while you're warning me against places like Mike's. These old families have taken you up, but don't get the idea you're one of their crowd. It's only be-

cause of what you've done for the football team, and what they expect you'll do. If you fell down on them, you'd soon see where you stand."

"Nonsense."

"No, it's not. They talk about the traditions and the spirit of Bolton and all that, but it wasn't meant for outsiders like you and me. They say all men are equal on the campus, but that's blah, too. You weren't equal the day you met Fatty Beach, and you never will be even, if you become the greatest star. You'll always be a roughneck no matter what they pretend. There will always be Dearings and Hunekers and Blackstocks and there will always be you and me."

"I don't see it that way" said Gary. "There will always be upper and lower classmen prominent and obscure; but the freshie becomes the sophomore and the obscure can become prominent if he wants to. You seem to have got the wrong slant on this equality proposition. When Lincoln said that all men were born equal he didn't mean that the prince becomes the pauper or the loafer the captain of industry. There's no automatic magic formula like that. He meant that all men had an equal chance under the law to become what they like. You may say that the man who is born rich has a far better chance than the one is born poor, but it all depends what use each makes of his chances. Anybody can stand poverty, simply because he has got to, but there are mighty few who can stand wealth.

"Equality on the campus is the same thing. We all come here with equal chances, and money or birth has got nothing to do with it. You don't come here to try and climb the social ladder; you come to fit yourself for the game of life. It depends on yourself what you get out of college, out of anything.

"And these old families, who've been identified with the college for so long, have a right to their pride; it's not pride of money or place, but of worthy endeavor and accomplishment. They are the custodians of its traditions, the inculcators of its spirit. There's nothing to stop what you call an outsider becoming a true Boltonian, just as there's nothing to stop a foreigner becoming a true American. It all depends on himself."

Ransom laughed and clapped his hands.

"Going in for the declamation contest, eh. I guess Dearing suggested the subject. Well, if you believe all that—I used to, myself, when I came here first. Talk as you like, we really don't belong, and maybe you'll see it some day. All they want of me is football, too. I'm good enough to be a frat member, and a whole lot of things, but I'm not good enough to be asked to Dearing's table. Oh yes, we're all equal. If you take my advice you'll come out of your shell and come down to Mike's and make some real friends."

"And if you take mine," said Gary good humoredly, "you'll remember what I said—enjoy yourself, have all the fun you like, but watch your step."

Thus the season passed and the Christmas holidays came, bringing with them Ad Steen, who had added to his football laurels, State winning the championship, thanks in great part to his scoring ability. He was second choice that year for All-American left half, even the first choice of a few critics.

Ransom went home to his widowed mother; but Gary, now having no home, remained in Chatterton's Block which, though outside the college precincts, was under its jurisdiction. A superintendent, an ex-army sergeant known familiarly as "Bow-wow," lived on the premises and saw that certain rules and regulations were enforced. There was plenty of freedom but no license.

Ransom had invited Gary to his home,

but warned him that he should have a very thin time of it.

"It's a hole of a place," he said, "and there's nothing to do but sit around and count the new graves in the cemetery. I've got to go, because my mother's pinching to send me through college; but you don't."

"I couldn't go, anyway" said Gary. "I want to get after that carburetor, now that I've a chance." He had brought the model with him, among his few belongings, and it had become a stock joke with Ransom who called it "Lizzie."

At this moment a gorgeous roadster came down College Street; and Gary, who was standing at the window, remarked on its beauty. "It's a Peugeot. Who owns it?"

"It beats me how you can tell every make of car at a glance," said Ransom. "There's only one person round here that I know of who owns that amount of money on wheels." He left the suit case he was packing and came to the window. "That's him," he said, with ungrammatical envy.

"Who is he?"

"Why, that's Ad Steen you've been hearing so much about. If you'd half his coin, you wouldn't be wasting your time trying to make a carburetor that'll never sell, or working your way through here. He's a fine illustration of that bunk you were talking the other day, about us all being equal. He never did a stroke of work in his life, and he never will. His old man owns Bolton Hall, and I guess pretty nearly every penny he made reeks to high heaven. But what's the odds? They'll soon be one of the old families. Nothing counts these days but money."

Gary met Steen eventually at the Dearings, where the other did not fail to show his amused astonishment at Gary's presence. If there is love at first sight, there is also hatred, though that is too strong a term to apply in this case. But certainly there was mutual dislike, if not active animosity, before the evening was over. The fault was entirely Steen's. For seemingly no reason at all, he went out of his way to be politely unpleasant, just as he had called Gary the "honest blacksmith" and decried his ability when Judith Dearing first spoke of him. Though he himself now enjoyed so much football prestige, he seemed to grudge granting the smallest amount to Gary.

He made subtly ironic comments about the rejuvenated team, the astonishingly excellent season just closed and the assistance Gary had rendered. He seemed even to resent the fact that the latter was on such friendly terms with Judy. He appeared to resent everything that Gary said or did, and succeeded in making everybody thoroughly uncomfortable.

"He's had a drink or two," explained Huneker, the optimist. "Been celebrating quitting the training table. He didn't mean anything."

But Steen's attitude did not improve throughout the holidays, and it reached something of a climax the night of the Blackstocks' New Year's dance. That he had obviously been celebrating the coming of the new year, as, on the former occasion, he had celebrated the passing of the training table, served as little excuse to his host, who took him to task about it.

"I hate to say this," added Blackstock, "but I don't propose to have a guest insulted in my house, particularly a fellow like Gary. Oh, I know you didn't say anything directly, but those remarks about people whose mothers took in washing——"

"Well, so his did, if it comes to that. She was a common vulgar washerwoman who could hardly read or write. You ask anybody in Mercersville. And everybody knows what his father was. Democracy is all right, but you've got

to draw the line somewhere. It's ridiculous that he should be received like this. You needn't get mad, Tony. I'm meaning the best. I've heard more than one tale about him, you see."

"You'd better take them somewhere else," said Dearing shortly. "This sort of talk doesn't do you any good. We know Gary, if you don't."

"Well, maybe you do. But there should be limits to offering inducements to a sandlotter. It's one thing to make him a present of a scholarship, another to give him the run of your home and to——"

"What's that?" demanded Dearing, Blackstock and Huneker in unison. "Are you suggesting that he didn't win the Bolton on his merits?"

Steen saw that he had gone too far.

"It's nothing to me whether he did or not, though there are different ways of winning things," he muttered. "Yes, and buying things, too. I guess this college isn't different from any other, and I wasn't born yesterday. I don't have to be told things that maybe you think I shouldn't be told.

"But *I'm* telling *you* things you should know. This fellow Gary doesn't belong, and maybe you'll see that some day. He's a mercenary, that's all he is. He came from nothing and he'll end there. He'd throw you down to-morrow, if he got a better price, just as he threw down the Comets. And he has a bad name about other things——"

They told him he had better go, and he lurched down to his waiting car, calling them fools for making such a friend of Gary.

"'When the drink's in, the wit's out,'" quoted Dearing, as they watched him go. "He would never have said that about the Bolton if he'd been quite sober. It shows what he really thinks. If he keeps hitting it up like this when he has broken training, he won't be a star half back long."

"No, he'll be a full back," grinned Huneker. "Of course, we knew he hadn't much love for Bolton; but what makes him so darned down on Gary?"

"Oh, it's easy enough to understand," said Blackstock. "You remember that, even as a kid, Ad used to get ratty if anybody was praised more than himself. Of course, he doesn't believe half that's been said about Gary, but all the same it has taken a lot of wind out of his sails. He's no longer the supreme football hero. It's just plain jealousy. Of course, we mustn't let Bolt know what he said about him."

Blackstock did not add that he thought it more than football jealousy. Dearing would have roared at the mere idea of his "kid" sister evoking the pangs of jealousy in anybody, but Blackstock considered it highly probable. He had the eye to see what others did not; Judy had great charm of manner, and she was giving promise of a beauty that might surpass that of the college widow herself. Steen, who had long been the first string in Marie Burdet's bow, had shown signs to Blackstock, if none other, that he was not unaware of this.

Yet there was another factor whereof even the discerning Blackstock knew nothing.

## CHAPTER IX.

### HIS BUNKIE AND LIZZIE.

TOWARD the end of the Easter holidays, and after a late football session at the frat house, Gary came into his rooms one night to find Ransom tolerably drunk. It was the first time he had seen him in such a condition, though he had reason to believe that the other was no ardent admirer of Mr. Volstead.

"Sh'all right," reassured Ransom. "Bow-wow didn't shee me. Anyway, I'm perfec'ly shober. Never more perfec' in m' lifsh. Jush been havin' a little fun."

"Mike's, I suppose?"

"You've gueshed it firsh time." Ransom nodded approvingly. "Clever duck. Won the Bolton, didn't you? Yesh, Mike's. Fine plashe. Why don't you come down? Don't matter if you're a freshie. Rules are made to be broke. Shteen wash there. Fine fellow, Shteen. I wash all wrong about him. He'sh a true Democrat. Had a big flashk of the real prewar shtuff."

Gary waited a few hours until Ransom's state of perfect sobriety had diminished, then he threw a glass of ice water in his face, yanked him into a chair, and sat down opposite him. Ransom had fought, but, powerful though he was, proved no match for the other. Gary had not lost his temper; he was good humored but inexorable.

"We're going to have a talk," he said. "This has got to stop, Jack. Not only the booze, but that waitress at Mike's. You know who I mean."

Ransom swore, became abusive. He would thank Gary to mind his own business. Flossie Bing was a lady, even if she had to work for her own living. A perfect lady, and a fine looker, too. "She's as good as any Dearing or Blackstock, even if she wasn't born in Bolton. I'm a Democrat, and this aristocracy bunk will never get me as it has you. I'm a true Democrat and I don't care who knows it."

"You're a fool, that's what you are," said Gary dispassionately. "And I'll tell you now what I didn't like to say before. If you're not invited to the homes of fellows like Dearing, it's because of the company you keep in the town."

"I'll keep any company I like! And I'll do anything I like, too!"

"No, you won't."

"Who says so? Who'll stop me?"

"*I'll* stop you," said Gary. "And, if I can't do it with words, I'll do it with fists. If you're the kind that has to be hammered to get some sense, I'll hammer you. By gravy, I will!"

After a battle of eyes, Ransom's wavered and he said sullenly:

"There's no call for this silly talk. I'm not the only fellow who takes a drink once in a while."

"You're the only fellow in the football squad that does; and if Traynor and the others knew about it, you'd learn something."

"We aren't in training now. A fellow has a right to some fun during the holidays."

"It depends what you call fun," said Gary. "It wouldn't be much fun for your mother, if she saw you this way, nor to the football team. You're being false to both of them, and, what's more, false to yourself. It doesn't matter what I or anybody thinks of you; it's what you think of yourself. And you know darned well this isn't playing the game. Your mother's pinching to give you an education, and you're throwing money you can't afford to the bootleggers. We're depending on you to help make the team worthy of the team of '96; we're straining every nerve, doing all we can, while you're rotting yourself with hooch."

"Aw, quit preaching. What's a drink once in a while? Doesn't Ad Steen, even if he is a star——"

"I'm not talking of Steen or anybody but you. You're breaking the house rules by coming here in this condition, and you're forcing me to wink at it. You say it's none of my business; but, everything else aside, you're my bunkie, Jack, and I've my duty to do by you. And I tell you now, if you don't take it one way you'll take it another. You'll cut this out or I'll hammer it out. Which'll it be? You'll hear no more preaching."

