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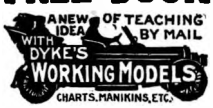

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TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE

VOL. XVI | MAY 20, 1914 | No. 5

The Fizzle of Fhu-Boo-Loo

Adventure of "The Bass Drum Soloist"

By Will Gage Carey

(A COMPLETE NOVEL)

CHAPTER I.

BEN ABHUL MAZAJINFIZZI.

WHEN Martella and I escaped from the Island of Fhu-boo-loo in a biplane, rising into the blue-vaulted sky and fleeing seaward from the cruel clutches of King Maori and his court, who sought to retain us to play the leading parts in the great conflagration scene they were about to stage, we winged our way toward a ship on the far-distant horizon. Our little motor was working grandly. The whirling of the propeller at our backs was music indeed, as each second it thrust us farther and farther from that dread island of perpetual peril.

Closer, closer we drew to the ship. Presently we could make out the name in great white letters upon her bow: *Princess Royal.*

Martella leaned over toward me so that I could hear her voice above the noise of the propeller, and queried anxiously:

"Are you sure they will welcome us aboard the big ship? What if they should refuse to stop for us, and leave us behind, floating helpless over the ocean?"

Her fears were groundless; for even as she spoke we could see a boat being lowered over the ship's side, manned with bareheaded sailors, who, despite their haste to lower away, paused frequently to gaze in our direction in wonder and amazement.

I began to volplane. At a distance of

thirty feet or so from the water, I brought the planes to a level again.

"Martella," I asked, "are you afraid to drop from this height?"

She peered over the edge of the plane with a shudder of dismay. "I'll drop —if you say to," she answered.

She crawled cautiously out upon the framework, and gathered her skirts about her closely; then she let herself hang at arms' length.

"Drop, Martella!" I called to her.

At the words, she loosed her hold. Relieved of her weight, the biplane shot upward with a jerk. Halfway down, Martella turned and dived the rest of the distance headfirst, cutting the surface of the water with scarcely a ripple. My own descent was equally spectacular, but far less graceful; for I struck the water broadside, with a splash that drenched the sailors who had by this time rowed up close. When I came up again, spluttering, Martella was already in the boat, and laughing at me merrily.

Five minutes later we were aboard the vessel—sorry-looking specimens, but safe; at least, for the time being.

The captain greeted us at the rail. He was amazed, evidently beyond measure, at our coming; this literally dropping down upon him out of the sky did not seem to him quite according to Hoyle. But he asked no questions. Instead, he pressed back the crew and passengers who crowded about us, curious and clamoring noisily, and hurried us off for dry clothing—Martella with a stewardess, and me to his own cabin.

It would seem, after all the captain had done, and was doing, for us, that I should in all decency feel kindly and grateful to him; but I was not. From the moment his hand touched my own, and I looked into his cold, fishy eye, I felt an instinctive hatred for the man. And here, in his own cabin, as he handed out raiment—warm, clean, and dry—with which I was to clothe my drenched form, instead of wanting to offer him thanks, I hated myself to think that I was in a position wherein I must accept help from him. It was in vain that I endeavored to argue myself away from this strange antipathy. Though I answered his kindly queries concerning my needs only in sullen monosyllables, he seemed not to notice anything out of the way in my manner.

When at length I was once more of presentable appearance, we returned to the upper deck, where I found Martella awaiting me. She, too, had received the best of care, and now she was looking sweet and dainty, in a little, white dress of some soft, clinging material, which the stewardess had found for her. The two were great friends already; in fact, Martella had a way about her that seemed to compel those with whom she came in contact to like her. I was just thinking to myself how nice it would be were I of such a nature, to see only the good in every one, when she suddenly turned to me as we stood at the rail a little apart from the others, and began impetuously:

"Harold, there's a man on this ship I don't like—I hate him!"

She set me gasping. "Why, Martella, you——"

"Oh, I know; you'll say it's foolish of me; but I just can't help it."

"Indeed I do say it is foolish, Martella," I answered, not with much consistency, perhaps, considering my own emotions in the captain's cabin. "It is absurd. Who is the man?"

"Rajah Ben Abhul Mazajinfizzi!"

"I don't blame you a bit—a name like that!"

"The stewardess says he is an Indian prince—from Hindustan."

"So?"

"Yes; she says all the women on board are in love with him. Well, I don't like him!"

"So you said. Got anything against him besides his name?"

"He followed me to the room of the stewardess; he waited till I came out. He followed me up here; when he saw you join me, he left."

"Evidently a Hindu of some discretion. How was he dressed? Funny I didn't see him; what did he look like?"

She began to get enthusiastic. "Well, I barely noticed him at all; but he had a red turban, and in the center, in front, was a star and crescent made of rubies edged with small diamonds. And he wore a sort of robe or mantle of yellow silk, cut rather full in the waist and brocaded along both sides——"

"That will be about all, thank you, concerning his scenery. What about his face—his features?"

She laughed merrily. "He is very dark. He wears a pointed beard. His eyes are very black—his teeth very white——"

At that moment the captain joined us. "Pardon me," he began politely. "I have had a little luncheon prepared for you two in my cabin. Will you join me there? And as you eat—if it is your pleasure—you may tell me your story; for I must confess to a consuming curiosity to hear all."

We thanked him, and moved along with him toward the cabin. On the way, I managed to say to Martella:

"When we get in there, you've got to do the talking."

"All right," she whispered back, "I think he is just grand!" Which wasn't precisely what I would have liked most in the world to hear her say.

The luncheon was dainty, appetizing, and thoroughly enjoyable. Under its benign influence, I thawed out toward the captain; but he gave little heed to me, paying close attention to Martella, as in a plain, straightforward way she told him the details of our recent experiences upon Fhu-boo-loo, and of our escape from that island. The recital concluded, he made no comment other than to assure us of the pleasure it gave him to be the means of assisting in our rescue, and for us to feel ourselves quite welcome to his ship.

We thanked him again, and arose to depart. I stepped through the door of the cabin first, as Martella had stopped for some parting word with the captain. As I did so, I beheld a vanishing form, which, doubtless, but a second before had been standing close by the door of the cabin; and the man wore a red turban and a mantle of yellow silk.

CHAPTER II.

THE RAJAH STARTS SOMETHING.

WE spent the afternoon quietly. For a time we conversed with the passengers upon the hurricane deck; then Martella retired to her own apartments for a much-needed rest, for the strenuous events through which we had passed during our last few days upon Fhu-boo-loo were beginning to wear upon her. I did not see her again until nearly time to go in to dinner. Then, when she joined me, after her rest, she said to me:

"I've had another long talk with the stewardess. Isn't she the dearest thing! Her name is Emily."

"Yes?"

"She is in love; she told me all about it."

"So soon?"

"Oh, yes."

"With whom—the rajah?"

Martella laughed. "No; she is in love with one of the ship's officers."

"Which officer?"

"The first mate."

I couldn't see how this had anything to do with our own immediate affairs, and was about to change the subject; but Martella continued:

"She isn't happy. The first mate and the captain have had a dreadful quarrel.

The captain threatened to put him in irons. It isn't ended yet; that's what worries Emily."

So there was some friction among the crew. I began to take an interest in the affair; all this might be used to our advantage, perchance, later on.

"And now," Martella resumed, "they are simply both waiting—waiting for a——"

"Each waiting for a good chance to knife the other; is that it?"

"That's it, I guess. Oh, I hope nothing dreadful happens to the captain!"

"Martella, my sympathy is all with Emily's friend," I answered, somewhat coolly. "Do you know, that captain you seem so fond of, makes me——"

The cheery call of a bugle ended my remarks.

"What's that for?" Martella asked.

"It's the first call for dinner," I answered. "Come, let us go down."

At the foot of the stairs, the purser met us, and informed us that our seats were at the captain's table. The captain's seat was at the end; ours, next to him, upon the right. He greeted us affably, and stood until we were seated. On his left was a vacant place, directly across from Martella; all the other seats at the table were occupied. I think the captain noticed my glance in the direction of the vacant chair, for presently he remarked:

"This seat at my left is reserved for a personage I am very anxious for you both to meet; I think you will find him an interesting fellow voyager."

"Indeed?" said Martella, with pretty interest; "and who is this person?"

"The Rajah Ben Abhul Mazajinfizzi."

As though especially announced by the captain, the rajah at that moment appeared on the scene. His entrance caused a low murmur of interest and expectancy along the length of the table. He had changed his raiment for clothes of colors more subdued, which set off to advantage his handsome face and figure. His bearing was truly princely, and entirely free from any form of ostentation; he was to the manner born; there could be no doubt of that.

The captain introduced us.

Personally, I thought the rajah charming. He talked entertainingly, but did not seek to monopolize the conversation, seeking rather to draw out those around him. His voice was low, vibrant, well modulated. As I leaned over to pass a dish to Martella, I remarked, sotto voce: "Some kid, believe me!"

She laughed musically and replied, as though I had merely uttered some pleasantry for her benefit alone: "Oh, do you think so?"

The captain turned to us and observed graciously:

"The rajah is here in the southern seas on a special mission." He turned to his guest upon his left. "You have no objection to my speaking of it, rajah?"

"Certainly not, my captain," the one addressed replied easily. "I will state that mission myself—if it be of interest. The sovereign ruler of a certain province in Hindustan has sent me to this part of the world in quest of a precious jewel of which he has heard. This jewel, if he obtains it—and I think, eventually, he will—is to be placed in the front of the royal crown. The jewel is of world-wide fame; it is called the 'Ruby of Roo.'"

The Ruby of Roo! At that moment it hung, concealed, from a tiny silver chain around the neck of the girl beside me! Had the sea suddenly opened and swallowed up the ship, my surprise could not have been greater; yet a surprise still more astounding was in store for me; it was the behavior of the brave little girl at my side.

The rajah sat with his great, piercing black eyes fastened upon her face.

Clearly, his statement was made with a purpose in mind; an attempt to fathom some faint inkling or suspicion. From her demeanor, now, he would read the answer to that suspicion; the situation was strained, intense. Could she stand this strain?

Here was a slip of a girl—inexperienced—unsophisticated almost—about to engage in a mental conflict with a man of the world, to parry and thrust with a master mind; a shrewd, wily diplomat, trained in finesse and dissimulation.

He leaned far over the table toward her, his eyes still looking straight into her own.

"The Ruby of Roo it is called," he repeated slowly. "Have you ever heard of it?"

For the first time now since the jewel was mentioned, I was conscious of breathing freely; for now came her answer, in tones fraught with eager interest and expectancy:

"'The Ruby of Roo!' Oh, how interesting! Do tell us more about it!"

The rajah sank back in his chair, an expression of dubious uncertainty now replacing the confident look in his eyes. He was baffled, perplexed; he had expected something different both in demeanor and response.

He had himself quickly in hand again, however.

"This ruby," he resumed, "is a most wonderful gem—brilliant, dazzling to the eye."

"And its color?" queried Martella eagerly.

"It is blood red."

"It must indeed be beautiful; how large is it?"

"It is the size of a pigeon's egg; but it is perfectly round."

This last, as the rajah well knew, was not the case; the ruby which now hung from Martella's neck, beneath her waist, was not only as large as the egg of a pigeon, but also of the same shape. His ruse failed. She showed in no manner that she noticed this discrepancy.

"Well," she said reflectively, "I'd like to wear it—if only for five minutes."

Again the rajah bent forward toward her. "And you are sure you have never heard of this Ruby of Roo?"

"It seems to me I have," she answered, knitting her brows in deep thought. Then she turned to me: "Haven't you heard of it, Harold?"

"Many times," I answered; "but it disappeared from Roo, I understand, some time ago. I doubt very much if trace of it will ever be found."

The rajah frowned slightly.

"I do not share those doubts," he said coolly; and we talked of other things.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

WHEN a well-meaning young man is assisting a good-looking, youthful, and thoroughly interesting lady to escape from a cannibal island, it is only natural that he hold consultation with her at not infrequent intervals as to the best course to pursue. Should it happen that the lady in question be wearing suspended from her neck a priceless ruby which a dark, handsome man from India is hot on the trail after, the gravity of the situation is very greatly enhanced. In such a case, not only should consultation be frequent, but, for the very best results, the two should be, if possible, in some spot remote, absolutely alone.

This will explain, perhaps, how it happened that two hours later Martella and I slipped away from the noisy throng in the main saloon, and repaired to the extreme end of the upper deck, where we took a seat beneath the shelter of a lifeboat, where we could be—as we imagined—quite alone.

The moon had arisen, and shone down upon the waters; we were sailing

upon a silver sea. From up ahead came floating back the soft tinkle of a mandolin, and the weird cadence of a Spanish love song. The breeze, balmy as the breath of spring, blew gently against our faces; and the eyes of the girl beside me shone bright as the little twinkling stars overhead—and a man who wouldn't fall for such a night, such a setting, and such a girl wouldn't be human, that's all!

"Martella," I murmured, "there is something I want to say."

She placed a slender finger against my lips. "Hush! I hear some one coming," she whispered. "Keep perfectly still."

The next moment Rajah Ben Abhul stepped into the stretch of moonlight in front of us. He stopped to light a cigarette, and as he stood there the captain joined him. We were eavesdroppers, even though unintentionally so. Of course, we could have made our presence known; but for my part, I wanted to hear what they had to say. I had caught the rajah spying on us; turn about was only fair play.

The captain was the first to speak.

"Well, rajah, I placed the two at the table just as you requested. What did you learn from them?"

The other shrugged. "I can't fathom that girl. Either she knows nothing whatever regarding the ruby, or she is the most crafty little witch alive! I confess I'm at a standstill; yet she must know about the jewel!"

"I didn't understand why you made the request that they sit at our table, rajah. I was content to wait and see. When you sprung that about the ruby on the girl, I knew your game: You wanted to find out just how much she knew about it. Well, I watched her almost as closely as you did. She didn't change color; she didn't bat an eyelash; and it came mighty sudden upon her, too. This is what I conclude: You're on the wrong tack, rajah."

The prince from India threw away his cigarette, with a gesture of impatience. "Listen," he said. "I recall, now that I've heard the name again, that this ruby was last heard of on an island called Fhu-boo-loo; now, then, they're running away from that very island, and——"

"How do you know that?" the captain broke in quickly. "I didn't tell you; I alone know their story. Who said they came from Fhu-boo-loo?"

The prince hesitated; clearly he had not intended thus to commit himself.

"Captain," he said ingratiatingly, "we of the East know many things."

"It isn't what you know; it's how you learned. If I thought 'we of the East' had been spying——"

"Patience—one moment, please; don't say anything to mar our friendship. When we saw the great air craft coming toward us, we knew it must be coming from some island. I heard, I presume, some one mention the name Fhu-boo-loo. If these two came from that island, naturally I gained the impression instantly they knew of the ruby I seek. They seemed to be fleeing from some peril or danger; their manner denoted that much. Perhaps they have had some trouble with the ruler of that island; I don't know. I don't ask you to tell me; that's their affair, not mine."

"Um-m."

"Perhaps, also, they have stolen the ruby, and are even now fleeing with it. That, too, is their own business. I simply, at this time, want to locate the jewel. If the girl has it, I'm in a position to pay her more for it than they could realize from any other source."

"Well, you know now that she hasn't got it—never heard of it before."

"I'm not positive of that. The man wouldn't be able to fool me one second, but this girl—well, that's a different proposition entirely."

The captain seemed amused at the other's perplexity.

"Well, rajah," he said at length, "what are you going to do about it? Have you decided?"

"I have decided."

"And your plan?"

"My plan is to have you change your ship's course, return to a point near where we picked the pair up, then send the girl, the man, and myself in a boat ashore on the Island of Fhu-boo-loo."

Martella gave a little sob, and clutched my arm convulsively.

"So that's the plan," commented the captain calmly.

"That's the plan."

"It will never be put through. I won't go back."

"You must. The moment you lower the boat near Fhu-boo-loo, as I've planned, I'll hand you the sum of ten thousand rupees."

"It—it looks bad," said the captain.

"Twenty thousand rupees! How does it look now?"

"Only half as bad."

"You accept?"

"You must give me time to think," he answered.

I bent close to Martella. "We're lost, girlie," I whispered; "the old rascal is wavering."

At last the captain spoke. "I hate to double cross the girl that way, rajah; she's a nice little thing, and she seems to like me!"

The rajah's tone became sneering. "The man, too—I suppose you have an overwhelming feeling of tenderness and sympathy toward him?"

"The man? Say, I took a dislike to that fellow at first peep; or, rather, as soon as I observed the insolent manner in which he accepted my hospitality. I'd like to accept your offer, if only to put the foolers on that smart Aleck!"

Martella nudged me.

"Why don't you, then?" the rajah said eagerly.

"What could I tell them? I've promised to look after their welfare; and now, to take them back to the scene of all their peril and troubles—you don't know, rajah, what you ask. You don't know their story, as I do."

"You need not face them again, captain. Have your first officer attend to all the details incidental to their—our departure from the ship."

"When do you want me to turn the ship back?"

"Within the hour."

"And you say twenty thousand rupees, cash?"

The rajah made one last play to close the deal. "Twenty thousand? No, you misunderstood me. I said thirty thousand."

"It's enough."

CHAPTER IV.

COUNTERPLOT.

"MARTELLA," I said, when the two turned away and left the upper deck, "I'll tell you something now that I refrained from mentioning before, thinking it might do no good, and would only serve to worry you. This afternoon, after our luncheon with the captain, I stepped out of the cabin just in time to see the rajah hurrying away. He had been listening to your recital of events upon Fhu-boo-loo."

"Well, I hope it does him a lot of good," she answered; "but I certainly didn't think it of him, much as I disliked him."

"Fortunately, if I remember, you made no mention of the ruby in any connection whatever; but he heard the name 'Fhu-boo-loo'; and that doubtless recalled to his mind that the ruby had gone from Roo over to Fhu-boo-loo. From your story, he learned exactly how King Maori feels toward us. He knows that if we are in possession of the jewel, and are thrown again into Maori's power, the king will make us

give it up. Even if he finds we know nothing of the ruby, he hopes to ingratiate himself with the king by turning us over to him again. He is taking a long chance; he is willing to sacrifice us for his own selfish ends, and——"

"I'll never give up the ruby; I'll throw it into the ocean first; it has caused enough trouble already."

"Well, Martella," I responded solemnly, "don't throw it into the ocean until I tip you the signal to do so; the amount of trouble I'm willing and glad to put up with because of a ruby as big as that one would surprise you."

She jumped quickly to her feet. "I'm going below," she said.

"Below? What for?"

"I'm going to find Emily, and have a talk with her. You stay here, if you wish, and wait for me."

"But see here, Martella——"

She had slipped away, however, not giving me time to make any protest. I sat down, in no pleasant mood, to await her return. My thoughts went back to the turbulent times upon Fhu-boo-loo. Perhaps, after all, Martella was right: the ruby had caused about enough sorrow, and pain, and anxiety already. Then, of a sudden, it occurred to me that had it not been for this ruby I would in all probability never have seen Martella at all. The thought reconciled me to renewing the dangerous fight it had brought upon us, with all my strength of mind and body; I would not throw up the sponge, even though compelled, now and then, to take the full count. It was not one jewel, but two, for which I must strive.

Presently I heard her coming back. She was humming the same little plaintive air as on that day when I first beheld her in the mountain forest of Fhu-boo-loo.

"Well, I found her," she said, as she reached my side. She was almost lighthearted again; but I couldn't judge much from that. Nothing could ever make her dispirited for very long at a time.

"Did you tell Emily?" I asked.

"Yes, and she said it was outrageous."

"We already knew that."

"And she said she would see the first mate at once."

"Well, Martella, it certainly didn't take you long to start something."

"I had to start something. In twelve hours, most likely, we'll be back in the vicinity of Fhu-boo-loo once more. If we land in the clutches of King Maori again—well, then we'll have the fireworks!"

"Was she able to suggest anything?"

"Yes, indeed; but wait and let me tell you; she's going to bring the first mate up here to talk it over with you. Here they come, now."

I saw them approaching cautiously along the boat deck, Emily and the first mate. He was a tall, slender young fellow. One look in his face, and I knew that we could place our trust in him. With the direct way of all seamen, he came right down to business at once, when they reached us.

"Well," he said, "the old man's going to double cross you, eh?"

"It looks as though he was about to try to," I answered.

"Are you game to take a chance—to put the bee back on him?"

"Are we? Show us the chance!"

"Well, I'm going to do it; for two reasons—because Emily, here, likes you, and because I don't like the old man. Now, then, here's my plan."

He glanced cautiously around the deck, then leaned over closer to impart his secret; but before he could speak we heard the rajah's voice again; the captain and he were coming toward us once more from the stern of the ship.

The mate grasped my arm. "Listen; we mustn't be seen up here together talking; that pair would get wise in a jiffy. Emily and I must go below. I

can't tell you my plan—there isn't time. You leave it to me, an' be ready to come with me when I tap on your door for——"

"When?"

"At midnight."

Again I heard the rajah's voice, now much closer. I turned to warn Emily and the mate, but they had already slipped silently away.

"Martella," I said, "don't you think you should go to your stateroom now? You will need what rest you can get, to be ready to answer that mysterious midnight summons of the mate."

"I suppose I must," she answered; "yet it is so beautiful up here." In another moment she left me; but I remained at the rail, gazing far off over the gleaming waters, until even the silver moon had dipped down into the sea to rest.

CHAPTER V.

VANISHING LIGHTS.

WHAT plan could the mate have in mind? The more I sought to solve the problem, the more impossible it seemed to me that he would be able to devise any way for us to escape being carried back to Fhu-boo-loo. Wearied at last with useless surmising, I went to my room and threw myself down, fully dressed, upon the berth. I did not hope to sleep, yet I must have sunk at length into troubled slumber, for I was awakened by the mate's rap upon my door.

"All is ready," he whispered, when I opened the door and stepped out. "Come with me."

We made our way cautiously to the upper deck, and he took me at once to the lifeboat beneath which Martella and I had sat when we listened to the scheming of the captain and the Indian prince. There we found the two women waiting for us. I saw that Martella was wrapped in a heavy shawl that Emily had given her, for the chill of the night was in the air. Then, as we sat there huddled close in the shadow of the boat, the mate told me his plan, and what he had done to bring it about.

"You are to leave the ship. I have a lifeboat ready for you, provisioned and supplied with water, compass, and all things you will likely need. We have doubled back on our course; by dawn we shall sight Fhu-boo-loo. I will lower you now in the lifeboat; I'll show you how to take your course by compass straight for Fhu-boo-loo."

"But," I broke in, "Fhu-boo-loo is the one particular spot in the whole southern sea we want to steer clear of!"

"I know; but it is the only isle I know the bearings of in these waters. You can land on some desolate part of the coast, hide there during the day, and, when night comes, guide yourselves by the stars to some other island more friendly inclined. What do you think?"

"I think you're a benefactor to be thankful for," I answered, with hope renewed, "and we'll fool the captain and this prince person yet."

"One thing more," the mate resumed. "I have a little portable gasoline motor which, in no time, I can attach or take off from any ordinary rowboat. It only weighs fifty-five pounds, has a three-inch stroke, and underwater exhaust. I'll just hitch this motor on the stern of your lifeboat, and you've got a gasoline launch at your disposal. How does that listen to you?"

"It listens almost too good to be true," I answered candidly.

"You'll see," he replied. "It's easy to operate, will run five hours on one gallon of gasoline, and drive an eighteen-foot boat along at a seven-mile-an-hour clip."

Martella threw herself into Emily's arms. "Oh, how shall we ever be able to repay you two?" she murmured, half sobbing.

Emily patted her upon the shoulder soothingly. "There, there, girlie; don't you ever think of that. The thought that we were able to help you at this time of need is all the reward we'll ever require."

The mate began getting the boat ready to launch. Suddenly a figure approached us from out of the darkness. Martella and I shrank back.

"Don't be alarmed," the mate whispered, "it is only one of the sailors who is to help me lower away. The night watch, too, knows all our plans; we will not be disturbed, unless the old man himself comes upon us."

Martella and I entered the boat, now swinging free from the davits. We paused only long enough to clasp the hands of Emily and the mate in silent, fervent farewell; then they lowered us slowly. We struck water safely, and I loosened the ropes. I did not start the motor at once, thinking the noise might arouse those aboard the ship before our benefactors could have time to disappear from the rail. As I stooped in the darkness to pick up the oars, I heard a faint sigh from the stern of the boat where Martella was sitting, still closely wrapped in Emily's shawl.

"Don't sigh that way, girlie," I said, in low tones. "We're making our getaway in fine shape; you mustn't worry."

We pushed forth into the darkness hanging low over the silent stretch of waters.

"I wasn't sighing, Harold," she answered softly; "I was just thinking."

"Of what?" I asked.

"Of what Emily told me early this afternoon."

"Tell me."

"Well, Emily said that most likely tomorrow—to-day it is now—the rajah would wear his brocaded Bulgarian lavender silk robe, with the rose trimming!"

With all my anxiety incidental to getting safely away from the perils which had surrounded us, and from which we were not yet entirely free, I could not refrain from laughing outright at the girl; but my laughter was cut short. Suddenly lights shone out from all quarters of the ship; we could hear the captain's voice, pitched high in anger, shouting forth orders to the crew. A great searchlight from the forward deck began gleaming out over the waters, casting about, now here, now there, in anxious search for us.

At length the gleam fell full upon us. We heard a shout from the ship. In the glare of her lights we could see another boat being swung. The sailors were climbing in, obedient to the captain's orders. Then the rajah appeared upon the scene. We saw him speaking with the captain, and beheld his gesture, waving the sailors back. He got into the boat alone. They lowered him to the water. Guided by the gleaming searchlight, he began rowing swiftly after us.

I heard Martella gasp in fright.

"Well, I like his nerve!" I said, to comfort her, "but I can't say that I think much of his judgment."

For an instant the light left us, and flashed over upon our pursuer. It showed him bareheaded, with robe thrown aside, and arms bare to the shoulders, straining at the oars, his dark, swarthy countenance eager and tense with the impetuosity of his purpose; also, he was rowing with the skill and power of an expert; his speed through the water and the way he was lessening the distance between us was almost incredible.

The light flashed back upon us once more, and again we heard a hoarse shout from the ship.

"He is gaining on us!" Martella cried to me, gazing with fear-stricken eyes back into the darkness covering our wake. "Oh, can he outrow us—has he any chance?"

"As much chance as a snowflake in

a barrel of ink!" I answered, bending to my work. "We'll soon be out of reach of the searchlight; he's making his best spurt now, while we're in sight. It shows the grit and determination of the man, Martella; he has set out to get that Ruby of Roo—and he's ready to battle for it against whatever may arise, and against all odds, and battle alone! We're going to have one sweet time before we ever shake this raving rajah off the track of the blood-red ruby."

Now the gleam from the searchlight barely reached us; a few moments more, and we were beyond its glare. I rowed on and on with all my strength, then paused to listen. I could still hear the frantic dip of oars, but the sound seemed not to grow nearer; the hovering mantle of darkness was befriending us.

Far away in the distance we could still make out the lights of the ship. For a time she appeared to be motionless; then we saw that she had started her engines again; and she turned back into her course. Fainter and fainter grew the lights, now gleaming, twinkling like tiny fireflies dancing dreamily over the sea of darkness; then they vanished.

The good ship *Princess Royal,* the passengers that had befriended us, the captain that conspired to betray us, the first mate and little Emily who sought to save us—all passed silently out of our lives forever.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LONG CHANCE.

THE dawn of the southern seas came at last—when sea and sky line seem to meet, a soft, dull gray, slowly livening to a faint, delicate pink such as lines the seashell; then pale crimson streamers flaring out, changing to lighter shades of mauve and magenta; these, in turn, giving way to a great canopy of molten silver and gold, through which the sun bursts suddenly—full-fledged, radiant, glorious—another day is born.

This grandeur of sea and sky Martella and I beheld from our boat, in which, with motor cut off, we floated idly, awaiting such time as we could make a safe landing. Before us lay the coast of Fhu-boo-loo—desolate, forbidding; for we were on the side opposite that from which I first gazed upon the mystic island. I picked up the oars, and began slowly rowing toward shore. Somewhere in that rugged, towering cluster of gray rocks I felt certain we could find a safe hiding place for the boat and ourselves until ready to put to sea again. The mate had placed an extra supply of gasoline along with our other necessities; but even so, it was far too precious to waste in any promiscuous exploring. We must wait for the stars again, we concluded; for then Martella thought she would be able to guide our little craft aright, straight to the Island of Roo.

Suddenly she gave a cry of alarm and consternation.

I looked off toward the shore, in the direction in which she pointed.

High on the crest of the mountain range skirting the coast, a solitary figure—a native warrior, apparently—was scrambling in frantic haste over the rocks. He was headed straight for the sea. Behind, in close pursuit, followed a horde of hideously painted savages. They waved their long spears aloft as they bounded forward, shrieking, yelling so frightfully that, distant as we were, the effect was chilling and appalling. From time to time, some one of the pursuers would stop, fit the string to his bow, and let fly an arrow at the fleeing form ahead. We could not see where these arrows struck; but the fugitive never paused or faltered, so we knew that as yet the archers had missed their human target.

It was a race for life; it held us fas-

cinated in the very one-sidedness of it; a hundred—five hundred, more likely—against one poor, striving soul! We followed the mad chase with straining eyes.

Martella was in a tremor of anxiety. "They'll kill him!" she cried out. "Can he possibly get away?"

I was stirred to a pitch nearly equal to that of the girl; I scarcely knew what I said. "The fools!" I muttered. "If they'd stop dead still, then all shoot together, they'd get him sure!"

On, on they rushed, over the rugged rocks. "They don't work together," I went on vehemently; "he has a chance for his life, unless—unless the trail ends there at the top of the precipice overhanging the sea."

"Oh, it does end there!" Martella exclaimed excitedly. "See! he has reached the edge of the mountain wall. They are closing in behind. He is on the brink; they will shoot him down with their poisoned arrows! Look! he is getting ready to jump from the precipice; he will be dashed against the rocks below. Oh, it is frightful!" She turned away and covered her eyes with her hands.

For a second the hounded man poised on the brink; then he leaped forth. I saw him strike the water, far, far below the heights, where his pursuers now stood gazing down in a frenzy of disappointment and baffled rage. I turned to reassure my companion.

"He cleared the sharp rocks in his leap, Martella; see, he is up to the surface again; he is swimming in toward land."

Martella came close to me, and tried to follow my gaze. "Where is he?" she asked. "I don't see him."

"He has gone under again," I answered. "He is likely swimming under water. Watch the shore line, at the foot of the crags."

It was as I thought. Presently we saw him crawling cautiously up out of the water onto a low ledge of rocks. There he lay, flat upon his face, either overcome by his exertions, or striving to keep from being seen by his enemies above.

"They don't see him!" Martella exclaimed joyfully. "He will get away unless——"

A savage yell cut short her joy. The horde above had discovered him; a shower of arrows fell upon the ledge, striking all around him.

So intent had we become in watching the unequal struggle that we had failed utterly to note that the tide had carried us close in to shore. But the refugee and those who sought to slay him had been too busily engaged to see us; now, however, a strange, wild shriek went up from those upon the mountain wall; they had discovered our presence. For a few seconds they gave no heed to their quarry, but crowded close to the precipice, gazing out at us in a tumult of noisy consultation. The man below began cautiously swimming in toward land again. They renewed the attack. He sank below the surface of the water. When he came up again, he was far out from shore, and swimming straight toward us. A howl of baffled hate and rage came from above. I began rowing in to meet him. The savages above showered down arrows and angry imprecations; both were alike futile. The arrows fell far short of us, and to their mad ravings, bitter threats, and remarks of a purely personal nature, we gave no heed, merely laughing back at them tauntingly.

"Martella," I said, as I worked away steadily at the oars, "I hope Maori, ruler of Fhu-boo-loo, is in that bunch of roughnecks up there."

"Oh, he is, all right; whenever there's any little, pleasing pastime like this being pulled off, Maori is always right there with bells on. Do you suppose he recognizes us?"

"Likely not. If he did, he'd push

that howling mob of native sons right over the precipice to get at us; but here's our man. Keep the boat steady, Martella, while I help him in."

I reached over and lifted up the swimmer, now nearly spent. I laid the dripping form down in the bottom of the boat.

And now, for the first time since we espied him high above us upon the cliff, we got a look at his face. A cry of joy and astonishment escaped us both; it was the faithful Fhu-boo-loo who had assisted me in building the aëroplane: my head mechanician—O'Reilly!

As yet, however, he knew neither Martella nor me; he was too far gone to know or care.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RUEFUL ROO.

I STARTED the motor. We began putting out to sea. To attempt a landing now upon Fhu-boo-loo was out of the question. Presently O'Reilly showed signs of coming out of his semi-stupor. He opened his eyes and sat up, looking about in wonderment. Then it all came slowly back to him—his escape from the savage horde—and he began thanking us for the part we had taken in the undoing of the Fhu-boo-loos. He plied us with eager queries; naturally, it all seemed strange to him. For when he last beheld us, we were winging our way seaward in an aëroplane, fondly believing that we were leaving the dread domain of King Maori behind us forever.

Suddenly an expression of added amazement came over his face; he had just discovered that we were speeding through the water, even though the oars lay idle in the bottom of the boat. He could not comprehend this. He kept looking over the bow, and ahead of us, believing that in some strange manner we were being towed. I called him to the stern of the boat, and showed him the motor. I explained, as best I could, how it worked and propelled us through the water. His interest in the contrivance, and his delight, were unbounded. But I little imagined, at this time, what an important bearing this small motor attachment—and O'Reilly—would have upon the life of each of us three a little later on.

"Now, O'Reilly," I said at length, "I have told you all that has befallen us since we took our departure from Fhu-boo-loo; how has it fared, meanwhile, with you?"

"Badly enough," he answered. "No sooner were you two out of sight in your aëroplane, than King Maori had me seized and thrown into prison as a conspirator. I was given a speedy trial. The verdict was 'death at sunrise.' At the fatal hour I was led forth. They tied me to a stake. While they were piling brush about me, I broke loose, and headed for the sea—with King Maori and half his army close on my heels. The rest you know. I'd have been a goner for fair had you not appeared when you did to save me. And now, if I may ask, for what port are we making?"

I turned toward Martella. It was for her to decide.

"If you can guide us there, O'Reilly," she said, in tones of finality, "we will go to the Island of Roo."

It was upon this island that Martella —when only a tiny babe—was washed ashore from a shipwreck. There she was raised, and lived until, at the age of a little over seventeen, the ruling monarch of Roo permitted her to be carried off as the fiancée of King Maori, of Fhu-boo-loo, who wished to make her his bride solely to acquire a precious jewel—an heirloom—which the girl possessed, and which could be obtained by him in no other manner—the mysterious Ruby of Roo.

And now the only course left to us, it appeared, was to make our way to the

Island of Roo, place ourselves at the mercy of the monarch who had already turned Martella over to Maori's power but a few months earlier; and to hope and trust that now—she having escaped from Maori's clutches—she would be given help and protection from the monarch with whom she had virtually been raised since both were children together.

What would our reception be upon the Island of Roo? Would they treat us kindly, or make us prisoners, and perchance carry us back to Fhu-boo-loo? Who could tell? But our course was decided; and already O'Reilly had swung the bow of the boat around nearer due west; we were headed for the uncertain domain of Rudolph, ruler of Roo.

"Martella, how does this monarch we are about to visit really feel toward King Maori?" I asked.

"He has no use for him," she answered, "yet he seems to fear him."

"I'll bet he laughs, then," I said, "when he hears all about Maori's recent mishaps; and how we all three have escaped from him."

Martella's answer astounded me. "Rudolph, ruler of Roo," she began solemnly, "will not laugh. Were he to do so, he would be a dead man the next minute."

"What do you mean, Martella?" I queried.

"Just what I say. Listen; I'll tell you a little of his history. Some twenty-two years ago—when Rudolph of Roo was a little boy of five—he was in the council chamber one day where his father and some kings from neighboring islands were engaged in a debate of some very serious and important affairs of state. Rudolph's father was arguing with one of them, trying to get him to sign a certain document—which, had he signed, would have meant millions of dollars to Rudolph's father. The king referred to wore a funny sort of headpiece made of brilliant-colored feathers. As he talked and argued, one of the feathers became loose, just as he was about to accede to all that Rudolph's father wished of him. The feather dangled down over his eye, and flapped to and fro in grotesque manner, with the agitation of the heated debate. Rudolph was standing close by his father. Boylike, when he saw the dangling feather, he laughed outright. The visiting king was furious. He tore the paper Rudolph's father wanted him to sign into little pieces; he stormed out of the palace, and never set foot upon the Island of Roo again."

"But how did all this affect the present ruler of Roo?" I asked.

"This way," she resumed: "There is an edict in force on the Island of Roo that any command of a ruling monarch shall continue throughout the entire lifetime of his successor. Well, Rudolph's father was so angry with this five-year-old boy for having laughed—and ruined thereby the cause for which the assembly was being held—that he commanded an armed guard of four giant Roos ever to attend his small son, night and day. In case the boy laughed at anything, at any time, or even smiled, they were to inflict torture upon him that is too horrible to describe."

"The monster!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, it was cruel," she went on. "Those same four men of Roo appointed by Rudolph's father to guard his son are still on the job; old, decrepit, but ever watchful, with great swords ever sharpened by their sides, to cut the present ruler of Roo down, should he so far forget himself as even to smile. Wherever he goes, night or day, winter or summer, these four old graybeards are right behind him, watching his every move."

"But that hoary old guard must sleep some time. Why doesn't he have a good laugh all to himself while the four are snoozing?"

"They sleep in shifts, two at a time; so there is no time when at least two of their number are not right there, stroking their long, gray beards, and with their evil, glistening eyes fastened upon him."

"And there is no remedy whereby he can shake these—these male chaperons of his?"

"None; not even though the cruel father has long been dead; not even though in all other things his word and wish are supreme throughout the Island of Roo."

"Blooming tough, I call it!" I commented, as she finished. "How does all this seem to affect the present ruler of Roo?"

"Naturally it has had its effect upon him," Martella answered. "He is now twenty-seven years of age; certainly, since the age of ten, anyhow, he has not laughed once—not even smiled. The result is that he has an ingrowing grouch; things are ever going badly with him; he whines continuually. He always expects the worst of everything, and he usually gets it."

I began getting out the lunch baskets the first mate had provided for us. As I finished setting the good things to eat upon a box before my two eagerly awaiting companions, I remarked, with all seriousness:

"Now I know why it was that fate brought me to these southern seas: I have a mission here. I will never give up until it is accomplished. And that mission is this: To pull a laugh from Rudolph the Rueful Roo!"

CHAPTER VIII.

IN SPITE OF THE QUARTET.

WE made the voyage to Roo in nine hours flat; we sighted the island, therefore, late in the afternoon. Unlike Fhu-boo-loo, there was a wide river of sluggish current flowing from some point far inland down to the sea, widening greatly at the confluence, forming a beautiful bay. Around the sides of this natural harbor we could see well-constructed one, two, and even three-story buildings. Farther inland, on the bank of the river, we beheld a great white structure of some gleaming kind of stone.

"That," said Martella, pointing to the white edifice, "is the palace of the king."

We had been steering straight for the mouth of the river; but now I shut off the motor, and used the oars instead, thinking it wise to keep secret our chief motive power, until such a time, at least, as we could feel more certain as to our real status upon the island.

Presently three long, black canoes, filled with armed warriors, darted out from shore and headed straight for us. Their manner of approach was thoroughly businesslike, even threatening; but I rowed along steadily toward the river. As we drew closer, Martella arose and stood in the bow of the boat. The Roo warriors recognized her at once. They slackened speed, and there was a lowering of spears, as they uttered a friendly shout. Finally the three canoes stopped entirely, and waited for us to come up with them.

In a few minutes more we were in their midst. Martella greeted the chief warriors cordially, and they replied in kind. They gave no heed whatever to O'Reilly; but as for myself, I came in for a careful scrutiny. Although they said nothing, the opinion they apparently formed of me, from this close scrutiny, was nothing for me to be swelled up about. Then we headed straight for the king's palace, our dusky escorts following noisily in our wake.

We reached the palace, the curious crowd along the bank of the river becoming larger and more demonstrative each moment. We drew up to a stone landing, from whence a wide marble stairway led upward to the entrance of

the palace. On the side of the building facing the river there were three verandas, or terraces, placed one above the other. On the lower of these stood a tall, solemn-looking individual surrounded by courtiers and attendants.

"Look, Harold," Martella whispered, without pointing, "there stands Rudolph, ruler of Roo!"

We alighted from the boat, made it secure to a pillar, and began ascending the stairs with as much grace and confidence as we could muster.

Rudolph was a tall young man, with long legs and dangling arms. His eyes —his most noticeable feature—were wide-set, very large, and inclined to be staring; which, in connection with the fact that their expression was one of dismal solemnity, together with a long, narrow nose, gave him a most striking resemblance to an owl in a perpetual state of offense toward everything and everybody. He was so remarkably sad in aspect as to appear actually funny; yet, when his life history is considered, what else could be expected? Close behind him we beheld his gnomelike guard—four ancient patriarchs, gray-bearded, and clad only in abbreviated blue tunics.

"Pipe the 'Ancient Mariner' quartet," I whispered to Martella.

"Hush!" she whispered back; "we've got to do a graceful grand entry right here—and do it as though we were conferring the biggest kind of a favor to the king and all his court. You watch me; do just as I do."

We advanced, with heads held high, straight across the narrow space between the stairway and the spot where the king stood awaiting us. Twenty paces in front of him we stopped. Martella and O'Reilly bowed low before him three times; I meant to follow Martella's lead, but was left at the post. As a consequence, at the end of the ceremonial, I was about one bow and a half short; but the king didn't seem to mind that. He had so much sorrow to think about that I don't believe he even noticed it; but later, Martella gave me an awful panning about my court manners, or, rather, my lack of them.

We stood there, waiting for the king to speak. He looked at us mournfully, and the longer he looked, the more aggrieved he seemed to feel about it. At length he spoke.

"Well, Martella," he whined, "I see you're back again. I presume that means more trouble ahead, all hands 'round!"

"Trouble? Oh, I hope not, king," Martella answered cheerily; "we have merely dropped in for a little friendly visit to your royal court."

"Um; you have, have you?"

"Yes, king."

"Well, I can see a bunch of trouble a mile high peeking around the corner right at this moment. I thought I sent you off to Fhu-boo-loo to become the bride of King Maori?"

"You did, King Rudolph."

"What are you gallivanting around these islands with this pale-faced gink for, then—and this other gent of darker complexion, who is, if my eyes mistake not, a Fhu-boo-loo himself?"

"I will tell you all, when you are pleased to hear," she answered.

He was silent, looking down upon us, his whole being the personification of painful distress.

Suddenly he spoke:

"Martella, have you got that Ruby of Roo?"

My heart sank; the jewel was about to weave its fatal spell about us again, I surmised.

"Yes," Martella answered simply, "I wear it suspended from a silver chain around my neck." There were sobs in her voice—whether real or assumed, I could not tell; but they seemed to touch the heart of the monarch above us, for he resumed, more kindly:

"Well, you keep it suspended from a

chain around your neck, child. Don't let any of these phony kings on neighboring islands ever try to get their mitts on it again; and I——"

Martella broke in, with a voice of new-found gladness: "Oh, King Rudolph! Then you will protect me from King Maori now, and save me——"

"There, there! I can't see anything for you or me to feel happy about," he said again, in his former plaintive whine. "I can't see any way out of this. It means widespread war, I reckon. And I haven't enough army to police a village; I haven't enough war canoes to make up a respectable fishing party; I haven't anything—but trouble!"

"You have your royal guard, king," Martella observed, with pretended innocence; "your faithful bodyguard ever with you to cheer you?"

I thought I caught just the faintest suspicion of a grin about to appear upon the lips of the king; perhaps it was only the play of light and shadow upon his face. Whatever it was, he found the four pair of eyes riveted upon his countenance as he turned quickly toward them.

"You'll have to hand it to 'em for being faithful, all right," he answered, with a deep sorrow in his voice. Then, in low aside to us, he added: "Say, those four skinny thugs would make a self-respecting porous plaster ashamed of itself. But come on in; don't stand out there all day! Let us repair to the throne room, where you can tell me all the bad news."

He turned and entered the palace; we followed closely behind. The throne room was spacious, with high ceiling and paneled walls. The furnishings would have delighted the heart of a cubist painter; everything seemed built along square lines. The great throne at one side of the room was square in design; the huge stand lamps at each side the same; it seemed that even the row of warriors in hollow square around the throne were square-jawed, and selected because they fitted so well with the furniture.

The king seated himself upon the throne; we stood before him. He motioned for Martella to take a seat upon the step below him.

She began her story of events since her departure from Roo. In plain, simple manner she told him all, the king listening attentively to every word. To those portions which treated of the undoing of King Maori, and of that ruler's discomfiture, anger, and frenzied disappointment, he listened with well-concealed but evident delight. But no trace of a smile appeared; the Blue Kilty Four were right around us! When she had finished, he spoke—the first cheery words he had uttered for years, most likely:

"You've had your troubles, you two; but you sat in and played the game; the jack pots you won were won on nerve and pluck alone. You are welcome back to Roo, Martella—the two of you—the three of you. So long as you choose to remain, you will be held as guests—not prisoners. You shall have the——"

The words of cheery welcome and kindness were interrupted by a messenger who entered in breathless haste. "A visitor to see your majesty," the messenger said, bowing low before the throne.

"Show him in!" our protector shouted savagely, without turning his head. "As I was saying, you shall have——"

At that instant, the personage announced came striding forward toward the throne, with pompous manner and scant ceremony. We shrank back in dismay—Martella, O'Reilly, and I—for the bold intruder upon our little scene of peace and harmony was Maori, ruler of Fhu-boo-loo.

CHAPTER IX.

A STORMY AUDIENCE.

WITHOUT deigning to look in our direction, Maori began at once addressing the ruler of Roo; it was clear that he had worked himself into a sort of frenzy for the occasion. "Well, Rudolph, I'm here!" he stormed forth fiercely; "I come to get 'em; I'm going to get 'em, too—or there'll be something popping on this island!" He paused, and glanced over at us now malignantly.

Considering his innate fear of the man, I think that our would-be benefactor answered this outburst with commendable dignity and calmness.

"I see that you are here, King Maori," he began quietly; "but the rest of your remarks I don't gather so readily. Whom have you come to get; whom are you going to get—and why should there be any such popping upon this island as you speak of?"

"You know very well who I mean!" the wrathful visiting monarch retorted. "I mean these three traitors here—this girl whom you turned over to me to become—when of age—my bride. Do you recall any such transaction as that?"

"I recall that you offered me the Sapphire Cross—that flaming blue ornament I have always coveted—if I would consent to such a marriage; I recall that, in a weak moment, I yielded to this offer. I have seen nothing since of the Sapphire Cross"—Maori winced—"I don't want to see it, now; I've changed my mind. All my life I have seen nothing but sorrow—that is, for myself. I don't expect anything but trouble for myself; but this girl, here—I want to see her happy; I want to see her free to marry whom she may choose; I want——"

"Enough of what you want!" Maori broke in angrily. "These three belong to me; I mean to have 'em, come what may. I demand these three traitors as prisoners of state!"

"And if I refuse?"

"I will land an army upon this island inside of twenty-four hours; I will drive you, your court, the people of Roo, into the sea to drown like rats!"

The disconsolate monarch, thus threatened, was silent. He realized that the ruler of Fhu-boo-loo could, and would, start a war which would result just as disastrously for Roo as stated; yet he was reluctant to give us up; he knew the tortures that awaited us upon the neighboring island, should he do so.

"I must have time to decide," he said at length.

"You shall have all time needed," Maori answered, the gleam of triumph in his evil eyes.

"How long?"

"Ten minutes."

"Impossible; this is an affair likely to bring on war. I have given my sacred promise to protect these three unfortunates, and I mean to do so; yet you give me but ten minutes in which——"

"King Rudolph," I whispered in his ear, "you will pardon my speaking up without being called upon, but a plan has just entered my mind by which I believe we could stand a show to wallop this fathead mutt to a fare ye well! Ten minutes is all I need to explain it to you. Just take Martella and O'Reilly and me into some adjoining room for the time allotted, and, when we come out, I promise that you will have a proposition to offer Maori that he will grab at like a star boarder reaching for a plate of biscuits."

King Rudolph arose. "Maori," he said, "I will take the brief interval of time offered for a talk with the three you have come here to claim; we will step into the next room; at the end of ten minutes you shall have your answer."

"Very well," the visitor responded,

scowling at us as we passed before him on the way out. "But remember, my men have the palace completely surrounded. Don't try to put over any tricks!"

The look of almost perpetual melancholy upon Rudolph's face was replaced by an expression of haughty dignity which somehow seemed to become him well. "Maori," he answered, "upon the Island of Roo we have something which I think is unknown upon Fhu-boo-loo; it is a certain something called 'honor'!"

We passed out into the room adjoining. It was a small one, and vacant until we entered. The ruler of Roo passed in first, Martella following close behind him, then O'Reilly, while I brought up the rear. I attempted to close the door behind me, but a large foot jammed into the space at the bottom of the door and the side, and prevented my doing so. I flung it wide open, surprised and annoyed. There stood the king's bodyguard, grinning at me in a groveling manner, but withal clearly determined to enter that room and join the king or die in the attempt.

I bowed low before them. "Ah, the Stick-fast Brothers; enter, gentlemen; you'll pardon me, please, for overlooking you in the stress of the moment." They made no reply, but hobbled in, and hitched over in a row behind the king. I shut the door, and bolted it.

"Now, King Rudolph," I began, "to get right to business at once! Shall I tell you my plan?"

"Oh, go ahead; but it ain't any use," grumbled his majesty. "I never have any sort of luck for more than fifteen minutes at a stretch. You see, just as the dove of peace is about to settle down and stick around a while, this old buzzard comes flopping along, and bing! the stunt's off."

"I know, king," I answered, "you've been up against it proper; but I believe we're going to have a shake-up on this island; I feel it in my bones. Now, here's the idea: Maori, with all his faults, is a sport—though hardly a dead-game one. He delights in any kind of fight or mix-up, if he's sure he holds the winning cards. He is simply dippy on all forms of athletics; he thinks and honestly believes that his Fhu-boo-loos are the best runners, wrestlers, rowers, archers—all-round athletes—in the whole universe. Now, this pride in his own men is commendable, in a measure; but I believe it is a pride that will lead to his downfall. I've sized up your people here on Roo, even in the short time I've been here. I like your men—the way they're built—their action. Let's settle this whole difficulty in a contest of strength, skill, and endurance, between the trained athletes of Roo—with myself as trainer—and those of Fhu-boo-loo!"

The king's eyes glistened with interest and eagerness. "Do you—do you think it could be done?" he queried, with more semblance of hope than I had expected to arouse so soon. "Have we a chance?"

"A swell chance, king," I answered, warming to the subject. "At any rate, it's better than sitting down and giving up everything to Maori without making any kind of a fight."

"I believe you're right, son. Now, just what is your idea?"

"We'll stake the Ruby of Roo, and ourselves, against that flaming blue Sapphire Cross you want so badly. We'll place the two jewels in one case, and give it to some responsible person to hold, until the winning side claims both. My offering to put up the ruby is proof of my own confidence, is it not? And Martella," I added, turning to the girl, "you are willing to place the ruby at stake, and trust me to save it and ourselves from the clutches of Maori?"

"I am willing," she answered, "and glad to do so, for I have faith in everything that you attempt."

"And just what form of contest shall it be?" the king asked.

"A boat race."

"A rowing race?"

"Yes, and our boat shall be built as closely along lines of a typical racing shell as we can construct; Maori's boat may be whatever he chooses to have it; but he must use eight men only, to row."

"But——"

"You leave it to me, king; I'll deliver the goods on schedule time. All you have to do is to get Maori's consent for the race to take place, here upon your own river and around a course of buoys in the bay, ending in front of the palace."

"And when shall the race be pulled off?"

"On Saturday; ten days from today."

"But if Maori won't consent?"

"He will consent. I know him. He loves a game of this kind. He will feel that he can't lose, and that he will have a fine opportunity to show up the Island of Roo to ridicule. Now, as our presence seems to incense the king of Fhu-boo-loo, I suggest that you go back to the throne room alone—that is, alone except for the company of the honorable blue-shirt brigade, here—and you state our plan just as I've outlined it to you. Martella, O'Reilly, and I will await here the outcome; send for us if Maori requests further details and enlightenment."

The king and the four octogenarian gladiators filed slowly out.

In five minutes—possibly less than that—they sent for us, and we returned to the throne room. King Rudolph was seated again upon the throne; Maori stood before him, but a wondrous change had come over the latter. He no longer stormed, and fumed, and threatened; on the contrary, he seemed almost jovial, and his gold teeth shone forth in an amiable smile as he turned to us.

"Harold," he began, "when you were my stoo-ga-roo—my bass-drum soloist over on Fhu-boo-loo—I knew you were a live wire; you are one man in a million; you have ideas—ideas that not only interest and appeal to me, but to the whole populace of the South Sea Isles; you're a lad after my own heart!"

Martella pressed my arm and whispered: "Watch out for him; when he's in this mushy mood he's most dangerous of all."

"This latest frame-up of yours, Harold," Maori continued, "is certainly very much to the mustard; it is hot stuff! Of course, it won't make much difference in the ultimate destiny of certain people now upon this island"—he looked over toward O'Reilly and Martella meaningly—"but it will give us all a welcome relief from the customary ennui which existed before you came into our lives down here, Harold. I accept your proposition; I shall delight in making this—this——"

"Regatta," I supplied.

"'Regatta' is right!" he resumed. "In making this regatta the greatest, most thrilling event in the whole history of our times; that is, provided, of course, you can bring out a racer that my boat will not lap about three times in the course laid out."

He made me sore. "Say, let me tell you something," I said hotly. "If you don't want your old tub to finish so far down the stretch you can't see it with a telescope, you'll have to be a busy bee these next ten days. To-morrow I pick my crew; we go into training at once. I just tip this off to you so you'll bring over a crew that we won't need to row circles around to make the event interesting."

"Well and nobly spoken!" Maori replied, in good part. "Now I must be getting back to my own island, to tell the folks the good news. Send over a

committee to arrange with us all the details. Until ten days from now, then, *adios!*" He turned and left us, a very different-appearing individual than when he entered. It was the other side of his peculiar nature and make-up in evidence now; the peril in which we stood was not over; but we had been granted a respite. Our lives still hung in the balance, notwithstanding Maori's change of manner and mood. The real battle to decide our destiny was yet to come.

We were assigned apartments, Martella with some of the women of the court whom she had known of yore; myself in a suite of rooms adjoining the royal chamber. And there I repaired at once with the king—and the four sticking plasters—to plan, consult, and systematize the work before us.

CHAPTER X.

THE SQUARE END RACER.

IN three days our boat, especially constructed for the coming regatta, was completed. While it was built according to my own designs, with a special view, of course, to speed, I turned the work over early to O'Reilly, confident that under him the workmen would turn out a better boat than if I supervised. He insisted—against my judgment—on building a low stern to the craft, cut off square across the end. I argued against this, but he was obdurate; and knowing that he must have some good reason in mind for wanting so peculiar a shape for a racing shell, I let him have his way.

But the boat, aside from that square-end stern, was a beauty. We called the king and Martella down to look it over; they were both delighted; Martella expressively so, the king self-contained, dreary, and unemotional appearing, as customary.

"Now," I said, as I explained to them all of the fine points regarding the little racer, "we must have a name for it. What shall it be?"

"I have it," answered Martella joyfully; "we'll call it the *Oscar Olson!*"

I must have looked disappointed, but Martella was insistent.

"Why that name, Martella?" I asked, "it is not musical—it is not poetic, or romantic——"

"No," she answered, "but it is good common sense, for that is the name of the first mate who helped us escape from the captain and Rajah Ben."

"The *Oscar Olson* she is, then!" I agreed heartily; and so we christened her.

"How about your crew?" asked the king anxiously.

"All to the merry, king," I answered. "I asked for twenty applicants; a hundred or more responded, all eager and capable. It was no easy task selecting, and no small job keeping the discarded ones from starting a riot, then and there. The eight I have chosen are now in training; I will soon have them in great form——"

"Form?" wheezed the king, "what do you mean by that?"

"Form," I answered, quoting from an authority far higher than myself, "is that brief interval between getting ready and going stale."

"Um; and what method did you use in the selecting and placing of your men?"

"I made it a point to pick out men with long, bony arms, good backs and shoulders, strong legs, and, above all, a powerful muscular loin. They are nearly of a size, my eight; no flat, narrow chests; good wind, perfect heart, free from palpitation and not easily excited. For the most important place in the boat—the stroke—I have a jewel—O'Reilly. There are multitudes of rowers able to follow time or stroke with the greatest exactitude who have absolutely no idea how to set it. An accomplished stroke, possessing first-

rate form, pluck, and a good head, who can maintain the same number of equally well-rowed strokes, whether rapid, medium, or slow; who can raise a spurt, when pressed, without hurrying his men or throwing them into disorder—such a man is simply a jewel; and O'Reilly fills the bill. I also have a good man—Navarro—at number seven to take up the stroke duly. The remainder of the crew I shall shift from place to place in the work-outs, until I have a smooth-running machine."

"Well, that all sounds fair enough, to hear you tell it," commented the king dismally; "but I dunno, I dunno. It's a pretty tough proposition you're going up against. Those bohunk rowers of Maori's don't know nothing at all about form and stroke, and all that bunk; but, believe me, they can sure push a boat through the water; I've seen them do it. And with that Ruby of Roo and the Sapphire Cross at stake—say, they'll beat you out or break their backs trying!"

I saw that the king was fast getting back into his dismal way of talking and looking at things. There are some men who show up best under the stress of emergency and impending peril. When confronted face to face with Maori, King Rudolph spoke up like a man; now, from morning to night, it seemed to me that he did nothing but whine. Still I couldn't expect him to change his whole manner of thought and being in so short a time, when he had spent twenty-two years of his life in disconsolate sadness. As he sat there upon a bench in the boathouse, with Martella beside him, and the blue-shirt big four in close attendance, dreary looking, mournful, I wondered if there would ever come a time or an occasion when I could get just one good cackle of delight from him.

"Maori will win, sure!" he croaked on; "he'll have the Ruby and the Sapphire Cross, both, by next Saturday night; he's a shrimp; I call him a greedy old pelican."

CHAPTER XI.

THE REGATTA.

THE day of the regatta dawned clear and bright. Not a cloud flecked the azure sky; the breeze blew so gently that the river flowed without a ripple, down into a sea of glass. Out in the bay, gay pennants marked the buoys around which the racers were to turn; on the river bank, flags and bunting were draped over the stands which lined the course from the bay to the palace.

Shortly after dawn, boats from neighboring islands began coming in, loaded with eager, expectant throngs. At eight o'clock, Maori, ruler of Fhu-boo-loo, arrived with a great convoy of boats. Behind them, empty save only for the oars, they towed their dark racer—the *Black Minorca.*

For the nonce, all enmity was forgotten; the little petty grievances of the islands, the strife and jealousy, all were cast aside. It was a merry gathering of happy children, eager and anxiously awaiting the start of some new game. Yet, even so, and with all his jovial demeanor, I could see that Maori meant strictly business. The Ruby of Roo and the Sapphire Cross had already been placed, side by side, in a satin case, and given into the hands of one of the regatta committee to hold; and from that moment all the mirth and frivolity of the occasion seemed to vanish, as far as Maori was concerned; from then on he was in deadly earnest; quiet, but silently scheming, watching every move of throng and participants in the coming contest.

The betting became fast and furious. All wagers, when made, were plainly marked and placed in a great chest, to be handed out at the close of the race. This chest was placed upon a

high platform, not far from the lower terrace of the palace, where Maori and King Rudolph both stood, surrounded by their courtiers and attendants. From this vantage point, a clear view could be had of the entire course. By Rudolph's side stood little Martella, all a tremor of excitement; and back of them—the True Blue Quartet. With a parting talk to my boys in the boathouse, I left them to join Martella, depending upon O'Reilly to see that the *Oscar Olson* was in fit trim.

The hour for starting was at hand. A mighty cheer went up from the Fhu-boo-loo stands, and from the adherents of King Maori in the terrace; the *Black Minorca* was taking her position for the start. As she swept along the course beneath us, a strange feeling came over me; a feeling of dread and of admiration, strangely mingled; for those great, muscular rowers of Maori were working with a perfection of movement and unity of effort that was a revelation to me. Their long, black craft seemed fairly to leap through the water, yet the muscles of their glistening backs were scarcely exerted. Maori caught my glance; a sneering laugh came from his lips. "How about it, son?" he called over. "Some class there—what?"

I believe I am too true a sport not to give credit where due; I was thrilled by the spectacle made by his eight; I was honest enough to admit it, notwithstanding the sinking in my heart.

"Maori," I answered, "you have a crew to feel proud of. I know of only one in existence that can surpass it—and here it comes right now!"

Along the river bank, in the stands down close to the boathouse, a low roar arose, gradually increasing in volume and intensity, as the *Oscar Olson* neared a point directly before the palace; then a mighty shout burst forth—the Roos' welcome to their little racer. I had expected O'Reilly to have the crew carry the boat down before the palace upon their shoulders, then get in, and row to the starting point. Why they did not do this I readily understood later. One glance at my men, and my heart sang within me again; for if the *Black Minorca* seemed to leap under the swelling muscles of Maori's men, our boat surely skimmed along as though in air, under the pressure of a force less powerful, perhaps, but applied where every ounce of strength told most. I looked over at Maori. He was sizing up my crew as he would the fine points of a thoroughbred. What was passing in his mind I know not; but Maori, with all his bombast, was a pretty wise one at that, and now he was strangely silent.

The boats took their places. The starter gave the signal. They were off!

Side by side they raced, the glistening backs raising and lowering in concentrated effort, the long oars flashing in the sunlight. It was a sight to stir one's blood.

Slowly, gradually, the *Black Minorca* began nosing ahead. A great shout went up from Maori's followers. I heard a sob at my side—Martella was covering her eyes with her hands.

"Don't worry, girlie," I said, to comfort her. "O'Reilly is merely changing his stroke. He knows that no crew living can keep that pace they set out at. You just trust old O'Reilly; he knows his business—and the boat is right there to back him up!"

On, on down the river they flashed. Still the black boat kept straining ahead—half a length—three-quarters—and as they reach the bay she led by a full length.

I heard Rudolph's plaintive wail above all the noise and tumult. "I knew it—I knew it," he whimpered. "I never did have no sort of luck; I hope the *Oscar Olson* gets beat so bad——"

As though in response to this hope—purposefully expressed—the *Oscar Olson* immediately began gaining. Now

the boats had rounded the buoys; they were headed back up the river—and our boat was creeping up. O'Reilly had quickened the stroke; the other crew was surely weakening; the strain was telling upon them. Inch by inch the black shell seemed to fall back; now she led by but half a length.

Martella signaled to her feminine squad; a ringing yell for Roo went up—and the boats were racing side by side.

"Come on! Come on! You little *Oscar Olson!*" I shouted and shrieked in wild delirium; and behind me I heard the shrill squeak of one of the Bluebell Brigands: "Yes—come on, consarn ye—I've got four bits on ye!"

Now the Roos' boat was in the lead. The crew of the rival craft, with a mighty spurt, brought up even again, then fell back, slowly, sullenly, still fighting hard.

I clutched Martella's arm. "See now, girlie," I cried; "we win! Watch the little darling racer creeping away—creeping away. Ain't it glorious——"

A sudden wail of anguish from the stands opposite the boats drew my attention. I looked again at the *Oscar Olson;* my heart seemed to stop beating. Number four was sitting idle—he had snapped his oar off, close to the oarlock!

The boat began falling back.

Again the throngs from Fhu-boo-loo rent the air with their cheers, for the *Black Minorca* was even again—now leading!

"I knew it—I knew it!" I heard the wail of King Rudolph. Then his voice was lost in the riot of sound all about me.

Martella grabbed my hand; her face was white; her voice tremulous. "Do you know what that means, Harold? It means we must go back to the Island of Fhu-boo-loo again—give up the Ruby and——"

"Not yet!" I answered fiercely. "If the man opposite number four ceases to row, their stroke will not be broken up entirely; there will still be some balance to their work. See, he has stopped; but Maori's boat is stringing out far ahead; she leads by a length and a half; the crippled crew can never catch her now; Martella—we're done for!"

But the end was not yet.

I saw O'Reilly give some order, and the *Oscar Olson* began scooting through the water as if her crew were just now at their best, and coming into their own. I couldn't understand it; the stroke of the crippled crew was the same as when the accident occurred; the other crew were beginning a spurt with renewed hearts—and yet our shell was surely gaining again. What could it mean? On, on she came with a rush; her bow was even with the stern of the other boat; still she crept up and up. They were side by side; she led again. They swept into the course directly in front of the palace; the Minorcas attempted a spurt. It was futile; their strength was not equal to this burst the little *Oscar Olson* was making with a crippled crew. To me it seemed uncanny, and yet, oh, so glorious! The Roo crowd were shouting madly, and the little racer of Roo slipped over the finishing line—a winner by half a length.

Tumult raged throughout the stands and terraces and along the river bank. They were carrying the victors off upon shoulders proud to bear them—the victors, all save O'Reilly. He had other matters at hand. Unseen, unnoticed save by myself alone, he was at work at the stern of the *Oscar Olson,* which was draped over with bunting. I saw him hastening off on a side trail for the boathouse, with a strange black object under his arm, which had been used at a moment of dire necessity—the gasoline motor from our lifeboat!

Good, faithful O'Reilly had saved the day by being prepared.

I turned again to my friends. Martella was dancing all about delightedly; the regatta committeeman was just handing over to King Rudolph the satin case.

He grabbed it with eager hands, then looked over at Maori. The expression upon the face of the ruler of Fhu-boo-loo was one of mingled surprise, resentment, rage, disappointment; he seemed actually dazed; he was stunned with the sudden realization that his especial pride, which he held infallible, had been nosed out at the finish by the little Roo boat.

For a full minute, King Rudolph stood looking at his defeated rival; then a most astounding thing occurred. Throwing back his head, the ruler of Roo burst out in a roar of laughter—laughter which rang out full and clear above all the noise and tumult, echoing and reëchoing along the corridors and throughout the palace. It was a paroxysm of wild, hilarious mirth; it was twenty-two years of pent-up laughter suddenly turned loose.

I realized on the instant that a tragedy was impending. I whispered in the king's ear: "Run—run for your very life—and meet us at the lifeboat!"

Even as I spoke, the guardsmen came rushing in upon him with swords uplifted. They were like madmen—they and the frenzied mob which pressed in close behind to get at the king. The delight of recent victory, for them was changed to furious anger; the superstition of ages was spurring them on to murder; their sacred tradition had been trampled in the dust; their king—had laughed!

With one bound his majesty was over the rail, and speeding along the court, his long legs making wondrous strides, his dangling arms flapping like flails, while close behind pressed the Frowsy Four with swords raised to strike him down. Martella and I stood rooted to the spot, absorbed in watching the mad chase. We were passive and inert, fairly consumed with the excitement of the moment; yet the riot of startling events was only just starting; another party was about to sit in and draw cards—one never known to stand idly by while wild doings of any sort were being pulled off—Maori!

