ISSUED THE 1ST AND 15TH OF EVERY MONTH

"THE TROLLEY MAN" IN THIS NUMBER

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Top-Notch

A Magazine of Adventure Fiction

Edited by BURT L. STANDISH

VOL. 3~No. 1 JANUARY 1911

THE TWICE-A-MONTH YOUNG MAN'S MAGAZINE

IN THE NEXT ISSUE:
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By BARRY WALCOTT

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IN THE MID-MONTH TOP-NOTCH
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VOLUME III NUMBER 1

TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE

Edited by BURT L. STANDISH

January CONTENTS 1911

FASCINATING COMPLETE NOVEL

BRISK NOVELETTES

SPRIGHTLY LONG COMPLETE TALES

BRIGHT SHORT STORIES

THRILLING SERIALS

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Talks With Top-Notch Fellows

By BURT L. STANDISH

HARNESSING THE WILD HORSES

HAVE you ever given a thought to the chap who, ages ago, invented the windmill? Nobody knows or cares who he was, yet his clumsy device was the forerunner of the biggest idea that is engaging the world's inventive genius to-day.

The man who fashioned the first windmill belonged to an ancient and honorable order of trappers. He snared, and bent to his will, the most elusive and mysterious of Nature's forces—the wind.

He decided that the wind had been playing in his yard long enough; so he set it to work for him.

And the same thing, on a stupendous scale, is what inventors the world over would like to do.

They aim to trap not only the wind, but all those forces of Nature which, on every hand, are running away.

By that they mean that wind, water, sun heat, air, snow, ice are going to waste—not being enlisted, as they might be, in the service of man for his needs, comforts, and luxuries.

The scientist who runs to figures of speech tells us that in the elements man has countless millions of servants, ready and able to do all his work, if only he had wit enough to make himself their master.

The thought is enough to make the world's Weary Willies unite in a vote of thanks to science.

THERE is abroad a modern, intensely practical fellow who is doing much to realize the outlook of the high-browed theorist.

His name is Electrician.

He has done some amazing stunts in the way of rounding up wild horses.

He has corralled to date millions of these madly prancing steeds—or the water power that corresponds to their combined energy.

When you venture among the huge generators and converters in electric plants at Niagara, along the streams of the Sierras, or in the Appalachians, you get an idea, vaguely, of the presence and power of the millions of wild horses that have been made to obey man's command to toil.

Street cars in Syracuse, 165 miles away, and the lights in that city, are operated from the Falls of Niagara, but the greater part of that tremendous energy is used locally.

Still only five per cent. of the available power in the water is utilized.

Niagara's full power is equal to that of five million horses. It could give light to New York and seventy more American cities of the first class.

IN northern California the power is carried 232 miles from a water system in the Sierras to towns on the coast.

This is probably the greatest feat in long-distance transmission.

With Los Angeles as the centre, more than 1,200 miles of transmission lines, all told, are used.

The makers of these successes, and the communities to which they belong, are inclined to regard them as crowning triumphs. Certainly they are wonderful achievements in harnessing the visible to the unseen—electricity.

But by contrast with what the future will produce they are no more than the trapping of the squirrel who turns a wheel in a cage.

It is estimated by competent students of the subject that there are available in the waterfalls of this country an energy equal to thirty million horses.

Just think of it! Thirty million

horses, and most of them running away!

There is still a lot of work ahead for the electrical cowboys to rope these wild steeds and break them to harness.

But they have learned the trick, and time will show a complete round-up.

Meantime, the untamed chargers will go on plunging down the rapids and cataracts of our land.

IN no phase of the world's dynamic progress has there been a swifter advance, or one meaning more to civilization, than in the electrical field.

It is the electrical age, and whatever relates to it is keenly interesting to all who are awake to the wonders of the century.

Top-Notch fellows, by tens of thousands up and down the land, are in this class.

And for you it is our intention to provide stories that shall not only keep you in touch with the boundless possibilities of electric wizardry, but afford you delightful entertainment at the same time.

A story of this sort, for example, will begin in the next issue of Top-Notch. It is called "Aladdin's Lamp in 1911."

Perhaps the title gives you a faint hint of what to look for; perhaps it does not.

Anyhow, it is a New Year's tale in a way, for its splendid Arabian Nights climax comes an instant after the stroke of twelve in the old year's last hour.

Mr. Fritz Krog, the author, is a practical wizard of the ohm as well as the pen, and knows what he is about when it comes to affairs electrical.

This much of a tip for you:

The climax is a pictorial effect in electric light that puts all the other White Way dazzlers on the blink.

You'll enjoy this story, every line, for the hero, a young electrical engineer, and the other chaps—two of them pretty bad—are real men, with the passions of their kind. In a remarkable way the author has kept them moving in a drama that is as fascinating for its industrial as its human interest.

THE next number of Top-Notch will be the best, in certain respects, thus far issued.

It will come out on the 15th of December, and strike a holiday note here and there among its unusually large number of stories, short and long.

We are doing our best to crowd in as much reading as our present number of pages will hold.

But we are not satisfied, and it looks as if we should have to make Top-Notch a still larger magazine. We have so many good stories that we want to give you that it vexes us to have to hold them over for want of space.

But there is an excellent prospect that this difficulty soon will be overcome.

THERE is a feature of the next Top-Notch that it gives me genuine pleasure to announce.

This is a contribution by Mr. Henry A. Shute, author of the Plupy stories. Probably no writer of our day has supplied so much wholesome merriment as he with his tales about real boys.

The thousands who know his work need not be told that no other writer has equaled him in making the true country youngster live on the printed page just as he lives, goes to school, plays hooky, and dodges work in his native sphere.

Do you know Plupy, Skinny, Beany, and Fatty?

If you don't happen to, you'll enjoy making their acquaintance, and readers who do know them will enjoy meeting them again.

"If Teachers Only Knowed" is the title of Mr. Shute's contribution, and it is the matchless Plupy who points out what he regards as the instructor's chronic failings.

Glance at the inside covers, if you will, also the back, and read other announcements that will interest you.

TOP-NOTCH
MAGAZINE

VOL. III JANUARY 1, 1911 No. 1

Won by a Sneeze

By Mark A. Daly

The war in the woods directed by a hustling young lumberman who looked peaceable enough at college, but developed unusual qualities for generalship when he hit the lumber country. A story unlike anything you have ever read, and with some big surprises.

(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

CHAPTER I.

WANTED—A MAN.

HE stood on the veranda of the hotel as the long line of singers returned, a gaunt, bearded giant with steel-blue eyes.

In the square in front of the hotel they circled about, leaving a young man in sweater and abbreviated cap in the centre, and to the spur of his enthusiastic gesticulations they yelled their "Rah! Rah! Rah!" Then they sang.

Then, once again they cheered, but this time they ended the yell with:

"Burke! Burke! Burke!"

The newcomer's steel-blue eyes glinted eagerly as he scanned every face in sight.

"He ain't thar," he said, when he had concluded his inspection. "Leastwise," he added, "if he is he don't look much like his old man."

He walked to the outskirts of the ring, and gripped one of the youngsters by the arm.

"Whar is this Burke you boys is hollerin' about?" he asked.

"What! Peewee Burke? Well, you *are* green! Why, he's up on the hill with the team, feedin' his face. Where would he be?"

"Give it up," said the bearded giant. "But he sure ain't where he ought to be."

Before the youngster recovered from his surprise the angular stranger was well on his way toward "The Hill," a huge bonfire as his guide.

His every expression depicted the scorn he felt for the bobbing silhouettes whose unbridled antics about the fire became clearer as he approached.

"An' I come here t' git a *man*," he muttered half sorrowfully.

Finally he arrived.

"You wish to see Mr. Burke? And your business is important?"

"Them's my words."

The suave attendant smiled behind his hand. His glance covered the uncouth visitor from head to heel.

"Mr. Burke is much in demand tonight," said he. "He is the greatest quarter back Halswell ever had, and he won the game for us to-day. I don't know that he can get away. The team has broken training; it's a banquet in there." He jerked his thumb toward the closed door, through which came sounds of revelry.

"Sonny," said the visitor impressively, "I don't care a continental what's broke, or whether he's quarter back or on'y half a back. I got t' see him—understand? *Now.*"

But "Sonny" wasn't impressed.

"Sorry, but there's nothing doin'," said he, as if that were the last word.

The visitor quietly thrust him aside, and strode toward the door. Before any one could get in his way—which was fortunate—he jerked open the door and stepped into the banquet room.

Coming from the dimly lighted anteroom, his eyes were dazzled for a minute by the brilliant illumination.

He blinked once or twice; then he noted a young man standing with slim-stemmed glass held aloft in the act of proposing a toast.

He thought the glass was to be thrown at him, and involuntarily his arm was raised to shield his head.

The quick brains about the banquet board divined the supposition; a great laugh followed the sudden silence.

It brought the visitor to himself. His arm lowered itself naturally, and, without trace of self-consciousness, he gazed calmly about him.

The dazzling shirt bosoms and high collars filled him with a wonder he did not show. He never had seen a man in evening dress before; the array of them filled him with awe. Yet, unconsciously, the lips beneath the damp, matted beard curled in a sneer.

"An' I come t' git a man!" he muttered again, as his eyes roved about the room.

"You were looking for some one?" inquired a suave voice.

"I were," he answered instantly.

He had not meant to be funny; involuntarily he had taken the word for his answer from the lead of the questioner. And the laugh that followed bothered him not at all, though he wondered what was funny. He merely continued his search.

"I was thinkin' maybe I'd know young Dicky Burke if he looked anything like his ol' man," he volunteered in a matter-of-fact tone after an interval of silence. "I'm lookin' for Richard Burke."

"Peewee Burke! Peewee Burke!" yelled the banqueters. "He's lookin' for Peewee Burke."

"Well, he hasn't got far to look," boomed a great bass voice, and a smooth-faced young fellow arose, beamed benignly, then reached down and lifted a diminutive specimen of humanity into the midst of the confusion of glassware and crockery on the table.

With superb contempt for broken dishes, the little man cleared a space with his feet, then turned toward the visitor with an elaborate mocking bow.

"Peewee Burke, sir, at your service."

He was not quite five feet tall. His voice was a treble screech—the voice of a nervous woman. His linen was immaculate; his evening clothes fitted him with the snugness and precision which denoted care and a three-figure tailor. His complexion was pink and white, and his straw-colored hair was long and wavy.