"That's a fine way for a freshie to talk to a second-year man," said Ransom, with a sudden grin. Then he got up and clapped Gary on the back. "You're a queer duck, all right, you and your idea of duty. And I bet you'd do

it, too. Well, I don't want any hammering from you, Marty. If you can lick Fatty Beach, I guess you could lick me easy enough."

"If I couldn't, I'd keep at it till I could," said Gary, looking at the other in his unwinking fashion.

"I believe you would," laughed Ransom. "I guess you'd do anything you set your mind on. It's lucky for me you haven't thought of murder."

"There's too much good in you, Jack, to be spoiled by the bad that's in us all. I care a whole lot what happens to you."

"Thanks," said Ransom. "Same here. I'll cut it out, Marty. That's a promise. I guess you didn't say anything I didn't know."

Perhaps this was the real beginning of their friendship, a friendship that deepened and strengthened with the passing days and became such an influence even on the gridiron. Ransom's casual words had covered much genuine emotion and feeling. He admired Gary intensely, not merely his athletic prowess but his character, even if he could not quite understand the latter. In his cynical experience, this "queer duck" was the only one who practiced what he preached. That fact condoned the preaching.

Gary, on his part, admired Ransom for qualities that he himself lacked, no doubt placing a falsely high value on them. He was fully aware of his faults and failings, but these in themselves had their power of attraction. He cared for Ransom as the strong cares for the weak.

Yes, they were straining every nerve to make the team worthy of the team of '96; and, following this memorable talk with Gary, Ransom worked harder in every way than he had been doing. This was made the more necessary by a sudden warning from the faculty that if he was conditioned again in his studies he would not be eligible to play on the team. Gary's own class work was brilliant in spite of the hours he put in on North Field and he even found time to redouble his efforts at grinding Ransom.

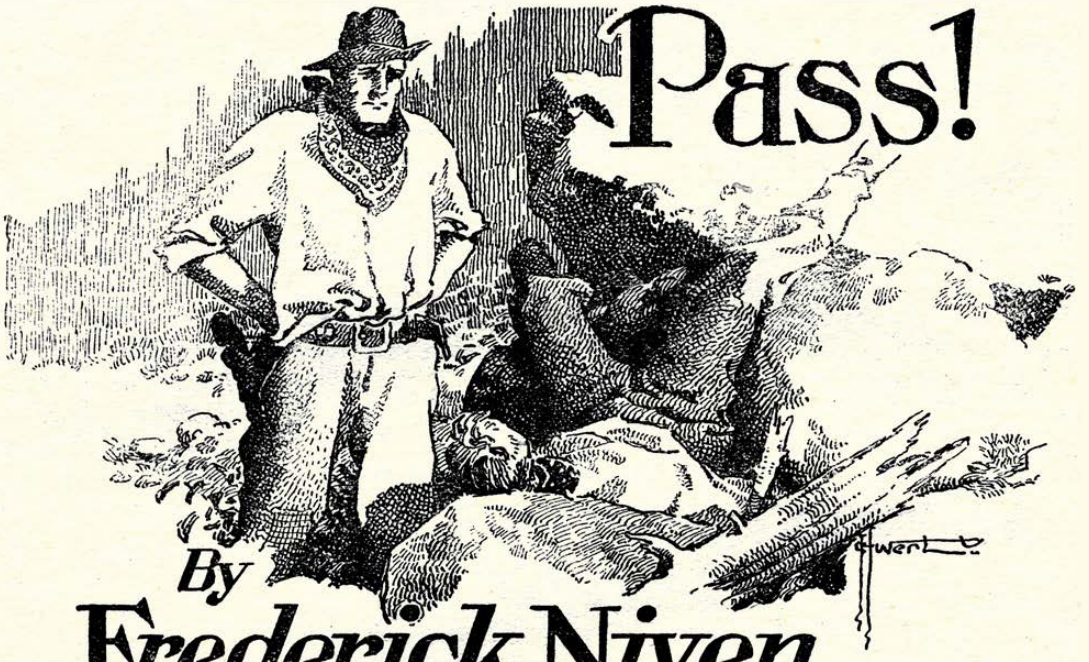
"You needn't worry about him," he told Dearing. "I'll see that he's eligible to play."

Already some report of the miracle that was being wrought at Bolton had got abroad, of the new spirit which imbued every one, of the excellence of the team that was in being, of the star work of Gary. Thanks partly to this and the past season's record, Dearing was succeeding in arranging a schedule that greatly surpassed in quality anything of the previous ten years.

All the backfield, and, indeed, the whole team, worked as one man; but between these two, Gary and Ransom, an understanding had grown up that seemed little short of uncanny. It often happens, and the team is indeed fortunate that possesses such an ideal combination. From a state of weakness, the college suddenly had a backfield that it had never known since Humph Bolton's day. Gary was the great scorer, and every cog in the machine worked with the single aim of making chances for him.

To all intents and purposes, Gary and Ransom were one cog. With the former to interfere or start a fake run, the latter's potentialities as a ground gainer became suddenly trebled. Alone, Ransom was bright, but, aided by Gary's great light, he became brilliant. These two not only thought out and developed trick plays, talked them over and analyzed them in their room of nights, but they brought off impromptu ones that could not have succeeded with any other combination. A glance or a nudge and one knew what sudden plan had leaped into the other's mind.

*To be continued in the next issue of* THE POPULAR STORIES—*October 8th.*



# Pass!

By

## Frederick Niven

*Author of "Bread Upon the Waters," "While the Going Is Good," Etc.*

**When Bill's mining partner skipped out with a clean-up, Bill swore he'd get his revenge when they met—and he did, but in a way that he hadn't dreamed of.**

IT is a cinch that if you were to take at random two men out of a crowd, and drop them down in a log shack in the midst of wilderness, you could not prophesy the sequel. It might be all right. And it might not.

Take the case of Bill Atkinson and Pete Bellairs, out at Eagle Creek. Even when the partner is selected—as Bill had selected Bellairs—instead of come upon by chance, all may not go well; for there is a great difference between seeing a man in a crowd and seeing him alone in the mountains, day in, day out.

Atkinson, placering, had felt the need of social intercourse and so invited Pete to join him. He liked his views as he heard them during chats in the rear room of Thurman's tobacco store, or in the lounge of the Kootenay Hotel. He was a great man, by his talk, this Pete Bellairs, for a square deal, doing the fair thing, being white; and Bill, being the very opposite of a cynic, never thought that perhaps the talker might not be the doer.

But the close contact out there in the wilderness around Eagle Creek revealed all. Perky and bumptious was Bellairs. And a talker. He talked on and on; talked at work on the sluice boxes; talked all evening. He talked in his sleep. He, himself, was the chief topic. And he had an exaggerated opinion of the importance of Pete Bellairs. Sometimes Atkinson was interested, sometimes felt weary, but even then had ready his, "Well, do you say so!" and, "Well, who'd have thought it!" when his head reeled from the chatter. But he kept telling himself Pete was a good fellow. For Bill's long suit was tolerance. He had evolved a secret assistance toward a quiet life. When he was greatly irritated over anything he did not resort to the old device of counting ten before re-

plying. He did not reply at all. He said to himself:

"Pass!"

The hills had taught him that spirit of detachment. It was not worth while to get agitated, or angry, or any way "het up" about things. He didn't take umbrage at, "Fancy you knowing So-and-So!"—So-and-So being some mining-world bigwig whom he had mentioned; or at, "Oh, *you* knew that, did you?"

Nevertheless, Bill was glad when Bellairs felt the need for town and went thither. And as he passed from sight on the trail, something happened to the hills and the woods for the older man. They wore again their good aspect for him. They were a refuge, a home, not a prison where he was confined with that—well, that damned runt! He got it off his chest after Pete was gone, heaved a sigh of relief at having a rest from keeping a grip on himself. The very creek, it seemed, brawled down the gulch to another tune.

"Well," he addressed the trail down which his partner had gone, "I sure drew a blank when I drew him. The damned runt, with all the talk about being a man, and being white, and being honest-to-God, and all the rest of it!"

Yes, it was good to be alone. When Bellairs was around, Bill felt very lonesome; but with Bellairs gone he did not. That's what it had come to. Feeling so, he tried to be balanced. He laughed as he shoveled, and, trying to be fair, said to himself:

"Oh, maybe I get his goat in other ways from what he gets mine. Maybe he's sick and tired of me. Maybe he's putting up with me just as good and hard as I am putting up with him. He certainly lets out often enough that he doesn't think me of much account. 'Fancy you knowing *him!*' The gall! Aw, to hell with him! But all the same, when he gets my goat, I've got to freeze on to this notion that it is no doubt fifty-fifty, and that maybe I'm getting his."

Pete returned in five days, snuffling, and with the news that in town there was an epidemic that they called "flu"—as it sometimes seems they call almost any epidemic for which the doctors have on dope except orange juice. His whole manner was that he was the valiant lad, afraid of nothing.

"They're scared stiff of it in town," he scoffed. "Dying like flies. The undertakers have an extra staff of coffin makers at work. But it doesn't fizz on me. I'm not scared of catching things."

However, he had caught it and was sore afraid. He was not able to work next day and, at Atkinson's suggestion, went to bed. Bill made an onion broth of some tried and proven recipe of his own, and gave the patient that. It was assuredly a febrifuge, and Pete sweated in the blankets, talking on as usual, telling many queer stories to which his partner paid no heed. Atkinson knew, anyhow, that fever talk is not evidence, that in delirium a man may babble much bunk, tales despicable but untrue, even about himself.

Two days after Pete got out again it was high time for a clean-up at the workings. But Pete was too weak, after his shot of the so-called flu, to do much.

And as for Atkinson—just then he saw things through a haze, the sluice boxes outside and the bunks in the cabin all oddly mixed. He wanted no supper that night. He went to bed with his clothes on, growing weary of undressing by the time he had his shoes off. He flopped on his bunk, vaguely hauled the blankets over himself, and knew little more thereafter for several days.

It seemed as though he was both in his bunk and shoveling sand into the boxes—on and on, on and on. He got distraught over vague and shifting calculations, forced on him by the fever.

He was making an onion broth for Pete, it seemed, but without onions, with gold nuggets, and they didn't make good broth. And voices were whispering, on and on. Now and then, as in a movie fade-out, he saw Bellairs loom and fade.

But at last he opened his eyes from a sleep in which he had not been totaling up impossible sums and trying to do impossible things. He saw the shack normally again, not like a mile-long tunnel with the table at the end of it, and door and window puzzlingly now on one side, now on the other. It was a normal cabin, with a normal sun-shaft coming through the window and laying an oblong of mellow radiance on the floor. The whisper of the creek was going on, like a creek, instead of like voices of conspirators.

He felt very fresh, and at the same time very weak. He waited for Pete to come in, just stretching out and resting there, instead of tossing in fever. But Pete did not come. He had made the clean-up alone, and then pulled stakes. It seemed impossible, but thus it was, as Atkinson discovered when at last he began to crawl around. The evidence was cumulative and had to be accepted. Unbelievable! And yet it was true, too true.