Seeing the raving Roos now bent upon revenge alone, he gave a signal to his men. They made a sudden rush for the chest containing all the money, jewels, and precious belongings which had been staked upon the race. They slammed the cover shut, dumped it from the platform, then picked it up again, and the whole Fhu-boo-loo contingency began a pell-mell scramble for their boats, Maori and the stolen chest in the van. Another fierce wail went up from the Roos. They were rent asunder by conflicting emotions; they knew not whether to chase the King of Roo—or the King of Fhu-boo-loo! All was chaos, pandemonium, and maddening riot.

I grabbed Martella by the arm. "Come, girlie!" I exclaimed, raising my voice so that she could hear me above the horrid din. "This is no place for a couple of innocent bystanders!" We ran for the lifeboat.

We reached it just as King Rudolph appeared upon the bank, hard pressed and nearly spent; the swords of the Blue Shirt Avengers gleamed close behind him. I shouted, and he staggered toward us. O'Reilly had already attached the motor to the lifeboat again. We all sprang in and pushed off, amid a shower of missiles and arrows from the shore. They began getting their boats afloat; a few started after us, but the greater number went darting off after the fleeing Fhu-boo-loos.

As we were clearing the bar at the river's mouth, I beheld a lone boat about to beach. There was but one

occupant, and he was so worn and weary that he took no heed whatever of the wild riot around him, as with faltering, uncertain steps he began making his way inland. I pointed him out to the erstwhile ruler of Roo beside me. "There, Rudolph," I said, "is our new Nemesis—and he's going to be harder to shake than the Butt-in Brothers Bodyguard. He's had a bad inning or two, it seems, but he is likely to heave 'em straight over the pan before the game is over."

"And this wearied, exhausted stranger is——"

"Rajah Ben Abhul Mazajinfizzi!"

"Um; well, he blew in a trifle late for the party."

"Yes, a little late," I agreed; "yet he's hot on the trail of the Ruby of Roo."

But for the time, at least, the ruby was safely suspended around Martella's slender neck; and with the motor at full speed, we steered for the open sea and safety.

After the Applause

By Margaret Chute

"I DON'T mind telling you, my boy," snorted the sandy-haired man, "that unless you put a little fresh life—new blood, that's the idea—into your show, you'll find yourself in the discard. See?"

Mr. James Dobson, known in the variety world as Hazlett, the Mystery Maker, nodded, and stared gloomily at the other.

Bob Marner, of the sandy locks and stumpy legs, was the best-known, best-hated vaudeville agent in New York. He made careers without apparent effort, and unmade them, with equal ease and speed.

There was silence for many minutes in the agent's ornately furnished office, before the Mystery Maker spoke. He was a thin, wiry man, past fifty, and he sat opposite the arbiter of his destiny, dry of throat and trembling.

"What's wrong with my turn?" he burst out defiantly.

Bob Marner carefully removed the ash from his cigar.

"It's stale," he snarled. "Dead stale! You've been giving the public the same everlasting stunts for the past three years. And the public, my boy, are getting fed up with your mysteries."

"It's not so!" Dobson shouted.

"It's the truth! This is the situation, dear boy. Your old contracts expire in a few weeks, and when I try my hardest to get you rebooked, the syndicates demand new stuff—or no dates are available. It's up to you, Jimmy; it's your shout, now."

Dobson stood up unsteadily, rather white around the mouth. "You know how to put on the screw, don't you?" he said slowly. "It comes to this—you can't get me any more work, unless I put up some new tricks. But, Marner, there's nothing new in our trade. I—I'm not so young as I was. I don't seem able to——"

He stopped suddenly, clenching his hands. Marner studied the end of his cigar.

"Sensation!" he murmured, "that's what the managers want! There's a new man making a big stir—Chinese chap. Chang Loo, on the bills—really English, I'm told. My boy, he's got some contracts that ought to be in your

pocket! Why? Because his turn's new and sensational. It's the goods, and no error. One trick—The Chrysalis, he calls it—absolutely knocks creation. Now, if you could get hold of something of that sort, my boy, I might be able to——"

Dobson thrust out his hand. "Don't!" he gasped. "This isn't a surprise to me, Marner; I've felt it coming, for months. I've tried to fight it, and failed. Why does this life make a man old before he's past middle age? This Chinese chap's half as old as I am, and he knows more than I've ever dreamed of. How can I beat, or equal, him?"

Marner stroked his chin. "Don't know, I'm sure!" he remarked rudely. "But think it over. You're clever, Jimmy, but you're so confounded old-fashioned!"

The Mystery Maker summoned a wistful smile. "That's so," he confessed. "Well, I'll do what I can."

"Good!" Marner fingered a pile of letters on his crowded desk. "Don't let this upset you! By the way, how's your daughter? Nice girl, your daughter."

"Jess? Oh, she's fit, thanks."

"Glad to hear it. Pretty girl, Jess. Remember me to her. By the way, Jimmy, talking of Chang Loo's tricks—has it ever struck you that she might be of use to you?"

Looking up from his papers he met Dobson's amazed stare. "Of use to me? How?"

"Oh, I don't know! She helps you at tricks and things, doesn't she? Knows your secrets, and so on? I heard by accident that Chang Loo's losing his chief girl assistant—being married, so I'm told. Think it over."

II.

ALL the way home, Dobson "thought it over," and it was only at his apartment door that illumination came, in a flash which nearly stunned him. Marner was right; he *was* old-fashioned. But he would rather go under than use Jess for such a despicable purpose.

For a week he turned the matter over in his mind, and puzzled out new tricks and business that proved futile. Then he sent for his daughter, determined to explain the situation, and let her accept or refuse the remedy.

Jessica Dobson was a pretty girl, small, and beautifully made, with a piquant face and laughing eyes that made her popular everywhere. As her father's principal assistant she had darted in and out of boxes, appeared, and disappeared, ever since her school days ended.

She sat very still and solemn while Dobson related his interview with Marner. "Then it's serious!" she said. "Really serious, and something must be done. But I don't quite see——"

Dobson took her hand. "My dear," he said, controlling his voice with an effort, "Marner says this Chinese chap has just lost his principal assistant, a girl who's got married, I believe. It comes to this: I want you to apply for the job, and, if you get it, do your best to learn this man's secrets. Then come back and tell me. Afterward we can reproduce his effects in a different form, and get a sensational turn once again."

Jess was silent for some time. "I'll do it," she said at last. "If I can get him to engage me, I'll do it, for your sake. It's the easiest way out. The Chrysalis trick alone would set you on your feet. We'll solve the riddle, dad, if luck is with us. I wonder what he's like?"

III.

LUCK was with them. "Miss Jessica Dees," seeking an interview with Chang Loo, the inimitable illusionist, found him a keen, rather abrupt business man, tall and slight, with sleepy,

Oriental eyes, and the high cheek bones of the Chinese. He was quite English, nevertheless.

She pleased him. It appeared that the lady who had married was being forcibly retained by Mr. Chang Loo, owing to his inability to find a girl small enough and quick enough to take her place. "Jessica Dees" was small enough, and, when tested, proved quick enough—though ostensibly quite ignorant of illusionists and their tricks.

"You'll want a week to rehearse," said Conway Layton—Chang Loo in vaudeville land. "I'm playing in New York next week, so we'll go at it every day, and you can open with me the following Monday. Is that all right?"

He smiled a slow, attractive smile as they shook hands, and Jess felt, for the first time, sincere regret at the trick she was going to play. He was so frank, so jolly—it seemed fearfully mean. But——

She shook herself mentally, and remembered all that was at stake. Was she to sacrifice this chance of helping her father because a perfect stranger smiled kindly, and held her hand in his?

Dobson could hardly believe their good fortune. He was playing in a "road" town, "wading through," he wrote to Jess, "with your understudy." So "Miss Dees" rehearsed with Chang Loo every day for a week; every day Conway Layton grew to like her a little better, and every day she grew to hate herself a little more.

"You are astonishingly quick," he told her one afternoon. "I wish I'd had you before, instead of this other girl. She wasn't dependable; with you I feel perfectly secure. You seem to understand."

Jess looked at him, and smiled. "I'm glad," she said shyly. "You see, it interests me so much. I—I want to find out all about it; some of your tricks are so wonderful. How did you learn them?"

Conway Layton stretched his arms wide. "I traveled," he replied, and a strange, far-away look came into his eyes. "I wasn't always a mountebank, Miss Dees. Once I used to think I was a gentleman. A misguided relative left me some money, and I spent it on a trip to the East. China—Japan—India—oh, the wonder of those countries!"

Her eyes were shining. "How I envy you," she whispered. "I have always dreamed that I should see the East one day."

"Perhaps you will. I hope so, for your sake. And out in China I learned many secrets—many queer tricks. I practiced magic for amusement, because it interested me. And when I came back to England, to find that unlucky speculations had considerably altered my family fortunes, I turned my wandering to good account. The result is the turn presented by Chang Loo."

Jess laughed nervously, yet with a thrill of joy. Why should he tell her all this? Why were his sleepy, Oriental eyes so kind?

"And now I'm to be part of Chang Loo!"

It was wonderful—unbelievable. But, as yet, she had learned nothing that her father did not know. Did this man keep his best tricks secret, even from his assistants?

"I want you to go in front to-night," he said as they parted. "Watch carefully, and see how my act strikes you."

Enthralled, carried beyond the critical standpoint of a fellow professional, Jess watched the sleepy-eyed Chinese pass from trick to trick, from mystery to mystery, in a scene of Oriental splendor. Several devices were new, and were received with overwhelming applause.

Finally, as an amazing crisis, came the one called the Chrysalis. From nothing, against a dead-black background, by means of a few movements

with a fan, Chang Loo produced a cocoon, a chrysalis, and, finally, a dazzling butterfly, which opened, and a girl stepped out. For a second she stood poised against the butterfly's wings, apparently without support; then, with a wave of the fan, the whole thing vanished. How was it done? That was the secret she must discover, if she could. And, after days of waiting, Conway Layton said at rehearsal one afternoon: "Now—the Chrysalis trick."

As he spoke, full sense of the injustice she was doing him dawned on the girl. The stage became suddenly very dark, and she opened her eyes to find him bending over her, his face anxious, and near her own.

"I—I'm so sorry," she said painfully. "I'm so stupid—I—I felt faint for a moment. Let's go on. I'm all right now."

He protested, and wanted her to go home. Her face was white, and the strained, frightened look in her eyes made his heart ache. She was such a fragile little creature, made for laughter, not tears. But, as she persisted, he had to give in, and so the unfolding of the Chrysalis began.

She nearly laughed aloud, as he made it clear, to think that she had not guessed. It was so easy! But it seemed an unfathomable mystery from beyond the footlights. Of course, it would take a lot of practice and patience for her to perform her part of the trick without a mistake, but the essential points she learned immediately.

As he finished his demonstration, Conway Layton stopped, with his hands on her shoulders. "Little girl," he said slowly, "you understand, don't you, that my secrets have to be shared by my assistants, and must go no farther? I have to let those who are with me into my private mind, but nothing goes beyond. You understand?"

She raised her eyes, and looked him straight in the face. "I understand," she answered. And when she got home she lay on her bed and sobbed herself to sleep.

IV.

ON Sunday she traveled, as one of Chang Loo's company, to the big northern town where he was topliner at the principal vaudeville house.

Then, just as she was starting for the theater on Monday evening, a wire from her father reached her. The message ran:

> Great news. Fresh agent secured me five years' contract—America, England, and Continent, at old terms. Am still depending on you—new stuff desirable, if possible. Delighted at your success. Stick to it a few weeks, then fall ill and break contract. Shall be ready and waiting for you and your answer.

Her hands were trembling as she crumpled the flimsy paper, and while she made up, in the dingy, alcohol-scented dressing room at the theater, her eyes kept clouding with tears. Why had it come too late—this news? Though her father was safe for a long time, he still depended on her. But the man downstairs, the man who trusted her—how could she cheat him, after all?

At last she was dressed, and the call boy was thumping on the door.

"Chang Loo's ladies—next turn."

He clattered down the staircase, and Jess glanced again in the mirror. Along the boarded tables women in all stages of dress and undress chattered and quarreled. The atmosphere made her sick, and she dashed to the door, nearly falling into the arms of a man who was just going to knock.

"Oh!" cried Jess, and drew back hurriedly. The tall man, in Chinese dress and make-up, caught her hand.

"I came to see if you were all right," said Conway Layton. "Don't be frightened—you'll get through splendidly, I know."

Without a word she followed him

to the wings, listened in a dream to the Musical Smiths' clever turn, watched, unseeing, while stage hands tore madly, and Chang Loo's gorgeous set came to life.

At length the stage was cleared till nobody save the "Chinaman" and his little company remained—an invariable rule, this, with most illusionists. Then a bell rang and the star turn began.

V.

IT was over. Trembling, but doing her work with machinelike accuracy, Jess had gone through to the bitter end, appearing against the butterfly's wings in a blaze of limelight, while the audience went frantic with delight.

As the curtain fell and the stage became chaotic, something in her brain seemed to snap, and she began sobbing wildly, unreasoningly. Stumbling blindly, she made for the back of the stage and leaned against a friendly wall, crying as if her heart were broken. And there Conway Layton found her.

"Jess!" he cried, "Jess, my dear, my dearest—what is it?"

"I can't bear it any longer!" sobbed the girl. "I can't go on deceiving you. Let me tell you, and then turn me out—if you must!"

"Tell me? What have you to tell me?" asked Conway, and he seized her cold hands.

Then she related the whole miserable story, and looked up, at the end, expecting to meet antagonistic, angry eyes. But the man in the Chinese dress was looking at her, and his eyes were glistening suspiciously.

"What made you tell me?" His voice was shaking.

"I don't know. It doesn't matter so much, now father's got this contract, but I—I just felt I couldn't go on deceiving you, tricking you—any longer—because I—I——"

"Was it because you—loved me?"

A moment of silence. "Yes," whispered Jess, at last.

"Thank Heaven!" cried Layton, and he caught her in his arms.

Talking Clocks

RAILWAY travelers in Berlin are not allowed to run any risk of losing their trains or getting into the wrong train in the future, for at all the principal stations underground "talking clocks" are to be installed for their benefit. These consist of electric timepieces combined with phonographic apparatus. When properly adjusted people waiting on the platform will hear every quarter of an hour the exact time called out in loud, resonant tones. Passengers also will be warned of the approach of the train by which they are to travel just before the latter is about to enter the station.

Should the experiment prove successful, talking clocks will be adopted in all the large business houses. There they can be adjusted to act as reminders in regard to appointments, thus doing away with the necessity for entries in a book of engagements.

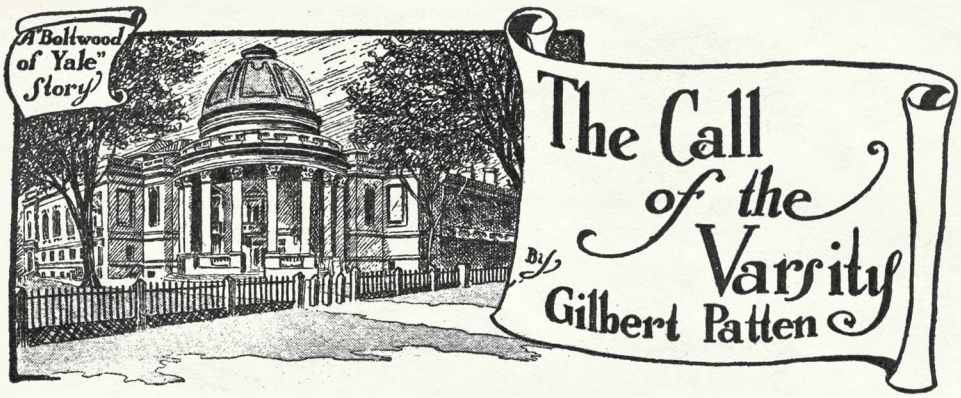
Herr Selan, the inventor of this wonderful device, will put on the market clocks which can speak English, French, German, Italian, and indeed almost any language. He is an engineer, and resides in Berlin.

His Own Language

HE was one of those fresh young fellows, given to the use of stale slang. At the breakfast table, desiring the milk, he exclaimed:

"Chase the cow down this way, please."

"Here, Jane," said the landlady, "take the cow down to where the calf is bawling."



HOW IT BEGAN.

Summary of the opening chapters for those that missed them.

ROGER BOLTWOOD, while pitching on the Yale nine against Amherst, wrenches his arm seriously, but bravely continues the game and defeats Amherst. Doris Keating, a girl friend of Boltwood, and Andy Dowling, his roommate, admire him for his pluck, but some of his enemies, particularly Malcolm Douglass, start a rumor that he is faking the injury and trying to win popularity by his show of heroism. After the game the injury to his arm is found to be serious, and he expresses doubt that he will be able to play again.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MAN SHE KNEW.

DORIS and her father were waiting for Boltwood and Dowling when they arrived at the Taft. In a modest lacy evening gown, the girl looked lovelier than ever, and the eyes of both young men glowed at the sight of her. Roommates and bosom friends though they were, there was between them an honest, open rivalry for the favor of this girl. Misunderstanding and suspicion had once threatened the disruption of their friendship, but now each man felt sure that never again could anything happen that would raise a shadow of doubt in his mind. It was to be all square and aboveboard, and the one who eventually became the loser would take his medicine like a man, and congratulate the other.

She smiled on them both as they entered the hotel parlor. It was to Roger that she gave both her hands. "I knew they couldn't beat you to-day," she said. "I knew you'd never let them do it."

"Then you knew more than I did, Doris," he laughingly confessed. "My feet were pretty cold in that last inning."

"I don't believe it! You didn't show a symptom. You went at it to strike the last man out just as if you were positive of doing so. And Andy thought your arm was gone! Why, the last ball you pitched was the fastest I ever saw."

"And I'll own up that when I pitched it I wasn't sure my arm wouldn't go with it, Doris. I simply had to give that man something he wasn't looking for. He can hit speed, but he wasn't expecting it then."

"That's always the way to fool the man you're up against," put in Cyrus Keating. "Give him what he isn't looking for. That's what we've done with the automobile builders. The new Keating-Comet will jar them some. The pinion shift is the greatest improvement since the self-starter; and we control it, which means royalties that would let us sit down and keep busy counting the money coming in if we never manufactured another car ourselves."

Cyrus Keating and Henry Boltwood, Roger's father, once rivals in business, were now partners in the concern that manufactured the Keating-Comet. The opening of new salesrooms for the concern in New Haven had afforded Mr. Keating an excuse to run up on the day of the Amherst game, and, knowing that he meant to take that game in, his daughter had insisted on accompanying him.

Keating had reserved a table in the handsome dining room sufficiently far from the music to allow them to chat freely. The orchestra had just begun playing, and the guests were coming in, when they entered and were escorted to that table by the head waiter himself. Roger and Andy were placed to the right and left of Doris, while her father faced her across the table.

Barely were they seated, when a waiter was seen escorting three students in their direction.

"Hello!" murmured Dowling; "here come some friends of ours, Roger."

Glancing up, Boltwood looked into the eyes of Malcolm Douglass, who was passing the table accompanied by Fenwick and Baxby. Douglass gazed straight at Roger without even the flicker of an eyelash. Fenwick was saying something to Baxby, and neither he nor his friend seemed aware of the other two students as they went by. This amused Dowling mildly.

"A grouch, a bounder, and a bluffer," he said, in a low tone. "I'd like to know who writes the verse and other stuff that appears in the *Lit* and the *Record* branded with Newton Baxby's nom de plume, 'Newby.' Whenever I look at his face I can't believe it possible that he possesses the ability to perpetrate anything resembling verse or humor. Some of the stuff is clever, too."

"Yes, it's clever," agreed Roger; "and he's taken pains to let the whole college know he's the great Newby. It was supposed that the secret leaked out through a friend of his, who saw some of the stuff he was writing on his desk, but I know fellows who swear it was slick advertising for Baxby. Perhaps he writes it; I can't say. But still, like you, I sometimes doubt, Andy."

The three students settled down at their table in a manner which placed Douglass facing Doris Keating. And barely was he seated, when Malcolm began staring at her in a manner so marked that Roger, who chanced to notice it, felt his gorge rising.

"The insolent cad!" thought Boltwood. "I believe he smiled at her. What's he trying to do? Does he think he can pick up an open flirtation with such a girl, or is he after my goat? At any rate, I feel like punching his head."

This desire to punch Douglass grew as he took note, later on, that the man continued to stare at intervals, and, furthermore, seemed to be saying something about Miss Keating to his companions, although he had breeding enough to try to cover this by a pretense that his remarks were of quite a different nature. It also seemed that Doris had seen, for after her first quick glance at the trio of students, she gave them no further attention, and the color in her cheeks was distinctly heightened.

Cyrus Keating had ordered the dinner in advance, and the first course came on promptly. As they leisurely disposed of this course, they chatted of topics of mutual interest to them all, baseball principally. Mr. Keating was an ardent fan, who found much pleasure in following up the professional games, but his knowledge of college baseball and college players was far less complete than that of his daughter.

It was not at all remarkable that both Boltwood and Dowling were so sincerely interested in Doris Keating. She was a girl with a great personal charm and a distinct individuality; though not the kind to attract the special attention of any and every man at first glance,

the interest in her grew and deepened as one came to know her better. Both Roger and Andy agreed that she had the most wonderful eyes in the world, and sometimes those eyes spoke things to which her lips seemed dumb. Her unswerving loyalty to an invalid mother and a reckless and wayward only brother had proved that she possessed a heart of gold.

Roger was telling himself that, seek the world over, he did not believe her equal could be found, when suddenly he felt, without turning his head to look, that Malcolm Douglass had risen to his feet. He knew that the man was deliberately and boldly coming forward, with the assurance of a person about to address friends. In a flash, Roger believed he understood the man's purpose. Douglass would make an excuse of speaking to Andy on some pretext, in order that he might secure an introduction to Doris Keating.

The offensive junior paused beside the table, whereupon Dowling and Boltwood both rose to their feet, Mr. Keating following their example more deliberately. Roger's teeth were set, and he felt the blood burning in his cheeks. He gave Douglass a steady look, but the other, smiling the least bit, was regarding Doris unswervingly.

"I beg your pardon," said Malcolm, bowing slightly to them all. "Don't let me disturb you, but I couldn't resist speaking, although I'm afraid Miss Keating has forgotten me."

She gave a little exclamation of surprise. "Why, Mr. Douglass," she said, putting out her hand, "I didn't recognize you."

Boltwood felt a throb of mingled relief and resentment. So she knew this man! That fact relaxed the tension. But surely she must know him quite well, else he would have contented himself with bowing formally at a distance. She gave him her hand!

"Father," she said, "let me introduce Mr. Douglass. I met him at Bar Harbor, in July."

"I'm very glad to meet you, Mr. Keating," said Douglass, stepping round the table and shaking the older man's hand warmly.

"Of course," said Doris, "you know Mr. Boltwood and Mr. Dowling?"

"They are classmates of mine," said Douglass, bowing again a trifle stiffly. "I hope your mother's health is improved, Miss Keating."

She assured him that it seemed to be, and, after the briefest sort of a pleasant and formal chat, he excused himself and returned to his companions.

"Queer you should know Douglass, Doris," said Andy, as he sat down again.

Boltwood felt like saying he was sorry, although, of course, he did not.

"I know his sister much better," she explained. "It was through her that I met Malcolm Douglass. Kate is a splendid girl. She was at Bar Harbor last summer with Mrs. Herkimer—you know John Herkimer's widow, father?"

"Huh! Oh, yes! Old Herkimer left her six or seven millions. I believe she's one of your mother's girlhood friends, Doris."

"Yes, mother has known Mrs. Herkimer all her life. She's eccentric, but kind-hearted, and very generous. She'll never travel around alone, and it's her hobby to have a youthful companion. She seemed as fond of Kate Douglass as if Kate were her own daughter. I didn't wonder, when I came to know Kate. There was nothing in the slightest degree menial about the position she held with Mrs. Herkimer."

"I don't know much about Malcolm Douglass," admitted Dowling. "He's a rather good dresser, and seems to be a bit of a swell."

"It may be that he has a small income on which he's going through college," said Doris, in a low tone. "His father and mother are both dead. He

has an older brother, out West somewhere. I had an idea that Mrs. Herkimer might be giving him his course at Yale. I'm surprised, though, that he's not playing with the varsity."

"He did come out for the eleven, but he didn't make it."

"He's a baseball player—a pitcher. I saw him pitch two games last summer, and he won them both. He was stopping across on the mainland, at a little place called Sorrento. Sorrento had a really excellent baseball team, made up principally of summer visitors."

"A pitcher!" exclaimed Andy. "Oh, yes, seems to me I remember something about his trying to pitch in his freshman year. It was Bolt who beat him to it then for the position of twirler in the class games."

"Perhaps that's why he has never had any use for me since," laughed Roger, flushing, and slightly embarrassed.

CHAPTER IX.

DOUGLASS REFUSES.

THE following afternoon, Stote found Boltwood alone in his study. There was a worried expression on the face of the varsity captain as he flung himself down in the big easy-chair. He inquired anxiously about Boltwood's arm.

"Hawkins has been working at it again to-day," said Roger. "That shoulder didn't let me sleep much last night. Between us, I'm afraid I've put it on the blink this time."

"That's fine!" Stote exclaimed bitterly. "We're in a pretty mess! Here it is the first of May, and with you knocked out we haven't a real pitcher to our name. We'll make a big splash, won't we?"

But for the seriousness of the situation, his disgust would have been amusing. Roger did not smile.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I feel that it was my fault to some extent. I was certain that my arm was all right, and I wanted to pitch yesterday."

"I wanted you to. I didn't feel like letting Amherst have that game, and those fellows can bat some. Now, I understand, they blame me for not taking you out before you strained your wing. But you were going along fine and easy—and how the dickens was I to know? If you'd even hinted that you wanted to quit——"

"That's one of my failings; I never want to quit."

"We've got to have another pitcher, but where can we find him? What do you think about Del Codman? Don't you suppose he could be whipped into shape?"

"Possibly. If somebody could shake the laziness out of him."

"That's it! If he only had a little real ambition! It's a shame for a man to lie down and become a loafer, when he's really needed. I don't understand Codman. Coaching didn't do him much good; in fact, it seemed to make him worse. I talked to him to-day. Couldn't rouse him at all, even when I piled it on thick—even when I insulted him. Toward the end, I didn't mince words a bit. He laughed at me. Do you know, the principal trouble with him is that he doesn't care a rap about the game?"

"And no man can ever become a crackajack at anything he doesn't enjoy doing, Stote. Two-thirds of the failures in the game of life are men who take no pleasure in the business or professional occupations which they pursue."

"Can't you suggest something?"

"You know the conditions even better than I, Stote. If you can't see a way, with a coach to help you, what chance is there that a suggestion of mine would be of any value?"

The varsity captain sprang up. "By Jove! it's fierce. It's getting on my nerves and my temper. When a man

approaches me, and opens his mouth about baseball, I feel like growling and snarling, dog fashion."

Three minutes after Stote's departure, Roger suddenly struck the study table a crack with his fist.

"Great Cæsar!" he exclaimed, throwing back his head and staring, open-mouthed, at a banner on the wall. "Nobody has thought of him! He hasn't ever really tried to do anything at college baseball. Who knows but he's the very man to fill the breach? I'll find Stote."

As he was leaving the dormitory, he almost brushed against Malcolm Douglass, who was talking with several fellows near the steps. Moved by a sudden impulse, Roger stopped and spoke to the man.

"I say, Douglass," he called, "if you're not too busy I'd like a word or two with you."

Malcolm swung round deliberately and looked Roger over, his hands deep in his pockets. "All right, Boltwood," he said, like a person who had no particular use for the one he was addressing. "There's nothing special engaging my time just at present. If you've anything you want to say to me, shoot."

Restraining his annoyance, Roger drew the fellow apart from the others. He began talking earnestly, watching the expression on Douglass' face.

"We're Yale men, you and I, Douglass. As such, we must always stand ready to do anything in our power for the good of the university."

"That's awfully trite, Boltwood. It's the talk every Yale man makes. But what are you driving at?"

"In such a situation, any personal feelings we may entertain should be disregarded by both of us. Even if we were the bitterest personal enemies, we should be ready to work shoulder to shoulder for the good of Yale."

"Let it come. What's the dope?"

"The nine is in a bad way. It needs —it must have—another pitcher. I don't know—no one knows—when I'll be able to go on the slab again. No one has thought of you as a pitching possibility because you've never attempted to make the nine. Miss Keating told us last night that you did some pitching last summer. I suppose you played on a strictly amateur team. You're eligible for the varsity. If you're half the pitcher Miss Keating thinks you are, you should make it, too."

Douglass was silent, his face inscrutable, though deep in his dark eyes there danced a queer gleam.

"Stote came to me fifteen minutes ago and told me how desperate he was," Roger went on. "He asked for a suggestion. He seemed to think that we must make a pitcher somehow. I didn't think of you then; after he was gone I did. I was on my way to find him and tell him about you just now. If you've pitched summers it shouldn't take you long—a week or so at most—to get your arm into shape. Yale needs you."

Douglass laughed softly, disagreeably. "Seems to me you're using mighty little judgment and tact, Boltwood. You might have tried to fool me, at least. You might have gone to Stote and had him make this suggestion to me. Then, if I fell for it, if I came out and succeeded in filling the gap in your pitching staff, you could have claimed the glory of discovering me just the same."

"Man alive, you're crazy! I don't want any glory. I'm thinking of Yale and——"

"Oh, yes; oh, yes! That's the sort of slop they all babble. You're thinking of Yale, now that your wing has gone to the bad, and you know you won't be able to pitch any more. You thought of me after that happened. You didn't think of me before, not much!"

"Be reasonable, Douglass!"

"You can't fool me, Boltwood; I

won't try to fool you. You ought to know just how much I like you. I'd have made the eleven last fall, only for you. I've played football as well as baseball. I'd rather play football than baseball. I came out for the eleven. The very first day I came out I ran up against you. You were doing some coaching. You remember about it? Well, I didn't make the eleven. You were elected captain for next season. Away back of that I remember how you beat me to it as pitcher on the freshman team. You had money, and you were somebody. You had a pull. That's how you——"

"Douglass, you're actually raving. For the love of common sense use a little reasoning power. It wasn't my money or my pull that gave me the chance to pitch on the freshman team. Neither of those things had anything to do with what success I may have made since then. You know it, as well as I. Simply because you've fostered an intense hatred for me, you permit yourself to be blinded by prejudice. As a Yale man, forget it. Come, now, will you try to do something worth doing?"

"You've hurt your arm, Boltwood. You hurt it a while ago, but yesterday you went back into the game. You thought it was all right again. Now your injury lays you off for a while. You'll have that arm doctored, and you'll look forward to the chance of getting into the game before the season's over. You'll keep in mind the prospect of pitching against Harvard. You can't deny that. If your arm comes back, you'll expect to go into that game. They'll put you in. Meanwhile, you want somebody to fill the hole you've made. You want somebody to help carry the team along until you can step back to the mound and take the glory of the big games, if Yale wins. Oh, I'm wise to you, Boltwood! You can't deceive me."

"You're not wise at all, Douglass. I suppose you mean that you won't even try?"

"You've got me," said Douglass. "You don't have to guess again."

CHAPTER X.

THE PRICE OF RECKLESSNESS

ROGER blamed himself for the impulsive folly which had led him, on the spur of the moment, even to mention the matter to Douglass. He told himself that, having a full knowledge of the man's intense dislike for him, he should have left it wholly with Stote, as he had meant to do in the first place. But he had not thought that any true Yale man would permit a personal matter of such a nature to lead him into flatly refusing the call of Old Eli in distress. Douglass' action redoubled the hitherto somewhat mild contempt Boltwood had felt toward him.

"It's doubtful," he told himself, "if that kind of a man would really be any good for the team. He's too egotistical, too self-centered, too petty, and wholly lacking in qualities of generous manhood."

He did not tell Stote about it. At that time he did not even tell Dowling, for he knew that Andy would deride the lack of judgment he had displayed in mentioning the matter to Douglass.

Roger appeared on the field when the team came out for regular practice; but, under orders from both trainer and coach, he was bound not to participate in that practice. Nevertheless, he found something to do. Half a dozen would-be pitchers had been dug up, and were on hand. The coach turned three of them over to Boltwood.

"See what you can do with these fellows," he directed. "See if they've got anything that looks at all interesting. But understand that you're not even to try to work your arm to-day. This is Drew's first year; Rackliffe and Pease

came out last year, you know, but they weren't good enough to get on."

Drew was a sophomore; the other two were juniors. Roger had little hope of discovering anything in either Rackliffe or Pease, for he had previously fathomed their failings. One was as wild as an inhabitant of the Borneo jungles, while the other had simply a few merely showy curves, and no speed whatever. Nevertheless, trying to forget what he knew about them, he went at the work of coaching them with an open mind. At least, they were earnest, ready to try their hardest, and not at all cocky or averse to following advice as far as they could. When it came to Drew, he had speed, but that seemed to be about all. He could not even control that; and control, Roger knew, was one of the essential things in any pitcher.

Among those who came out to watch the practice was Malcolm Douglass. He was accompanied by Newt Baxby, and Roger had seen Baxby's six-cylinder roadster standing outside the entrance to the field. With this high-powered car, Newt frequently tore up the thoroughfares in and around New Haven. He was a reckless driver, and he had twice been arrested and fined for speeding, something of which he appeared to be rather proud. The prophecy of many persons, among whom were some who pretended to be his friends, that he would figure in a tremendous smash some day, had not given him pause.

Baxby and Douglass sat by themselves about halfway up in one of the stands, Malcolm doing nearly all the talking. He was very glad to be seen alone in this manner with Baxby. He had long entertained a secret soreness toward Fenwick, who had seemed to stand between him and the much-desired friendship of this well-known student. The chance which had brought them together in the stand at the Amherst game had given Malcolm the long-wished-for opportunity, and he was making the best of it. Of course, he told Baxby, as he had told many others, of Boltwood's "colossal nerve" in suggesting that he should come out for the nine. At this moment he was saying:

"Now, look at him coaching those three dubs. He knows there's not one of them who stands the slightest show of developing into a first-class pitcher, and if one should happen to show too much promise, Boltwood isn't the sort of a man to push him ahead too fast or too far. He wouldn't help anybody who might endanger his own chance of being the great 'it' of the team this year."

Baxby grunted: "According to what I hear, his chance for anything like that has gone glimmering. You said yourself that his arm was on the fritz."

"I've a notion now that it isn't half as bad as I fancied. Remember how he struck the last Amherst man out with a smoker—how he did it after bluffing along that he could barely lob the ball across the pan? I tell you, that man is a clever press agent for himself. He knows just how to work for effects. He's always doing the dramatic thing when it will throw him into the spotlight. For instance, he's been reported sick, with a big football game coming on and everything in suspense, but he's always got into the game just when, by doing so, all eyes would be turned upon him. Remember how he pitched the final and decisive inning of the second baseball game with Harvard last year? An accident that befell his father took him away, but he got back just in time to warm up, step in, save the game, and win the glory. That's Boltwood! I don't doubt that he has a lame arm. I own I thought his arm was gone in the seventh inning of the Amherst game. Since then I've thought it over, and I believe it was more than two-thirds a bluff. He was playing for the sympathy of the crowd.

When he simply had to burn one over, you saw him do it."

Baxby grunted again: "If you're right, he came blamed near handing Amherst the game. It was a foolish thing——"

"Not from his standpoint. The whole affair was too soft, too one-sided, too lacking in the dramatic element. Think it over. If he'd really been all in, as he seemed to be, wouldn't he have let some one else take his place? In that last inning Pascal was all warmed up, but that was only a part of the bluff. He never meant Pascal to pitch, at all. And that's the kind of a man that asked me to come out for the team! Why should he ask me, anyhow? Because he wanted the laurels, in case I accepted and proved able to do the pitching in the games to come before Yale meets Harvard. Otherwise he'd have let Stote or the coach come to me. If I'd fallen for it, I might have pitched my head off in the minor games, only to see him step in against Harvard. But I'm not such a fool! There's one of his admiring satellites, old Handy Jones, standing down there watching him with adoring eyes. That's what he wants, some one to slobber around him; but I'm not such a sucker."

Roger left the field while the others were gathering up bats, balls, gloves, and other things. Jones accompanied him.

"I'm going to foot it back," said Boltwood, as they passed Baxby's car outside the entrance. "You can catch a trolley if you want to, Jones."

"Nix!" said Handy; "I'm with you, and I'll pace you in. You know that's about all I'm good for; but they say I'm a pretty fair pacemaker."

Preferring the road to the sidewalk, they were jogging along Chapel Street at a swinging pace, Jones a stride or two in advance, when Baxby's roadster roared up from behind and went swooping past, flinging the dust over them.

"Go it, you bonehead!" exclaimed Jones. "You're due to get yours before—— Great Scott!"

A touring car, crossing Chapel Street by Orchard, rolled out directly in the path of the flying roadster. Baxby had not been sounding his horn, and the driver of the other car was wholly unwarned of his approach.

Roger's heart leaped into his throat. It seemed for an instant that the roadster would strike the touring car amidships. Baxby swerved, however, and with another second of time would have cleared the other car. As it was, he struck the rear of the touring car's tonneau, flinging it round against the curb, where it nearly upset, pitching out the driver and two women.

Apparently Douglass had started to jump. At any rate, he was hurled from the roadster, and sent spinning and rolling in the dust. Baxby's car zigzagged for an instant, the man at the wheel trying to control it. Then it shot across the sidewalk and struck a tree with a tremendous smash which nearly cut the tree down.

Leaping forward, Boltwood reached the touring car as the chauffeur was making an attempt to rise from the sidewalk. He bent over an elderly woman, who lay stunned and dazed, lifted her quickly, and carried her to the grass of a near-by lawn.

"I hope you're not badly hurt," he was saying, without being aware that he was speaking at all.

She gasped for breath, looked at him strangely, and made motions with her gloved hands. At first he thought they were gestures of distress, then he realized that she was trying to say something, and motioning toward the car.

"Here, Jones," he said, as Handy came up, "look after this lady. There's another one——"

At first he believed the other one was pinned beneath the car. She lay there, very white and still, a slender girl,

with dark hair, which curled in little waves about her ears. Her eyes were closed. At the sight of her pale face, her still, huddled figure, Roger cried out an execration upon Baxby. In that moment he almost hoped the man had suffered the full penalty for his mad folly.

Fortunately, only a portion of the girl's motor coat had been caught under the half-overturned car. In a twinkling, almost, Roger had her out of that coat. As he lifted her in his arms her eyes opened, and she looked at him. To his surprise, those eyes were deep blue.

"You're all right," he said, seeking for words to soothe her and mitigate the shock. "I don't think the other lady is hurt much, either. You——"

Covered with dust, his clothes torn, his face cut and streaming blood, Malcolm Douglass came staggering and panting to the spot.

"Kate!" he cried hoarsely, trying to snatch the girl from Roger's arms. "Great heavens, Kate! You're not killed? It's the mercy of Providence!"

Then Boltwood knew that the girl was Douglass' sister.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ECCENTRIC MRS. HERKIMER.

THE wonder of it was that Newton Baxby had not been instantly killed. He was pulled from the wreck of his completely demolished roadster, and, later, an ambulance bore him away to the hospital. Although he was badly cut and bruised, he did not appear to have any broken bones, and within twenty-four hours he was out again, and able to hobble around, with the aid of a cane.

Mrs. Herkimer had friends in New Haven. At one time her husband had been associated in business with Robert Deering, president of the North Shore Traction Company, and Deering himself was one of those who appeared on the scene shortly after the accident occurred. He saw that the old lady and her youthful companion, Miss Douglass, were conveyed to his home in his limousine, a Keating car, which he had purchased the previous summer, at the request of his wife. Oddly enough, Roger Boltwood, engaged at the time in demonstrating the Keating, had convinced Mrs. Deering that it was the car she wanted. Thus it happened that Roger knew the president of the traction company, to whom, on the scene of the affair, he explained how the collision had come about.

"They should take Baxby's license away from him," said Deering angrily, "and give him a few months to think it over in the jug. It's such reckless fools as he that imperil the lives of pedestrians and other motorists. It's a marvel no one was killed in this crash."

When Roger left, a big crowd of people still surrounded the two cars. Both he and Jones had told their story to the police, and their names had been taken. Roger improved an opportunity to slip away, and he had not proceeded far when Handy again appeared at his side.

"Well," said Jones, "I guess that will cook Mr. Baxby's goose."

"It will depend a great deal on the action taken by the lady who owns the other car," said Roger. "I suppose she was thankful for the time being to escape with her life."

"She's a queer little old woman, all togged out in fine clothes and jewels. She was wearing some beautiful chunks of ice."

"I didn't notice. When I saw that she seemed to be all right——"

"You gave your special attention to the younger one. Say, she was some looker—a regular queen. And that's Malc Douglass' sister! Take it from me, she can give the most of them dust."

"I don't remember much about her

except that she had blue eyes and dark hair. I wonder how they happened to be in New Haven."

Roger found Andy at the Oval. In their rooms, he told Dowling all about it. His roommate did not express great sympathy for Baxby.

"He's one of those mutton-headed dubs with money, who believe they have a special license to do things other men would be jailed for," said Andy. "Perhaps this will teach him a lesson."

"You mustn't forget that he's the famous 'Newby,'" said Roger, smiling.

"I don't believe he is."

"What do you mean?"

"In my judgment, he's got an upper story that would echo if you thumped it with a mallet. How anything bearing the stamp of brains can issue from such a vacuum beats me. What does Douglass' sister look like?"

"Ask me! All I can tell you is that she has a pair of wonderful blue eyes that are almost violet. I never saw such eyes——"

"Now, come off! I think you've met Miss Doris Keating."

Roger flushed a little, and laughed. "Oh, yes; I'm not comparing her eyes with those of Doris. There's really no comparison."

"There can't be. Doris has the finest pair of lamps in the world, and you know it."

At dinner, Boltwood was compelled again to tell the story of the accident for the ears of his companions of the nine, but he made no effort to describe Miss Douglass—he did not even mention her eyes.

Shortly after dinner, he received a telephone call. It was from Robert Deering, who stated that Mrs. Herkimer wished to ask him some questions about the accident. Would he not call that evening at the Deering home, on Prospect Avenue? Roger had little desire to do this, but he felt that he could not refuse, and less than an hour later he started out to make the call.

"I'll get it over with as soon as I can," he muttered. "I suppose I'll be expected to appear as a witness against Baxby."

The Deering home was modern and somewhat pretentious. He was admitted by a butler. Mr. Deering met him in the hall and escorted him into the presence of Mrs. Herkimer, who sat propped up amid many pillows in a big easy-chair. She peered keenly and appraisingly at Roger as he bowed before her. He took note of the fact that, as Jones had said, she was heavily bedecked with jewels. Evidently she was a person who wore them on any and all occasions. She put out one thin hand to the college man.

"Now, tell me," she said, "do you really think that fellow who upset us was exceeding the speed limit? And let me remind you first that I sometimes like to move along myself, though I always caution my driver to be careful in town."

"I'm afraid, madam," answered Roger, "that Baxby was moving somewhat faster than the law allows."

"Oh, never mind the law! If every motorist who broke the law was arrested, the courts wouldn't have time for any other business. I mean the limit of decency, that entertains a proper regard for the lives of other people."

To Roger's wonderment, she actually seemed seeking some sort of an excuse for Newton Baxby.

"Baxby's recklessness has been commented upon," he stated. "He's been arrested twice for speeding."

"Oh, land! My chauffeur was summoned to court once, and I was in the car myself. I was in a hurry, and I had told him to drive faster. I appeared personally before the judge, took the blame, and paid the fine. Now, if there was any reason why that young man, to-day, found it necessary to drive

faster than is generally thought proper——"

In spite of himself, Roger laughed. "I'll have to let Mr. Baxby answer that, Mrs. Herkimer," he said.

"I don't believe he will do it again. He was fortunate to escape with his life. He's a young man, and most young men are foolish. You don't look foolish. I understand that your father is a manufacturer of motor cars. I understand you've driven a car yourself. Have you ever driven fast?"

"I don't think I've ever exceeded ninety miles an hour."

"There, you see——"

"But that was in a motor race. I don't suppose I've ever beaten sixty in the open country, with a clear stretch of road."

"But you might have been arrested for that. You see, everybody does it. I shall talk to this young man, Baxby. I shall tell him what I think, and I won't mince my words. I'm really very angry with him. They say I might send him to jail; I shall give him the impression that I mean to do so. I'm much disturbed over the loss of one of my earrings. I suppose that must have happened when we upset; but they've tried to find it, and not a trace. I shall advertise it, of course. Robert, will you please have Miss Douglass called? Ask her to bring the other earring; I'd like to show it to Mr. Boltwood. Perhaps some one of those young college men who came up after the accident happened may have found it."

In a few minutes Kate Dougless appeared. She was simply and plainly dressed, and there was fresh, warm color in her cheeks, which had been so pale when Roger first saw her lying beside the overturned automobile. But it was at her eyes that he looked. Their violet tinge seemed deeper and even more wonderful. She gave him her hand. The touch of her fingers thrilled him.

"It was you who reached us first, Mr. Boltwood. I don't think I fainted. I've never fainted, to my knowledge." Her color deepened. "I know I shut my eyes. When I opened them you were lifting me. You must know my brother, Malcolm. He was terribly frightened."

Roger became aware that her voice was scarcely less interesting than her eyes. She was a girl of refinement and surprising charm; everything about her bespoke this.

She had brought the earring, a beautiful, sea-green emerald, set off by pure white diamonds.

"I should dislike very much to lose the other," said Mrs. Herkimer. "It's not the value so much as the fact that it was given me by my husband. It may be somewhere in the grass of that lawn to which you carried me, Mr. Boltwood. I shall have that lawn raked over with a fine-tooth comb. You might try to assist me by making inquiries among the students who were there."

"I'll do so," he promised; "but it scarcely seems possible that any student would pick up anything so valuable and fail to report it at once."

Mrs. Deering came in. During the course of their chat Roger learned that, motoring through Boston, Mrs. Herkimer had planned to stop over in New Haven that night, in order that Kate Douglass might give her brother a surprise.

While they were talking, the butler announced Malcolm Douglass, and the young man entered. He was distinctly surprised and apparently not greatly pleased on discovering Roger there. One of his cheek bones, which had been cut, was patched up; otherwise he bore no mark of the accident. The manner in which his sister met him betrayed her fondness for him.

As soon after Malcolm's arrival as politeness would permit, Roger took his

departure. He carried away in his mind a rather singular impression of an eccentric little old lady bedecked with jewels, who was willing to find an excuse for a reckless young man who had nearly caused her death. That was not all. Far more vividly he recalled the vision of a slender, charming, dark-haired girl, with eyes of violet blue. But she was Malcolm Douglass' sister!

CHAPTER XII.

A CHANGE OF MIND.

THE accident caused Mrs. Herkimer to change her plans; she did not leave New Haven the following day, as she had intended doing. For one reason, her car had been injured in the collision. Another was that she found herself somewhat lame and shaken up, and the Deerings urged her to remain at their home and recuperate from the shock. There was a third reason: the police did not wish her to leave. As she was not subpœnaed to appear in court, this need not have deterred her, however; for, to the surprise of nearly every one, she positively refused to make a complaint against Newton Baxby. She even intimated that the collision might not have come about wholly through the fault of the student. And when both Boltwood and Jones, the outside witnesses of the affair, diplomatically and rather cleverly avoided making any positive statement regarding Baxby's reckless driving, the officials plainly became disgusted, and declined to pursue the case of their own accord.

Commenting on this, a New Haven newspaper severely scored local scorchers who endangered people's lives by reckless driving. Whether or not Baxby found a method of assisting himself in escaping an appearance in court was a question. Some of his fellow students professed to believe that the man's money had been of service to him in this respect.

In the same issue of the newspaper, Mrs. Herkimer advertised for her lost earring, which further and thorough searching had failed to find. It was said that the eccentric old lady had summoned Newton Baxby to her presence, and, true to her threat, had talked to him without mincing words. But Baxby had come hobbling, with the aid of a cane, and, having eased her mind by flaying him, she concluded with a queer burst of sympathy and kindly advice. Baxby himself afterward intimated that he thought her a little cracked.

To Boltwood's surprise, as he was crossing the campus on his way to ten-eighty-one, just before dusk the next day, he encountered Baxby, who stopped him.

"Just a minute, old man," said Newt, signaling with his cane. "I want to say that I think you showed yourself a brick in refusing to let the cops pump you. You could have put me in rather bad if you'd had the mind to do so."

"You don't owe me anything," returned Roger distantly. "When I found the lady you ran down didn't wish to prosecute, I decided it wasn't up to me. I will say, however, that I think you must be carrying a rabbit's foot."

"Oh, yes," agreed Newt, "I was lucky to get off with a twisted knee. My old car is junk. I'll have to have another one, and I'm thinking of buying a Keating-Comet. I'll buy it through you."

"I'm not in the business of selling cars," said Boltwood promptly, annoyed by the thought that the man might possibly entertain the idea of trying to reward him in such a manner. "There's an agency in town."

Stepping aside, he hurried on, leaving Baxby muttering. Later, in his room, he told Dowling about it.

"That's Newt!" exclaimed Andy.

"He has the idea that money will do anything. He believes every man has a price. You weren't clever, Rog; you should have sounded him out. I'll guarantee he would have offered you a premium for quick delivery. If you'd accepted, he'd have gone round telling how cheaply he bought you. He'll be of great assistance to Malcolm Douglass, now that Douglass has got in with him. I have an idea that the man's principles must be of a pretty low order."

"Meaning Douglass?"

"Yes; I heard something about him to-day. Joe Erwin, a freshman I happen to know, told me the Douglass family history. It's a spotted one."

To Roger's surprise, this statement gave him a mild sensation of disturbance and rebellion. Why he should care if the history of the Douglass family was as spotted as a leopard's skin, he could not imagine, until he thought of a pair of blue eyes which were deep as the tint of a violet. A short time before he would have calmly accepted any unpleasant report involving Malcolm Douglass and his relatives; but now he had met Malcolm's sister, and he was uneasily aware that his position had shifted from one of indifference. The cause of this, of course, was no more than a casual feeling of respect and friendly regard for a nice girl. But, somehow, with a queer feeling of guilt, he did not wish Andy to suspect. He was vaguely troubled by a disagreeable sensation of disloyalty toward both his friend and Doris Keating.

"Erwin knows all about the clan Douglass," Dowling went on. "The old man Douglass made money at one time, but his methods were somewhat shady, and he lost his fortune before he encountered the reaper's scythe. There was a scandal in connection with his final failure. Dug's mother didn't survive the old gentleman long. It seems that she was a lady of somewhat better caste than the partner of her joys and sorrows. Two sons and a daughter were left, with only the frayed remnants of a fortune to support them. That didn't last long. Barry Douglass, the older brother, went through Tech. He became a construction engineer, and was apparently well qualified for his profession. It's supposed that he furnished the funds to send Malcolm here to Yale. But the crooked Douglass streak was in him, and it had to come out. He was concerned in the construction of a big irrigation dam somewhere out West. The discovery was made that the cement for the dam contained a much greater per cent of sand than the specifications called for, and Barry Douglass lost his job and his reputation at the same time."

Boltwood listened, without comment, but with a growing feeling of uneasiness.

"You see," Andy went on, "he couldn't help it, for it was in his blood. How Malcolm Douglass has succeeded in getting along for the last year without the aid of his brother is a matter of speculation. It is said, however, that he has been hard up at times, although he puts on a front. His particular friends are fellows with more or less money, and they're a trifle sporty, too. Douglass has to spend the coin to keep up with them. There are rumors of rather hot poker games in which he has participated. At the present time they say he's head over heels in debt. But his sister is the companion of a rich old lady, and I fancy Doug'll find a method of working the simple-minded old dame, with the aid of his sister."

Roger jumped up. "Not with her aid, Dowling—never in the world!" he protested.

"Whew!" whistled Andy. "What's the matter with you? How's it happen——"

"I've met Kate Douglass," said Roger earnestly. "I think I'm a pretty

fair judge of people. No matter what Malcolm may be, no matter what his brother is, or his father was, I refuse to believe that Kate Douglass is anything but the soul of honor and loyalty!"

Douglass whistled again. "That's nice," he said. "Always think the best of a person, especially when it's a pretty girl. But why are you so warm about it, Bolt?"

"Why, I—you haven't met her, old man."

"I asked you to describe her, and you couldn't do it. All the same, she seems to have made a most pronounced impression on you, Rog. Now, how much do you really know about this girl? You've met her once—no, twice, if you count the occasion when you picked her out of that automobile spill. With all your clever judgment of human nature, do you fancy yourself competent, under such conditions, to say just what sort of a girl she is?"

"I don't believe I'm mistaken," answered Roger defensively. "I can't be. A girl with those eyes——"

"There are only one pair of eyes in the world," interrupted Dowling, with a touch of resentful reprimand, "and you know the pair I mean. If you are——"

Roger tried to explain, but soon found himself floundering for words. All the while he was aware that his roommate was regarding him with suspicion and incredulity.

"Oh, confound it!" Roger finally exclaimed. "You know what I'm trying to say. I haven't any use for a man who hasn't respect and regard for any decent girl. And I wouldn't judge one by a cheap skate of a brother. Doris has a brother that no one except herself is particularly proud of. We know what Tom Keating was, yet he showed some decent, manly traits toward the last of his stay here at Yale. I'm going out for a walk before I turn in. Coming?"

"No," said Andy; "I think I'll stay and do a little grinding."

On the stairs, Roger encountered Malcolm Douglass, who stopped him.

"Boltwood," said Douglass, "would you mind coming into my room a moment? We can't talk here without somebody hearing something of what we're saying."

Surprised, Roger followed him. Morrison was not in. Douglass closed the door behind them. His manner was that of a man facing something disagreeable, but determined to go through with it.

When Roger declined to sit down Malcolm stood with the study table between them, fumbling with a chemistry book, which he kept opening and closing.

"I'm naturally extremely sensitive," he began, in an uncertain manner. "Nothing cuts me deeper than the feeling that another man thinks himself my superior, and is inclined to patronize me. Perhaps I'm envious, too, but we're all that, in a greater or lesser degree. Some succeed in hiding it better than others. It was rather unfortunate that circumstances aroused in me a feeling of dislike and resentment toward you in our first year here. I've never been able to shake it off. When you showed that you didn't care to room with me, last September, my dislike for you was redoubled several times. What followed on the football field simply emphasized this intense feeling. I didn't make the team, and I blamed you somewhat. Perhaps I was wrong," he admitted, as if the words almost choked him.

By this time the man's face was crimson, and he seemed like a person passing through an ordeal to which he had been forced by the whip. The hands which continued to open and

close the book were unsteady. Roger waited for him to go on.

"I'm not going to say anything more in this line," Douglass finally declared, as if his companion were the one who was forcing him to say it. "That's enough. I don't know that I owe you anything. What little you did yesterday any man would have done. Baxby seems to feel differently about it. He's been handing me some advice. I acknowledge that what I'm doing now has come through Baxby's advice. I've never really cared much about baseball, although I've played it ever since I can remember, and I've had success as a pitcher. They tell me I'm a born pitcher. When I came to Yale, it was my ambition to make the eleven. I've failed. The other day you came to me and asked me to come out for the nine, which sorely needs pitchers. I refused. It gave me a great deal of satisfaction to refuse you then. Now, at the advice of Baxby, I'm going to tell you that I've changed my mind. If the team wants me, and if I'm found capable of pitching on it, I'll come out. Will you tell Stote and the coach, or shall I?"

CHAPTER XIII.

WAITING HIS CHANCE.

WHEN the team came out for practice on the following day the appearance of Malcolm Douglass in a playing suit was a surprise to many persons. Both the captain and the coach were aware that he would show up, for Douglass had talked with them after his last interview with Boltwood, in which he had announced his change of mind. They had questioned him concerning the sort of summer baseball he had played, and received his assurance that it was strictly amateur in character, although some of the teams had been more than ordinarily fast.

At Roger's request, Malcolm had made no mention of him. The possibility of thus finding another pitcher in this time of need had given Stote much more satisfaction than he permitted Douglass to perceive. There was, of course, another possibility, namely, that the fellow would not be able to rise to the proper standard of efficiency; and neither the captain nor the coach were the sort to encourage false hopes.

With the exception of three other persons, probably Baxby was the only one who knew Douglass had offered to come out. Despite his lameness, Baxby was at the field, accompanied by Fenwick and Morrison, both of whom voiced their amazement at the appearance of Malcolm with the squad.

"Well, what do you know about old Doug!" spluttered Fenwick, staring. "After all the talk he made, too!"

"The deceiving scoundrel!" Morrison laughed. "And he never breathed it to me!"

"How in the world did it happen?" speculated Fenwick.

Baxby promptly took the credit. "I advised him to do it. It required considerable argument and persuasion on my part."

"I never thought *you'd* be so interested," confessed Fenwick. "Why, if he gets on, which I very much doubt, he'll simply plug a hole temporarily made by Boltwood's lameness. It will be aid for Boltwood in his resting up for the big games. If that man had to do some pitching now and then, he'd probably keep himself in the crippled class."

Baxby swelled out his chest. "And that would be a misfortune for Yale," he said ponderously. "Regardless of personal likes and dislikes, we should only hope and work for the good of the college."

In spite of himself, Morrison snickered. The idea of Douglass making any self-sacrifice for the college was amusing, knowing his roommate as he

did. Nor could he imagine Baxby as one who would worry over Yale's unpromising baseball prospects. Still, the well-advertised "Newby" had the patter of the college man down fine; apparently he could talk it as well as hundreds of others who were more or less sincere in what they said. It was doubtful if the man had ever felt a touch of the true Yale spirit.

That there was such a spirit which obsessed hundreds of men who bore no society honors and who had never risen into pronounced prominence in the college life, Morrison was more than aware; he had experienced a glimmering of it himself. His sense of humor, mingled with a feeling of pity, permitted him to accept, for just what they were worth, those associates with whom fate had cast his lot. His one great fault was an apathy regarding his own position as an undergraduate and a fixed belief that it was useless for any man to struggle to break away from conditions which hemmed him in, as all were foreordained to pursue their fixed courses through life.

Of course, Roger Boltwood was on the field, but he was not wearing a playing uniform. Not only had he been forbidden to throw a ball, but the doctor who daily examined his arm had stated that he would like to put it in a sling. For the time being, he had declared, ordinary use of it might be harmful through giving his shoulder in the simplest movement a turn that would affect the injured ligaments. Roger's abounding energy and impulsiveness could carry him even farther at baseball practice, and he was sternly and repeatedly warned.

Having started the other players at practice through fungo batting, both Stote and the coach gave their attention to Douglass. The captain donned his big mitt and stood off to catch, while the coach placed himself behind Malcolm, where he could talk to him quietly. In a few minutes they learned that Douglass had good control, some speed, and a curve ball which he once or twice caused to break sharply. He was not encouraged to work his arm too much or too hard. Boltwood could not resist the desire to stroll up behind the coach to see what Douglass had. When the coach turned away, he saw Roger standing there, and said, in a low tone:

"It's mighty strange about this man. Of course, nobody can judge him until he's seen working in a game, but I'm in hopes he's the individual we've been yearning for. I say, Boltwood, you ought to be able to give him some finish."

Roger shook his head. "No," he returned guardedly; "I've had one experience trying to coach him. He won't stand for it from me."

A little later, to his surprise, Douglass approached him and asked him about throwing the fade-away, a deceptive ball which Boltwood had learned to command.

"I can't throw it for you," said Roger; "but I can show you how to hold it, and try to tell you how to pitch it." This he proceeded to do, Douglass listening attentively and seriously the while.

Up on the seats, Fenwick and Morrison wondered greatly. Baxby was silent; but his face, usually stolid and lacking in expression, wore a knowing look.

Throwing to one of the change catchers, Stote now being employed with the rest of the players, Douglass tried vainly to catch the kink of the fade-away. In spite of all Roger could tell him, he did not succeed.

"I reckon," he finally said, "that you and Christy Mathewson are the only two men who have it down fine."

In batting practice, Douglass showed good form, and met the ball in a manner which indicated that he "had an

eye." He swung freely, sharply, and easily, without slashing or trying to slug, and his hits went out on a line. He could run the bases, too, although, of course, his wind was not what it would have been had he kept himself is condition. The coach was particular not to let him go too far on this first day at the field. When it was all over, he was invited to appear at training table. Rarely, if ever before, had such a thing happened. But the situation was unusual; the case was desperate, and Douglass seemed to be a straw worth grasping at.

The majority of Yale's scheduled games to come were to be played at home. Of the teams met during the Southern trip, Georgetown was doubtless the most formidable, and Georgetown was now making a tour in the North, and winning a majority of the games played. On Tuesday, the following week, this fast bunch of collegians from the Potomac would reach New Haven. On Saturday, the day after Douglass came out, Yale played Columbia, and Malcolm, with the eagerness of youth, was secretly hopeful of getting into at least a few innings of the game. Despite his lack of recent experience, he believed he could acquit himself well, and now that he had begun, he yearned to show what he could do.

Pascal pitched the whole of the Columbia game—pitched it, and lost it. Starting off like a whirlwind, his fast ball seemed to dazzle the Manhattanites, and, for the first five innings, his smoke prevented the visitors from reaching first. Keeping the sacks clear in this manner, Pascal went along beautifully while Yale gathered two tallies. Those who knew Pascal, however, were not satisfied that those two runs gave the locals a margin of safety.

In the sixth, with one down, an error let a Columbia batter get on. Then the Yale pitcher betrayed his weakness, and every sack was tenanted when a terrifically long drive to the outfield promised more than enough runs to let Columbia even up. A sensational running one-handed catch by Guy Brisbane dashed the hopes of the visitors and doubtless saved Pascal from a benching.

On the bench, where he sat beside Boltwood, Douglass had fretted.

"Why don't they let me warm up, too?" he said, glancing toward Regan and the change catcher, who, in the distance, had resumed work with a ball when Columbia threatened. "I think I've got the measure of the most of these fellows. I'm sure I could go in there and hold them."

"And lame your arm, as I did, possibly," returned Roger. "You forget that you haven't been pitching, and your wing must be soft. That would leave us crippled and about as bad off as before. Better lose this game than to have such a thing happen."

When he saw Brisbane make that catch which roused the Yale crowd to admiring cheering, he added:

"Now Pascal will have clean cushions behind him next inning, and he ought to go along nicely as long as runners can be kept off them."

In the seventh and eighth Pascal was again unhittable. With only one more inning to be played, Regan came in to the bench. Douglass was silent and disappointed.

With the opening of the ninth old Trouble again turned his frown on Yale. The first Columbia batter met a whistler coming hot from Pascal's fingers, and reversed its course with such vigor that Gray let the ball go through him. The home team had acquired no further lead, and Stote felt an instant twinge of apprehension. Nevertheless, Pascal struck out the next man. While he was doing so, however, the runner who had benefited by Gray's bobble, stole second.

With that runner behind his back, Pascal became extremely nervous. Either he was afraid to put the ball over, or he had suddenly lost control, for he walked the next man.

Right there Columbia sprang a surprise. A pinch hitter was put in, a man who had the reputation of knocking the cover off the ball. To the consternation of the Yale players, this fellow dropped a bunt in front of the pan, and so by surprise did his performance take Pascal that the pitcher was too slow in getting the ball and throwing to first. The sacks were all covered, with only one out.

Regan slipped off his sweater, while Stote talked to Pascal in front of the pan. Pascal went back to the mound and pitched again. He put the ball across with plenty of speed, but somehow the jump he sought to stick on it was not there. The Columbia batter slugged out a double, on which all three men ahead of him scored. When he attempted to stretch that double into a triple he was thrown out at third; but Columbia led by a tally.

It was no credit to Pascal that the next hitter popped an easy infield fly; again the Yale pitcher had handed up a straight one with nothing on it.

Try desperately though the Yale players did in the last half of the ninth, they could not push a man round to the home anchorage, and the game ended with the visitors hilariously victorious.

"If they'd put me in, perhaps it would have been different," muttered Malcolm Douglass. "Well, now, maybe they'll give me a chance against Georgetown."

CHAPTER XIV.

A QUESTION OF MOTIVES.

DOWLING pushed up his eyeshade and struck a match to relight his pipe, staring quizzically across the table at Boltwood. Both men had been doing a little studying before turning in. In this, their junior year, having got into the swing of things at college, neither found it necessary to plug quite as hard as previously, but there were times when they conscientiously held their noses to the grindstones.

"And they say," added Andy, "that you were actually seen coaching the man."

Roger gathered up the loose pages of the theme on which he had been at work, jogged the sheets together, and fastened them with a clip.

"Well," he returned challengingly, "being on the blink myself, the least I can do for the team, it seems, is to coach a new man."

"But that man!" grunted Dowling, pulling hard at his brier, which wheezed rebelliously.

"What difference does it make who the man is if he can strengthen the nine in its weakest department?"

"Can he?"

"I hope so."

"There's not much time for the development of another pitcher this year."

"If the reports about Douglass are correct, if what he himself says is true, he ought to be able to pitch as soon as he can harden his arm a little. He's been in the game more or less every year as a pitcher."

"And never came out for his college team," said Dowling significantly. "A fine Yale man, infused to the core with interest and loyalty!"

"It was his ambition to make the eleven. He prefers football."

Dowling rummaged in the table drawer, found a cleaner, and poked at his pipestem.

"Some men always want to do things they can't do; what they can do they never consider worth while. But I'm not disposed to believe that Malcolm Douglass has got it in him to pitch. He's not the right sort. He

isn't doing it out of pure unselfish interest for the team. He won't work hard at anything. If there had been plenty of pitchers, you'd never have seen him competing for a position on the staff. As it stands he thinks he sees an easy way to get on and acquire prominence. Just at this time that might mean a great deal to him. Senior-society elections are coming on soon. Every man in college who has done something to bring him to the front is hopeful. Douglass managed to squeeze on to the junior-prom committee. Now the eyes of the whole college are turned toward the nine in a time of distress. If he can step in and pitch a little winning baseball against even the lighter-weight teams, he'll get himself talked about. And he knows that's bound to add to his chance of being 'tapped' on the last Thursday of the present month. If I haven't fathomed his reasoning and sounded his purpose I'll eat this pipe. What's the matter with the blamed thing, anyway? It's balking like a mule."

"And it's stronger than the much advertised forty-mule team that hauls borax out of Death Valley," averred Roger. "I'm under orders not to use tobacco, but I get a roaring old second-handed smoke that makes me dizzy every time you fire up that loud smelling fusee. Let's get a window open." He rose and threw the window up. "Perhaps you're right about Douglass," he admitted, returning to his chair; "but even if you are, what's to be done? Whatever the nature of his motives may be, he's needed if he really can pitch, and I fancy that settles it."

"Sure," agreed Andy. "I was merely speculating a little over your interest in the fellow. It's rather odd, you know."