"An' I come t' git a man!" breathed the visitor, pity and baffled purpose in his eyes.

For an instant he stood there near the door, perplexity and indecision plainly evident. Then, a new purpose in the steel-blue eyes, he moved with slouching gait to the table on which the youngster stood, reached up, and, with an exhibition of strength which caused the athletes about him to gasp, he fastened one gnarled and knotty hand in the back of Peewee Burke's dress coat, and tucked him beneath his arm, as if he were a bag of meal.

"I come t' git ye," he volunteered simply, but not in apology.

The young fellow with the great bass voice arose, the light of battle in his uncertain eyes, and would have fallen upon the visitor.

"Let him alone, Bobby," said Peewee Burke's shrill treble, from his snug, if undignified, position, "I know him, and it's all right."

CHAPTER II.

STRAIGHT TALK.

"Now, give me a full explanation," said Peewee Burke, when they were on their way in the train. "In a general way I understand. But I want to know the details."

Sim Dobbs, woods boss for the Burke Lumber Company, turned with patient indulgence to the young man in the seat with him.

His contempt for the effeminate-looking youth had merged into a great pity as he told himself that the man whom his fellows dubbed "Peewee" was not to blame for his puny body.

The fact that he might have had brains did not interest Mr. Dobbs. Strength and cunning were the only factors worth consideration in the big woods.

"There hain't much o' 'Black Brian' Burke in you, is there, sonny?" he queried, his eyes taking in the snuff-colored suit with the rigid creases down the centre of the trousers legs, the neat collar and delicate brown cravat with the chaste opal scarf pin, the tan shoes and stockings—"a symphony in brown," as Bobby Lee would say.

Peewee Burke's eyes became moist and gentle.

"Dobbs," he said, no trace of hauteur or choler in his tone, "you are considered one of the best bosses in the woods, are you not?"

"Waal," said Mr. Dobbs, smiling grimly, "some says I can handle men a little bit."

"And to handle men you must be a judge of human nature; isn't it so?"

"I guess mebbe thar's some truth in that."

Peewee Burke gazed out of the window at the bare limbs of the windbreaks along the tracks, through which the snow was swirling thinly. At length he turned the gentle gaze on the woods boss.

"Three times I've asked you to explain the situation on my property, Dobbs," said he. "Understand? *My* property. I'm the owner, and you are my woods boss. Each time you've treated the request with thinly veiled contempt. Dobbs, you're discharged."

"Discharged?"

The word boomed from Sim Dobbs so loudly that everybody in the car heard it. A man in the seat behind them, who had been straining his ears to catch every word, chuckled to himself, and righted the paper which he had been reading upside down for a full half hour.

"Exactly. You're discharged. When we get to Manitou you can put in your time to Mr. Ferguson and get your money."

For a moment Peewee Burke's life was in danger. Sim Dobbs' steel-blue eyes became gray, and the gnarled hands clenched. He half rose in his seat.

"I've been your pa's woods boss for twelve year," he said hoarsely, "and now——"

"Sit down, Dobbs," said Peewee Burke, the treble voice as thin and cutting as a razor blade. "I've discharged you on your own recommendation. You just told me that to handle men one must be a judge of human nature. You've still got to learn not to judge a man by the size of the package he's done up in. When you've learned that, come back to me for a job."

The man in the seat behind did not smile this time. Instead, he looked again at Peewee Burke—a long, searching gaze.

Sim Dobbs, trembling with rage, quickly made his way down the aisle toward the front of the car, and disappeared into the smoker. Just before the train reached Manitou the man in the seat back of Peewee Burke arose and made his way to the car ahead. As the train drew into Manitou, he was deep in conversation with Sim Dobbs.

CHAPTER III.

THE TIMBER THIEVES.

The office of the Burke Lumber Company, in Manitou, was a two-story frame structure built on the edge of the wide waters of Manitou River, and overlooking the booms which were already in place for the drive next spring.

Jed Ferguson, office manager, lived his bachelor life in the rooms over the office. Peewee Burke made his way from the train to the office without a glance about him in search of Sim Dobbs. Jed Ferguson saw him coming up the road without a suspicion of the fact that he was the "Big Boss."

"You are Mr. Ferguson, I presume," he said, standing outside the railing that kept curious ones away from the desks.

"I am," was Mr. Ferguson's curt answer from his position by the window. He did not even turn around.

"I am Richard Burke, and I'd like a few moments' conversation with you. In the meantime please order a buckboard around here. I'm traveling right into the woods."

Mr. Ferguson's indifference fell from him like a cloak. With one quick glance, which took in the owner completely, he walked calmly to the gate, and opened it. If he was disappointed he did not show it.

"Come in, sir," he said. "We've been expecting you. I have never seen you before. The buckboard is down at the station waiting for you. We expected, of course, that you would come on with Sim."

There was a half question in the last sentence. Peewee Burke noted it.

"I discharged Dobbs on the way up here," he explained immediately. "He will be here to get his pay soon. He probably will get drunk. If he comes back for a job, and I am not here, you will please hire him again and send him on to the woods."

Ferguson gasped. He showed no trace of doubt or hesitancy.

"You will now give me the details of the situation, please," Burke continued, when he was comfortably seated behind the railing.

Ferguson caught the keynote. In terse, snappy sentences he began. Since the death of Mr. Burke's father, timber thieves had been operating in the northern end of their lands. The office was at the extreme southern end, and the Burke gangs were cutting along the line of the Manitou River. The thieves were using the White River as their base, and depended on it to get their logs down in the spring.

"The Belden people are back there," explained Ferguson. "They claim ownership of the land. We sent a surveyor up there with Sim and Flanagan to locate the line. They did it before the Belden people got onto them, but they caught 'em comin' out; and the surveyor, Johnson, got a bullet through the shoulder, and Sim's cap shows two holes. Sim estimates they've cut about fifty thousand feet of spruce already.

"They couldn't have done it this fall so far, so I s'pose they must have worked some last winter. They're 'way inside our line, and they know it. But they intend to fight. We knew what we ought to do all right enough, but we wanted to have the owner's say-so on it before going ahead."

"The thing to do is to get the sheriff and a posse and an injunction and stop 'em cutting," said Burke.

Ferguson gazed out of the window, and drummed with his fingers on the desk.

"That *would* be the thing, Mr. Burke," he said, after a short silence, "if the Mantee district was in this county. But it isn't. It's over in Ballard County."

"Well," said the diminutive owner impatiently, "get the sheriff of Ballard County and take it into court there."

"You don't quite understand, Mr. Burke," said the patient Ferguson. "Joe Belden, who practically runs the Belden Company, is sheriff; old Harvey Belden, from down in Forestville, Joe's uncle, is the supreme court justice; and Tod Ballard, Joe's brother-in-law, is the county judge. Pretty much in the family," he added, with a rueful laugh. "You'd get about as much justice over there as you could wrap up in a beech-

nut. Tom Belden, Joe's brother, who is actively in charge of the Belden interests, came up on the train with you to-day. I saw him pass here a few minutes ago. He's one of the forestry commissioners."

"Well, I'll be—hemstitched!" gasped Peewee Burke; then, humbly: "What is it that you know you ought to do, Mr. Ferguson?"

"Fight," was the laconic answer.

CHAPTER IV.

A NIGHT CONFERENCE.

Flanagan, who was one of the last to leave the bunk house, saw the bundle on the buckboard seat with Joe Trudeau jar itself loose, and a straw-colored head come up out of the collar of the big fur coat.

As the figure stood erect everybody noted that standing it was but slightly taller than Joe was sitting down. Joe grinned. He anticipated something pleasant.

"Which one of you is Flanagan?" inquired a high treble voice mildly.

"I'm Flanagan; who are you? An' where are you?"

This pleasantry was not lost on the men. In fact, the head of Peewee Burke above the huge fur coat was rather funny. He ignored the latter part of the question.

"I'm Burke," said he. "I thought I owned this place, but it seems that a chap named Belden does. So I'm up here to see about it. You're the foreman on this cutting, Mr. Ferguson tells me. I want to talk with you."

He looked around at the weather-beaten faces, and hesitated for an instant. Then he smiled when he spoke.

"And after that I want to speak to you boys about a little excursion up into the north country."

The wild yell that followed this speech was sufficient commentary on Burke's ability to judge human nature—though it was not so wonderful in this instance, because Ferguson had posted him on the temper of the men.

He slipped out of the big fur coat, and, after a glance at the mud hole on his side of the buckboard, hopped over the low dashboard and the backs of the horses and alighted on the chip-strewn ground on the other side with no more effort than if he had walked down a stairway. Immediately he turned and walked off with the now crestfallen Flanagan.

"Well, by thunder!" ejaculated Denny Hawkins, who was the champion jumper of the camp, "did you see that jump? T' say nothin' o' goin' over th' hosses, it was a good ten feet on the level. I couldn't do it myself from whar he stood. An' I'm no slouch."

"He fire Sim Dobbs to-day, down at Man'tou," volunteered Joe Trudeau. "He's ver' beeg li'l man, dat boss. He's meet Tom Belden w'en we drive out Man'tou an' he's say to me, 'Who dat feller, Joe?' An I say, 'Tom Belden.' 'Stop,' he's say, 'I want talk dat mans.' I put team across road an' Belden he's stop 'cause can't git by. 'Say,' boss says, an' he's spik lak he's glad t' see dat feller, 'I hear you Tom Belden?' 'Sure,' says Belden, 'dat's me; who be you?' 'I'm Peewee Burke dat owns lan' you steal timber from. Bimeby I geev myself de pleasure t' pull you' nose out dere on Mantee. Drive on, Joe.' An' Tom Belden he's jus' laff an' say, 'Better be careful, Burke, 'cause I got mans enough on Mantee t' wipe your mans off de slate!'"

The woodsmen heard him out in silence, and as they turned to enter the bunk house one of them said—and he voiced the sentiment of all: "Well, the Beldens are hogs, and if this little sliver wants to give him a battle he can count on me."

Immediate activity marked the advent of Peewee Burke. That very night a messenger went to notify MacChesney's gang on the west cutting to report at the east cutting camp as soon as possible. And another messenger, with the buckboard, went south to Manitou with a note to Ferguson, telling him of certain things Mr. Burke wanted and which he was to procure forthwith.