Pete's pack sack was gone. He had made the clean-up over at the creek and run away with it. It must have been tempting, Bill considered bitterly. Some clean-ups brought them but "wages," some, in that erratic place, ran high for days on end. Weak from his sickness Bill lurched from the flumes to the shack and back again, unable to comprehend such perfidy.

For days he was as one stunned, but, crawling at last into town for supplies, he learned that Bellairs had indeed gone in with a sack of dust to the bank and summarily disappeared from Kootenay City.

"Yes," he said, in a queer level voice, "he left me after he had the flu. Wanted a change. Foot got itching." But he thought his own thoughts.

There was no partner for him thereafter! He had known that there were crimes and evil men, but he had not imagined that there were such as Pete Bellairs. He was disappointed, very much disappointed. He had to talk about it—out loud. Not only to himself, but to the conjured up image of Bellairs he talked after he got back to Eagle Creek. Any chance passer-by—though such came but seldom—might have heard his voice:

"Aha! My partner, Bellairs! So we meet again! Say, listen. Listen hard. I want to tell you something. I want to tell you what I think of you."

And then the telling.

Or sometimes it would go like this:

"Well, well, Pete Bellairs! 'Windy' Bellairs! The white man, the man who couldn't run a skin game! Well, I left it to chance. I wasn't going to hunt you, for you weren't worth it, but I said to myself: 'If ever I do meet him again I'll have a word with him.' Now, you! Prepare to meet thy God. Take that! And that!"

And he would let drive at empty air with his fists, dashing across the cabin to pursue, with knock-out blows, a retreating phantom. He who was wont to whistle much at chores by the door—peeling potatoes, slicing onions, mixing batter for the flapjacks—never whistled at all. No easiness of heart found outlet so any longer. He had become morose, prone to mutterings in place of whistled airs.

And eventually he left Eagle Creek. The main cause was his own realization of the fact that, if he continued to brood over the desertion by Bellairs, he would go mad. Out at the cabin on Eagle Creek he did so brood. It rankled too badly. He had altered the position of the table in the cabin to make the place

look different from what it had been in his partner's time. Not being able to exorcise memories of the man by that change, he had removed Pete's bunk and used it for firewood. He would never have another partner, so one bunk would serve. If some stray traveler, off the track in the hills, ever dropped in on him he could give the guest his bunk and make a shake-down for himself on the table—or the floor, for that matter. It was one thing to discuss with himself the traitorous Pete, but entirely another when, at the end of such speeches, he smacked empty air with the flat of his hand and cried out: "Aw, you worm!" That was going too far.

"I guess I got to have a change of scene," he told himself finally.

Pack sack on back he hit the trail for the road to town. There he sat a while, looking out at the snow, in the hotel rotunda, twisting his thumbs; and then one day was seen no more in Kootenay City, or in the Kootenay country.

A new "excitement" in Cassair lured Bill thither. Cariboo Ford was in the building, the carpenters' hammers making a din all day. The Commercial Bank had just established a branch there. There were a town hall, a fire hall, a hospital, all in the course of construction, the hammers going all day. But men of Atkinson's type did not stop long to listen to the hammers. They arrived, took out miners' licenses, and trudged away into the big silence, with the wonted impedimenta on backs, accustomed to packing such loads.

Over the first hog-back, Cariboo Ford might have been a thousand miles away. But every here and there in the silence of these forests and the roar of these creeks, was a trickle of smoke at morning and at night—some lone prospector cooking his meals. They washed for color. They picked for floats. They followed their gleam by tributary creeks and wandered in the high country, searching for mother-lodes.

There Bill forgot his partner of Eagle Creek. He was not a haunted man any longer. The mountains here looked good to him. The old spell of the search for precious mineral was on him and the old joy of being in the wild, joy of the life as well as the quest, taking care of himself there, coping with it.

The snow, in the high places, was not yet gone, despite all the thrushes piping their one clear note in the valleys, and the squirrels chattering in the woods. A creek that had given him colorful floats led him above timber to these primordial places. At night they were quiet, in frost and starlight, but by day, under the blaze of the sun, there reverberated ever and again the crash of rock slides loosened by the melting snows.

The great silence would be broken by a din like the upsetting of many loads of steel rails; and Bill would raise his eyes from the place where he was picking and turning over the rocks, or swirling sand in his pan, and would watch the slide go down on its awful turmoil, boulders changing direction at every impact, now rolling straight, anon leaping sidewise, next rolling straight again, and then off at a tangent. Then the last crash of the big rocks in the forests below, the splintering of trees, and a dropping fire of little smashes above, as the smaller stones slid into new formation on the slopes.

One day, after such a slide and uproar, he stared and broke out: "What the——" On the edge of the slide that he had been watching something dark rolled and came to rest.

A bear, he decided, recently out from its hibernation, had been knocked over by one of the deflected rocks as it rooted in a cleared swath. But, puckering his eyes at the thing, he was doubtful; and the shape of the sprawled object eventually drew him to the place. He had to

find out what it was. As he came nearer, and saw what it truly was, he quickened his pace. A man lay there in a contorted position. Had he been in the full slide he would have been mangled pulp; but he had been on the edge of it. He lay, now, in grass, wet grass, drenched by the melting of the upper snow.

As Bill drew nearer he heard a moan and the man moved. At once Atkinson was utterly matter of fact, as one of his breed naturally is at such a time. It was a moment not for sentiment, but for cold, keen consideration of what was to be done. He clambered on, upward, toward the prone man, who groaned again and struggled up on an elbow, a hurt creature caught by the implacable wilderness, in the same sort of fix as an ant wounded by the edge of a passing hoof, in the same sort of fix as a trapped lynx. He tried to rise, but fell.

Atkinson focused his gaze on that writhing body.

"Spine all right," he commented to himself. "He can twist around."

With that he was at the man's side.

"Hullo, partner!" said he. "You're up against it, eh?"

Balanced on a spread palm the man, at that voice, looked up. And, standing over him, Bill Atkinson looked down. So. They had met.

"If ever I meet you," he had said to himself. "I ain't going to hunt you, because you're not worth it. But if ever I come across you—— Take that! Take *that!*"

The moment, then, had arrived. It all swam vividly into Bill's mind, the cabin on Eagle Creek away down in Kootenay —the treachery. He drew back a foot to plant a kick on that face, and then—then the pathos of it took hold on him. The man was hurt, caught by the remorseless wilderness—the wilderness which could also be kind, but didn't care one way or the other.

He stifled his old rage and bent over Bellairs.

"Well, let's see where you are hurt. Can you move the arm that's been behind you? Bring it round. You can! Oh, I see—it's dislocated. Well, I guess I can fix that. How's the legs?"

Bellairs drew one up.

"Can you press down on that foot?" asked Bill. "Yep. How about the other? H'm, broken. Well, I'll see what I can do. But I got to get you down to my camp first. Some more rocks may come settling down here. Now, wait till I get a holt to lift you on my back."

Bellairs was again unconscious when Atkinson got him to his camp at timber edge and, under his lean-to of cedar shakes—snug as a shingle roof—laid him on the deep mattress of boughs. There he came round again. The arm, Bill found, was out of socket at the elbow.

"This'll hurt," said he, and, holding Pete's elbow in his left hand, with the right he gave the forearm one expert tug and a slight turn. The elbow clicked. The arm was straight; but Bellairs flopped face forward in a dead faint.

Bill flicked a pan of water behind his ears, brought him round, and made a sling for the arm.

"Just you keep that way a spell," said he. "And now I got to see this here leg."

The leg, to his cold annoyance, presented a surgical problem beyond his skill. It seemed that there were some small ankle bones broken, probably by the first blow, from the rock that had knocked him down. In trying to rise he had possibly fallen again, and so sustained a compound fracture. Certainly the leg was broken above, also.

"I'll do the best I can," said Atkinson, "but you don't want to be crippled and have a dud leg for the rest of your

life. I'll do what I can, and then I got to get you to Cariboo Ford."

He thought that Pete had already recognized him, but it seemed that the man must have been half-stunned till then and had not, actually, done so. It was after his rescuer had cooked a meal and propped him up, handing him a mug of tea, that recognition came. Bellairs moaned, took a reviving swallow, drew a long quaking breath. Then he looked at Bill, and there was a sudden dropping of his jaw, a gaze of horror. He had seen something entirely unlooked for.

"What you look at me like that for?" snapped Atkinson. "I know you. I know who you are. Did you think I didn't?"

A moment later he added:

"I ought not to have said that. All right. Now see here. All I ask of you is that you keep your mouth shut. Don't you talk to me. Don't you say a thing. I'll get you down. But honestly, if you talk to me I'll—I'll knock your head off!"

The rage he had doused out flamed again. He bit through the mouthpiece of his pipe, and raised a fist to smash it in that face before him. On his forehead veins stood up like cords. Then, in his attempt at control, he shook in all his frame.

"Aw, I shouldn't have said that," he said finally. "You're up against it. Forget it! I'll see you through."

He carried the injured man on his back down through the forests, down among the pines, down through the great silent, dusky cedar woods, where the cariboo moss hangs from the branches like plummet lines, accentuating their utter hush. There was many a halt on the way, but not for long. Atkinson had staying power.

At Cariboo Creek he left Bellairs, with a blanket over him, to follow the sign of a recent passage of horse hoofs into a lateral gulch. He knew there was a prospect there, on which a crew of six worked, and that they kept a couple of pack horses for getting their supplies out. He made his plea. There had been an accident to a prospector, and could he have the loan of a horse? Why, sure! Want any help? Want one of the boys along? No, he could make out himself, he guessed.

It was on the way back out of the draw that another spasm seized him. Bellairs was not there before him to touch his sense of pity by his helplessness. He remembered the Eagle Creek treachery and his promise to himself if ever he encountered Bellairs to *fix him.* He'd do it yet. He was a fool to go to all this trouble for a man like that, who hadn't the sense of pity in him. He'd fix him. Nobody would know.

And then across a broadening of Cariboo Creek, that some called Cariboo Lake, a loon called. The reason for it was beyond Atkinson to analyze, but always, at the call of a loon, some note in its voice, he was filled with a sense of the bigness of the wilds, the easy ways of the slow seasons, the utter folly of feuds and angers and rancors. Why, he might be dead himself, to-morrow. Life was short. The wilderness was very old. *Pass,* so to speak.

So Bill brought Bellairs to Cariboo Ford, trudging ahead of the pony on which the injured man sat, a washed-out look in his blue eyes. There was no speech. They had no desire to speak.

His task accomplished, the patient left at the new hospital of that new city of Cariboo Ford, Bill passed again to the trail, to take the borrowed horse back and return to his search in the high country.

And suddenly, as he rode, he broke forth in gay whistling. Somehow the memory of Pete's treachery rankled no more. It didn't matter. It didn't amount to a row of red apples. "Pass!" he whispered to himself.

By Aimée D. Linton

# The Windigo DRUM

*By the author of "The Timber Butchers," "The Wolf Dog," Etc.*

**Chief Gitchee Mah-nin thought to use his college education to lift his people out of the ruck. He had hard going, but got encouragement from the Indian agent's daughter.**

THE more he considered the matter, the more convinced he was that there was but one straightforward thing to do—before he did other things. And young Chief Gitchee Mah-nin proceeded to do it. He went to William Edgecombe, Indian agent for the Sioux reserve at Beaver Lake—and got just about what he had expected in the line of lethargic indifference, if not of actual abuse. But, on the other hand, he got infinitely more out of that visit than his young and fervent heart had ever dreamed of. Which is life's usual balance.