"I don't know," returned Boltwood, flushing. "My interest lies in the team. Would you have me let personal prejudice interfere? I'm surprised at you, Andy. Do you believe me wholly selfish and——"

"Not at all," cut in Dowling instantly. "Old man, I know you're generous to the core. Old Handy Jones is a living testimonial to that fact. Oh, you covered your tracks rather cleverly, you thought, but I'm wise to it that it was you who practically saved the beggar from starvation in his bum little cell of a room. He doesn't know it, but it was you who, through the students' aid committee, established the mythical deserving fund, which keeps him fed and clothed in return for supposed services of a purely visionary nature."

"It's queer," observed Roger, annoyed, "how leaky some people's mouths are. I'd like to know who cracked and let this out."

"Accidents will happen. Don't worry; I'm not going to spread it. Whether or not he ever knows it, Jonesy will owe a heap to you. He was trying to work his way through, but the athletic bug had him, and he couldn't keep away from the field. He chased up athletics when he was too poorly nourished and too frazzled to make good at anything, even if he possessed the natural ability. That's something he doesn't possess, and contemplation of the disappointments he has met and those he must meet seems pathetic. Pacemaker or tail-end cheer leader is as far as he will ever get, yet the change in him is marvelous, and he seems happy."

"He's not the only man doomed to such disappointments. There are plenty of others, Andy—fellows who come out for the teams year after year, hope burning perennially in their breasts. As long as the light burns they will look forward to the prospect of some day wearing the magic letter, and they'll work like tigers, sacrificing themselves that other men may be rounded into condition through their assistance. Lots

of these fellows are more loyal, better Yale men, more deserving of respect and honor than some of the fortunate ones endowed by nature to achieve their ambitions. I could name several."

"No need to name them. I think I know a few myself."

"Well, with such examples before me, even if I never pitched another ball, even if something happened to prevent me from playing football next year, if I were doomed to see other men fill the positions I might have filled, and win the honors, I'd think it a duty and a privilege to help them every way possible, just as I'm ready to help Douglass now that he has asked my assistance."

"And not even a pair of blue eyes, tinted like the violet, would add to your enthusiasm," put in Andy.

"Oh, confound it!" exploded Roger, slapping shut a book and jumping up to thrust his head out of the window for a long breath of genuinely fresh air.

Barely had he looked forth, when, from a group of juniors in the inclosure below, rose a spirited hail.

"Yea-a-a, Bolt!" called one of the saluting group. "Come down and join the sewing circle. Bring your knitting with you. The gossip is tasty to-night."

"Oh, won't you come out to-night, to-night; oh, won't you come out to-night?" sang another.

"It can't be done," Roger answered laughingly. "Whose reputation are you tearing in tatters this pleasant evening?"

"Yours," was the prompt answer. "You haven't got a shred of it left to your name, you worthless parasite."

"How's the wing?" inquired yet another, more seriously. "When are you going to take it out of the splints and let it perform again?"

"Just as soon as it's able to sit up and have its bed made—if I'm allowed," was the ready assurance.

This promise was greeted with high approval. "Oh," said a voice, "he'll be there with the deadly shoots, and send Johnny Harvard marching home on crutches. He's always there when the time comes. It's a way he has."

"I hope you're not a false prophet, Gidley," said Roger, withdrawing his head.

Andy was smiling at him over his dead pipe. "You see how it is, old man; they depend on you. They believe you'll come to the scratch at the big moment."

"But," returned Boltwood regretfully, "I'm afraid some of them think me faking more or less. They've got the idea that my arm may be a little lame, perhaps, and so I'm laying off to let others do most of the minor work, while I come in for the hot stuff at the finish. I wish they wouldn't think that."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CHANCE COMES.

IN chapel on Sunday morning Boltwood settled himself down to listen to a famous preacher from another city. He knew that the discourse would be worth hearing; doubtless it would be discussed by the students for days to come. But barely was he seated when, chancing to glance a little to the left and in front of him, his eyes beheld that which gave him a thrill. It was the clear-cut profile of a girl with healthily tinted cheeks, and dark hair that waved just a bit in tiny tendrils about her ears. He could not see her eyes, but instantly he thought of fresh violets peeping forth in springtime woods. Kate Douglass was still in New Haven. She had come to chapel with her brother, who sat beside her.

It is strange how time, place, and occasion work upon the imaginative

mind. Boltwood possessed such a mind. Sometimes, when he saw how much more easily fellows got along who were endowed with natures more stoical and less easily aroused, he almost despised himself for it. Almost always he endeavored to control his too vivid fancies and dreams, believing they were certain to make any man flighty and impractical. In this conviction, perhaps, there was more or less soundness, but the dreamer who is likewise a doer usually conceives and executes things which could never have had their genesis in the mind of a commonplace, unimaginative person.

Roger found it difficult to take his eyes off that fascinating profile, and, when he did so, it remained etched vividly on the retina of his mind. So he speculated on just what sort of a girl Kate Douglass really was, and, despite his knowledge of her brother and the unpleasant, gossipy rumors concerning her family, his fancy endowed her with all the mental charms and graces and high qualities which a girl who looked like that must possess. For the time being he did not spend a single thought upon another of her sex who had hitherto occupied some moments of his fancy to a disturbing degree. Yet he had told himself that his interest in Miss Douglass was purely impersonal.

He was astonished when he discovered that the choir had risen to chant the close of the service. Flushing and feeling a trifle foolish, he rose with the congregation. Following the benediction he lingered a little, and brother and sister, going out, passed him. She saw him and bowed with a smile—such a smile! Douglass likewise gave him a bow, in which there seemed almost a touch of friendliness.

"Perhaps he isn't such a bad sort, after all," thought Roger. "The best of us have our faults."

Later Andy chaffed him a little. "You seemed to be wrapped in a trance all through the sermon, Bolt, but you had a crick in your neck the most of the time. I wondered if you wouldn't put it into the same class as your bum arm, holding it twisted round sidewise so long."

"I had my ear turned to the speaker," explained Roger.

"Was that it? Now what do you think of the point he made regarding the distinction between ethics and morals? I've always maintained that the meaning was practically the same."

"A-a-ahem!" coughed Boltwood, clearing his throat. "Oh, there's a distinction—a pronounced distinction, though I own up that I didn't quite follow his reasoning. He was a little too vague, I thought; he didn't make himself quite clear."

"Go on, you bluffer. He was the clearest, simplest, most understandable speaker I ever heard, and Richardson, Hardy, and Thorpe, who walked back with me, said the same. I don't believe you knew what he was talking about. These accidentally interrupted automobile tours sometimes raise the dickens."

"You go and jump off the dock!" returned Boltwood.

At dinner he was still further embarrassed when two or three members of the team attempted to discuss the sermon with him. He escaped awkwardly by professing that he had permitted his mind to be absorbed by thoughts of baseball and other things. He was glad that Dowling was not there to confound him; probably Andy wouldn't make any hinting remark under such conditions, but he had a way of grinning and winking.

Practice on Monday found Douglass still trying to acquire the fadeaway.

"If you'd pitch it for me once or twice, Boltwood, I might catch the kink," he said.

"I'm sorry I can't," returned Roger. "I would in a minute, but I'm still under orders to keep my wing absolutely loafing, and I may be for some time to come. Has Mrs. Herkimer recovered her lost earring?"

"I don't think so," was the answer. "She hadn't yesterday. Too bad that happened. It has really annoyed her more than the accident."

"When does she think of leaving town?"

"I don't think she's decided. The longer she stays the better I'll like it, for it keeps my sister here. Kate will be at the game to-morrow. I told her it was possible that I might be given a chance to pitch. Think I'll get it, Boltwood?"

"That's not for me to say, but I wouldn't be at all surprised if they had to use you in a part of the game, anyhow."

"That's what I'm looking for. I reckon my arm is all right. Why, I haven't even lamed it a bit in practice."

Coming out with the team on Tuesday afternoon, Roger found himself, whenever it was possible to do so, surveying the gathering crowd that came pouring into the stands. Not until some time after the game began, however, and then by surreptitiously watching Douglass, did he discover the location of the person he sought. She was there, bearing a Yale banner, accompanied by a sprightly, middle-aged woman, whom Boltwood recognized with surprise as Miss Davis, a once famous "college widow," now somewhat passée. Then he remembered that he had heard that Miss Davis was a relative of the Deerings.

The game opened with Regan on the slab for Yale. Besides Douglass and Pascal two of the forlorn-hope pitchers had warmed up, but it was pretty certain that neither of the latter would be used unless the run of the game should be so disastrously against Yale that, with no chance to win, it would be good policy to save the better men.

Georgetown had some sluggers, and they hammered out one run in the first inning. Yale was unable to retaliate in her half, for Hollywood, the visitors' first-string pitcher, was in excellent form.

The second round gave neither team a tally, but in the third Georgetown's heavy hitters got at Regan again and came near chasing him to the bench. They accumulated two more tallies.

"Why don't they let me go in?" muttered Douglass. "Regan can't hold that bunch."

Yale desperately assaulted Hollywood and succeeded in getting a score, which, however, was presented them through a bad throw to the plate. In the fourth, having apparently sized Regan up, the visitors resumed their bombardment. With only one down, they scored twice. Then Regan fumbled an easy roller, and two men were on the sacks.

Stote made an excuse to rush to the bench for something. A word or two passed between him and the coach. Douglass, eagerly waiting, shed his sweater at a signal, and ran out to limber his arm a little.

A fortunate double play checked Georgetown, but the score was five to one, and Regan's performance was ended for the day. Douglass would go in with the opening of the next inning.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The next section of this serial will appear in the May 30th TOP-NOTCH, out April 30th. This magazine is now issued three times a month—on the 10th, 20th, and 30th. Back numbers will be supplied by news dealers, or the publishers.

Corns are a joke—on the other fellow's foot.

Adventures of Steve Blake, Traveling Man.

It's A Long Lane

By J. A. Fitzgerald

(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

DISTRESS SIGNALS.

STEVE BLAKE, dozing in the parlor car of the train that was proceeding toward Boston with a deliberateness that was positively irritating, awoke with a start as sounds of merriment greeted his ears. Hinkle & Co.'s popular business scout was not long in locating the source of the hilarity. The train had stopped at Groveton, New Hampshire, to take on a pair of honeymooners, and a large proportion of the population had assembled at the station to shower the newlyweds with shouts, good wishes, rice, and superannuated footwear.

Loneliness took a fresh grip on the big fellow's heart when the bride and groom, radiant as the June sunshine that poured through the windows, came tripping down the aisle of the car, and, choosing seats directly ahead of him, stood waving joyous farewells to the cheering crowd on the platform. The happy scene that was now furnishing mild amusement for the other passengers served to recall his hopeless infatuation for pretty Martha Lake, and started him wondering afresh whether their marriage would ever come to pass. At such times it was only natural that he should rage inwardly against the fate that had led Martha to believe she was a wonderful singer instead of the sole proprietor of the most atrocious voice any one had ever heard. He sighed audibly as he thought that her shrieking was all that stood between them and happiness; that it was the chief obstacle to his appearing in the rôle now being enacted by the beaming fellow in front of him.

The satisfaction of a successful trip through Canada, the comforting feel of a well-filled order book in an inside pocket, the contentment that should accompany perfect health—all these were not sufficient to banish the regrets that surged up in him as he watched the happy couple. At length he arose and started toward the smoking compartment, unable to stand the torture any longer.

"June is a tough month on a traveling man who happens to have a ro-

mance on his hands," he reflected sadly. "It seems as if I had been hemmed in by newlyweds ever since I left New York. We've been gathering 'em in at every stop. Funny how everybody but me can get married!" Three or four sighs, and then: "Martha, those vocal chords of yours have an awful lot to answer for; they are wrecking my happiness, and the nerves of every one who hears them."

At the door of the smoking room he halted. The sole occupant of the place sat huddled up in a corner near the window, his elbows resting on his knees, his face buried in his hands, a picture of dejection. So engrossed was the fellow in his thoughts that the noise made by the sliding curtain did not rouse him. Something familiar about the bowed figure caused Steve to take a second look at it. As he did so, his lips framed an exclamation that remained unuttered. The crumpled heap in front of him was Pop Taylor!

Steve could scarcely believe his eyes. What had happened to discourage so completely the man who had once been his keenest rival? Taylor, long regarded as the most unscrupulous, domineering, unsociable drummer on the road; Taylor, the most cordially disliked commercial traveler in the business, sat before him, completely crushed. Steve recalled how he had been tricked by him on several occasions. Recollection of the manner in which he had evened up matters by beating Taylor to a seven-thousand-dollar order in Maryland a year before made him feel better. Taylor had been Merlin & Webb's star man at that time. Since then, Steve had lost track of him.

Here was a chance to gloat over the man who had spent most of his life gloating over others! But Steve was not so ungenerous. He stepped out of the room. He would leave Taylor to his own reflections. Outside the door, he came to a stop and thought a minute, then retraced his steps. Any one in distress—even an enemy—could have his sympathy.

"Hello, Pop!" he called out cheerfully. He held out his hand as he advanced.

Taylor never raised his head. "Hello, Blake!" came from the bowed figure.

Steve looked his surprise. How had Taylor made such a remarkable guess? "That's calling the turn for fair, Pop!" he ventured. "How on earth did you know I——"

"Saw you when you got on the train early this morning," Taylor whispered hoarsely. "Nothing remarkable about it. As a matter of fact, I've been keeping out of your way."

He straightened up as he said this, and stared ahead of him. Steve noted the pallor of his cheeks, the beaten look in his eyes, the deep lines in his face. It was plain that worry was responsible for his changed appearance. By no means a young man, he seemed to have aged ten years in the months that had elapsed since they had met. All resentment left Steve as he surveyed his late rival. He could not help feeling sorry for him.

"Keeping out of my way?" Steve repeated.

Taylor sighed, and reiterated his statement.

"That's a strange admission, coming from you, Pop," Steve went on. "You used to go out of your way to give me battle."

Their eyes met for the first time. "I know, Blake; but those days are gone for me," returned the other. "I was a pretty fair peddler then, Blake, wasn't I?" he added.

"Better than that," returned Steve. "You kept us all humping to keep up with you, but I don't mind telling you ——" The big salesman checked his words. His look of annoyance indicated that he was sorry he had not checked them sooner.

"Out with it," urged Taylor.

"Oh, it's nothing," said Steve.

"Yes, it was," the other added. "You were about to say that you didn't mind telling me that my methods didn't always meet with your approval."

Steve looked confused. Taylor had made a good guess. But he put Steve at his ease when he continued: "I have lived to regret my trickiness, Blake."

This admission, coming from a man who had been arrogance itself, amazed Steve. What on earth could have brought about the change? Taylor caught the mystified look in his eyes.

"Sounds strange, eh?" he went on. "Well, I mean every word of it. If I could live my life over, you can lay a little bet that I'd adopt different tactics. I've lived long enough to find out that you can't deceive your fellow man and get away with it; you've got to pay the penalty some day. The man who treats his associates unfairly gets paid back in his own coin before he dies."

There could be no mistaking Taylor's sincerity as he made these statements. Steve agreed with him. "There's no denying that the square deal pays the best dividends," he granted. "But—but why the sermon, Pop? What's happened?"

Taylor looked at him a full minute before he replied: "Because, Blake, you have before you a splendid illustration of the fate that awaits the trickster in any game." Steve made as if to interrupt, but the other hurried on: "I'm now collecting dividends on my trickiness, and I have figured it out that I am getting just what I deserve. I feel that I am making my last stand; that this will be my last trip." His voice was hardly audible as he finished speaking.

"Have—have things been breaking badly, Pop?" asked Steve.

"I haven't sold a dollar's worth in two weeks," said the other. "I—I got a letter from the firm yesterday telling me that I'd better come home. You—you know what that means."

This information touched Steve deeply. "What are you handling now?" he inquired.

"The Excelsior carpet sweeper," said Taylor. "I've been with the Excelsior company for three months; ever since I came back to the game."

Steve was surprised to hear this. The Excelsior concern was one of the smallest in the household-equipment field. It handled half a dozen articles—the carpet sweeper was its chief standby—but was frowned upon by traveling salesmen because of the small salaries it paid. He could remember the time when Taylor would have scorned such an offer. "The Excelsior has always been a good seller," observed Steve. "I've been having pretty good luck with the Imperial this trip. I——"

"The Imperial is a bully sweeper," Taylor declared.

"I can't understand why you've run into a slump," Steve resumed. "Every carpet sweeper in the country goes big at this season of the year."

"That's what makes my showing look twice as miserable," said Taylor.

The conversation had progressed to a point where Steve felt that he could ask a few pertinent questions. He was a bit curious to know the reason for Taylor's present plight. "How did you come to hook up with the Excelsior people?" he asked.

"No one else wanted me," Taylor replied bluntly. "I've been out of the game for more than a year, you know. Yes, I got through right after you put it over on me down in Maryland. The——"

"No!" exclaimed Steve.

Taylor nodded. "Yes," he repeated. "That Fairfield fumble of mine did the trick. I don't blame you, now. I was bitter against you then. I don't mind telling you that I tried my best to ditch

you on that occasion; but you played the game on the level, and won out. Merlin & Webb were furious when they lost that order. They were sure they had the thing cinched. When they learned that you had grabbed the prize, they went after me with a club. I had a battle with old man Merlin. Before we finished the argument I passed him my resignation. I was conceited enough to think that the firm couldn't get along without me."

"You'd been with the house a long time," ventured Steve.

"Eighteen years. I had saved about twenty-five thousand dollars, and I was bursting with independence." He laughed harshly at this point. "Why, I thought Merlin & Webb would have to close down after I quit. That gives you an idea of the size of my head at that time."

"I lost track of you about then," said Steve.

"Well," Taylor went on, "I got an insane delusion that I could make a success of the hotel business. I'd spent most of my life in hotels, and reckoned I knew that game backward. I put every dollar I possessed in a house in Atlantic City. Eight months later I quit, not only broke, but in debt for several thousand dollars. The minute I opened the hotel, I began to realize that my chickens were coming home to roost. Every traveling man in the business put the hammer on my place. And you know how they can make or break a house."

Steve gave a nod. "You sure have had tough luck!" he declared. "I think you made a big mistake in opening a hotel down there. The small hotel can't hope to compete with the big fellows with their swell dances and fancy orchestras and——"

"Don't get the impression that I was a piker," remonstrated Taylor. "I made a big splash for a few weeks. I brought Phinney's Metropolitan Band from New York—what's the matter?"

The question was addressed to Steve. At the mention of Phinney, he had given a quick start. Phinney was the man who was responsible for most of the big salesman's troubles; the man, who, posing as a singing teacher when in reality he was nothing but a bass drummer, had persuaded Martha Lake that she had a wonderful voice, and had urged her to adopt her hopeless career; the man whose band had guyed him unmercifully during the charity baseball game in New York a few weeks before; the one man, in short, capable of inspiring homicidal reflections in his mind. Unconsciously Steve clenched his fists until they went white at the knuckles.

"That's a good band, isn't it?" queried Taylor.

"It seems to be in great demand," Steve admitted.

"Well, I had Phinney and his bunch there for a month. I'll bet that guy Phinney ate more than the rest of his men put together. Sometimes I felt like choking him."

Steve laughed softly. He was sure that he could stand by and see the bogus professor's wind shut off without making a protest.

"Down and out financially," Taylor proceeded, "there was nothing left for me but to hunt a job at the old game. One after another of the big firms turned me away. Some of the managers were frank enough to admit my ability as a salesman, but made it plain that they wouldn't have me on the premises. News that I was on my uppers caused general rejoicing in the wholesale district. The hammers were applied vigorously all along the line. I've been getting the same frigid reception on the road. Buyers everywhere have been giving me the cold shoulder. I'm through, Blake."

His head drooped on his chest as he said this. He had been brave enough as

he talked, but now, with the end of the recital bringing back the gloomy outlook more vividly than ever, he sat there crushed and broken.

A wave of sympathy swept over Steve. He placed his hand on Taylor's shoulder. "Nonsense, Pop!" he said comfortingly. "I wouldn't talk that way. There's a thousand big sales left in you yet. The going may be a bit rough right now, but it will get better. Stick to your determination to play fair and you can't lose."

Taylor refused to be cheered. "No use, Blake," he said, in a low voice. "I'm licked. I know I am. I—I wouldn't care so much if it wasn't for my wife and little girl. I've always been able to keep them in comfort, but now—but now——" He couldn't trust himself to finish the sentence.

"Your luck may turn in Boston," Steve suggested.

"With you working against me?" came in a hopeless tone. "Not a chance, Blake. You've got as many friends as I have enemies. Now you can understand why I was keeping out of your way."

CHAPTER II.

THE MISSION MYSTERIOUS.

STEVE'S efforts to cheer his discouraged companion were not very successful. In his optimistic way he cited numerous cases where traveling men, after meeting with reverses, had come back stronger than ever. Taylor insisted that all these cases were different from his; that the men referred to had had a few friends to assist them in getting a fresh start. The net result of the big drummer's advice to Taylor was the latter's promise to work harder than ever; to go down, if he must, with colors flying. They had dinner together when they reached Boston, and then Taylor retired to his room.

After he had gone, Steve sat for some time reviewing the situation and trying to figure out some way in which he might help his erstwhile rival. He realized that Taylor was getting desperate; that any improvement in his affairs would have to come quickly to be of any benefit. An hour's meditation found him as far from a possible solution of the problem as ever. Taylor's unenviable reputation among those who might have been of assistance to him in such a crisis made the task especially difficult. In the midst of his reflections, he jumped to his feet, hurried through the door of the hotel, and entered a taxicab.

It was theater time, but the cab in which he was riding gave the amusement district a wide berth. Long after midnight, when he returned to the hotel and took the elevator to his room, he appeared to be well satisfied with himself. Despite the lateness of the hour, he was humming softly as he started down the long corridor that led to his apartment. Contrary to his custom of rising at seven each morning, it was past noon when he came downstairs the next day. This unusual action on his part surprised the hotel clerks and attendants, but no one more than Taylor, whom he found making inquiries for him at the desk. Steve thought he detected a more hopeful look in his friend's eye.

"You don't mean to say you are just getting up?" Taylor ventured, with a smile.

"Uh, huh," replied Steve. He yawned and rubbed his eyes. "I've been giving the alarm clock the laugh lately."

Taylor regarded him curiously. "It's queer to think of you losing a morning," he observed. "You weren't gaited that way in the old days."

"I haven't missed very many," said Steve. "As a matter of fact, I've had a particularly busy trip, and have been slowing down a bit."

Taylor broke into a nervous little laugh. He was rubbing his hands,

smoothing the back of his head, and giving other evidence that there was something on his mind. "Will you join me at lunch?" he asked.

Steve said he would. "But I'll call it breakfast," he added. "After all, food tastes just as good under any name."

They had been seated at the table but a few minutes when Taylor opened up: "Why—why don't you ask me what kind of a morning I've had?"

"I wanted to," Steve admitted. "But I didn't know just how to go about it. Judging by your expression, luck seems to have given you the high sign."

"It has. I got two splendid orders this morning, Blake. I'm happier than I've been in a month. See, there they are!" he exclaimed triumphantly, exhibiting the memoranda.

For the first time Steve realized how thoroughly disheartened his companion must have been. Here was one of the acknowledged high-class salesmen of the country, a man who in better days had sold thousands of dollars' worth of goods in a day, boasting of the fact that he had made an ordinary sale! His enthusiasm made it plain that he had about abandoned all hope.

"I can't tell you how glad I am, Pop," Steve assured him.

"I know you are," the other returned fervently. "I couldn't wait to see you to tell you about it. And——"

"Just as I told you yesterday," Steve interrupted. "Keep hammering away. That's the answer."

"And the best news of all is that the biggest order came from a man I wasn't going to see; a man I had snubbed when he was on the road, and who, I believed, was one of my worst enemies. I went after him first, determined to get the hardest knock early in the day. Imagine my surprise when he came through with an order for fifty dozen sweepers!" Taylor rattled on.

"That's the kind of fighting that wins," remarked Steve.

"I've got my nerve back now," said Taylor. "And I'm going to give these Boston buyers the greatest argument they've had in a long while."

"Bully for you! Right at them!"

Steve put in a fairly profitable afternoon in the big dry-goods district, and dined with the general manager of one of the largest firms in the city. On his return to the hotel he found Taylor in the writing room, a smile on his face, his manner even more cheerful than it had been earlier in the day.

"By George, Blake!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "It beats all, the way things have been breaking for me today. I'm so happy I could turn a handspring."

"Go to it!" urged Steve pleasantly.

"Yes, sir," Taylor resumed. "This was like one of my old-time days. And I've only visited five houses. If this keeps up I'll have my firm cheering for me. I'm just sending in a few orders that will convince them that I have a punch or two left."

Steve smiled at his friend's enthusiasm. "They can't stop you now, Pop," he observed. "You've got your jinx on the run."

"Thanks to you, Blake. All I ask now is a chance to stick in the game long enough to convince my fellow traveling men that I have seen the error of my ways. I'd give anything to win their good opinion."

"And you will," Steve assured him. "Don't let that worry you. It won't take the boys long to notice the change. And I'll do my best to help them notice it." He reached out his hand. Taylor grabbed it eagerly, but looked the other way.

For reasons best known to Steve they did not meet for several days after that. The sudden reluctance on the part of Hinkle & Co.'s representative toward early rising enabled him to avoid the

other man. He wrote Martha Lake that he would be home on Saturday, and requested an appointment for that evening, and was not surprised when he received a reply from her on Friday morning—that is, part of a reply. A very important part of the letter—the part that gave her new address—had been blurred in folding. Try as he would, he could not decipher it. The enthusiastic assurance that she was making great progress with her singing "despite the unsympathetic attitude of inartistic persons" did not cheer him to any great extent.

"You will be surprised to learn that I have moved from Yonkers," the concluding paragraph read, "and am now ——" The rest of this sentence had been blurred until it was indistinguishable. By holding the letter to the light he thought he could pick out "Pon" from the inky jumble. That the obliterated line contained a reference to the address was made plain by the ensuing sentence:

Take the subway to Ninety-sixth Street. It's just off the Drive. I will look for you Saturday night. Yours lovingly,

MARTHA.

P. S.—I forgot to tell you that dear old Mrs. Pickachs is with me. You have no idea what a comfort she has been. M.

His annoyance at his inability to make out the address was short-lived. He would have no trouble locating her newest abode. It was one of those ornate human warehouses on Riverside Drive. But Martha's announcement that Mrs. Pickachs was enjoying her hospitality roused his anger. If there was one woman in the world he could get along without seeing it was Mrs. Pickachs. From the day when they had met her on a railroad train, she had left nothing undone to discredit him in Martha's eyes. He felt that the stony-eyed old lady was responsible for his continuance in the bachelor squad; if she hadn't restored Martha's alleged voice with her hot birdseed poultices, he would now be a happy married man.

"I can't see what Martha sees in her," he reflected bitterly. "There's no use in my thinking of real happiness while she and that despicable Phinney are on earth. Just as I think I've got Martha tamed, one of them turns up and upsets my plans."

Boston's bustling suburbs claimed his attention that day and most of the evening. He was anxious to finish up his work in that territory, as he had reserved a berth on the night train for New York. It was ten o'clock when he got back to the hotel, packed his grip, and started for the station.

"Oh, Steve!" the head clerk called after him. He had not seen him come in. "Taylor has been hunting all over for you."

"Is that so?"

The clerk said that Taylor had left word for him to wait. "Your train doesn't pull out until midnight," observed the clerk. "Stick around. Maybe it's important."

"I guess Pop just wants to gossip," said Steve, resuming his journey toward the door. "I'm all tired out, and I want to get to sleep before the train starts. Tell Pop I'll look him up in New York next week. So long!"

CHAPTER III.

A RUDE AWAKENING.

LIKE most traveling men, Steve never found it necessary to count himself to sleep. All beds looked alike to him. Ten minutes after he had tucked himself into the lower berth he was shaking hands with the fantastic persons who people the Land of Nod. He had no idea how long he had been asleep, when he was awakened by loud voices and sounds of a scuffle; lying there on his back, still more asleep than awake, he tried to make out the cause of the uproar. The train seemed to

have stopped. The aisle of the car appeared to be jammed with struggling passengers. There had been a wreck! That was the first lucid thought that came to him with returning consciousness.

At the same instant he became aware of some unwieldy object on his chest. The thought that he was pinned under the wreckage brought the cold perspiration to his brow; in his terror he forgot to make any effort to extricate himself. The struggle in the aisle seemed to be getting fiercer. Steve took a deep breath. That part of him seemed to be all right. He took an inventory of his arms, hands, fingers, eyes, and ears; they were all present. He found he could move his legs; that his toes wiggled a wireless greeting to him. Reassured to this extent, he had courage to examine the object that rested on his chest. In the darkness of the berth, it seemed to take on a cylindrical shape. He was certain it was a car wheel, until it yielded to a slight effort on his part. He had drawn himself from under the object when the light in his berth was turned on. A sharp cry escaped him as the sudden illumination revealed a bass drum, with this inscription: "Phinney's Metropolitan Harmonists."

Quick as a flash, he ripped open the curtains and jumped into the aisle, to be confronted there by "Professor" Phinney, who, in a more or less maudlin condition, was resisting the efforts of two husky porters to silence him.

"I'm sorry he disturbed you, sir," one of the porters explained to Steve. "He pushed that drum in on top of you before we could——"

"Well, bless my little heart, if there ain't my old pal, Blake!" cried Phinney, reaching toward Steve. He had recognized the big salesman despite his pajama attire. "Put it there, old top!" urged Phinney. Steve side-stepped the invitation.

"Throw that guy out!" came from all parts of the car.

"I'd like to see some one throw me out!" Phinney roared back. "Me and my little friend, Blake, can take a fall out——"

An irascible-looking old man poked his head through the curtains and shot a withering look at Steve. "Why did you bring him in here in that condition?" he demanded.

"The big fellow is to blame," added another man.

This was too much for Steve. To be roused from a sound slumber was bad enough; to be roused by the man he despised more than any other in the world was worse; to be accused of bringing him in was the limit. "Gentlemen, I've been in the hay since half past ten," he explained, in a loud voice. "This fellow just got on at this station. I——"

"The train is still in Boston, sir," interposed one of the porters. "It's close to midnight. We'll pull out in a few minutes. The gentleman has the berth over yours. He——"

"What!" gasped Steve.

The porter repeated the statement. "He tried to put his drum up there," the porter went on, "and when he couldn't, he just shoved it in on top of you."

Phinney had quieted down now. He had fallen asleep while leaning against the side of the berth.

"He's the owner of the band," the porter volunteered. "The fellows who carried him to the train said the other musicians had returned to New York last night. The band has been playing at a fair in Lynn."

To say that Steve was astonished at the strange twist of circumstances that had brought them together again is putting it mildly. He was stunned. It just seemed as if he couldn't do anything or go any place without having Phinney bob up serenely to annoy him. "It beats all, the way that pest adheres to me,"

he said to himself. "If I was to take a stroll along the bottom of the Atlantic I'd be sure to meet him coming along with a pet whale."

These meditations were interrupted when the porters picked the limp bass-drum impresario up by the head and heels, and, after swinging him to a "One, two, three!" accompaniment, tossed him into the upper berth. Then they took the drum to the washroom.

"I guess he won't bother you now, sir," one of the porters said, as he drew the curtains together across Steve's berth.

That was probably the worst guess that porter had ever made. The train had scarcely got under way before discordant noises, now like the combined efforts of a dozen croupy horns, now like the squeal of a pig under a gate, now like the harmony made by a tin pail rolling downstairs, began emanating from Phinney's berth. Gradually the olfactory-organ recital increased in volume until it drowned the rattle of the car trucks.

Directly beneath this nasal concert, Steve found sleep out of the question. He covered his head with the bedclothes; he plugged his ears; he hunched himself into all sorts of uncomfortable positions in an effort to shut out the sounds; but all to no purpose. Finally he sat up and began pounding the pillow with all his energy. Angry protests were coming from the other berths now.

"Oh, porter!" called Steve.

"Yes, sir," came the response.

"I thought you said that fellow sent his band on to New York ahead of him?" said Steve, somewhat acidly.

The porter, urged to action by the irate passengers, poked the snoring Phinney with the gas lighter. Each poke only served to shake a new set of discords out of the professor.

"Run it through him!" directed the irascible old man in the berth across the aisle.

"Don't do that!" advised Steve. "He thinks you're encoring him. Put a clothespin on his nose. If that doesn't work, slip a feedbag over his head."

Sleepy heads emerged from most of the berths, the owners emitting low, ominous growls at having their rest broken. One powerfully built fellow lumbered along the aisle until he reached Phinney's bunk. "There's only one thing to do with this nuisance," he bellowed. "Shove his head out the window and pull the window down on his neck."

He started to put his plan into execution, but the porter dissuaded him. "If a bridge struck him, it would take his head off," pleaded the porter.

"That's the only thing that will make a decent citizen of him," the other retorted. "The idea of worrying over what happens to that human pianola!"

Seeing that there was nothing to do but make the best of the situation, the passengers returned to their berths and passed the rest of the night trying to conceive of some form of torture that would fit Phinney's crime. The train was an hour late, but Phinney was equal to the extra performance this delay entailed. Not once did he run out of records. Long before the train reached New York, his fellow passengers, red-eyed and disheveled, were up and dressed, eagerly awaiting the chance to get beyond range of the serenade. Blissfully unconscious of the uncomplimentary things that were being said about him, Phinney was still shattering the atmosphere when the train pulled into the Grand Central Station.

"The company should be compelled to equip each berth with a Maxim silencer," was the final protest of the elderly passenger.

Steve was among the last to leave the car. He was making his way through the train shed when some one touched

him on the arm. It was the porter, gasping for breath after a sprint to catch up with him.

"Ah beg your pardon, sir," he began. "Your friend is still dead to the——"

"Friend!" ejaculated Steve, with a slight frown.

The porter saw that he had made a mistake. "Well—well—the man that you know; the man in the berth above you," he corrected. "He's dead to the world. He won't wake up till Tuesday."

"I don't care if he never wakes up."

"But we've got to get him out of that car," the porter went on. "It has to be shunted onto a siding in a short time, to be cleaned and aired, and we've got to get rid of him. Could you tell me where to send him?"

A mischievous gleam entered Steve's eyes. "I'd hate to tell you where I'd like to have him sent," he answered, resuming his journey.

CHAPTER IV.

BY WIRE.

THERE was no occasion for his rushing downtown at such an early hour, so Steve made his way through the hurrying throng of commuters to a near-by barber shop, from which he emerged a little later showing but slight traces of the ravages caused by a sleepless night. A carefully selected breakfast helped him to forget Phinney, and turned his thoughts toward pleasanter things, so that his usual cheerful expression was in evidence once more when he breezed into Hinkle & Co.'s big showrooms a few minutes before nine o'clock.

It was his first appearance at the office since his complete fiasco as a baseball player in the big charity ball game a month previous, and he was not surprised at the sarcastic references to his diamond ability that came from all sides. Answering this good-natured criticism with his characteristic form of retort, he made his way to Fred Hinkle's private office. He no longer feared that the boss—the only man of his acquaintance, by the way, who knew of his affair with Martha Lake—would interrogate him as to the latest developments in his unfortunate romance. Of late, evidently realizing that Steve was pretty well broken up by the unsatisfactory progress of his courtship, Hinkle had been making only casual references to the affair. Steve was extremely grateful for his employer's consideration in this respect.

"Good morning, chief!"

Hinkle had risen, and was awaiting him. "Hello, Steve, my boy," he returned cordially, taking the proffered hand. "I heard the boys joshing you about your ball playing."

"I had it coming to me, all right," Steve admitted. "I guess I'm the champion bad ball player of the world. The next time I play I'm going to use a hod. Then I may be able to catch something."

The big salesman was regaling his employer with the story of how Phinney had kept the whole car awake. All at once Hinkle's hands came together in a gentle crash. "By Jove! Steve," he exclaimed, "I forgot to give you a telegram that came in about half an hour ago. I opened it, because I thought it was business, and didn't know just when you would arrive. It——"

"You did perfectly right in opening it," interrupted Steve. "That's the arrangement we've always had regarding wires that come to the office."

Hinkle found the yellow slip under a stack of mail, and handed it to Steve, after which he strode away toward the window that looked out on city hall square. Steve flushed slightly as he read:

Understand now why you avoided me. Also understand reason for change in my luck. Williams tipped me off to what you

had done. Million thanks. God bless you, Steve! TAYLOR.

Over and over Steve read the message. It was the first time that Taylor had ever addressed him by his first name. He crossed the room and joined Hinkle. "I suppose you know who it is from?" he said quietly.

"From Pop Taylor," replied Hinkle. "I got a letter from him yesterday in which he expressed his deepest gratitude for something you had done for him. I was thunderstruck at the remarkable change in his attitude. He explained that he would not have written the letter had he not wanted to make sure that I heard of how you had helped him. He said he knew that you would never tell of it. I don't know just what you did for him, but you've converted Pop into a warm friend."

"I didn't do any more for him, Mr. Hinkle, than I would do for any other fellow down on his luck," said Steve. "I'm kind of sorry he's mentioned it."

"But what's happened to Pop? What's brought about the change?" Hinkle asked wonderingly.

Steve told his employer what Taylor had related to him.

"I don't wonder that you experienced a change of heart toward him," said the boss. "He surely has had more hard luck than even his indefensible conduct entitled him to. Working for the Excelsior people, eh? Well, that sure is a big drop for Pop Taylor."

Steve folded the message and placed it in his cardcase. "The night we reached Boston," he resumed, "I visited the homes of a dozen buyers, the heads of the household departments in the city's biggest stores. I asked them to give Pop a chance. Until they heard what had happened to him, some of them were for slipping the knock-out punch over on him, but they are all good fellows at heart, and agreed to give him a lift. I kept out of his way so as not to embarrass him. That's all there is to it."

"You're a generous man, Steve," was all his employer said in commendation; but it meant a great deal.

"I wish you could have seen him when he was telling me how he had made his first sale!" exclaimed Steve. "He was almost crying for joy."

There was a reminiscent look in the boss' eyes. "Poor old Taylor!" he mused aloud. "He's had all his life's work for nothing. Despite his unfair tactics, we've got to admit that he was a hustler. Too bad, too bad! We'll have to see if we can't help him a bit when he gets back to town."

"I've written to a dozen of the boys," said Steve, "urging them to make a little fuss over him when they meet. When I go to the C. T. rooms this afternoon I'll do a little missionary work in his behalf."

This plan met with Hinkle's enthusiastic approval. A while longer they chatted, and then Steve took his departure.

CHAPTER V.

AT IT AGAIN.

IT was fifteen minutes to eight that evening when he emerged from the subway at Broadway and Ninety-sixth Street and headed west toward Riverside Drive to keep his appointment with Martha. The tender nature of his business in that neighborhood, not to mention the fact that he was just slightly conscious of looking particularly fit in a new straw hat and well-cut suit of blue serge, put him in an amiable frame of mind, and he whistled blithely as he stepped along at a brisk gait. The fact that he might not be able to locate the house she was living in had not given him the slightest worry.

Not until an inspection of the entrances to apartment houses on the Drive between Ninety-fourth and Nine-

ty-eighth Streets failed to reveal a name that contained the syllable "Pon" or anything that could possibly sound like that combination of letters did it occur to him that he had a job on his hands. Inquiries at all the houses between these points failed to disclose Martha's whereabouts. A canvass of the houses on a dozen side streets produced no better results, so he enlisted the services of one of the telephone operators and got in touch with all the apartment houses whose names began with "P," or which even remotely sounded like the syllable he had in mind. This, too, proved unproductive. Martha was not to be found.

All his blithesomeness had disappeared by this time. He was annoyed to think that his engagement should be spoiled by a simple little ink blot. "Just my confounded luck!" he grumbled. "It's almost nine o'clock, and my appointment was for eight. The chances are that she's gone out now, anyway."

In sheer desperation he strolled back to Ninety-sixth Street and the Drive and studied the windows of the apartments in that neighborhood. Thus engaged, he paid but slight attention to two men who passed him on the run, headed toward the river, but when he caught sight of half a dozen other persons moving swiftly in the same direction he evinced sufficient interest to ask one of them what had happened.

"Some one drowning, or drowned!" the fellow called back over his shoulder.

This information promised excitement enough to divert his thoughts from his disappointment. With a last look at the buildings about him, he joined the crowd that was flocking out to the end of the long pier from all directions. Glancing ahead of him as he ran, he caught the shadowy outlines of persons standing on the stringpiece. It was a clear, bright night, but despite the stars and the lights that dotted the Jersey shore, the river looked particularly ominous, the lights, if anything, serving to emphasize the blackness of the waters.

"It's a woman, all right!" the pier watchman was explaining when Steve came up; "I heard her screams first about twenty minutes ago."

"Must have gone down by this time," suggested a man in the crowd.

"More than likely," the watchman returned. "We haven't heard a cry in ten minutes. It's barely possible the rowboat may have reached her before she sank, but I doubt it. The poor thing evidently knew just enough about swimming to keep afloat for a while; then she went down from exhaustion. It seemed an age before any one answered my call."

Three or four women in the crowd were in tears. "Isn't it just too dreadful?" one of them wailed.

"How long since the boat put out?" asked Steve.

"About ten minutes ago," some one answered. "They had a long pull ahead of them, because the cries seemed to come from the middle of the river."

"Probably fell from one of the big steamboats," said Steve.

"Or jumped, maybe," put in the watchman. "I'll never forget her cries as long as I live. They were something aw——" The rest of his sentence was lost in the excitement occasioned by the discovery that the rowboat was returning. Men and women hung over the end of the dock and peered into the semidarkness. "That's the boat, all right," he went on. "See the brass buttons of the cop behind that light?"

The rowboat was not more than fifty yards from the shore when an earsplitting shriek from the inky blackness beyond brought every heart to a dead stop—that is, all but Steve's. His was thumping so hard he buttoned his coat for fear some one would hear it. There was something strangely familiar about that shriek. While he was trying to

convince himself that he was wrong, a succession of screams from the same location strengthened his suspicions.

"That's her again," said the watchman. "Wonder why they didn't save her."

The rowboat had come close enough now to permit the crowd to speak to the occupants. Steve was shaking with terror. He was glad that the dimly lighted pier enabled him to conceal his emotions.

The watchman yelled to the policeman in the boat: "Why didn't you save her, Tom?"

A raucous laugh from the boat greeted this query. "Save her!" exclaimed the policeman, lifting himself onto the dock. "If I had my way I'd have thrown her an anchor."

"What do you mean?" came from the crowd.

"Why, there's no one drowning out there," replied the policeman, his tone implying disgust. "That's an old dame singing."

"Singing!"

The exclamation was so unanimous, it seemed as if the crowd must have rehearsed the scene.

"Well, she says she is singing," answered the policeman. "She's got the worst voice I ever heard. We had all we could do to keep from jumping out of the boat when we drew near her. And you ought to see her face! It would stop a clock!"

"And maybe she didn't scold us for interrupting the concert," another member of the relief expedition put in. "Her tongue is a sharp one, all right."

Any hope that Steve had entertained that the voice was not Martha's had vanished by this time. She was with Mrs. Pickachs, but why had the rescuing party not mentioned her?

"Was—was anybody with the old lady?" Steve inquired, with such indifference as he could muster.

"Not a soul that we could see," the policeman returned. "There may have been some one inside, though."

"Inside?" repeated the watchman.

The policeman nodded. "Yes," he went on. "The old lady lives in a house boat. She defied us to arrest her. She said we had no jurisdiction, as the boat was close to the Jersey shore and——"

"What—what was the name of the house boat?" Steve broke in, unable to restrain his impatience.

"The *Pond Lily*," said the policeman.

Steve didn't wait to hear any more. Everything was cleared up now. Martha, driven from apartment after apartment because of her wretched wailing, had been forced to rent a house boat. With her staccato shrieks as well as the indignant remarks of the crowd ringing in his ears, he retraced his steps. At the head of the street he turned and gazed back across the broad expanse of water—back to the place where he knew she was waiting for him.

"No use of my going out there, Martha," he reflected sadly, "until I can borrow a diver's suit."

Canine Prodigality

MONSIEUR CLEMENCEAU, the French statesman, owned a large and fierce mastiff whose habit it was from time to time to make long excursions into outlying parts of Paris.

When he was tired, the dog would jump into a horse cab and sit there growling and showing his teeth if the cabman attempted to remove him. Seeing the name and address of Monsieur Clemenceau engraved on the dog's brass collar, the cabman would finally drive the dog home. In this way Monsieur Clemenceau had several large fares to pay.

Under His Pennant

By Robert Corwin Lee

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

NEATLY DONE.

STARING moodily out on the flooded landscape, Lieutenant Ellis St. Clair Hill spoke aloud as a man does when left for a long time practically alone.

"Commandant of the naval station at Guantanamo, Cuba! Sounds big, doesn't it? But what a job in reality! As desolate as Christmas Island. A few sailors, a few marines, a few natives, and two Chinamen. Not a woman on the place, not a man of my own kind, and rained on for six months of the year. Oh, for one little hour on Broadway! Well, thank Heaven, the rainy season stops this week; and then the fleet gets here." He rang, and the marine orderly came in. "I want my boat, orderly."

"Aye, aye, sir."

A few minutes later the boat came alongside his porch, and he stepped out of the house. To the westward, a patch of blue sky was showing.

The telephone jangled behind him. The orderly answered it, and then came out with the report that a small white steamer, apparently a yacht, was standing into the harbor.

"Well, I'll be——" Then, recovering from his surprise, he acknowledged the orderly's salute, and sent for his binoculars. Sure enough, at the entrance of the bay he could clearly see a small white yacht standing in. "I will just wait here a while," he said to the coxswain of his boat.

The sailing directions of every country in the world contained the information that no vessel other than a public one of the United States might enter Guantanamo, except in stress of weather, or accident, without special permission from the navy department. Washington had never granted such permission without notifying the commandant by wireless.

But the yacht came on through the

channel confidently and swiftly, as if sure of a welcome. As it rounded the second turn, the sun burst from behind its curtain of clouds; brass rails sparkled, white paint glistened. Lieutenant Hill glanced at the sun, dimly aware that he had not seen it for many a day, then riveted his gaze again upon the incoming boat.

Opposite Deer Point she changed course, and veered in toward the station. Five-hundred yards off the dock she stopped short, the swirl of her engines going astern came up under her counter; then, with a splash and a rattle of chain running out through the hawse pipe, she was anchored.

"Very neatly done, whoever you are," commented Hill, studying her intently.

An officer, a helmsman, and two deck hands were the only persons in sight. Was the officer on the bridge the owner? Clearly not, for the glasses showed the weather-beaten face of a seagoing master, a man with all the earmarks of an experienced sailor, but not those of a wealthy yacht owner. Where was the owner? Why did the boat carry no colors, and, above all, what was she doing in a forbidden harbor?

Lieutenant Hill went to the telephone. The quartermaster on watch on the station ship assured him that they had made every effort to communicate with the yacht, but that she either did not see, did not understand, or would not answer signals. No, she had not flown any colors since she had been sighted.

He studied the yacht while he considered. Suddenly his study became concentrated. He rose with an exclamation, refocusing his glasses several times. A girl clad in a most bewitching yachting suit had come on deck. She poised for a moment at the gangway, looking around the harbor, while a small boat was lowered over the side, into which, presently, she descended. He watched her as she played about with the oars, and, at length, pulled strongly for the shore. She rowed swiftly, and, to his astonishment, seemed about to make a landing upon the commandant's private landing. Evidently these people who had descended upon him were determined to break every rule possible.

A marine sentry, in whom duty was stronger than any regard of clothes, waded out to her. A hundred feet away, Lieutenant Hill stood on his water-bound veranda, and stared.

"You'll have t' get off'en this dock, lady," said the sentry, saluting uncertainly.

"Why?" indignantly demanded the girl.

"She's reserved for th' commandant, like this here sign says," informed the sentry.

"Ah, is it so!" exclaimed the girl. "I think your commandant is—what you call it—very piggish. Please give him my compliments, and tell him that he is a pig."

The full red lips of the girl framed the words with a childlike innocence.

The sentry stiffened visibly, at loss what to do, or say. He advanced irresolutely toward the girl, who turned laughingly, balanced her oars with teasing irresolution a moment, and pulled off over the water. Fifty feet off shore she waved gayly.

CHAPTER II.

UNDER FLAG AND PENNANT.

LIEUTENANT HILL watched spellbound until the girl climbed aboard and disappeared down the companion hatch, aft.

"Good night!" he exclaimed. "It may be because I haven't seen a girl in so long—but she certainly seems to be a ravishing beauty! A perfect Latin type without the weight! I wonder if I am going to wake up, or if this is real. I hate to run out a yacht with her for cargo, but duty is duty. It

appears advisable to go with everything flying. Reflection upon that lady's conversation would indicate that she has not an overamount of respect for the commandant of this navy yard.

"Orderly," he called, "telephone the *Newark* to get my barge ready for an official trip. Then tell Ah Fang to bring me my sword."

Twenty minutes later, with flag and pennant flying, he started for the yacht, riding saucily to her anchor. She had much of the spirit of her fair occupant; she was breezy, and wholesome, and beautiful.

At the gangway he was met by the officer he had seen: a ruddy-faced Scotchman, parsimonious of words, terse in expression, after the manner of seafaring skippers. Hill thought him far too capable a man to be wasting his talents handling a craft of that size.

Hill asked for the owner.

"Señorita Felipa Gomez is the owner, sir. She has just returned from rowing, and regrets very much that she was unable to receive you at the gangway." The captain indicated a chair, and left.

A moment later a crown of beautiful black hair appeared above the companion hatch. The girl was looking back, and pouring a flood of remonstrance in purest Castilian upon a maid, whose feeble protests, half tearful, were in the colloquial Spanish of the West Indies. At the top of the steps the girl paused to continue her tirade. Breathless, at last, she stopped for a second, then broke into a clear, merry laugh; the clouds lifted from her brow, she clapped her hands gayly, and motioned the maid back.

"Anda, chiquita!" she cried.

Turning, she stepped out on deck, still laughing, saw Lieutenant Hill, and sobered instantly. He was standing, hat in hand. She hesitated, doubtful, then swept him a curtsy.

"Buenos dias, señorita," he said, and bowed stiffly several times.

To come aboard a yacht to order its pompous owner out of your harbor, and then to be confronted by a radiant vision, is likely to unsteady the most reserved. Hill, on the contrary, was an impulsive, adventure-loving person, who had not spoken to a girl for six long months. He could not have been more completely bewildered had he been confrontd by an angel.

The girl was the first to see the situation, and his complete embarrassment. Her mirth began to rise, her eyes sparkled mischievously, and little creases gathered around them, the corners of her mouth twitched, then the lips parted, showing two chains of perfectly matched teeth. Then she stretched out her hand.

Lieutenant Hill, falling through miles of thin air, landed with a sobering jolt. He must not stand there like a dummy. He grasped her hand, and, bending gallantly over, kissed it—just why, he never could tell. Certainly he would not ordinarily kiss the outstretched hand of a fair stranger. His confusion grew.

"Do we need introduction, I wonder?" said the girl, smiling.

"No, I guess not," he answered, laughing. Her good humor was infectious. "Besides," he continued, "it does not seem within possibilities, and I am here on duty, so we must be friends."

"On duty? How unromantic! Am I to be arrested, or what?" She spoke banteringly, but with a shade of earnestness.

"No," he replied, "but the fact is, ships are not allowed in this harbor."

"How inhospitable you are," she protested.

"Not at all," he demurred, "there is nothing I would rather do than to beg you to remain indefinitely, but this is a government rule that I am compelled to enforce. We wish to keep secret the defense—I might better say the lack of defense—of this naval base."

"Ah, then that is why my captain said that I could not come into this harbor!" said the girl.

"Then you knew it was forbidden?" he exclaimed.

"Of course. Why else should I have come? It is a desolate place."

"I am sorry, but you will have to leave at once." He was nettled, and showed it.

"'Have to' has an unpleasant sound to me!" she flared.

"Well, then, will you please leave?" he begged, subsiding. "It will cause me trouble if you remain. I must do my duty, you know."

CHAPTER III.

DISTURBER OF LOGIC.

SENORITA FELIPA melted immediately. "Certainly," she replied. "I would not cause you trouble for anything."

But she began to argue. She parleyed and coaxed, apparently bent on staying; and a pretty woman has ever been a disturber of male logic and reason. She teased and stormed in turn, wheedled, ridiculed, and begged seductively, with consummate skill and adroitness.

When, half an hour later, he returned ashore, he had reluctantly given her permission to remain overnight. After all, what harm could she do?

But all the afternoon his foolish action continually preyed upon his thoughts. Had not the vague promptings of his heart undermined his better judgment? What would be the consequences if this neglect of duty became known at Washington? Away from the spell she cast, he could reason more clearly, and several times was on the point of telling her to leave. Why should he become a candidate for court-martial merely because of a pretty woman's whim?

At six that evening one of her sailors brought him a note, asking him to dine with her. A moment's hesitancy, and the loneliness of his situation mastered him. He craved companionship—more particularly, he wanted to see her again.

There had been no rain all day, and the sky had cleared to a beautiful tropical blue. The water was rapidly sinking into the ground. His quarters, that morning perched in a swirl of muddy water, now stood on stilts on a little island. The end of the rainy season is the beginning of spring to the tropics. Every one breathes a sigh of relief that the long siege is over, new strength is borne on the cool, fresh breeze, and starts coursing through the veins, filling hearts with new hopes, new desires, and new loves.

Lieutenant Hill dressed carefully that night, more carefully than ever before during the careless years of his bachelor life. Again and again, an inner something rose up and told him that he was most shamefully neglecting his duty. But when spring gets into a young man's bones, he is quite as likely to seek adventure and fair women as he is a clear conscience and duty well done.

Dinner was a wonderful dream through which floated a most beautiful fairy princess, capricious, witty, tender; no man could do less than idolize. The appointments were perfect, the cuisine delicious, the wine seemed nectar.

"What do you do here to amuse yourself?" inquired the girl.

"Oh," said Hill, "there is no amusement to be had here. The most thrilling thing that happens is the periodic insurrection that breaks out each year at the beginning of the dry season."

"What has the United States to do with Cuban revolutions?" asked the girl indifferently.

"Why, just this, that I have orders to use everything within my power, even armed interference, to prevent any

uprising. You see, every time one of them gets a good start, commercial interests begin to call for protection."

"And have you seen any fighting?" asked Señorita Felipa.

"No," responded Hill, "much as I would like to. My chance may come, though. There is a regular hotbed of anarchy just up the river from here."

"Hotbed of anarchy?" repeated the girl.

"Yes; if they could get arms there would be some stirring times. The trouble is that our naval station has taken the only harbor on this coast, except Santiago, and that place is guarded as rigidly as this."

"I suppose," mischievously suggested Felipa, "that, with you guarding the interests here so valiantly, it would be impossible to get war supplies through here."

"Well," answered Hill, "I fancy I could make it rather warm work. I wish they would try it."

"What do you think would be their plan?" asked the girl.

"Oh, the only possible way would be an attempt to run past at night. Just at the limit of the reservation this harbor narrows into a river that is navigable about thirty miles inland."

"And if they should try that?"

"I have sentries watching both the entrance to the harbor and the entrance to the river. Both places are narrow."

"I wish they would try it to-night," said Felipa, her eyes sparkling; "I should like to see a good fight. I know you would give them one!"

Lieutenant Hill smiled with satisfaction. He found it agreeable to have this girl believe in him, and regretted not having made out the situation to be a little worse.

Unlike most yachts, the dining room here was below decks. She explained that this was her own idea; it seemed more cozy.

Several times he thought that he heard peculiar noises forward; but the girl apparently noticed nothing unusual, so he dismissed the matter with scant thought.

About four-bells the noises forward subsided, and, shortly after that, the señorita suggested that they go on deck.

"How dark it is!" she exclaimed, pausing at the top of the hatch. "Let me take your hand. I am familiar with the pitfalls, and can save you many bumps."

"You are very kind," he answered, and, as he felt the pressure of her small hand, added: "I owe much to this darkness!"

"More than you guess," added the girl, laughing. Their eyes presently became accustomed to the dark; but, even then, objects stood out only as shapeless blots. "An ideal night for your battle," she went on; "though I dread the flash of guns at night."

"And when do convent-bred beauties see gunfire at night?" he questioned.

She was silent a moment. "Our plantation was attacked after nightfall. It was two years ago, but I shall not soon forget. My parents were killed. The government which you are so manfully keeping in power were the insurrectos then." She spoke with dramatic intensity, which showed the depth of her hatred for the men who were now ruling her land.

This outburst brought silence; each was busy with new ideas. The girl occasionally attempted to get a glimpse of the man's face, as if fearful of his thoughts.

At length he turned to her. "I am sorry that our pleasant party must end so disastrously." He spoke quietly and disappointedly.

"What do you mean?" Her voice was well controlled, but she was struggling in the effort to be calm.

"Simply that I know you are bringing arms into this port."

CHAPTER IV.

ABOVE ALL CLAIMS.

THE girl's nails dug deep into the flesh of her hands, but outwardly she was still cool. "Ridiculous!" she scoffed.

"It was so obvious that I should have known long ago. For instance, why should a girl like you be cruising around in this out-of-the-way place? But I was so glad to see you that I did not consider such evidence."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" She spoke defiantly.

"My duty. I sympathize with you and your cause. I would do much to help you; but a man, if he is worthy of the name, must hold duty above all personal claims. Don't you think so?"

"Ye-es," she said thoughtfully.

"I must take immediate steps to prevent your landing your arms here, though, truly, my heart is in the balance against it."

"Suppose I tell you that I will not land them here?"

"Your word?"

"Ye-es."

"That is sufficient."

"Thank you. It is given."

Constraint fell upon them. Lieutenant Hill resumed his seat, and sat moodily smoking. The girl, shortly after, arose and disappeared forward. When she returned, she was crying softly. He felt irresistibly drawn to her. He wanted to tell her how sorry he was, but the words choked him, and would not be said.

She was the first to speak. It was just a monosyllable, a beginning, but it loosened the torrents. Words tumbled over each other in a mad chaos, telling his innermost thoughts, telling what he had not known himself, until that moment.

But time waits not at all, and, at last, he felt compelled to take his leave.

"I suppose I must not come out to say good-by in the morning?" he asked, as he stepped into the boat that was to take him ashore.

"It seems best not, doesn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose so. But you are sure to be in New York next month when I get there?"

"Sure to."

"And you'll not forget?" He was very careless of what the boat crew heard.

"Of course not."

"Good night. I am sorry you must leave."

"Your own doing!" She laughed, and waved as he disappeared into the night.

Once more back in his lonesome quarters, he sat dreaming far into the night. His reverie was rudely broken by the telephone. It was two o'clock. Who could be disturbing him at this late hour?

"Commandant," he said, taking down the receiver.

"The yacht in the harbor seems to have gone," came the astonishing report.

He hastened out, straining his eyes, peering into the darkness. Nothing could be seen. Hurrying down to the dock, heedless of mud and water, he turned out the guard and ordered a boat manned. Carefully setting a course, he went toward the place where the yacht had been. The mysterious bird had flown. There came down the breeze the unmistakable sounds of rifle firing. Hastily putting about, he went full speed toward the new disturbance.

A cluster of lights broke the darkness just where the harbor narrowed into the river. Toward these he hastened. Out of the night loomed the lines of the yacht. "Yacht *Bonita*, ahoy, there!" he hailed.

"Hello!" came the answer.

"Heave to, or I will fire on you!" he challenged, still closing on the yacht.

"We are drifting on the tide, our engines are not moving."

A few minutes later, Hill stepped aboard. Just as he arrived on deck, the lights aft blazed up, and the figure of the girl appeared silhouetted against the hatch.

"What on earth is the meaning of all this commotion?" she demanded.

"Just what I want to know myself, madam," said Hill angrily.

"It simply means," the heavy tones of the captain broke in, "that we accidentally slipped our anchor, and have been drifting up on the tide."

"That is a likely story," grimly replied Hill. "I'll have a look around this boat, I think."

"By all means," said Felipa haughtily.

He strode forward, angry and chagrined, his suspicions thoroughly aroused. An empty hawse pipe in the bow reassured him a little, but he was determined to make sure of everything.

CHAPTER V.

CLEAN OUT OF SIGHT.

"TELL Lieutenant Hill that one of his men is here, and insists upon seeing him at once." The hail arrested Hill's progress. Going aft, he found that the corporal of the guard and one of the river sentries had come aboard.

"Well, what is it, Mitchell?" he inquired.

"Sir," replied the corporal, "I heard firing from this man's post, and, of course, took the guard out to see what was up. I decided to bring him to you at once, and, just then, we saw you out here. Tell the commandant what you told me, Allan."

"Well, sir," said the sentry, "I was walking up and down on me post when I thought I heard a sputter boat going slow up the river. It was so dark I couldn't see nothing at first, but pretty soon, looking close, sure enough, I seen two dark things going along real slow. I hails them a couple of times, but they didn't pay no attention. Then I fired like I been told to, first over their heads. They lit out like Sam Hill then, sir, and, just at the very same second, a bunch of lights showed up over here. Of course, I took a look and found this yacht. Well, it rattled me some, I guess, and by the time I got my mind back on them two boats they was clean out of sight."

"And you didn't see anything come into the bay?" questioned Hill. "They must have come from up the river."

"No, sir," replied the sentry, "only when I come on at twelve, Hansen, who I relieved, said that he thought he had seen something out on the river about two bells. It was so dark, though, that he guessed he was just seeing things."

"Didn't he hail them?"

"No, sir; he said he hadn't, because he would have felt kind of foolish yelling at nothing."

"He will hear from me in the morning, and learn to feel really foolish." Just then the girl joined the group. She was dressed as she had been earlier in the evening. "Your word is not very good, señorita," said Hill scornfully. "I fear I have placed too much confidence in you."

"And I fear that I have made some mistakes," retorted the girl disdainfully. "A Gomez's word is never broken."

"Can you account——"

"Account! I account to no one."

"But don't you see——" He was humble now.

"I see that your faith in me is not very strong. And that grieves me."

He hesitated for a time, weighing the situation. "Can you account for those boats in any way, Allan?" he asked the sentry.

He was ready to grasp at anything that would confirm his belief in the girl. He felt that she was telling the truth when she said that her word was

never broken, but he wanted some one else to supply the explanation.

"Yes, sir," replied the sentry; "the river above here is full of alligator hunters. They always drift on the tide until dawn. In the dark, like to-night, they might easily have got too far down before the tide turned."

"Yes, sir, that is right," the corporal confirmed.

"Of course," exclaimed Hill, "I have seen them down pretty close to the line myself."

"Send your men away, please; I want to speak to you alone," interrupted Felipa. As soon as every one had withdrawn she addressed him: "Those boats were not alligator hunters."

"What!" he exclaimed.

"No. They were the boats sent for my cargo. That is why we came up here, to get them through your lines by confusing your sentries."

"I don't believe that."

"Why?"

"Because I think you told me the truth when you promised that the arms would not be landed here."

"But they were."

"I cannot believe it."

"Now I can forgive you. And I will tell you just what happened. During dinner the arms were unloaded. Then you know how I changed my mind about landing them here. After you left, I loaded them back aboard. Then I had to get my boats through your lines. I didn't want your men to know about things, so I did not appeal to you, but attempted to get them through in the same way that I had planned for the loaded boats."

Early the next morning, the yacht stood out of the harbor. This time the fair owner was on the bridge, and continued waving as long as the yacht was in sight.

A week later, the Atlantic fleet steamed into the bay and anchored. Hill hastened aboard to make his official calls.

"Glad to see you, Hill," said the admiral, a grizzled seaman, who plunged into the heart of his business with disconcerting directness. "Ever hear of the yacht *Bonita?*"

Hill's heart stood still. "Yes, sir," he managed to say.

"Where did she unload her arms?"

"Unload her arms!" exclaimed Hill, completely taken aback. He had expected a reprimand for allowing the yacht to remain in the harbor, but this was more than he was ready for.

"Exactly," said the admiral.

"She didn't," he finally replied, with conviction.

"We came south two weeks early to get her. Overhauled her off the north shore. Too late. Cargo discharged. You and I know where, don't we?"

"You are sure they were landed, sir?"

"Yes, had a look myself."

"I cannot believe it. There is some mistake."

"What makes you think so?"

"Why—er—we—she——" stammered Hill, in confusion.

"Felipa is a fine girl; known her a long time; fine family, and all that, but I know these Latins; hate is their grand passion, and after that comes love, but only after."

"But I am absolutely sure that they were not landed here."

"Any reason?"

"Her word is sufficient for me."

"Will not hold water in Washington; not evidence before a court."

"Then it means court-martial?"

"Sure to. I am sorry." The admiral spoke with kindly sympathy.

"You don't think she could have landed them anywhere else?" questioned Hill, his belief still unshaken.

"Well, you know this coast. Coral reefs the entire length. No one would be fool enough to try to go through them."

"It would be suicide, certainly."

An orderly came into the cabin and handed the admiral a radiogram.

"H'm! Intercepted," said the admiral. "Not much secrecy in radios—— What a coincidence, it is addressed to you!"

Hill took the proffered message and courteously read it aloud:

"Kept my word. Landed cargo, but elsewhere. Struck Great Coral Reef doing so. *Bonita* in Habana ten days for repairs. Don't care what happens now. Can you come up?

"FELIPA."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" exclaimed the admiral. "That girl has nerve."

"I would like ten days' leave, sir!" Hill cried joyously. The radiogram meant far more to him than his escape from disgrace.

"Certainly, certainly," said the admiral gruffly; "and, young man, if you don't bring the *Bonita* back with you, you will get a court for neglect of duty, anyhow."

"I hope you will not have to organize that court, sir," answered Hill.

Sighed For Adventure

TO the end of his days Robert Louis Stevenson, the lovable author of "Treasure Island," had the heart of a boy.

Neither illness, nor disappointment, nor the sad way in which ill health limited his activities, could kill in him the boyish love of adventure, or make him deaf or indifferent to the call of the wild, the call of the sea.

In his "Essays on Novelists," W. L. Phelps very truly says of Stevenson that everything in his life, bodily or mental, was an adventure. He even set out on his expedition in search of health with the zest of one after buried treasure.

It is not strange that it was such a man who commenced the rebellion against extreme "realism." Those who like "something to happen" in books will enjoy Stevenson's humorous plaint in the letter quoted by Professor Phelps —and will pity him for the books he could not read:

"Stevenson's appearance as a novelist was in itself an adventure. He was as unexpected and picturesque among contemporary writers of fiction as an Elizabethan knight in a modern drawing-room. The realism that reigned was a challenge to him—the very name of his first novel, 'Treasure Island,' was like the flying of a flag.

"In contemporary fiction he felt as impatient and ill at ease as a boy imprisoned in a circle of elders whose conversation does not in the least interest him. His sentiments are clearly shown in a letter written shortly after the appearance of 'Treasure Island.'

"'I do desire a book of adventure—a romance—and no man will get me one or write me one. Dumas I have read and reread too often; Scott, too, and I am short.

"'I want to hear swords clash. I want a book to begin in a good way; a book, I guess, like "Treasure Island," alas! which I have never read, and cannot, though I live to be ninety. I would that some one else had written it!