The latter message followed the short

conversation between Flanagan and his boss, in which Flanagan told Burke all that he had seen on Mantee; and Ferguson, when he read the note, threw up his hands and laughed scornfully.

"I guess he isn't just right in the head," was his comment.

But faithfully he went about getting together the things the boss wanted. And one of the first things was the rounding up of Sim Dobbs, the sudden curtailment of Sim's debauch, and the presentation of that gentleman, sober and bright-eyed, to Peewee Burke, in the office of the Burke Lumber Company, when the boss came out of the woods after several days at the east cutting.

There was conciliating talk from the boss and ready response from Sim, though, to placate his pride, he had to appear reluctant to patch up the quarrel. And Burke, with his instinctive judgment of men, humored the grizzled giant until Sim grudgingly admitted that "mebbe I did fetch a man back, after all."

There was a conference one night in the office of the Burke Lumber Company, in which Johnson, convalescent, Sim Dobbs, Ferguson, and Peewee Burke participated. At its close Mr. Burke made a little speech.

"If we expect to win," said he, "we must be secretive and thorough. If we cannot get men enough to fight, we can manufacture enough for a bluff. The plan I've outlined is a stale chestnut, but it may work up here. I'll go to New York in a few days to get things together. In the meantime, speed is the watchword."

Following which Sim Dobbs disappeared from Manitou, and Johnson took the morning train for the south, to return within a week with three strangers, who immediately were driven out of Manitou into the woods.

Boxes and packages began to arrive in Manitou addressed to the Burke Lumber Company, and they were hustled into waiting buckboards and whisked away into the woods. It was generally understood that the boxes contained rifles and cartridges, and Manitou shuddered delightedly at prospect of a "lumber war."

The climax came when Bobby Lee, the smooth-faced young giant guard on the Halswell College football team, dropped off the train one morning, followed by thirteen rugged chaps as brawny in their way as was Bobby.

Then it was that the Belden Lumber Company's agent sat up and took notice.

Next morning another batch of ablebodied young men alighted from the train, boarded the Burke Lumber Company's waiting buckboards, and started for the woods. The morning following there was another detachment, which the Belden agent watched with wide-open eyes.

"B'gad, I guess he means business," muttered the agent. "That makes fifty-four. Tom said he couldn't get another man in the woods, but I guess he overlooked the fact that he could get a few outside that would do for this business. And they look like husky youngsters, too. Anyway, they're as good as real men when they've got guns back of them. I think it's about time I was getting over to Beldenville."

If the agent had followed the buckboards to the first crossroads, he might have witnessed the meeting between Peewee Burke and his classmates; he could have heard the laughter and conversation, and then he could have followed on the twenty-mile drive to Connerton, where the young men boarded trains to take them back to Halswell College.

Bobby Lee insisted on remaining.

"Who is going to take care of Peewee if I don't?" was his clinching argument.

CHAPTER V.

THE WAR IN THE WOODS.

Tom Belden received his agent's report with grave face, but he wasted no time in getting every man he could find and massing them at the camp on Mantee.

"I guess you're right, Bill," he said, in answer to the agent's assertion. "He means business, sure, but we can't back

down now. It would put us in the wrong. Possession is nine points of the law, anyway; and we got a little law in the family to help us out in a pinch."

He laughed, and Bill laughed. The Beldens ran Ballard County about as they wanted it.

"If it comes to a fight I guess we can hold our own against a few hundred 'rah-'rah boys," continued Tom Belden. "The stockade should be all up by this time, and they can't get within fifty yards of it on any side without coming out in the open. All we've got to do is to keep snug inside and let 'em sputter. Maybe it will not be so bad, after all."

Out in the woods the Burke Lumber Company's scouts allowed no one within miles of the east cutting camp. One of Belden's men was turned back one day, but not before he had seen the east cutting clearing black with lounging men.

His story, however, fitted very nicely with that of Belden's Manitou agent and Sim Dobbs, who had drifted into camp one day and asked for a job. He was hired on the spot on order given by Tom Belden shortly after Burke arrived in Manitou.

"Probably Sim Dobbs will be around after a job," Belden told his woods boss. "Young Burke fired him the other day because Sim didn't treat him as if he were grown up. He's a peppery little crab, and sassy as they make 'em. He may give us some trouble. But hire Sim if he comes around. He'll probably get drunk and stay drunk until his money is gone and then hike for our camp. I told him he could have a job any time he wanted it."

Sim appeared as foretold, and he did not come empty-handed. He had plenty of information to give the Belden outfit, and it hastened work on the new stockade, which was constructed of upended ten-foot logs pierced with regulation frontier portholes, with the bunk house, cook shack, and stables inside.

There was no doubt that a state of war existed. Denny Hawkins discovered it when a bullet whizzed by his ear as he was walking toward the Belden camp on Mantee. Denny was invited to throw up his hands, which he did with great celerity. Then he was led captive to the stockade and brought before Tom Belden.

"Getting careless in your old age, Denny?" queried Tom.

"Nope, worse'n that, foolish," chirruped Denny, with a grin. "I'm lookin' for a job."

"Something happened over on the Manitou, eh?"

"Fired, that's all," was the laconic answer.

"What for?"

"I guess I got sassy with the kid."

"Meaning Mr. Burke?"

"Ya-as—*Mister* Burke," grinned Denny.

"He is pretty peppery, isn't he, Denny? You know he's going to pull my nose one of these days."

"I heard about it." And again Denny grinned.

Denny was hired, and Denny talked —*ad libitum*. Young Burke had some queer ideas, according to Denny. He had a couple of hundred men already, and more were coming every day. He was actually drilling them in the clearing at east cutting. Every man had a partner, and they were under orders never to be separated for a minute.

"There are three men who don't take any part in the target practice or the drilling," Denny added. "I don't know who they are. They watch everything, but never say anything to any one. I don't know when the expedition is to start. But I do know that it is to be a night attack. The kid wants to take you by surprise. Often he gets the men up in the night to train the pairs not to get separated in the dark. He is a queer customer—that college man."

Shortly before Christmas one of the Belden scouts brought word that Peewee Burke's men had left the east cutting and were on their way toward Mantee. And, just as Denny had said, they traveled in pairs. The scout watched them as long as he could with safety, and then came in to report. He had counted something over three hun-

dred men, but didn't think he got them all. Tom Belden looked still more grave when this report came, but his teeth shut with a snap, and he ordered everybody within the stockade. At the count of noses there were two hundred and ten men.

"Nearly two to one," muttered Tom Belden to himself. "Well, no matter, we've got the advantage of 'em; we're protected."

When the darkness came, Peewee Burke turned to his army, and said with a laugh: "You can throw 'em away now, boys; I guess everybody has seen us that's going to, and they are most infernally in the way. But keep enough of them for Belden to shoot at, as I instructed." Whereat each man detached himself from his "partner," and carelessly threw aforesaid "partner" in the heap with the others.

CHAPTER VI.

BEHIND THE STOCKADE.

"Ho, Tom Belden!"

The call came from the woods surrounding the Belden camp on Mantee. Inside the stockade determined men stood at every porthole, rifle cocked, and waiting only for the word of command to fire at the moving shadows that for an hour had been taking positions within the shelter of the trees.

"Ho! Tom Belden!"

This time the voice was a womanish screech, and involuntarily Big Jem Ballard guffawed with a muffled roar that was distinct at the edge of the clearing. Tom Belden tiptoed in moccasined feet over snow that always threatened to "crunch," and in careful whispers angrily remonstrated with his kinsman.

"Tom Belden, if you are inside that stockade I want to talk with you."

The high treble cut the still air like a knife blade. All sounds ceased; Peewee Burke's men were in their places. There was not a breath of wind. The brooding stillness of a winter's night had settled over the woods. In the distance occasionally a tree cracked with the frost. Inside the stockade fingers twitched at the trigger, impatient at delay when slouching fingers presented fair marks only half covered by the bare trees. Tom Belden held animated parley with his advisers.

Once more the cry came from without the stockade.

"Belden, if you are there, I want you to hear what I've got to say."

"Well, say it," shouted Tom Belden. "Don't chin all night."

"I'm glad you're there," returned the shrill voice. "You're the only one I really want. Now, listen to me. I've got enough men here to clean you off the slate. I'm disposed to be merciful, though I've had plenty of provocation, and you're illegally occupying land which I own. If you will agree to withdraw your men and cease cutting on my property until our boundary line can be surveyed by an impartial engineer, I'll agree to give any and all your men safe conduct through the woods to the town line of Beldenville. If you refuse, I shall be obliged to defend my rights."

"Oh, cut it out——" began Belden.

"Don't interrupt until I finish," cried Burke. "I think it no more than fair to warn you that I have the law on my side, which you know, and it will go hard with you, aside from any disability or inconvenience you may be put to tonight, after this thing is over. No, wait a minute; I haven't finished.

"If you have an honest doubt as to the location of our boundary line, I have here a written statement by Jim Johnson, a competent surveyor whom you know, also a complete set of drawings and maps, which I'll be glad to have you look at. If you will give your word of honor not to hold me by force, I'll go in there and confer with you. Or, if you'd prefer, I'll give you my word of honor to allow you perfect liberty if you want to come outside and examine the maps and documents. I guess that's all."

Tom Belden laughed loud and long. The men took their cue from him, and all around the stockade the laugh rolled. It was so droll, this childlike method of Peewee Burke.

"Well, sonny," boomed Belden, "I'm

giving you credit for some sort of a grand-stand play in all that big talk, because I don't think you're fool enough to think that I am going to give up my property to you on your say-so. You may be smart, but old Tom Belden wasn't born yesterday, and he's been at this game a little longer than you have.

"Now, if you take my advice, you'll take your 'rah-'rah boys and go back home again and let peaceable men get their rest. If you don't, some o' you are going to get hurt. I know just how many men you've got; and, while it's true that you outnumber us, don't forget that we've got the position and you've got to get inside this bunch of logs before you can begin to do business. Now, go along home, like a good little boy, and let us go to bed."

"Is that your last word, Belden?"

"Well, I don't think of anything else."

Silence fell upon the woods again. For five minutes there was not a sound. Then, with a roaring swish, a giant rocket hurtled itself into the heavens. In the stillness of that winter's night this was sufficiently impressive. Those inside the stockade waited to see what followed. There was another interval; then, in the dim light, dusky shadows could be seen slowly mounting the trees near the edge of the clearing.