Chief Gitchee Mah-nin (Great Ironwood), by his people also called Kehkah-tah Wehn-doh (Man Who Knows Much), was an evolution of Indian and Scotch ancestry. The blood of the Sioux, those proud, lone fighters of the prairies, as yet fairly untainted by the vices which civilized centers exude, had united with the blood of the conquering Bruces who had made Scotch history, and the Scotch of the indomitable Carlyles who had made Scotch literature, to produce a leader which no race seems to give to posterity oftener than every hundred years or so.

In the University of Saskatoon, where his education had been paid for by a Scotch great-uncle, Bruce Warnock, as he was known there, had distinguished himself as a brilliant debater, an orator of impassioned fervor and scintillating

eloquence. When he had refused a position with a future in journalism on the *Prairie Beacon*, and had accepted instead the Chieftainship of Beaver Lake Reserve, his white friends had marveled. "Genius gone to the prairie dogs!" they called it. But Bruce Warnock, Chief Gitchee Mah-nin, had his own ideas about that. He had dreams of which he didn't speak to his white friends. And as chief of even a little reserve he considered those dreams could better be realized than as a writer.

From the portals of possibility dreams of a great Indian federation beckoned to him alluringly. Through the murk of tremendous obstacles and difficulties, his faith in his race's future glimmered bright. The shocking depletion of his race's population through the ravages of the diseases and vices of civilization, the apparent apathy into which they had sunk because of the whirlwind changes which for a century had rushed past their eyes, were among the problems with which he grappled.

The older Indians were still bewildered over those cyclonic changes. It was upon the younger men, then, that the young chief built his hopes. For they had accepted those changes and were adapting themselves to the different environment. Incapable of competing with the astute, energetic and often unscrupulous white trapper, even that occupation was now gone. Remained but one means of livelihood: the land could be made to yield.

When Chief Gitchee Mah-nin knocked on the door of the Edgecombe cabin, it was opened by a girl. And such a girl! Almost the young Indian blinked his eyes. For it was just as if the sun had suddenly flashed out from behind a dark cloud. But for the dark shadows under her eyes, which proclaimed her of Indian origin, Nancy Edgecombe would have passed for a Castilian beauty.

"Is Mr. Edgecombe in?" the chief asked, raising his hat.

"Yes; father is in. Will you come in?"

The young Indian stepped inside. Edgecombe was reading—which was about all he ever did, besides fishing, his favorite sport.

"Oh—yes—uh—chief," Edgecombe grunted in greeting, dragging his eyes from his book.

"Won't you be seated?" Nancy invited, placing a chair opposite her father. With a murmured, "Thank you," the young chief dropped into the chair.

Somehow the interview was not starting off with the easy swing, the composure, to which he was accustomed. A strange shyness had gripped him. He had not counted upon seeing the agent's daughter; he was under the impression that she would have returned to school. Edgecombe's wife, a full-blooded Assiniboine squaw, he had met before. She sat beside the stove, some mending in her lap. Her face was tired, sad, and bore few traces of the beauty she was said to have possessed over twenty years before.

To tell Edgecombe of the lawlessness of his son, Artie Edgecombe, and his associate, Joe Chauvin, the half-breed, would not be easy in the presence of the agent's wife and daughter. Artie Edgecombe was a bad lot, but the young chief had no desire that the boy's mother and sister should hear of it from him.

"I came to speak to you, Mr. Edgecombe, concerning affairs at the reserve," the chief began. His English, of course, was perfect.

Edgecombe closed his book reluctantly and leveled his pale-blue eyes on the young chief in grudging invitation to proceed.

Chief Gitchee Mah-nin felt his shyness increase. And he knew that with

shyness his language became stilted, didactic. But he plunged into his subject.

"In the two years in which I have been the chief of this reserve, Mr. Edgecombe, I have tried to work for what I thought was the betterment of my people. Up to a few weeks ago the results were not discouraging. As an aid to health, they have consented to living in their tepees in summer. They are beginning to till their land, and we have added considerably to our acreage by buying or homesteading land adjacent to the reserve. In time we shall be hauling our surplus wheat to Three Pines Station, and perhaps in time the railway may come to meet us."

The agent looked frankly bored. His face expressed an utter lack of interest in the future as it affected any and all Indians.

"But now," the young Indian went on, disregarding the expression on Edgecombe's face, "I see all my plans and the work so far accomplished doomed to failure, unless——"

He paused and glanced at the two women. The girl sat embroidering a cushion top in wild roses. Wild roses! That was what she reminded him of. The delicate coloring, the faint, far fragrance of roses on the prairies. On her mobile face was a thoughtful look. The mother's face, however, expressed no more than a drab interest in her homely task.

"Unless I can secure your help and influence in—in eliminating something which is destroying my work," the chief finished.

"And what is that?" Edgecombe asked briefly, uncompromisingly. The mere suggestion of effort to the agent was, the Indian knew, extremely distasteful. In point of general laziness and worthlessness Edgecombe could compete with the laziest, most effortless Indian on the reserve.

The young Indian looked down at his small, well-booted feet, then resolutely in Edgecombe's face.

"I have every reason to believe," he said, measuring his words, "that liquor is being sold to my people."

Edgecombe scraped his chair. "How'je know? Uh—yuh'd have to have some proof for your statement, chief, you know."

"I have—several," the Indian returned quietly. "One is that the other night one of our Indians came home drunk, beat his wife and drove his children out of the tepee. That sort of conduct is rare among Indians, you know, Mr. Edgecombe."

The agent gestured widely. "Tut, tut! Quite common among Injuns, chief."

The eyes of the young Indian narrowed slightly; the lines of his mouth set a little. But his voice was soft and musical as he answered the other.

"Mr. Edgecombe, you know that that sort of thing isn't common among Indians, except where they have come into contact with the white man. Drunkenness is a gift of that malady we call civilization."

Edgecombe's brows met in a scowl; he gestured violent dissent.

"Perfect rot you talk, chief! Where'd we all be, I'd like to know, if it wasn't for civilization?"

"I can tell you where the Indian would be, Mr. Edgecombe. He'd be all over this continent, unrestrained, owning all the land he once did, hunting the game he killed for his food only as he needed it; instead of being pushed back from East to West and confined to a few acres of land, with no game left for his food!"

Nancy Edgecombe had leaned forward as the young chief talked. Her eyes were bent on him fixedly, her lips slightly parted. The squaw-mother, her work fallen into her lap, sat with downcast eyes. Her manner suggested an

interest purely impersonal, almost apathetic.

Edgecombe stared at the young Indian for a few seconds in speechless amazement.

"Well, I'm damned!" he swore finally. "Of all the impudence!" He paused again, as if incapable of expressing forcibly enough his convictions as to such absurdities. Then, with a snort like the blast of the ram's horn before the gates of Jericho: "Who *should* all this continent belong to, I'd like to know? To a set of worthless Injuns that wouldn't develop the country? The white man owns this entire continent"—he leaned forward impressively—"because he's got brains! That's why!" And he sat back again.

"By sheer weight of mass and gun power the alien white man owns this continent, Mr. Edgecombe," the Indian came back coolly. "He has crowded against my race, dominated it and reduced it to a few thousands. In every way we have lost by contact with the white man."

The young Indian's voice was coldly intense; he was making a supreme effort to keep a rein on his temper.

Edgecombe broke into a cackle of insensate laughter, more expressive of rage than mere words could be.

"Mass and gun power! He-he! You talk like a speech from the throne, by gad! Is that all they taught you at the white man's college?" The agent nervously jerked at his whiskers, then fumbled in his coat pocket for his pipe. He drew it forth, clamped his teeth upon it, then looked around helplessly for his tobacco.

"Nancy," he rasped irritably, "where'd you hide my tobacco?"

There was the barest flicker of a smile on Nancy Edgecombe's red lips as she rose, found the plug of tobacco on the window sill and handed it to her father. As she turned to take her seat again, her dark eyes met and locked with the dark, serious eyes of the young chief. For an imponderable moment, as deep answers deep, his eyes flashed back indefinable feelings to hers.

Edgecombe cut a fill for his pipe, lighted it and began to smoke furiously. The chief's eyes came to rest again on the irate Englishman and regarded him gravely.

"I'm a beautiful bungler!" the young Indian mentally scolded himself. "Too much debating at college! I rise to an argument like a bass to a frog! I've got him in a lovely fever! Perhaps if I apply a little more mustard, it may help—even if it does blister! What a man for an Indian agent!" He waited for Edgecombe to resume the offensive.

"If you think at all, you know as well as I do that the white man has done a lot for the Injun," Edgecombe began again impressively, with less edge to his voice. Evidently he felt better now that he had something to bite on. "A whole lot," he repeated. "Take our religion, now, for example——"

"Your churches, you mean?" The Indian smiled his shadowy smile.

"Yes, our churches—our religion—our religious institutions," the agent explained jerkily, with the air of one who must be patient with a stupid pupil, "the religion of the one true God," he enunciated didactically. "Why, look here: to have Christianized even one heathen race is a whole lot, you know! And I consider we've done that for the Injuns." He puffed vigorously on his pipe as if he had made an irrefutable statement.

There came a tint of flame into the young chief's eyes, but his smile was still misty as he answered.

"Then you consider us a heathen race, Mr. Edgecombe? To be sure, our religion is very much like the Greek folklore and much older than the Aryan Christianity—if age has anything to do

with paganism. But we make no presumptuous claim that our religion is the true one. But I wonder, now, if your religion is any finer than ours?" He smiled as if considering the premise. "Our Gitchee Manito is really, I suppose, our concept of nature—his voice is the voice of all living creatures, his smile is the sunshine, his breath the wind, his benediction the rain we need. I confess, Mr. Edgecombe, that your white man's conception of God rather puzzles me at times. Somehow He seems to me to have been created in your own image. He threatens with hell and encourages with heaven. You put collection in your church plate as a sort of rental for your mansion in the skies. Our priests are, I expect, rather far behind the times, for they scorn any reference to a fee, and they aren't sophisticated enough to have a place of torment."

Nancy's brown eyes twinkled. She smiled approvingly at the young Indian. "I rather fancy her sympathies are more red than white," he thought.

Edgecombe started violently, shot his daughter a glare and scowled threateningly at the chief.

"You dare to revile Christianity!" he roared. "For very little I'd report you to my government! You've too much liberty with your tongue! The Church is our very finest institution—not something to be scoffed at by an Indian! If you'd said all this two or three hundred years ago, they'd have given you——"

" 'The thumbscrew and the stake for the glory of the Lord!' " Gitchee Mahnin quoted softly.

Nancy Edgecombe looked at the Indian with sparkling eyes and lips parted in laughter. His white teeth flashed her an answering smile. The pale blue eyes of Edgecombe glared at him.

"You've got too damned much education for an Injun!" the agent broke out, his voice thick with rage. "And if it hadn't been for that one-quarter Scotch in you, you couldn't have learned anything! It seems to me that when you had the good luck to get an education, the least you might do is to give the Church credit for the schools it has established for your race. But, of course, you couldn't expect gratitude from an Indian!" There was a calculated insult in the agent's words.