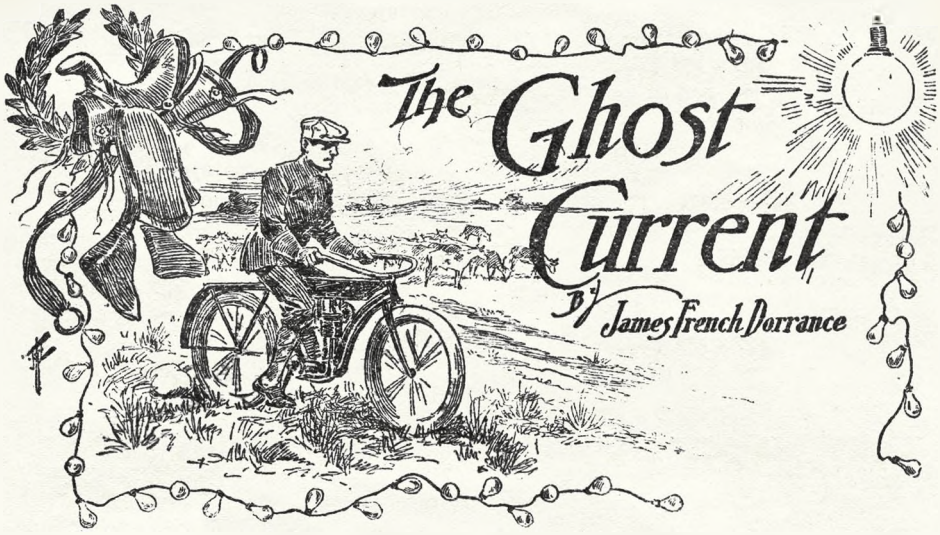
"'By all that I can learn, it is the very book for my complaint. I like the way I hear it opens, and they tell me John Silver is good fun. And to me it is, and must ever be, a dream unrealized, a book unwritten.

"'Oh,' he concludes, 'my sighings after romance!'"

Speaking From Experience

IN a certain parish in New England the following notice was posted on the church gates:

"A tripe supper will be held on Saturday evening. On Sunday an address will be given by the rector. Subject: 'A Night of Agony.'"



EARLIER CHAPTERS.

Summary of the first installment for those who did not see it.

WINTHROP HADLEY, an electrical expert, installs a lighting and power plant at the great El Toro Ranch, to gratify the progressive ambitions of the lovely young owner, Miss Marietta Webster, generally known as "The Princess." The improvements are resented by the conservative cowmen, especially by Scott Terry, the foreman, who is in love with Marietta, and the girl's uncle, who owns a quarter share in the ranch.

Rustlers from across the Mexican border steal many steers from the Webster herds, and, to the delight of the girl, Hadley sends an electrical current through all the wire fences, in order to shock any one that tries to cross a fence or cut it down. Scott Terry rides into the corral mysteriously wounded, and will say only that his pony fell with him. The cowmen and Mexicans show increasing enmity toward Hadley, and a warning is sent to him bidding him leave the place or beware the consequences. He already has been ordered to Cuba by his employers, but he resolves to stay and fight out the battle.

Hadley, by making use of what electricians call "the ghost current," apparently makes the arc lights on the ranch and in the village speak to the people, in both Spanish and English, warning them not to steal cattle or disturb the electrician. He does this with a telephone apparatus and a phonograph. The Mexicans attribute the voice from the air to evil spirits, and becomes panic-stricken.

Marietta's uncle annoys her by trying to force her to marry Scott Terry, with whom he has entered into a conspiracy. Hadley offers to shield her from the annoyance, and she admits that she regards him as her friend. While they are riding across the prairie in an automobile, the power gives out. Marietta goes to obtain a horse while Hadley guards the machine, but does not return. He walks to the ranch and finds that the girl has mysteriously disappeared.

CHAPTER XII.

ACROSS THE BORDER.

NO betrayal of Win Hadley's agitation showed in the way he operated the high-power car through the growing dusk. His eyes were on the dim track over which they were racing, his hands gripped the steering wheel tightly, and his lips were pursed in the grim effort for speed. Yet his mind moved more swiftly than the machine, reviewing the possible misfortunes that might have befallen Marietta Webster, condemning himself for permitting her to set out alone, making rash promises to himself regarding his course of action in the event of her being interfered with by Terry, by Ignacio Fuentes, or by any one else. The fact that the rustlers had resumed their depredation of El

Toro did not come in for even passing consideration, in view of the weightier apprehensions that clutched him.

Although chuck-wagon solitude had made Lazy Barker a notorious monologuist, he was silent for once, occupied by the thrills and impressions of his first ride in a battery-driven vehicle. His eyes, too, were peering ahead, for he was as much worried over the absence of mules or ponies over the dashboard as he was startled by their unseemly speed. He kept a grip upon the arm of the seat, and the usual smile was wanting from his ruddy face.

With slackening speed, Hadley swung into the plaza of the Mexican village, and stopped before its most pretentious house, that of Fuentes, the ex-bandit.

"El Diablo! El Diablo!" The cry in shrill chorus from a group of youngsters scattered by the machine's arrival reminded the electrician that he was in extreme disfavor.

"You'd better do the talking, Barker," he said to his companion. "Find out first if Fuentes is at home."

Lazy disappeared within the long dobe structure, and shortly the sound of much chatter came to the waiting expert. "The old guy's been gone all day as near as I can make out from the womenfolks," reported Lazy presently. "They've seen nothing of the Princess, and ain't anxious to. They're as friendly as a flock of brooding hens."

"Get in and we'll try the old witch," said Hadley.

Doña Luisa and her granddaughter were both in the yard before their jacal when the machine halted in front of the door. Escape within the hut being cut off, both seemed inclined to take refuge from the "devil wagon" by flight into the brush. Only the reassuring admonition of the cook, whom they knew, checked them. Even so, their answers to all questions were muttered and reluctant.

Yes, they had seen Major-domo Terry riding toward the ford. He was in a hurry, and had not even greeted them. Had they seen the Princess? They might have. Indeed, after thinking it over, and conferring in whispers, they were quite certain she had been riding with the ranchman.

The possibility that Marietta had encountered Terry on the road, learned of the raid of the rustlers, and accompanied him of her own volition was the one grain of comfort that came to Hadley from this garbled information. Yet, he could not seriously consider the surmise. There was too much probability that the range boss, with Tom Webster's admonitions in mind, would try to force the ranch girl to accompany him. Once he had her across the border, the opportunity of capturing a few rustlers might easily be discounted by the chance of playing Lochinvar and compelling a marriage which would win him a place in cattle "royalty."

"Where would Terry be likely to head if he had in mind stopping the rustlers?" Hadley asked as he drove on toward the Rio Grande.

The fat cook gave vent to his cackling laugh. "You think Terry's riding to capture rustlers?"

"What else would have taken him off in such a hurry?" was Hadley's return question.

Lazy winked solemnly, but offered no further explanation of his query. "If Terry is after rustlers, he'll probably ride to Ipolito Pass," he said, after a moment's consideration. "That's five miles back from the ford, and several trails meet there. There's a greaser hang-out at the opening of the pass. Ask there."

As they drew up to the ford, Hadley asked about the probable depth of water and the security of the river bottom. It seemed that, while the ford was easy enough for horsemen, and cattle could be driven across in safety, it was bad going for a wagon on account of shift-

ing sand and possible sink holes. Naturally it would be still worse for the heavy automobile. But above the ford there was a rope ferry which they might use if the barge would sustain the weight of the machine, and they could get hold of the shiftless Mexican who operated it.

"Why didn't you say ferry in the first place?" grumbled Hadley, as he turned into the road which Lazy indicated. The prospect of losing the car in the treacherous sands of the river had discouraged him.

"You never asked," retorted Lazy, his peace of mind in no wise disturbed.

The ferryman was found at his shack on the river bank, enjoying an after-supper smoke. He took one look at the big car and shook his head. Ferry the devil wagon? It had never been done, therefore it couldn't be done. His final shrug was meant to be conclusive.

In an undertone Hadley suggested that they commandeer the ferryboat. Lazy's objection was on practical rather than ethical grounds. It was a cranky craft, and neither of them knew how to operate it. "Try gold," was his suggestion.

Hadley found a five-dollar piece, and held it out to the ferryman. "Over and back for this in advance," he said. The effect was magical, and they were soon on the Mexican side of the sluggish river.

After admonishing the ferryman to await their return, even if they didn't come back until morning, Hadley switched on the powerful headlights, and picked up the well-defined main trail leading to the draw in the hills which the Mexicans dignified by the name of Ipolito Pass. The half light of dusk had snuffed out as they were crossing the river, and the darkness of the night made the lights doubly effective. The urgency of his fears caused the expert to give the car full speed, despite the strange road.

Lazy Barker's first remark held a complimentary note that would have been more appreciated had Hadley been in a less occupied move. "She can go some, can't she! Do you reckon you could learn me to run her?"

Five minutes later he laid a hand of caution upon Hadley's arm. "Take her easy, pardner. We're nearly there."

The expert slowed down the car and turned off the searchlights, and they rolled noiselessly in front of a shack by the roadside. The door was shut, but light streamed from the single window, and voices could be heard within.

With Lazy just behind him, Hadley strode to the door and rapped loudly. A call from inside in guttural Spanish bade him enter, and he pushed open the door.

As his eyes pierced the cloud of tobacco smoke that hung heavy in the low room, he made out three men who evidently had been playing cards upon a rough table. Directly facing him, Scott Terry sprang up in surprise on recognition of the pair from El Toro. The man at the left of the table, whom Hadley at once recognized as Ignacio Fuentes, pushed back from the table with every sign of alarm. The third player alone remained undisturbed, as became the proprietor of a peaceful road house.

"Haven't you strayed pretty far off your range?" Terry asked. "What's up?"

"What have you done with Miss Webster?" The electrician's direct question was replete with threat, and his eyes were particularly keen for the range boss' first answering expression.

To his surprise, however, the other's face instantly registered astonishment, and there was emotion in the ring of his reply. "The Princess?" he cried. "I haven't seen her since breakfast. What has happened?"

"She is missing. We heard that she had ridden this way with you."

Terry looked puzzled as he came around the table. "I rode alone," he said. "Who was the liar that told you different?"

It seemed impossible to Hadley that the range boss could be playing a part so cleverly. His expressive eyes had not shifted and there was no hesitancy in his answers. When the expert recalled the source of their information, he was inclined to accept this emphatic denial. "Doña Luisa said you two rode past her *jacal,*" put in Lazy Barker, giving Fuentes a sharp glance of suspicion.

"The witch was dreaming," asserted Terry. "How do you mean the Princess is missing?"

Briefly, Hadley related the breakdown of the runabout, her setting out to bring a relief car, and her failure to reach the home ranch.

"And you've been wasting time chasing me!" groaned Terry, with an agitation no one could doubt. "The dinged rustlers got busy again this afternoon. Fuentes and I were waiting in the hope they'd come this way before morning. Something must have happened to the Princess along the trail."

He said nothing, but Hadley was bitterly condemning himself. Common sense should have told him to first cover all the ground she might have traversed from Doña Tonia's where she intended to borrow a horse. At best this borrowed mount would be strange to the girl, possibly it was skittish, and any rider is liable to fall. Direfully, he pictured her lying even now along the down-river trail, insensible, perhaps crippled, with broken bones.

"Come!" The acute misery of his mind was expressed in his cry to Barker. "We mustn't waste another minute."

"I'll get my cayuse and overtake you," said Terry, following them out. "Rustlers don't count when the Princess is missing." He blinked with surprise at sight of the car. "Room for another passenger?" he asked.

"Pile in," urged Hadley, eager to be off. "Nothing counts now but her safety."

"You, Fuentes, look out for my horse," Terry called to the Mexican, who hesitated in the doorway. "I'll send for him to-morrow."

"But the cattle——" the ex-bandit began.

There was a whir from the motor, and the touring car sprang away for a sweeping turn into the back track. "Suppose we start with Doña Luisa," shouted Terry from the tonneau. "She must have had some reason for lying."

Hadley nodded approval of this suggestion. Then he gave his entire attention to demanding the utmost speed from the car.

CHAPTER XIII.

HEARTS DISTURBED.

THE jacal of Doña Luisa was as dark as the night when the searching party returned, and the heart of the pear thicket could not have been more silent. But this did not deter Scott Terry, who had lived long enough on the border to understand that rough-shod methods were the only effective ones with the witch women of the Mexicans.

As Hadley stopped the car, the range boss vaulted the side of the tonneau, and strode to the door. He did not take the trouble to knock, but forced the flimsy catch with his shoulder and entered with a loud demand that the occupants awaken pronto. By the time the electrician had shut off the power and reached the door, Terry had struck a match and lighted a bracket lamp which hung on the wall.

From a pallet upon the earth floor in a corner of the room the distorted face of Doña Luisa leered up at them, her beady eyes blinking. She drew back

her thin lips over toothless gums in a snarl, and uttered prolonged invective against the intrusion.

"Don't pretend you were asleep," said Terry in Spanish. "What did you tell these men about the Princess? Quick, now—the truth, if you know what's good for you."

Evidently recognizing authority, she bowed her head almost to the floor and with upraised hands declared that she had not seen Señorita Webster in many days.

"Then why did you tell the lie that you saw her ride past with me this evening?"

"Mea culpa! Mea culpa!" wailed the crone in well-simulated distress.

"Hush that whining!" ordered Terry, scowling. "What for? Why did you lie to Lazy Barker?"

The hag burst into a torrent of words, speaking so rapidly that Hadley's mind could not translate. *"El Diablo,"* the name he had worn among the Mexicans since the night of the speaking arcs, was about all that he could distinguish, and that chiefly through repetition. Even Terry was only able to catch the drift of her verbal outpouring.

The range boss finally turned to Hadley. "She says she lied because she was afraid of *El Diablo,"* he said. "You came in the devil wagon and frightened her. She could not, at the time, speak the truth, but she swears that she knows nothing of Marietta."

"Is she speaking the truth now, do you think?"

"How do I know?" snapped the range boss. "You certainly have made a mess of things, as usual! If anything has happened to the girl I'll hold you personally responsible. Do you understand?" He raised his voice. *"You* answer to *me!"*

Hadley returned his wild glare without flinching. "We'll discuss that later—any time, any way you please, Terry. We're only concerned now with finding Miss Webster. Do you know the trail to the Tonia woman's jacal?"

Evidently too angry to trust to words, Terry jerked his head affirmatively, and started toward the door, with Hadley a pace behind. But they were both halted by a cry which sounded in a weak voice from somewhere outside of the room:

"Mr. Hadley! Win Hadley!"

The big range boss whirled around, and glared angrily at the expert. "More of your ventriloquist tricks?"

"I'm here, Win! Don't leave—I'm here! I——" The weak voice died in a woman's sob.

Terry's heavy frame crouched, as though he would spring upon the electrician. Hadley stepped back quickly, but rather in order to locate the sound than to avoid attack. Then, with a bound, he was across the room, tugging at a rear door.

So violent was his effort that the makeshift portal was torn from its hinge, and came tumbling into the room on top of him. Shaking it off, he seized the lamp from the wall bracket, and entered the back room of the jacal, whence, the next moment, came his glad shout and something unintelligible but equally glad in a feminine voice.

When the range boss, after a moment's hesitation, followed into the back room, the sight that met his eyes was not calculated to ease his stress of feeling. The Princess had been found, to be sure, for she lay there on a mattress of straw, her head roughly bandaged; but kneeling beside her rude couch was the electrician, his blond head bent over hers with its beautiful masses of tumbled black hair. Already he was feeling her pulse in a manner quite professional. Any feeling of relief was rudely banished from Terry's mind. Even the wan smile with which the girl gave him recognition did not comfort him.

Starting out of the room under a petulant impulse, he found the way blocked by the bounteous figure of

Barker. "They don't need us, Lazy," he muttered, trying to push past the cook.

But Barker, struggling under no heart disturbance, felt no scruple, and turned the range boss about as he muttered in his ear: "Don't play the boob before the Princess; show your tallow."

For a moment nothing was said, Marietta smiling wearily from one to the other. "Break anything, Princess?" Barker asked in a hushed voice.

"Not a bone, thank Heaven," she said weakly. "Just shaken up a bit. Doña Luisa did the best she could by me, but I surely was glad to hear Mr. Hadley's voice outside."

Scott Terry groaned inwardly. The expert was speaking now: "I'll just take off this bandage and see what damage it hides."

"Talking like a doctor, is he?" mused Terry, behind the mask of his smile. "Playing the rescue hero, and him the cause of it all!" Then he realized the importance of being in the picture, and stepped closer. "You'd better leave that bandage alone, Diablo. This ain't a case of splicing wires, and Doña Luisa is one of the best herb doctors going."

Hadley removed the bandage as if he had not heard the objection. There was an ugly bruise upon the girl's temple, but the swelling had been greatly reduced by whatever it was the Mexican woman had put in her compress. So he replaced both the pad of herbs and the bandage. "I'm mighty glad, little woman," he said fervently.

"You ain't the only one," added Lazy Barker, nodding his head emphatically. "Wouldn't you like a drink of water, now?"

Marietta beamed acceptance of this overture, and Lazy crossed to the door, demanding of the hag the whereabouts of her water gourd. "Jumping tarantelers!" he exclaimed, as he peered into the outer room. "Call me a road runner if she hasn't vamoosed!"

"You'll rest easier in the other room—it's too hot and stuffy in here," suggested Hadley. "Bring the light, Terry."

He picked the girl up in his arms and, never heeding her protest that she was able to walk, carried her into the front room and placed her triumphantly on the old lady's pallet.

"Kind of behindhand in your tender care, ain't you, Hadley?" Terry could not refrain from asking, as he appeared with the lamp. "If you'd been as considerate in the first place——"

Marietta Webster suddenly sat upright on the couch. "Now, Terry, come out of your temper!" she commanded, then immediately gave him a coaxing smile. "The accident was entirely my own fault. Mr. Hadley did not want me to come, as you might well know. And I am keenly grateful to each one of you for hunting me up."

"How did it happen?" asked the expert, after Lazy had pompously held the gourd of water to her lips while she drank.

"It's something of a joke on me," she began, still a trifle shaky as to voice, but obviously much refreshed. "I'll appreciate it more to-morrow. A case of being 'hoist with my own petard.' The initial blame goes to Doña Tonia's pony. He must have been dining on loco weed, and you all know what that does to a horse."

"Sure," agreed Lazy, with a sage wabble of the head. "Their judgment's plumb missin'."

"Well, we came to that baby creek that runs down from the hot springs," continued Marietta. "A miserable little brook, it is—not three feet across—and the horse could have stepped it."

"But with the loco in his innards he thought it was the Rio Grande and wouldn't jump?" put in the cook.

"Shut up, Mutton Chop," chided Terry. "The lady has the floor."

"You're right, Lazy," said Marietta.

"He wouldn't jump. Instead, he bolted and gave an imitation of as fleet a horse as ever looked through a bridle. I tried sawing the bit and twisting his neck, but I might as well have been tickling him with a feather. I was looking for a soft place to fall when the wires of the line fence loomed up ahead. That Mexican horse must have been against that fence before, for the minute he saw it he put on brakes with all four feet. But the distance was too short, and he slid into it. And you can take my word for it, friend Hadley, that fence has a kick. The last I remember was the pony starting on a backward somersault."

Scott Terry's face was a study in conflict. It was as if he wanted to grin derision at the electrician, and at the same time continue his show of sympathy for the Princess. Contradictory speech stumbled upon his lips.

Marietta checked all comments by proceeding: "That is what I meant by my own petard. I ordered the kick put into the fence, and I'm the first to feel it."

Hadley, remembering his suspicion regarding Terry's fall several weeks previous, could not resist throwing a meaning glance his way. He received such a comprehensive glare in return that he was convinced that his surmise was correct. What is more, he needed no further warning that Terry's enmity was now burning in open flame.

The rest of Marietta's story was brief, and well supplied with gaps. When she regained consciousness she was in the jacal with Doña Luisa. The old woman said that a peon—she claimed not to know his name—had carried her to the shack and left her. The doña had bandaged her head, given her something bitter to drink, then had gone to sleep.

"The next thing I knew," concluded the girl, "was a few moments ago, when I heard voices out here. I thought I recognized Mr. Hadley, and called to him to come for me. Didn't I?"

Hadley's face reddened at the thrilling remembrance of that call, and Terry's scowl returned. It was Lazy Barker who answered: "You sure did, Princess, and he didn't lose any time a-coming, either. Yanked that door plumb off its hinge."

"Lazy and I stopped here two hours ago," said Hadley. "You must have been asleep here then. Why didn't she tell us?"

"El Diablo!" exclaimed Terry. "She was afraid you'd ghost-current her. It's all plain enough. The peon brought the Princess here, and sloped for fear he'd be held responsible for the accident. The old woman had what few wits she possesses frightened out of her by Hadley's appearance. She put you in the back room until some one she trusted should come to look for you, or until you should be able to make your own way home."

"Doña Luisa deserves a medal for first aid to the injured," suggested Hadley.

"Something of more use to her than a medal," corrected the young woman.

"A bunch of grub," was Lazy's inspiration.

"A jug of mescal," contributed Terry. "You'd have been at the home ranch hours ago if some one else——"

"You will be there in a mighty few minutes," interrupted Hadley, "if you'll permit me to help you into the car which is waiting outside."

She arose without assistance; but, feeling dizzy, was glad of the support of his arm as she walked out.

Perforce Marietta occupied the tonneau, with Barker on one side and Terry on the other. Alone in the front seat behind the steering wheel, Win Hadley was quite content. She had called for him in her emergency, and she had called him by his first name!

Their newly formed pact of friendship still held.

As for the rustlers who had broken through his kick fence, he did not give them a thought until he had stored the car in the garage and was on his way to the ranch house for a belated supper. Then it struck him somewhat forcefully that Scott Terry had a queer system of hunting cattle thieves.

CHAPTER XIV.

"SOMETHING PRACTICAL."

ALTHOUGH there was an ache in almost every muscle of her supple young body and a dull pain in her head, Marietta Webster defied Mrs. Muller the next morning, and appeared for breakfast shortly after her usual hour. She surprised Lazy Barker in the act of preparing a tray that was to be laden with all the delicacies of his experience.

"For the love of ranchin', Princess!" he cried, as she entered the patio. "Ain't you got sense enough to be an invalid first excuse you've had in a dozen year?"

"I'd need more than an excuse to stay in bed after overhearing your debate with Pablo on the genesis of El Toro cattle stealing," she returned.

Lazy's head dropped guiltily. The preparation of the morning meal had been peppered with a wordy war between his Mexican rival and himself as to which nationality was "on the rustle" against the Webster cattle. Lazy knew that, by common consent, word of the latest depredation had been kept from the young owner the night before that she might get the rest her experience with the locoed horse demanded. He had no idea that his clash with Pablo had been noisy enough to be heard in her room.

"Did Pablo spring that genesis stuff, Miss Marietta?" he asked with almost childish naïveté. "*I* never said it."

"You said enough, Lazy, to make me walk, even though I didn't take up my bed. But I'm not blaming you. It was best for me to know. Where did they strike this time?"

"Upper ranch, according to the fence alarm. Nobody's rid in as yet."

"So the signal system did work!" she said, more to herself than to him. "He's a wonder, and we'll get that crew yet."

"Who's a wonder, miss—begging your pardon, but I didn't hear you say?"

Her reply was a smile as she asked what he had for her breakfast. By way of answer, he set the tray before her. She lifted the hot cover from one dish and peered into it. "Milk toast!" she exclaimed, with a frown of feigned disgust. "Lazy Barker, I'm ashamed of you! How many years have you known me? When did I become a hothouse plant?"

The fat cook grinned. His loyalty to the Princess, unwavering and often belligerent, was grounded on such pretended tyranny from her. Marietta lifted another cover. "Poached eggs!" She fixed him with a horrified glance.

"They're fresh," insisted Lazy hurriedly.

"Of course, they're fresh, but when did I ever eat *poached* eggs? You were just out of baby food, I suppose?"

"There is a cup of orange juice." Lazy's face lighted up. "I squeezed 'em myself."

"Now, Lazy," she said, as if taxed to the limit of her patience; "I'll give you exactly twelve minutes to bring me a breakfast—porterhouse rare, hashed brown potatoes, two fried eggs, bacon, and coffee. If it is not before me on the second, Pablo shall cook my breakfast, and you'll wash the dishes!"

"And I was thinking you'd be poorly this morning!" groaned Lazy, as he waddled away. But he was back well within the time limit with a meal which nearly filled the order. Washing dishes

for Pablo was his idea of capital punishment.

When she had paid his culinary achievement a fine and practical testimonial, she turned her attention again to Lazy Barker. "You rode in the devil wagon last night. How did you like the experience?"

"They can go some!" There was enthusiasm in his look and tone.

"I suppose you know that I had you in mind when I ordered the electric chuck wagon that hasn't yet been outside the garage? You'll find it easier than driving balky mules and hustling firewood every camp you make."

"*I'll* find it easier?" gasped Lazy. "You mean—*me?*"

"Certainly," returned Marietta. "I'm going to ask Mr. Hadley to teach you how to run it this week. El Toro's going to see the biggest round-up of its history in about ten days, and you'll be glad you have that electric stove."

"If you don't mind, Miss Marietta, I calculate I'll stick to the old covered wagon and the mules," pleaded Lazy earnestly. "I don't mind rustling firewood, and the punchers mightn't like juice-fried beef. Yes, indeedy, the old wagon'll do for yours respectfully!"

"I wonder if Pablo could learn to run the electric?" Marietta was looking out the window as she spoke, and the question might have been put to herself.

"I'd admire to see him a-doing it," said Lazy, with a gleeful chuckle. But, as Marietta still had a far-away look, he was moved to ask what she had in mind. "Oh, nothing of importance," she assured him. "It's only that Pablo will make a good cook for the round-up outfit."

"Princess!"

"Unless you should happen to learn first how to run the new chuck wagon." She arose from the table, and started toward the quadrangle. "Tell your friend I'd like to speak to him."

"I'd sort of hate to wake him up, Miss Marietta," said Lazy, his voice low-pitched and apologetic. "I—I reckon them juice chuck wagons may be right handy contraptions, after all!"

It was not until Tom Webster rode in from the upper ranch early in the afternoon that she learned the extent of this latest raid on their stock. She first had to tell her relative of her own experience by way of accounting for the bruised forehead. He was unusually verbose and sympathetic, and tried to dissuade her from talking business until she had entirely recovered from the shock.

On account of his persuasive efforts —not to use a stronger term—in Scott Terry's behalf, they had scarcely been on speaking terms recently, and she was somewhat puzzled over his sudden change in manner. She dismissed this feeling as unkind toward her uncle, but insisted on going to the office. "Understand we had another visit yesterday," she began.

"At least a hundred and twenty-five prime steers gone!"

She glanced at the latest market report from San Antonio, which lay on her side of the double desk. "And prime steers are quoted at thirty-five," she remarked gravely.

"Figures up to quite a sum, don't it?" Webster gnawed his ragged white mustache. "Say, they went through your boasted fence like it had been made of thread!"

For a minute she sat in silence, except for the drumming of her pencil upon the desk top. She was thinking of her own experience with the kick fence, and wondering how the rustlers had handled the powerful current. Finally she remarked that the new alarm signal had worked perfectly, but that it was little use when there was no one on hand to respond to it. In response to her uncle's question she reported that Hadley had gone to the scene of the

break in the fence with some repair men, and that he promised to have the line carrying current again before nightfall.

"You didn't get a long-distance sight of the scoundrels, I suppose?" she asked.

"Didn't even know there had been a raid until we found the herd missing from below the water hole." He spoke rapidly, his eyes on the growing ash of his cigar. "We'd been up in the hills looking for strays. I telephoned Terry about five o'clock, and told him to head out to Ipolito in the hope they'd go that way. Then I sent Bud Rand and Alfredo to follow up the trail of the cattle. Is Terry back yet?"

Marietta explained that Hadley had found the range boss at the pass while searching for her, and that he had returned in the machine.

"It's confounded strange that Hadley has a hand in every plan that goes wrong around this ranch," grumbled the old man. "I say, little girl, aren't you nearly through with that fellow and his electricity foolishness? Now, mind, I'm not saying he doesn't know his business, and that there isn't a whole lot to his science, but it doesn't fit in on a Texas ranch! We've had nothing but trouble since he came, and he's got about as much chance of checking rustling with that fence as you have of holding up a train. Why don't you do something practical?"

"Something practical?" she repeated, studying him from behind narrowed lids. "For instance?"

"Well, marry Scott Terry, for instance," he suggested, half jokingly.

The girl's expression was never more cold. "I'd give a good deal to know the real reason you urge that."

"For your own good, child." Webster squared around and faced her. "That is the old reason. You don't seem to realize that I'm getting old. Look how played out I am after this ride from the upper ranch to-day! Five years ago I wouldn't have turned a hair. To-day, I'm so spent that I ought to be in bed this minute."

"Don't let me keep you, Uncle Tom," she put in quickly.

Webster ignored the interruption. "I took a liking to Terry from the first. Since bringing him to the ranch, he has grown to be like a son to me. As a substitute in my poor way for your father, I'd like to see you settled for life. What do you know against Terry? What does any one know? Not a single thing! Who else is there around here fit for you to marry? Not a darned soul. It ain't as if you were a belle in society. You need a protector the worst kind of way. Terry's a good, strong fellow, and he loves you. Now, why don't you marry him when he asks you again?"

"For the perfectly good, top-of-the-heap reason that I don't care for him," said she, with emphasis. "What's more, I'm not at all certain that he ever will ask me again."

Webster was too shrewd a player of the game of life to overlook this lead, but he deemed it policy to ignore it. He did not ask her why she thought Terry was through, but promptly assured her that he would ask again, and made mental note that the range boss should have prompt orders to that effect.

"I'm too old to fight for you much longer," he continued; "but Terry has youth, and strength, and courage. Give him the right, and he'll make short work of these bandits. Your business sense should tell you that we can't stand this drain much longer. We'd better give up the ranch unless you'll do something practical."

"We had better do anything rather than sell my heart to make the ranch pay!" she retorted, with heat. "When you hear of a buyer let me know. I'll talk with him." With that, she arose and left the office.

For some minutes Webster sat in

meditation, his huge head with its mane of snow-white hair propped up between his hands. "Why couldn't her father have given us an even break," he mused. "It was coming to me by all that's just."

He arose and walked over to a wicker couch in a darkened corner of the big room. "I wonder if I'm overplaying my hand?" he asked himself, as he flung down upon it. "We can't—we mustn't sell this ranch!" In a moment he was asleep, for he had not misrepresented his weariness, though there was more than the ride from the upper ranch to account for it

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE SPOT.

REPAIRING an electric fence was all in the day's work to the two linemen who went to the upper ranch that day with Winthrop Hadley. They were artisans, satisfied with their wages, and without ambition beyond. But to the engineer this particular gap was a problem which warranted the closest study. The fact that the rustlers had broken through the charged barrier on what seemed to be their first attempt since its installation only served to put him on his mettle. He was more determined than ever to safeguard the herds of the Princess.

Thus far the problem had appealed to him as a more or less mechanical proposition, and he had entirely overlooked the chance that it might hold a mystery which must be solved before success was possible. Charging the line fence had been a preliminary step in mechanics. The automatic signals comprised step number two. Now that the rustlers had shown their daring, these must be backed up by an adequate reserve force always in readiness to answer the alarms.

He was satisfied that he could convince Marietta of this necessity. He would not lack for illustration. What use, for instance, would there be in the fire-alarm boxes one found in every city if there were no engines and trucks to respond to the calls for help? Why police signal boxes if there were no patrol wagons to answer the turning of the key? He did not believe that the matter of expense would stand in the way. The greed of the rustlers was warrant for any reasonable outlay. And there was the advantage, that the reserve force need not be made permanent. Once El Toro was established as a danger spot for rustlers their activities would cease.

Traveling up the range in the power car, they found the break without difficulty, a quarter of a mile beyond signal box No. 17, which had not been tampered with. For three hundred yards the wires were entirely wanting, and in almost the center of the gap were the tracks which showed where the driven herd had followed through.

Leaving his men to spread their wire along the stretch, Hadley went alone to examine the break. It took but a glance to prove to him that the wires had been cut, probably with the sort of nippers that are a part of any lineman's belt equipment. He was glad he had foreseen this possibility, and spoken to the Princess about it. The rustlers in some way had learned that the fence was charged, and had either imported an electrician to do the work, or had taken instruction on the subject themselves.

He walked to the other end of the break to continue his inspection. There the strands showed the same sure touch, with cuts as clean as any he could have made himself. He was about to rejoin his men, lending a hand to make the repair job as brief as possible, when his eye fell upon something lying on the mesquite at his feet. It was a rubber glove! He smiled at this confirmation of his surmise, and picked up the nonconducting hand covering.

From force of habit rather than purpose, he pulled it on his own hand. There was nothing startling about the fact that it fitted him like one of his own—linemen's gloves come in only two or three sizes. But, as he turned over his hand and glanced at the palm, he saw something that at once gripped all his attention: Two of the fingers were patched with rubber.

It was like meeting an old acquaintance. To make certain, he made a minute inspection. He remembered every detail of those patches, recalled just how the original breaks had occurred. Even the cement used in mending looked like his own composition.

There was no possibility of error. That glove belonged to him! And, what was equally as important, it had been in his possession within the past week. He recalled that he had last used it in the garage, and, on finishing the repairs, had hung it and its mate upon a peg near the door until he should need them again.

At once the situation took on a new aspect, and he stretched out upon the fragrant prairie to consider the flood of suspicion that rushed to his mind. He had builded better than he knew when he included the warning against rustling in the ghost talk of the arcs. Some one within the El Toro outfit itself was in league with the cattle thieves. The use of his gloves in cutting the fence proved it.

That his mind should first feature Scott Terry was not unnatural, and not necessarily due to the personal feeling which had arisen between them. The road house at Ipolito, with the ex-bandit his tablemate at cards, had already seemed a strange place for a range boss to hunt for cattle thieves. He had acknowledged to himself a well-founded suspicion of Terry that night.

His horror of doing any man an injustice bent him to the minutest consideration of the case. That Terry himself could not have done the fence cutting was evident after thought, for a man cannot be in two places at the same time. According to his best judgment and information, Terry must have been somewhere between the home ranch and the pass at the time the fence was cut. Even if one suspected Ignacio Fuentes of rustler affiliations, finding Terry in his company explained nothing. The range boss might have been playing a waiting game in the hope of getting direct proof against the rustlers.

Eventually, Hadley came to the conclusion that he had more reason to suspect one of the Mexican vaqueros. Any one of them might have abstracted the gloves from the garage without attracting attention. Yet he felt certain that no Mexican had done the actual cutting of the fence, at least none of those he had seen about the ranch. Their aversion to the "devil wires" had been too sincere.

In the end, the one thing of which he felt certain was that the problem was no longer a mechanical one alone. Wrapped up with it was a mystery that must be solved before there could be any certain protection of El Toro herds. There was a traitor within the outfit—one, at least. As he slipped the telltale glove into his coat pocket, and started to rejoin his workmen, he grimly and solemnly accepted the self-appointed task of putting his heel upon the guilty.

"By my hope of winning my princess, I'll do it!" he vowed.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MATCHMAKER REAPS.

WINTHROP HADLEY'S report to his fair employer on the repair of the line fence and the recovery of the stalled runabout was necessarily delayed until the next morning, as she had retired before he returned to the home ranch. It comprised the briefest recital of facts—fence wires cut clean by some

one who knew the use of insulated gloves, and a discharged battery responsible for the failure of the car.

"I am working on a follow-up plan for the fence-alarm system," he concluded. "I will be able to put it before you in detail within a day or two."

"Meantime——" Marietta hesitated.

"Meantime, have you ever considered the possibility of a traitor within the outfit as a factor in the continued successes of the rustlers?"

"What a disturbing thought!" she cried. "But, of course, it is out of the question on El Toro."

"A certain famous detective advises one to seek always for the alternative. You suspect the Mexicans, either of the village or from across the border. An alternative suspicion might well be directed against some one among your own men."

Marietta shook her head decidedly. "I'd bank on the loyalty of this outfit," she declared. "Most of the punchers have been with us for years, and a majority of the vaqueros are old hands. Even though some of them were inclined to be on the rustle, the sense of loyalty is great enough to defeat their purpose. Besides, Uncle Tom and Scott Terry are continually riding the range, and they would surely have detected signs of disloyalty if it existed. No, my friend, our losses must be blamed on outsiders, and the length of our exposed flank so near the border."

He took the rubber glove from his pocket, and held it out to her, remarking that he had found it where the fence had been most recently severed.

"Yes, you said that they used a nonconductor," said she casually.

"But this glove belonged to me," he returned, with more emphasis. "It was taken from the garage within the last few days." Pointing out the patched fingers, he showed her that he could not be mistaken.

As she looked at him, and then more intently at the glove, the confident smile born of her belief in El Toro loyalty faded. The most worried look he had ever seen in her dark eyes replaced it. "I hope there is some other explanation of the glove," she remarked, after a moment's thought. "If you knew how I despise treachery! I'll not be satisfied until this is proven one way or the other. You suspect?"

"No one definitely, as yet. But we must both be on watch, and perhaps we can bait a trap that will catch them."

She left the subject abruptly for one that had been on her mind when he first came to her. "You remember our conversation when you halted the runabout in the arroyo, day before yesterday?"

"I'll never forget," he told her eagerly.

"You spoke of a dose of medicine for Uncle Tom," she continued. "I guess he'll have to be prescribed for. He returned to the inquisition subject yesterday, and, though he tried to make light of it, I could see that he was more than ever in earnest. This morning he and Terry have been closeted in the office, and I'm morally certain that my stubbornness is under discussion, though I've kept as far away as possible."

"The doctor is at your service," said Hadley.

"What sort of a dose have you in mind?"

"We might call it a tonic for nightmare, or a stimulant for consciences. I'll guarantee it to be efficacious. If you will let me into the loft, I'll not trouble you further."

"Oh, you won't! Then I'll trouble you; for I'm coming with you," announced Marietta. "You were sufficiently mysterious about the speaking arcs. I want to see what you do and how you do it. Indeed, I have a right to, as this move is entirely in my behalf, and I'm the only person interested."

"Do you really think that 'only person' is well advised?" He demanded this with a direct look of his blue eyes that seemed to make any answer superfluous. "I'll be mighty glad to have an assistant. Will you wait on the gallery until I get the necessary apparatus from the power house?"

El Toro ranch house was a square structure, a single story in height, with a center patio open to the sky after the Mexican fashion. To afford relief from the intense summer heat, there was a space of perhaps three feet between ceiling and roof. Fortunately, for the purpose Hadley had in view, this garret was unused, and its only entrance was by ladder through a trap in the ceiling of the sewing room.

Hadley had been in the loft when wiring the house for the lighting system and knew just where he wanted to go with the boxlike machine which he brought from the power house. Bending over on account of the low roof, with Marietta just behind him, he cautiously made his way to the corner that was directly over the room in which Tom Webster slept. There, between the rafters and tight against the ceiling, he fixed the box with the side that had a funnellike opening pointing downward. It was but the work of a few minutes to run a wire from it, which he connected with a reserve wire found at the point where the house trunk wires entered.

"What do you call it?" queried Marietta, intensely curious.

"How would 'medicine chest' do?" he said, with a chuckle. "Otherwise, it's an annunciator—a loud-speaking telephone. It is calculated to direct the dreams of one Thomas Webster, esquire, and it won't be my fault if they do not prove first-class nightmares."

"But the ceiling," warned the girl. "It's thick, and you forgot to bore any hole."

"This machine doesn't mind a trifle of a ceiling," Hadley assured her. "Your uncle might become suspicious if he found a hole in the plaster over his troubled couch."

Late that afternoon, when the old cattleman was out for a ride, Hadley entered his room, which, like the others of the house, was equipped for indirect lighting. He took off the globe, which ordinarily reflected the rays of a filament lamp, and inserted a Cooper-Hewitt mercury vapor lamp in addition. When he had connected this so that it could be controlled from the outside through a separate current, he announced to Marietta that the stage was set and her uncle's slumbers could be disturbed at will.

It was two o'clock that night when the household was awakened by the bark of a six-gun and the crash of broken glass. Two other shots followed in quick succession. A moment later the weird, nightgown-clad figure of Tom Webster appeared in the quadrangle. With hoarse cries, he commanded all marauders to come out and show themselves that he might have the privilege of making sieves of their worthless persons. The old cowman was not without courage, and in his bare feet made a tour of the house in search of the disturber of his slumbers.

Lazy Barker, half dressed and more than half asleep, finally appeared and convinced his agitated employer that he had been a victim of indigestion. But the cowman had no sooner entered his room than he dashed out again with a frightened cry. He swore that the chamber was all lighted up in ghastly green, and that the one fleeting glance he had of his face in the mirror showed the reflection of a corpse.

The phlegmatic cook immediately demanded what Webster had been drinking, and scorned his positive declaration that he hadn't had a drop in a week. He insisted on leading Webster back to his chamber. When they entered, the

soft glow of the filament lamp gave the room its usual tone. "I'll take oath it was as green as the sea a minute ago," Webster insisted huskily.

"You certainly have got 'em," was the cook's rejoinder. "Get to bed before you wake the womenfolks."

Webster did return to his couch, but not to sleep. Twice he felt certain that the room lighted up with green fire. Several times he seemed to hear cries in the quadrangle as if some one was being murdered. But, on investigation, he could see no sign of disturbance. Each time he fell into a doze, he started up again, his ears ringing with sharp commands.

He appeared at breakfast next morning with reddened eyelids, and a face that was heavily lined. He was so nervous that he could scarcely handle his knife, and fork, and his coffee cup.

"Whatever was all the hubble-bubble about last night?" queried Mrs. Muller. "I was awakened and couldn't go to sleep again. Was some one shooting up the ranch?"

"You're not the only one who couldn't sleep," grumbled Tom Webster. "I had a whole herd of nightmares."

"And you thought I was your hoss wrangler, didn't you?" asked Lazy, with a grin. "You must have ate too strong of some of Pablo's grub."

"There's nothing troubling your conscience is there, Tom?" asked Mrs. Muller blandly.

Tom looked sharply at Marietta, but the smile she returned seemed sympathetic enough. With the remark that his appetitie "simply wasn't," he abruptly left the table. Then, for the first time, Marietta dared glance at Hadley. She was sorry for his heavy eyes. "What did Uncle Tom's dreams tell him?" she asked when they were alone.

"Enough," was his enigmatic answer. "He'll think twice before he annoys you again about Scott Terry."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ROUND-UP.

A CLOUD of dust hanging low above the next ride was the first sign of what was coming. It changed presently into a conglomerate herd, principally red in color, which advanced with tossing horns. Then, as the van drew nearer, the ears were assailed with a veritable bedlam—the lowing of cows, the bawling of calves, and the bellow of bulls and steers. Although it was only July, the El Toro round-up, ordinarily scheduled for September, was under way.

Such a round-up the Texas plains had never seen before! The novelty on the right was the trim little electric runabout with Marietta Webster at the wheel. On the left was the touring car, manned by Win Hadley. From the beginning of the drive the machines had done the work of half a dozen punchers, according to unprejudiced authority. The form of diversion at the extreme rear was the huge, vanlike auto chuck wagon, trundling along under the tireless power of its batteries with the tents, blankets, and grub of the entire outfit of thirty men. The man on the front seat, with both hands gripping the steering wheel, was red of face and rotund—none other than Lazy Barker. And he was smiling!

To the amazement of the outfit, not to speak of the disgust of her uncle, and the outspoken disapproval of Scott Terry, the Princess had ordered the combing of the range practically over night. She had met the storm of opposition that ensued with a firmness that might well have been inherited from her imperious father. She was unwilling, she declared, to be despoiled of any more mature and fattened stock. If the rustling must go on, the renegades would have to be satisfied with "dogies"—calves that had lost their mothers—yearlings, and the scum of the herd.

She proposed to market her prime stock while she had them to market.

That Marietta had not reached this decision on the spur of the moment was apparent when Sidewheel Emerson and five Star-Circle punchers rode in from the Pecos by way of Texmex. She had borrowed them to help with the clean-up, even as she was ready to loan her own men for the emergency work of the other ranch.

The fact that she had taken this step without even consulting him seemed to cut Tom Webster deeply. He washed his hands of the entire activity, and remained sulking in the ranch office when the cavalcade rode away accompanied by the automobile contingent.

For three days now the horsemen and the machines had been scurrying back and forth across the range, steadily driving down the scattered herds. A round-up on fenced-in El Toro differed from that of the free-grass days in that it was an individual, not a community, harvest. In common with the old-time institution of the plains, famed in fable, history, and song, the present garnering of beef on the hoof showed all the ingenuity, the energy, and the resource of the cowman. But El Toro was not an illustration of the fundamental purpose of the round-up—"justice to all men on the vast, unfenced, and undefined farm of the range." The cattle all wore one brand, and the "cutting-out" that would follow would be in no sense a division of the spoils.

As the herd swept on, its number was frequently augmented by small bunches of cattle which the cowboys had started away from their feeding ground in coulee or flat and on hog-back ridge. The gregarious habit of plains stock made the work comparatively easy. On seeing the larger herd, the heads of the strays would go up, their tails would stiffen, and, with a rush, they would be off to join their fellows, sounding, as they approached, a low mumbling moan of greeting.

It was in keeping the herd together that the automobiles had rendered most effective service. El Toro held such a vast area within its fences that the cattle had all the liberties of the free range of long ago. They were as "wild as deer and half as fleet," but none could outrun the power-driven vehicles. Suppose an aroused bull, weary of the milling of the compact herd, scented a feeding ground off to one side, and darted away, followed by a bunch of faithful cows, one of the autos would dash off silently in pursuit, and, swinging a wide circle, head back toward the deserters. The approach would be punctuated with nerve-jarring honks of the horn, which proved far more effective than the leather-lunged shouts of the punchers, or the sharp reports of their revolvers. Almost with the first surprising blast, the headlong rush for freedom would be checked, and the runaways, pivoting in their tracks, would turn tail, and seek the refuge of the bellowing herd.

It was when the cattle reached a spacious flat halfway between the Providence Water Hole and the home ranch that Marietta Webster ordered a halt, for the purpose of cutting out and branding the calves. The "beef cut," which was the real purpose of the round-up, would take place farther down the range. The pressure of horsemen at the rear of the herd was withdrawn, and with exuberant shouts punchers and vaqueros spurred their bronchos into the game they called "riding the circle." The herd was thrown into a turmoil, the bellowing grew into a concerted, awesome roar, and soon the entire bunch was milling.

Riding a rangy sorrel, his third mount of the morning, Scott Terry galloped to the runabout, from the seat of which Marietta was watching the work. For some reason best known to himself,

he had not approved of a round-up at this time, but the fact had not interfered with his vocational duties. The most exacting owner could not have objected to the manner or spirit of his direction. Silvered with the dust of the moving herd, his eyes afire with the excitement of the chase, fairly boiling over with the energy of full-blooded life, he made a striking picture as he swept off his sombrero before her.

"The herd is bunched, Princess!" he announced, as his mount pretended to pitch by way of celebration.

"On with the branding then," she cried. "I'll signal Mr. Hadley." She blew three blasts of the horn, waited half a minute, and repeated the signal. The answer came from the opposite side of the herd, and she knew the expert was on his way to her.

The range boss looked puzzled, and the fire of elation in his brilliant eyes faded. "You're not thinking of cutting out by machine, are you?" he asked, with a glance at the crush of cattle before them. "It can't be done."

"You're right," she agreed. "A car wouldn't get very far in that mêlée. Here is where your punchers have a chance to prove to themselves that they're still indispensable, that electricity can never cut them out of their jobs. But Mr. Hadley has worked out an electric branding iron that promises a quicker, cleaner burning. Besides, it will make it easier for the poor calves —I've always pitied the curly little creatures. You won't need any branding fires, for he'll draw the heat from the battery of the big car."

"Are we to snag them out as usual, or can Diablo wish the brands on them?" Terry asked, frowning.

"I think I'd leave that name to the greasers, Terry," she chided. "It isn't worthy of you. You'll find the new iron will save time and trouble. The invention won't change the cutting-out process."

Hadley drove up the big car a moment later with an enthusiastic greeting for the girl and a nod for Terry. "Never had so much fun in all my life," he cried. "Talk about your auto polo! Give me an auto round-up! Wish you could have seen that big, spotted steer that tried to board the car a while ago. He had his fore quarters into the tonneau, and his hind hoofs on the running board when I honked him out."

With a few crisp sentences, Marietta informed him that they were ready to begin branding, and indicated the most convenient position for the car. Arrived there, Hadley threw off the current, and from the tonneau of the car abstracted a nickeled tool and a coil of wire. The latter he attached to the battery. Throwing a switch, he held the flat face of the instrument toward them, showing the brand lines—E-Bar-T, El Toro's famous mark.

With a rush and a whirl, the cutting out began. Into the milling herd dashed the punchers, the loops of their ropes swinging slowly over their heads. Their horses seemed to know just what cows were wanted, and were absolutely fearless in the midst of the angry mass.

As it happened, Terry himself was the first to single out a cow with the ever-following calf. With a shout that might have been patterned after the famous Rebel yell, he headed the family pair toward the branding spot. The loop of the rope spread into a circle as it curved about the range boss' head, then suddenly darted down and out with a snakelike hiss, and the calf was laid by the heels. Instantly the sorrel squatted, flaring back on its haunches, its mane falling over its eyes, its sides heaving, its quarters silvered with the dust of the herd. A deft twist of the rope about the horn of the saddle, and the calf flopped on its side. The next moment it was skating along over sage and mesquite to receive its fiery christening.

The two who had been told out from the outfit to assist in the branding were waiting. As the calf came dragging along at the end of the rope Blas Murphy seized its ears and dropped gently on its shoulder. Buck Gilpatrick cast free the rope and seized its hind legs. The under leg he pushed far forward with his foot as he pulled the other back at full length with his hands. Hadley stepped forward with the glowing iron, pressed it lightly upon the hide at the hip, and jumped back out of the way as Buck and Blas loosened their hold. With a bawl, of fright more than agony, the little animal scrambled to its feet, and ran to rejoin its mother.

Looking on from a seat on the running board of the car, Marietta rejoiced that this necessary operation of ranching seemed to have been shorn of its most disagreeable aspects. For one thing, the electric brand iron did not hiss and seethe as did the old-fashioned one when carried red-hot from the wood fire. The operation was much quicker, only an instant's touch; and the malodorous cloud of smoke that usually arose from burning hair was almost eliminated. She felt certain that the suffering of the calf must be lessened materially, and experiments had proven that the brand thus applied "didn't come out in the washing," as the punchers had prophesied.

The sun was low and very red behind the profile of the distant Davis Mountains before the calf cut ended, and the hungry crew emerged from the press and dust cloud of the herd with horses dejected and drooping.

Then some one caught sight of the camp which the followers had pitched at a spring on the edge of the flat. "Who says dinner?" was the cry, and at once a wild race was on, putting new life into the worn mounts.

Lazy Barker, much in his element, was ready for them. The electric stove, which was part of the chuck-wagon equipment, held two huge canisters of steaming coffee, and caldrons of vegetables; but the glory of the meal lay buried in the embers of a big wood fire, for the rotund cook was ready to surprise the tired outfit with a meal of his famous "porterhouse royal."

Saddles were whipped off as if by magic, and bridles loosened at a single touch of trained fingers. In no time the tired horses were within the rope corral in charge of the wranglers. Just a splash of water, to take off the outer coating of dust, sufficed for the round-up toilet, with a rub from a rough towel.

Two Mexican boys dealt tin cups and plates, with steel knives and forks, to all hands, while a third followed with a huge pot of scalding coffee. Lazy deposited mountains of thickly sliced bread at convenient points, then loaded the boys with buckets of vegetables.

Bud Rand it was who noticed that the electric stove was cleared, and there was no sign of the meat their appetites most craved. "Beef, beef all around, and not a sliver to eat!" he droned.

"Does he think we're vegetablearians?" demanded Sidewheel, the visitor from the Pecos.

But Barker only widened his grin, and descended upon the ember-filled troughs with a pair of long tongs, followed by a boy with an enormous tray.

"Porterhouse royal! Hurrah for Lazy!"

From the fire the cook had taken the sizzling steaks, which he placed upon the ground. With a smaller fork, he whisked off the top layer, a porterhouse that was now blackened and juiceless. This he tossed to one side. Another quick movement put the center steak upon the platter. The other outside layer was discarded where it lay, for the thick, juicy piece that had occupied the middle position had drawn from it as well as its top-side brother. Again and again was this operation repeated until every one had his allotted pound

—or more—of meat. For every pound that was eaten two pounds had been cast away. A senseless waste? Only to one who has never eaten porterhouse royal!

Once fed, out came the "makings," and the outfit relaxed for an hour—plainly a necessity after the high tension of the day's work. The "ragging" of two who had been thrown during the round-up consumed much of the time; nor was Hadley forgotten, though the quips sent his way were of a different temper from what they would have been two months before. Electricity was no longer looked upon as a dangerous rival, and most of the men were ready to yield the labor it could save them, so long as it did not mean the loss of their beef and bread.

At last the tents began to call, and the group about the fire slowly dwindled. Tents? Most certainly! Just as the bucking cayuse has become the rare member of the *cavvieyah,* so has the cow-puncher of to-day grown sybaritic. But he sleeps just as hard and as sonorously under the canvas as he did when the stars were his canopy and his saddle leather served as pillow. The day's work is just as hard as it ever was, even though he seldom has to rope his broncho before saddling; there is the same danger of crushed limbs in the press of the herd, and the call for breakfast "grub pile" comes just as early as it ever did.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DREAM THAT WAS NOT.

"ROLL out! Roll out!" The morning alarm sounded early the next day, which promised to see the finish of this particular drive, barring the misfortune of a stampede.

While the punchers were eating a brief breakfast, and pouring great cupfuls of coffee into their voracious mouths, the night wranglers brought up the horse herd, and established it in a rope corral. The posts of this were three old saddle horses who could be depended upon to stay where put. They were placed at the points of a triangle, and a single strand of rope was run from pommel to pommel. It was not much of a barrier, but a horse once rope-burned is rope shy for life, and none of this herd tried to break through.

Their appetites stayed, the punchers descended on the *cavvieyah* to select the first mounts of the day. With utter disregard for the picturesque, many of them ducked under the rope, walked up to the cayuses they desired, and slipped bridle over their heads, for all the world as if it had been a stable-bred nag. Only a few of the wilder, younger animals required roping. Soon saddles were cinched over bulging, protesting sides, and the herd put under way by the yelped commands of the mounted men.

Early in the afternoon, as the drive approached the home ranch, Tom Webster appeared astride "El Capitan," the famed black stallion which was his favorite mount. He sought out Marietta, who was still riding herd in the electric runabout, and surprised her by exhibiting a manner entirely changed. The querulous, reproaching mien by which he had shown his disapproval of the round-up had disappeared.

"Accept my congratulations, Marietta girl!" he cried, as he urged his horse alongside the slowly moving car. "You were right about taking the harvest on the jump, after all. It's a scrumptious herd! Didn't know we had so many ready for the jump from chaparral to packing house."

The Princess was exceedingly pleased over his changed manner, for, after all, he was her nearest male relative, and held, besides, a quarter interest in the ranch and its cattle. Only the extremity of the present rustling situation had

persuaded her to take the reins of majority ownership.

"Won't you admit now, Uncle Tom, that there was no real reason for waiting until September just because custom makes that the month of our round-up?" she asked, with her fondest smile. "Who knows how many head we'd have lost in August, if we had waited?"

"You're a shrewd little business woman, and I offer my sincere congratulation. My grumpiness is just another sign that I'm getting old."

"Not too old to make a mighty gallant figure on El Capitan," she said gayly.

"What is your plan?" he asked. But, instead of awaiting her answer, he inserted his own wishes. "Make the beef cut to-morrow, and bunch the market stock in the big corral. Then round up the lower ranch, with the usual cutting out, and end the deal with one drive to Texmex. That's the way to do it."

Marietta had worked out a different course, intending to drive the marketable stock to the railroad immediately after the beef cut, then return for a separate rounding up and shipping of the cattle on the lower ranch. She was not absolutely committed to her own plan, but offered an objection to her uncle's idea in defense of her own.

"If we bunch up our drive, we'll get into trouble over cars, I'm afraid."

"That's exactly what we won't do," returned Webster. "I went down to Texmex yesterday, and had a long chin over the wire with the traffic manager. In ten days he'll give us two full trains, and run them as expresses direct to the yards."

"That's good news, but we mustn't overlook the law of supply and demand. If we dump all our cattle in at once, aren't we likely to bear the market?"

"You couldn't jar the present market if you were able to dump every horn on El Toro into San Antone to-morrow," said he, with decision. "I looked into the market before I talked to the railroad."

Knowing him to be keen in the marketing end of ranching, she cheerfully yielded the point, and he rode off to acquaint Terry with the change in plan.

The beef cut of the upper ranch stock began the next morning in the basin a couple of miles from the ranch house. Sunset would see it ended, with all the marketable animals—shorthorns, white-faced Herfords, and an occasional old-time Texan longhorn—closely bunched on one side. The remainder of the herd would be headed back toward the feeding range, over which it would gradually scatter itself to graze and fatten against some subsequent round-up. Under the new plan suggested by Webster, the beef-cut stock would be held in the basin, where the grass was luxurious, until the approach of the lower ranch herd. Thence they would be driven into the big corral until the herd from below had been segregated.

Late in the afternoon a thirst for coffee came to Win Hadley. He turned his machine away from the herd and drove over to Barker's chuck wagon. Although the home ranch was in plain view, and not over three miles away, the round-up camp was maintained that the punchers might be close to their herd.

Lazy was not in sight as Hadley stopped his car, and he tooted the horn several times. Shortly the cook crawled out from the front end of the wagon, which held his sleeping quarters, rubbing his eyes. "Did I wake you up, Lazy?" asked the expert in regretful tones. "I ask a thousand pardons. I wanted only a pot of coffee."

The yawn of the other was prodigious. "I had it coming to me. This outfit don't miss no calls for grub. You've been on hand when they rides in. Reckon I'd be slaughtered if the grub wasn't ready."

He set about making the fragrant

brew Hadley desired, calling meanwhile to his Mexican helpers to leave the shade in which they drowsed and get busy with preparations for supper.

"The fellow that designed this here chuckmobile sure had a heart, Hadley," he continued, with another luxurious yawn.

"Thanking you for the kind words," Hadley returned, and made him a bow. "Which particular feature have you in mind?"

"That snug bunk up front with skeeter-proof netting. This is the first round-up in my long and honorable hash career when I really get enough sleep. Say, Hadley, do you believe in dreams?"

"That depends, Lazy, on who dreams them, and whether they're good or bad. Besides, there's the rule of contraries. Was your siesta troubled?"

"Some troubled," the cook admitted. "I think I'll tell it to you by way of seeing how it sounds wide awake. The Princess thinks she's put one over on the rustlers by combing the range of all market stock, don't she?"

"It strikes me as the wisest move that's been made on this ranch in many a day."

"Since they imported you and your ghost currents, eh?" Lazy asked, with a grin. "Hear what my dream mind thinks about it. Here's a beautiful herd, every horn prime and full weight, all bunched up and ready for the drive. Lightweights, yearlings, and dogies cleaned out with a fine-tooth comb. Tomorrow the outfit hikes for the lower ranch, leaving this bonanza with two or three herd riders. There's the river three miles off, with a perfectly good ford waiting, and nothing between but a fence what can be put out of kelter with a pair of rubber gloves and the nippers. I ask you, now, if you was a rustler, wouldn't you feel like passing a vote of thanks to the little lady what did so much of the hard work for you?"

At this unexpected conclusion, Hadley looked sharply at the alleged sleeper, but Lazy's placid countenance gave no clew to his thoughts.

"I'd say that your dream was a mighty miserable one," said the expert, frowning. "Haven't you anything better to do than figure out schemes of despoiling your indulgent employer? Where's your boasted loyalty to the Princess?"

"My loyalty is plumb on top of the deck, young feller. That's why I'm reciting my dream, only—*she ain't a dream at all.*"

"What do you mean?" The query was like a small explosion.

"It's the real thing, all plotted out, and ready to be pulled off at the proper moment," insisted Barker. "I was only pretending to be asleep when I heard them a-planning of it. Even the slickest rascals get careless now and then, and this time was the 'then.'"

Hadley made no effort to disguise the fact that he was startled. The plan that the cook had outlined did seem entirely plausible on consideration. The beef herd, practically unprotected, was a cut-to-order opportunity. It would require daring; but that, he knew, was a part of the border rustler's stock in trade. If Barker had overheard such a plot, it was confirmation of his suspicion, based on the discovery of the mended glove, that members of the thieving band were within the ranch outfit. Under proper handling, Marietta's precautionary move might spell ruin. Since there was, however, still the possibility that Lazy Barker was romancing, Hadley turned on him savagely.

"If you're joking, Barker, I must say that I haven't a high opinion of your sense of humor."

"A minute ago you was casting aspersions on my loyalty to the Princess," continued the cook. "Now I'm going

to test yours. Have you got the nerve to join me in blocking this scheme?"

"If you are serious about it, of course I'm with you in blocking it," Hadley assured him gravely; "but I don't see where any particular amount of nerve comes in. If you overheard the plot, you must know the plotters. Seems to me that all that's necessary is to expose them to the Princess, and let her call in the sheriff. To make certain that their accomplices don't attempt the raid, she can postpone the lower ranch round-up, and drive to Texmex at once."

Lazy Barker grinned. "Sounds easy when you put it that way, don't it? And I reckon, if it'd work out as easy as it sounds, I'd 'a' been man enough to tell the Princess myself. But you're overlooking a few bets. Your white-chip ante won't cover in this here game."

"I don't follow, Barker," said Hadley.

"You were speaking of the sheriff. What's the first thing he's going to ask for before he arrests the aforesaid plotters? Evidence, me son, evidence! It's a shame there wasn't two of me asleep —I mean awake—at the psycho moment. But there wasn't, and in spite of my reputation for lying, my sole and lonely testimony ain't going to go with the sheriff. Besides, you can't tell the Princess who's who. She wouldn't believe; she'll have to be shown, and Texas has it on Missouri when it comes to that."

"Who *is* who, Barker?" Hadley realized that the cook had withheld, either by accident or design, the most vital detail.

"Of course, Texas has it on Missouri!" It was Scott Terry's voice that broke into their conversation. They had been so absorbed that they had not noticed his approach.

"She sure has," was Lazy's casual answer, sharing with Hadley a wonder as to how much the range boss had overheard. "And she's always going to have, whether you're dealing women, cows, rattlesnakes, or cards."

Hadley's question remained unanswered perforce, for Scott Terry stayed until the beef cut was ended, and the outfit swooped down on the cook camp with every appetite on edge.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The next installment of this serial will appear in the May 30th number, out April 30th. TOP-NOTCH is issued three times a month, on the 10th, 20th, and 30th, so that there will be but a few days to wait for the continuation of the story. Back numbers will be supplied by news dealers or the publishers.

Fully Prepared

IN a case in which damages were claimed for assault a carpenter who had been subpœnaed as a witness was asked by counsel what distance he was from the parties when he saw the plaintiff struck.

"Just four feet five inches and a half," the carpenter answered.

"Pray tell me," said counsel, "how it is possible you can be so very exact as to the distance?"

"Why, to tell you the truth," replied the carpenter, "I thought perhaps some fool might ask me, so I measured it!"

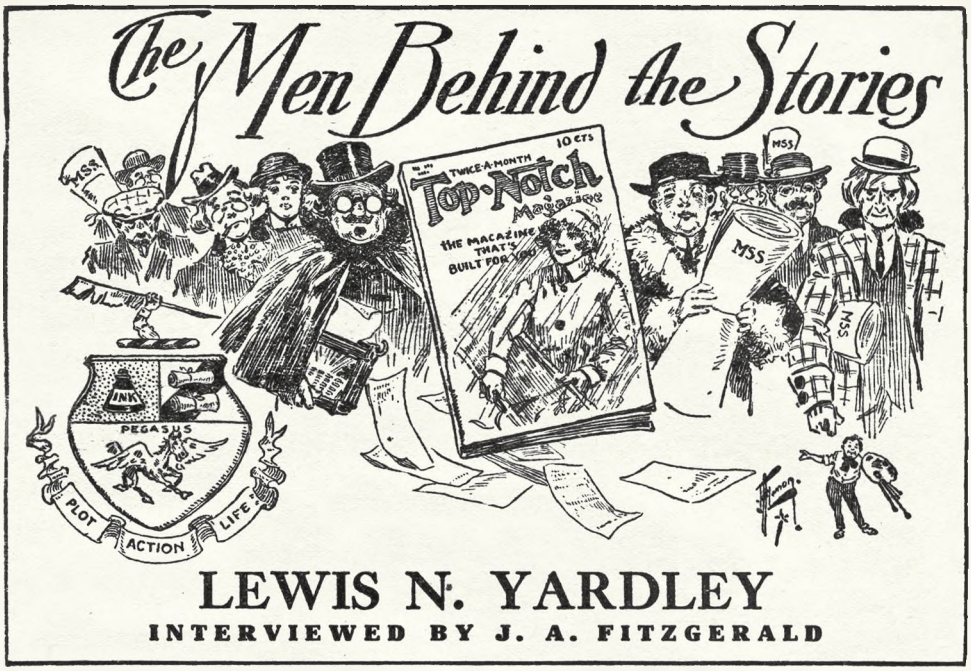
Cold Bluff

AN Englishman and an Irishman made a bet as to which could swim the longest. On the day of the race the Irishman came to the shore in a bathing suit with a large satchel on his back. The Englishman asked what he had in the bag.

"Provisions for three days," coolly answered Pat.

"The bet's off," said the Englishman, as he handed Pat the money.

A few days later he heard that Paddy could not swim a stroke.



LEWIS N. YARDLEY

INTERVIEWED BY J. A. FITZGERALD

STEP lively, now, if you want to make the acquaintance of a regular fellow. Lewis N. Yardley is his name. "Rural Delivery," "The Sign of the Sixes," "An Acre for Every Man," and numerous other diverting stories have been plucked from his fertile typewriter.

And while we are on that subject, if any typewriting machine ever needed sympathy, that one is our friend Yardley's. Talk about cruel and inhuman punishment! It is inconceivable that any one—even an author—should so far forget himself as to beat a defenseless bunch of type bars until they shriek for mercy. But their cries fall on deaf ears. Yardley, the most tender-hearted chap in the world in all other respects, seems to take a fiendish delight in sinking his knuckles in the keyboard, his unwarranted brutality having reduced a once merry and bright little typewriter to a tangled mass of steel and iron.

Ordinarily the writer would be inclined to give a fellow yarn spinner the best of it, but he feels that Yardley's admirers are entitled to know just what sort of a fellow he is. That so entertaining a writer should possess such a savage side was discovered only by the merest chance, and goes to prove that amiability is only skin deep. After what I saw him do to his machine, I'm satisfied that if they should ever skin Yardley—but, there, what's the use of dwelling on such an impossibility; you can't skin an author; no, sir; it can't be did.