"By thunder!" muttered Tom Belden, at his porthole, "he's no fool. There's going to be hot work here to-night. Get ready there, men," he bellowed, his voice crashing through the woods. "They're getting up into the trees to fire down into us. Pick 'em off. Take careful aim, and *get 'em.*"

The first sharp crack of a rifle came from the vicinity of Tom Belden. It was followed by a screech from the woods and the fall of a heavy body. Then pandemonium broke loose. With the first sound of a gun from outside the stockade, Tom Belden pricked up his ears. He listened intently, then turned to Big Jem.

"He must be crazy!" he roared. "Just plumb crazy! Do you hear that? They're using shotguns instead of rifles. Jem, it's like taking a rattle from a baby."

For fully five minutes the firing continued. From outside the stockade it was incessant and thunderous. Those inside fired only when they could find a mark, or something that looked like a mark. And these were not hard to find.

It seemed as if the 'rah-'rah boys recklessly exposed themselves. Many times a sure marksman, seeing his man fall behind his tree, turned his attention elsewhere, only to find, when he looked again, that another man had taken the place of the one he had dropped. This happened so often that the men inside the stockade began to comment on it as they reloaded.

"B'gad, I've dropped four of 'em back of th' same tree," said one. "There must be a bunch of 'em."

"That's funny," said his mate. "I've plugged three or four, too, and another shows up right away. I guess there was more of 'em than Tom thought."

Suddenly a rocket went up. Another followed, then another and another and another. Then scores of them. The attention of the entire fighting force was attracted.

Just as suddenly, from the other side of the inclosure, there came a hollow thud. From the edge of the trees a dark, oblong object sailed majestically into the air and dropped inside the stockade, where it bounced along erratically until a man ran out from the walls and grabbed it, held it for an instant, and then, with a startled cry, threw it from him again.

Before any one could conjecture what it might be, another dark object sailed up into the air and dropped inside the inclosure. Then another followed, and another and another.

From the edge of the woods the hollow thuds followed each other rapidly, and the mysterious things began to drop inside faster and faster.

A sort of a panic began to seize the men; this was a sort of warfare they did not understand. Visions of bombs and infernal machines came to their minds. A few of the more courageous

made a dash for one of the bounding things and fell upon it.

"Jab a knife in 'em," cried a voice. No one knew whose voice it was or where it came. Instinctively the knife was drawn, and with one fierce jab the lively, bounding object collapsed.

"Stung!" laughed Tom Belden, great relief in his voice, when he had captured one of the objects. "It's a common, ordinary football that them 'rah-'rah boys use to play a game with. Bust every blame one of them, boys, so they can't use 'em any more. They're having fun with us. Atchoo! Atchoo!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE ROUT

Tom Belden sneezed. That was the beginning of it. He sneezed with gusto, a great, whole-hearted sneeze. Then a man near him sneezed. Then another—and another. And soon half the men in the stockade were sneezing.

"What th'—— Atchoo! Atchoo! What's the matter? Atchoo!" gasped the astonished leader of the Beldenites.

From the trees that marked the edge of the woods there came a steady stream of fire that marked the line of the besiegers. Peewee Burke's men fired incontinently, apparently at random.

It seemed like a waste of ammunition, for, inside the stockade, not a man had been hit. That is, not a man was disabled.

A few had received stunning blows from strange missiles that looked like shiny cocoons. One or two had been curious enough to pick them up and look at them after being struck.

Every one noticed that when they struck wood or any other hard substance they cracked and broke asunder. And to all appearances they were empty.

Finally there was a man who picked one from his coat, where it had lodged, and as he pressed upon it with his fingers it broke, and he saw a quantity of fine powder fly into the air.

Immediately he was seized with a violent fit of sneezing. Light dawned upon him.

"Sneezing powder!" he sputtered, and he tried to explain to Tom Belden, who was too busy to wait for the explanation punctuated by sneezes.

Everybody within the inclosure was infected. Sneezing had become the paramount issue. It was only occasionally that a shot was fired at the attacking party, and then it was only perfunctorily, for no man could remain still long enough to take aim. The climax came when Jem Ballard threw down his gun and ran screaming toward the bunk house.

"I'm blinded! I'm blinded!" he gasped.

"So am I" cried another, gouging at his eyes with his bare hands.

And from the edge of the clearing the line of fire sent its curious missiles snapping and crackling into the inclosure.

The sneezing became tremendous. The air seemed impregnated with a queer, irritating poison that attacked the eyes and nose. Men went from one sneezing fit into another.

Too late, Tom Belden saw through the plan. Any attempt at order had been given up long since. Game to the last, the leader of the Beldenites tried to make one more stand.

"Get—atchoo!—to the—atchoo!—bunk—atchoo!—house," he gurgled, and ran from one man to another, dragging them by the arms and pointing until they understood.

Then there was a great rush. Every one wanted to be the first man inside. All wanted that shelter.

Those in the rear either did not hear or did not heed the frantic cries of those in the lead when the rush began. Men who entered first, after they had been in the bunk house for only a few seconds, screamed in agony, and turned to fight their way out again.

Nose and throat and lungs and eyes were filled with the stifling powder. It was not a defeat; it was a rout. Inside the bunk house, men lay on the floor gasping and sneezing, so weak that they could barely jerk themselves

out of the way of the calked boots of their fellows.

And still that terrible hail of shiny missiles blazed from the trees about the edge of the clearing.

Then, when the confusion was at its height, two figures, their heads swathed in cloths, and with little spongelike contrivances tied snugly over their noses and mouths, ran boldly from beneath the windows of the bunk house to the two gates of the stockade and threw them wide open.

Immediately there was a rush of men, who apparently had been waiting for this instant, all of them with heads swathed and noses and mouths protected, with Peewee Burke in the lead.

The figure of the diminutive leader darted here and there like a flash, pointing out his orders, because he could not speak. And the men, trained for the moment, obeyed with an alacrity that bespoke thorough understanding.

Each man carried pieces of stout rope. As they came to a helpless man, wheezing and spitting upon the ground, they turned him over and trussed him up deftly and quickly, but thoroughly.

Occasionally there was a hardy spirit who weakly tried to resist. Without compunction, he was tapped on the head with the short club that every man had attached to his wrist by a leathern thong.

Within a half hour every man of the ill-fated garrison was tightly bound and lay with his fellows in the bunk house, with all the windows open and the three strangers—doctors thoughtfully provided by Burke—hurrying from one to another, administering a lotion to allay the terrible irritation of nose and throat.

When it became apparent that all resistance had ceased, Peewee Burke ran to the middle of the inclosure, and, setting a rocket, touched it off. Immediately the firing from the trees ceased. The battle of Mantee was won—a bloodless victory, thanks to the innocent sneeze.

An Interrupted Shave

By Carlton Roberts

Showing a variety of false alarm new to Mr. and Mrs. Proudfit.

"THERE go those screams again! John! John! Do you hear them?" Mrs. Proudfit dropped the pancake turner and shouted to her husband, struggling over his before-breakfast shave.

"Wonder what they are?" Proudfit blew a bubbling mass of lather from his lips in reply.

"It's simply dreadful. Hear that? It sounds as though it came from the apartment across the court, halfway down, about the third floor," she went on, rushing to the bathroom door and peering in at her husband, juggling with the razor. Her eyes were big with wonder and pity.

"It's been going on for three days now, hasn't it?" Proudfit asked, repeating the wondering look and absent-mindedly jabbing the shaving brush into his eye.

"Yes, *four* days," Mrs. Proudfit corrected in an awed tone. "The screams come at about the same time, too. Nice thing, for a man to beat his wife first thing in the morning!"

"Sounds that way, all right," winced Proudfit, hunching his shoulders and nearly cutting the lobe off his ear as a series of shrieks, muffled and agonizing, came up through the court to their apartment on the sixth floor.

"I think the police ought to know about it," his trembling little wife put in. "It's simply horrible, John."

"I guess it's that pair that moved in a week ago. I wonder what the row's about?"

He put down the razor carefully, tip-

toed to the bathroom window, opened a crack, and peered down across the court.

His wife, a trembling hand on his shoulder, tried to get a look at the flat in question.

"Can you see anything?" she piped in the same hushed voice.

"No."

At that moment a wild cry welled up through the court, and then there was a sudden and abrupt silence.

A tense two minutes passed.

"Can you see anything, John?" queried Mrs. Proudfit in a fluttering tone.

"Somebody just slammed a window shut in their flat. I saw his face," answered the other.

"Oh, how'd he look?"

"Hair mussed up. Face red and perspiring," was the reply, as Proudfit turned away from the window.

His wife, on tiptoes, took his place. Nothing occurring, she dropped to her heels, and turned with a gasp:

"The brute. I suppose he's through beating her at last?"

"Couldn't expect him to keep it up all day," answered John, making faces at himself in the mirror as he tried to get at a wisp of truant hair on his upper lip.

"I don't think you're at all nice about it, John," she pouted. "You really ought to do something. It's been four mornings now."

"Thanks! I'll let well enough alone. Besides, she may be yelling for sympathy. I don't believe he's beating her. Men don't do that sort of thing nowadays."

"Don't they?" there was a shade of a sneer on his wife's face as she darted into the kitchen, flopped over two burned pancakes, and rushed back to read aloud extracts from the trial of a wife-beater, cheerfully chronicled in the morning paper.

"But that's exceptional," Proudfit asserted.

"Couldn't it happen across our own court just as well as not?" his wife asked in an injured tone.

"Well, whatever it is, I'm not going to meddle," replied Proudfit, as he wiped the razor on his bathrobe and returned it to its case.

The very next morning at the same hour came the accustomed shrieks.

"It's getting on my nerves," declared Mrs. Proudfit. "You've simply got to find out what's the trouble and try to help that poor woman. Can't you tell by the tone of voice that she's in physical agony?"

"It certainly seems that way." Proudfit looked positively worried.

"I think you ought to do something," she goaded him on.

"But what can I do? I can't go down and call him out for a fight," replied Proudfit.

"You might at least call up the superintendent and tell him to do something. Oh, it's horrible. Do you hear that?"

A ringing scream sounded through the court at that moment, and he stood in uncertainty. Proudfit quivered with the mystery of the thing.