The Indian smiled, but his lips were a trifle merciless.

"As to the Scotch in me, Mr. Edgecombe, I confess I am rather proud of it. It is that of the great Bruce himself. To your reminder that we owe to the Church our schools, I may say that I should be grateful if I didn't think that the churches, by their petty denominational jealousies have really hindered education among my people. Their chief efforts seem to be directed toward securing a greater number of converts than their rivals. And your astonishing variety of creeds has worked confusion in the minds of my people. We have the Roman Catholic law, the Protestant law, the civil law and the Indian law—and none of them are adapted to the particular needs of my people. I think we'd do much better to return to Indian cults and ceremonies." The chief rose, hat in hand.

"But we have got away from the object of my visit to-night. We have discussed everything from liquor to laws." He smiled disarmingly. "And I may say that it has been a real pleasure to me to talk with a cultured, educated gentleman."

Edgecombe looked slightly mollified; the glare left his eyes.

The chief continued:

"What I really came about was to ask your help in cleaning up that dive of Joe Chauvin's, for the sake of my people—and of your son."

The agent started violently. "What —what's that? My son? Artie?

What have you got to say against Artie?"

"Nothing, Mr. Edgecombe. But your boy is at an age when a place like Joe's is a terrible menace to him. Artie has time on his hands"—he could have put it stronger—"he's a gay, likable chap and the young Indians of the reserve, who should learn how to work instead of loafing, are very likely to pattern after a young fellow they like. You are not aware, I suppose, that Artie is at Joe's a great deal?" The chief looked searchingly at Artie's father.

"No; I'm not aware of any such thing!" Edgecombe snapped. "The boy's almost of age now, and I don't see that he has to give an account of his doings to any one!"

The chief's quick eye saw a delicate tinge of color rise from Nancy's throat and mount to her cheeks.

"But surely, father," she began, "if Artie is——"

"Artie's all right!" her father snapped her off. "I'll listen to no tales against him from any one! Artie is an Edgecombe and will always be a gentleman, don't forget that! It's in his blood to be a gentleman!" He waggled his head in heavy emphasis.

"Very well, Mr. Edgecombe—if that's how you feel about it," the chief said a trifle wearily. "I see then that I need expect no help from you? But remember: if anything happens to your son, you'll have only yourself to blame for it." He moved to the door.

"Come again, Chief Gitchee Mah-nin—if you have enjoyed the evening," Nancy said, her manner quite casual. But her eyes twinkled. Her father frowned.

"Thank you—I may. Good night," and the young chief left the cabin.

"'From frantic boast and foolish word Thy Mercy on Thy people, Lord!'" he murmured as he turned toward his own tepee. "No wonder Artie is so worthless! He's never had to work, and he boasts that between him and a title there's only a childish old uncle with oodles of money. So he won't work, but hangs around Joe's, puffing at bad cigars to help him express the manhood being born in him! He's terribly like his father. Looks like him, too. Now, the daughter——"

The serious eyes of the young chief became dreamily reminiscent. His firm mouth relaxed, his swinging stride slowed down to an aimless saunter; he walked as if under a spell. Chief Gitchee Mah-nin, Great Ironwood, Kehkah-tah Wehn-doh, Man Who Knows Much, had met up with magic—the magic whose name is Woman.

At the end of half an hour's rehearsal of the evening's events, during which time he had recalled every flash of Nancy Edgecombe's dark eyes, each curve of her red lips, the half-amused lift of her well-formed eyebrows, the music of her voice, he shook himself impatiently.

"Dreaming again! She may be half Indian and the daughter of a worthless Indian agent, but she's out of my reach! Strange! But it's always the fruit out of our reach we desire to pluck. As things appear to be shaping, it might have been better if I had accepted that job on the *Prairie Beacon*. I should likely have accomplished more for my race there than as chief of this remote reserve, with its problems of regeneration. My dreams have winged too near the sun!"

Chief Gitchee Mah-nin now found himself in the somewhat paradoxical position of being both very happy and rather miserable. For he was surfboarding high on the crests of happiness and floundering in the troughs of despond, by turns. From his frequent secret meetings with Nancy Edgecombe he would return feeling anæsthetized, only to face the hard actualities of the problems of the reserve.

That raid on the cabin of the breed, Joe Chauvin, had terminated very badly. In fact, it couldn't have been much worse. The crop of troubles which had sprung up as a result of that raid had thrown back a hundred years the fulfillment of his dreams, the chief considered. And instead of diminishing, the troubles seemed to be accumulating.

With the constable of the reserve, he had raided Chauvin's cabin, and had found Artie Edgecombe, with four or five young Indians, drinking bad whisky. In the surprise and uproar which had followed their entrance, the constable had been struck on the head from behind with a bottle. The chief, each strong hand gripping an Indian, had heard some one yell: "Run! You've killed him!" And one young Indian and Artie Edgecombe had run.

Next day the fugitive Indian had been caught and was now in Edmonton jail. The same day Artie Edgecombe's canoe had been found on the lake half full of water. From that discovery there was but one conclusion to which to come: in the wild storm of the night, attempting to escape across the lake, Artie Edgecombe had been drowned.

When questioned privately by the chief, Artie's squaw-mother had confessed that Artie had first run home, had told them he had killed the constable, and had taken food and blankets in his canoe, planning to get to Three Pines railway station, some miles east of the lake.

"I tell his father that night you talk to us that Artie is in bad company," the squaw told the chief with a dry sob, trying, with Indian stoicism, to conceal her grief. "But always he say to me that Artie is an Edgecombe. And Nancy, she tell him, too, that you speak the good truth. But he swear at us and say we better mind our own business, no Injun talk to him 'bout an Edgecombe. Always he talk like that."

"Father doesn't mean half he says," Nancy spoke up in palliation. "It's just his way, and he was fond of Artie. If only he had cared more about him in the right way!" Nancy's dark eyes were full of unshed tears.

But her mother shook her head. Her Indian passivity and reserve had crumbled somewhat under her son's disgrace and tragic death.

For days the young chief and the Indians of the reserve had dragged the lake for the boy's body. But the swift current of Big River, of which Lake Ah-mik was but an extension, had no doubt carried it downstream, and not until the warmer waters of the following summer could they hope to get it.

In the meantime William Edgecombe went about dry-eyed, stony-faced, breaking out occasionally into wild torrents of abuse of Indians in general, and in particular of the Indians of Lake Ah-mik Reserve.

"Artie was an Edgecombe," the young chief overheard the agent say to the missionary who came to offer comfort. "What harm was there in the boy sowing his wild oats! Sooner or later he'd have pulled himself together—the Edgecombes always do. I see now, when it's too late, that I should never have brought him up among these Indians!"

"Yes, yes—a fine young fellow. I am sure," Mr. Wodehouse soothed. "Great pity his associates hadn't been young men of his own class."

The listening chief had smiled grimly and had murmured, inwardly: "I think so, too, Reverend White Sir—for the sake of the Indians!"

Gitchee Mah-nin saw his dreams, his plans for his people dissipated like snow under a Chinook. He forgot that eggs have to be broken to make an omelette. The peace of the reserve was broken up; the attention of the R. C. M. P. was focused on the once inconspicuous

and law-abiding Lake Ah-mik Reserve. And the Indian agent for the reserve, holding his position under the ægis of a vicious system of political patronage, was a mountain that could not be removed. His former indifference had now turned to open hostility.

But, in the opinion of the chief of the reserve, there was, if possible, a result vastly worse than all these. In the past few weeks the reserve had been rocked to its depths by the revival of old superstitions and fears so deadly to all the work he wished to do.

For Nay-budgh Min-is, the Island of the Dead, midway of Lake Ah-mik and for half a century the burial ground of the reserve, had lately become the haunt of a *windigo*. An old Indian who had fished in the early morning near the island, had brought back to the reserve a fearsome story of some things he had seen and heard that morning. From the dense foliage of the island had come sounds of the blows of a huge ax and strange, hollow sounds which only a giant could make. Unmistakably it was the *windigo's* drum.

The old men of the reserve told of having last heard of the *windigo* far to the North, in the Barren Lands. In one night, with his mile-long stride, he had come down to the Island of the Dead for better hunting grounds, and had taken up his abode in that place of awe. And now, though no man ever went to the island for any purpose but that of burying his dead, it was plain that no one could go there now even for that purpose. So the cannibal-giant, for lack of human victims, would soon become hungry and would leap across to the mainland for his food.

In vain their young chief argued, reasoned, even threatened. The old men, their sunken eyes still wearing a bewildered look over the cinematographic procession of changes, stubbornly shook their heads.

"This is Indian medicine," they told their chief. "You have been much among white men and understand their medicine better than you understand Indian medicine. Sounds are made by substance; there is a *windigo* on Nay-budgh Min-is."

And that settled it. The younger men, though they had progressed materially beyond the old men, felt that in matters spiritual it was well to listen to their elders. So to their young chief, the man who knew much, they gave rather apathetic attention.

"To the devil with their old *windigo* and his drum!" their young chief swore fervently in his desperation. "What next, I wonder!"

So, since the current of reform and progress had suffered a setback, Gitchee Mah-nin decided to follow to its source another current which, from the dawn of life itself, had flowed sweet and strong from the great fountain head of love. Had not the wise men followed the star? And in all the spangled firmament of stars none was as bright, as lovely as Nancy Edgecombe.

Their wooing was as warm, as colorful and glowing as the Indian summer itself. As nature moves in no formal lines, these children of nature decided upon an informal course of action. If the consent of Nancy's father to their marriage could not be obtained—and not until the heavens should be rolled back as a scroll was he likely to give it—they would marry without his consent. The Indian agent of a neighboring reserve, who was a friend of Gitchee Mah-nin's, would perform the ceremony. Not only did Edgecombe now cordially hate the young chief, but he had become harsh to both Nancy and her mother. But before they took that final step, Gitchee Mah-nin would go to her father and ask his consent. That was the honorable, and the Indian way to act.

Accordingly, Chief Gitchee Mah-nin, looking very trim and modern in a suit of soft gray tweed, but with his heart filled with the lover's ancient fear of a prospective father-in-law, went again to call on Edgecombe. He found him down on the lake shore, calking his old punt. The agent looked up sourly as the good-looking young Indian stood before him.

Any one but Edgecombe would have been impressed with several things as he looked at the young chief. His face showed disbelief in many things, toleration of most things, and a nervous tonicity of character well leashed. His body, slight and wiry, suggested untold stores of vitality.

The chief came to the point at once. And when he had ceased speaking, there was, for several seconds, an appalling calm.

It was broken by a verbal tornado which seemed to whirl and eddy about the beach. The young chief had not thought there could be so much unused fuel in William Edgecombe.

"You damned black baboon!" The agent's voice was a bellow of rage. "You infernal, impudent red skin! Ask me for my daughter—a white man's daughter!"

For a moment his mouth worked in soundless anger; his whiskers twitched like a cat's. The young chief made no reply, but smiled his misty smile.

"Who do you think you are, you dirty gopher? An old family like mine!" Then in quieter, but more densely hostile voice: "You wouldn't understand me, of course, if I told you I come of a titled family with large estates—a title given by His Gracious Majesty, King George the Third of England——"

"And my family," the young Indian cut in, his voice soft, illusive, "was an old family when yours began! We owned all this country"—he waved a slender brown hand in a gesture to include the whole continent—"and got our title from no other than from Gitchee Manito." His perfect teeth flashed a smile into the agent's magenta face.