Our victim was incarcerated in an apartment in Brooklyn at that time of this investigation, having taken up a temporary residence there to put the finishing touches to a story. In the semidarkness of the hallway I could not see that the place where the bell button should have been was empty, the result being that I drove my index finger up to the hilt in the opening. This struck me as funny, until I found that I could not withdraw my digit. You

can imagine my embarrassment. Every time I heard a tenant approaching—and it seemed to me that a large section of the population paraded past me in that few minutes—I had to stand there, carelesslike, and pretend to be waiting for some one to answer the bell.

IN my struggles to free myself, I think I must have shook the building. The rattling of the chandeliers in Yardley's apartment came to my ears, but my squirming was not noisy enough to draw him to the door. For the first time in my life I felt that I could get along without one of my fingers; I felt that way because it looked as if I would have to. I had visions of carpenters removing the section of doorway that held me prisoner; I could see myself escorting a log of wood back to New York. Not until I had thought of all these horrible things did it occur to me to kick the door. I did so, and a second later was greeted pleasantly by an extraordinarily tall young man, whose legs seemed to start in the vicinity of his Adam's apple.

"Mr. Yardley?" I ventured.

"You bet!" he answered cheerily.

"I'm from TOP-NOTCH."

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" he cried enthusiastically. "Come right in. I thought you had come to fix the bell. I——"

"I did," I interrupted; "I've fixed it, all right."

Not until then did he notice my plight. I felt extremely awkward when he walked all around me, laughing as he went. "What's happened?" he inquired eagerly. He was serious now. Fear that he might have to support a fellow companion in crime made him so.

"I got my finger in here and can't get it out," I explained.

Before I could divine his intentions, he had seized me and was endeavoring to pry me loose. "Do you feel it give?" he asked.

"If you mean my shoulder, yes; if you mean my finger, no," I replied.

All at once he ceased his efforts, and started laughing again. "I might have known you were joshing me!" he exclaimed.

I assured him that I wasn't. "What do you mean?" I demanded.

"Why don't you unbutton your glove if you wish to free yourself?" he continued.

To say that I felt stupid doesn't half describe it. Somehow or other, I had not thought of this. I unbuttoned the glove, gave a slight tug, and—I was free again.

"Solid ivory!" voted Yardley.

There was nothing left for me but to make it unanimous.

I'M just fitting one of my heroes with a halo," he said, leading me into the apartment and closing the door behind us. "I'll be with you in a moment."

Those skyscraping legs carried him across an exceptionally large room in a few strides. I saw him seat himself before an object which, from where I stood, looked like nothing so much as a xylophone. Imagine my surprise when it proved to be his typewriter. The next instant he was jabbing, jolting, swatting, and uppercutting that miserable old bunch of junk with a ferocity that cannot be described. I have never seen a machine go faster; I have never seen one take so much punishment. And I say this with Gilbert Patten's typewriting performances in mind. You will recall that on the occasion of my visit to Patten's fictionary I caught him chastising his metal meal ticket for all he was worth. Take it from me, Patten's treatment of a typewriter is charitable compared with Yardley's.

"There we are!" Yardley exclaimed joyously, giving his machine the concluding wallop. "At your service now. Fire away!"

Curiosity prompted me to delay the

interview until I had examined his machine, still writhing in agony. How he ever writes on it is a mystery. It has been hammered out of all shape. Not a letter has escaped; not even the poor little period. It has been flattened until it looks like a hyphen.

"That machine takes a beating better than any I ever had," he remarked, observing my interest in the wreck.

"H o w—h o w many have y o u killed?"

"I've forgotten," he admitted coolly.

SEEING that it would be a waste of time to try to rouse his sympathy in behalf of the machine, I took a running jump and landed right in the middle of his private affairs.

"Are you married?" I asked.

"Not on your life!" he answered. "Becoming an author is the worst thing that I ever did to humanity."

"How long have you been authoring?"

"I've been in the writing game since I left school; been turning out short stories for the last ten years."

It took all my courage to ask the next question: "Do you live in Brooklyn?"

He shook his head. "No; a friend of mine hires this apartment, and I do some of my work here when I happen to be in New York."

"Which isn't very often?"

"About twice a year, I should say. I have no permanent address. I'm something of a gypsy; I keep on the move all the time."

"Have you been abroad?"

"A dozen times. I've been around the world twice."

"Got the brass ring the first time, I take it?"

The fact that he did not resent this wheeze convinced me that he was n o t altogether cruel. The ensuing ten minutes were spent in discussing his stories a n d t h e work of c o n t e m p o rary writers.

"You're strong for TOP-NOTCH?" I suggested.

"You're a good guesser. No matter where I happen to be, the first and fifteenth of the month have always found me hunting f o r a news stand. Now I'll be hunting three times a month. A TOP-NOTCH cover smiling up at you looks awfully good when you're knocking about the world. Oh, yes, you'll meet it in all parts of Europe. I got my last Christmas number in Australia."

THE conversation lagged at this point, but he inquired, with a quizzical smile: "Why don't you ask me where I was born?"

Figuring that it had taken a great many years to have those legs reach such an imposing height, I had decided not to embarrass him by asking when they had started. But I'm one of those fellows who can take a hint. Besides, his manner promised an interesting answer. "Where were you born?" I asked.

"On a sailing vessel, about one hundred miles from Halifax," he responded, a note of triumph in his voice.

"That is unusual," I remarked.

"I was very young at the time," said Yardley. "My daddy was captain of the vessel. He was a fine scholar, and gave me my early education; you see, my mother died when I was two years old. Most of my childhood was passed on the ocean. When I was ten years old my father came ashore for good, and I was shipped to a regular school."

"The writing fever attacked you early?" I ventured.

He laughed easily. "Fairly early," he assented, "but not before I had other ambitions. You'll never guess what I wanted to do while I was in school."

I knew that he expected me to guess something unusual, so I racked my brain to think of some extraordinary desire that might have possessed him at the time referred to. "Run away to sea?" I hazarded.

Wearily he turned away. Then I realized that my guess had not been a particularly bright one. "Become a runner!" I almost shouted. I was sure I had it this time. A boy with those legs couldn't have any other ambition. tion.

"That's a little better," he returned; "but you are still a long way from it. You'll never guess it in a thousand years. I'll tell you: I wanted to join a circus; I had a mad desire to become an acrobat."

"Honest?"

"Honest," came the admission. "I rigged up a trapeze in the woodshed. I was getting along nicely until one day when——"

"You missed the trapeze," I interrupted.

"Exactly! And the next day I turned author."

The Only "P. T."

THE late P. T. Barnum had a keen sense of humor, and delighted to play a practical joke.

Keene, the great American tragedian, was playing "Richard III." in San Francisco at the same time as the "Only and Original Greatest Show on Earth" was in the city.

One night, when the well-known sentence was uttered, "A horse! a horse! My kingdom for a horse!" out from the wings there issued forth a quadruped that struck the audience dumb—a veritable living skeleton, with sprung knees and staring ribs striped with all the colors of the rainbow. A large card, bearing the legend: "How's this, sonny? P. T. Barnum," was fastened above the animal's head.

It was the best "ad." "P. T." ever issued; but it cost him hundreds of dollars to "square" things.

No Kick

LARRY O'SHEIL, in many respects a good soldier, had a very limited idea of the virtue of tidiness.

Appearing one morning on parade with his boots in a fearful state, the sergeant's eagle eye soon spotted him.

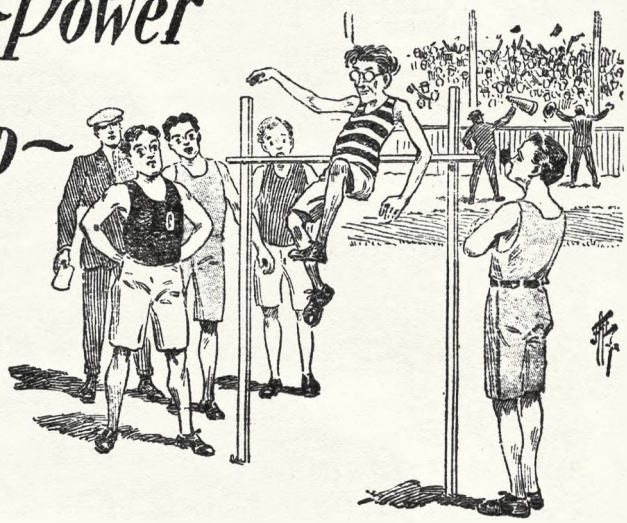
"Private O'Sheil, fall out!" he roared. "Phwat d'ye mane by comin' here wid yur boots in a mess loike thot?"

"Arrah, now, sargint, be aisy!" retorted the imperturbable Larry. "Shure, ye niver saw a good soldier showin' a clane pair o' heels!"

His Brain-Power Jump—

Tale of "The Hummingbird"

By Hugh McNeill



SCISSORS GREAVY skimmed along the dirt path, took two quick little steps just as he came to the take-off, and straightened out above the crossbar some six feet in the air, coming down in a cloud of sawdust in the pit. Everybody howled—everybody except The Hummingbird, who had taken an hour from his favorite sport of hunting the fierce co-secant through the dense jungles of Logarithm Land, and had come down to watch the final practice of the track team. He snorted in disgust.

"Huh!" he sneered, when the cheer died away, "if that's considered a good specimen of the high hop, my opinions of sport are decidedly confirmed!"

"You lunatic!" I reproved him. "Scissors just broke his record! That means the team has a chance against Cornell next Saturday! And for Heaven's sake, don't call it a high hop! It's a high *jump!* Try to conceal your total ignorance, please, or else don't talk! You disgrace me!"

"I called it a hop because that's what it is," persisted The Hummingbird. "Your terminology is as unscientific as your sports. A jump is performed when the impulse is supplied by both feet—a hop is accomplished with one only. This is a high hop, no matter what you choose to miscall it!"

"Aw, don't argue with him, Mac," growled "Peaches" Dunlap. "I don't care what you call it—it broke the record, and, if Scissors can do it again next Saturday, we'll sting Cornell. Let it go at that!"

So we let The Hummingbird have his own way, and he sat there, wearing his most annoying expression of superiority, while Scissors got ready to make another try. They had shoved the crossbar up an inch or two, and, if he cleared it, he was going to make history right in front of us. We all held our breath, and watched him pacing off his distance and taking the kinks out of his elongated legs. Then he came down the path again, gathering speed all the way, and checking just the tiniest fraction at the take-off. He sailed up into the air like a kite, cleared the bar

by at least two extra inches, and came down in the sawdust amid a yell that made the bleachers tremble.

But he did not scramble to his feet this time. Instead, he lay still on the soft earth, and in the awed hush that followed the din, we could distinctly hear him groaning.

"Fish" O'Connell, the trainer, came up on the run, and began to explore Scissors' legs. Suddenly Scissors uttered a loud wail, short and sharp, but eloquent of agony. Fish straightened up and shook his head. In a minute some of the second-string men were carrying poor old Scissors off to the field house, and we could see from where we sat that his right leg was broken. The foot and part of the lower leg were loose and askew, and Scissors' face was all twisted awry with the pain of it. For a minute there was a tense silence, and then, when it was so still that his shrill little voice carried halfway along the stand, The Hummingbird piped up:

"Well, that's what comes of trying to hop, instead of to jump! If he'd landed on both feet, instead of one, he'd be all right! It never pays to be unscientific!"

For a minute I thought The Hummingbird would be mobbed. Everybody was so sore, and disappointed, and so sorry for Scissors that if The Hummingbird had been half the size of a normal man, he'd have come in for pretty rough handling then and there. As it was, Peaches Dunlap grabbed him by the collar, and shook him like a rat.

"I've a good mind to spank you!" he growled. "What license have you got to criticize a wizard like Scissors? You know as much about high jumping as an angleworm! And, instead of being sympathetic when the best jumper in college cracks a leg, you sit there and tell us how he ought to have jumped!"

I got The Hummingbird away, considerably ruffled as to plumage and dignity, but otherwise undamaged. He was fighting mad, of course. Nothing got him so stirred up as treating him like a kid.

"Mac," he said, between his teeth, "I'll show that bunch of beefy lowbrows that a little science will beat the best legs on earth! I'll teach them to laugh at me! The big, overgrown numskulls!"

I thought he was going to cry, and I felt sorry for him. I suppose it's pretty tough to have to go through life with just enough flesh and bone to carry around a heavy stock of wisdom in the top story. Anyway, I tried to calm him down, but he would not be comforted. He refused to come back to the rooms with me, and said he wanted to go down to the physics laboratory to make some experiments. His little eyes were bright with his rage, and his lips trembled just like a child's. I hated to let him go, for there was no telling what folly he might commit in that state of mind, but he would not let me accompany him.

II.

THE whole college was steeped in gloom over Scissors and his broken leg. You see, it was his last year in college, and this was the first time he had ever shown anything like championship form. And now, just when he had trained up to record-breaking pitch, he was out of the running. The doctor said it would be a year, at least, before he would be able to jump again, and, of course, by that time poor old Scissors would be far out in the big cold world, working for his living. You must admit it was pretty tough on Scissors, and it was tough on the college, too. We had set our hearts on beating Cornell that spring. They usually triumphed over

us, but this time we had a lot of good men, and were sure to make a pretty close bid for first honors. But with Scissors out of it we stood to count nothing in the two jumps, and very little in either of the hurdles, for Scissors was our one best bet in all those events. We did not exactly wear crape, but we felt just as sorry without it.

It was Tuesday when Scissors broke his leg, and I didn't see The Hummingbird till the next morning. He was all smiles and smirks when I came back from breakfast.

"Don't tell anybody, Mac," he said, "but I've fixed it all up about that high hop. We'll win it easily!"

"Who's going to do it for us?" I asked suspiciously.

"I am!" he said, as if that settled it.

I had to laugh in his face; he looked likely to win nothing more athletic than a chess match.

"Laugh away," he said calmly. "You'll see for yourself. I was going to tell you about it, but now you'll just have to wait and see, like the rest!"

I choked off my laugh, and tried to get him to tell me his scheme; but he only shook his head knowingly, and grinned.

"Wait and see!" was all he condescended to say. "I'm going to demonstrate that the idea of hopping by sheer leg power is out of date. Why, a rheumatic octogenarian, with nothing more scientific than a stepladder, could beat the best high hopper that ever walked. Science wins, Mac! You think beef beats it, but I'm going to educate you a little—you and the other muscle-bound feeble-wits around here!"

"If you think they're going to let you use a stepladder——" I began, but he shook his head impatiently.

"I know the silly rules of the stupid game!" he declared. "I'm not going to violate them. Science makes light of minor obstacles like that. You wait and see!"

Finally, he seemed so confident that he could win that I began to believe it myself; so I hunted up "Antelope" Kelly, the track captain, and told him. He hooted the notion at first, but I pointed out that even if The Hummingbird proved to be "a false alarm," it would not do any harm to let him try, and there was always just the chance that he might make good. So Antelope had him entered in the two hurdle races, and both high and broad jumps, and the whole college laughed through its gloom when the list came out in the daily, with Scissors' name missing, and The Hummingbird's—Isaac Newton Diefenberger—in its place!

A lot of the fellows dropped in at our rooms to see The Hummingbird, but he was not there, except during his sleep time. He knew better than to reveal his plans prematurely under the rapid fire of their jokes; and, besides, he usually did most of his studying elsewhere, our room being rather too noisy to suit his tastes. I hardly saw him that week. He would come in after I was in bed, and be out before I was up. I was rowing stroke, that spring, and so, of course, I had to get lots of sleep. But Friday night, just as I was undressing, he came in, looking like a canary-fed cat. His shoes were muddy, and so were his hands and clothes, and there was a splash of dirt on his protruding forehead, where he had slapped at a mosquito, evidently. But he was very much pleased with himself.

"Where've you been?" I demanded. "Making mud pies? You look like it!"

"I've been high hopping!" he declared airily. "Did a bit better than seven feet, too!"

"Seven inches, you mean!" I snorted. "You couldn't pole vault seven feet!"

"Just as you say," he replied, with a self-complacent grin. "Only I meas-

ured it rather carefully. You'll see tomorrow!"

Of course, it was absurd, but I couldn't help wondering whether, after all, the fellow might not have stumbled on some new stunt. It is never safe to figure that The Hummingbird is lying; he doesn't know how!

I told the Antelope about it, next morning, and he tried to pump The Hummingbird; but Kelly couldn't get any more satisfaction than I had. So we had to wait till the meet to be sure, and I never saw time fly so slowly as it did that day. It seemed like a year before the referee got them lined up for the hundred—the first event. Then, of course, it was not so bad waiting for the high jump—the last item on the day's bill. There was plenty of excitement, for we took the two dashes handily, and the Antelope won the quarter and the half, while "Beef" Meyers was winning the two weight events. But Cornell got all the places and thirds, and took the mile, the two mile, and the high hurdles. We won the low hurdles, because the Cornell star fell on the last one; and Peaches Dunlap, entered in the broad jump at the last minute, astonished everybody by tying for first with the Cornell hurdler, who was supposed to be the best man on this side of the water. We came up to the high jump one point behind. If we took first in it, even though Cornell got the other two places, we would win. So it was all up to The Hummingbird.

There was a sort of mingled groan and titter when he came down in front of the stand, dressed in a gymnasium suit that hung in folds and wrinkles on his small, lean, bony frame. But he was our only hope, and we crossed our fingers and pulled hard for him. Whickert led three good old cheers for Diefenberger, three more for the high hop, and three more for science, and then we settled down to watch the contest.

III.

THE Cornell sharp was the most graceful jumper I ever saw. In action, he would barely touch the take-off with one toe, and then sail up over the bar like a bird, landing on his feet without a bit of fuss or dust. They started with the bar at four feet. The Hummingbird passed, but the Cornell man went over it with nearly two feet to spare. Then they raised it to five, after the two other Cornell men had cleared it less gracefully. They all three got over this, and The Hummingbird passed again, waving his hand contemptuously, as much as to say that he had no time for paltry low levels. They kept on jumping, and The Hummingbird kept on passing until the bar was at five eleven, where both the second-string men put themselves out of the running. The star sailed over it without half trying; and now The Hummingbird was obliged to show what he had up his sleeve.

He argued a bit with the referee and the Cornell man, and finally it was agreed that he might put the bar up at once to six feet six inches, on condition that if he failed at that he was not to be allowed a try at anything less, and the Cornell men would consequently win all three places on their previous jumps.

Everybody groaned when this arrangement was announced, for it meant that The Hummingbird had to make this jump, or fail to score at all, and none of us had any belief that he would even come close. But he did not seem to worry. He spread his handkerchief down on the sod, a little to one side of the take-off, and about a yard back of it, and measured off his paces back to the end of the runway very carefully. Next he stood there a few seconds, gazing at the bar, which was more than a foot above his head; and then he came running slowly down the path, his

thin little legs wabbling, his elbows swinging wildly, and his head bobbing around on his spindly neck like an orange perched on a toothpick. I felt pretty sorry for him, but, while I was feeling that way he dodged aside from the skinned path, took two strides on the turf, and came down *ker-flump!* on his handkerchief, both his feet together and his knees straight and stiff. Instead of stopping right there, as he ought to have, by every known law of nature and high jumping, he shot into the air as if he'd been picked up by the grapnel of a balloon, and cleared the bar nicely by two or three inches. His feet were gathered up in front of him, his knees tucked up under his chin, and he came down in the sawdust pit, sitting, with a thump that seemed to jar the stands. But he had made the jump, and we stood to win!

There was a howl that must have been heard in Ithaca! We pounded each other on the back, and there was a regular rain of hats all over the stands, while Whicket and his assistants got the cheers going in wild enthusiasm till the Cornell star got ready to make his tries. Then there was a dead hush.

The Cornell man knocked the bar off twice. He was inches short of clearing it both times, and it looked easy for us, especially when, on his third try, he missed his stride and had to take off back in the sod instead of just in front of the uprights. But, to our amazement, he went over this time, with something to spare! We stood to tie, unless The Hummingbird could repeat. They shoved the bar up another notch, and Isaac Newton plastered down his little handkerchief and tried again. He missed the handkerchief this time, and barely got high enough into the air to carry away the bar. The next time he hit the mark, all right, but just grazed the bar as he cleared it, and down it came behind him, while everybody groaned. But the Cornell jumper missed both his first two tries also, and, as he was inches short each time, it looked like a victory for us, if The Hummingbird could only manage to improve by the least fraction. If they should tie for first and second, it would split seven points between them, and the Cornell third place man would score the single point they needed to tie the whole meet. So we crossed our fingers, and held our breath, as Isaac Newton prepared for the final attempt.

He paced it all off extra carefully, and then, landing squarely in the middle of his handkerchief, he bounced up into the air like a tennis ball, and went high above the crossbar. I remember just how he looked, hung there against the evening sun for a fraction of a second before he started to come down. It was a thrilling sight! But, as he came down, he lost his nerve—he told me afterward that the ground looked a mile away—and he grabbed out wildly for something to stop himself from falling. He caught one of the uprights, and hung on to it, shaking the crossbar loose as he slid down! The meet was tied, even if the Cornell jumper failed again. If he went over—good night!

He made a perfect jump. Up, up, up he went, until he slid over the bar with half a foot to spare. It was all over! Muscles had beaten brains again!

We went away to supper, feeling pretty glum, but everybody agreed that The Hummingbird deserved a lot of credit. Some criticized him pretty severely for grabbing the post on his last jump; but we shut them up quickly and decisively. When a spindly little "grind" like The Hummingbird could go out and jump six feet six on his first try, nobody has a right to say a word against him. That is only justice. And we all agreed that when he'd been trained a little he'd break all the

world's records. I felt pretty proud to have him for a roommate, I tell you!

IV.

BUT when I got up to the rooms that night I found him wrapped in gloom. He could hardly get up spirit enough to absorb his nightly dose of knowledge, and if you knew The Hummingbird you would realize what depths of depression he had sounded in the few hours after the meet. I tried to comfort him by telling him how well he had done, how we all felt that he was a wizard, and a child wonder, and world beater, but he couldn't believe my words of praise, and he found in them only the coldest comfort.

"It's a blow, Mac!" he said, shaking his head and looking woebegone. "I didn't believe that mere muscle could beat brains, but I was wrong. I'll never jump again!"

This was horrible—it would be just like the little lunatic to stick to that crazy notion. The fact that he could send his name down in athletic history as a world's record man would not influence him in the least. I had to get his mind off that idea quickly, before he had time to settle down on it.

"Nonsense, Isaac Newton!" I said cheerfully. "I never used to believe that brains could beat muscles in the sports, but you proved it, this afternoon. The trouble is that you don't take training into account. Blake's muscles were *trained,* trained for years, to jump, and to do precious little else. Your mind wasn't trained to jump. And the other training it has had wouldn't help. Why, if you can take a perfectly untrained set of brains and beat a perfectly trained set of muscles, as you really did, except for an accident, what can you do when you put those brains through a little scientific training? You try that, and you'll see I'm right!"

The lowering clouds of gloom seemed to lift from his mind.

"I believe you are right, Mac!" he declared. "I didn't get full benefit out of my science to-day. I know it could be improved. Let's go and try it."

We started right off to the field, The Hummingbird half running, he was so eager to vindicate his beloved science. There was a fine moon, and we could see well enough. The Hummingbird made a couple of experimental jumps, with all his clothes on, and I should say that both of them were close to seven feet! I was satisfied, for my part, just as I had been all along, but The Hummingbird was not content, not free from misgivings.

"That's all right for ordinary cases," he said. "But suppose some extraor- good leg jumper comes along and manages to twist himself over that height? No—if science is any good at all, it's got to be able to beat the best leg artist that ever hopped. I'm going to see!"

Down he dropped on his knees, right where he had put his handkerchief, and began to roll up a thick strip of turf. I thought for a minute that he had gone suddenly insane, but when I came around beside him and saw the surface of a metal plate where the turf was cut away, I began to get an inkling. The Hummingbird pried the plate loose, and began to adjust a screw on some odd-looking coils, stored away below it.

"This is dad's new multiplying spring," he explained, between grunts. "It's arranged so that it can be made to store up any number of jars and bumps; and, then, when it's properly set, the tiniest little movement will produce a rebound of really tremendous force. The plate only moves about half an inch, but there's real power behind it. That's science! That's the scientific way of propelling a human body over an obstacle, and it's better than the best leg that ever hopped, even if legs did win this afternoon!"

But I had a sudden burst of inspiration in the moment of horror and disgust that overwhelmed me at sight of The Hummingbird's miserable trick.

"Rats!" I yelled. "Science is all right, Hummingbird, but science alone can't beat science and legs together. And *that's* what won to-day—not legs alone!"

"How do you mean?" said The Hummingbird, puzzled.

"Why, don't you see?" I cried. "Blake accidentally took off above this contraption of yours both times when he made his big jumps! He had all your rascally advantage and all his own leg power, and naturally he beat you!"

"Then," said The Hummingbird musingly, "he'll be surprised when he tries to duplicate that performance, won't he?"

We never knew whether he was surprised, but he never came close to that record again. His name still stands in the record books. His spikes, gilded and marked, hang on the wall of his fraternity house. Ambitious jumpers study his career, as young West Pointers study Napoleon's. But, unless this confession falls beneath his eye, he will never know what happened that afternoon, when, with The Hummingbird's unintentional assistance, he perpetrated those two amazing brain-power high hops.

New Danger in Wireless

THE latest in the list of occupational maladies is "wireless operators' disease." A German authority reports that the men who send the "S. O. S." signals suffer often from impoverished blood, headaches, and other untoward symptoms. That these are directly due to the powerful electric waves sent out by their machines has not been directly proved, but incidents are cited that make this appear at least probable. Other conditions only indirectly connected with wireless telegraphy may, of course, add to the effect. The following is from a German scientific journal:

"Wireless telegraphers are subject to anæmia, in which the number of red blood corpuscles, as well as their content of hemoglobin, is diminished. This malady has certainly various causes. In the first place, the defective sanitary conditions of the stations, especially on board ship. It is equally probable that the strong ozonization of the air, due to the use of alternating currents of high frequency to send the messages, plays an important part. Similar troubles, such as paleness, headache, loss of appetite, and bad digestion, have often been noted among the electrical workers employed in high-tension plants, such as those at Niagara.

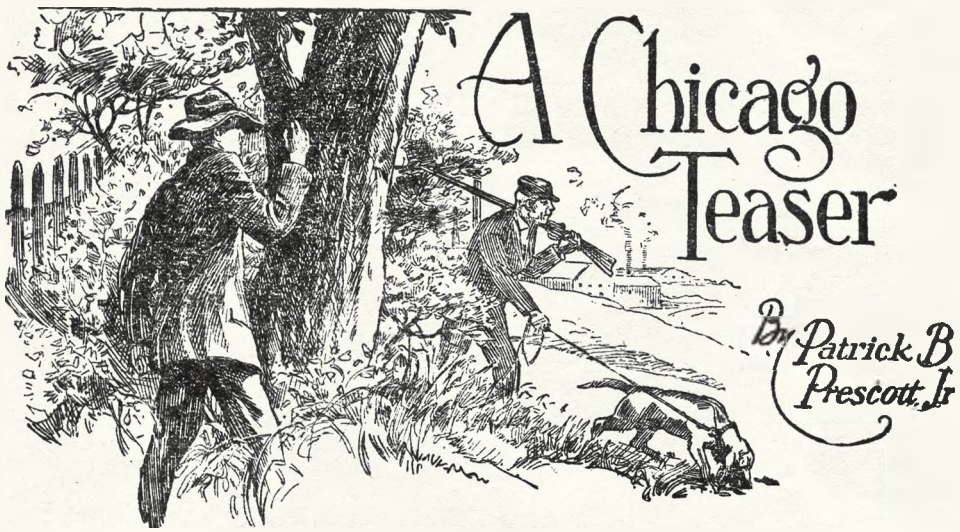
"The future will show us whether electric waves have any physiologic effects. A Viennese physician, Doctor Beer, has noted the production of subjective glows when a powerful electromagnet is brought near the head."

Water Bullets

SHOOTING a humming bird with the smallest bird shot made is out of the question, for the tiniest seeds of lead would destroy his delicate plumage. The only way in which the bird can be captured for commercial purposes is to shoot him with a drop of water from a blowgun or a fine jet from a small syringe.

Skillfully directed, the water stuns him. He falls into a silken net, and before he recovers consciousness is suspended over a cyanide jar. This must be done quickly, for if he comes to his senses before the cyanide whiff snuffs out his life he is sure to ruin his plumage in his struggles to escape.

Humming birds vary in size from specimens perhaps half as large as a sparrow to those scarcely bigger than a bee.



A Chicago Teaser

By Patrick B Prescott Jr

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

WITHOUT A FORMALITY.

THAT afternoon Hampton Braig and I were seated at our window in Michigan Boulevard, Chicago, gazing out upon the phenomena of the lake, when Gunsen, the Swedish butler, a worthy relic of the Braig estate, appeared at the door, bearing an empty tray in his hand.

"A gentleman to see you, sir."

"His card?" said Braig, without turning his gaze from the window.

"No card, sir."

Braig turned to me and smiled. "Good indication," he observed. "There's usually more business than formality in that type. Show the gentleman in, Gunsen."

The butler bowed, and departed. Next minute the door swung open before a stockily built young man with a freckled, bulldog face and flaming hair, but with a spark of innate merriment in his alert blue eyes. He glanced from Braig to me, then settled upon Braig as the man he sought, and finally, with true Celtic ease, dropped into a nearby chair.

"Your friend?" he inquired, jerking a blunt thumb toward me.

"Mr. Harding, my companion and coworker," explained Braig. "The confidences of one are those of the other. What can I do for you?"

The young man laughed. "I suppose this will sound like an old woman's tale to you, but it's run so blamed funny that it's about getting on my nerves. My name's Flanagan—Ralph Flanagan. That was my father's name, too. The old man died about a week ago."

He took out a handkerchief and mopped his brow. "Well, let me try to give you the tale in order. My father had a very dear old friend, named Tom Kelly. They were the greatest chums in the world. On Monday, eight days ago, my father came home, affected by the heat. He died in a few hours. Two days later we buried him. He left a bit of business to be attended to, so I worked late on his affairs, and slept right in his room. About midnight the very first time I slept in there, which was the night after the burial,

I was disturbed by a peculiar noise that sounded as if somebody was trying to move about unheard. I grabbed my revolver from under my pillow, jumped up, and rushed to the window, but the night was dark, and whoever it was had gone. I saw no sign of anything, or anybody. Next day I looked among our things, but there was nothing missing, although any amount of loose jewelry lay about.

"The following night I was awakened again. This time I caught the rascal red-handed; he was sneaking in through the window, with a pair of shoes in his hand. He tiptoed in, dropped the shoes softly, and began to ransack the cabinet. I must have stirred, for he grabbed another pair quickly, and jumped toward the window when I covered him, and, in spite of the revolver pointing at his head, he fled through it like a jack rabbit. And I didn't fire because I recognized him as my dad's old friend, Tom Kelly!

"I lighted the gas, and looked at the shoes he had left—they were mine! He had had them overnight, but I hadn't missed them because there were so many pairs in the cabinet—some mine, some dad's."

"What color were the ones returned?" asked Braig.

"Black."

"And the last pair stolen—were they yours, or your father's?"

"They were my father's, I think."

"You are not absolutely certain?"

"Well, pretty nearly so. My father and I both had a hobby for shoes. I had put four pairs of black ones and a pair of tans of my own in his cabinet. He already had several pairs of blacks, and one of tans there, too. All my shoes are accounted for. So it must be dad's that are gone this time."

"Black?"

"Yes, black—he had but one pair of tans."

Braig drew forth the inevitable cigarette case, and, in a moment, a blue wreath was wafted toward the ceiling. "Now, a few other points," he suggested pleasantly. "You remember the pair of black shoes which the thief returned, do you not? Was there anything distinctive about them? Were they in any way similar to your father's?"

"We both wore whatever was in fashion."

"Then do you recollect any mark, or sign, or peculiarity in that pair? Think a moment."

Flanagan closed his eyes. "Why, by George!" He brought his fist down on the armchair with characteristic Celtic vigor. "I do, by all that's good! I had my initials, R. F., in them. It was a fad at the time, and the shoe clerk insisted that I have them put in."

"Do you know of your father having any similar mark in any of his shoes?" asked Hampton Braig.

"No, I do not, though I can't say positively that there was none."

Braig's expression was not one of dissatisfaction. "Just a few points more, Mr. Flanagan. What was your father's occupation?"

"He was a detective of the Chicago police force from eighteen eighty-three to nineteen-two, when he retired, and lived on the income from his investments."

"And Kelly?"

"He was a detective, too. It was on the force that dad met him. They were often detailed together, and so became pals. Kelly quit the force in nineteen-three."

That the latter point of the narrative was of vital interest to Braig was apparent, for he chewed the cork tip of his cigarette to shreds, and plowed his nervous white fingers incessantly through his thick shock of raven-black hair. With a final luxurious inhalation of the smoke, he sprang from his chair, thrust his hands deep into his pockets,

and paced the floor. "Your tale is very singular, Mr. Flanagan," he said—"very singular. I am truly glad you brought it to my attention. By the way, what sort of a looking man is this Kelly?"

Our visitor's blue eyes sparkled with anything but merriment. "Looks like a question mark. Drooped, grizzled, scowling, tanned, thin of build, and about fifty-three. He wears a slouch hat pulled down over the right eye. He wears frayed trousers, and his hands are always inside the pockets—not a very pleasant fellow to look at, and I've often wondered how dad took to him. He didn't seem so very fond of him, but there was some strange bond of sympathy between them, which makes me feel that there may be more in this matter of the shoes than appears on the surface. Kelly may have something up his sleeve that would make a great deal of trouble for us."

Braig had listened with close attention. "Leave your address with me," he said, "and I will look into the case first thing in the morning."

"We move this afternoon at five," said our client. "The house is too large for me alone, so I decided to rent it, and move into a smaller cottage in Hammond, ten miles out. We are now in Pullman—here's the address," he added, scribbling it on a bit of paper. "It's a new, green cottage, surrounded by trees. The caretaker is packing the things now."

Braig stopped in the middle of the floor, and stroked his chin. "I have business this afternoon that I can't sidetrack. I'll send Mr. Harding to watch things until I am able to come. Meantime you keep an eye on all shoes, and I'll see you to-morrow myself."

Flanagan smiled. "I'll keep an eye all right. I gave the caretaker strict orders to be careful while I was away. Now that I've told you, the story sounds so absurd that I'm sorry I bothered you; but, just the same, I can't explain it. For dad's sake I wouldn't turn the old man over to the police, and yet——"

"Oh, it probably won't be anything serious," Braig assured him. "Anyway, I'll try to clear it up to-morrow." He gave our client a hearty handshake, and repeated, smiling: "Keep your eye on the shoes!"

As the door closed softly behind the visitor, Braig dropped back into his seat at the window, and turned a quizzical look upon me. "Well, what do you make of it, Harding?"

"Nothing," I confessed, and I felt that there was a gleam of pity in his eyes, as he said:

"There are a few things that are suggestive. In each instance black shoes were taken, and tan were present. Looks as if only blacks would do. Then, too, there may be something in the initials, again there may not. I must look up the old man's shoes, and see if any have initials, too. In his hurry this last time, Kelly may have taken a chance on anything his hands fell on, and may not have got what he wanted. If he didn't strike luck he'll likely take another fling at his first opportunity. We must make his opportunity ours."

"Evidently it's the old man's shoes he wanted, else he'd not have broken into his room," I observed.

"I thought of that," said Braig, "though there is the possible alternative that it is young Flanagan's shoes Kelly wanted, and that he knew of the change of rooms. We must find out later. You, Charles, will keep watch for me while they move. Keep at it until pitch dark. You can never tell what turn things will take. Here's the address." He handed the strip of paper to me. "You're familiar with the country out there. Select yourself a cool, shady, obscure nook, and watch for developments. If anything

happens, stand your ground, but call up and leave word for me. I'll come as soon as I've looked into the Harlequin case. Now, get on your job, old scout, and I'll start on mine."

CHAPTER II.

ON THE TRAIL WITH FULSY.

WITHIN a half hour I found myself comfortably installed in the smoking compartment of an elevated express train, and speeding toward the south end of the city. I smoked and pondered the apparent triviality of my mission until, rousing myself, I found that my train was making local stops along the south end of the line. Five minutes later I got on a surface car, in the suburbs of the city, and within another twenty reached my destination.

I stepped from my car with a growing feeling of depression. The atmosphere was humid and sultry, and the close proximity of monstrous smelting foundries added nothing to my comfort. Up and down the street I peered, until a suspicion of green gable, peeping above a heavy fringe of foliage, reminded me of the description of the cottage, and I knew that the object of my search had been found.

Toward this place I strolled with all the carelessness I could assume until I came to a vacant lot that was green and shady and commanded a view of the cottage. Here I shed coat and hat, and lay down, as if I were taking an afternoon nap.

From my point of vantage it could readily be seen that everything there was in order for a journey. The windows were bare; here and there rolled rugs were stacked, the furniture was in disorder. Throughout the afternoon I watched in patience, until, at last, when the heavily laden moving van passed on its way, and young Flanagan and the caretaker had left, I heaved a sigh of relief. However, Braig's order was to stick until dark, so stick I would, though I was certain the possibility of trouble was over.

Neighboring foundry whistles had blown, and blue-jacketed workmen were trudging home. Dusk had fallen, and I was just preparing to return home and report to Braig, when a prolonged, not unfamiliar sound reached my ears. I listened again. It was the baying of a hound in the distance. I stood in the shadow of the tree and listened. The sound came nearer, and, before long, there appeared a bent old man, who, from the description of young Flanagan, could have been none other than Tom Kelly, and who, from his scowling visage and shifting eyes, could have boded scant good to his fellow beings. Across one shoulder he carried a rifle, and he held in his hand the leash at which, whining, impatient, his nose dropped close to the ground, tugged the bloodhound I had heard—as beautiful a dog as it had ever been my luck to see. The old man looked neither to the right nor to the left, but moved straight on at a pace that was almost a run, and seemed remarkable for one of his age.

It took me but a moment after they had passed to rush to the drug store, at the corner, and enter the telephone booth, where I soon had Hampton Braig on the wire.

"This is Harding," I told him. "I am telephoning from Pullman. Kelly just went by with a gun and a bloodhound, following scent. They must be on Flanagan's trail."

Braig did not hesitate a moment. "Notice his footprints, and wait for me, I'll be there in thirty minutes," he answered briefly, and rang off.

I turned down the road just traveled by Kelly and his dog. A few rods distant, in a soft spot, I found clear footprints of master and hound, and,

planting a stake to indicate the spot, returned to the corner, and paced the sidewalk impatiently, while awaiting Hampton Braig.

He was punctual, as always. In exactly half an hour up sped his automobile at a terrific speed. With a jerk it stopped, and Braig jumped out. "Hello, Charles!" he said gayly, "looks like nasty business, doesn't it? Well, we'll see. We've got Fulsy here, and, if there's a chance for us, he'll make it." He turned and extended a friendly hand to a black-spotted, gray, sleek-bodied mascot of the same breed as Kelly's. "Now, Fulsy." The animal sprang to the ground and wagged a friendly tail. "Stroke him behind the ear, Charles, and make friends with him. I just got him from Mayrick's kennel as I passed. Where's your footprint?"

I nodded toward the east fork of the road.

"Good! I see. He started his trail evidently right from the door of the house. We won't have to travel that part of the road." Braig passed the leash to me. "You take Fulsy," he said, turning away, "and lead him to the scent. Just follow him into the main road, but be careful he doesn't run away. Here, slip this revolver in your pocket for safety. I must get the druggist to look after the machine."

Within a few minutes Braig was holding in check an animal fairly wild on a scent that led us down the shimmering macadam road. The night was hot to oppression. Not a breath of air stirred, and over the sweltering city hung the acrid odor of great smelting foundries, mingled with the foul odor of the stockyards. From beyond the lake rose an early, crescent moon, which cast a pale yellow mantle over the landscape, and which made our shadows faint, uncertain blotches against the dusty, silvered road. What a night for adventure!

CHAPTER III.

FULSY'S CURIOUS CIRCLE.

ON we raced, at a pace that told on my endurance, for a full mile, until we came upon a small, muddy canal, spanned by an old, rickety wooden bridge, which, no doubt, was a landmark of the town.

Here Fulsy struck his first snag. He nosed along until he reached the very edge of the bridge, and I thought the trail might end in the water, but the fretful animal sniffed and whined only a minute before he gave a confident leap and followed his scent as hotly as before.

"I wonder what made Fulsy hesitate on the bridge?" I spoke for the first time. The silence was getting on my nerves.

"Puzzled myself," admitted Braig.

"Hope he's got his trail," said I.

Braig turned a reassuring smile upon me. "He's got it if it was there. He's a true thoroughbred, Harding."

We had not gone on more than fifteen minutes, when, as if to justify my suspicion, Fulsy stopped short, hesitated a second, lifted his head high, dipped again, gave several sharp yelps, then began running around in a circle. I looked at Braig; he looked at me, then dropped upon the ground and examined narrowly the marks on the dust. As he regained his feet, we were startled by a sharp, raucous voice some rods behind us. I wheeled sharply, yet not so sharply as Hampton Braig, who already had drawn his revolver and was moving quickly toward the wild apparition in the moonlight.

"Ye sniveling spalpeens!" cried the knotted figure, his fists doubled. "Ye young cutthroats! Here I am, begorra. It's no use to go farther. Here I am, ye bloody ingrates."

Braig was now by the man's side, and in a moment I was sufficiently close to recognize the figure as that of the trou-

blesome Tom Kelly. The dog was gone; his gun was lying harmlessly on the slope of the road. The old man was nursing a hurt leg.

"Where's me dog?" he cried. "Me dog, ye young scoundrels! Ye'll pay for this, or my name's not Tom Kelly!"

"Come, come," interrupted Braig, "what's happened to you? Been slugged?"

"Been slugged?" echoed the old man wildly. "Have ye got the nerve to ask? Do ye think I didn't know ye were following me? I've been sleuth meself, and in the old days when nary a brainless pup as you are could lay claim to the name. I knew ye, begorra——" Here he stuck his finger right under Braig's nose—"knew when yer infernal confederate there watched me from Mitchell's lot. Old Tom Kelly's too clever an Irishman for babes in swaddling clothes." He stopped a moment, and laughed in self-satisfaction, plunging his hands into his dog-eared pockets. "So an honest citizen of Pullman can't go about his business unmolested?" he went on. "Been slugged? No, I haven't been slugged. I slipped over the hill here, and hurt me leg, and Fritz got away from me. I'm an old man, but when I saw yez, my spleen got up in my throat, and I just braced meself whether or no and called you. Oh, if I was a younger man I'd fix ye!" His hand stole to the aching leg. "Now," said he finally, picking up his rifle, "I'm all right. Shall I come wid yez?" He threw us a contemptuous look.

"For what?" asked Braig innocently.

With puckered brows Kelly gazed at my companion as if to ascertain the sincerity of his question. Then, lifting his old slouch hat and scratching his head, he smiled up at us sardonically. "Well, if I'm not to come with yez," said he, "I'm not to come with yez—that's all."

"I reckon so," Braig agreed.

A wagon headed for Pullman was abreast us now, and our grim friend begged a ride. The next minute, without even so much as a glance toward us, he was riding over the ground we had just covered, while Braig and I, in momentary irresolution, stared silently at the vanishing team.

Braig brought me to earth again. "Harding," said he, turning upon me, "what trail did you put Fulsy on?"

"Tom Kelly's, to be sure. Why?"

"Because, don't you see we had passed him a couple of hundred yards when he called us? Fulsy must have been on some other trail. Harding, I know this dog, and whatever trail you gave him he kept. By Jove, I can't make it all out. You're sure you gave him Kelly's scent?"

"Yes, I stuck his nose to the footprint."

"Sure nothing else was near?"

I thought for a moment. "Yes," I admitted, at length, "his dog's foot was close to it."

Braig's eyes blazed. "That's it—you gave Fulsy the dog's trail!"

"But can they trail each other?" I asked.

"Does a lost bloodhound ever get back to the pack?" he returned. "The dog probably was so excited that he kept right on his trail after his master had slipped over the——" My companion stopped, his face clouded. "That doesn't make it yet, though—no, not by a long shot. What about Fulsy's circle if he was on the dog's trail? There's something missing, Harding, there's something missing."

I could give him no satisfactory reply, so I turned the conversation. "Well," I said, laughing, "shall we remain in this upright position in the middle of the road for the remainder of the night?"

His brow was still dark, but his

good nature and appreciation of the ridiculous rarely forsook him, so he laughed, too. "Comfort is in the mind, Harding," said he genially. "Likely as not I could have as much peace here in this grimy road as I shall have in our snug apartment—but I must consider your comfort, of course." He slapped me heartily on the back and laughed. "Let's see, now. As it stands we could really prove nothing against Mr. Tom Kelly—not even petty larceny. Very probably, too, the gentleman won't risk another journey to-night, and ours is dependent upon his." Braig sobered again, and looked down the road. "Doesn't this highway fork somewhere, so that we could double back on a side road, and reach our machine without running the risk of being seen by the old man? We might as well keep him in as much ignorance of our movements as possible."

I was familiar with that part of the country. "Yes, there's a crossroad about two hundred yards down," I answered. "Come, let's hurry, Braig—I'm beginning to feel the need of my supper."

Another half hour found me at the wheel of our machine, speeding through the dim, gaslighted thoroughfares toward our apartment. Braig, lounging deep in the cushions, with Fulsy between his knees, spoke not a single word, and in that brief time I counted no less than seven cigarettes sent beyond recall. It was very evident that our night's business could have ended far better.

Once again at the house in Michigan Boulevard, up the stairs we went by bounds. Not even had our hats been removed, when the precise Gunsen appeared.

"A telephone message for you, sir, just a half hour ago—a Mr. Flanagan. He left word for you to call up at once. Here's the number, sir."

CHAPTER IV.

ONE PAIR, TEN DOLLARS.

I LEFT Braig to secure his number, while I repaired to my room to remove some Pullman grime from my person. I was stopped short in the middle of my operation, however, by a sharp call from the sitting room. I burst in before my companion, my hands and face still wet, and a towel thrown across my shoulder.

"Harding," he said, "I've been an unmitigated self-constituted ass. The *right* shoes were stolen forty minutes ago! Come, get yourself together—quick, now. Revolver again. We may have some adventure, after all, to-night."

A Braig hurry is a hurry! Within two minutes we were back again in the machine, and my companion took the wheel, which meant that the speed laws of Chicago would be annihilated. Now on through the dense, early-evening line of machines in the boulevard we wormed our way, now impatiently we drew up at the crossing policeman's whistle, until, at last, we slipped into the less crowded and less lighted Wabash Avenue, where we could throw on third speed unmolested, and Braig found time for a few words of explanation.

He was visibly affected. "We've got clever rascals to deal with, Harding—rascals, indeed, for there are two."

"Two!"

"Just so. Flanagan says the old man has a son, and it's ten to one he's the other. Now, listen. When Flanagan got home this afternoon he found an old pair of his father's shoes marked with the initials 'R. F.'—not in the cabinet, mind you, but in an old chest. When he got to his home in Hammond he put the shoes aside on a table, intending to bring them down to me to-night. He stepped into the yard to get a step-

ladder, and, when he returned, the shoes were gone. Luckily, he noticed it right away. He looked, but could find no one about the place. Then he spoke to the old housekeeper, and she admits she heard a noise, but thought it was he unpacking some of the things. She is apparently too trustworthy to be considered before we've given Kelly's son our attention. Now, the singular part is that it occurred about seven-thirty, the very time we had our encounter with old Kelly! So it's evident some one else is in the game, too. One other point: Flanagan says he looked inside the shoes, but found nothing except an old bill: Bulwer & Co., Chicago, July thirteenth, eighteen hundred and ninety-three. One pair of shoes—ten dollars.'"

"Is that gone, too?" I asked.

"No, Flanagan took it out. It will be at the house by special messenger before we return." A peculiar twinkle crept into Braig's eye, and I knew he was holding something in reserve. "Say, did you see Flanagan and the caretaker take the Hammond Road?" he asked.

"No, I didn't," I answered regretfully. "I saw them go down the main road, and took it for granted they followed it to Hammond."

"Well, they didn't. The fellow says they went as far as their doctor's, paid a bill, then came back and took the train out."

"Then what trail was that old crook following?"

A patient smile answered me. "The trail of the moving van, Harding. He merely wanted a sure way of following the furniture, so he could ransack it before things were settled."

"Well, how——"

"Easy, Charles. Ether, aniseed, creosote, anything pungent rubbed on the wheel would do. A good dog would follow such a scent through eternity. Of course, we're running only a chance of getting these fellows to-night. The old man was not hurt—it was a clever ruse to turn us back. If the son returns by the road, which is likely, since there are no trains at this hour, and if the father waits for him, which is not unlikely—why, my dear Harding, we may have a fair scrimmage yet to-night, and perhaps the mystery of Fulsy's circle may be cleared. I'll have a couple of bluecoats handy. You pinion the old man; I'll take care of the son and the dog. If it comes to extremes, remember our lives are worth taking care of. Understand?"

I nodded in grim silence, and instinctively my hand stole to my hip pocket as I sank back and thought it all over. So the shoes were not stolen for a scent, after all!

Already we were dashing beneath the elevated tracks over Fifty-fifth Street, and at a clip that meant Pullman within fifteen minutes. It was exactly eight-forty-five when we drew up before the drug store, and started down the Hammond Road for the second time that night. When we had walked about a quarter of a mile, Braig pointed to a clump of trees to the left of the roadside and suggested that we wait there. So we tied Fulsy and sat down.

Such a wait! At every rustle of leaves, every chirp of a cricket, I started, and my hand went to my pocket. Once a workman passed, and I found myself within an ace of leaping upon him. Braig, true steel in a crisis, remained ever alert of eye and ear, ever steady of hand and foot. In actual time it was not long before there came to our ears distinct sounds of several footsteps. Braig laid his hand steadily on my wrist.

"It's they, Harding," he mumbled, almost inaudibly. "I can see the old man. So he went back to meet the

son, after all. Let them pass—then go for Kelly, senior. Now wait."

After a brief span, that spelled eternity, Braig whispered softly: "Now!"

CHAPTER V.

THE SMALL BROWN BOTTLE.

THE next instant I had sprung upon the neck of the old man, and we were both prostrate in the dusty macadam road—twirling, squirming, wriggling, gripping, now one on top, and now the other. My opponent's strength and endurance amazed me, but finally youth prevailed, and, with the timely assistance of Braig, who, by the way, had already neatly shackled the son and muzzled the dog, the old man was conquered.

"Quick, Charles, quick! Off with this young rascal's shoes—they're the ones. He put them on and threw away his own, so that if it came to the worst, he would have the prize on his feet. Clever rascals!"

A minute later Braig was holding each shoe to the moonlight. "'R. F.'" he read, "that's the goods!"

Young Kelly remained sullen and silent. My companion whistled shrilly. Two bluecoats suddenly appeared from the shrubbery.

"They're yours," said Braig serenely —"dog, gun, and all. Make it petty larceny—a pair of shoes. I'll be down to see the chief in the morning."

So saying, he went and untied Fulsy. Then we turned back toward our machine, leaving the queer little group to await their automobile.

"Now what have yez got after takin' the shoes, ye young pups—what have yez got?" yelled the old man after us. As far as we could hear he was still raving.

Again I took the wheel, while Craig smoked incessantly. Once back in our rooms, we donned our lounging gowns, but so heavily did the mystery of the stolen shoes prey upon my mind that my once ravenous appetite was now gone, so I swallowed a glass of milk and a raw egg. When I returned from the dining room Braig was stretched languidly in his armchair.

"Harding, Harding," he said impatiently, "that was surely a clever pair we had to deal with to-night. I am elated at the pleasure they've given me so far, but much chagrined that the crux of the whole thing is not clear to me. Look!" He passed over the old bill found in the shoe.

I looked at it for a moment, mumbling slowly: "'Bulwer & Co., Chicago, July thirteenth, eighteen hundred and ninety-three. One pair shoes —ten dollars.' The only mentionable thing I can see is the 'thirteenth,'" said I.

Braig nodded. "It is very likely you are right. It gives a hint of the make-up of old Flanagan, however. Very exact in his affairs, I should judge. Notice the paper. While it's old, it's neither wrinkled nor pressed, as if it had been long in the shoe. It's plain that in the upsetting of the old man's effects it accidentally fell in there. But how about this little bottle of chloroform?" He indicated a tiny brown bottle on the table. "I found it in young Kelly's pockets."

I gazed at the ominous little bottle, and shook my head in despair. "Reckon they had planned to put a quietus on any one who got in the way," I said.

Braig lifted the bottle above his head, eying it with interest. "No, it has served a more innocent purpose than that, Harding, thank goodness! This is the stuff that stopped our Fulsy!"

I sprang from my chair. "That's it exactly. It was put on the dog's foot, where Fulsy started his circle dance."

My companion smiled. "Is it likely they would figure out our mistake in following the dog's trail, and try to take advantage of it? Or does it seem more likely that they would count on our trailing the human foot?"

"True," I agreed, "but what about Fulsy's passing Kelly? Perhaps Kelly saturated his feet, and then retraced his steps to where we saw him on the roadside."

"That is very logical, Harding," answered the crime specialist, "and I should believe it the correct solution, except that I examined the road at the spot where Fulsy stopped, and found that all footmarks on that side of the road led toward Hammond, and there were none coming back."

"Then it was young Kelly's foot that was saturated," I suggested as a last solution.

"Exactly."

"But, Braig, how the dickens did Fulsy ever get on young Kelly's trail?"

Braig chuckled. "Ah, that's the unusual finesse about the job—one of the things that raises these rascals so above the ordinary. We were never on the dog's trail; we were on the old man's trail from the first. I might have known it. The human scent is too high for Fulsy to have got the dog's scent if the footprints were close together. You recollect when Fulsy hesitated on the canal bridge? Well, I'll wager my reputation that there the father and son exchanged shoes."

"Exchanged shoes!"

"Just so. It was probably at this point that the boy met his father. The lattter had followed the leash, and his scent was high; the former was fresh. Thus the boy took his father's shoes, and so could carry their fresh scent for some little distance before his own grew high enough to interfere. That's how we came to find Fulsy following the old man's trail a good two hundred yards beyond where we found him hiding."

"But I can't see the necessity of all that," I said.

"Pride, Harding, pride! Wasn't the old man a detective himself once? He saw you in Pullman, guessed your mission, and suspected you'd trail him, likely with a partner. What greater satisfaction to him than to see us follow his trail to a point beyond where he actually had passed? He knew it would cause some tall thinking. He could have accomplished the same thing by the method you suggested—by covering the ground himself, saturating his feet with chloroform, then doubling back along the slope of the hill. On the spur of the moment, in his eagerness to outwit us, however, he fell upon a more complicated way. In a word, my dear Harding, he wanted the pleasure of making fools out of us and—he got it. Did you notice the color of the shoes he wore when he set out along the Hammond Road at dusk?"

"Yes, they were black."

"Did you notice those he wore when we captured him?"

"No, I was too excited to see anything."

"Well, they were brand-new tans, and easily two sizes too small for him. They were freshly cut across the toe for comfort. It bears out my theory of the exchange."

"And now that we've got the shoes," I said, "what have we gained, after all? You remember the old man's parting words?"

Braig's face crimsoned with chagrin, as he lifted the pair from the center table. "That's just it, Harding—just it!" he declared, springing up and thrusting his hands impatiently into his pockets. "Hang it all!" He snapped his fingers in disgust, as once again he dropped into his chair.

"Harding," he said, at last, "the mind is a very peculiar mechanism. At certain periods—mainly when it is overworked—it has no initiative—no invention. The more it runs in this condition, the more deeply it cuts, but always in some old groove! For instance, I have several theories for this case, but none seem to fit. The more I reason the deeper I get along one of these already beaten tracks; but, of course, to no avail. To-morrow I may have a fresh point of view—perhaps the right one. It may come during sleep—that often is the case." He turned slowly toward the cause of all the trouble, and smiled. "What's the matter with amusing ourselves by deducing old Flanagan's characteristics? Though it can do us no good, it surely can bring no harm, and, perhaps, much interest."

"Good!" I assented.

"Well, in the first place," he said, picking up the right shoe and holding it to the light, "the old gentleman was neat of habit. This shoe is fairly old, yet it bears no such marks of skinning as the shoe of the slovenly person does. Again, we might deduce his good circumstances from the quality. This is a Bulwer & Co. made-to-order kid shoe. It can hardly be improved upon in the trade. Also, we say the old man retained his youth to the last. Note the perfection of the arch of that shoe. It's not run down one bit, and one of the first signs of decrepitude is the breaking of the arch. He was surely——" An exclamation escaped him. "Harding, Harding, what an idiot I've been! Oh, what an idiot I have been!"

With the words he wheeled to his cabinet, snatched a chisel, and the next instant the sharp steel had disappeared between the lifts of the heel. A sharp pry, a rasping noise, and several layers of leather fell to the floor, disclosing something hidden in the heel.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT KELLY WANTED.

THE Crase diamond! As I live, the Crase diamond!" cried Braig, and he dug in with his fingers, uprooting a wondrous white stone from its leather bedding, and stood, triumphantly poising it between forefinger and thumb, oblivious of my presence.

"It is a wonderful stone," I commented.

"Wonderful? Well, I should say so! A pretty penny it's worth—a good fifty thousand, if a cent—with a dash of choice history thrown in for good measure. It was given by the African prince, Fujo. Ah, that clears it all, every bit." He replaced the big book and dropped again into his chair. "As I was saying," he continued, "it was given by Prince Fujo to some Dutch traders in exchange for his two sons, whom they had captured. That began its eventful history. The Hollanders got to fighting so fiercely among themselves about it that it was sold at a sacrifice to the English collector, Pettigrew, so that a division might be made. Pettigrew turned it over to the great Italian lapidary, Dianelli, who, by the way, is now serving sentence for appropriating part of the stone to his personal use. Notice the flat under side? He took the under half of the stone and fitted in its place a remarkable paste imitation; and so finely was the joining done that the discovery of fraud was not made for five years. It was by that unusual feature that I was able to recognize the stone instantly. Ah, that, too, was finesse, Harding." Braig rubbed his hands in appreciation as he went on:

"About the time of Dianelli's arrest, Mr. Crase was touring Europe. He became interested in the stone, and bought it for his daughter, Naomah. What a history—how steeped in crime! Isn't it strange, Harding, how often

moral hideousness and the materially æsthetic go hand in hand? For that which is beautiful merely to the eye, man has ever shown a willingness to lose or to tarnish that whose beauty is infinite—the soul! The remaining history of the stone is the history of Chicago's best society."

"Of which I am profoundly ignorant," I confessed.

"I'm coming to that part now. Miss Crase had her gift set cup fashion in platinum, and suspended it from her neck like a locket. It was in nineteen hundred and one, one year before Flanagan retired from the force, that Chicago was astounded by the loss of the Fujo diamond at the most brilliant social event of the season—the Carews' ball. More consternation was aroused because it was understood that scores of detectives were on duty. From our find, it would seem that that was just the trouble. My log book shows both Kelly and Flanagan detailed at that function. What happened is problematical. Likely enough, during the dance the chain and all became unfastened, and slipped from Miss Crase's neck. Kelly and Flanagan saw, and took advantage of it—Flanagan securing the stone, I fancy, since it was in his possession. The pair reckoned that even the guardians of the law might be suspected, so—clever rascals—they conceived the idea of unsetting the stone and sinking it in the heel of a shoe."

"That was an idea! And how did it strike you that there was something hidden in the heel?"

"It didn't strike me. In scrutinizing the shoe for deductions, I noticed that the lifts of the heel had been pried apart and put together again. The shoe had never been repaired, so it was evident that I was at the end of my quest."

"Well, what about the 'R. F.'?" I asked.

Braig smiled. "Another piece of cleverness. Evidently Flanagan changed the stone from shoe to shoe as each wore out, so he would constantly have it in a shoe that he was wearing. Since he always had several pairs of shoes, he probably told Kelly that he would always put it in a black one, and that 'R. F.' would be in the one that carried the prize.

"We may safely assume, I think, that the purloined diamond was a white elephant on our friends' hands, and that they never found it advisable to part with it, knowing that its remarkable worth and peculiar characteristics would attract attention. Flanagan's sudden death left matters essentially as they were just after the stone was stolen. Naturally, Kelly claimed full ownership at this time, but respected his friend sufficiently to await his burial. The coincidence of the son's shoes having initials, too, resulted in his getting them on the night of his first trial. He was generous enough to return them the next time, but was caught while at his work, and so grabbed what he could get. The shoes sought were safely hidden away in a chest, as you remember, which shows that when he was not wearing them, Flanagan kept them out of harm's way.

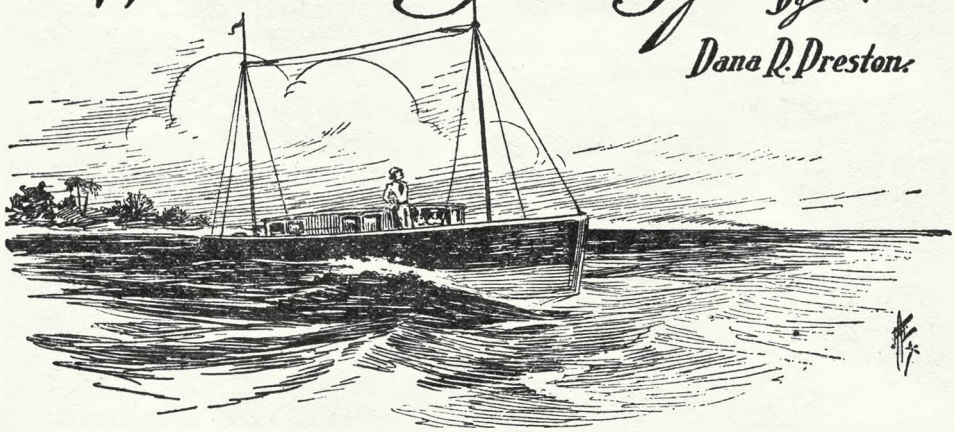
"Well, Harding, what shall we do with the pair?"

"I don't know, Braig," I said. "It seems to me that the innocent son, our client, would be the real sufferer, for old Kelly can tell whatever he chooses of the affair, and dead men refute no tales. We can arrange to restore the stone to its rightful owner without explanation, and let the charge of petty larceny stand."

"Capital! I was thinking the same thing." He stretched himself lazily. "Now for some sleep, man; we've had a strenuous night. Pass that toy to me." He smiled, and reached out his hand; I passed him the stone. He rose, and stood beneath the light, once again admiring the matchless gem.

Wireless Strategy

By Dana R. Preston



WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.
For the benefit of those that missed it.

SIDNEY WILKINS has gone to Haiti in his cruiser with his friend, Jim Doran, to investigate thefts of lumber from his employer, James Fray Brownell. The two friends separate in order the better to spy upon the thieves—Cottrell, Fagel, Cavare, and Grail. Through "Wireless" Sid's proficiency in wireless telegraphy, and the help of one of the natives, they learn a great deal of the plot. At the opening of this installment Doran has made friends with the villains at the seat of the lumber operations on the Muerto River, keeping in touch with Sid—whose enemy he pretends to have become—by wireless. A steamer has just been sighted, causing unaccountable consternation among the thieves, who by now are working at cross-purposes, trying to cheat one another.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LOADING THE STEAMER.

THE steamer *Nicolas Herkimer,* of New York, was coming after a load of timber for Brownell, Incorporated, and the natural apprehension and worry which all thieves feel as their schemes work out had betrayed the scalawags into a demonstration of surprise and fear. Captain Fagel had recovered himself more quickly than the others, and his laughter was over the discomfiture of his associates.

In the innocence of his heart, Jim did not comprehend the joke at all. All there was to it, they had forgotten for the moment that they expected the *Nicolas Herkimer,* and that as soon as this ship was gone, they could get away with the curly mahogany.

The steamer came slowly up around the bend, and drew alongside the crib dock, while the second mate called away the deck hands with their lines, and the steam winches were manned, ready to catch and hold the long wire ropes to be run out to the stumps that served as mooring heads.

Inch by inch she moved up, slower and slower, till at last came the order: "Throw the lines, there!" Then swart men on the dock caught the marlines and hauled out the wire ropes, caught the loops and dragged them out onto the bank, and there made them fast by dropping the loops over the stumps.

As they fell in place, the mate called: "Take in the slack there—Two!" or "One!" whichever engine it happened to be.

Then the winches began to puff, and the scream of the wires coming taut cut into the jungle silence. Humming, the lines came stiff and straight as crowbars. The steamer swung in broadside to the dock and quivered there.

Familiar as they were with the warping in of huge ships, all the seamen who had nothing to do with the business, Fagel, Jim, and Cavare, stood watching the spectacle as one of the ever wonderful. In the hurly-burly along the piers of a metropolis, it attracts less attention, but in a gloomy jungle, where the waving branches of the uncut timber bend before the black nose, where the red hull churns the warm, yellow river, where the parrots and toucans and scarlet birds of the tropics mock the second mate as he shouts and jeer him when he swears, there is the weird—perhaps the profane—contrast between the ultra-civilized and the unregenerate savage when the steamers come swinging in.

While the boat was making fast, cargo ports opened, and yawned black, a foot or two above the ship's water line. Hatches were opened, and one man sat whistling on a swaying derrick boom, working with a monkey wrench, where a mate's sharp eye somewhat tardily had discerned a loose bolt.

No sooner had the steamer come to rest than there was a pattering of feet, and out on the cableways came pouring the motley logging crews, unkempt, savage, efficient, They swarmed up over the long, high skidways of heaped-up, hewn timbers, and when a long, rusty rope came out to them, they were ready with a timber caught in the middle. The tightening of the rope started the timber, and it swung booming down, and then up over the ship's side, while other timbers, caught in the snout by steel dogs, headed end on into the cargo ports along the side.

There was no time wasted, not a minute; every minute meant its heaping-up interest money, its lost-wage money, its consumed energy of machine and men. Watching the steamer, the spectators saw the figures at the bow and stern sinking into the water, inch by inch, as the smooth-shaven, lean-jawed, swaggering second mate kept the lines coming and going, as he ducked under the hoisting timber, or jumped over a coiling, outgoing line, on his way to where he detected some incipient tangle or hitch.

Down in the hold, an older man watched the timbers sliding into their places, stowing away the cargo of low-thundering or deep-booming timbers, the first mate taking care of the inrushing mass to see that it was packed in solid, without give or slipping room. He was as good there as was the young man above.

The captain, who had been just such a hustling second mate, and just such a competent first mate, in his day, settled his collar around his coat, shifted the cigar that was between his teeth, and climbed down the ladder at a smart pace that did not impair his dignity in the least. He strolled away from the scene of rush and bustle, and arrived at the logging boss' headquarters. Cobbert came to greet him, and to make over to him such papers as were needed.

Cobbert, just a little ill at ease in the presence of a man who was so clearly competent, and so sharp-eyed and honest, brought out wine, whisky, and rum. He laid out some cigars and then sat down to tally.

"I got company," Cobbert explained. "One of them sporting yachts——"

"So I noticed; the *Cueda*. Cavare has a name of his own. Keep your eye on him," Captain Gersham remarked. "There's Fagel, too. He and Cavare traveling together?"