"Call up the building superintendent and ask him what it is. I can't stand it, John. I saw the woman who lives in that apartment yesterday; she looked badly, and she was buying medicine at the drug store."

Another scream decided Proudfit. He rushed to the phone, and asked for the superintendent.

A flow of seething language greeted his shocked ears as he was put on the wire with the superintendent's rooms.

"Helen, come here!" Proudfit placed his hand over the mouthpiece and called to his wife in a low, mysterious tone.

She rushed to his side, and together they listened to the angry voice expostulating with the superintendent.

"I tell you, it's got to stop!" the man was crying. "I won't stand for it any longer. The noise that woman makes is simply outrageous. Our bathroom's flooded again. I tell you I'll move out if you don't make them stop this screaming every morning."

"But, Mr. Hodges," the superintendent broke in, "I've asked the gentleman on the third floor, above you, to be careful about the water leaking through into your rooms, and others has kicked

about the screams; but he says the doctor's orders was positive."

The Proudfits eavesdropped with breathless eagerness.

"But it's all foolishness. They ought to be more careful," the irate second-floor tenant went on. "They ought to stop and realize that there are other people here that have some rights."

"Well," said the superintendent in a weary voice, "I'll see what I can do about it; but the gentleman on the third floor says the doctor's orders was positive an' that his wife would have to take a cold shower bath for five minutes every mornin'. He says she don't like it an' just can't help screamin' with the shock, an' splashin' water all over the place. But I'll see what——"

Proudfit hung up the receiver slowly, and gazed at his wife for a full minute before his face broke into a beaming smile.

"The idea!" cried Mrs. Proudfit, giving a curious little giggle as a final agonizing scream echoed up through the court. "I don't blame her for yelling. Think of it! A five-minute cold shower every morning."

At that instant the telephone bell clanged, and both jumped like guilty children.

"Answer it, John." Mrs. Proudfit pushed him toward the instrument, and he took down the receiver mechanically.

"Hello, Mr. Proudfit," came the hall boy's voice. "You want the superintendent? He was busy when you called up. I can get him now."

"No, I don't want the superintendent," answered Proudfit, dropping the receiver on its hook and joining his sheepish-looking wife by the window, where she was gazing down into the third-floor flat opposite, with a sympathetic little smile on her face.

Heroes of the Alps

EVERY summer brings its stories of accidents among the crags and snow slopes of the Alps. Switzerland has been well called "the playground of Europe," and mountaineering, like some other sports and recreations, has its very real risks and dangers.

Of course, this very fact is the salt of life to the ardent mountaineer, and while to some it fails to be a deterrent, to others it is positively an inducement. There is one thing to be said—the more scientifically a man goes about this sport, the less he is likely to "come a cropper."

Climbing without guides when knowledge is imperfect is probably responsible for more accidents than any. The climbers attempt the impossible, or attempt the practicable in the wrong way at the wrong time. The "tight corner" is at last reached—the difficult bit or the treacherous place—and there is no experienced guide to get them out of it. Were he there, the imprudent adventurers would soon have an illustration of his wisdom and resourcefulness.

A Swiss guide's sense of responsibility to his employer is very fine. Occasionally one guide is called upon to manifest it toward another.

Last February a magnificent instance of this took place. Two guides, Jules Favret and Edouard Ravanel, were returning to Chamounix from a ski expedition. While crossing the glacier, the former fell and broke his leg. Here was a predicament. To fetch aid from Chamounix would have taken six hours, and help would probably have arrived to find the sufferer frozen to death.

Ravanel had lately dislocated his shoulder, and the injury was not yet healed. He resolved, however, despite this, to carry his comrade down. Jules generously protested he would rather die, but Ravanel insisted. The descent, always difficult in winter, was fraught with peril to any one thus hampered, but it was accomplished. Between four and five o'clock in the morning the heroic fellow staggered into Chamounix. His human burden was unconscious by that time, but his life was saved.

At the Call of the Coach

By Harold C. Burr

A football story, and one that is enriched by real heart interest. Part of the game is on the gridiron, but the other part is quite as absorbing.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

THE SUMMONS.

IT was said of Andy Soper that he had never heard his alma mater call to him and not answer. Take for instance that afternoon of strife and stress seven years ago. It was Severen's ball twelve yards from the final chalk rib wherein the great white "H" of the goal post was spiked into the soil.

To go over meant victory for the Purple and Gold. But Severen had already had two tries and failed weakly. The eleven, desperate, ferocious human animals that had once been men, snapped and growled impotently in the line-up.

That march down the field had cost them dear. Bodies wearied and hearts a-sob, they had been held for three downs, flung back upon themselves. Now they crouched, waiting for the last maddened spring of despair at the enemy's throat. And the quarter back signaled that he would use Soper.

With doffed hats, the Severen rooters were chanting the wailing battle hymn of the college. Ears deadened to all else, Randy Soper heard two things —the slow, solemn, measured song, and the sharp, incisive, boyish-voiced signals of the quarter.

Those twin sounds made him grit his teeth, strain to leap ahead. Severen was calling to him, beseeching him. And it wouldn't be a requiem. He felt the new strength surge thrillingly through him.

Then he got the ball.

He went into that mêlée of grappling, struggling men like a man propelled by a released invisible spring. Willing hands dragged him on in frenzy. He communicated the spirit of that song to his teammates, infusing them.

Well, Severen won, Soper making twelve clean yards on that last down.

But all that was seven years ago.

Randy Soper had graduated. Now Severen called him again—called him back to coach a forlorn hope. He received the telegram at a lonely, blizzard-bound trading post in the snow wastes of the far North.

Soper went out and found a dog team, and before night he had started. It was a dogged, day-long, night-weary tramp. He had the energy of two tireless men.

At the first village he kicked his Indian guide out of his job. Frostbitten in half a dozen places, he reached the line of the connecting link with the "outside"—the railroad. And one fine day Randy Soper reported to the captain of the Severen football squad for duty.

Still was he without fatigue. On the selfsame night of his arrival he was in consultation with the advisory board on athletics. He learned how this year's mediocre eleven fared. It was a tale of defeats.

Out of Soper's gridiron experience he had learned one truth—a great eleven is invariably built around one man. The new coach asked questions. Severen had no such pivot around which to weld a machine of grit and sinew. It seemed a forlorn hope, indeed, to dream of vic-

tory two weeks hence against Severen's best-hated, worse-beloved rival—Delarand University.

Delarand was the sort of rowdy college that gave in exchange for every yard relinquished a drop of blood. This year she would romp joyously up and down the field touchdown mad. Captain Leigh was disheartened.

But it was Soper, optimistic, who took him aside and had a talk with him. He got him to make admissions.

"Why, yes, there is a chap in college," he confessed. "I wish you would get after him, if you could. Name's Neville. He's beefy, and fast, and hits the line all humped up. I know, because he came out for the eleven early. But he quit."

Soper looked into the young captain's grave face thoughtfully. "That's bad. What ailed him—streak o' yallar?"

"No, and that's the part that beats all. He was a silent sort of duffer, used to moon around by himself and take his orders like an obedient puppy. That sort get on my nerves somehow. Then, all of a sudden, he laid down cold. There's no more college spirit in him than a cow. Wouldn't explain. Just sat braced in his chair and wouldn't budge. Said he'd gotten sick of the game. But we knew he was lying. Well, we fellows gave up urging him after a while, and gave him the go-by. He's been on the outside looking in ever since. It can't be physical fear. But, hallelujah how that young bull could go through flesh and bone! It's a shame!"

"What did you say his name was? I'll look him up and have a talk with him."

"Neville—Percy Neville. Rooms over at Mrs. Graham's, on Blair Street."

Soper nodded. "That settles it," he said decisively, "we've got to round up Neville. He's the man to bolster us up. I'll have him back on the squad by next week, if I have to drag him out by the scruff of the neck!"

"Well, I wish you luck, sir." Leigh was shaking hands. "But you'll find him an obstinate old mule to handle."

CHAPTER II.

"JUST A CHANCE."

Soper kept his promise the next evening. Mrs. Graham ran a select boarding house for select young college gentlemen. There were roses in the yard, a rusty gate, and green blinds at every window. It developed that Neville had the second story front.

The coach went up without ceremony. He knocked, and turned the door handle with the same motion. It was Soper's way. He had traveled down from Alaska at breakneck speed to whip out a winner at Severen. Nothing had daunted him, stopped him. It was the reverse of natural then that a surly giant of a deserter should hold him off now.

But on the inner side of that threshold he stopped in astonishment. Neville was at home. He had turned squarely to face the intruder. Head Coach Randy Soper knew him—to his regret.

"Nick!" gasped the man whose loyalty to Severen had brought him out of the frozen arctic. "What the devil are——"

The other smiled lamely, motioning him to a chair. "Yes, it's me, all right," he owned up readily. "I've changed my name since—since—— But sit down. It's a long story."

Soper's face was hardening. "I don't think I'd better stop," he declared, with at effort at self-control, bringing himself up with a round turn. "I didn't know it was you—masquerading under the nom de plume of Neville!"

"God knows I've suffered, Randall. Since—since that afternoon you caught me tampering with your father's books I've lived twenty years—twenty years and it isn't two yet!" He stretched out his hands pleadingly. "Randall, I don't ask your forgiveness; I don't want your friendship. I'm not a cringer, and up to date I've taken my medicine without whimpering. You were in court the day the judge sent me up. It was fifteen years at hard labor. There was a sob in my throat—but I made it stick there. You were just back from col-

lege, and I, a mere boy clerk, ruined your dad and drove you into Alaska to look for a living. I'm sorry and ashamed, but I don't want your pity, either. I never was a hypocrite, Randall. Remember, I didn't deny that forged certified check when you came back that night and caught me—fixing the accounts."

Soper was white, and when he moved his hand it trembled. "You went to prison after—after the governor's funeral. Nick Lucas, I swore then that if you ever crossed my path in life again I'd think of dad and pray my aim was true! The news of your new trial reached me before I started into the North. You had powerful friends, and the law was afterward bulldozed. But what are you after here?"

"Just a chance. I've been a whelp. I treated the only friend I ever had in the world low down. You got me that position in your father's mill." He made an empty, futile gesture. "Well, you see how I've repaid you. But I would like a chance, if it isn't too much to expect—of you. That's what I've been trying to say."

CHAPTER III.

THE BALANCE OF MERCY.

"What sort of a chance?" asked Soper dispassionately.