Edgecombe essayed an answer which ended in an incoherent mumble. He waved his arms in a semaphoric sweep and yelled:

"Get out of here before I send a bullet through your red hide!"

The Indian met the other's congested glance squarely.

"I'm sorry you are not reasonable in this matter, Mr. Edgecombe," he said evenly. "I realize now that I should not have asked your consent to marrying Nancy. It is not the white man's way. Good morning, Mr. Edgecombe."

But as he retraced his steps to his tepee, the smile left his face; his jaw set a trifle.

"No; it is not the white man's way! The white man takes what he wants in any way he can get it. For my present purpose his way is a good way!" And he smiled.

In the lilac glow of a mid-September evening a canoe glided through the still, shadowy waters of Lake Ah-mik and landed under the dusky pines below the Edgecombe cabin. Out on the lake a mile to the north, the agent sat in his punt, fishing—which was what he did every evening in good weather. Fishing was one of the set habits of his set and inelastic life. Up in the cabin a tired, sad-faced squaw watched anxiously from the window.

Nancy Edgecombe, her lips and cheeks scarlet as the autumn maples, her eyes bright as the star of love itself, stood in the pines' shadows waiting for Chief Gitchee Mah-nin.

No words passed between the two. Lips need not move when eyes can so eloquently speak. The young Indian leaped lightly to the shore, with one

hand took her suit case, with the other helped her into the canoe. As he shoved off, he waved a hand to the squaw at the window.

There was not enough air to stir a cobweb. But overhead, where temperatures adjust themselves, the young Indian noted a hurried movement among the low-lying, lilac-gray clouds. In the northwest a smoky nimbus rolled headlong, curtaining the light of departing day.

They both paddled. Their canoe darted like a swallow over the shadowy waters. Half a mile out the air began to stir; little gusts of wind broke up the lake's mauve surface. The weather-wise eyes of the Indian read the signs of a wind storm sweeping down from the northwest. Half a mile from the Island of the Dead the wind had become almost a gale. He had to shout to make himself heard.

"We'll have to run for the island, Nancy," he called to her. From her place in the bow she nodded consent.

With the wind directly on their backs, he faced the canoe for the island. Over his shoulder the young Indian had caught a glimpse of Edgecombe's punt, half a mile back. The agent was then pulling up anchor.

"Strange for Edgecombe to have waited so long," he thought. "But a punt with good oars can defy any wind."

Darkness closed in as suddenly as if a vault door had shut against the light. But just ahead of them the Indian made out the vague blur of the island. To the south of the Island of the Dead was another, smaller island. It was separated from the larger island by a narrow strait. To avoid being swamped it was necessary to find this strait and so get to the sheltered east shore.

By the Indian's perfect sense of orientation Gitchee Mah-nin found the opening. With foam snarling after them to their gunwales, their canoe raced through and came to rest in a sheltered bay.

"And now I'm afraid we're going to have to break into Indian superstition and camp here until the wind goes down," he announced with a laugh. "You don't mind, do you?"

"'With thee I nothing fear,'" she sang lightly. "But what is the superstition?"

"That no good luck can come to any one who lands here for any purpose but to bury his dead!" he chanted in sepulchral tones.

"It is well to be warned!" she returned in mock-serious voice. "But bury me deep on the lone praire-ee, so that the *windigo* giant may never find me!" she improvised to the air of the famous prairie song.

To that Gitchee Mah-nin made his reply with arms that were as strong as the ironwood for which he was named.

"And now we'll have a fire," he said. "A fire, the Indians believe, is the only thing that will scare away a *windigo*."

So they jested as, by the flare of a little heap of birch bark he peeled from a white veteran on the shore, they gathered firewood.

The night had grown chill and the heat of the fire was pleasant. Hand in hand they sat before its cheerful blaze, dark eyes flashing messages of warmth in the fire's red glow, their young hearts singing the age-old litany of love, a song as old as man, but to youth always new and as fresh as spring leaf buds.

Behind them the forest, in Stygian darkness, was a whispering temple of gloom. The *lap, lap* of the water on the shore was a lonely sound. A loon cried up-wind; in the distance could be heard the surge and resurge of the waves as they beat on the island's west shore. A spooky, eerie spot, the young Indian admitted to his practical self.

Under the narcotizing glow of the

fire a silence, a spell which is born of happiness, fell on the two. There was peace there, he told himself, the easement of a backwater of life. After all, was not the Indian apathy better than the constant struggle, the "climbing up the ever climbing way?" The world was pretty much like a can of fish-worms—the stronger, fatter few crushing the weaker, thinner ones; all squirming in their cosmic dirt, struggling to be on top. Life was a sort of madness, an illusion—and perhaps his own dreams and plans had been the most illusory sort of madness.

The fire began to die down; the trees encroached nearer the fire, the sky's roof hung low over the swaying tree tops.

Then from out the windy night, faint and far, but standing out distinctly above the soughing of the pines, the lapping of the water, came a sound to the young Indian's ears.

In a moment he was all alive. He got to his feet, but as if casually.

"More firewood," he explained briefly.

Out of range of the firelight, ear to the ground, he listened. It came again, a noise like an Indian tom-tom.

*Tump-tump, tump-tump!*

Chief Gitchee Mah-nin was an heir of the ages, with all the traditions and superstitions possessed by every race of every age. The Indian part of him told him that this sound was the dirge the *windigo* played for his victim before the killing. For that was the *windigo's* way—the way of the rattlesnake which warns before he strikes. For one long, suspended breath he was Indian, in the grip of a fear of demons and dark which has come down from the Pleistocene ape-man. In the next breath his fear vanished before common sense and a startling possibility. Hastily he gathered some wood and strode back to the fire.

"That sound you hear, Nancy"—he smiled reassuringly—"may be a log on the rocks of Little Cedars Island—but it may be a boat, too. I'm just going to slide over there and investigate. Back in no time." And the next minute he was down the bank and into his canoe.

The wind had calmed a little. He shot across the few yards of flying spray like a leaping fish. He crossed the narrow island to the west side. The moonlight, breaking fitfully through scudding clouds, for a few seconds shone full on the rocky shore of the little island. Straight in front of him lay what had caused those drum beats.

Out in the sultry calm of that September evening William Edgecombe sat fishing—as for almost every evening of his life he had fished. And as he fished he dreamed—as all his life he had dreamed. But to-night his dreaming took the form of mournful meditations on his dead son.

For almost thirty years William Edgecombe had lived and moved and had his indolent being in a fog of ancestral glory. The youngest of the three sons of Sir Arthur Edgecombe, Bart, with no career save that of a young gentleman of too much leisure, the only startling thing William had ever done was to forge a note on his uncle, William Edgecombe. When found out, he had run from his uncle's red wrath and the law's long reach to Canada. There he had drifted from East to West on the tide of immigration, ashamed, afraid to go home again. And finally, from pure lack of effort, had become pot-bound in a government position which, he considered, required no work and little attention.

On the prairies, where hotels were likely to be a few hundred miles apart, he had taken a pretty Assiniboine squaw to keep house for him, and it may be

set to the credit side of his account with life that before Artie was born, instead of deserting her, he had married her. For marrying a squaw, he comforted his family pride by remembering he had a famous precedent in the great Lord Strathcona whose wife was a full-blooded squaw. Nevertheless he knew in his secret heart that whatever glory there was in belonging to a noble family, the glory belonged to his ancestors. With the contrariness of some people who have made a failure of their own lives, he sought relief for his inner shame in open disdain of the Indians and frequent references to his own noble, white family.

So, reclining importantly on his geneological dust heap, with a small income from his eldest brother and the salary of his government position, Edgecombe's life for some years had been as serene as a barnyard pond. But now this long serenity had been broken up. His son, on whom he had centered so many hopes, so much family pride, was drowned; and an Indian wanted to marry his pretty daughter. Worse still, his daughter wanted to marry the Indian. Indians! How he despised them!

In fact, he told himself, as he sat in his old punt, that he hated them. Hatred was a tonic; it kept his blood from congealing to the ice-water of depression. With rage in his heart, he could go about without seeing too much of the pitying glances that benumbed him. But alone on the lake, that defense dropped from him.

"Oh, Artie, my boy!" His voice broke in a dry sob, the hand which held his fishing rod trembled from his suppressed grief. "It might all have been so different! But you were an Edgecombe—cowards, all of us! And I made you into a coward! If only you hadn't run that night—if I hadn't run years ago!"

His rod hung limply in the water while the tears coursed down his cheeks. At last, dully, he noticed the wind-disturbed water, and he lifted a pain-seared face to the darkening skies. The cloud-curtain of wind was moving rapidly down from the northwest.

He hastened to pull up anchor; an equinoctial gale had caught him. His oars, with rowlocks loose in their worn sockets, lay with spoons over the water. Around one of them the anchor rope was looped. He jerked up the anchor —the oar left its socket and floated off on the wind-ruffled water.

With something like panic Edgecombe took his seat in the stern to paddle the broad, clumsy punt. But the rising wind struck the broad sides of the flat-bottomed craft and spun it around like a compass on a liquid base. There was nothing now to do but to crawl to the center of the punt and shield himself from the chill wind by crouching low in the bottom. If the calking in his old boat held, he would drift across to the other shore. But from the direction of the wind he thought that shore would probably be the west side of the Island of the Dead or of the smaller island near it.

Black night closed down. It might have been half an hour later when he was roused from a half-frozen stupor by a jar and dull thud of his punt. He raised his head and looked around. Right in front of him in dim outline was Little Cedars Island. He got stiffly to his feet to be ready for a leap ashore.

The punt struck the rocks and rebounded. Edgecombe's feet went from under him. His head struck the seat and a void of blackness descended upon him.

The moon shone from thin, skittering clouds in faint adumbration. By its faint light Chief Gitchee Mah-nin made out a form in the bottom of the half-

submerged punt, the bow of which was caught on a flat boulder. With each climbing wave the punt rose and thumped upon the rock, the water, which poured through its rapidly opening seams, slushing over Edgecombe as he rolled from side to side. In a short time the old craft would fill, and the man in its bottom would drop into Phlegethon.

At college his Rugby team mates had called Bruce Warnock "The Terrible Trinity." To get into that pitching punt and drag out an unconscious man whose weight was greater than his own, required the agility of a squirrel, the suppleness of an eel and the strength of a gorilla. By means of that combination he did it, however.

As he laid his burden upon the rocks, the scudding clouds laid bare the moon for a moment. The young Indian drew in his breath sharply; then he stooped, felt Edgecombe's heart and found it still functioning.

"Stunned—and so am I!" he said.

"What are the red gods trying to do with me!" he asked himself as he paddled across the narrow strait with his unconscious burden. "It begins to look as if my people are right when they say it's unlucky for an Indian to land on Nay-budgh Min-is except to bury his dead. Looks as if the luck's with Edgecombe! But I am sure that his great and honorable house would not care to owe to a mere Indian the life of one of its noble family! What's he going to do, I wonder, when he comes to and finds his daughter with the 'lousy gopher!' I'm much afraid that the wind, the *windigo* and the devil himself are all against me to-night!"