"Why—er—they came together."

"I see—I heard they had a falling out over some scheme they worked together. Um-m—I wonder who they're skinning now?"

"Grail's with them!" Cobbert blurted out, more than a little disconcerted by the things the sea captain observed.

"Is that so? I thought I recognized him. Why didn't he—— Oh, here he comes! They say he wasn't here the last trip down. This is a better lot of timber——"

"We're back in the swamp now; not such a punky line as that other pile."

"I see," the captain remarked, sipping the wine. Jimmy came in just then with Grail, and Captain Gersham chuckled. "Hello, you rascal! Whatever did bring you into this jungle?"

"I needed the money," Doran replied. "Where's Betts?"

"He has a ship of his own now—the *Blue Ridge.*"

"Glad to see you, Mr. Grail!" said Gersham, rising formally, and Grail shook hands nervously. "Didn't Cavare want to come over?"

"He said—he has a headache."

"He usually has—when we come this way. And Captain Fagel?"

"Here I am, Captain Gersham. How are the winds with you?"

"Fair, sir, fair! And you?"

"Barometer falling, squalls freshening, and no change in the——"

"In the hurricane track, as usual!" The captain chuckled delightedly.

So they sat around the table, while Jimmydigs raided the ice chest, and brought out fruits, nuts, and sweetmeats. Captain Gersham and Captain Fagel talked with good humor—the competent, steady, reliable seaman and the rascal wanderer of all the seas. They admired each other, envied each other, enjoyed each other. They would turn to Doran, with a gibe or a joke, but Grail and Cobbert sat by, out of it.

Cavare did not appear, nor was he mentioned after the captain's sharp remarks which squelched Grail and made him shiver during the hours that followed; while Fagel and Gersham bandied words and talked of people who were scampering around the world, some honestly believing they were working, and some knowing in their hearts that they were just having the finest time of all mankind.

"How did you come to settle down?" Fagel asked once, almost taunting the staid toiler.

"I began to take on too much blubber—adventurers are never really fat!" Gersham laughed, and then added: "You remember Delia?"

"Yes." Fagel nodded, his face lighting up.

"Well, I married her——"

"By George! Is that so? Well, well—I hadn't heard that, somehow. You know——" Whatever confession he thought of making, Captain Fagel did not make. "I see—I don't blame you."

"It does make a difference!" Gersham remarked, nodding. "If I hadn't married, of course I——"

"Of course!" said Fagel, with finality.

So they talked, and hinted, and suggested—quite the greatest conversation that Jimmydigs had ever heard. It was like seeing history played, or hearing it, just to listen to those old sea dogs, one settled down and comfortable, the other still adventuring, and with the little tinge and manner that suggests unresting dissatisfaction veiled by an air of good-humored content.

Night fell, and they dined together. The lights burned out on the skidway, as the men toiled to load the ship. Through the woods echoed the booming of timber, the calls of men laboring, the sounds of insects and birds disturbed by all the noisy confusion. On the house boat sat the men, talking or listening. Anchored across the river, a pale, yellow-lighted mass against the foliage, was the yacht *Cueda,* whose owner for reasons of his own had no desire to join the company of which the efficient Captain Gersham was a member.

They sat late, and after midnight the

little party broke up. Grail and Fagel crossed to the yacht, Captain Gersham retired to his quarters on the *Nicolas Herkimer,* Cobbert and Jimmydigs went to hammocks.

Before noon the following day, the *Nicolas Herkimer* was loaded and sagged back from her ropes, as they were cast off, except the line by which the stern was held, while the stem swung out and around in a half circle, carried out by the current and the slow thrust of her propeller, which kept her clear of the bank as she came about.

At last, as she headed away downstream, the final line was cast off, and, with the water coiling and twisting under her stern, the freighter swung around the bend, her black smoke floating above the trees. Her hulk faded from sight among the overhanging tree branches, and shortly even the smoke disappeared from view.

Watching it stood Captain Fagel, with blinking eyes, and Jimmydigs could see that the adventurer was for some reason stirred deeply by his emotions. After all, when man meets man, it is not the one that has fled from responsibilities, that has ignored the universal laws of compensation, who finds the greatest peace, the keenest sense of comfort and happiness. In his heart, Captain Fagel knew that Captain Gersham was the happier, the better, the more efficient man, even if for a minute or two Gersham had by a tone and a gesture indicated that he was stirred by the recurring longing to get forth into the wild, free life of adventure.

"Doran!" Fagel exclaimed, putting his arm around Jimmydigs' neck, "don't keep goin' too long; take my advice, and settle down 'tending a stationary engine somewhere, or just farming it, or something of that sort. Don't you forget what I tell you. Just hold yourself tight till you feel as if you'd bust up, every time you think of pullin' your freight and goin'. You and I are goin' to settle down on a little farm, as soon as we've made this haul we're figurin' on!"

And because Jimmydigs knew what he knew, he realized that the sea rover, the pirate of modern days, was giving him inspired advice, was pleading with him like a father, telling him not to follow in footsteps that led to bitter mortification.

Jimmydigs entered the house boat, and sat down at the wireless keys to learn what Wireless Sid was up to, and, as the hour was noon, an even hour, he found the call, "JG—JG—JG," echoing across the wild lands and over the seas.

"GA," Jimmydigs sent out.

"Keep your eyes open—tell Fagel ship coming in to-night for timber—be all ready!"

"O. K.," Jimmydigs answered. "Stand by at two o'clock to see if safe to come in." Then he wrote down the message and went out to find Fagel, who was restlessly wandering up the cableway to fill up the hours with some kind of occupation. "Here's a message," he remarked briefly, finding the man alone.

"To-night! Good!" the man answered, taking a small vial out of his pocket, to make sure that he had it. "Look wise, my son, and say nothing —no matter what happens!"

Jimmydigs nodded, and the two returned to eat dinner on the house boat with Cobbert, who was not yet over the glum and disagreeable feeling which the realization of his unimportance, compared to the two captains, had roused in him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LAW OF MIGHT.

WIRELESS SID was a fast worker, when he began to reach out into the lengths and breadths of the fairways of the sea, seeking what he

wanted that day when he said to Doran: "Well—hear from me later!"

He was matching wits now. He would see whether or not he could play the game as it was played in the wild West Indies by such master crooks as Señor Cavare and Captain Wilbur Fagel, whose game Sid could now begin to understand as he pieced together the things that he had learned about their operations.

In his mind's eye, he saw the pile of curly mahogany logs piled up the Muerto River, behind the screen of uncut timber on the river bank. When he called up Captain Gersham of his employer's steamer, the *Nicolas Herkimer,* he learned what Captain Gersham's plans were, for there were, of course, no secrets in that work, in so far as Brownell's trusted employee was concerned. From Captain Gersham, too, Sid had some details about the character and quality of the timber which the unblushing Adirondack timber thief had had the audacity to send northward to the New York market, as if the Brownell, Incorporated, experts would fail to notice the kind of timber it was!

Wireless Sid now put himself in touch with the ship news of the West Indies, and with the help of his international code and his wireless-operator friends and the sea registers, he gathered the scattered threads of seafaring information. For he had need now of using more than his own wit, and courage, and ingenuity, of more power than he had in his own motor and more assistance than he could find in Doran, useful as his friend was at the camp.

He could not call on his employer to protect him from the crafty man who had doped his coffee and sought to hold him for ransom; he could not appeal to any government authorities to punish him; he could not let the matter drop, for no doubt the old rascal would keep thinking to find some scheme by which to take him down a peg.

The last thing that Wireless Sid could permit was having any one get the best of him, if he could help it. Besides, he knew that Captain Fagel was such a good-humored scoundrel that he would make a wry face over his own defeat, and Sid might perhaps win a friend worth having down there in those jungle lands. Sid realized, now that he was about it, that he would probably have a good deal of work ahead of him there, and he could not make too many friends; only they must not be friends who would fancy that they could hoodwink him at any time.

"I've just got to put it over that steel-eyed man!" Sid told himself. "If he were honest, instead of a crook, I never could do it; but he's a crook, and an honest man is always sure to overcome the scalawag if he puts the same amount of brain matter into the plan."

So Sid put his full strength into the matter, not only of saving his employer's timber profits, but also of teaching the rascals of the tropics that they must behave themselves, at least as regards James Fray Brownell, Incorporated, and Sidney Wilkins, alias Wireless Sid.

Nor did he plan in vain. As one by one he flagged his chart with the location of all the steamers in that part of the world, those in port and those plugging along the seaways, he studied them with a view to his own little schemes. The flags were little squares of paper on which he wrote the vessels' names and destinations, everything he cared to remember.

One by one, he eliminated them from his plan; but he was obliged to trace up others whose whereabouts were matters of secret intelligence. Their owners had reasons of their own for keeping their locations hidden. They were the filibusters, the modern pirates, the sneaks, the adventurers, the hobos, the yeggmen of the seas. There were ships which never went into a charted port,

yet carried priceless cargoes of the world.

Wireless Sid had not listened in vain to the whisperings of the air, switching up and down the tonal notes and dipping in on the secrets of captains and owners and yachts and navies.

Now, he put into service many things that he had learned, and in due course he had found the captain he wanted, with the kind of a crew he wanted, near enough to do as he wished.

In the course of his hours of toil at the key, he learned that the wireless of the yacht *Cueda* was out of whack, and the call of the steamer *Maidano* was unanswered, hour after hour. Then with his customary audacity he rang in on the steamer *Maidano,* and asked, with as good an imitation of the touch of the *Cueda's* operator as he could, what was wanted.

"We are all coaled up, and everything in good condition," the *Maidano* reported. "When shall we repair to the Muerto?"

Wireless Sid thought a moment, and then somewhat nervously he tried again to do as he had done all the way down the Tongue of the Ocean.

He sent back in Spanish a message purporting to come from Cavare:

"Muerto deal fell through. Go to Laguna de Terminos, Yucatan, where have logwood, hides, and fiber. Observe very closely twenty-two heavy boxes, steel-bound. Promise crew four hundred dollars extra, and put boxes in strong box, as they contain gold, and I shall hold you, captain, responsible."

A few minutes later, the reply came from the *Maidano*:

"I will do as you say. Loud cheers from crew for generous Señor Cavare.

"Maidano."

Two hours later, when Sid called up Port au Prince on the commercial note and asked if the *Maidano* was still in port, the wireless operator there said that the *Maidano* had cleared for Mexican ports an hour before, and was somewhere out by Gonave Island, and could be reached with standard ship's tonal note of three hundred and fifty meters' length.

"If Señor Cavare doesn't hurry up and fix his wireless, he'll have some fun finding the *Maidano!"* Sid chuckled to himself. "Wonder what happened to his instruments, anyhow?"

It did not matter particularly. He was ready now, and so Wireless Sid once more drove his motor boat ahead at full speed, and when he had rounded the headlands and cruised along the jungle coast till he came to the mouth of the Muerto River, he entered it boldly, and, steering up the stream, rounded the bend, and came in sight of the crib dock and the house boat about mid-afternoon.

He had just seen, that afternoon, the *Nicolas Herkimer* swing out into the deep bay and head away northward with her cargo of timber, some of it a very fair grade of mahogany—enough to pay Brownell, Incorporated, a ten-per-cent profit on the investment. As he entered the river, he had seen, also, another steamer's smoke away out on the horizon, swinging in slowly. He studied that steamer a minute or two with his glasses.

Now he swung up the Muerto, whistling comfortably, thinking what a sensation his arrival would give his acquaintances up there on the jungle-land log job. The fact is, Wireless Sid was beginning to feel just as if he knew all there was to know about the life in the tropical jungles; he was feeling quite competent to deal with such gentry as Señor Cavare and Captain Fagel, and the burly Cobbert.

He was not in the least disappointed in the sensation which he made, for as he shoved up the river, he saw Señor Cavare strolling along the deck of his yacht, in deep thought, apparently, till

suddenly he discovered the neutral-colored launch creeping up the river.

"Caramba!" cried Cavare.

The unguarded exclamation brought forth Jimmydigs and Captain Fagel from the house boat, and Cobbert, who had just started up the cableway over the now empty company skids, turned back to see what had happened.

Wireless Sid was clearly a bombshell in that locality. As he glanced from countenance to countenance through the light glasses that he carried for near distances, he could see the evidences of anger and malevolence in the Mexican's face as he saw all his fine plans jeopardized, the quizzical look on the face of the adventurer; and on Cobbert's countenance, what was more menacing than anything he had yet seen in a human expression—the sullen, desperate, bitter fury of a baffled, hating, determined, bad man.

It was Cobbert, now, who held his gaze. He had easily recognized the man. He was cold-blooded, merciless looking—the man whose hopes, based on criminal effort, had failed repeatedly during thirty years, more or less, of endeavor. He came as if to welcome Wilkins; but that first minute of surprise, followed by definite recovery and masking of his feelings, showed Sid that neither the good humor of the adventurer, Fagel, nor the volatile and feline anger of the Mexican, was a circumstance to what was in the heart of Cobbert.

CHAPTER XXV.

TREATED LIKE A HERO.

THE connoisseur in high-seas and jungle-coast roguery, Captain Wilbur Fagel, was sitting in the house-boat quarters at the Muerto crib dock, talking to Jimmydigs in the squint-eyed, humorous way which many of the pleasantest men of his type have, when the shriek of Cavare startled him.

It was the shriek of a man whose nerves were strained to the breaking point. Fagel had heard the like a thousand times. It might mean a snake, or a shark, or a knife thrust of an angry member of his cutthroat yacht crew.

Fagel landed on the deck of the quarter boat at a bound, and of course the sweep of his eyes disclosed the overcome Cavare and the motor boat coolly coming up the Muerto River—the "river of the dead man," by the way, so named because in a previous age some buccaneers called it so after one of their companions died there of snake bite.

Fagel was as irritated as Cavare, but he was only slightly disconcerted. Wireless Sid might interest, amuse, exasperate—do any of many tantalizing or remarkable things—but he could hardly again astonish or amaze Fagel, whose knowledge of his capacity for doing extraordinary things had reached the emotional limit when Wilkins had appeared at Port au Prince on the same morning that he had forwarded the message demanding a hundred shot bags full of American gold as ransom for him.

Captain Fagel regarded with considerable contempt any such display of feelings as Cavare now betrayed. He turned his eyes to observe the expression of Doran, and what he saw there of delight and relief informed him of many things which did not decrease his admiration for that capable young sea waif, although it compelled an instant readjustment of his plans.

Now Fagel felt that on his own resourcefulness depended the whole situation. He was glad that Sidney Wilkins had come there. He rejoiced in the fact that he must now match his wits not only against his pals, Cavare, and Cobbert, and Grail, but against the fresh and unfathomed intellect of the man who had once quite outmatched him in the game of strategy.

Herein was the difference between Fagel and the low criminals. Fagel was in the life because he enjoyed it, because he could laugh when he was beaten, because all the money that he might win was but a secondary consideration in the games he played. The others were hungry for gold, for wealth, for safety in their endeavors to steal. So in the beginning Fagel had the overwhelming advantage over the thief who merely was lazy, and degraded, and vile.

The captain loved adventure, and his mistake was that he considered the looting of men an adventurous calling. He was beyond the pale of law, while Doran, who was equally fond of adventure, was within the pale of the law, and had just as much love of adventure as Fagel—with none of the consequences hanging over his head.

So there on the Muerto River were gathered types of the world's adventurers: Cobbert, who hungered for wealth because he thought gold would bring him the comforts of life; Grail, who thought that money would help him to be fearless instead of the coward he knew he was; Cavare, whose idea of happiness was to have a thousand souls hungering for his mercy, and a thousand men dependent on his yes and no; Fagel, who found joy in excitement; Jimmy, who just wanted to come, and go, and travel, and stop when he pleased; and Wireless Sid, who was breaking the bonds of convention under the inspiration of a serious purpose in the interests of justice.

Captain Fagel, taking in the scene and the opportunity, made haste down to the dock, and when the motor boat came in he caught the line Sid threw him, to make it fast.

"Why, how are you?" Captain Fagel greeted him. "The last we heard of you, you were adrift out in the wide waters—when you wirelessed in to us."

"Oh, that was only temporary," Sid answered, laughing. "I had to rig up a hydrogen tank and a carburetor for it; some one filled my tanks full of water, instead of gasoline. That took quite a while."

"I see—I see the advantages of a liberal education!" Fagel spoke with genuine admiration, looking around to see where Jimmydigs was. "There's a young fellow here—Doran. You know him, of course?"

"Yes, I know all I want to about him!" Sid answered, with something of a snap.

The captain did not change the expression on his face, nor even glance sideways. When the boat was sparred off and moored bow and stern, they strolled up the hewed half-log walk to the quarters, where Cobbert joined them. Jimmy had gone out into the chopping, and stopped to talk to Cobbert a minute.

Cobbert's greeting was effusive, and his handshake hearty, the left-over habit of his younger days. The two men sat down opposite Sid, and proceeded to pay him little compliments of attention and consideration; but this was not what he had come for exactly. Sid was anxious to get out and have a talk with his friend, without being caught at it. There was something that he wished to have Jimmydigs understand, so that there would be no hitch in the program which he had laid out.

But neither Cobbert nor Fagel gave him any chance to entertain himself. They prepared some fruitade, they brought out a little lunch, and they kept him busy, talking and answering questions; nor was there an opening anywhere during the rest of the afternoon.

Toward night, the yacht sent over a launch tender with an invitation for all hands to come over to dinner at seven o'clock. Fagel could hardly conceal his eagerness to have Sid accept, and Cobbert was equally insistent that he should meet the gentlemen who had come in from Port au Prince. Fagel hunted for

Doran, too, to have him go to the dinner, but could not find him anywhere.

Wilkins hesitated, of course, for he feared Cavare's malignant hate; but he decided that he had better go across. There were some features of the game which he had not yet fathomed, and he hoped that if he could have under his eyes the four men, who he knew were conspiring to steal his father's choicest cut of timber, something might slip out in their conversation which would enable him to gauge the consequences of his proposed line of action.

They sat in the cabin talking for half an hour or so, waiting for the dinner to be served. It was hard to believe that the good-natured, story-telling group was other than a happy gathering of friends, with Sid as a kind of hero, telling the tale of his escape from the sea and the school of sharks.

"I'd surely like to catch the darky who stole my gasoline!" he said. "Now, wasn't that just a regular darky trick, Captain Fagel?"

Fagel had the grace to wriggle in his chair, while Cobbert stifled a guffaw of laughter. Fagel knew that Wireless Sid was calling him a "nigger," in the most delicate possible way, and it made him want to yell with glee. He was the only one there who could laugh at a joke on himself.

The announcement of dinner stopped the badinage, and the five went to the after deck, under the awning and sheltered by screens, where the meal was served by competent waiters. It was quite as strange a place to dine as one could imagine, with the jungle just abreast them, with the Muerto River coiling along on either side, with tropical birds shrieking in the treetops and among the vines; while, afar off, like an orchestra, sounded the songs of the negro loggers as they gathered at their own camp on the other side of the river.

Wireless Sid, with caution born of experience, saw to it that he ate nothing that was different from what the others had, especially his host.

Grail would do nothing—he lacked the nerve.

Indeed, Grail was in a pitiful panic, choking on his food, swallowing the light wines the wrong way repeatedly. He was frightened half to death.

"Do you understand the wireless?" Cavare asked, at the third course. "My wireless, it is all out of—what you call it?—kilter. We have not the messages been able to send or to take for some days."

"Is that so? Well, after dinner I'll take a look at it," Sid said confidently. "Probably I can find out what is the matter, even if I don't know what to do to fix it." Captain Fagel smiled, and Sid caught a glimpse of the smile out of the corner of his eye. He thought perhaps that man could tell what was the matter with the wireless, if he desired. "Probably he's dumped a lot of neutralizing salts into the acid baths—if it's that kind of an outfit," Sid remarked, to himself. "I wonder what his game is, anyhow?"

There was something in the air that made Sid feel sure that somehow the adventurer was playing a lone hand—but he could not have figured it out if he had tried. As it was, he tried to piece together the significance of the remarks, the shoulder shrugs, the excitement, the significant smiles that passed around the table.

When they were through with the dinner, the hour of the inevitable punch was at hand. It was nearly nine o'clock. From time to time the captain had glanced uneasily down the river. Cavare showed no such perturbation, which seemed strange to Sid.

It was Cavare who did homage to Captain Fagel's far-known fame as a concocter of the delicious and radiant jungle-firefly punch. "Will Capitano Fagel make us the great favor to brew his greatest of masterpieces?" Cavare

asked, and the captain replied that he would.

And he did—with fruits that were juicy, and slightly acid, and neutral, and sweet, and the mildest of no one could tell just how many ingredients. Also, it was distinctly not an alcoholic beverage, for people know that alcohol is worse in the tropics than in the temperate zones.

It was soon sparkling in the cut-glass bowl—one could see all the colors of the spectrum in that radiant temptation. Captain Fagel dipped out liberal glasses of it, and the waiters passed them around, then retired.

What happened none there except Captain Fagel could have told. Wireless Sid, with the memory of his own previous experience, watched the man narrowly, and he could have sworn that Fagel dipped and filled his own glass as he filled the others from that gorgeous drink. Then, to make himself certain, Sid observed that every one present drank deep before he even touched the beverage.

They drank to the Gridiron Flag, to the Mexican eagles, to one another—and then Wilkins noticed Grail sitting there, blinking and looking worried. Cobbert, whose boast had been that he could drink with any man, wore an expression of increasing amazement. Cavare was drawing his lips tight across his teeth as he directed a glance of suspicion and hate at the genial, smiling adventurer, who stood leaning with both hands on the table, gazing with a look of intense satisfaction upon his fellows.

As a gentle tingling insensibility crept through him, infolding his heart, his limbs, his throat in its coiling and sinuous embrace, Sid suddenly recollected the twilight moment when on Gonave Island he drank coffee with this man.

With a startled cry, he sprang to his feet, drawing his automatic as he did so. He realized that he had been tricked, and he would have his revenge. As he staggered to his feet, marshaling all his waning will power, Grail suddenly slumped from his chair, and for an instant Sid took his eyes from Captain Fagel to look at the one who had first been overcome by the master rogue of the seven seas. As he staggered, Sid heard the low roar of a steamer approaching its landing.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WAITING FOR WIRELESS.

DORAN, out in the chopping, waited for Sid Wilkins to find a way to get out to see him. That he and his friend were in peril, he knew, and he feared for Wilkins while believing himself competent to master any condition that might arise. Now he felt, as the hours went by, that Cobbert and Fagel were purposely keeping his companion away, for reasons of their own.

He returned where he could watch the house boat unseen, and when, toward night, he saw the yacht's tender come over to the house boat and return with Sid, Cobbert, and Fagel, he saw his own worst fears confirmed. He knew that something was sure to happen. In the dark he ran to the house boat and buckled on his automatic, gathered his wits, then looked into the motor boat, to see if there was not some clew to Sid's intentions there. With his little pocket flash, he looked over the cabin, pulling down the shades to keep any one from seeing the light reflected.

Then he came to the wireless loose-leaf record, and, glancing over the last few pages, read with more and more attention, and finally clapped a hand over his mouth to keep from giving a yell of delight.

"There never was any one like Wireless Sid before!" he chortled. "No wonder he took a chance of going over to the *Cueda* to dine!"

Watching the diners across the river on the yacht, he could see them faintly through the screens, under the electric lights. He could hear an occasional sound, but nothing to tell him what they were talking about. More and more, he felt that he must depend on his own ability in emergency which he felt was coming on apace. Just what he would do he could not plan ahead, for he did not know what form the attack would take.

The ingratiating bearing of Captain Fagel had partly overcome Jim's repulsion for him. It was Cobbert and Cavare who worried him most.

On the motor boat, he studied the lay of the land and the conditions as best he could. He could tell from the wireless record that Sid had made a wonderful plan—but would it work on that shrewd man who had lifted thousands of the most exquisite pearls in the world right out of the hands of the most suspicious and careful and observing of pearl specialists? Jimmydigs had seen so many schemes fail that, with his limited understanding of what Wireless Sid planned, he could not feel absolutely confident.

Besides, it was this very night that the steamer was coming in to take on board the load of curly mahogany and bear it away to the far ports, where such cargoes are welcomed. How did the old rascal expect to seize that skidway full of timber, load it, and make away with it, without arousing the suspicions of Cavare, Cobbert, and Grail?

But one thing Doran had seen—that was a little vial which the man had taken from his pocket for an instant; he had seen the action, but had not heeded it. He had the uncomfortable feeling that he had failed to observe all that he should.

Then suddenly, in the dull gloom of the jungle night, he felt the leaves of the trees begin to quiver, he felt the boles of the trees begin to hum and resound. It was as if the vast earth were beginning to awaken. Louder and louder it grew, more and more it filled the jungle; then he recognized the sound: It was the whistle of a steamer coming in. There was a glow against the sky, and a flash whitening the dark—the steamer's searchlight was picking the way up the Muerto, seeking that timber which Cobbert and Cavare, and now Fagel, had stolen.

As he heard the sound, Jimmydigs looked across the water, and saw a shadow walking across the reflections; then, on the yacht's deck, he saw a figure go to the gangway, and heard a familiar voice raised in song:

"Oh-h, you take a man from a town like mine,
And fill him up with ruby wine,
You bet your boots he'll do it fine—**oh-h!**"

Suddenly the song broke, and Jimmydigs heard footsteps running down the stair to the tender, followed by stumbling and slipping on the brass-plated steps.

A moment later, the tender came chugging across the river to the dock, where Captain Fagel stumbled up, and, balancing himself, bade the man be gone. The man did as bid, and when he was well out, the captain turned toward the house boat, chuckling softly to himself. When he saw Jimmydigs standing on the dock, he greeted him: "Well, I suppose you know what that steamer's comin' means? It means you and I are rich——"

"Where are the others?" Doran asked, trying to be careless in his tone.

"Oh, they're a bit under the weather!"

"How about Sid?"

"Oh, he took his with the rest!" replied Fagel, laughing. "That's the second time I caught him—and he caught it good and strong, too—none of your seven-hour doses, this time!"

Jimmy made no answer, but he was thinking fast; the old rascal might have

poisoned them all; he might have killed them already; his easy efficiency, his cold-blooded chuckling made the blood run chill in the young man's veins. "What can I do—what shall I do?" he muttered to himself.

"We've got 'em, Jim—you and I! We'll load the timber, and in the morning we'll sail away on her, and our friends across there can untangle themselves as best they can. *Hué-ê!* There's a million in it, sonny! Come on, we've got to get out the darkies and those swamp angels, and make ready for the loading. You go tell 'em to forgather at the skidways up the river, while I drop out in this motor boat and hail the captain, and—— No! There come some darkies now!

"We're going to begin loading!" Fagel told the men from the loggers' camp, in French. "Roust out the boys—and double pay for night work, remember!"

"Bien!" came the answer, and the men turned back to inform their comrades. Their shouts echoed through the jungle—shrill and tuneful.

Jimmydigs went down on the motor boat, as he was told, and, casting off, they started the motor and ran alongside the big, black hull as it came opposite. Captain Fagel hailed the man on the bridge, and told him that the timber was a mile farther upstream, on the east side, where he would see the flicker of flambeaux and torches through the foliage.

Doran ran the motor boat back to the dock, arriving there just as the engine died, for there was only a little hydrogen gas in the improvised tank. However, he landed it, made it fast; then, with his electric flash, made his way around over the half logs to the cableway and joined the last of the crew as they turned out and swarmed through the dark, lighting their way by flickering wood torches and wire pots full of oiled cotton and moss waste—certainly as wild a crew as ever lifted peavey or dogged a stick of timber.

They sang as they scrambled and pranced along the uneven way, and, when they came to the pile of timber, they swarmed up over it, looking like ants as they crawled up and down. Some of them had worked for lumber thieves before, and they set about clearing away the curtain of brush, and vines, and trees, so that there would be no delay in starting the logs up the timber skids, which were already over the rail into the hatches and hold ports.

Foot by foot the steamer came, a leadsman calling, lights breaking out at yardarm ends, and dangling from stays. Along the rail were hung coils of wire and arc lights, ready to rush them up to the limbs of trees over and alongside the skids, so that no time would be lost in illuminating the harbor.

On the skidway, Jimmydigs saw Captain Fagel pacing up and down, rubbing his hands in an ecstasy of delight, and exultation, and confidence. "Certainly, if a man is able to steal a peck of pearls," thought the adventurer, "why should he not make away with a cargo of priceless timber?"

Doran found his heart beating painfully. Here was the enemy's ship, with the enemy aboard in full command, apparently with every move planned. The messages which he had read on the wireless records had given him hope for a minute, but now the old scalawag had won out. Jimmydigs could not doubt it.

The steamer came swishing, and crashing, and grinding against the brush, a snake or two sliding out of the vines onto the deck, and the boom of timbers pressed back by the hulk echoing through the jungle. Ropes were out, and screaming on groaning timberheads.

While yet the steamer was quivering and settling to rest, a stick of the mahogany slewed around, and a steam donkey puffed and sputtered. The tim-

ber rocked, and bumped, and pounded, and crawled in at one of the open bow ports, sliding aft out of sight. Another followed it, and a third, and a fourth; overhead, a long derrick arm bent down, and a flat steel block clattered out to a hook, and a gigantic timber slipped up into the sky and swung out over the deck, to go nosing end down into a hatch, out of sight.

As Doran stood there, anxiously watching the scene, half stupefied by the full realization of his helplessness, some one tapped him on his shoulder. "That's the way to do it, Jim!" said a voice. It was Captain Fagel, who had slipped over the ship's side, and had come ashore, for reasons of his own. "We'd better go to the quarters and pack up," the man remarked; "there are some things there I'd hate to leave behind!"

Without a word, the younger man followed the now swaggering, alert, and chortling captain, wondering whether he should go aboard the steamer, and endeavor to head off the stolen cargo beyond the seas, or whether he should slip out to one side and let Fagel go on his way alone, rejoicing.

"I'll go with him!" Jimmydigs decided, at last. "If he goes to any great port in the world, there'll be an American consul, or an agency of James Fray Brownell, Incorporated, and I'll be able to save the cargo—it's worth a million. I've just got to do it! But I hate to leave Sid with those other cutthroats. However, he'll come through all right, for they'll be too hot against Fagel to think of him. He may even be able to use them, somehow."

They came to the house boat, and Fagel lighted it up, and began to rummage around. He dumped out Cobbert's suit cases, and filled them with odds and ends. Jimmydigs, too, gathered up his own little collection of things, and put them in a sailor's bag. As he stooped to lash the bag with twine, he was suddenly crushed and thrown down across it. Fagel had pounced upon him, and now proceeded to bind his arms and legs, and lash a gag in his mouth. Having done this, he took the automatic out of Doran's belt, and tucked it, with the cartridges, into his own pocket.

"I'm sorry to treat a good fellow that way," the captain said; "but you know I just had to do it; you see, I know some things about wireless, myself, and, while I don't blame you for standing by that man Wilkins—it's all right to be faithful and all that—let me tell you: the next chance you get to be the pal and partner of Captain Wilbur Fagel, you'd better take it! This is just a lesson to you. If Señor Cavare happens to want to cut your throat, you just tell him that if he does he'll have me to reckon with!"

Fagel was smiling, and gesticulating gracefully, lighting a cigar as he did so.

"It'll take you some time to twist out of those lashings—but you'll do it in time. They'll come to across there about three o'clock to-morrow afternoon. You are all right in the meantime! Now, good-by to you! We're going to a port you'll never think of, so you can't head me off. Ta-ta, my smart young friend. By the way, here's something to remember me by!"

He took off his watch and chain, and tucked it into Jimmydigs' pocket. "It's a good one!" the man said. "So long!"

With that, he passed out, with the suit cases.

CHAPTER XXVII.

TO THE RESCUE.

CONFUSED, Sid looked back to where Captain Fagel had stood. The man was gone, and when the young man turned to look around, dumbly wondering where he had gone, he saw the side of the deck begin to rise up, higher and higher, and the lights circle around and around, faster and faster,

till there was a sheet of flame spread before him.

Little by little, fighting with all his might, he slipped down into the depths of drugged sleep. His last conscious thought was that Captain Fagel had caught him again, and was holding him fast, in spite of his struggling and fighting.

The waiters returned after a while, and, whispering among themselves, debated what they should do under the circumstances. They decided that they would take a drink of the luscious beverage which sparkled in the punch bowl. They drank, and then they drank again. Soon one of them muttered sleepily, and sank in a comfortable doze. The other waiter, less tractable in spirit, started up angrily, but soon yielded.

In the morning, in the fine sunshine, when the great steamer, drawing ten feet more of water, came nosing down the Muerto River and passed by the yacht, standing on the bridge was a lank, gray-eyed man, joking with the captain of the steamer *Avernie*. And when it had gone by, in the quiet, Jimmydigs could hear the boom and pound of timber coming along the cable right of way out in the swamp.

It seemed a mockery, having all the negroes and white swamp angels toiling out there, when so much had happened. They would do their work, but were not concerned with what became of the timber they snatched from the mahogany brake.

Doran had labored over the knots that Captain Fagel had tied, but it was in vain. He could not feel that the hard-waxed line had frayed under his scraping, or loosened under his picking. He struggled, chewing on the hard chunk that Fagel had forced into his mouth, and lashed there with an efficient hitch. "What has become of the cook?" he wondered suddenly, and then easily surmised the truth. Fagel had bribed that worthy and had sent him about his business.

The hours of the night did not prove less laggard than the hours of daylight, when he could see the sunlight crossing the floor, inch by inch, board by board. He wriggled and twisted, squirmed and pulled, and his wrists became more painfully chafed, and his jaws ached more and more. He knew that some time some one would come there to the house boat from the working loggers, but it might be a day, or two days.

He could not be sure that Cavare and Cobbert had not gone with the adventurer, for, of course, he knew only what he had seen and what Fagel had boasted about the affair on the yacht. Of course, the latter had seemed to say that he had left the others behind—but had he? In his heart, Jimmydigs hoped he had not; the young man wanted no experience with those men, now that they had been baffled in their undertaking.

Noon came, and with it the whistle of the cableway engine. Then there was the jungle silence—no sound but a whistling insect out in the humid air, no voice but the shrill cry of a lonesome bird. Presently Jimmydigs heard a louder and louder purring and humming. As he strained his ears, listening, he heard water falling away from the bow of the little motor boat. There was a bump against the house boat, followed by a heavy footstep. He could hear a man breathing heavily, a whistle in his throat.

The door opened, and some one came stumbling into the semigloom within. "Jim! Jim! Are you here?" he heard.

The prisoner tried to speak, but his voice was like a groan. The next instant, Wireless Sid was beside him at the bunk, and, seeing what was the matter, he slashed the bonds away.

Jimmydigs started to jump up, throwing the gag from his mouth, but at the

first toss of his arms he uttered a cry of agony, for through his cramped muscles shot a thousand pangs, like blades of polished knives and hot needles.

"Not so fast, old boy!" Sid cried. "Let me get at them with my palms!" He massaged the knotted muscles and dressed the chafed rings around his friend's wrists and on the sides of his jaws. In a little while Jimmydigs could move, if somewhat stiffly.

"What a scoundrel!" Wilkins exclaimed, as he told what had happened on the yacht. "They haven't come to, yet—but I suppose I'm younger and in better condition than they are. I was scared for you. I was afraid that old rascal would take you with him, or kill you—but it's all right! We won't worry any more now. We're all right. We've a little more work to do—and then away we go again! I've got to go back to Port au Prince—I don't imagine those fellows will hang around here long after they come to. I'll have to see somebody out on the log job, to take charge now—do you know any one?"

"Why, there's that yellow man who guided me out to the Round House that night. He's pretty handy out there in the swamp——"

"All right. The boss will have a new agent down here before long, now, and perhaps he'll send down some other logging boss—that'll depend on whether he's learned his lesson or not, I suppose. Mr. Brownell's always giving these political crooks he takes up another chance. Of course, he'll keep his eye on this job now. Well, you might as well gather up your duds, if you're going with me. We'll pull out, and, down the bay, we'll get in touch with the world, and we'll find out what is doing."

There was not much for Jimmydigs to gather up. They looked over the house boat, and then went out into the chopping to tell Monsieur Caracalen Neurasell that if Cobbert did not show up again he was to take charge of things and keep things moving till another boss should appear, as one would, in course of time.

Thereupon the yellow man explained the situation to the crew, and Sid affirmed the statements. Then the crew went on with its task, as if the coming and going of masters were of little concern to them, so long as they had trees to fell, logs to hew. They sang the same old tunes, and leaped to the same old crew-boss commands, wallowing, and splashing, and shaking out the timber.

The two Northerners, with several backward looks, turned from the strange jungle scene. They came to the motor boat, and cast off the lines, after Jimmydigs had warned Sid that the fuel was all gone.

"I've a new wrinkle in motoring!" Sid laughed, and then he told how he had overcome the difficulty of having water in his fuel tanks by the simple expedient of developing hydrogen gas and feeding it to an improvised carburetor.

Doran, sore, and slow of thought, could only rejoice that they had escaped the dangers and the villains who had encompassed them. He found little opportunity to break in on the flowing talk of Wireless Sid, whose capacity for conversation had not been decreased by the drug he had twice imbibed.

Rather shamefacedly, he told Jimmydigs about it. It made him blush to think that he had been caught twice by the same trick. "It's taught me a lesson!" Wireless Sid exclaimed, starting the motor, throwing the reverse, and backing out into the Muerto, and then swinging around to head downstream. "And it's taught them one, too—perhaps—look at them! They're coming to!"

Sure enough, Cobbert and Cavare were staggering to their feet, wrestling with their stupefied brains, rubbing their eyes to get the dimness from their vision.

Cobbert came to faster, and he saw the motor boat driving by, hardly a hundred yards distant. He staggered to the rail, and leaned against the wire screen, trying to see—but the two boys were in the cabin, and he could not tell who they were, till Wireless Sid stepped to the hatch and shouted across to him: "You may as well clear out of this—there's another boss on the job, and the sooner you're gone the better."

Cobbert showed his teeth, and then staggered back, his face twisting with emotion. He had played a mean game, and had been caught at it—he knew that, even though he had not yet discovered the fact that the heap of curly mahogany was gone. He must have suspected it, however.

Of Cavare, the two youths saw only his snarling face as he stumbled along the rail, gesticulating with emotion rather than through realization of what had happened.

The two swung out of the mouth of the Muerto, and the motor boat bowed to the rolling in of a swell. A little later, Jimmy took the wheel, while Sid sat down at the instrument and began to call; he had messages to send home, reporting the condition of affairs.

He laughed so much, as he sent them, that Jimmydigs wanted to know what it was all about.

"Why, don't you know?" Wireless Sid exclaimed.

"No. It's no joke. They got away with the loot—all that mahogany!"

"Well, we'll see!" Sid chuckled. "Wait till I've reported to Havana Commercial, and let the chief know what's up—he'll laugh his sides sore!"

So Wilkins gave his friend no satisfaction, while he sent away the messages. But, after a while he remarked: "Now we'll see what has become of that load of curly mahogany—we can't afford to lose that!"

"Do you think the steamer'll answer you?" Jim exclaimed. "Why, Captain Fagel said they were bound for a port we'd never dreamed of!"

"A port he'd never dreamed of, either, I'm thinking," said Wireless Sid. "I've got them on, now; here it comes!"

Jimmydigs set the steering wheel in beckets and came alongside to read the message as Sid wrote it on the typewriter:

Sidney Wilkins.

SIR: Loaded timber as directed, took on Captain Fagel for passenger as directed; was not necessary to put him in irons. He gave up at once. He desires to express his great admiration for you, and to apologize for any temporary inconvenience you may have suffered.

(Signed) *Avernie*, CAPTAIN WOVERN.

"What on earth does that mean?" Jimmydigs shouted.

"Oh, nothing much!"

Sid smiled, as he stood up and yawned with gusto. "You see, the *Avernie* is one of the James Fray Brownell, Incorporated, steamers. I sent for it. Captain Fagel didn't know that, and never thought to ask! I'm disappointed about one thing, though."

"What's that?" Jimmydigs gasped, rubbing his head.

"Well, I've shaken out my boots every time I put them on lately, and there hasn't a thing come out—what do you suppose they meant?"

"You'll find out if you stay down in these latitudes long enough," Doran answered. "I don't know, myself."

"Well, we won't be in any hurry to go north, you know. This kind of a life gives a fellow practical experience."

"That's right! Where away now?"

"Port au Prince. I'll have to wait there for orders. Mr. Brownell said he had something else for me to do down here. The last message from him said he would look it up in the card index and let me know later."

THE END.

A Romance of the Fifteenth Century—

In Flashing Armor

By Ellis Pearson

(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

THE CHOICE.

IT was about two o'clock on an afternoon in January of the year 1465. Paris appeared drab and dirty under a gray, lowering sky. It was bitterly cold, for a chill, damp wind, promising rain, was blowing lustily, shrieking about the chimney stacks and through the narrow streets and alleyways, and rattling the window shutters and creaking signboards. There were few pedestrians abroad, and they, well cloaked and muffled, hurried along to keep warm.

As the hour struck, a man, hatless, cloakless, running swiftly, and ever and again glancing behind, entered the Rue St. Antoine from the direction of the Palais des Tournelles. He was an elderly man, tall and lean, and gray of hair and beard, his face crimson with his exertions, and his eyes full of deadly fear. From some distance behind him, but momentarily drawing nearer, came a clamor of voices and the rattle of armor and jingle of steel.

Without slackening speed, he sped on till he came to a house about midway in the street. He stopped and hammered on the door, gasping hard for breath the while. In a short time it was opened, and the man, thrusting the servant aside, flung the door to again with a clash and shot home the bolts. As he did so half a dozen retainers came hurriedly into the hall from the back.

"Do not open that door, whoever demands!" he cried, then sprang up a flight of stairs, ran along a corridor, and into a room overlooking the street.

As he entered, a woman, or, rather, girl—for she was not more than twenty—rose with a startled cry, dropping a score or so sheets of parchment bound together with a cord, the poems of Master François Villon, which she had been reading. She stared at the intruder a moment, then: "Father, father, what is it?" she cried, and moved toward him.

He brushed her aside. "For Heaven's sake, do not delay me!" he gasped. "They'll be here in a minute!" And, opening another door, he entered a smaller room.

The girl followed him in. "Who will be here?" she demanded. "What does it mean?"

The man laughed mirthlessly. "Tristan l'Hermit, with a dozen guards, will be here! Ha"—as a thunderous knock came at the door and a voice: "Open, in the king's name!"—"they are here already! I am to be arrested; but they must not get this!" He had been rummaging in a drawer as he spoke, and now produced a folded sheet or two of parchment. "What can I do with it? Tell me, in Heaven's name!"

The girl stepped back with a sob. "Arrested! *Mon Dieu!*"

"Quick, quick!" he cried. "They'll have the door down in a minute! Quick, I say!"

"Burn it!" she gasped.

"No, no! It is for Burgundy; it must reach him!" He looked wildly around the room: "Surely there is a hiding place—surely, surely?"

The girl clenched her hands and stared about questioningly, then suddenly a light flashed into her eyes.

"Give it me!" she cried, and, snatching the parchment, swiftly led the way into the room where she had been reading. Quick as lightning she folded the parchment into small compass, and, opening her dress at the front, thrust it in, then, picking up the poems she had dropped on his entrance, she tore the leaves apart and flung them into the fire. The man stared at her in amazement, then gave a delighted laugh.

"Good!" he cried. "I see, I see! They will think I have destroyed all incriminating documents. Now listen. Guard that parchment as you would your honor, and at the first opportunity send it to the Duke of Burgundy or his son, the Comte de Charolois. It means ruin and death to a score if it falls into King Louis' hands. You understand?"

"Yes, yes!" the girl cried. "But you —you?"

He turned swiftly, went out on to the landing, and looked down into the hall. As he did so, the door fell in with a crash, and Tristan l'Hermit, King Louis' provost marshal, or, as he was more commonly called, the king's hangman, and a dozen guards sprang into the house, and, catching sight of him, began to mount the stairs. He laughed bitterly.

"Too late!" he said, and, returning into the room, stood before the fire, and watched the parchment burning into ashes. The girl gave a despairing cry and broke into a passion of tears. He drew her to him and kissed her tenderly. "Courage, my dear," he said; "tears will not avail us. And anything may happen yet. Courage, I say; they are here."

Heavy footsteps sounded in the corridor, and the next moment Tristan l'Hermit stood on the threshold, the guards at his back. He stepped forward, a triumphant smile on his grim face.

"You have led me a pretty dance, M. de Chanfreau," he said. "You are my prisoner, by the king's command."

De Chanfreau bowed. "I am at your service, Master l'Hermit," he returned. Then, pointing to the fire with a slight laugh: "The reason of my flight is apparent, I think."

In an instant Tristan was on his knees before the fire; he stared into the ashes a moment, then rose with a bitter oath. *"Pardieu!* You will regret this, M. le Comte!" he snarled.

The other laughed. "No more than I regret living, Master l'Hermit, and that is not at all. Those documents in your hands would have meant death to a score of my friends. I had lost all honor had I not destroyed them."

Tristan scowled. "Honor, forsooth! You are likely to lose what is better than honor—your life," he said. Then his face brightened. "And you forget, *messire,*" he continued, "there are ways of getting information other than by

documents. Torture, for instance; the rack, the thumbscrew."

The girl gave a shrill scream.

"You will not dare!" De Chanfreau stepped forward, and snapped his fingers in the hangman's face. "You dog!" he cried. "You—you *canaille!*"

Tristan laughed. "So that touches you," he said. "Ah, *messire,* you will wish then you had not destroyed your documents." He laughed again ghoulishly, then motioned to the guards. "Take him!" he commanded. And in an instant De Chanfreau was held by the arms and helpless.

The hangman turned to the girl. "Mademoiselle," he said harshly, "you will please keep to the house until you have permission to leave it, you and your servants. Move from it, and you shall join M. le Comte in the Bastille, and your servants shall hang." He stepped to the door. "March!" he ordered, and stood aside while the guards passed out with De Chanfreau in their midst; then, with a last look at mademoiselle—who, with head bent over the table, was sobbing bitterly—followed them down the stairs and out into the street. An hour later De Chanfreau was locked up tight and safe in the Bastille.

Half an hour passed, during which mademoiselle's passion of grief spent itself; then she rose unsteadily. Her face was colorless, her eyes red, and her lips trembled piteously. The tramp of feet and the rattle of arms had long ago died away in the distance. The house was silent, and there was nothing to show, save the splintered door below and a white-faced group of servants and retainers, that anything out of the ordinary had taken place. It might have been a dreadful dream; but she knew. She passed to the window, and stood looking out with unseeing eyes.

Presently she remembered the documents. She lifted her head and listened, then silently crossed to the door and looked out. There was no one in sight. Softly she closed the door again, and bolted it; then, returning to her chair, drew out the parchment, and read through what was written from beginning to end. Her face, when she had finished, was if possible, more pallid than before, and her teeth fixed themselves on her under lip.

After a brief interval she again read it through. It was covered with minute writing, and in effect it was a summary of certain projects of the Paris members of the League of the Public Weal, a league which had for its heads Philip Duke of Burgundy, his son Charles, Comte de Charolois, and the Duke of Bretagne, and which had for its aims the downfall of King Louis, and the better governing of France.

Mentioned in the documents were the names of a score or so gentlemen—great gentlemen well known in Paris and at the court, among them that of her father, and one other of particular interest—her eyes dilated as they rested upon it—Philibert Vicomte de Caen, her betrothed.

She remembered what her father had said, the documents in King Louis' hands meant death to a score. Death, among others, to her lover. A long-drawn sigh escaped her. Oh, that he were here now! She sat erect at the thought. Could she go to him? Dare she ignore Tristan's command? He lived but a half dozen houses away, and if she did go, how would Tristan know? But then again he might not be at home. She sat debating a while, then rose, and was for crossing to the window when a sound fell on her ears.

The sound, for the second time that day, of the tramp of feet and rattle of arms in the cobbled street below. She drew a deep breath and, with tense, erect body and quivering nostrils, listened intently. The sound drew nearer, and at last came to a stop beneath her window. With a heavy fore-

boding of trouble in her heart, she stepped lightly across the room and put out her head. Half a score men in armor were standing at the door, and entering the house were Tristan l'Hermit and a slim, slightly bowed figure in black—the king, Louis the Eleventh, of France, himself. Starting back in dismay, she gave a half-stifled sob, and sank into her chair, her eyes fixed on the door.

Footsteps came hurriedly along the corridor—a moment, and a knock came at the door, and a voice spoke quickly: "Mademoiselle, his majesty, the king, is below, and desires to see you at once."

She sat motionless, her mind in a whirl. What this visit betokened she could not judge, but no good, she was sure. Yet, whatever it might mean, the king must be seen.

"Ask his majesty to be so good as to come to me here," she said. "Say I—I am unwell, or would come to him."

"Yes, mademoiselle," the man returned, and hurried below. Mademoiselle composed her face, and glanced around the room, and, as she did so, became aware of the documents still in her hand. With a gasp, she replaced them in her bosom, then moved to the door, and drew back the bolts.

She was standing erect, one hand on the table, when a knock came at the door. "Enter!" she called; and it opened and admitted the king and his hangman.

Louis' thin face wore a look of commiseration, a look belied, however, by the twinkle in his eyes. He crossed the room as mademoiselle bowed low and lifted her hand to his lips.

"I am deeply grieved at the trouble which has come upon you, believe me, mademoiselle," he said courteously. "Pray be seated."

She returned to her chair, her eyes on his face, and, as she looked at him, felt her courage returning. She came of a gallant line, and rose nobly to the occasion. She met his look, unflinching.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "I desire some information. My gossip here tells me that M. le Comte, your father, burned certain documents I was anxious to see. Is that so?"

Fear leaped into her eyes, but she commanded herself, clenching her hands till the nails bit into her palms. Did he know? Ah, but he could not know. It was that he saw further than his servant. She opened her lips and tried to lie, but words would not come. Louis eyed her keenly.

"Come, mademoiselle," he said, and his voice was harsh, "is that so? Something was destroyed, I know, but were the documents I desired to see destroyed?"

Again she tried to lie, but again could not. "And if, sire, they were not destroyed?" she said evasively.

He stepped forward, stood over her, and looked down into her face. "Do not evade the question, mademoiselle," he said. "Answer me—yes or no."

Her spirit rose, and the blood ran swiftly through her veins. She deliberated a moment, then stood erect, a flush on her cheeks.

"No, sire," she answered clearly; "no documents were destroyed. The ashes this—this gentleman"—she indicated Tristan scornfully—"saw in the fire were the ashes of the poems of François Villon. The documents were in my possession."

Tristan swore, and the king turned with a shrill laugh. "Ha! You hear that, gossip? It was as I thought." Then, again addressing mademoiselle: "Where are they now?"

She laughed derisively. She did not fear him now in the least. "Sire!" she exclaimed, and spread out her hands. "You do not expect me to tell you that? They are where you will never find them."

"Mademoiselle," he said, between clenched teeth, "I want those documents! I must have them—I will have them, at whatever cost!"

She looked at him searchingly. At whatever cost! She saw a ray of hope. "At whatever cost?" she repeated. "What does that mean, sire?"

Louis glanced at Tristan, his eyes asking a question. The hangman nodded. "It means, mademoiselle, for one thing," he answered, "that I will release your father, and grant him a pardon, if you will give the documents into my hands."

"Ah!" She stepped forward quickly. Then she remembered, and the light died out of her eyes. "But giving you the documents means betraying a score of other gentlemen, sire," she said. "What of them?"

The king bared his teeth in a snarl. "They shall die, as they deserve!" he cried passionately. "On them I will have no mercy! Do they not deserve death, to plot against me, God's anointed? *Pardieu,* they shall be examples to all France!"

Mademoiselle sank trembling into her chair, her spirit gone now, her cheeks ashen white. She could save her father, but at what a cost! The cost of a score lives, among them that of her lover! Was woman ever in so terrible a predicament? On the one side was the life of her father, whom she loved; on the other the lives of a score of gallant gentlemen, one of whom she loved also. She knew well what her father would have her answer to the question. He would die, willingly, rather than sacrifice others, and account it a small thing to do. She knew he would sacrifice life a thousand times rather than honor once. A moan of pain broke from her lips, and she covered her face with her hands.

Louis, watching her keenly, spoke: "Well, mademoiselle, what is it to be? You know the alternative if I do not get the documents. Your father dies, and you, though you are a woman, shall not stand in my way. The documents, or the knowledge contained in them, I will have, though I have to torture it from one of you. On that I am determined!"

She stretched out her hands. "Give me time," she implored—"give me time! I cannot decide now. Oh, it is too much!"

Tristan stepped to Louis' side, and whispered in his ear. The king, after a momentary pause, nodded.

"Very well, mademoiselle, you shall have time," he said. "To-night I am free, and will visit you again at eight o'clock. Decide by then, one way or another. But decide wisely, for I will not be trifled with. And let me impress upon you this: neither you, nor your servants, are to leave this house until I come to you. You will give me your word as to that? Yes. Well, at any rate, both exits will be guarded. Whether you leave it a free woman or not depends upon your decision. That is all."

He wrapped his cloak about him, and stepped to the door. There he turned. "Decide wisely, mademoiselle," he said, with a significant glance; then, without a further word, motioned the hangman to him, and the two passed out of the room, down the stairs, and so out of the house and into the street.

Alone, the girl rose and began to pace the room. What was she to do? One moment she decided to save her father and let the others die—they were naught to her, save one; and him, too, she might save—the next filled with loathing of herself for entertaining such a thought. Who can tell of her agony of mind?

But by and by calmness came. In the end it seemed to her there was but one thing, in honor, she could do. She could not save her father at the ex-

pense of others; she must not give the documents to the king. There was nothing to do, then, but destroy them and suffer the consequences. And the consequences? She fell on her knees by the chair, and buried her face in the cushions.

CHAPTER II.

KING OR NO KING.

ABOUT four o'clock that afternoon a horseman rode into Paris by the St. Denis gate, and without delay passed through the streets till he came to the Rue St. Antoine. Dismounting at a door six houses removed from that of the Comte de Chanfreau, he left his horse to the care of a serving man who appeared, entered the house, and, throwing aside his heavy riding cloak, disclosed the tall and sinewy figure of a man about thirty. He wore neither beard nor mustache, and was dark and handsome of face. His eyes were black and keen, his nose prominent, and his chin bold and strong. A sword hung by his side, and a dagger was fixed in his girdle.

He turned to enter a room on the left of the hall, and, as he did so, the door of it opened and two men appeared, one young and fair, and the other about middle age, gray and grizzled.

"Ah, De Caen at last!" the younger man exclaimed. Then, without giving him time to speak. "You have heard the news?" he questioned excitedly.

The newcomer laughed. "My good De Lembrat," he said, "I have only just returned to Paris, and have heard nothing. What is the news?"

De Lembrat glanced at his companion, then again at De Caen. "*Pardieu,* it is bad news," he answered. "Prepare yourself, my friend. De Chanfreau was arrested two hours ago, and lodged in the Bastille."

"What!" De Caen's hand shot out, and caught the other's arm in a grip of steel. "What! Say that again!"

De Lembrat winced. "Steady, De Caen, steady. I repeat, De Chanfreau was arrested two hours ago, and lodged in the Bastille."

De Caen released him, and fell back a step. "*Mon Dieu!*" he muttered, then turned swiftly to the elder man. "Is this true, De Moins?" he questioned hoarsely.

The elder man nodded. "True enough," he said.

"*Mon Dieu!*" De Caen muttered again. Then, with blazing eyes: "Clotilde, Mademoiselle de Chanfreau! What of her?"

"We can tell you nothing as to her," De Moins answered, "except that the king visited her a short time ago. He had been gone only a few minutes when you arrived."

De Caen gasped. "The king?" Visited her? *Nom de nom!* What does that mean? But come in here, and tell me all," and he led the way into the room. "Now then, De Moins, quickly, please," he said.

De Moins seated himself on the edge of the table. "They tried to arrest De Chanfreau at the palace," he said; "but somehow he evaded them, and made for home. De Lembrat and I were at the palace at the time, and naturally we were alarmed, so followed the guards. Tristan l'Hermit led them. De Chanfreau's door was bolted when they got there, but they soon had it down and shortly came out with him. I imagine he went home to destroy his papers, but whether he did so I don't, of course, know. If not, *pardieu,* we're all as good as dead men. There was nothing for us to do then but warn the others, and that we did, then came here to tell you, knowing you were expected back this afternoon. While we waited, it would be about an hour ago, the king passed with Tristan and half a score of guards. We

watched, and saw them go to De Chanfreau's. They were there about half an hour, and left, as I said, shortly before you came. There you have it all."

De Lembrat bent forward. "You have forgotten to mention," he said, "that guards were left at both front and back of the house."

"Yes, that is so," agreed De Moins.

De Caen flung himself into a chair and stared straight before him, his brows knitted in a frown.

"It looks to me," he said, at last, "as if the king has some inkling of the conspiracy, and if, as you say, De Chanfreau did not destroy his papers, we might as well count ourselves dead men. But what did he want of Mademoiselle de Chanfreau? That passes me." He sprang to his feet with an air of determination. "I must see her. She, you know, is my betrothed, and if he has hurt a hair of her head, king or no king, I will——"

De Moins nodded. "We know," he interrupted, "but how will you get into the house? You forget the guards. It is a thousand to one they won't admit you."

"I must get in," De Caen said doggedly. "I will get in, somehow. Will you wait here?"

They assented, and accompanied him as far as the door, then returned into the room with troubled faces. "He will not get in," said De Moins.

"I think not, too," said De Lembrat.

It was raining when De Caen stepped into the street, and darkness was fast coming on. He strode rapidly along till within a few yards of De Chanfreau's house, then a man stepped out of a doorway and touched his arm. "M. le Vicomte," he said.

De Caen stopped and eyed him keenly, and recognized him as one of De Chanfreau's trusted retainers. "Ah, Michel," he said, "what are you doing here?"

"I cannot get into the house, my lord," he answered. "My master was arrested this afternoon while I was out, and there are guards at both doors who won't let me pass."

De Caen laughed shortly. "I, too, want to get into the house, Michel, my friend," he said, "and get in I will, by hook or by crook. Come with me," and he passed on till he reached the entrance.

Two guards, with halberds, stood just within the doorway. De Caen addressed them:

"My good fellows, I desire to see Mademoiselle de Chanfreau. Am I permitted to pass?"

"No, *messire*." Sharp and curt came the answer.

"But," he said, "mademoiselle is my betrothed. Surely there is no harm in my seeing her?"

"Harm or no harm, *messire*," answered one of them, "you cannot pass."

He thrust his hand into his pocket. "If ten crowns——" he began.

"Not ten crowns, nor a hundred, *messire*. We have our orders. You cannot pass."

"But this fellow," De Caen motioned to Michel. "He is one of the servants. Cannot he be admitted?"

"No, *messire*—no one can pass, man or woman. I think"—with a harsh laugh—"you would be well advised to go."

He hesitated a moment; then, seeing it was useless, turned on his heel. "Come, Michel," he said, and retraced his way to his own house, passed through into a narrow alleyway at the back, and along this to the rear of De Chanfreau's house. The result, however, with the guards there was the same, and, cursing bitterly, he once more returned to his own house, and directed Michel to the servants' quarters.

De Moins and De Lembrat sprang up when he joined them. "Well, what luck?" cried the latter.

He shook his head. "None," he answered. "I could not get in, nothing would tempt them." He flung himself into a chair and gazed somberly into the fire, which, burning fitfully, threw grotesque shadows about the room.

"What will you do?" asked De Lembrat.

"I do not know," he said. "Let me think," and rested his head on his hand.

Thus he sat for some time, his mind filled with dark thoughts—thoughts, too, of Clotilde, his betrothed. In fancy, he saw her sitting alone, weeping bitterly, her face white, and those bright eyes of hers lusterless. He wondered, he asked himself again and again, what the king had wanted of her. Then he sprang up. "*Pardieu!* I must do something. De Moins, De Lembrat, what can I do?"

"As far as I can see, nothing," answered the former.

"And I cannot——" began De Lembrat, when a knock came at the door. Michel, De Chanfreau's servant, came quickly into the room, his eyes aglow.

"My lord," he cried, "there is a trapdoor in the roof."

"Ah!" De Caen sprang forward. "A trapdoor in the roof! You are sure of that?"

"Yes, my lord."

He gave a cry of delight. "And there is one in mine also, if I remember aright. That is the way! I shall not forget this, Michel."

"But surely," cried De Moins, "you will not dare?"

"Not dare? Pah, there is little risk!"

"But with this wind? Why, man, up there it will blow you over. And it is raining. It is not as if it were daylight!"

De Caen laughed. "No matter! I am going; it is the only way. I must see her. Will you see me off?"

"I like it not! But if you will go, you will go," said De Lembrat, "and I cannot say I would not in your place."

De Caen clapped him across the shoulders. "Good man!" he cried. "Come, then!" He picked up a close-fitting cap, drew it well down on his head, called for a lighted lanthorn, and, when it was brought, led the way upstairs. They came presently to a small room immediately under the tiles. The light from the lanthorn showed it dusty, hung with the cobwebs of a century, and bare of furniture except for a chest standing in the middle of the room under a trapdoor in the roof. De Caen pointed to it. "I thought I remembered it," he said. "I used to hide here when I was a child." He mounted the chest, unfastened the rusty catch, and flung back the door. Through the opening the sky showed almost pitch-black, rain poured in, and the wind, blowing strongly, howled a dirge about the chimney stacks.

"*Mon Dieu!*" De Moins shivered. "Let me dissuade you, De Caen!"

"No, my friend, you cannot do that," he answered. He put out his head and glanced along the roof. What he saw would have dismayed many a man. The tiles sloped steeply, there seemed scarce foothold for anything save birds, but he did not hesitate. "Let me see," he said, "if there is a trapdoor in every roof, I shall want the seventh, including this one. Farewell, my friends! Will you wait for me?"

They agreed, wishing him good luck. He gave a spring, and a minute later was outside, clinging to the coping.

CHAPTER III.

WITH SINKING HEART.

HE remained thus for a little while, then began to work his way along. The wind blew in sharp, strong gusts, and drove the rain with stinging force into his face so that he could scarcely see. The tiles were slippery as ice with the wet, and each foothold seemed more precarious than the last. His chief dif-

ficulties were when he came to a house the roof of which was lower, or higher, as it might be, than the rest. He had to climb, or drop, and more than once seemed like to topple over into the black void of the street. But at last he arrived, hands and knees cut and bleeding, and almost sodden through, at the trapdoor in De Chanfreau's roof. He gave thanks for so much success.

Clinging with one hand to the coping, he stretched out the other and strove to lift the door. It held, and his heart sank. He tried again, but it still held; it was, without doubt, fastened on the inside. But he did not despair.

He drew his dagger, thankful that he had not discarded it, and attacked the door with feverish energy. It was of wood, and rotten with age and wet, and soon he had a big enough hole made through which to put his hand. It was an easy matter then to unfasten the catch, and shortly he had the door open, and was looking down.

Not a glimmer of light was there, and, though he listened intently, no sound could he hear but that of the wind and rain. He inserted his legs, lowered himself till he hung by his hands, then dropped lightly as he could, to be almost choked by the dust that rose about him.

He got on his knees and fumbled about in the darkness, and presently came on what he wanted—another trapdoor in the floor. The catch of this, as luck would have it, was unfastened, and he had it open in a moment, and, descending the ladder that led up to it, found himself in a room into which a dim light filtered from below through the open door. He stole to it silently and put out his head. It looked into a narrow corridor, at one end of which were the stairs.

He stood listening; then, hearing nothing, walked swiftly along the corridor, delayed an instant, then passed down the stairs, to run, as she came from a room, into a woman. She recoiled from the strange figure, wet and begrimed, stared in terror, then opened her mouth to scream. Quickly he clapped his hand over her mouth.

"Silence!" he said, in a low yet insistent voice. "You know me; I am the Vicomte de Caen. Where is your mistress?"

He removed his hand. The woman stepped back, and looked at him in amazement. "My lord," she said, "I did not know you. How came——"

He held up his hand. "No matter," he interrupted. "Quickly, where is your mistress?"

"In her room, my lord," she answered.

"And her room? It overlooks the street, does it not?"

"Yes, my lord."

"I will go to her," he said. "And you, do not mention to a soul you have seen me. You understand? Not to a soul."

She nodded, and he passed swiftly along the corridor, down another flight of stairs, and so to the door of the room which he knew to be that of his betrothed. He knocked softly, his heart beating fast. A voice—her voice—answered wearily, "Come in," and, opening the door, he entered.

Mademoiselle was seated in a chair, her head on her arms on the table, the picture of despair. She did not look up. "What is it?" she asked.

De Caen closed the door quietly, then stepped forward. "Clotilde," he said, in a voice of infinite tenderness.

She was up instantly, stared at him with dilated eyes, then stretched out her hands. "You!" she murmured, as if she could scarcely believe her sight. "You, Philibert? Oh, thank Heaven!" And, thrusting back her chair, she went to his arms.

They stood thus, heart to heart, his arms about her, his lips kissing her lips, her eyes, her hair, and for a brief spell

forgot everything but themselves. Then she remembered, and, releasing herself, stepped back till she leaned against the table.

"How came you here?" she cried. "The doors are guarded!" He told her briefly, and her face paled. "By the tiles?" she repeated. "You dared?"

He took her into his arms again, and kissed her lovingly. "For you, my sweet," he said, "I would dare anything. And that was only a little thing."

"A little thing! Oh, my love!" She looked at him with her heart in her eyes, then again released herself. "You know?" she cried. "You know?"

He nodded. "I know," he answered. "I heard not an hour ago, on my return, that M. le Comte was arrested this afternoon, and that the king visited you later."

She sank into her chair, and covered her face. "Oh, *mon Dieu,* it is dreadful!" she murmured.

He stood by her side, and put his hands tenderly on her shoulder. "Tell me," he said gently.

The pressure of his hand seemed to revive her courage, for she sat up, and a slight flush came to her cheeks. This handsome lover of hers, so brave, so strong, might be able to help her, or, at the least, to advise her. And so she told him all that had happened, all, that is, previous to the king's visit, then paused.

He looked at her in pride and admiration. "Ah, that was brave!" he cried. "And where are the documents now?"

She put her hand in her dress, and, drawing them out, passed them to him. He read them through, and, when he had finished, beads of perspiration stood on his brow.

"Great Heaven," he muttered, "if these had fallen into Louis' hands!" and was silent a while. Then: "What was the reason of the king's visit? What did he want of you?"

She shuddered. "He somehow suspected that the documents had not been destroyed, and asked me point-blank. I —I could not lie, though I tried to. And then——" She broke off with a moan of anguish.

"And then?" De Caen prompted after a time.

"Then he told me, if I would give him the documents, he would pardon my father and set him free. But if I would not, if I destroyed them, he would torture both my father and myself to get the names and information contained in them."

De Caen stiffened, and, his eyes flaming, his hand dropped on his dagger hilt. "The fiend!" he cried. "Oh, brave king, to threaten a woman!" And he swore he would repent it. "What did you answer him?" he asked.