Lucas, whose other name was Neville, spoke swiftly: "Just a chance to hew to the line, to reach down and drag my manhood up out of the mire. Ah, Randall, you good chaps! You don't, can't, won't know how my soul's been tormented in the sweat box of remorse. The rottenness of it all's polluted me until I've cried out. But I'm not going to offer excuses. I came here to Severen to get my fresh start. When I heard of your appointment I forsook the team, foolishly thinking I might avoid you altogether if I cut out football. But it was no use. You're here." The sweat stood out on his forehead. "What are you going to do about it? For God's sake speak!"

Soper went over to the window and stared out. Just out there beyond the pane were the branches of a nude elm in winter garb of simple brown bark; below was a lonely sentinel lamp-post—desolation, darkness, mystery beyond its dim radius of flickering light. Far away somebody's footsteps echoed metallically on the old-fashioned brick walks. Not a sound in the room behind him, only a sensation of some one waiting tensely.

The coach was wrestling with a problem. Once he turned with a vital question. Lucas nodded eagerly. No, there was nothing to prevent him now from going in for football again. At last Soper turned back for good, his decision made.

"Nick," he said quietly, "that throws the balance of mercy in your favor. I've come a long ways to teach old Severen the little pigskin knowledge I've picked up. I was just beginning to get a strangle hold on the Northland, and she was coughing up gold. But I chucked the booty, every dollar of it, because the Purple and Gold was sick, and needed a physician. I want you to stand by the colors, Nick. You can do it if you're in earnest about this manly thing. It's no time for personal animosities. I'm going to patch up a truce."

Lucas didn't offer to overdo it by offering his hand. "Thank you," he said simply, and lifted his head in pride. "Some day I'll pay back every dollar of the money I stole. Only I can't now. It was spent before the conviction."

And Randy Soper left him with a strange feeling in his heart that the conversation was complete.

Sure enough, on Monday afternoon Lucas—or Neville, as he was known to the others on the team—returned to practice with the football men.

Nobody explained the phenomenon. Leigh grinned contentedly, and referred all inquiries to the new coach, who had worked the miracle.

Soper performed other miracles. He kneaded, molded, galvanized that Severen team into a power that gained the yards. He solidified the defense.

But it was Percy Neville whom he

took for his foundation—this Percy Neville, faithful to please, to atone, who had robbed him of all that he counted dear on earth. Severen was calling, and it was Randy Soper who was answering whole-heartedly.

CHAPTER IV.

A LONG CHEER FOR NEVILLE.

Neville went into the Delarand game as the regular varsity right tackle. The whistle blew in Hunterstown that year. Alternately Severen had the date at home and abroad. The team went down Friday night, lifted through the car windows for luck. So much for tradition.

Soper stood on the platform and watched the fun, thinking of other years. Below him swarmed the student body, yelling, singing. A chap in a sweater, mouthing a makeshift newspaper megaphone, was perched on the vestibule step beneath him.

"Neville, fellows!" he called out over that sea of boyish heads. "A long cheer for Percy Neville! Are you ready? Hip-hip——"

Neville himself came through the cars, laughing good-naturedly still from his flying trip through the opened windows. He paused beside the coach and looked out at his college mates.

The engine shrieked warningly; the long line of cars stretched, couplings rattling; the train moved, gathered headway. The young master of ceremonies tossed aside his megaphone, and jumped clear. But above the roar of the racing wheels the staccato college cheer rang.

Soper looked askance at the man beside him. There were tears in his eyes as big as dewdrops.

"Randall, I'd give a leg to please that bunch of loyal white Indians!" he gulped, and that was all, enough.

CHAPTER V.

THE WHISTLE SHRILLS.

A raw wind swept across the gridiron. The two elevens trotted out, swathed in blankets to their ears. In that bleak November weather the subs were glad enough to huddle together on the long, low side-line benches.

Out on the white-ribbed skeleton of the gridiron the varsity cavorted coltishly about, practicing punts and formations. There was a brief delay while the linemen pranced about their positions to keep warm, arms swinging.

Severen had the kick-off. The Purple and Gold eleven was strung out from either side of the poised ball, ten strong. The eleventh man was the centre of attraction.

He worked over that resting pigskin tenderly. He pointed it on end, stood off critically, allowing the twin handfuls of dirt he had gathered to sift through his fingers. But the referee had come running out, calling to the captains:

"Ready, Severen? All ready, Delarand?" The next second his whistle shrilled.

The man behind the ball did a quickstep forward; the waiting Purple and Gold line fell into his stride and tore madly down under the twisting kick. Ahead swarmed the garnet-hosed gladiators of Delarand.

To Neville it seemed as if they swarmed like a colony of bees driven out of their hive. He cut across field as the ball arched earthward.

There was a wild, converging scramble, and the whistle again, this time commanding, insistent, the magic peacemaker of the great American game of football. It was Delarand's ball on her own twenty-yard line, first down, ten yards to gain. Thus the game was inaugurated.

The tide of battle was fickle that afternoon. It was a struggle to tickle the most blasé of pigskin followers in the drafty, openwork, peek-a-boo stands. Fumbles, brilliant catches, yards lost and yards won, long, dodging runs and headlong plunges, spiral punts and blocked kicks—all these galore. But the greatest of these was a blocked kick. It lost the game.

It came toward the terminus of the second period of play. Severen had the ball seventeen yards from the goal line that Delarand had bit and scratched so

savagely to keep out of jeopardy all afternoon. Severen's whirlwind attack had been a revelation.

Soper's methods, his individuality stood out in letters two feet high. And Neville had been the centre of it all. But somehow hoodoo had dogged the Purple and Gold up and down the checkerboard.

Never a touchdown so near but a snarled signal or a penalty upset every calculation, made of gallant striving dross. Now in the last, never-to-be-had-again minutes of play a drop kick for goal was to be tried.

It looked like three sure points. The scrimmage was to be directly in front of the posts. In Badger, Severen had a drop-kicker second to none. Often in practice it was no feat at all for him to boot eighteen attempts out of a possible twenty over the bar.

But, you say, that is one thing, and success from behind a struggling line quite another. True enough for you. Badger was hurried. But that was no excuse for Neville allowing the tackle opposite him to storm by him roughshod and receive the booted leather in the pit of the stomach.

That worthy representative of the Garnet must have been properly gummed for the occasion. The ball stuck fast. He staggered, stumbled, recovered his balance, and kept on his way, headed straight for the Severen goal ninety odd yards in the middle distance.

Those who would strive to bring him down were in the rear to a man, bewildered. He had a clear field ahead, gridiron right of way.

The suddenness in the change in the complexion of events was stunning, terrifying—from a Purple and Gold angle of vision. He must be stopped, or all would be up with old Severen for that afternoon. Defeat rose out of the ground specterlike.

It was Neville who led the pack in full cry. Soper, biting his lip raw with awakened anxiety, saw him close with those fleeing red legs, saw him gather himself and dive fearlessly, arms outspread like grappling hooks.

The head coach clenched his fist and drove it downward at nothing in what was meant for a gesture of relief. But his elation died a spasmodic death the next instant.

The flying ball bearer fled on unhindered the while a man sprawled awkwardly on the torn turf, and the ruck of the chase went by. Neville had missed his tackle amid Severen groans.

A minute later the score was 6—0.

Percy Neville, on probation, had set Soper at naught again. It was tough on the head coach. He had spared him for this fiasco—that was all.

CHAPTER VI.

A CLEAN SLATE.

Going back silently on the train, Randy Soper swallowed his defeat like a man—silently. Nobody had much to say, after the manner of good losers, be the game football or tiddledy-winks. Another year was coming.

Yes, it had been a hard game to lose, but it had been a good one to win, too. To the victor belonged the spoils, all right. Not a word to Neville of the mess he had made of things. Everybody just kept their mouths shut and blinked back the bitter tears.

It was Neville who took the empty seat beside Soper. He sat there a whole half hour, moodily staring out into the darkened country that was sweeping past the window in a great flying, blue-black blur—that and the reflected car interior, which swayed grotesquely at the trackside as if in a mirror. At the last stop before Severen he spoke up.

"It's about that game to-day that I wanted to see you," he began uneasily. "You know I almost missed this train—just caught the last hand rail as she went past the water tank, and swung aboard. I had business at a lawyer's in town."

Soper nodded absently, disappointed. Neville's mind was elsewhere, already, after all.

"I'm dead sorry I lost your game for you. Yes, it was your game, and I ought to have won it for you. I've watched you out coaching the eleven,

seen how your heart's been set on turning out a winner for the college. It was tough—that Delarand touchdown, and I'm to blame."

Neville leaned closer the better to whisper in the coach's ear. "But, man, I've got the confession of the chap who cheated your father tucked away in my pocket, duly sworn to before a notary! I exchanged that for a game of football."

"Neville, defeat's addled your brain!" Soper stared at the young fellow before him indifferently. "Better go forward to the smoker and see if Maloney's there. You've been trained too fine."

"I'm not guilty," stoutly affirmed Percy, face white, voice steady. "Thank God I can speak to you now, man to man! It was Kirby. I caught him with the goods that night when you thought you had caught *me*. I was covering up the little scamp's tracks when you happened to drop in. He broke down and bellowed like a cowardly calf, said the local gambling house had threatened to go to his mother for collection. So he had placated them with Mr. Soper's cash.

"Well, we thrashed it over. To cut a long story short, I promised to fix it up for him, and sent him hiking home. Then you came back, and I got the rattles.

"While you were talking, accusing me, I sort of got to thinking of Kirby's mother. In her sickly condition I knew that the disgrace would be the death of her. Then I switched to thinking of the cause of her poor health. Randall, that good little mite of a woman broke down nursing me when I was a kid—out o' pure love."

Neville shrugged, as men will who suffer for others.

"Kirby had one decent streak in him. He managed to save me from prison. Since then his mother's died. He told me to-day. Did you hear the fellow's name who scored for Delarand this afternoon?"

"No."

"Kirby—the very same. To-morrow's papers will say that Crane, of Dartmouth, refereed that game. But don't you believe all you see in the papers! It was Fate who did the refereeing. Kirby got me to one side between the halves. He's the same old leopard, and hasn't changed his spots any. Up to his old cute tricks. But he wanted to bargain. Seems he's thoughtlessly bet somebody else's spare change on Delarand. Told me if I'd chuck the game he'd sign a sworn confession for your inspection. He'd trust to his heels to get away from you."