The wind moved the scraggly hair on Edgecombe's lined forehead as if in pitying caress.

"Poor old fellow!" the young Sioux murmured commiseratingly. "His gods have served him a rotten deal, too. His idolized son drowned because of the Indians and one of the hated race wants his daughter. No wonder he seeks relief in a sort of *furor loquendi!*"

When Edgecombe opened his eyes they rested first on his daughter who bent over him; then they lifted to the young Indian who looked down upon him. After that one look of incredulous bewilderment, Edgecombe closed his eyes again as if to ponder the problem of what he had seen.

"Where am I?" Edgecombe murmured presently, gazing now full-eyed at the young chief. "What's that—that Injun doing here?"

"That Injun" thought it better to steal away for more wood.

"He has about the same tender regard for me a veteran rattlesnake would have!" he laughed to himself.

Things could scarcely be more muddled, he thought as he stopped to pick up some firewood. His dark eyes were as sober as the fir trees around him. In a few weeks everything seemed to have gone flooey. Just as he had thought he saw ahead of him the dawn which was to end the Indians' two hundred years of night. But it was still black night—blacker than this virgin forest of the Island of the Dead. Vice, tragedy, superstition, each had followed on the heels of the other like rapid fire. And the last was worse than the first. To the simple, accepting Indian mind, hearing was believing. The *windigo* drum had beaten the knell of his hopes.

His thoughts broke off as if shot asunder. For again, out of the night, came again a distant drum beat.

*Tum-tum-tum—tum-tum-tum!* In regular, rhythmic beats of three. This, at least, was no boat on the rocks! The young Sioux stood grim-faced, tight-lipped, staring into the darkness.

*Tum-tum-tum tum-tum-tum!* The sound now seemed to come straight on

the wind from the depths of the forest. The Indian's black eyes narrowed.

"Something there, all right! Well, I think I'll just take a peep at the show!" And like a comet's flash he darted out of the line of light and his lithe form was soon lost in the darkness.

Liike an Indian on the blood trail, he dodged from tree to tree. And ever near zoomed the drum beats. The scurrying clouds were flying from before the face of the moon; intermittent flashes of light penetrated to the forest floor.

*Tum-tum-tum——*

Suddenly, like a searchlight thrown upon an actor in a theater, a shaft of light shot down into an open space. Not twenty yards away stood a man—not a giant, but the slender, youthful figure of a man. In his hand he held a wooden club; at his feet lay a large, hollow log. As the club descended on the log in regular strokes, the blows gave back the drum beats.

"Ah-h!" The young Indian's exclamation was almost audible; his black eyes flashed in a strange excitement. Then he rushed.

He covered the intervening space with his best college hundred-yard sprint. Before the arm which wielded the club could cease beating, it was caught in a grip like a crocodile's jaws.

"Now, my young buck, stop your little *windigo* tattoo and come with me!" the Indian addressed the drummer.

All the resistance went suddenly from Artie Edgecombe's arms. He crumpled up like a concertina, but the Indian jerked him to his feet again.

"No you don't!" the chief said sternly. "If you can beat a drum, you can walk! Mush!"

"Not to be hanged—my God, chief, not to be hanged!" Artie's voice begged; his eyes were supplications. He clutched the chief's arm in terror.

"We'll see about that later, Artie," the chief evaded coolly. "You're coming with me, but first I want you to tell me what's at the back of your little *windigo* game." He gazed compellingly into the thin, white face of Artie Edgecombe, his strong fingers still gripping Artie's arm.

"I—I didn't mean to kill the constable when I hit him—honest to God I didn't, chief! Joe yelled that I had killed him—I ran home—grabbed some food and clothing and got into my canoe. I made for the island when the storm came on—sent my canoe adrift to make 'em think I was drowned."

The chief nodded. "Clever! Go on!"

"To-night I was asleep in my hut there"—the Indian's quick eyes took in the little green shelter of pine boughs a few feet away—"and when I woke up I saw a fire. I thought it was the police come to get me—thought maybe some one had heard me chopping down the trees for my shelter. Then I remembered the story of the *windigo* the old Indians had told me, and I thought if I pounded this hollow log and made a noise like a drum, they'd run."

He spoke in sharp, staccato jerks, as breathlessly he poured out his story. His eyes, feverishly bright, were sunken; even under the scrub of beard his cheeks showed hollow.

"Just about starved, poor beggar!" the chief thought pityingly. "No means of getting away, and yet he'd sooner starve than hang!" Aloud, he said: "You are going to tell all this to the Royal Northwest Mounted, Artie."

The boy shivered violently. "I can't, I can't! They'll hang me!" His teeth chattered like ice in a jiggling jug.

"No they won't! And I'll tell you why they won't—presently. Now: you'll tell the Mounties what you did that night at Joe Chauvin's?"

"Yes—yes!"

"You'll swear to the whole truth, even if it means that your chum, Joe, is kicked off the reserve?"

"Yes!

"And take the place"—the chief's voice was deliberate, slow—"of the Indian who is serving your time?"

"Yes—yes! Just give me one more chance! I've had all these terrible weeks here to see what I've done—what I haven't done, I mean—how worthless I've always been! I don't mind prison, but I can't—I can't hang!" He shook with the ague of fear, of weakness; the veins weltered out on his thin temples.

"I only hope you mean all this, Artie. I don't want a worthless brother-in-law." The young chief smiled queerly. "And you know, yourself, that you've been considerable of a curse, Artie—to your parents, to the Indians and to me. It isn't nice, you know, to be so much of a nuisance to people that they say, 'Good riddance!' when the nuisance is drowned!"

Chief Gitchee Mah-nin compressed his lips grimly.

"Now, Artie, I'm going to tell you something, and I'm going to see that it doesn't weaken your good resolutions any. The devil has a way of turning monk when he is sick, then turning devil again when he is well, you know. You didn't kill my constable that night. And you'll probably serve only a few weeks in jail for the crack you gave his skull. If you hadn't been such an infernal coward, you'd have saved yourself and your family all this suffering! You should think more of the family name!" The chief smiled ironically.

"Remember, Artie, you can be a real help to me. And the first and best thing you are going to do for me is to tell my old men how you played the *windigo*. Your little story will put us back to where we were before you began to act like a young fool."

The Indian released his hold on Artie's arm. The boy tried to speak, but no words came. Tears of relief and shame coursed down his cheeks.

"Now that you know what you have to do, Artie, we'll go over to the fire. "We've a little family party there," and the chief smiled mysteriously.

## THE LAST MAN'S CLUB

SEVERAL days ago the Last Man's Club held its final dinner in New York. Many, many years ago, a group of young Civil War veterans formed the club, and agreed to meet every year—until no member should be left alive. And, year after year, the chairs have become more and more empty, until to-day there are only three occupants. At the final dinner an ancient bottle was opened, and the old toast was spoken by stooped, white-haired patriarchs.

There is something in this that appeals to our ancient heritage of fatalism. It is the same quality that makes Robert Louis Stevenson's story of the suicide club rather appealing. It is the old spirit of uncertainty, and though in this case and in the case of Stevenson's story it is applied somewhat morbidly, it still cannot be denied that uncertainty is the keynote of our interest in life. Not long ago Boyden Sparkes wrote a novel which appeared in these pages, called "The Obituary Lottery." It concerned a real lottery, but the counters were not placed on a board; they were placed invisibly upon the lives of prominent people.

Uncertainty makes life interesting. It is the unexpected that charms. That is why we like to read stories, or attend plays and motion pictures. That is why we like transatlantic flights, murder trials, railroad trips. If it were not that we are always expecting something new and different, a new impression, around the corner, life would be very dull, indeed.

# A Chat With You

THIS is the second number of the weekly POPULAR. At this moment of going to press, it is too early to hear what you thought of the first one. We want to hear from you. The price is fifteen cents; it is on the news stands every Thursday. The covers are a little different from those of any other fiction magazine, and we flatter ourselves that the contents are different, with a different tang and taste.

* * * *

DO you like the outdoors? Not the outdoors of the crowded beach or the paper-strewn park, but the woods where there is still virgin timber, the mountains that few folks ever get to climb, the seas that are still uncharted.

Europe, at present, is filled with American tourists. They are spending good American money there because the natives of those parts know how to capitalize their outdoors. You can do Italy and France and the Black Forest, you can visit the lakes of England and the Highlands of Scotland. Everywhere you go you will find a busy hotel proprietor and an obsequious guide. The outdoors over there has been done to death. There are no unbeaten trails. Every place you go, some thousands have been there before you. There cannot be any of the joy of discovery in a land where everything possible has been discovered long ago.

* * * *

OVER here it is another story. There are thousands of miles of the U. S. A. where no white man has ever put his foot. There is absolutely virgin forest as near to this office as Vermont, and if we stray up to Canada or go west of the Mississippi there are more new countries to be seen than any one will see in this generation.

* * * *

SEE America first," is not such a bad slogan. We remember, after a long, heartbreaking climb, standing on a windy summit high in the Presidential Range in New Hampshire. Looking west we could see tumbled heaps of mountain and miles away the silver glint of a great river. On the other side of the river were more hills and the trees that grew upon them were so close and green that from our high eminence they seemed like moss.

"Those," said a friend, "are the Franconias. That forest there is utterly unspoiled. No one has ever cut a tree down there. It is first growth, virgin forest."

It looked it. One could tell the difference.

* * * *

IF you get off the train at Flagstaff, Arizona, you will find a charming little town growing up the side of a steep slope and towering over it the snow-capped summits of the San Francisco peaks. The Alps have nothing on them. The Alps have all been climbed, but not the San Franciscos. Twelve thousand feet high they smile at you in the light of the setting sun and say: "No man has ever put his foot here. We are still unspoiled."

* * * *

CROSS the peaks, either in a motor or on horseback—it is too dry and far to go on foot—and you slip down a long slope to the edge of the cedars.

The cedars all stop growing at one latitudinal line as if they had made an agreement about it. After that you are in the Painted Desert. And it *is* painted. There are no hotels there, nor servants nor cabs; but nature has laid on the colors in her own fashion so that you need no guide or cicerone to tell you that this is a beautiful sight.

* * * *

ACROSS the Colorado and up toward Utah you can look north and see the great height of Navajo Mountain and the untracked ranges of the Henry Mountains with the snow still lying on them in summer. These are things worth seeing. And there are plenty more places just as much worth while in western Canada.

A. M. Chisholm takes you out West in the present issue. Dane Coolidge takes you to the Southwest with the first installment of the best serial he has ever written. Fred MacIsaac takes you to Hollywood, and if you don't like it there try a fresh-water college town and the snap and excitement of good football with W. B. M. Ferguson. The next number is just as much of an outdoor number as this is. Read POPULAR STORIES and see the world.

# The Poopular Stories

*In the Next Number, October 8, 1927*

**BRIDE OF THE TIGER** — **WILLIAM WEST WINTER**
—Novel

The Progress of Peter Pratt — FRED MacISAAC
Episode III—The Man-eater.