"I—I could not answer him!" she cried. "Oh, do not blame me! I should have refused there and then to give him the documents, I know, but it was too much—too much to decide at once. I asked him to give me time, and he said he would again visit me at eight o'clock to-night. Oh, what shall I do?" She broke into a paroxysm of weeping.

De Caen's rage flamed out again, and, muttering oaths of vengeance, he paced to and fro like a caged tiger. To think of it—she, his betrothed, so sweet, so beautiful, so lovable, to be tortured! What a fiend the king was—fiend was too good a word! But he swore it should not be so. He would—but what could he do? He struck his forehead in his agony of mind. What could he do?

At last, his eyes shining, he turned quickly to his betrothed. "I have it!" he cried. "You shall not stay to meet him. There are only two guards at the door; I can easily account for them. Put on your cloak quickly!" And he was all impatience to be off.

"But my father?" she cried.

He frowned. "Better that only your father should suffer than both. He would have it so, I swear. Come, come!" And he made for the door.

She started to follow him, then stopped. "I cannot," she said. "I promised."

"You promised?" He lifted his eyebrows, and looked at her questioningly.

"I promised I would not leave the house till he came."

"But that promise was forced from you; you could not say anything else. You must come."

She shook her head. "I cannot," she reiterated stubbornly. "I gave my word." And she seated herself in her chair.

Had he not loved her so well—aye, and in his heart of hearts admired her for what she did, knowing what it would mean—he could have raged at her. But the sight of her despair, of her agony, filled him full of great tenderness and pity. And, putting his arms about her, he kissed her fondly, murmuring that he loved her, that he was proud of her, and that he would stay with her, and, if need be, die with her.

At this she rose in horror. "No, no!" she cried. "You must go at once!"

But he shook his head. "No, my love, I stay with you!" he said; and, kneeling beside her, silenced her with kisses.

So, her head on his shoulder, De Caen went over in his mind what she had told him, wondering if there was yet a way of escape. But, look at it as he would, he could see none. If his betrothed would not leave the house, there was an end to it, for he could not use force. If he did she might hate him ever after.

No, he was convinced there was no way, and so he would wait until the king came. Until the king came! That started a fresh train of thought, and gradually from that train of thought grew an idea. He rose quickly, his eyes keen and bright, his breath coming fast. Mademoiselle looked up at him, rose, and put a hand on his arm.

"What is it?" she whispered.

He laughed, a great, exultant laugh, and caught her in his arms. "*Pardieu,* I have it!" he cried. "I have it, my love! You shall yet go free. Why did I not think of it before? You said the king would come at eight o'clock, did you not? Yes! And the time is now what?"

"I do not know," she answered, "I will find out." And, infected by his excitement, she slipped hurriedly from the room, to return in a moment. "It is close on six o'clock," she said.

"Six o'clock? Phew, then I have only two hours! Why did I not think of it before? Listen!" And, drawing her to him, he spoke for some minutes in a low, earnest voice.

Mademoiselle listened dumfounded, at first plainly incredulous, for it was a daring plan, but as he continued a flush of excitement came to her cheeks. "Oh, if you might only succeed!" she exclaimed.

"We will succeed!" he cried. "But I have not too much time; little enough, in fact. I must go at once and see the others. You are sure you understand?"

She nodded.

"Good!" he said. "Then I and two or three others will be here at about a quarter to eight. Have a servant you can trust awaiting us. If we are not here before the king, delay him as much as possible. If he is with you when we arrive, I will let you know of our arrival by coughing outside your door. That is all, I think. And now, my sweet"—he drew her to him, and kissed her tenderly—"God guard you!"

Then he went swiftly from the room, up the stairs, and so to the trapdoor in the roof. In a minute or so he was out on the tiles and making in the direc-

tion of his own house. And below, in her room, mademoiselle knelt by her chair, following him in her mind from roof to roof, and prayed for his success.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR ONE IN TEN THOUSAND.

THE rain had stopped when De Caen climbed out on the tiles, but the wind was still blowing hard. But, filled with exultation as he was, he cared little for that now, and he moved quickly along the roofs till presently, without mishap, he arrived at the trapdoor in his own roof. As he lowered himself into the dusty garret a clock somewhere near struck the hour of six.

Though he was sodden through and dirty, he did not stop to change his clothing, but hurried below and found De Lembrat and De Moins still awaiting him. They sprang up on his entrance.

"Ah," cried De Moins, "I am glad to see you again, De Caen. I was beginning to get nervous. What news?"

He laughed joyously, and, putting his hand in his doublet, produced the documents given him by his betrothed.

"Look you, my friends!" he cried, and passed them to De Moins. "You have no cause for alarm now." And rapidly he told them all he knew. "There is a woman for you," he said, "a woman in ten thousand!"

The others exclaimed in delight when they had read the documents. "And she had them in her dress when Louis was with her?" said De Moins. "My faith, as you say, a woman in ten thousand. But what a predicament! We have to thank her for much. If we could only help her in return!"

"We can," cried De Caen; "more, we will!"

"How so?" questioned De Moins.

De Caen laughed. "No less, my friends, than by getting her father out of the Bastille." He watched their faces as he spoke, and, if he had expected to surprise them, he was not disappointed.

They stared at him in bewilderment. "Out of the Bastille?" repeated De Lembrat. And said De Moins: "Man, man, that is impossible! You are mad!"

He smiled. "From your point of view it would seem so," he said, "and in the majority of cases—in all, in fact, save this one—I, myself, should say it was impossible. But if you will listen to me, I think you will grant that we might, that we can, given good luck, get De Chanfreau out."

He stole softly to the door and listened intently a moment, then moved across to them, and in a low voice expounded that which he had expounded to Mademoiselle de Chanfreau. They, as she had done, listened at first in dumfounded amazement, and looked at him as if they thought him mad, but as he went on their faces changed, and in place of amazement and incredulity came surprise, and hope, and, when he had finished, belief.

He, watching them keenly, smiled in satisfaction. "Well, what say you?" he asked. "Can it be done?"

For some seconds neither spoke, then at last De Moins smote the table. "It is possible!" he cried. "I could not have thought it."

"Nor I," exclaimed De Lembrat excitedly. "But it can be done, and, by Heaven, it shall be done!"

"Ha, good!" said De Caen, drawing a deep breath. He thought a while, then: "It is after six now, so we have not too much time. I propose that we separate, visit every tavern where we are likely to find the others—we shall need fully a score in addition to ourselves—and tell them to be here at a quarter past seven, not a second later. And I will also send my servants to their houses with the same message, chance they should be at home. And it would be

as well if they all brought masks to prevent their being recognized. That, I think, is the best plan."

"Quite the best," said De Lembrat.

"I can think of nothing better," added De Moins, and so they decided.

De Moins and De Lembrat left at once, and De Caen, calling up four of his most trusted retainers, gave them explicit instructions and saw them away. Then, after cleansing himself of the grime of the roofs, he wrapped about him a heavy cloak that fell to his feet, and followed them quickly.

They did well what they set out to do, so that at about a quarter past seven a score and three gentlemen were gathered together in the dining hall of De Caen's house, asking each other what this meant, what was the trouble.

De Caen, when he was satisfied no more would come, stood forward and put up his hand for silence.

"Gentlemen," he said, "we have some work to do to-night that should appeal to you. You know, or most of you know, that De Chanfreau was arrested this afternoon—but no more, I fancy. Let me, then, tell you——" He told them then of his visit to his betrothed, and all she had said to him. "The matter stands thus now," he went on; "I have the documents that De Chanfreau left with mademoiselle. King Louis to-night at eight o'clock will visit her, and demand those documents. If she will not give them up—and that, of course, she cannot do—she will be imprisoned, and both she and her father tortured till they give the names and information contained in the documents."

He paused as an angry murmur ran through the room, then continued: "Such, you will agree, must not be, both for your own sakes, as most of your names, if not all, are contained in the documents, and for the sake of Mademoiselle de Chanfreau."

He smiled as cries of "No, no!" resounded through the room, then again went on: "I have a plan, therefore, to checkmate King Louis, a plan which means the saving of Mademoiselle de Chanfreau, and, further, the release of her father from the Bastille. Two of you, De Moins and De Lembrat, have heard the plan, and pronounce it a good one. You all shall hear it." And for the third time that evening he rapidly expounded his ideas, then waited for their comments.

"*Pardieu,* nothing could be better!" cried one, and "Good, good!" cried another. All, it seemed, were willing, and De Caen again lifted his hand for silence.

"I see you all agree, gentlemen," he said. "Now, as time is short, please pay attention." To them all he assigned their parts. Picking out three who were of about the same height and figure as himself, he drew them aside. "We, my friends," he said, "if you dare risk it, go by the roofs. It is not as dangerous as you would think. Do you agree?"

They assented, and, leaving De Moins and De Lembrat to give any further details required, De Caen and the three he had chosen passed from the room.

CHAPTER V.

SPOKEN ASIDE.

AT about half past seven Tristan l'Hermit entered the Palais des Tournelles and was instantly conducted to the king's chamber. Louis, that most hated of kings, greeted him cheerfully, and, after glancing at the clock, bade him be seated.

"You are in good time, gossip," he said. "I presume you have not heard if mademoiselle has attempted to leave the house?"

The hangman shook his head. "I have heard nothing, sire," he answered, "but she would not be able to do so if she attempted it. As you know, I left two men on guard at both doors."

Louis nodded, and rubbed his hands together complacently. "We hold all the trumps this time," he said. "The game is ours, for certain. I have no fears she will not give up the documents. She loves her father, and will do so rather than let him die. There shall be a heavy reckoning! Your henchmen, gossip, will be busy." And he grinned sardonically. Tristan did not answer. The king also remained silent a while. Then he spoke again.

"My only fear is that others concerned in the affair will have heard of De Chanfreau's arrest, and will have left Paris before we get possession of the documents. But we will pray not. And even so they will be out of the way, and we shall not be troubled by them again, for they will not dare to return." He gave vent to a low, well-satisfied laugh. "It is not often we are so lucky," he added.

The other laughed harshly. "Luck, indeed, does seem to be on our side," he returned. "But she is a fickle jade, and has a habit of changing sides and going over to the enemy when least expected."

Louis frowned. "Pah," he exclaimed, "you were ever a bird of ill omen, gossip! Look on the bright side of things, man! If I had your mind I should not long be King of France." He glanced again at the clock. "You have given instructions for the guards to be in readiness?" he asked.

"A dozen are awaiting us at the gates," the hangman answered.

"Half that number will be sufficient," Louis said, with a laugh. "There is no danger, and we don't want to create a commotion in the streets. Luckily, it is dark. You may dismiss six to their quarters, then wait for me without."

He slipped into his dressing room while Tristan passed out of the palace into the courtyard. Dismissing half the guards, he returned and encountered another of the king's intimates, Oliver le Daim, his barber.

"Ha!" he exclaimed. "The one man I wanted to see! I have work for you." Drawing him aside, he spoke for some time in a low voice.

When he had finished, the barber nodded. "Better to be on the safe side," he said; "one of these days he will find more than he bargained for. Here he is."

As he spoke, Louis came down the steps. "Ready, Tristan?" he said.

The hangman stepped forward, whispering to Oliver as he did so: "Remember, about nine o'clock."

A minute or two later the king, and Tristan, and the half dozen guards were in the street, and walking swiftly in the direction of the Rue St. Antoine.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE HOUR.

AT precisely the same time as the king and his hangman left the Palais des Tournelles, Simon, a servant of the Comte de Chanfreau, was admitting through the trapdoor in the roof four masked gentlemen. He bowed and requested them to follow him, and, leading the way below, he knocked at mademoiselle's door, and ushered them into the room, then retired.

Mademoiselle, pacing agitatedly to and fro, turned with a delighted cry, "Philibert!" and, as De Caen stepped forward, flung herself into his arms. "I feared—oh, I feared," she murmured, "that you would be late, that you would not get here before the king!"

"We are here, my sweet," he whispered, "and it will not be our fault if in an hour's time M. le Comte is not a free man. I have all prepared." Then, motioning to his companions, "These gentlemen you do not know, I think," he said aloud. "Permit me to introduce them. M. de Marrillac, M. de Pibrac, M. de Vexille."

She bowed. "It is good of you, *messires,*" she said, "to venture so much for my sake and my father's. I cannot thank you sufficiently."

"'Tis we should thank you, mademoiselle," returned one. "We are honored to be of service to you." And they bowed low.

She turned to her lover. "What am I to do?" she asked.

"Very little," he answered, "When you hear three whistles in quick succession from below, call to us, and we will be with you immediately. You will have naught to——" He lifted his hand suddenly, and bent his head in a listening attitude. "What is that?" he exclaimed.

She stepped quickly to the window, and, drawing the curtain aside, put out her head, and looked up the street. The rattle of arms greeted her ears, and a hundred yards distant was a small body of men—one carrying a lighted lanthorn—coming toward the house. She stepped back into the room, her face, by the light of the hanging lamp, ashen white.

"It is the king!" she gasped.

De Caen moved to the door. "He is early," he said. "We must go. Where?"

"The next room on the right," she replied. "It is in darkness. You will be safe there."

He nodded. "Delay him as much as possible," he said, in a low voice. "And courage, my dear, courage. You will come to no hurt." He gave her a reassuring smile, and the next instant they had passed from the room.

Mademoiselle, trembling violently, drew a deep breath, and looked around the room with a hunted expression on her face. Her courage, now that it was needed most, almost failed her. But, remembering how much depended on the venture, she forced back the terror that would have filled her mind, and, moving across to the window, listened intently

King Louis, and Tristan, and the guards advanced quickly, and presently arrived at the house. The two men left by Tristan were standing without the door. Louis questioned them abruptly.

"Has Mademoiselle de Chanfreau, or any of the servants, attempted to leave the house?"

They answered in the negative. "But, sire," said one, "two men sought admittance—one, who said he was a servant of the house; the other, the Vicomte de Caen. I know him by sight. He offered us ten crowns to let him pass."

"Ah, the Vicomte de Caen?" Louis exclaimed; and mademoiselle's heart stood still. "Remember that, Tristan. I'll warrant we shall find his name in the documents." Then, to one of the men: "Fetch the men from the back!"

The man passed through the house, and shortly returned with the other two guards. Louis put the same question to them, and they, too, replied in the negative, but said two men had sought admittance.

Louis nodded. "The Vicomte de Caen, eh? We must remember that, Tristan," he said. Then, turning to the guards: "You will remain here, and admit no one. Should we need you, Master l'Hermit will call you from that window." He pointed out the window of mademoiselle's room. "And should he call, you will come at once. You understand?"

The men saluted, and Louis and Tristan entered the house. A serving man was standing within, and at a word from the king conducted them to the room where mademoiselle was awaiting them.

She rose, deathly pale, on their entrance, and bowed. "You are early, sire," she said. "It is not yet eight o'clock."

Louis laughed. "A few minutes either way can make no difference, mademoiselle," he replied. "You have had

well-nigh five hours to decide in. Yet if you insist——"

"I do!" she returned firmly. "Eight o'clock you said you would come, and at eight o'clock I will give you my decision."

He looked at her with suspicion, but she met his gaze without flinching. "What do you hope to gain by this, mademoiselle?" he questioned. "What good does it do delaying giving me your decision? It only wastes my time, and causes you the more pain. I trust—— Ah!"

He checked himself, and stood listening. To them came the sound of a clock striking the hour. Mademoiselle gave a gasp of dismay.

Louis grinned sardonically. "It is the hour, mademoiselle," he said. "Now, at once, since you are so strict on the point, your decision, please! I trust it is a sensible one."

She stared at him a moment, then sank into her chair. Her lover's words rang in her ears: "Delay him." She roused herself.

"Have you no pity?" she cried.

He frowned darkly. "No, mademoiselle!" he said harshly. "In such affairs as this I have no pity. Am I to let all men conspire against me and France, and forgive them when their womenfolk ask it? Think you I would long be king if I did? No, mademoiselle; I repeat, I have no pity, in this, at any rate."

She flung out her hands. "Do you think of what the world would say of me if I betrayed the score of gentlemen whose names are mentioned in the documents? I should be shunned by all. Do you think of my thoughts, of my dreams? I should be haunted always. Always I should see their dead faces gibbering at me. Sire, you ask too much!"

Louis' small eyes glittered malevolently. "Am I to consider you before myself and France, mademoiselle? And what of your father's dead face? Would you not see it gibbering at you always, also? Think of that."

She bowed her head, and covered her face with her hands. Thus she sat a while, to all seeming sunk in the very depths of despair. Oh, why did not the three whistles come? Delay him! Delay him! She sat up presently and looked into his face.

"How do I know," she said, "that you will release and pardon my father if I give up the documents?"

"You have my word, mademoiselle," he replied.

"Your word?" She repeated the words in a voice fraught with scorn and distrust. "Your word, sire? I must have more than that."

Louis bit his lips. "You go too far, woman!" he cried. "I will not be spoken to thus by you or——" He broke off with a laugh; then, after a pause: "What would you have, mademoiselle?"

She rose. "Promises can easily be broken, and oaths repudiated," she answered. "But you can convince me of your good faith by writing out his pardon here and now, and giving it into my hands. Oh"—as he gave her a quick, suspicious glance—"have no fears; I am but a woman, while you are two men, and have others at hand."

The king frowned, and glanced at Tristan, who nodded. "I see no harm in it," he said, with a grim laugh. "Mademoiselle, as she intimates, is at our mercy."

Louis glanced at her questioningly. "You shall have your way, mademoiselle," he said. "Give me parchment and ink quickly, please; I have been here long enough as it is."

She turned and crossed to the table, her eyes glowing with triumph, producing parchment, quill, and ink. "They are here, sire," she said, and put a chair to the table.

After a moment's hesitation, he seat-

ed himself, and, taking up the quill, dipped it in the ink. He thought a while, then began to write in a thin, crabbed hand:

"M. le Marquis de Belesbat, governor of the Bastille, is hereby commanded to release M. le Comte de Chanfreau, who, in return for services rendered us by Mademoiselle de Chanfreau, his daughter, is pardoned for all offenses against us and France."

He signed and dated it, then rose, and handed it to mademoiselle. "This will perhaps convince you of my good faith," he said. She took it with trembling fingers and read it through. He watched her intently. "Is it enough?" he questioned.

"It is enough," she answered, and, folding it, put it in her bosom.

"Then I will trouble you for the documents," he said, and held out his hand.

She laughed. "You are strangely eager, sire," she said.

"I admit it," he returned testily. "The documents, please."

She laughed again mockingly. "What if I say——" she began, and broke off as a sound from below reached them. A cry of alarm, the sound of a scuffle, the rattle of armor, and the ring of steel, and a half-choked scream. Louis started in alarm.

"What is that?" he cried.

Tristan sprang to the window, and, tearing aside the curtain, craned out his head. Louis, pale with fright, joined him. Neither saw the strained look that came into mademoiselle's eyes; neither saw her sidle nearer the door, and, doing so, put her hand to her bosom. Their eyes were intent on a swaying group at the door below. The guards in their armor surrounded—they saw plainly by the light streaming from the open doorway—by a ring of men in masks, who, two to their one, with swords and daggers drawn, were forcing them into the house.

Louis fell back. "A trap! A trap!"

He wheeled and started toward the door, only to fall back again, with an inarticulate cry of fear and rage. Mademoiselle, her eyes flashing, a poniard in her hand, stood with her back to the door.

"Tristan!" The king's voice rose in a shriek, and he cowered against the wall.

The hangman turned swiftly, and instantly his hand dropped on his sword hilt. He sprang forward.

"Stand aside!" he cried, and flashed out the blade.

Mademoiselle stood her ground. "You shall not pass!" she cried; then, as he advanced his weapon, "Philibert, Philibert!" and flung the dagger in his face.

CHAPTER VII.

LESE MAJESTY.

THE cry had not died away before the door was flung open, hurling mademoiselle aside, and De Caen and his three companions sprang into the room, naked swords in their hands. Louis almost collapsed, and Tristan's hand fell and his chin dropped. De Caen stepped forward.

"You are my prisoners," he said. "Master l'Hermit, be good enough to drop your sword, and other weapons. Sire, I fear I must relieve you of your dagger." And he suited the word to the deed.

Tristan, with an oath and an ugly scowl, flung his weapons at their feet. "You will regret this," he muttered, "whoever you might be!"

De Caen laughed. "I think not," he said. "You do not know us, Master Hangman, and if you did you should not live to tell the tale." He turned to his betrothed. "I was listening, but did not hear the signal," he said. "What has happened?"

"They were watching through the window, and saw the others attack the

guards," she answered. "I should not have called, but they tried to get out."

"Ah, then I must go below and see how they are faring," he said. He turned to the others. "See to it they do not move," he ordered, then went swiftly out of the room and down the stairs. At the foot he came to a stop.

The retainers and servants of the house were huddled together in the hall, watching the open doorway. Through it, as De Caen looked that way, came a guard with a man in a mask at either side of him, daggers drawn. Following them came three others, and yet another, and another three, till the hall was crowded. De Caen's eyes gleamed with satisfaction, and he addressed one of the masks.

"You have them all?" he questioned.

The mask nodded. "All," he answered, "and without much trouble. We took them absolutely by surprise, and, luckily, their weapons were stacked in the doorway. One of them we had to kill. We have been fortunate."

"Excellent!" De Caen exclaimed, then turned to the servants and retainers. "Go to your quarters," he commanded, "all save Simon; him I want." He called the latter to him as the others dispersed. "Where can we put these men?" he asked.

After a moment's thought, Simon turned, and led the way to the back of the house, and into a large room bare of furniture, but on whose walls hung every kind of weapon, and in whose corners stood suits of armor.

"This room will be best, my lord," he said.

"It will do admirably," said De Caen, then turned to the others. "You know what you have to do. Bind them hand and foot, and gag them, then six of you put on their armor. I must go now to the king. We have him safe." He passed quickly out of the room, and a moment later was in that of his betrothed.

Louis was seated in a chair, his face deathly pale, looking furtively about the room. Tristan stood near him, an ugly scowl on his face. Both fixed their eyes on De Caen when he entered.

He stood watching them a while, an amused smile on his face. Louis rose, and stretched out a shaking hand. "You —you villain!" he shrieked. "What is the meaning of this? You shall suffer for it, as sure as I am King of France!"

De Caen frowned. "Softly, sire," he said. "You, who threatened a woman with torture, would do well to remember you are not now in a position to threaten. If I spoke the word, you would not leave this room alive. And such, *pardieu,* you do not deserve to do!"

Louis quailed in his chair. De Caen eyed him with a scornful smile. "Oh, do not be alarmed," he said, "you shall go free and unharmed, but we want our price."

"Ah!" Louis bent forward eagerly. "And the price?"

"An order for the release of the Comte de Chanfreau," De Caen answered. "Not a big price surely."

Mademoiselle drew out the order given her a short time back. "I have it!" she said, and passed it to him.

He took it, and read it through, his face showing his amazement. "How did you get this?" he gasped.

Quickly she told him. He broke into a roar of laughter, and turned to Louis. "By Heaven, sire," he cried, "you have been fooled nicely! The documents you were so anxious to obtain have been in my possession over two hours."

Louis turned a baleful look on mademoiselle. "But," he gasped, "mademoiselle has not left the house."

De Caen laughed again. "That does not mean that no one has entered the house, sire," he said. "I entered it, shortly after you left, by the roof."

Louis started forward. "Then you,

I dare swear it—you are the Vicomte de Caen. You tried to get in by the doors, but could not, so you came by the roof. I shall not forget you, M. le Vicomte."

De Caen took off his mask. "That complicates matters a little," he said; "but no, I have a further request to make. I shall be pleased to have a passport out of Paris, made out in the names of M. le Comte and Mademoiselle de Chanfreau, and servant. I shall be the servant, sire. Give me that, and you shall go unharmed. Refuse—but I do not think you will refuse."

Louis glared at him in speechless wrath, his mouth opening and closing. De Caen shrugged his shoulders, and pointed to the table. "Parchment and ink are there, sire," he added. "I shall be glad if you will write it out at once. Otherwise——" He fingered his dagger significantly.

Tristan bent to the king, and whispered in his ear. Louis looked at him quickly; then: "No, no," he cried, "I will not write it."

"What?" De Caen, his chin thrust out, stepped toward him. "You will not write it?" he said, "will not?" and laughed harshly. "Ah, but I think you will!" He caught Louis by the shoulder, and dragged him to the table. "Write!" he said, and put his dagger to the king's neck.

Louis gave a scream of terror, and snatched up the pen. "I will write it," he cried, and, seating himself, did what was required of him.

De Caen picked it up and read it over. "I thank your majesty," he said; "that is all I want of you. And now I must trouble you and Master l'Hermit to accompany me below. Mademoiselle"—he looked at her with a smile—"will you please dress yourself for riding? Come, sire!" And he led the way downstairs.

A minute later they were in the room in which the guards lay bound hand and foot, looking like so many trussed fowls. The dead man lay in a corner, a cloth over his face. Six of the masks were wearing armor. One and all bowed when Louis entered.

De Caen turned to him. "I regret, sire," he said, "we shall have to treat you as we have treated your guards, but we must do it for safety's sake. However, you shall not be quite so uncomfortable. Bring chairs, please," he ordered the others, "and bind the king and Master l'Hermit to them. No, sire"—as Louis opened his mouth to speak—"your protesting will not avail; it must be done." He waited until they were tied up, then: "If all goes well with us you should be free in two hours; if not, and we fail through any arrangements you have made, I fear you will not live to tell the tale of to-night's happenings. These gentlemen"—he indicated those not wearing armor—"will stay with you until they have received word that we are safe out of Paris. If they do not receive word—well, as I have said, you will not live to tell the tale."

He addressed those who were to stay with the prisoners. "Gentlemen, you know your part," he said. "You will remain here till you receive a message to the effect that we have succeeded in our enterprise. You should know in an hour, or an hour and a half at the outside. If by the end of two hours you have not heard, you will know what to do." He touched his dagger, then turned to the door. "Good night, sire!" he said mockingly, then passed out of the room, followed by the men in armor, and the three who had assisted in the taking of Louis and Tristan.

CHAPTER VIII.

AGAINST TIME.

DRESSED for riding, Mademoiselle de Chanfreau was awaiting them in the hall. De Caen drew her to him tenderly.

"The last stage now, my sweet," he said. "Are you ready?"

She assented, and he stepped to the door and looked out. It had cleared, but it was still pitch-dark.

"The darker the better," he said; "it is to our advantage." He offered mademoiselle his arm, and a minute later they were in the street and walking rapidly in the direction of the Bastille, the men in armor half a score yards at their backs.

A quarter of an hour's sharp walk brought them, without adventure or mishap of any kind, within a hundred yards of the main entrance of the Bastille. The night guards were gathered around the watch fires at the gates, some nodding with sleep, others wide awake, and talking among themselves. De Caen and his companions came to a stop in the shadow of a wall, and waited till the men in armor came up with them. In a low voice he addressed them.

"Now, my friends, comes your part. Present this to the captain of the guard" —he produced the order of release written by Louis—"and say it is the king's command that M. le Comte be released to-night. You must, of course, remove your masks, but keep your faces as much in shadow as possible, lest you be recognized. A bold front and ready speech will carry you through." He handed the order to one of them. "You, De Morney, take this; you are as ready of speech as any man I know. And now go. We will await you here."

The men removed their masks; then, forming into twos, marched forward till they came up with the guards, who, all wide awake now, challenged them.

De Morney produced the order of release. "The captain of the guard?" he queried; then, as one of them stepped forward: "If you will read this, Monsieur le Capitaine, you will see it is an order for the release of one of your prisoners, Monsieur le Comte de Chanfreau. It is the king's command that he be released instantly. We have to conduct him elsewhere."

The captain took the parchment and read it through. "Why," he said, "Monsieur de Chanfreau was only arrested this afternoon. This is quick work. But it seems in order. Wait here."

He left them, and stepped to the gates and spoke a single word: "Valois!" A wicket opened, and, when he had passed through, closed again immediately. A second later the hollow sound of his footsteps on the drawbridge broke the silence of the night.

De Morney listened a moment, then gave a sigh of relief. So far all was well, and, if no awkward questions were asked, success was certain. He turned to the guards and engaged them in conversation, yet kept his ears open. The minutes dragged on, five, ten, fifteen; then at last the welcome sound of footsteps on the drawbridge again fell on their ears. He listened intently. The footsteps were of more than one; yes, two. He drew himself erect.

"This is our man, I think," he said.

"It sounds like it," one of the guards answered, and they turned their eyes on the gates. The footsteps came nearer, the password was given, the wicket opened, and the captain of the guard stepped out accompanied by another man—De Morney recognized him at a glance—De Chanfreau.

The officer motioned to De Morney and his companions. "You are free, Monsieur le Comte," he said. "But these men have somewhere to conduct you; where, they will no doubt tell you. I congratulate you on your short stay; it is not often our guests are so fortunate. Good night!"

"Good night," De Chanfreau returned, then joined De Morney. "I am at your service, *messire*," he said.

The six formed round him. "This way, Monsieur le Comte," De Morney

said in a harsh, forced voice. "March!" And, bidding the guards good night, they strode away into the darkness.

Fifty yards from the Bastille, De Morney could contain himself no longer. He looked at De Chanfreau, and laughed delightedly. "De Chanfreau," he said, "you do not know us?"

De Chanfreau started and peered into his face. "Gracious Heaven!" he exclaimed, "I know that voice! Who is it? Why, De Morney! What does this mean?"

"It means, my friend, among other things, that you are free, for which you have to thank De Caen. Mademoiselle de Chanfreau and he are awaiting us here."

They came up, as he spoke, with the others. De Chanfreau sprang forward. "Clotilde!" he cried, and clasped her in his arms, then turned to De Caen, and gripped his hand. "My faith," he exclaimed, "how have you managed it? Is it real, or am I dreaming?"

De Caen laughed. "It is real enough," he said. "How we managed it you shall learn later, when we are safe out of Paris. Now we must hurry."

The next instant they were speeding through the streets. At the Pomme d'Or in the Rue du Guesclin they came to a stop. De Caen gave three knocks on the door.

Immediately it was opened, and a man stepped out. "The horses?" said De Caen. "We want three quickly."

"Two are ready, my lord," the man replied, "and the third will be shortly." He vanished into the inn, and a few minutes later the horses were led round to the front, and mademoiselle, De Caen, and De Chanfreau mounted, and once more the journey began.

Quickly they passed through the streets, encountering scarcely a soul, and were within ten minutes of the gates when De Caen suddenly lifted his hand. "Stop!" he cried.

They halted and listened. A sound reached their ears, which, as they waited, resolved itself into the footsteps of a single person running swiftly toward them. De Caen gave a sigh of relief.

"Only one," he said. "My faith, I think I am all nerves!" He gave the word to start again, and once more the horses were set in motion, and they passed on in the darkness.

But they had not traversed ten yards before a shrill whistle sounded behind them, and following the whistle came a cry: "Holà!"

"Ride on," said De Caen. "I will see what this is," and, drawing his sword, he checked his horse, and waited until the man came up to him. "What is it?" he cried.

The man clutched his rein. "De Caen!" he gasped. "Hurry, hurry, you have no time to lose! The king is free!"

De Caen gave a cry of dismay, recognizing in the man one of those he had left with Louis. *"Mon Dieu!"* he exclaimed, "what has happened?"

Quickly the newcomer explained. "After you had gone," he said, "we stationed Simon, De Chanfreau's servant, at the street door, and instructed him to warn us instantly if he saw or heard anything that might concern us. We got out our dice to pass the time, and played for half an hour without interruption; then, shortly after nine had struck, Simon came to us in a state of excitement, and said that a body of men had just entered the street. Instantly we were on the alert, and drew our daggers; but, as there was nothing we could do, we remained where we were and waited. Two minutes had not gone when they arrived at the house, and we heard a voice bid them halt. We knew then that there was trouble in store for us, and prepared for flight.

"The room, you will remember, was at the back of the house, with a single window looking into the courtyard, which itself opened into an alleyway. I told the others to place a stool under

the window, and be ready to go at a word, then went to the door and looked up the hall.

"The men—they were guards—were entering, and I saw their leader was Oliver le Daim, the king's barber. He saw me at the same time, and sprang forward, calling the others to follow. I darted back, and, fastening the door, gave the word, and one after another, Simon among us, we scrambled through the window and fled through the courtyard into the alleyway beyond. There was no pursuit, so we halted, and considered what to do.

"We knew you must be warned, but as we did not know by which gate you intended leaving, we separated, each making in a different direction. That is why I am alone. I would I had driven my dagger into Louis' heart before I left, though that would not have mended matters."

They came abreast of the others as he finished. Once more De Caen called a halt, and briefly told what had happened.

"Without doubt," he went on, "they will have sent guards to intercept us, but they cannot have arrived at the gates yet. Still, we must lose no time." He drew out the passport, and handed it to De Chanfreau. "You want this, Monsieur le Comte. It is a passport out of Paris. In presenting it, you can say you are riding on the king's business. And I, remember, am your servant. You——"

He stopped suddenly, as Mademoiselle Chanfreau gave a startled cry: "I can hear men running!"

They listened, and, sure enough, though as yet some distance away, the quick tramp of feet reached them. They looked at one another in dismay.

De Chanfreau gave a fierce cry. "I will not go back to the Bastille. After so much success we must not fail now. There is no reason why any of you should come to the gates. They can know nothing there yet, and if the passport is in order, they will not dare stop us. Come, Clotilde—come, De Caen."

He drove his heels into his horse's sides. "Good night," they cried, and rode on.

"Good night," and "God speed you," the others returned, and watched them out of sight; then, separating, they vanished into the darkness.

In a few minutes the fugitives drew up their horses at the gates. The guards walking their beats presented their halberds, and challenged them. "Halt! Who is that?"

"Call the captain of the watch," De Chanfreau answered, "my business is with him. I am the Comte de Chanfreau."

The man bowed, and mounting the steps to the guardroom in the tower, thundered on the door. Some little time elapsed before it was opened, and a voice inquired what was wanted, and every second the tramp of feet grew louder and drew nearer. The light from the lanthorn fixed on the wall showed mademoiselle's face deathly pale. De Caen put his hand on hers.

"Courage, my dear," he said, "we are not lost yet. Ah, here is the captain."

The latter came down the steps as he spoke. He looked them over keenly, then spoke. "You ride late," he said. "What is your business?"

"The king's, Monsieur le Capitaine," De Chanfreau answered curtly. "I have a passport," he handed it over. "I think you will find that in order. Please let us through at once. I am in a hurry."

The officer carried the passport to the lanthorn, and read it over.

"It is in order, Monsieur le Comte," he said. "Jean," to one of the sentries, "open, and—— What is that?"

He lifted his hand, and bent forward a little. The tramp of feet sounded much nearer, and mingled with it now was the rattle of armor and the ring of steel. De Chanfreau affected to listen.

"That?" he said nonchalantly, though a chill ran down his spine. "I should say it is the watch going their round."

The captain laughed. "Why, yes, of course," he agreed, 'it can be nothing else. Open, Jean, and let M. le Comte through."

Jean stepped forward and unlocked the bars. Removing them, he proceeded to open the gates, but they were not a foot apart when the men approaching rounded the corner, and instantly perceived what was happening.

"Stop them!" they cried, "in the king's name!" and dashed forward.

The officer's jaw dropped. "What is this?" he gasped, then whipped out his sword. "Stop!" he cried.

But De Chanfreau, catching his daughter's rein, drove his heels into his horse. It darted forward, mademoiselle's with it, and hurled the sentries aside.

The next instant, De Caen following, they were through the gates and riding swiftly along in the darkness. When the guards arrived at the gates there was nothing to be seen of them. Only the rapidly diminishing sound of hoofs reached their ears, and presently, borne on the wind, a mocking laugh.

When the Charm Failed

FIVE hundred snake charmers, sounding weird notes on their pipes, formed the unusual yet picturesque procession that followed to his grave Katch Sarak, a man of big renown in his business, who died in terrible agony as the result of a cobra bite received while practicing his profession in the neighborhood of Garden Reach, India.

"Guru," or god, he had become dubbed by the people among whom he lived, such was his influence over poisonous reptiles. His services were sought recently by a neighbor who had missed many fowls from his compound. Going at dusk one day, the snake charmer discovered a cobra of unusual size among the birds, so formidable, in fact, that he postponed his attempt to capture it until daylight, when he was successful in securing it.

Instead of dispatching the snake at once, he took it to the local bazaar for the edification of the natives. On attempting to extract its fangs, the cobra wriggled free and darted at its captor, who was bitten on three fingers. The "guru's" supposed godlike qualities proved of no avail. Consternation reigned among the crowd as he lay in awful agony, the news of his plight spread swiftly through the bazaar, and more than a hundred other snake charmers scurried to the scene; but all their efforts, all their devices, their earnest prayers were of no avail against the powerful poison. Within ninety minutes Katch Sarak was dead.

With great ceremonial, Katch Sarak's pipes, snake basket, earthenware jars, and the other impedimenta of his craft were borne before him to the cemetery, where he was laid to rest, amid the heart-rending wail of the pipes.

Too Literal

IT is not to be expected that a shop in a country town shall classify its merchandise after the fashion of a big department store, but it is possible to be too heterogeneous. The window of a shop in a suburb displayed grandfather clocks and old furniture with a sign: "All genuine antiques." In the center was a basket full of eggs for sale.

Mending Matters

AT an evening party a lady said to her partner: "Can you tell me who is that exceedingly plain young man sitting opposite?"

"That is my brother," was the reply.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said, in great confusion. "I did not notice the resemblance."

The Girl of the Rails

By Dennis H. Stovall

ANNA NORRIS parted the scrim curtains to look out of her house on wheels. A passenger train had halted near by. It was No. 13, the Shasta Limited, with the general manager's private car at its tail. Through the big plate-glass windows, the girl had a glimpse of the rich, mahogany-finished interior of the magnate's rolling home. The general manager himself, gray-haired, heavy-cheeked, a man whose face was liberally lined with the marks of responsibility, sat at a massive desk, deeply engrossed in the business of the road. Close at his right hand, a younger man sat, transmitting by letter and telegram the orders of the chief.

It was this younger man who attracted the attention of the girl. She had heard of him—heard that he was the general manager's son, in direct line for promotion to the exalted place his father held. Anna Norris noted his fine-cut, clean-shaven face, and the black, straight hair, parted with exacting nicety. She observed him closely until the train moved on its way; but he did not look up.

On the rear step of the opened vestibule a brakeman stood, the shining buttons of his uniform in keeping with the polished brass handrail of the palace car. He raised his head, and saw the girl in the window.

Anna had seen him many times before, and had often felt the gaze of his calm gray eyes. She had singled him from all the other brakemen she knew, for the reason that he did not throw kisses at her, or call her sweetheart. This time, as before, he lifted his cap like a gentleman. For the first time a pink glow came to Anna's cheek and she smiled her acknowledgment.

When she turned from the window, and caught her reflection in the little mirror over the washstand, she was blushing furiously. Anyway, she told herself, he was a different kind of brakeman.

The thing that puzzled her most was why the general manager's son did not look up, did not give her a single glance. She had not expected it, and would not have sought such a recognition, even from him; yet the girl failed to understand why conductors, engineers, and brakemen waved their hands, and news agents tossed her peaches, while the "big men" of the line gave her no heed.

With a sigh, she turned to her work for the day. One end of the car was a kitchenette, with a little, round dining table that had its legs screwed to the floor. The middle portion of the car served as a living room. It had a rose-figured rug on the floor, pictures on the wall, and two plush-covered reclining chairs that had been saved from a wrecked day coach. Pocket shelves held a number of much-prized books. Here, too, was a pine desk, with many cubby-holes, that served originally in the conductor's corner of a caboose. At this desk Anna was seated, and now she began work on her father's report sheets.

Her father, Tom Norris, the construction boss, was a big-fisted railroader. He took due pride in the fact that he had climbed all the way from section hand to bridge foreman. He could build or reconstruct a bridge blindfolded, but his reports, prepared at an extreme cost of sweat and worry,

proved a torment to the clerks of the construction department. This task, therefore, in due time, had fallen upon his daughter, and the way of the boss had grown easier.

The girl had lived all her life on the road. Her first cries, emitted in the red-painted section house close to the main line, had been drowned in the roar of passing trains: a confused din which had smothered the cries of pain and anguish in the passing of a wife and mother. Big Tom Norris, with the helpless baby girl in his arms, had then faced the somber future with the same grim purpose that had won for him the name of "Sledge Hammer Tom." With the willing help of section men's wives, the infant had been cared for. The babe had become a girl, and the girl a young woman, possessing a charm and grace all her own. Ever since her birth, she had been the supreme joy and pride of Sledge Hammer Tom. He had contrived to send her to school, and from her mother she had inherited a genuine love of learning and of books. From the very first, she had declared that she was going to be a "lady," a "fine lady, like the wife of the chief."

On that morning, as for many days, Anna labored industriously over her father's reports. It had always been a task cheerfully done, yet now, as never before, a yearning came into her heart, a desire that well-nigh brought despair. She wondered if life must always mean just this drudgery, if she must always be kept a prisoner in a little house on wheels. She had never known the real freedom of a child. Always there had been a fence around her to keep her safe. She had never known a yard in which to play. Sometimes she would go to sleep on an isolated sidetrack far up in the mountains; when she woke in the morning, the reddish-brown car, with the scrim-curtained windows, would be wedged in among hundreds of other cars in the crowded railroad yards of a metropolis. And there, too, was isolation. She wanted to be free, to have companions and friends for whom she could really care.

Late in the afternoon, the creaking hand cars rolled in with the construction crew. Anna prepared the simple evening meal for her father and herself. Big Tom lumbered in like a hungry bear, seeming to fill half the car with his muscular bulk. He gave her an affectionate hug, and laid a crumpled bunch of pencil-scrawled sheets on the desk, from which the girl would make the reports next day.

During the meal, a freight train pulled into the siding, and the locomotive, breathing like a tired steed, paused near the car. Anna got up to get her father a second cup of coffee. As she passed the open door, she saw the engineer of the freight lean from his cab window, not ten feet away. He was a stalwart young fellow, handsome of face, with his cap tilted back, and a pair of motor goggles on his forehead. When he saw the girl, he spoke up cheerily:

"Hello, little one! Won't you take a ride with me?"

Anna gave no heed, and Big Tom, having heard, slid from his place and stamped to the door. The engineer was given a look that well-nigh froze him to his seat.

"Another break from you, an' I'll knock off your block!" the boss warned, with a shake of his sledge-hammer fist. Then he turned to the table, as the train moved away. "These fresh young bullheads make me sick!" he continued, over his beef and beans. "Just because they get the eagle eye, they imagine they run the earth!"

"I can see but little difference between them and the conductors," the girl said, in a tone of vexation. "They are all 'fresh,' dad—sometimes—but they mean no harm. Most of them are

a kind-hearted crowd. They don't mean to be rude."

"Probably not," her father acquiesced. "They all get gay when there's a pretty woman around. Don't take mush from any of 'em, Ann." He munched on a while, and finally added: "I said they're all alike, but I was wrong. For instance, there's Ned Francis, the G. M.'s son—works as hard as a section hand—but a gentleman always. Now, if *he* ever looks at you, Ann, don't get scared or back off, for he's the real goods, that fellow, and he's goin' to be the big gun on the job when the old man cashes in."

To this unusually long speech from her father Anna made no comment, but she recalled the glimpse she had that morning of the general manager's palace car. If that dark-haired young man should ever—— No, it was impossible, absurd, a foolish daydream! Remote, indeed, seemed the likelihood of her ever "getting scared" or "backing off" from that well-groomed young gentleman who held a place at the chief's right hand.

Tom Norris finished his supper with no further word, and went out. Anna knew he would spend the evening, with others of his kind, in the nearest "railroaders' rest." The girl lighted the kerosene bracket lamps, cleared the table, and washed the dishes. This done, she made ready to spend a couple of hours with her books and magazines. These were her most faithful companions, and in supplying them, be it said, Tom Norris was always liberal.

Somehow, even these friends failed to interest her. The restlessness and uneasiness that had been growing upon her since morning now took complete possession. She went to the door and peered out.

The air of the warm summer evening was fetid with its smell of burning oil. Over by the roundhouse, hostlers' torches glowed and moved like fireflies through the dark. In a distant corner of the yards, a switch engine coughed hysterically. Just then a freight train roared up, puffing clouds of black smoke; it halted, and backed into a siding. Close behind it came No. 14, with its long line of glowing windows. This was the Shasta Limited, on its return trip south.

Ordinarily, Anna Norris would have paid no attention to the passing trains. But to-night, more than ever before, they seemed a big part of her life. She observed the well-dressed passengers of the limited, lounging in luxury, with white-jacketed porters moving obediently to and fro. She noted that the same crew that were with the train in the morning now brought it back. At the rear, likewise, followed the big palace car of the general manager. This car was dark, save for a single light that burned over the massive desk. But the gray-haired chief was not in his place. She would have believed the car deserted had she not observed a man standing in the half darkness of the forward vestibule. He was whistling and humming to himself.

As the girl stood in the door, she was filled with wonderment at seeing the young man, cane in hand, step from the private car when the train halted, and come toward her. Her wonderment increased to astonishment when she found him to be the one whose place was at the right hand of the chief; for he was looking at her!

"There you are!" he exclaimed glibly. "Say, you sure are a pretty picture, with those lights behind you! Too bad you can't be set in a better frame."

The girl was unable to reply. Could this be the general manager's son? Was this man the one who had never deigned to raise his head to her before? With the same feeling of repulsion that came upon her when, in jest, the young engineer flung his invitation from the cab,

she drew back and took hold of the door.

"Now don't shut me out!" he begged. "I'm lonesome—don't you see I am? And I've got a whole hour to spend here. There's a wreck ahead." Drawing nearer, he poked his head through one window. "My! What a pretty nest!" he exclaimed, looking around. "And the little bird is all alone."

Turning, he raised a foot to the iron ladder at the door, as if to climb into the car.

"You'd better stop!" said the girl, her natural instinct for protection flaming up. On two occasions she had beaten back, with her bare fists, uninvited guests who dared attempt to enter her door. Her fist was clenched now, her black eyes blazed.

Yet even then she recalled what her father had said only a little while before: "If he ever looks at you, don't get scared or back off, for he's the real goods!" However, she scorned this paternal advice now; in her anger at the intrusion, she flung it to the winds.

"Why do you want to come in?" she demanded.

"I want you, birdie," he replied, as he made an attempt to vault through the door. His toe caught on the threshold, his cane flew from his hand, and he sprawled full length across the car.

Anna uttered a low cry, and pressed against the wall.

II.

DON'T get scared, sweetheart," the intruder said, as he picked himself up. "Your doorstep is rather high, and my feet are not working their best; not very certain where they're going, you know."

Anna understood: The fellow was drunk. Disgust came quickly. She must get rid of him. His being the son of the general manager made no difference.

"You must get out!" she told him sternly. "Leave me at once!"

"Now, birdie, don't ruffle your feathers," he bantered, as he came toward her.

She withdrew from him, and at that instant the car gave a heavy lurch, as it was struck by a moving train. The intruding gentleman lost his balance, swayed uncertainly, and once more measured his length across the floor.

"Excuse me again, sweetheart; but my sea legs are on the bias!" he lamely apologized, as he untangled himself and stood up.

Anna had dodged round him, and moved over nearer the door. She was frightened, not only by the persistence of the drunken visitor, but also by the continued movement of the car. At first she believed it was being shunted out of the way to make room in the crowded yards for delayed trains. But when she saw the red and green lights of a switch stalk by, she became convinced that something was wrong.

The switch, set for the main line, allowed the car to pass out from the siding. Anna leaned from the door, and, looking back, discovered that there was no engine following. Her car was running away.

The main line was on a grade, and down this the house on wheels struck gayly, as if glad to be free. For some reason, the automatic brakes had been "bled" of their air, and the car was free to make its wild way down the track. With no warning lights, nothing to stop or hold it, a collision seemed inevitable.

Anna turned to her drunken visitor, and shouted in terror: "The car is running away!"

"Is that so? Hooray!" he replied gleefully. "We'll have a joy ride, sweetheart! Sure thing! Let 'er go!"

"There'll be a wreck!" cried Anna, her terror growing. "We must get off at once!"

She moved, as if to swing down on the ladder.

Suddenly he caught her by the hand and pulled her in. "No, no! Don't do that! You stay with me!" he ordered, with a maudlin laugh. "This is great! A new kind of joy ride!"

"Let go!" she shrieked, as he jerked at her arm. "Can't you understand? The car is running away!"

Vainly she tried to release her hand from his. The car was moving onward with increasing speed. Again the girl screamed, and at that instant she caught a fleeting glimpse of a swinging light outside. Then followed the thud of a body striking the door.

Two hands, with tightly gripping fingers, clutched the handrail. This was quickly followed by the appearance of a man in uniform, carrying a lantern on his arm. Pushing a clenched fist, this arm struck forward with a trip-hammer blow, landing squarely on the jaw of the well-groomed gentleman, who relaxed his hold at once on the arm of the girl, and for the third time measured himself across the floor. This time he made no immediate attempt to rise.

Dazed with terror, Anna came slowly to the realization that the rear brakeman of the limited had entered the car. Stationed back on the line, to protect his own train, he had caught the runaway as it whirled by. Again he raised his cap when she looked up into his face; and in that brief moment fear and terror fled.

"I beg your pardon," he said, in a tone of genuine apology. "But I must stop this car. Where is your red lamp?"

His was the voice and bearing of a man with purpose and courage. His calmness and his assurance quickly brought the girl to herself. She ran back to where a row of red lanterns, neatly cleaned, hung on the wall. She gave the brakeman one of these; he lighted it, and swung out to the deck ladder.

By this time the wild car was swaying like a ship on a rough sea. The wheels roared and whined as they spun over the rails.

III.

IT required but a little time for him to screw down and set the hand brakes. The steel shoes screeched madly as they bit the swift-revolving wheels. Slowly the car ceased its mad race, and, like a tired thing, shambled to a halt.

Far up the line, a bright light flashed into view. It required no second glance for the brakeman to know it was the headlight of a locomotive. He set the red lantern on the roof, and climbed down.

Anna waited for him in the door. Her face was radiant, her dark eyes beamed happily. After all, she told herself, only real men can prove themselves when the test comes. And here was a real man.

"You needn't fear him any longer," said the brakeman, indicating the prostrate form on the floor. "He's out of business for an hour or two."

"But what will his father say?" the girl asked. "What will he do to you when he learns of this?"

"Nothing at all," the brakeman returned. "Anyhow, the old gentleman isn't that duke's father."

Bewilderment came upon the girl. Unable to understand, she drew closer and looked into the fallen intruder's face. "I thought he was Ned Francis," she told her champion. "I—I thought he was the gen——"

"You guessed wrong," he replied, a queer little smile playing across his handsome face. "This fellow has been the old man's secretary; but he will now be coal shoveler on a dirt train. I'm Ned Francis."

Involuntarily, Anna stretched forth

her hands in surprised and grateful appeal. The general manager's son took them in his own, and held them in a warm, firm grasp.

"Yes, I am Edward Francis," he added. "Dad wants me to prove myself, so I've started where he did. But I want to tell you, Miss Norris, that the way would be easier if I had you for my wife. You may not know it, Anna, but I've been fond of you for quite a long while. Your father knows it, and he's glad. I asked him not to tell you who I was, until I earned the right to tell you myself. I know you're grateful to me now, and I don't want to take advantage of it; but if you can learn to —to care for me——"

Anna Norris could not reply, but as Ned Francis looked down into her glowing eyes, he read the story of a young woman's loving gratitude, and his heart beat faster.

From down the line came the musical tri-tone of a locomotive whistle. Remembering that he was a brakeman on duty, he released her hands, and stepped to the door.

"Number sixteen is coming," he said. "I must run ahead and flag her! But I'll come back to-morrow, Anna, and then you'll give me your answer, won't you? Good-by."

"Good-by, Ned!" she called to him, as he bounded lightly over the tracks. Then she turned, and, going over to one of the plush-covered seats, knelt upon it and gazed out of the window. Her lover was nowhere in sight.

Presently two porters came over and carried away the insensible young secretary from whose attentions she had been rescued. Still she sat there, watching them in silence. Though she knew the story of her escape from death would soon become gossip, she was too happy to feel any resentment.

"To-morrow!" she whispered, with a smile.

Maritime Records

THE arrival and departure of steam and sailing vessels engaged in commerce is reported daily from every port in the world. In the maritime exchange they can tell at a glance just what has transpired in shipping circles during the past twenty-four hours, for a record is kept of every ship that has cleared or entered. The report gives the name of her home port, how many days out, her cargo, the number of passengers, her consigners and consignees, her destination, and her captain's name.

The companies themselves, and underwriters and forwarders, station these agents all over the world, and they report the movements of every piece of "rolling stock" under the reign of maritime law. And it is estimated that the number of men engaged on shore in the business of sailing ships is twice as great as the number managing them on the ocean.

Every steamer that floats is considered as a unit. It is a semi-independent state the moment it leaves shore. It has its orders, just as a battalion of soldiers on the battlefield has, and on its bridge walks the captain, who holds arbitrary power over his community.

Badges of Efficiency

IN Budapest women guides and interpreters wear a different colored ribbon for each language that they speak. They are to be seen walking about the city, waiting at railway stations, and driving in carriages. Some have two or three ribbons, and others have four, five or six.

Bright red represents English; a heliotrope or lavender, German; a brilliant yellow, French; a pale blue, Italian; and a brown, Danish. Dutch is shown by a Nile green, and so on, throughout all the colors and most nations of the earth.

Tale of the Game of "Fives"

Who Scores Last

By James Duncan

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

TURN ABOUT.

NOBODY at Corwin College, in Ontario, played "fives" in gloves. To play thus equipped was by college tradition to stamp yourself effeminate. Yet two years earlier tradition had stood in jeopardy when an attempt to introduce gloves made by certain resolute spirits had nearly attained success. It had been defeated by the precept and prowess of one sturdy conservative, the taciturn Tom Burrell, of large and flabby hands, who at that time was springing into eminence at the game. His methods of conviction were decisive. Having slaughtered the gloved iconoclasts in the courts, he had routed them bag and baggage by the exercise of a sharp wit, whereof none had hitherto suspected him. And Corwin had returned to its allegiance. Gloves remained effeminate.

The revolution squashed, Burrell had retired to his tent. His mouth was closed again. But in due course he had succeeded to the captaincy of the fives team, and had taken up his duties with a thoroughness which compelled respect. Never in the memory of his contemporaries had the game been better organized, and never, as one and all agreed, could the standard of play have been so high. Woe betide any whom the new captain found fooling in his courts! If you engaged a court, you must play for all you were worth—or yield it with ignominy and dispatch.

A term later the editorship of the college magazine passed into the same capable hands. Here the biting wit, which had been unsheathed to crush the revolutionaries and as quickly sheathed again, began to play once more. There were undoubtedly occasions when it hurt. "Serve him right!" mumbled Burrell when any complaint came sifting through to him; and he never opened his lips upon the subject again.

So the best fives player, and the best magazine editor that Corwin remembered scarcely enjoyed the popularity that he might have done. He knew this, and the knowledge brought him no disquietude. But his influence upon the life of Corwin was none the less a real one.

Spender was not the only man whose game suffered when Burrell was looking on. Many a blithe player declared that he went all to pieces under the scrutiny of the fives skipper. He was so stolid, they complained; so mum; and all the time you felt that he was spotting your weak points and making very little of your good ones.

But there was one in particular whom Burrell had entirely nonplused. And this was Creason, the tall dandy who had come from school abroad to put in

a finishing year at Corwin, passing straight into the senior class. Quite a man of the world was Creason, and quite astonishing at fives, he told them. All his life he had played the game, and his long reach and lithe limbs were fashioned for its excellence. Oh, yes; he was ready any day to make his word good, and give them each a few points and a defeat, in addition.

With Fyson's acceptance of this challenge, Creason had made his first appearance in the courts. But it eventuated as his last for several weeks. Creason had appeared in a pair of elegant gloves, and when the score had reached twelve to two in his favor—to his immodest satisfaction—he had been conscious of a dry murmur from the wall behind. He had turned to recognize Burrell, and meet a slow stare of contempt. Perhaps his gloves drew this contempt upon him. Or perhaps it was the vaunting air with which he had been emphasizing his superiority over the laboring Fyson.

Whatever the cause, the effect was indisputable. Creason had crumpled up. He ceased to jeer, and strode out of the court. He would play no more, he vowed, till the rounds for the cup began. And then he would show Burrell!

Creason was florid, open-handed, and —except in Burrell's presence—brimming with self-confidence; as a man who had seen the world he attracted many of his fellow students. And in the common room, which Burrell frequented little, he began hereafter to talk fives on every opportunity. Of the origin and theory of the game he displayed a liberal knowledge, and few had any conception, until Creason enlightened them, of the fascinating history of the pepper box and courts. Of its practice he had many personal triumphs to record, and at these the common room might very well have shied had not Fyson, an eyewitness to his prowess, declared stoutly for his conqueror. Yes, Fyson would demur, the fellow did blow his own trumpet, but after all it was a trumpet worth the blowing.

Creason made it quite plain that in the final for the cup he intended to give Burrell the licking of a lifetime. He smiled winningly on any who suggested that he must reach the final first. And he found several in the common room who admitted that they would not be averse to seeing Burrell taken down a peg. For two consecutive years, as they reminded one another, Burrell had won the cup; it was time that somebody else had a look in. And if this Creason chap *could* whip Burrell, well, by Jingo! wouldn't he deserve his honors? With such sophistry they cleared themselves of any lurking uneasiness of disloyalty to their stanch old champion.

Burrell, as word of Creason's boasting reached him, drew more into himself. He began to eschew the common room entirely, and if he had any comments to pass upon the newcomer's braggadocio they were reserved for his younger brother, Chris, who shared his study. And only Chris Burrell knew how keenly his silent brother desired that third consecutive victory.

But it was remarked that Tom Burrell had begun to practice strenuously, and it was remarked, further, that whenever the captain was in the court, Creason might be found among the spectators by the wall. And presently, as the ties drew near, it was remarked, finally, that Creason had begun to talk less. To Spender one evening he admitted that he was not sure whether he would enter for the competition, after all. "It's ridiculous," he explained, "to play against fellows who use no gloves, you know. It's not the game."

"But you're accustomed to gloves; you can use them till you get acclimatized," urged Spender.

"Thanks; awfully good of you," drawled Creason, with some sarcasm.

"Of course I shouldn't play without. My hands would be cut to ribbons."

Spender replied that Creason's hands looked hard enough, and asked to see them. But Creason thrust them into his pockets.

Creason was persuaded to enter, and in elaborate gloves that stirred the fellows' amusement, he cantered through the ties, till in the final he had to meet Burrell.

Tom Burrell waited for his adversary in the court; swinging his large, flabby hands in the bite of the March wind. Creason, smiling jauntily, came blithely across the grass, but he did not doff his blazer, and his hands did not leave his pockets.

"I'm sorry, Burrell," he drawled, "but I can't play you to-day."

Burrell looked him up and down. "Why not?" he inquired.

"Because I've lost my gloves."

At this a freshman among the youngsters at the back struggled to press through to the court. But thrust back and forced to abandon the attempt, Chris Burrell contented himself with muttering.

"Mr. Grellett has a pair," suggested Burrell, with a disdain he made no effort to conceal. "Borrow those."

"Can't. They wouldn't fit. Besides, I never care to play in other people's," said Creason. "I always—er—have my gloves—er—built for me, you know."

"You scratch then?" demanded Burrell.

Creason paused and looked about him. "Well, er—I suppose I must," he said at last reluctantly.

"How long will it take you to have a new pair made, Creason?"

"Three weeks or so. I send to town for them."

"That's not till after Easter."

"That's so."

"You've never played without?"

"Never," answered Creason slowly.

Burrell beckoned some one from the wall; he whispered to him, and sent him off.

"Well, Creason," he continued, with a look about him, "I'll tell you what I'll do: You've never played without gloves; I've never played with them. So, if we reverse the positions, and play it out straight off, I guess that's fair enough."

Creason still smiled jauntily, but appeared to hesitate. "I don't understand you," he drawled.

"Oh, yes, you do," said the other curtly. "I've sent to borrow Mr. Grellett's gloves. I'll play in them. You can play with your bare hands. That'll make it fair again."

Burrell knew, but did not add, that his great hands were larger than Mr. Grellett's. Creason deemed it unnecessary to explain the surreptitious uses to which during the last few days he had been putting a certain private preparation of resin and beeswax. That was nobody's concern but his.

Spender called from the wall. "I say," he cried, "if you've never used gloves it's a much greater handicap to wear them——"

"Than it is to play for once with bare hands," added Fyson.

"I really don't care," answered Creason airily. "For my part I am quite ready to scratch—if Burrell finds any pleasure in winning the cup that way."

Burrell said nothing; he was struggling too busily into a pair of gloves that were uncomfortably small; so small that he could scarcely open his hands in them.

Soon the great final ended in a miserable fiasco. Creason had made his word good, and in two brilliant games had beaten Burrell for the cup.

"I congratulate you," Burrell said quietly, when it was over. "And write to town for some new gloves, will you?"

"Thanks," the other answered. "Yes, I'll send for a new pair. But—er—I

think I can always give you five or six in a game, Burrell."

CHAPTER II.

A LIBEL CASE.

TOM, how do you spell pachydermatous?

"Spell what, kid?"

"Pachydermatous — thick-skinned, you know."

Tom Burrell grunted and passed the dictionary to his brother; then bade him hold his tongue while he finished the proofs for the college magazine. Some minutes later he bundled these together, and passed them across the table.

"There," he said, "pin 'em together, seal the envelope, and post it to the printer. And tell him to be sure and deliver the mags next week, as we must come out before the term ends. I'm off. Good night."

Chris Burrell was proud of his unofficial position as subeditor. But left to himself, he finished carefully the task he was engaged upon before he turned to the manuscripts for the magazine. Then he went slowly through them, arranged the sheets in order, and trotted off with his envelope. He was smiling when he came back to the study. Everybody was smiling—at first—when the magazine appeared a few days later. But soon smiles gave place to blank astonishment and indignation, for in the magazine appeared a letter, a bitter letter, directed against Creason, insinuating that he had purposely mislaid his gloves before the final for the fives cup in order to escape the humiliation of a beating by Burrell. This communication was signed "Fair Play."

Feeling ran high when the full purport of this letter was digested, so high that a meeting of the senior class was summoned to discuss it. To this came Creason, demanding vengeance on his anonymous traducer, and vengeance on Burrell for publishing the libel. When the latter had taken his customary place, a committee heard the accusation gravely.

"Of course we know that the insinuation isn't true," declared Stanniforth, the president of the class, "and we needn't trouble ourselves with that side of it. But this is where it hits us, that the letter itself is a disgrace to the mag——"

The others were murmuring assent.

"And entirely against the interests of the college."

"How?" asked Burrell.

"Because we exchange mags with other colleges," said Stanniforth. "What are they likely to think of us when they find that such a low-down trick can even be hinted against the winner of our fives cup?"

"But it's a lie," blurted Creason.

"No doubt, but that's not the point," urged Stanniforth. "The point is, Burrell, why did you print the letter? And what are you going to do about it?"

Burrell looked slowly round the ring of angry faces. He was about to tell them that he hated the letter as much as any of them; that he had no idea who wrote it; that he had never set eyes on it before it appeared in print; that he had not troubled himself to read it carefully since. But Stanniforth's tone whipped up his resentment—as editor of the magazine he refused to be dictated to.

"What am I going to do?" he repeated. "Nothing."

"You must!"

Burrell whistled softly, raising his thick eyebrows.

"Who wrote it?" demanded Stanniforth.

"That I decline to say," answered Burrell, with better grounds than they imagined.

"You decline?"

"I do. As editor I refuse to give any name."

Creason thrust himself forward. "It's plain enough," he jeered, with a nasty smile. "Surely, you men, it's plain enough. Burrell took very badly the licking that I gave him. Clearly Burrell wrote it himself—else it could never have got into the mag."

Nobody answered him at first. Obviously the fellow was right, they told themselves; for how on earth could it have slipped into the mag unless Burrell had written it himself? And if he had not actually penned it, he must have been privy to its concoction. And yet Burrell, close and caustic as he was, would never——

"That's all rot, you know." Fyson had broken the silence, but his manner was more diffident than his words.

Burrell rose to his feet, with a little laugh. "Oh, if you like to think it, do," he murmured. "But when I hit any of you men in the mag I don't hit below the belt. You ought to know that by this time. That's all."

He was moving to the door, but Stanniforth stopped him. "Personally, I agree with Fyson, and I don't believe it of you, old man," he said. "I am going to propose that we hold an inquiry, discover the writer, and deal with him as he deserves. Do you men agree?"

"Yes," they answered ominously.

And suddenly a thought took Burrell. He flushed, and held his hand out for a copy of the magazine at Stanniforth's side. "Here, let me see the thing," he said. They all watched him while he studied it deliberately.

But there was little need for Burrell's deliberate perusal. A word which he had overlooked in his first hasty glance leaped out of the pages at him now. *"Only a man with the pachydermatous impudence of the newcomer——"* Why, that told him the whole story. That letter had been written in his study; it was quite obvious, too, how it had been smuggled into the mag.

Burrell remembered that he was leaving Corwin in June, young Chris had his life to live there yet.

He returned the magazine to Stanniforth. "I wrote it," he said, his eyes upon the floor.

"You!" they gasped. "You did!"

"I've said so," mumbled Burrell.

CHAPTER III.

A CHALLENGE.

AGAIN that awful silence, before his fellows drew away from him, and whispered softly in a group. Creason was laughing shrilly, till Spender and Fyson turned on him with rough words.

At last Staniforth spoke. "We think you ought to resign the fives captaincy, Burrell, and also the editorship of the mag," he said, with a pale face.

"As you like," replied Burrell.

"And write a letter of apology for the next number."

"Yes," said Burrell, and turned to the door again, to meet a frantic youngster on the threshold, and glimpse a knot of excited freshmen in the corridor outside. The youngster—it was Chris Burrell—rushed passed him, and straight up to Stanniforth.

"Please, Stanniforth," he cried, "I hear there's a row on about that letter. I wrote it."

"You little ass!" groaned Tom Burrell, who had followed.

"I wrote it," repeated the youngster, while all the seniors stared at him, "and I slipped it into the mag without my brother knowing. He gave me the final proofs to mail to the printer, and I smuggled it in among them. He never knew."

From one to the other they looked, to read the truth of the boy's story written on every line of his brother's face. Stanniforth shook the youngster angrily, while Creason jeered softly from the window.

"One's as bad as the other——" he began.

"Oh, drop it!" flared Spender.

"And why did you write it?" demanded Stanniforth, but he glanced gladly at the captain of fives.

Chris Burrell was quite cool now; he faced them as composedly as his brother had done before him.

"Because it's true," he said.

"It's what!"

"It's true!"

"I suppose my word is worth more than a lying freshman's who has every motive to damage me," Creason put in coldly.

"Of course," snapped Stanniforth. And, turning to young Burrell: "This is a very serious charge, you know. You'll catch it if you're lying."

"I'm not, Stanniforth. It's true."

They seated themselves again, and put him in the middle. But Tom Burrell stood doggedly beside him.

"Now," they said, "how do you mean it's true?"