Percy drew a long breath that sobbed out of his throat like relief from physical pain.

"Randall," he said earnestly, tears in his eyes, "you don't just know how I wanted a clean slate again, old man!"

And Randy Soper, head coach of Severen University, felt around for his hand and gave it a squeeze of silent approbation. It was not the time for him to *speak*.

Music-loving Cows

THIS story is told of a herd of cows that was greatly moved by the music of a band:

Twelve or thirteen cows in a herd were grazing in a large field opposite a dwelling house. One day a German band began playing on the road dividing the house from the field.

No sooner did the cows hear the music than they came from the farther end of the field, and, standing with their heads over the dividing stone fence, quietly listened to the music.

On the departure of the musicians, the cows followed them as far as they could on the other side of the wall. When they could go no farther, they stood lowing piteously. Some of them became so excited that they ran round and round the field, seeking to get out. Finding no outlet, they returned to the corner where they had lost sight of the band, and remained there for a long time.

The Mystery Shop

By Lillian Bennet-Thompson

Some of the brightest examples of clear detective work are supplied to-day by persons not professionals as to training or connection—keen-witted chaps not within the pale of any police department. In this story you make the acquaintance of two young men who open what might be called a mystery shop. It is a place to which people bring their mysteries for solution. How they succeed with the first one brought in makes an exceedingly entertaining, teasing and amusing story.

CHAPTER I.

READY FOR BUSINESS.

RUSSELL HARDING gave a final tap with the hammer, and stood back a little, his head on one side, to contemplate his handiwork.

"Not bad, eh, Jimmie?" he said.

"Stand aside a little and let me have a look," said his friend. "'Harding and Post, Investigators,'" he read. "Investigators of what, Rus? Don't you think you might be a little more explicit?"

Harding shook his head, his eyes still on the neatly lettered sign which he had just tacked on the office door.

"Not on your life!" said he. "That one word and no more! People will see it, and will immediately ask themselves just that question—'investigators of what?' It will rouse their curiosity, and then *they* will investigate. A newspaper paragraph or two, judiciously worked up, will advertise us nicely; and in a short time business will be coming our way."

Jimmie Post looked only half convinced; but he was accustomed to defer more or less to Harding's opinions, and he said no more.

They were both young—on the sunny side of twenty-five—and correspondingly optimistic. For years they had been chums, rooming together through their preparatory school and university courses, and now they had elected to go into business together, as "investigators," to use Harding's term.

The idea of going into that particular line of work had originated with Harding. He had rebelled at the thought of taking a position as clerk, or some similar situation in an office. He wanted his own business; but he was handicapped in his choice of a vocation by a scarcity of capital and lack of experience; and Post was no better equipped.

During the last few weeks the two had spent at college, several petty thefts in the dormitories had baffled the authorities; and Harding had shown no little ability in unraveling the mystery and bringing the culprits to book.

It had immediately occurred to him that here was a business which required no great amount of capital, and in which he could gain experience as time went on. He broached the subject to Post, who began by scoffing at the bare suggestion, and ended by throwing himself heart and soul into the project.

"Common sense, Jimmie, and then more common sense is what we need," Harding said, slipping the hammer into the pocket of his coat and closing up the box of tacks. "The rest of it will come of itself."

"It may come to *you*," returned Post, not without some slight envy. "But I've always believed that detectives were born, not made. And as I wasn't born a sleuth, I'll never be one, if I live from now until doomsday."

"Rot!" said Harding scornfully. "You haven't a big enough opinion of your own ability, Jimmie boy. You want to think well of yourself, first of

all, if you want other people to think well of you. Come on—let's go into our palatial quarters."

He led the way into the little office, and closed the door. The furniture consisted of a couple of small desks—bought secondhand—a typewriter hired by the month, a filing cabinet, and three or four chairs.

Harding dropped into one of the latter, picked up a newspaper, and spread it out on the desk before him.

"Behold!" said he, with a wave of his hand, "we are ready. All we have to do is to wait until clients come."

"And we'll do plenty of that," predicted Post.

But this gloomy prophecy was not to be fulfilled.

CHAPTER II.

PUTTING THE RIDDLE.

Scarcely were the words out of Post's mouth when a knock sounded. Post straightened up suddenly, and removed his feet from the edge of the desk.

"Come in!" called Harding expectantly.

The door swung open, revealing a short, stocky man, who paused on the threshold and cast a questioning glance around.

"I want to see Mr. Harding or Mr. Post," he said.

"I am Mr. Harding," returned the head of the firm, getting to his feet, "and this is Mr. Post."

The visitor advanced a step or two into the room, and laid one hand on the back of the chair Harding had courteously pushed forward.

"You are both very young," he remarked.

"That," said Harding cheerfully, "is something time will cure. And I assure you that it is not our fault. May I ask to whom I have the pleasure of speaking, and whether we can be of service to you?"

"I'm Caleb Harrison; and I don't know whether you can be of service or not," was the reply. "But young brains are agile, and sometimes succeed where the older ones fail. Perhaps you can find out what is going on. I can't and the police can't. You claim to be 'investigators'—the janitor told me about you, and I've just seen it on your sign. I want you to investigate this queer business for me."

Harding bowed profoundly.

"Most happy," said he. "If you will just be seated—and tell us what the trouble is?"

Harrison sat down, frowned, and twisted around for a moment before replying.

"If I knew what the trouble was, I shouldn't have come to you," he said grimly. "I expect you to find that out for me. But if it isn't stopped and that soon, I shall be a ruined man. I'm a chronometer repairer—you can see my place from here."

The partners looked out of the window, and beheld a small shop, surmounted by the sign, "Caleb Harrison —Watches and Chronometers," nearly opposite their own place.

"Yes?" said Harding, turning away from the window and resuming his chair.

"Two or three days ago," continued the little man, "to be exact, Tuesday—this is Saturday—I went to my work as usual in the morning, and was greatly disturbed to find the place in great disorder.

"I had been engaged in repairing a very delicate mechanism, and all the small wheels, levers, and parts of this, which I had left the night before on my workbench, were strewn about on the floor. I at once supposed that burglars had entered the place; but a thorough search failed to reveal the absence of a single thing."

"Nothing was taken?" asked Harding, who had been listening with close attention.

"Absolutely nothing. Of course, I had put all the watchcases and other valuables in the safe; but I am obliged to leave the works on the bench, as otherwise they would get mixed up, and it is essential that they be left undisturbed.

"I inspected the safe with great care;

but apparently no attempt had been made to open it; so that, if robbery had been the motive, the thieves were not professionals. I could not see how an entrance could have been effected, as the doors and windows were all locked, exactly as I had left them.

"I was entirely at a loss, and reported the matter at the police station. A man came around at once and looked the shop over very carefully."

"And what did he think about it?" asked Post, speaking for the first time.

"That the damage must have been caused by rats. It seemed impossible to me that rats could have upset things so thoroughly. But there appeared no other way to account for it, so I set two traps, and spent all day Wednesday searching for and reassembling the parts of the chronometers. I had great difficulty in finding them all, as many of them are very tiny, and they were all over the floor.

"When I went in on Thursday morning, my work was all undone again. Things were, if possible, in a worse condition than they had been on Tuesday. As the police seemed incapable of assisting me, I determined to help myself. I made a careful search for rat holes, but could find none. There were none to find.

"Last night I had succeeded in getting the greater part of the mechanism together again, and I made up a bed in the room at the rear of the shop, after locking up as usual. I left the door between the room and the shop open, so that I should hear any noise; but everything was perfectly quiet, and at last I got tired of watching and went to bed.

"I tried to keep awake; but I must have fallen asleep in spite of myself, for about three o'clock this morning, I was awakened by a faint tinkling sound. I jumped out of bed and rushed into the shop. There was no one there, and everything seemed exactly as I had left it—until I looked at the workbench. The parts were all scattered over the floor again!"

"Did you pick them up again?" asked Harding.

Harrison shook his head.

"No," he replied; "I have touched nothing. The enigma is too deep for me, and I realized that I must have help. As for the police—bah!" He made a gesture of contempt.

Harding reached for his hat.

"Come on, Jimmie," said he. "We will just walk over to Mr. Harrison's, and see things for ourselves."

CHAPTER III.

A CLUE OBTAINED.

They followed the watchmaker across the street, where he unlocked the shop door and motioned them to enter.

Harding stopped just inside, and looked keenly about him.

He saw a small, low-ceiled room, rectangular in shape, one side occupied by a glass show case, the other by a flat-topped workbench and a counter. The show case was empty, everything having been left in the safe.

Back of the workbench stood a high stool, and on top of this lay two or three small wheels. A few others glittered on the workbench, but all about the floor, under the counter, in corners and odd places, the tiny parts had rolled, as if some one had gathered them up in his hand and flung them broadcast.

Harding stooped and picked up two or three of the bits of metal, examined them closely, and then laid them down on the bench. Next he walked over to the show window, but it was sealed in, and there was no way in which it could be opened.

"Are there any other windows?" he asked.

"Two and a door," replied Harrison; "but they are in the back room and open on the alley. No one could enter there, pass through this room, upset things in here, and get out again without my seeing or hearing him. Besides, everything was locked up last night, and was in the same condition this morning."

"I'll just have a look in there, if you don't mind," said Harding.

He stepped into the rear room, which was slightly larger than the shop itself,

and filled with the various appliances which Harrison used in his business.

An examination of the locks of the door and windows showed that no attempt had been made to tamper with them; and, while there was a cellar underneath the place, it was occupied by a cobbler and did not communicate with the shop in any way.

The heat was supplied by a stove, and this came in for a share of Harding's attention. The first tap on the pipe, however, brought down a shower of soot, furnishing conclusive proof that had any one or anything touched it, an indelible trail would have remained.

"You see," said Harrison, as the young man dusted his hands one against the other, "there is absolutely nothing —nothing at all to show what has caused this. Not the slightest trace—and yet it has happened three times, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. If it occurs again, I shall have to close out my business. I cannot work when all the labor of a week is undone overnight."

"I do not agree with you that there is no trace," said Harding quietly.

Harrison looked his surprise.

"Tell me," Harding went on, "is there any one who would be benefited if you were obliged to shut up shop? Have you any enemies who would be likely to try underhand methods to bring about such a result?"