**GUN SMOKE** — **DANE COOLIDGE**
A Six-part Serial—Part II.

The Opportunist — ROY NORTON

The Sculping Kid — MARK REED

Adios — HOWARD R. MARSH

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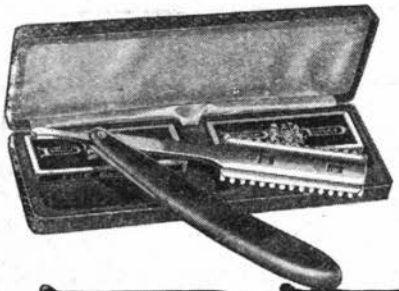

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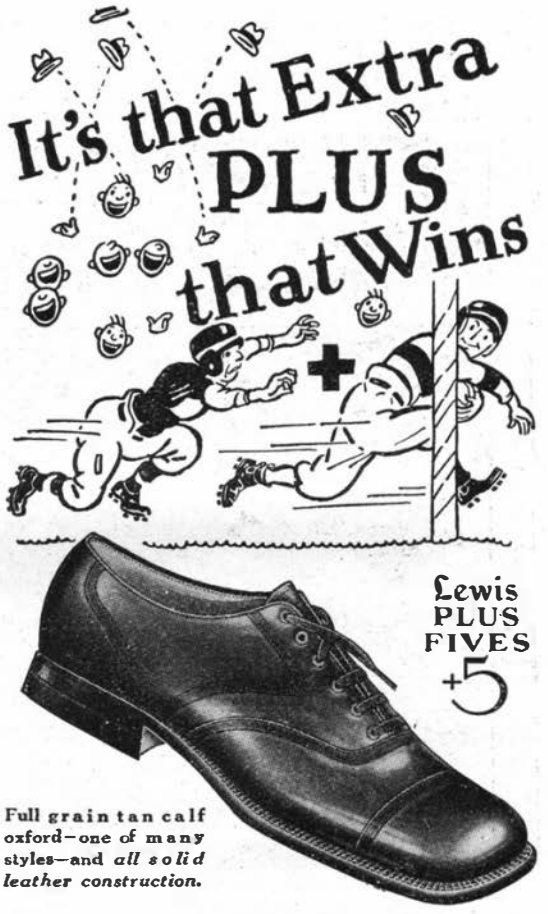


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# The Lewis Shoe

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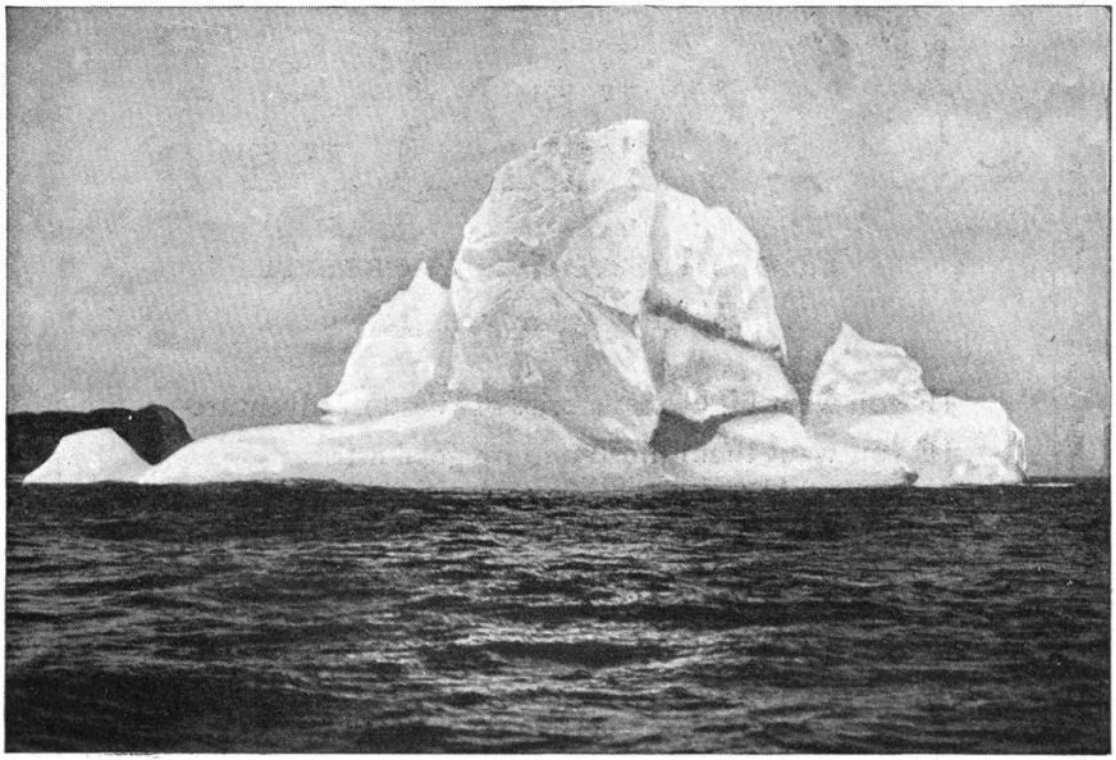

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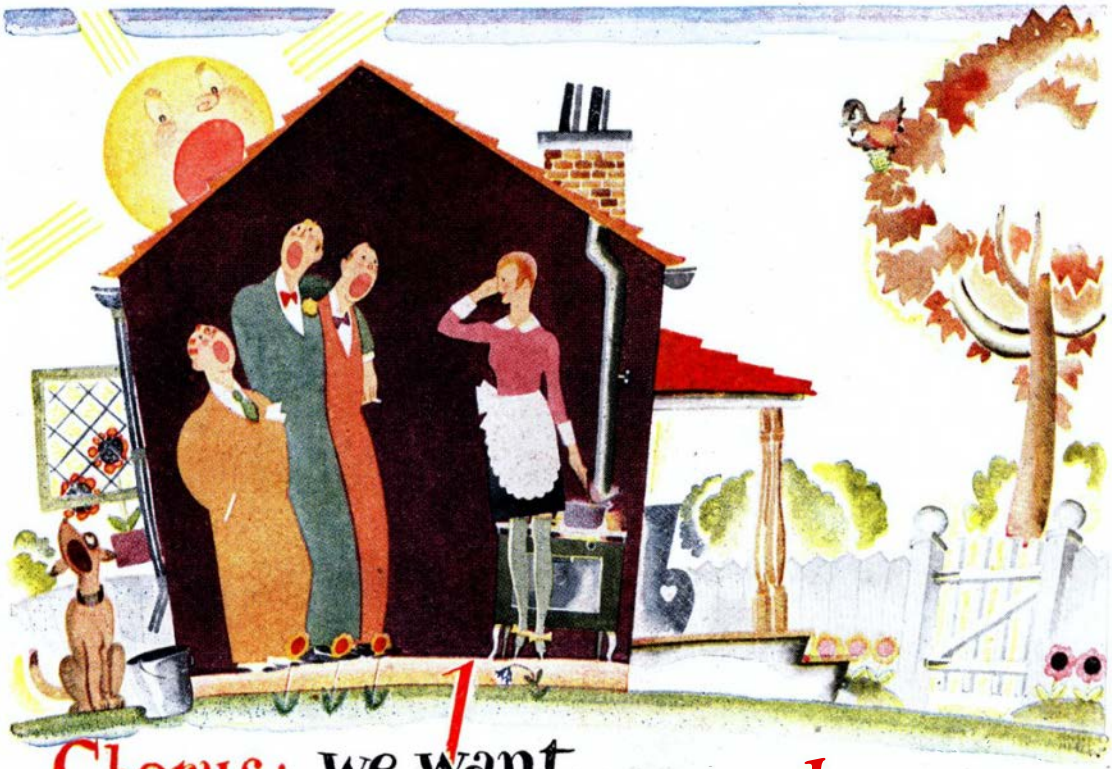

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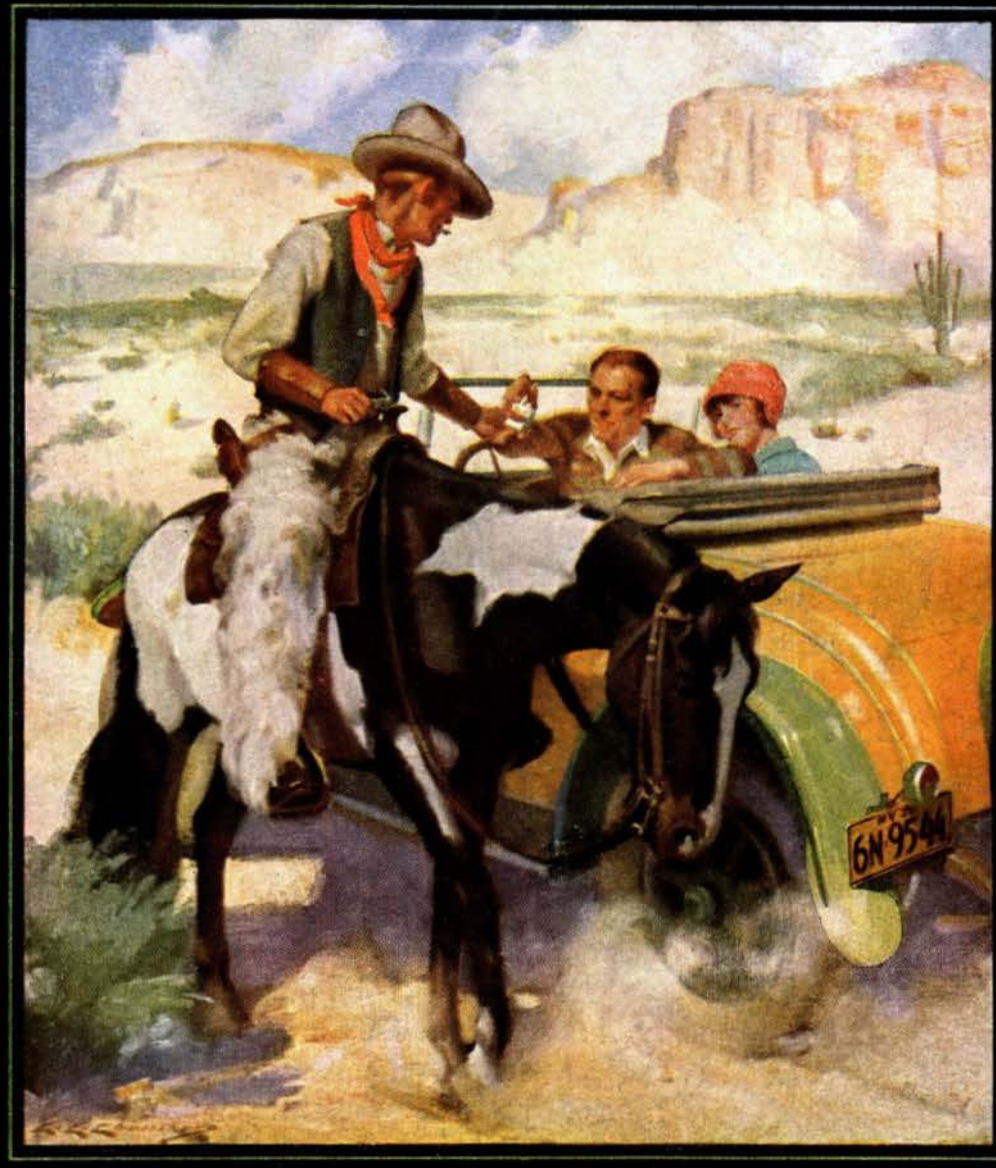


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