"Creason did hide his gloves on purpose. I saw him. They are locked up in a cupboard in his study. The key's in his pocket now."

Creason jumped up, expostulating.

"How did you see him?"

"It was this way: After the third class on the morning of the final, Bruce told me to nail up the broken shutter outside his study window. His study's next to Creason's——"

"Yes," murmured Spender. "Go on."

"I got the steps to do it, and I couldn't help seeing in through Creason's window into his study. I wasn't spying on him. But I couldn't help overseeing something——"

"Yes?"

"Creason picked up his fives gloves from the table, locked them into the cupboard by the fireplace, and put the key into his pocket. He did, because I saw him."

"You liar!" cried Creason.

"And he did something else," continued the lad calmly. "He took a jar of some sticky stuff from his table drawer and began to rub it over the palms of his hands. I saw him."

"But why?" ejaculated Spender.

"Why?" flashed Chris Burrell, regardless of the awful company in which he stood. "He lost his gloves on purpose to save his face, because he expected to get beaten. But he was taking no chances. So he hardened his hands against just such an offer as my brother made him. Oh, yes, he was playing up for it all."

"Well?" asked Stanniforth sternly.

"Well," cried young Burrell, "I determined to make him pay for it. So I wrote the letter—to bring it home to him. And I'm glad I wrote it!"

"That's enough," said Stanniforth. "Now, Creason?"

Creason leaped forward in his place. He was pale with passion, and his lips curled. "You don't really expect me to reply to any charge so ridiculous?" he drawled. "You forget, surely, that I'm a senior."

The meeting exchanged glances. "I admit it's awkward for you, Creason," answered Stanniforth, who felt that the situation was developing uncomfortably, "but we'll take your word for it if you'll——"

"If he'll let us look into his cupboard," put in Spender hastily.

"That you never shall," said Creason, half turning in his chair, as he fingered something in his pocket. "Burrell says it's true. I tell you it's a lie. You must judge between us. Remember, he has the motive to lie; I haven't."

"And you won't let us look into the cupboard?"

"Never."

"Then all I've got to say——" began Spender. But Stanniforth stopped him.

"We don't want to begin slamming one another, Spen. We'd better take a vote on it."

But of the ten present—excluding the two implicated—five were in favor of taking a fellow senior's word, and five, led by Spender and Fyson, demurred to any conclusion until Creason had permitted them there and then to search his cupboard. Here was a dilemma to tax the wits of any council chamber. No way out appeared.

At his brother's side Tom Burrell had followed the proceedings with the stolid calm that was his character. Once, when the boy was standing so stoutly to his guns, his eyes had lighted, and his fingers had touched the youngster's shoulder. Now he walked slowly over to Creason. "Your new gloves come yet?" he asked curtly.

"This morning," answered Creason.

"Do they fit all right?"

"Very nicely, thanks," jeered Creason.

Burrell threw his head back, and laughed aloud. "Now, listen then, all of you men!" he cried. "In the old days when they got into a crux like this they settled the dispute by combat. The accused and the accuser fought it out, in person or by a champion——"

"Jingo!" cried Fyson.

Burrell regarded him gravely for a moment; then continued: "I'm the champion of the kid here, and I'll fight it out with Creason. I'll play him fives for it!"

"Impossible," murmured Stanniforth.

"Oh, no, it's not impossible. And there's no other way out, you see. You can't condemn the kid unless Creason shows his cupboard. You're not asked to condemn that fellow"—a contemptuous finger indicated Creason—"on the kid's bare word. I'll play him for it. My hands against his new gloves——"

"Best of three?" drawled Creason.

"Best of three, or one game only; you to choose," said Burrell.

"But what I don't see," persisted Stanniforth, when the meeting had whispered over this new turn of affairs, "what I don't see, Burrell, is how that's going to help us?"

"You will," said Burrell. "If Creason beats me, the kid here apologizes, and I resign the fives captaincy and the editorship of the mag. Is that fair enough?"

"No, it's unfair!" cried Fyson. "It's rot, old man. The letter's not your fault, and Creason's better than——"

Burrell silenced him with a glance. "Is that fair?" he insisted.

"And if you win?" asked Stanniforth.

"If I win all I ask is this." Burrell paused, and went close up to Creason. "If I win, Creason must let you men look into his locked cupboard. And meantime, in case of accidents, he must agree to hand over to you, Stanniforth, the key of it that he's fingering in his pocket now."

The color swept over Creason's face.

"That's very little to ask," went on Burrell, facing them with the light of battle in his eyes. "I'm staking the editorship and the rest against a peep into Creason's cupboard. Suppose I do win—and the kid's lying all the time—Creason scores still, doesn't he?"

"It seems to me," said Stanniforth slowly, "that you're offering Creason all the best of the bargain, Burrell."

"Then persuade him to take it," growled Burrell, and he strode out of the room.

They broke up into knots when he had gone, debating the proposition. It was irregular, they agreed; but each in his heart was hoping that Creason would accept it. Its sporting character and the prospects of so grim a match between the two appealed to them, while all were moved beyond themselves by the chivalrous nature of the offer. Burrell was staking everything; Creason, if he spoke the truth, staked nothing. "The old boy might be a knight from the Middle Ages," as Fyson tried to put it. "On the kid's word he's risking everything."

"And on those big hands of his," corrected Spender.

But, as Stanniforth argued it, they should be grateful that Burrell had offered them such an easy way out of their dilemma. For what could they do otherwise? Creason's obstinacy about the cupboard made it impossible to silence young Burrell. The latter's position in the school made it equally impossible to convict Creason on such an unsupported statement. Clearly, Creason must accept the challenge and get them out of the mess.

At first Creason refused to see this. "It's babyish," he told them. "And it's undignified for me."

"If Burrell's prepared to stand the loss of dignity, you've nothing to grumble at," urged Fyson.

"But the kid's lying!"

"Then open your cupboard," insisted Spender.

And this clinched it. For as the discussion continued, it grew very clear to Creason that unless he showed them his cupboard or accepted the trial by combat he would receive the cold shoulder from the common room. Whatever official verdict might be recorded, they would hold him guilty by default. Farewell, in that case, to that coveted year he meant to put in at Corwin.

He winced as this thought found him, but was smiling lightly as he made his decision known to Stanniforth. "All right," he said, "I'll play the fool." Then he turned, and was making for the door.

"Hi!" called Stanniforth. "Hi, Creason!"

"Well?"

"Before you leave—you remember the condition. I'm sorry, but I've got to trouble you for that key. I'll seal it up in an envelope till the game's over."

"How very silly!" sneered Creason. "Besides, there are things in that cupboard I want."

"Well, then, I'll come with you and get them out," said Stanniforth.

Creason's eyes shifted from the other's face to a hockey group upon the wall. "You still distrust me," he said, with a mirthless laugh.

"I haven't said so," replied the captain coldly. "I merely remind you of the terms." And the others crowded round them in support.

"After chapel," suggested Creason.

"Now, please," urged Stanniforth.

And so the key was grudgingly surrendered, and when it had been sealed in an envelope before the company it was locked away in Stanniforth's desk. "After the match I return it to you or open the cupboard with it," he said.

"Oh, I'm not anxious," drawled Creason. "You'll return it to me right enough, for I'll wipe the floor with Burrell." He spoke airily, but it seemed to one or two that his manner was assumed. He seemed scarcely the old Creason—the dashing man of affairs.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMBAT.

NO one knew how the news leaked out, but leak it did, till every boy was chattering of the coming game—the trial by combat, as Fyson had christened it. Next Saturday afternoon, wasn't it? Creason in his new gloves against Burrell with his bare hands? Creason was practicing like sixty; Burrell hadn't been near the courts. No other topic would bear discussion.

But neither of the Burrells betrayed any excitement. The kid gathered the opinions of the freshmen, yet offered nothing in exchange; and when he returned to the study to tell his brother how the sporting fraternity were offering odds upon Creason, Burrell would vouchsafe no answer but a grunt. Nor did the boy know any qualms. Confident in the justice of his cause, he was more confident in the skill of his cham-

pion. All the oily Creasons in the world, he told himself, could never beat old Tom.

Stanniforth, elected to the office of umpire, was visibly nervous when he took up his position that dramatic afternoon. To Creason's jaunty salutation, he returned a short nod, only inquiring whether they had agreed upon sudden death.

"No, best of three," replied Creason, smoothing his smart new gloves. "That'll mean two games."

"You're very sure?" queried Stanniforth, as he scanned the other's well-cut limbs and active build displayed to the best advantage in his flannels.

When he had delivered his scarf and blazer to his brother, Burrell turned grimly to his antagonist. "We'll toss for service," he remarked. And the toss was won by Creason.

In his heart of hearts Burrell had been more than anxious to win that toss. For of the other's game it was the service that he mainly feared, remembering how it had bothered him in that brief encounter for the cup, when, handicapped by Mr. Grellett's gloves, he had been beaten so ingloriously.

Burrell stood well back, poising himself upon his toes.

"Ready?" cried Stanniforth.

The pair nodded.

"Play!"

Low and fast the ball flashed across the angle of the walls, and back swung Burrell's arm to take it. But as it struck the ground it broke away from him, and he only succeeded in returning it below the line.

"One—love," called Stanniforth.

Creason smiled, and served again; and again Burrell failed with his return.

Clenching his teeth, he adjured himself to take it more coolly, and make allowance for the break. The third he returned but feebly, and Creason jumped in and banged the ball across the court.

"Three—love," chanted Stanniforth.

Creason slapped his arms upon his chest with a gesture intended to indicate that this was cold and dreary work. "Can't you raise a rally?" he sneered, as he served for the fourth time. But very nearly was he caught napping, for the great hands of his enemy took the ball truly with a smack that rang, and only Creason's long reach saved him. The smile faded from his lips, and the applause from the onlookers, as nothing was heard but the players' heavy breathing, the pad of their feet across the court, and the *clip-clip* of the ball as it flew from wall to wall. Burrell was making a mighty effort to obtain the service.

With shining eyes Chris followed every movement from his corner on the wall. But he saw, as Fyson just behind him saw, that Burrell had not yet found his game.

"Love—five!" cried Stanniforth, and the boy drew a long sigh of relief, for his brother was in at last.

But the start that Creason had secured was to serve him in good stead. Burrell scored three consecutive aces, and the other in turn scored two; and so their fortunes fluctuated, till "Game-ball—twelve" was called, with Creason in. A moment later the first of the series was his.

How he preened himself in the few minutes' breathing space! "Yes, stiffer than I thought," he panted in reply to some sycophantic youth; "but I've got his measure safe enough."

Creason was puffing and perspiring profusely.

He was still blown, and Burrell very cool, as they took their places for the second game. And it was the latter's turn to serve.

"You look," the freshman was muttering to a boy beside him; "old Tom hasn't turned a hair yet. We're going to win, my son."

Creason stood deep, and Burrell, that astute general, favored him with a gentle service that just, and only just, made the required angle. Creason sprang forward, overshot himself, and lobbed the ball up. In a flash the huge hands fell on it, and banged it down above the line.

"One—love," chanted Stanniforth, as Creason, who had gone down sprawling, picked himself up with a great graze on the leather of his spick-and-span new gloves.

"Rattle him! Now rattle him!" cried the kid beneath his breath, and for the first time that afternoon Corwin beheld upon Burrell's face the flicker of a smile. He had secured four aces before he was dispossessed, and the other's confidence was beginning to be shaken.

And when Creason did get in, to find that the trick of his service had been mastered, he grew considerably flurried. For Burrell had read him truly. He could play a winning game with brilliance, but in a losing game his form was prone to fall away. And Burrell was getting the better of rally after rally, taking control of the proceedings, and keeping his adversary upon the rush from side to side.

"Twelve—seven," called Stanniforth, and Creason knew that in this game he was beaten. He lost the last three points tamely.

"We'll look into your cupboard yet, you beast!" the vindictive freshman was remarking, sotto voice.

When Corwin saw its old champion reassert himself, its loyalty flowed back to him. It began to wonder, however, that it could have come to doubt his supremacy, and grew secretly anxious to witness the humiliation of the interloper. And to themselves the seniors were confessing that Creason's defeat would relieve the situation enormously, since it would enable them to put to the test the charge of young Burrell.

So the atmosphere grew charged with a subtle hostility to Creason, and it may be that he felt it. For his face was white, his jaunty smile had left him, and he was biting his under lip nervously as he took his place to serve for the deciding game. He believed still that he *might* win—if the luck went with him. But old Burrell's grim features were emotionless as he waited, and raised his left hand to his mouth, for he had grazed it against the wall, and it was bleeding. A drop of rain spattered down from a great cloud overhead.

Creason welcomed the drop, and turned with an appeal to Stanniforth. "A storm's coming; shall we go on?" he asked. But the captain nodded in the affirmative, while Burrell waited motionless, after one glance at the sky.

"I must beat him before the storm breaks," he was telling himself.

The five courts are open to the sky at Corwin, and still to-day they tell the story of that last dramatic game. They tell how every moment the downpour threatened, and yet, while the heavens grew blacker and the court grew dark, the rain held wonderfully off; how admiration gripped the onlookers, as rally followed rally, and each point was battled for with an obstinacy and skill unparalleled; how the brilliance of Creason dashed itself against the steadiness and phlegm of Burrell, with never a word between the pair, and never a sound but the panting of their breath, and the rustle of the play—and the umpire's chanting of the score.

"How "Seven—all" was called, and "Ten—all"—and "Thirteen—all"—with Burrell in again.

"Fault!" cried Stanniforth, and "Fault again!" And in went Creason, very pale, with two points only between himself and triumph.

They saw Burrell's bleeding hand at his mouth again; they saw the ball flash and dance, to strike just above the line and ricochet on the side wall. Creason dropped on one knee, but he had

failed to scoop it up. Once more Burrell was in.

And still they tell how with two swift aces Burrell went straight out; then, without a word, took his wraps from the freshman and went slowly back with him across the grass, while the long-impending storm broke that moment into torrents of drenching rain.

And finally they tell that Creason, sauntering later into the common room with a pretty explanation that his new gloves had let him down, found nobody inclined to listen to him.

"Really!" Stanniforth replied dryly. "But hadn't we better inspect that cupboard of yours now."

"I'll accompany you," insisted Burrell. "And I think it's fair to take the kid with us."

Creason flushed. "You really mean to keep this tomfoolery up?" he asked.

"We do," snapped Stanniforth, and he turned to lead the way.

"Then go by yourselves," sneered Creason.

So they went, and in the dust beneath the shelf, flung into the farthest corner, they found the gloves that Creason had brought with him to Corwin, and lost on the morning of the final for the fives cup.

Burrell, when he saw this, drew the kid's arm within his own, grunted, and turned upon his heel. Nor ever afterward did he open his lips upon the subject.

But Creason removed his immaculate figure from Corwin that Easter, and nobody regretted him.

Caught in the Mail

DETECTIVES, lawyers' clerks, and others often experience great difficulty in obtaining an undoubted specimen of a certain person's signature. In one case recourse had to be had to a marriage register; in another, the only signature procurable was on the flyleaf of a book which the suspect had presented to a relative; and only two or three years ago a testimonial to a sea captain was brought into court, because among the signatures to it was one for which the police had long hunted in vain.

One of the most common expedients resorted to for overcoming this difficulty is employing a postage stamp—that is, sending a registered letter to the person whose signature is wanted. And this is frequently successful. Thinking the postal packet contains money or valuables, the addressee unsuspectingly signs the receipt, only to discover that inside the envelope there is nothing but a "faked" letter.

This trap once caught an anonymous letter writer—a woman—who, on being interrogated shortly before, had declared that she could not write, and whose friends believed her to be illiterate. It was, in fact, mainly instrumental in getting her six months' imprisonment.

The receipt for a registered letter, it should be carefully noted, is not given up to anybody, but can be obtained only in certain cases to further the ends of justice.

Forced to Wait

A YOUNG lady of Savigny-le-Temple, France, recently had the disappointment of having her marriage postponed because officially she is a young man. One day she went with her fiancé to the registrar's office to take the preliminary steps to the marriage, when to her astonishment she was informed that the ceremony could not take place as she was a male person.

The clerk produced his books, and showed her that by an error her birth certificate had been made out as if she were a boy, and that until her sex was changed by an order of the court she would have to remain single.

A Camera Chap Tale—

Missing—A Negative

By Bertram Lebhar

CHAPTER I.

NOT FOR SALE.

WITH a soughing noise, the carrier came rushing down the pneumatic tube and dropped, with a thud, into the receiving basket. As the card clerk picked it up, opened it, and handed the card it contained to the woman who sat in front of his desk waiting for her answer, he observed that the latter had green eyes. He noted this fact with interest. In the course of his three years' service at the Hotel Mammoth he had waited on thousands of women visitors who came to the tubes to send up cards to guests, but to the best of his recollection this was the first one he had ever seen with eyes of such a vividly vernal shade.

"Miss Throgmorton is not in her room, madam," he announced. "Shall I have her paged for you?"

"If you please. I hope she hasn't gone out. It is very important that I see her immediately."

The clerk beckoned to a bell boy. "Take this lady's card, and page Miss Virginia Throgmorton," he ordered.

The woman with the eyes took the trouble to wrap a dollar bill around the card, which she handed to the boy. "Make a good job of it," she whispered. "Look all over the floor for her. There'll be another dollar coming your way, sonny, if you find her."

The page stared at her curiously. Although the Mammoth catered to a wealthy class, it was not often that he received tips of that size for so small a service. Her generosity caused him to suspect that she must be the wife or daughter of a multimillionaire, although, to his way of thinking, she didn't look the part; her tailor-made suit was severely plain, and her simply trimmed hat appeared cheap in comparison with the costly millinery on parade in the Mammoth's foyer.

As soon as he was out of her sight, the boy examined the card which she had given him to deliver. The words on it brought a look of enlightenment to his face. "I ought to have guessed it," he mused. "Those female reporters are always mighty liberal."

He strolled through the ornate corridors of the hotel, chanting incessantly: "Miss Throgmorton! Card for Miss

Virginia Throgmorton!" As he entered the reception room, a blond, blue-eyed girl, seated at a table writing a letter, looked up and beckoned to him.

"I believe that is for me," she said. She glanced at the pasteboard. "'Miss Pansy Boardman, of the New York *Planet,*'" she read aloud, with a frown. "I wonder what she wants! Where is she?"

"Right here, Miss Throgmorton," exclaimed the woman with the green eyes, who, unknown to the page, had followed him on his rounds. "I must apologize for disturbing you, but I hope you will be good enough to give me a few minutes on a matter of business."

"Won't you sit down?" the younger woman said graciously. She was not altogether surprised to receive a visit from a representative of the press. She and her father had only recently returned from Baracoa, and the fact that the latter had been United States minister to that South American republic had caused them to be much in demand by professional interviewers since their arrival in New York.

But it was not of Baracoa that her visitor now spoke. "You took a snapshot in the park this morning, Miss Throgmorton," she began.

Virginia gave a start of astonishment. "How do you know that?" she exclaimed wonderingly. "Were you there?"

The woman with the green eyes smiled slightly. "How did the picture turn out?" she inquired, paying no heed to the question. "I am anxious to know."

"I can't tell yet. I haven't developed the plates."

This answer brought a gleam of satisfaction to the green eyes. "You do your own developing?" their owner inquired carelessly.

"Oh, yes; I think that is half the fun of amateur photography. I haven't been at it very long, but I am already able to get very gratifying results," said Virginia. "But why are you so interested in my snapshots?" she inquired curiously.

"I would like to buy the one you took in the park this morning," the other answered. "The paper I represent would pay you a good price for that negative."

Virginia shook her head. "Thank you, but I am not a professional photographer. My pictures are not for sale," she said civilly.

"You would be doing the *Planet* a great favor if you would let us have it," her visitor pleaded. "I hope you will pardon me for offering you money, my dear. Although," she added, with a quizzical smile, "I assure you I have known several amateur photographers of wealth and social position who were not at all reluctant to accept a hundred-dollar bill from a newspaper."

"A hundred dollars!" Virginia cried, in amazement. "Do you mean to say you would pay me as much as that?"

"I don't mind admitting that the negative would be worth that much to my paper." The woman with the green eyes directed a furtive glance at the girl's face. "But if you object to taking the money, my dear, perhaps there is some other way in which we could reciprocate."

Virginia shook her head. "I am very sorry, but I cannot let you have it. You see, to be quite frank with you, I am going to give it to the New York *Sentinel.* I have a friend on that paper—Mr. Frank Hawley. I presume you know him; they call him the Camera Chap." A tinge of pink made itself visible beneath her fair skin. "It was he who gave me my camera and taught me how to use it. It is only fair that in return he should have the benefit of my first worth-while snapshot."

An anxious expression came to the green eyes. "Have you offered it to him yet?" their owner inquired.

"Not yet. I must confess that I didn't realize until now that it was of such great value to a newspaper," Virginia replied ingenuously. "I took it merely for fun."

Her visitor bit her lip. "Well, since you are obligated to me for the information, wouldn't it be just to let us both have a copy?" she suggested. "If you will let me have the plate, Miss Throgmorton, I will give you my word of honor that I will take it down to the office, have it developed, and send a print over to the *Sentinel.*"

Virginia laughed. "I am afraid that wouldn't do. Mr. Hawley might be angry with me for spoiling his scoop. I'm sorry not to be able to accommodate you, Miss Boardman, but the *Sentinel* alone gets my snapshots."

The other remained silent for a few seconds. Then she shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, well, I suppose I can't blame you for saving the scoop for your friend," she said, with well-simulated good humor. "When do you intend to develop the plate?"

"This afternoon, I think. I have a complete outfit upstairs, and the bathroom makes an excellent dark room."

"How interesting!" exclaimed the visitor exuberantly. "I wonder if you would mind my being present while you do it? I'm really curious to see what luck you have."

A glint in the green eyes put Virginia on her guard. "I'm sorry to refuse you, but I'm afraid it wouldn't be convenient for me to have you up there," she declared.

The other shrugged her shoulders again, and, with a queer smile on her face, departed. As she walked down the hotel corridor and passed the public telephones she hesitated as if about to use one of them, but, changing her mind, left the hotel and walked down Broadway until she came to a drug store. Here she did some telephoning.

An hour later, she returned to the hotel. "Will you please send this note to Miss Virginia Throgmorton?" she requested the clerk at the tubes. "I believe she is in her room now."

The note was dispatched, and a few minutes later word came back that Miss Throgmorton would "be right down." The announcement appeared to afford great satisfaction to the woman with the green eyes.

When Virginia arrived downstairs she gave a start of surprise as she recognized her caller. "You!" she exclaimed indignantly. "You signed a different name to that note. What is the meaning of this trick?"

The other smiled deprecatingly. "Forgive me, my dear," she pleaded. "I was afraid that if you knew it was I you might refuse to see me again. We reporters are obliged to resort to such ruses. Please don't be angry."

"Well, what is it you wish, now?" Virginia demanded, somewhat mollified.

"I have come to see whether I cannot persuade you to reconsider about that snapshot. I have communicated with the editor of the *Planet,* and he authorizes me to offer you five hundred dollars for the negative."

"Five hundred dollars!" Virginia gasped. "Good heavens! Can it be possible that you want it as badly as all that?" A joyous expression came to her face. "I am so glad!"

"Then you will accept our offer?"

"Of course not. I mean that I am glad for Mr. Hawley's sake. If the picture is worth so much to the *Planet* it must be a tremendous scoop for the *Sentinel.* I am sorry to disappoint you, but, as I told you before, my snapshots are not for sale. I must ask you to excuse me now, as I have something important to attend to upstairs."

When Virginia returned to the suite which she and her father occupied, on the tenth floor of the Mammoth, she made a discovery which caused her to rush excitedly into the hall.

"Who has been inside our rooms while I was downstairs?" she demanded of a woman in a white cap, who was stationed in the corridor.

The latter stared at her in astonishment. "Nobody, miss," she replied. "I have been here all the time, and I surely must have seen them. Has—is anything wrong?"

Virginia hesitated. Then, without explaining matters to the floor guard, she went back to her room and used the telephone. "Connect me with the *Sentinel* office," she instructed the switchboard operator. "Tell them I want to talk to Mr. Frank Hawley.

"Is that you, Frank?" she said, a few seconds later. "I'm so glad to find you in. Yes; this is Virginia. Can you run up to the hotel right away? Something very queer has happened."

CHAPTER II.

A RARE PRIZE.

HALF an hour later, a tall, slim young man, with a merry twinkle in his keen eyes, arrived at the Hotel Mammoth and was greeted by Virginia Throgmorton, who was waiting in the lobby for him.

"Frank, the first thing I want to know is—are you acquainted with a woman reporter named Pansy Boardman?" the girl began excitedly.

He shook his head. "Never heard of the lady. What paper is she on?"

"The *Planet*."

"Are you sure? I know all the *Planet* staff. To the best of my knowledge they have only three women in the editorial department: Mrs. Parsons, who does society, Kitty Carruthers, who wrestles with the mysteries of feminine fashions, and Myrtle Matthews, who does the sob stuff. This Miss Pansy Boardman must be a very recent acquisition, I guess. What's the matter with her? Has she anything to do with this queer thing that has happened?"

Virginia frowned. "I believe she has a whole lot to do with it. If my suspicions are correct, that woman is a disgrace to her profession. Let's find a place where we can talk quietly, Frank, and I'll tell you all about it."

As they strolled down the hotel lobby and passed the desk, Virginia's companion nodded pleasantly to the clerks, who returned his greetings with great cordiality. As a rule, representatives of the press were not welcome within those marble halls, but the Mammoth employees were pleased and flattered by the notice of this breezy chap. For the fame of Hawley, of the *Sentinel,* had traveled far beyond Park Row. The big things which he had done had earned him a position unique in the journalistic profession. The fact that the President of the United States had recently recognized his genius and daring by borrowing him from the *Sentinel* in order to send him on a delicate diplomatic mission with his camera, had made him a public character. It was known even outside of newspaper circles that he drew a salary larger than that of most managing editors, and that, following the successful accomplishment of the diplomatic mission above referred to, he had received, and turned down, a flattering offer from the White House to forsake newspaper work for an important position in the United States secret service.

Knowing that, in addition to his skill and courage as a snapshotter, there were few professional detectives in the country who were his equal at solving difficult problems, Virginia felt confident that he would soon get to the bottom of the mystery which was perplexing her. "I will begin at the very beginning by telling you of my adventure in the park this morning," she said, when they had found two chairs behind a screen of huge potted palms in the music room.

"Was it there that you met Miss

Pansy Boardman?" the Camera Chap inquired.

"No; she doesn't come into the story until later. I suppose she must have been in the park—otherwise how could she have known that I took those snapshots of Mr. Thatcher? But I didn't see her then."

"Thatcher!" Hawley repeated, in astonishment. "You don't mean Elias J. Thatcher, the Wall Street magnate?"

The girl smiled and nodded. "Yes, I do. And the pictures I got of him weren't ordinary snapshots, either. They were most amusing poses." She laughed at the recollection. "He certainly did look funny, Frank, sitting there in his car, without his wig. I am afraid it was rather mean of me to take advantage of the poor man's predicament, but I just couldn't resist the temptation to snapshot him."

The Camera Chap stared at her incredulously. "What are you saying, Virginia? You don't mean to tell me seriously that you got old Thatcher's bald head?"

"Yes, indeed. Wasn't I lucky? This is how it happened, Frank: I was out riding through the park this morning in a cab I hired from the hotel stand. We were rolling along a lonely stretch of road when I noticed a big purple car coming swiftly toward us. It contained, in addition to the chauffeur, a sharp-featured, white-haired old man, who wore a silk hat. I recognized him immediately as Mr. Thatcher from the pictures I had seen of him.

"Suddenly, just as the car passed us, a gust of wind whisked the hat from his head and sent it bowling up the road. He gave a cry of alarm, and the chauffeur immediately brought the car to a stop. Then I observed something which appealed to my sense of humor. In addition to his hat, Mr. Thatcher had lost his beautiful white hair. The freakish gust of wind had snatched the wig from his head and sent it chasing."

"Splendid!" the Camera Chap exclaimed. "And then?"

"He cried out frantically to his chauffeur," the girl continued, "and the man jumped from his seat and ran down the road in pursuit. I had ordered my own chauffeur to stop. Suddenly it occurred to me that I had my camera with me, and that here was a chance to make an interesting snapshot. I made two exposures. The first I took from the cab, right after Mr. Thatcher's wig had blown off. Then I jumped out, stepped up close to the purple car, and got another picture of him just as the chauffeur returned and handed his employer his hat and his beautiful white hair."

Hawley chuckled. "What did the old boy do? Didn't he make any effort to prevent you from getting away with the pictures?"

"That was the most thrilling part of the adventure," Virginia answered laughingly. "He didn't notice that I had taken the first snapshot, but when I stepped from the cab in order to get a closer view he saw what I was up to, and he hastily ducked to the bottom of the tonneau in a frantic effort to get out of range. But I was a little too quick for him, and I had the picture before he disappeared from view. Then I ran back to my cab. Mr. Thatcher's chauffeur made an attempt to catch me. From his manner I believe that if he had succeeded he would have taken my camera from me by force. But I was too quick for him, too. I won the race to the cab, and we had started off before he could reach us. Fortunately my driver had kept on the power, so we were able to dash off without an instant's delay."

"And the purple car followed you, of course?" Hawley suggested. "Surely old Thatcher didn't let you get away as easily as that?"

Virginia smiled. "I think something had happened to their motor. As we

dashed away, I looked back and saw the chauffeur fussing with the engine. I suppose the suddenness with which he had applied his brake had jarred the machinery. Probably that was why they didn't pursue us."

Hawley looked at her admiringly. "Splendid work!" he exclaimed. "A professional couldn't have handled the situation better. And talk about beginner's luck! Why, I wonder if you fully realize what you've done? You've landed the biggest prize of the century. You've bagged the snapshot which every managing editor in the country has been dreaming about for years.

"You see," he continued, "Elias J. Thatcher, hard-headed old fox through he is, has one weakness: He can't bear to have anybody gaze on his bald head. It is known that he has spent untold amounts of money experimenting with hair restorers. In the meantime, he has been wearing a wig—the product of a high-priced maker. They say that he keeps it on even when he sleeps, that even his wife and children are not permitted to gaze upon his bald pate."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Virginia contritely. "What you tell me makes me feel ashamed of myself. I had no idea that he was so sensitive about it. If I had known, I don't believe I would have been so mean as to take those snapshots."

"Ashamed of yourself!" Hawley said, with a laugh. "Why, my dear girl, you've accomplished a feat which will make every camera man in the world turn green with envy. There isn't one of us who hasn't been yearning for a chance to get a shot at that scalp. I, myself, once spent three weeks trailing old Thatcher around in the vain hope of being able to catch him with his wig off. Those pictures of yours are more precious than a diamond mine." He looked at her anxiously. "Have you developed the plates yet?"

"Yes. Only one of them turned out satisfactorily. The first snapshot came out splendidly, but I spoiled the second in the developing bath; I think I left it in the solution too long."

"Too bad," murmured the Camera Chap. "Still, one is enough." Again he looked at her anxiously. "What do you intend to do with it, Virginia?"

She frowned. "That's just the trouble. I haven't it. I did intend to give it to you, to publish in the *Sentinel;* but I can't do that now. The plate is gone."

"Gone!" He stared at her blankly. "Gone where?"

Virginia shrugged her shoulders. "That's what I want you to find out for me, Frank. I suspect that woman reporter of having stolen it, but I can't imagine how she did it. She was downstairs in the lobby talking to me when it disappeared, and the plate was upstairs on the window sill of my room—on the tenth floor of the hotel."

"On the window sill?" Hawley repeated.

"Yes; I was making a print by sunlight, and I put it out there, in the printing frame. I was out of the room only about five minutes, but when I returned the frame had vanished—with that precious negative inside it."

CHAPTER III.

A NEGATIVE MYSTERY.

"WHAT perplexes me most of all," Virginia went on, "is how the thief could have got that plate without entering the room. I locked my door when I went downstairs, and I found it locked when I returned. Moreover, the woman watcher in the hall is positive that I had no visitor."

"Where was your father at the time?" Hawley inquired. "Isn't it possible that he has been playing a joke on you?"

"No; that can't be the answer. Dad isn't in town. He went to Washington

yesterday, and won't be back until the end of the week."

"That lets him out," the Camera Chap agreed. "Besides, on second thought, Mr. Throgmorton isn't the kind to play practical jokes. I believe the windows of your suite face on Broadway, do they not?" he inquired abruptly.

"Yes; and there are no fire escapes on that side of the building. Unless that woman's accomplice—I presume she must have had an accomplice—came in an airship, I don't see how he could have reached up to a tenth-floor window sill."

Hawley smiled at her pleasantry. "I guess we can take it for granted that he didn't fly up there," he said. "It is more likely that he fished for the negative."

"Fished for it?"

"That's a trick which was once worked on me," the Camera Chap explained. "It was out in a small town in Ohio several years ago. Like you I had put the printing frame out on the window sill of my hotel room—there were reasons why I had to develop and make a print in a hurry, and, as in your case, it mysteriously vanished. I learned later that a certain rival of mine named Gale, of the *News,* had hired the room above mine, and fished for the printing frame by dropping a line from his window. There was a chunk of lead and a disk of leather at the end of the line. The leather was wet, and it stuck like glue when it came in contact with my frame."

Virginia nodded. "I know; I've seen boys use that device for picking up things—— I believe they call them 'suckers.' But I don't think the thief could have got my negative in that way. How could he have got into the room above mine?"

"That remains to be seen," said Hawley dryly. "Possibly the room clerk may be able to throw some light on the subject. I'll go and have a talk with him."

He strolled over to the hotel office. "Any new arrivals within the past couple of hours, Ben?" he inquired of the man behind the register.

"One—a Mr. Davis, of Chicago. He came in an hour ago."

"Where did you put him?"

The clerk informed him that Mr. Davis had been assigned to room 68.

The Camera Chap shook his head. "That's the sixth floor, isn't it? I guess he isn't my man. Are you quite sure he was the only one? You haven't sent any new arrival to the eleventh or twelfth floors?"

"Not this afternoon." The clerk looked keenly at his interrogator. "Why do you ask me that? I'm curious to know because, as a matter of fact, Mr. Davis did want a room on one of those two floors, and seemed very disappointed when I told him that we were full up above the sixth, and couldn't accommodate him."

"Ah!" exclaimed Hawley, his face lighting up. "That sounds interesting. Did he ask for any particular number?"

"He didn't mention any number, but he wanted a tenth or eleventh floor room on the Broadway side of the building, as near the southern corner as possible. I've been wondering ever since why he should have had such a preference."

The Camera Chap merely smiled, and walked away without satisfying the clerk's curiosity. He went over to the card tubes and sent up his business card to room 68. He had decided that if Mr. Davis was in it would do no harm to interview him, but he was not surprised when word came back that the occupant of 68 was out.

His next step was to stroll through the lobby in search of Saunders, the hotel detective. He had a brief talk with that official, and they went upstairs together to the sixth floor.

"What time did number sixty-eight go out?" the detective inquired of the maid in the hall.

"A few minutes after he arrived, sir."

"Did you happen to notice whether he went upstairs or down?"

"He went up," the woman declared unhesitatingly. "I remember that distinctly because I called his attention to the fact that he was entering an elevator that was on its way up, supposing he had made a mistake."

"Do you know at what floor he got off?" the Camera Chap inquired.

"I think it must have been the tenth. I noticed on the dial that the elevator stopped there."

Following this lead, they proceeded to the tenth floor, and interviewed the floor guard there, who reiterated the assertion she had made to Virginia that nobody had entered the Throgmorton suite during Miss Throgmorton's absence downstairs.

"Did anybody else on this floor have a caller about that time?" it occurred to Hawley to inquire.

"Yes, sir," the woman replied, after a reflective pause. "There was a man called at one hundred and eight—that's Mr. Parson's room, you know," she added, turning to the detective.

The latter nodded. "Was Mr. Parson in?"

"Of course. Do you suppose if he hadn't been I would have let anybody into his room? He opened the door for the man."

The detective turned with a grin to his companion. "I guess you're on a wrong scent. Parson is all right. He's been stopping at this hotel for years, And if this fellow Davis is his friend, it looks as if he must be all right, too."

"Nevertheless," Hawley said quietly, "I think we'd better have a talk with Mr. Parson."

The hotel sleuth made a gesture of disapproval. "I don't see any sense in bothering him. He's over seventy years old. This whole business begins to look absurd to me, anyway. What's the use of going further with it?"

But Hawley was already knocking on the door of room 108, which was next to the Throgmorton suite. A white-haired old man responded to the summons. "I'm sorry to disturb you, Mr. Parson," the Camera Chap began, "but we'd like to ask you for some information concerning your friend Mr. Davis, of Chicago."

Parson stared at him in bewilderment. "I think you are mistaken, sir. I do not recall having any friend of that name."

"The man who called on you about an hour ago, sir," the house detective suggested.

The old man shook his head. "Nobody was here to see me an hour ago," he declared. "That is," he corrected himself, "nobody but the man from the telephone company."

"What did he want?" the Camera Chap inquired eagerly.

"He said there was something wrong with the wires, and he wanted permission to examine the instrument in my room."

"Did he go to your window?" Hawley asked.

Mr. Parson appeared surprised at the question. "Yes; he spent several minutes leaning out of my window," he declared. "He was fussing with a long, jointed bamboo implement, which looked like a fishing rod. He explained that he was feeling for an outside wire, which had worked itself loose."

With a triumphant smile on his face Hawley returned to the ground floor. He tarried at the telephone booth to hold a brief conversation over the wire. Then he returned to Miss Throgmorton, and told her what he had learned.

"The idea!" the girl exclaimed indignantly. "Have you seen this Mr. Da-

vis, and asked him what he meant by it?"

"I couldn't. He isn't in at present. I have a hunch that he won't be back, having accomplished what he came for."

"You believe that he registered here for the sole purpose of stealing my negative?"

"It looks that way. He tried, first of all, to get a room near yours. When that plan failed he took any room he could get, his idea being to have a chance to sneak up to the tenth floor without attracting the attention of the house detective on the ground floor."

Virginia frowned. "And you suspect that he was an accomplice of that woman?"

"I think it very likely. It looks as if she timed her second visit so as to lure you downstairs, in order to give her partner a chance to carry out his little fishing expedition. Probably she was watching your window from the street, and, as soon as she saw you put the negative on the sill, she telephoned to our friend, Davis, to get busy."

Virginia's frown deepened. "I think their conduct was outrageous. As soon as my father returns from Washington I shall have him go down to the *Planet* office and tell the editor what we think of such methods."

The Camera Chap smiled whimsically. "Don't blame the *Planet*. I've just had the city editor of that paper on the wire. He informs me that there is no such person as Miss Pansy Boardman employed on the sheet, and that he didn't send anybody up here for the snapshot. The woman is an impostor."

"But she had a card with the words New York *Planet* printed on it," Virginia protested. "Here it is."

Hawley looked at the pasteboard and grinned. "You can get a hundred of these printed in ten minutes," he declared. "I suppose she had it made for your especial benefit."

"But who is she?" Virginia demanded. "If she wasn't from the *Planet,* what paper did she represent?"

"I don't believe she represented any paper. My guess is that she came direct from old Thatcher, himself."

Virginia looked incredulous. "Would he go as far as that?"

"Would he! If you'd heard some of the stories the boys on Wall Street tell about him you wouldn't ask that question. And the old fox would go to any length to prevent his bald pate from being revealed to the public gaze, even in a picture. It is very likely that when you got away with the snapshot he had sufficient presence of mind to note the license number of your taxicab, and later on he sent that woman to follow up——"

He was interrupted by an ejaculation of excitement from his companion. "Look!" she cried, clutching his arm. "There she is, now!"

They were sitting at a window which commanded a view of Broadway. The woman with the green eyes was standing on the sidewalk outside this window. She was accompanied by a tall, clean-shaven man, who was beckoning to a passing taxicab.

Hawley arose hastily from his chair. "You're sure it's she?"

"Positive," Virginia assured him.

"Then I think it might be worth while to keep her in sight. I suppose we can't hope to get your plate back, but we may be able to satisfy our curiosity as to what she is going to do with it."

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAIR OF THE WOLF.

THE taxicab, which the woman's companion had hailed, drew up to the curb as Hawley reached the sidewalk. The owner of the green eyes entered, after exchanging a handshake

and a laughing remark with her escort. The latter walked briskly up Broadway; the taxicab proceeded in the opposite direction.

Suspecting that the tall, clean-shaven man might be the mysterious "Mr. Davis, of Chicago," the Camera Chap experienced a momentary hesitation as to which of the pair he would follow; then, observing another vacant taxicab standing at the curb, he gave hurried instructions to the driver to take up the trail of the woman with the green eyes.

Inasmuch as the other cab proceeded straight down Broadway to the financial district, he was inclined to believe that the trail would lead him to the office of Elias J. Thatcher. He was somewhat surprised, therefore, when the woman with the green eyes alighted at the door of a big office building on Broad Street, and dismissed the cab. This told him that here, evidently, was her destination, and he knew that Thatcher's offices were not in this building—for the famous financier, with that disregard for appearances which only the successful can afford to show, occupied the top floor of an antiquated four-story structure on Wall Street.

Hawley jumped from his vehicle, and entered the building just in time to see the woman stepping into one of the elevators. The car was crowded with passengers, and, realizing that, unless he caught it, he would lose the trail at this last minute, he dashed across the hall, and squeezed inside, just as the elevator man was about to slam the gate.

The woman got off at the twenty-ninth floor, and walked down a long corridor. The observant Camera Chap, who, of course, had alighted on the same floor, noted that, although she passed a score of other offices, she did not even glance at the lettering on the doors in search of the room for which she was headed. It was evident that she was on familiar ground.

She entered an office near the end of the hall. As the door closed behind her, the man who was following her stopped short, and an expression of astonishment came to his face. The gilt lettering on the door proclaimed the fact that this room was one of the suite of offices of Darius G. Ward. Hawley readily recognized the name as that of the man whom the newspapers had nicknamed "The Wolf of Wall Street," for reasons which were perfectly plain to those familiar with his career in the financial world.

Inside the offices the woman nodded affably to the half dozen clerks at work there, and, without waiting to be announced, turned the handle of a door and passed on into the great man's private sanctum.

Ward, a little, squat old man, who sat at a big, flat mahogany desk in the center of the room, greeted her with a cordial leer. "Well?" he demanded, in a voice that was ludicrously shrill, "did you get it?"

His visitor opened her hand bag, and, taking therefrom a square wooden frame, placed it on his desk. "Good girl!" he declared approvingly. He picked up the frame, and turned the catch at the back, releasing a photographic negative and a sheet of sensitized paper. As he did this, a man seated in the shadow of the room jumped up and came eagerly over to the desk. He was a big, rawboned man with a very red face. "There!" shrilled Ward, turning to the big man. "Now I hope you're satisfied."

The latter carefully examined the negative and the unfinished print on the sheet of sensitized paper. "Are you sure that no other prints were made?" he demanded, turning anxiously to the woman.

"Absolutely positive," she assured him. "You needn't worry about that.

We grabbed the negative the minute she first put it out on the window sill."

The big, rawboned man exhaled a deep breath of relief. He tore the print into small pieces, and, putting the negative on the floor, ground it beneath his heel. "Broken plates, like dead men, tell no tales," he remarked, with a nervous laugh.

The woman smiled, and Ward chuckled. "Now I hope you're satisfied," the latter repeated.

In the meantime the Camera Chap, having tracked the woman with the green eyes to the lair of the Wolf of Wall Street—a move which caused him to doubt the correctness of his first theory that Thatcher, himself, was the instigator of the theft—had gone downstairs to the street, and hurried around the corner to the Wall Street bureau of the *Sentinel*.

"Are Elias J. Thatcher and Darius G. Ward still bitter enemies?" he inquired of a bespectacled man, who was banging a typewriter. "Or have they buried the hatchet?"

"Buried the hatchet!" The man with the spectacles looked up from his typewriter and laughed. "I should say not, indeed. Whatever put such a queer idea into your head, Hawley?" He pointed to the page in his machine. "I'm just writing a yarn, now, about those fellows, and their coming struggle for the control of the P. D. & N. It's going to be the merriest little scrap that ever shook up the Street."

"Who's coming out on top?" the Camera Chap inquired.

"It looks to me like Thatcher. The Wolf appears to be on his last legs. Things have been going steadily against him of late, and I don't believe he has the capital necessary to swing the victory his way. Unless he can raise it, Thatcher has him by the throat. Still, as I remarked before, it's going to be a merry little conflict. When a man like Ward is desperate there's no telling what tricks he'll be up to. I don't believe he'd stop short of murder in order to win."

Hawley nodded. "Yes; from what I've heard of him I imagine he'd be capable of almost anything. By the way, old man, do you happen to know whether he has in his employ a woman with green eyes?"

"A slender, willowy sort of woman, about forty years old, with copper-colored hair, a long nose, and eyes as green as emeralds?" the financial reporter asked.

"If you'd been studying the Bertillon system, you couldn't have described her better," Hawley assured him. "Who is she?"

"Her name is Mrs. Nellie Youmans. She's a grass widow, I believe. She's been doing confidential work for Ward for several years. She's a mighty clever little woman and—well, not what you would call squeamish. I shouldn't be surprised if her activities range all the way from bribing corrupt legislators to stealing private correspondence from a business rival's files. May I ask you why you are interested in her?"

The Camera Chap told about the stolen negative. "In view of what you have told me," he said, "I am convinced now that Ward, and not Thatcher, was behind the theft."

"Of course, it was Ward," the financial reporter agreed. "I suppose he's going to use that picture to blackmail old Thatcher out of a nice sum of money. I guess Thatcher would give almost anything to prevent its being published."

"I imagine he would," the Camera Chap said. "It's possible, though, that Ward may not have blackmail in mind. He may be planning to publish the snapshot in order to make his enemy writhe. And on that chance," he added, turning toward the door, "I guess I'd better drop in and see him. If spite is his motive, I may be able to persuade him

to let the *Sentinel* use the picture. It can't make any great difference to him where it's printed."

He returned to the office building, in which the Wolf of Wall Street had his lair. As he stepped from the elevator at the twenty-ninth floor, and walked down the long corridor, he saw the woman with the green eyes come out of Ward's office. She was accompanied by a big, rawboned man, with a very red face. The latter, Hawley observed, appeared to be exceedingly ill at ease.

Staring curiously at the pair, the Camera Chap entered the office, and sent in his card to the financier. The latter, after a considerable wait, consented to see him, but the interview was short and fruitless.

Darius G. Ward received him cordially—he always made it a point to be affable to the press—and offered him a cigar, but professed utter bewilderment when his visitor broached the subject of the stolen negative, and assured him that he had never seen or heard of any such picture. "Your woman friend must be mistaken about having received a visit from Mrs. Youmans," he declared unblushingly. "I feel sure that she has been engaged on no such errand as you describe. One of those queer cases of mistaken identity, no doubt.

"You can be sure, my dear Mr. Hawley," he continued, "that if I had such a picture in my possession I should be delighted to let the *Sentinel* publish it. It is no secret to you newspaper men that my sentiments toward Thatcher are not exactly cordial, and I should hardly be inclined to spare his feelings."

As the Camera Chap rose to depart, his sharp eyes observed some fragments of glass lying on the thick carpet, near Ward's desk.

"It may have been another negative, of course," he said later, when talking the matter over with Virginia Throgmorton, "but if not—if it really was your plate—I can't imagine why he should have destroyed it. I must confess that, at present, I am all at sea as to what his game can be."

One night, a week after the incident of the mysterious theft of Virginia Throgmorton's negative, an office boy laid a single sheet of paper, containing a dozen lines of typewriting, on the desk of Sinclair, night city editor of the *Sentinel*. The latter read it through impassively, swung around in his chair, and surveyed the score or more of reporters at work in the big city room. His keen gaze, roaming over the busy group, settled on a broad-shouldered young man, who was putting a cover on a typewriter. Catching this reporter's eye, Sinclair beckoned to him.

"Better get busy on this right away, Johnstone," he said quietly. "It looks as if it may be something good. You'll have to hustle like a cat on hot bricks, though, in order to make the first edition. Let us hear from you as soon as you've found out the name of the owner of the car, and who was in it at the time. You can send along the other details afterward."

The reporter glanced at the sheet of "flimsy" from the news agency, which the other had handed to him. It read as follows:

BULLETIN.

At about nine p. m. a big touring car—name of owner at present unknown—skidded down an embankment and plunged into the Hudson River, a mile above Hastings. The car, which sank immediately, contained two men, one of them the chauffeur. Both are believed to have been drowned. The accident occurred near the boathouse of the Mercury Yacht Club. James McCarthy, employed as a night watchman at the club, witnessed it and immediately notified the Hastings police. McCarthy describes the automobile's passenger as an elderly man with white hair. The car was going north when the accident happened. The Hastings police are investigating.

"You'd better take the subway," Sinclair advised. "That'll get you as far as Van Cortlandt Park, and, in the meantime, we'll get busy telephoning some garages and arrange to have a car waiting for you at the other end."

Johnstone nodded his approval of this plan. Thrusting the sheet of paper into his pocket he hurried out of the office. He fully agreed with the night city editor that, under the circumstances, he would have to do some tall hustling in order to get even a bare outline of the story in time for the first edition, which went to press at one a. m.

As the reporter went out, Sinclair, a new thought coming to him, summoned an office boy. "See if there are any camera men around," he said.

"There's none of them in, except Mr. Hawley," the boy reported.

Sinclair hesitated. It was not the custom to ask the Camera Chap to go out on routine assignments. "Ask him to step in here," he said, with sudden decision.

"Frank, old man," he exclaimed, as Hawley approached his desk, "I wonder if you'd mind taking a run up as far as Hastings for us? There's been an automobile accident up there, and it looks promising. I've nobody else to send, and, if the story is any good at all, we'll surely need some pictures."

"I'll be glad to go!" the good-natured snapshot expert declared. He had returned a few hours before from Montreal, where he had spent several days on an important picture assignment, and he still felt somewhat fagged from his trip. In addition to this, he had a tentative engagement to meet Virginia Throgmorton and her father, uptown, after the opera, and take supper with them. But, with characteristic unselfishness and loyalty to his paper, he put aside these considerations. "Sure I'll be glad to take the assignment," he repeated. "What's the yarn?"

The night city editor gave him the details of the bulletin from the news agency. "We'll want a flash light of the car when they drag it out of the water," he announced. "The chances are that they won't be able to do anything in that direction before morning, but we've got to have a photographer on the scene in case they do. I'll send somebody else to relieve you by daybreak. Much obliged for helping us out. If you hurry you can catch up with Johnstone. I've just chased him out to cover the story."

Hawley got his camera outfit, and hurried out of the office. At the subway he overtook Johnstone, who expressed surprise when he learned that they were on the same errand.

"Do you mean to say that Sinclair had the nerve to send *you* up there?" he exclaimed, with flattering emphasis on the pronoun.

"Why not?" the Camera Chap replied simply. "It's all in the day's work. Besides, there's no telling what may come out of a story like this."

"You're an optimist!" the other declared, with an ironical smile. "Well, I can't say I'm tickled pink to get this job," he continued in a grumbling tone. "I had counted on getting off early tonight. I've got to go down to Wall Street first thing in the morning to assist Burroughs, and now I can see myself getting a big bunch of sleep. That fellow Sinclair is a regular slave driver. He knew I had that Wall Street assignment, and he might just as well have sent somebody else on this yarn."

Hawley laughed. "What's going on down in Wall Street?" he inquired, as they entered a Van Cortlandt Park express. "It must be something big for Burroughs to need assistance."

His companion nodded. "They expect the dickens to pay down there,

to-morrow," he announced. "The big clash between Thatcher and Ward over the control of the P. D. & N., which has been threatening for some time, is scheduled to come to a head. Burroughs expects to put in the liveliest day since the panic."

His words put the snapshotter into a meditative mood. The Montreal assignment, on which he had been sent a day after the episode of Virginia Throgmorton's stolen negative, had kept him so busy since then that he had not had time to ponder over that mystery. Now, however, a picture of Darius G. Ward's squat figure and malignant countenance loomed up in his mind, and, strangely, a remark which Burroughs, the *Sentinel's* financial reporter, had made, that day, concerning the Wolf of Wall Street, persisted in presenting itself along with the mental picture of Ward.

"I don't believe he'd stop at any crime to win his fight with Thatcher," Burroughs had remarked. The Camera Chap deemed it exceedingly odd, that, now, as he sat in the subway express, rushing up toward the scene of the automobile accident, the details of which were as yet unknown to him, he could not get that thought out of his mind.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Suits of Stone

IN Russia entire suits are made from a fiber of a filamentous stone—that is, a stone that can be stripped into a flosslike substance, like asbestos. The cloth is woven from these shredded filaments of stone and dyed various colors. It wears like iron, and when it is dirty the suit is tossed into the fire, not to be destroyed, but to be cleaned.

An Austrian has succeeded in making cloth of spun glass that has the sheen and the pliability of silk. A great deal has been written about the lost art of making glass pliable. This inventor claims to have done this, and a member of royalty in Austria has worn a purple dress made entirely of the spun glass.

Paper "cloth" is not new. We have long worn paper vests and such garments, and during the Russo-Japanese War the Jap soldiers wore paper clothing.

An English manufacturer has taken old ropes and cordage and by a secret method woven them into a very durable and not unattractive cloth or fabric. A large trade for this so-called rope cloth has grown up, especially in the British colonies.

Woolen clothing made from stones instead of sheep's covering is being manufactured extensively, and the remarkable thing about this mineral wool is that it comes from limestone. One would think that at least a fibrous stone would be needed, while limestone is of a granular nature. But the limestone is powdered and mixed with chemicals, the secret of the inventor, and thrown into a great furnace; then the limestone is blown out of the furnace into fluffy wool.

The Proper Way

FRANCES," said the little girl's mother, who was entertaining visitors, "you came downstairs so noisily that you could be heard all over the house. Now go back and come downstairs properly."

Frances retired, and in a few moments reëntered the parlor.

"Did you hear me come down that time, mamma?"

"No, my dear; that time you came down like a lady."

"Yes, mamma," explained the child. "I slid down the banisters."

Talks With Top-Notch Readers

By BURT L. STANDISH

HINTS FOR THE EDITOR

SUGGESTIONS for improvement come to us steadily in the mail, and we thank you for them. They help us in our business of producing the magazine that's built for you. We have this from Edward Crim, of Hancock, Michigan:

In reading the "Talks," I find you are told what to, and what not to, publish. Well, I am not going to be exempt, and I ask you to hear me with patience. Some time ago you promised a good hockey story, and, fearing you are overlooking it, I send this as a reminder. I am sure that a story about a game that is played in the United States and Canada would meet with ready appreciation. We people of the copper country are very much interested in this game, and have a right to be, as our team, the Portage Lakes, are last year's champions.

Knowing your time is precious, and hoping to see such a story appear, I will close, with best wishes for the success of the magazine whose supremacy is an acknowledged fact.

Since the promise of a hockey story, one has appeared. Tales of sport will continue to be a feature of TOP-NOTCH, but we like to print the stories at a season when interest is keen in the particular sport concerned. Baseball stories we run all the year round, because American interest in the national game never flags.

In the next issue an old favorite reappears—Harold C. Burr. He gives us one of those tales of the boxing arena that have won for him so much popularity. It is called "Defeat Victorious."

A basket-ball story by Hugh McNeill is another of the sport attractions that you will get in the May 30th number, out on April 30th. The baseball in that issue will be supplied by Gilbert Patten in his Boltwood serial novel, "The Call of the Varsity."

A COMPLAINT against writers who mention the name of certain colleges more often than they do the names of others comes is made to us in this letter:

I have read your March numbers, and the only two I have seen; buying the first prompted me to try the second. All this mush the readers of a magazine throw the editor is to be taken with a grain of sodium chloride. Use common sense and you can tell how your publication is going by the way it sells; and the people who write letters don't amount to much, anyway—myself included. But this is my first offense, and, as I am growing older, I suppose I can be excused.

TOP-NOTCH is the best magazine I have seen for ten cents. In fact, I prefer it to higher-priced ones.

Most of your writers—as Fitzgerald, Barber, Harold de Polo, and others—are especially good, but I don't see why, in other stories, the hero must be a Harvard athlete, whom the writer loves to picture with brains, morals, et cetera, when the contrary is a good bet. The great Western universities are turning out better men than any of your Eastern schools, and they are harder to get a degree from than Harvard. As you know, any one who has the money can pass Harvard examination. So why does the writer wants to throw his mush about the man being from Harvard and the girl from Vassar. But you have some authors who can write a story and do not throw the mush.

The stories in your publication are, as a rule, good. Very truly yours,

K. R. F.

1212 Florida Avenue, N. E.,
Washington, D. C.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I have a complaint, or rather a favor to ask. I prefer the contents page divided as originally, instead of one successive list, as you now have it. My reason for this is that I enjoy reading the serials first. Then when I have a few minutes to spare I like to read a short story. It is very convenient when you pick up the book to lay your eyes immediately on what you want. However, why not put it to a vote, Mr. Editor, and see which the readers prefer. Yours very truly, HERBERT C. RANDALL.

Portland, Me.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: Read every issue of TOP-NOTCH, and enjoy most of the stories. Those based on actual narratives and localities strike me the best.

Of your contributors, I believe Carey's stories are the best, or at least I enjoy them more. His "Ruby of Roo" series was certainly fine. Are there any more coming? If so, shoot them along. Truly yours,

JAS. M. TAYLOR.

Walla Walla, Wash.

FROM Mrs. J. E. Rule, of Longview, Texas, we have this:

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I am not a subscriber, but have not missed an issue at the news stands in more than two years. I read aloud to my husband and son each night after supper, until all the stories have been read, so none of us have to wait, for we are all so anxious.

We admire all your authors, but believe we enjoy most the stories written by Burt L. Standish, Terhune, Lebhar, and last, but by no means least, Fitzgerald. We surely did enjoy his Steve Blake stories, and hope for more of same kind soon. The "Talks" with TOP-NOTCH readers are read with much interest, even though I don't like the "knocks."

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: After reading your March edition, I thought I would have my little say. For the last four years I have been in the United States navy, having been discharged recently, and I can say that I never spent more enjoyable times than when I read your magazine.

While we were stationed in Mexico for five long months without shore leave, your magazine was my constant companion, as well as that of the rest of the crew who were lucky enough to get hold of it.

Your various authors are phenomenal with the pen, and your good judgment in the selection of these stories is, in my opinion, the reason your magazine is so well liked aboard ship as well as ashore.

Hoping you will pardon my intrusion on your valuable time, and wishing you further and greater success each year, I am, yours sincerely, MAX ROSENTHAL.

West 152d Street, New York.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I wish that we might have more of the Fitzgerald stories—such as "The Tin Can Branch." This struck me as being O. K., and I'll dare you to line up another. Your magazine is O. K., and you have the men that write the big stories. May your milestones number many more. Sincerely yours, C. A. BLOOM.

Mill City, Ore.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I think it's about time you heard from this "neck o' the woods" concerning TOP-NOTCH. It is, in my opinion, the best short-story magazine on the market. I have been reading it for several years, and hope to read it many more.

Would a good short story of merit be rejected on account of it being sent in in good, plain handwritten form, or must it be typewritten. I am not going to do any writing, as that is beyond me. I simply ask the question, as I have always wondered in what form stories were sent in. You might answer this in your "Talks." Hoping to remain a constant reader of your magazine, I am, respectfully yours, C. S. THOMPSON.

Pennsburg, Pa.

Generally speaking, the stories we use come to us in typewritten form. There are rare exceptions.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I am a steady reader of your magazine, and I can say it can't be beaten. I think I have a right to make at least one request, and that is: Please give us a bicycle story. I am a member of a bicycle club, and most of our members read TOP-NOTCH, and you know every fellow likes to read of the sport he takes up.

That story of "The Danger Trail," some time ago, was excellent, and also that last baseball story by Gilbert Patten. Wishing it success, I remain, yours for sport,

WILLIAM HOLTHUSEN.

The Big Mac Cycle Club, Inwood, L. I.

Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.

DEAR SIR: I am sending you a boost for TOP-NOTCH. It is one of the best magazines published of to-day. The stories like "Boltwood, of Yale," "Hazzard, of West Point," and "Brick King, Backstop," are the kind that get me, and those Steve Blake stories start me laughing whenever I think of them. My favorite authors are yourself, Bertram Lebhar, and Fitzgerald. Yours truly,

Anahim, Col. R. E. SCHIPPMANN.

G. B. Best, of Woodbury, New Jersey, sends the following, with a newspaper clipping inclosed:

Having been a reader of the TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE since it took its new form, I feel as though I might be entitled to revive a subject which I suppose you thought had been forgotten, and that is the discussion relative to Frederick Irving Anderson's "The Fade-away Car," which appeared in the January, 1913, number.

As my excuse for resurrecting this matter, I inclose herewith a clipping from the Philadelphia *Inquirer* of March 9, 1914, by which it will be seen that "truth is stranger than fiction" still, in that in this instance *two* cars disappeared. Upon inquiry, I find that the train ran some distance before the absence of the cars was noticed.

I might say about myself that I like TOP-NOTCH for the sporting stories it contains, being an ardent follower of anything baseballian; therefore, being an admirer of the stories written by yourself and Gilbert Patten, I hope to be pardoned for again bringing up a subject which has been dropped.

Here is the clipping:

TRAIN HAS PUZZLING ACCIDENT.

Special to *The Inquirer*.

POTTSVILLE, Pa., March 8.—A fast freight on the Pennsylvania Railroad, last night figured in a peculiar accident. While running at high speed about a mile east of New Boston Junction, two of the box cars became uncoupled, went over the bank, and the two sections of the freight then coupled up to one another. The momentum of the second part of the train was sufficient to have it follow up and couple on to the part of the train attached to the locomotive. The cars went completely over another track and down a twenty-foot embankment without doing any damage to either track.

We have received several newspaper clippings that prove Mr. Anderson's skill as a reader of the future.

Such a Difference

A SCOTSMAN was playing golf. Going out, he drove brilliantly over a stream in a hollow. "My, but that was a fine drive over the pretty wee burn," he remarked to his caddie.

Coming home, he had to play over this same "burn" for another hole, and drove right into it. "Go and fish the ball out of that dirty sewer!" he growled.

A Modern Arcadia

THE island of Ascension, in the Atlantic Ocean, is of volcanic formation, and has a population of only four hundred and fifty. It was uninhabited until the confinement of Napoleon at St. Helena, when it was occupied by a small British force.

Ascension is governed by a captain appointed by the British admiralty. There is no private property in land, no rents, no taxes, and no use for money. The flocks and herds are public property, and the meat is issued as rations. So are the vegetables grown on the farms. When an island fisherman makes a catch, he brings it to the guardroom, where it is issued by the sergeant major. Practically the entire population are sailors, and they work at most of the common trades. The muleteer is a jack-tar; so is the gardener; so are the shepherds, the stockmen, the grooms, masons, carpenters, and plumbers. The climate is almost perfect, and anything can be grown.

"Evinruding"

Do you know what "Evinruding" is? It is not a *new* sport because too many thousands are "Evinruding" to call it new. Dictionaries should describe it as making a motor-boat of any rowboat in less than one minute—of realizing all the pleasures of motor-boating with any rowboat or canoe. The

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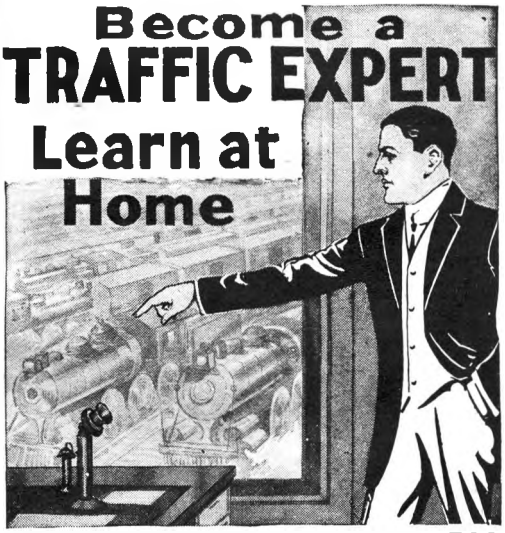

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Send at once, without expense to me, FREE copy of your famous book "10 Years Promotion in One"; also book telling how I may, without interfering with my present position, prepare myself as Traffic Expert.

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But it's different with the *untrained* man. His wages are small and uncertain. At the end of the month he often finds the pocket-book empty, with the landlord, grocer, butcher, baker, and other tradesmen clamoring for their money.

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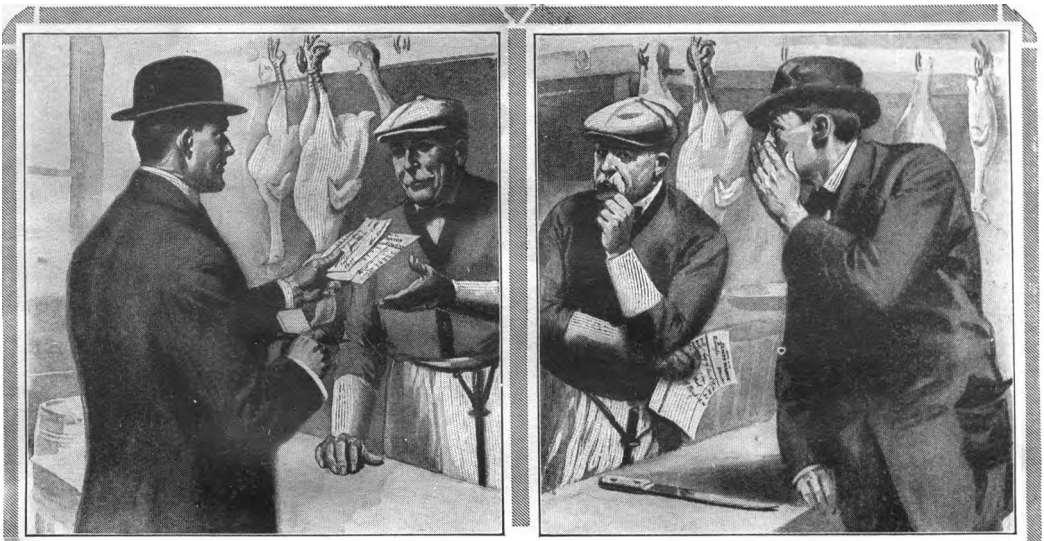
You don't have to leave home or give up your position to get this



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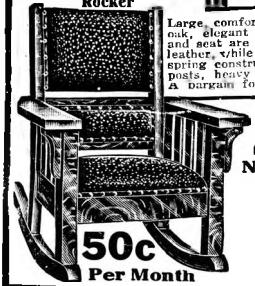

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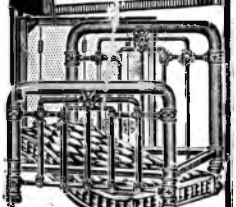

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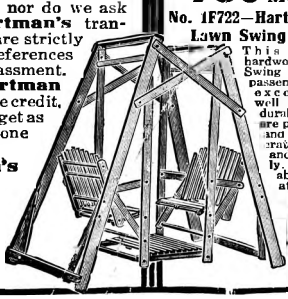

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