The watchmaker considered for a moment.

"I know of no one—no one at all, unless I except Tauzig," he said, at length.

"And who might he be?"

"A man in my line of business. He had a shop down the street; but after I had been here for a while his business fell off so that he could not make money, and so went away. He accused me of being the cause of his leaving; but he was not a good workman; he was careless and not thorough. His failure was his own fault."

"Did he make any threats?"

"No—not exactly. He merely said I was the fortunate and successful one now, but that I should not always be so."

Harding nodded his head slowly once or twice absently, as if absorbed in thought.

"How does it strike you, Rus?" inquired Post in an undertone. "I don't see a single thing on which to base a clue, do you?"

"I am not sure—it's too soon for that; but I mean to look into it," Harding whispered back. "What was Tauzig's first name, Mr. Harrison?" he added, turning to the watchmaker.

"Ludwig."

"Ah! Thank you."

Harrison came a few steps nearer.

"Tell me," he begged, his voice shaking with excitement, "tell me, what do you suspect?"

Hitherto the little man had been calm; but it was the calmness of despair. It was evident that he had regarded his fate as practically sealed, and that his enlistment of the services of Harding & Post had been a last desperate measure, to which he had resorted with little idea that they could do anything to help him.

Now that Harding's words, noncommittal as they were, held forth a faint hope of succor, his calmness had deserted him, and he stood trembling, clasping and unclasping his chubby hands in a nervous, excited way.

"I can't tell you what I suspect until I have something more tangible to go upon, Mr. Harrison," replied Harding. "But," he added, as he noticed the other's agitation, "I think we shall succeed in solving this mystery, and that very soon."

CHAPTER IV.

SOME TELLTALE BOARDS.

"You believe that burglars have been here, Rus?" queried Post curiously.

"Burglars?" said Harding. "No; nor rats. No human being except Mr. Harrison entered this shop last night. No one could possibly have got in, unless he were able to make himself sufficiently small to get through the key-

hole. And, as there are no rat holes and no trace of any rodent, I think we can dismiss that theory also.

"But the mischief was done by a man—or men—and from the outside, since they could not get in. Just how it was done is for us to find out."

"It's a bit spooky, I think, if you ask me," remarked Post, but Harding was not listening to him.

"Mr. Harrison," he continued, "if you will busy yourself here, exactly as if nothing had happened, I will investigate this case thoroughly and make a report to you this afternoon. Come on, Jimmie."

He linked his arm with Post's, and strode to the door, leaving Harrison standing in the middle of the shop and staring after them with mingled astonishment and incredulity.

"This way," Harding said, as they reached the sidewalk. He turned into a narrow doorway at the right and began to mount a flight of dusty steps that led to the floor above. The building was an old one, and consisted only of two stories and a loft. At the head of the first flight of stairs were two doors, one bearing a small, dirty card, the other innocent of sign or lettering.

Harding bent down and scrutinized the card for an instant, then straightened up with a grunt of satisfaction, and tried the door at the right. It opened on the latch, and he stepped inside, followed closely by Post.

They found themselves in a small, bare room, the dusty floor showing plainly that no one had occupied it for some time.

"We are now directly over Caleb Harrison's workshop," said Harding, carefully closing the door behind him and turning the key in the lock. "Make no noise, Jimmie; we don't want to be disturbed."

"What are you up to, anyway?" Post wanted to know. "There isn't any communication between this room and Harrison's. And, anyway, no one has been in here for a long time, because there are no footmarks in the dust on the floor. I think you're barking up the wrong tree, Rus."

"Do you?" said Harding, with a smile. "Just you wait, and you'll see something that will make you sit up and take notice."

He tiptoed softly across the floor to the front of the room, measured a certain distance from the wall with his eye, and then dropped to his hands and knees.

"I thought so!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "Look here, Jim; this board has been recently taken up—and this—and this!" He pointed to three of the wide parallel boards that formed the flooring.

"Well, what of it?" demanded Post. "There's a ceiling in Harrison's place, and there are no holes in it. I thought perhaps there might be a register or something, so that a man could poke a long pole through; but I made sure that there was no way. There isn't a break in that ceiling from one end of the room to the other—not so much as a crack."

Harding made no reply; but from his pocket he produced the hammer he had used in tacking up the sign on the office door, and, using the fore part as a lever, with the claw he pried up the three boards he had indicated. Then, still without speaking, he laid a dusty hand on his friend's arm, led him to the hole in the floor, and pointed.

"Now do you understand?" he asked quietly.

Post's eyes followed the direction of the outstretched forefinger. Then he bent over, his hands on his knees, his mouth dropped open.

"Oh, by Jove!" he gasped. "By Jove, Rus!"

Harding chuckled, as he replaced the boards, dropping the hammer and nails back into his pocket.

"We won't nail this up again, but it'll be as well to leave it covered over, so that if any one looks in it will appear to have been undisturbed," he said. "And now we'll go down and make our report, and let little Harrison do the rest."

"But I don't understand how you explain——"

"Just you wait," interrupted Harding, "and you'll hear the whole thing."

Locking the door after them, the

young men descended the stairs. Harrison, at work collecting the various parts of the chronometers for the third time, looked up as they entered.

"Well?" he inquired.

"We have discovered the source of the mischief, Mr. Harrison," Harding told him, striving to keep from his voice all trace of the excitemen' and exultation he felt at the successful solving of his first problem.

CHAPTER V.

OFF TO THE MAGISTRATE.

"You have?" cried the watchmaker, starting toward them. "Come—come into the other room, where we can sit down, and tell me all about it.

"Now," he added, when they had complied, "tell me everything. Who has done this? How was it done?"

"Hans Tauzig!" replied Harding promptly.

"Hans Tauzig! Why, he must be the brother of——"

"Ludwig Tauzig," interposed Post, thinking it about time for him to say something. He was almost as much in the dark as was Harrison; but he felt that, at least, he could be sure of the relationship of the two men—it was entirely obvious—and it appeared a good time for him to make some pretense of knowing a little about the affair.

"Exactly," assented Harding. "Whether it was his idea or his brother's, I am unable to say; but the fact remains that Hans is now the prime mover in the affair. Doubtless they planned to drive you out of business, Mr. Harrison, in order that Ludwig might be able to resume work at his former place."

"But I don't understand, Mr. Harding," said Harrison, passing his hand over his forehead in a bewildered way. "How could Hans Tauzig, any more than any other man, get in here? The doors and windows——"

"He didn't get in," explained Harding. "His workshop is on the floor above. As soon as you told me the name of the man who had made the veiled threat to you, I remembered that a person of a similar name had a place on the second floor of this building. His name appears on the window—and he is an electrician. When we went upstairs, I verified my knowledge; there is a card nailed on his door.

"From somewhere inside his shop wires run under the flooring of the hall to a spot in the room above, directly over your workbench; and there, between the boards of the floor and the rafters of your ceiling, he has rigged up a very ingenious apparatus."

"And that is——" asked Harrison breathlessly.

"An electromagnet!"

"What!"

"Just that. Your ceiling is low. The workbench lies directly in the field of attraction. All Tauzig has to do is to turn on the current in his office and every steel or iron wheel, lever or spring in that field will spring upward. As soon as the current is turned off they are released, and fly in all directions.

"Tauzig has probably had this fixed up for some time, and has not used it until now, because if an investigation were made the floor would appear to have been undisturbed."

"That explains the tinkling sound I heard last night!" exclaimed Harrison, and both Harding and Post nodded sagely.

"What would you advise me to do?" asked the watchmaker.

"Go to the nearest magistrate and swear out a warrant for Tauzig's arrest," returned Harding. "Of course, we shall be required to testify against him. And in the meantime, I think it might be as well if we went to the upper room and remained there, so that we might be able to frustrate any attempt he may make to remove his appliance." He rose as he spoke.

"One minute," said Harrison. "May I ask how you discovered all this? Why did not the police find out that the magnet was there? They looked into that room."

Harding smiled.

"You may ask," he said pleasantly, "but for me to tell you would be a be-

trayal of professional secrets. If you tell the police where to look for the magnet, they will probably be able to find it now. I doubt if they would have done so of themselves. We left the boards loose. And I should advise you to lose no time in getting your warrant, or Tauzig may become suspicious and take himself off."

"I'll go immediately," said Harrison, seizing his hat.

"I suppose you're going to tell *me* the 'professional secret,' aren't you?" Post asked in a somewhat aggrieved tone, as they again climbed the stairs to the second floor.

"Surest thing you know, Jim," replied Harding. He opened the door of the vacant room and closed it quietly after them. "I didn't want to give the trick away to Harrison, because the mystery will be good advertising for us, and it won't cost us a cent, either.

"The first thing I noticed when I went into Harrison's shop this morning," he continued, "was that only the pieces made of steel and iron were on the floor. All the brass parts of the works and those made of other metals were still on the bench. That spelled 'magnetism,' in capital letters.

"Then, the fact that there was an electrician on the next floor, bearing the same rather unusual name as the man Harrison had forced out of business, suggested to me that Ludwig Tauzig's remark might have been more than a mere empty boast.

"The ceiling was low, and I figured that a powerful electric magnet would about do the trick. So I looked in the only place a magnet could well be, and found it, as you know, with the wires leading under the floor in the direction of Tauzig's shop."

"It sounds easy, when you know how it's done," observed Post.

"And it *was* easy," rejoined Harding. "I had the effect—all I had to do was to work backward and find the cause. I—— Sh-h-h-h!" He broke off suddenly, as a stealthy footstep sounded outside the door, and, grasping Post's arm, drew him behind a little angle of the wall.

CHAPTER VI.

A BIRD IN THE HAND.

From this vantage point they could see what was going on in the room, without themselves being seen by any one entering.

There was a grating sound, as of a knob turning, and then the door creaked on its rusty hinges. Some one was coming in! The partners flattened themselves against the wall, scarcely daring to breathe lest they betray themselves.

A tall man moved silently across the room in the direction of the boards that Harding had taken up. His back was toward the watchers, and he was evidently oblivious of their presence. They could not see his face, but he was heavily built, with broad, thick shoulders, and long, muscular arms.

Drawing a small hammer and chisel from his pocket, he leaned over, as if about to pry up the boards.

Like a flash, Harding darted forward and leaped upon the bent shoulders, throwing one arm around the thick, bull-like neck, and, exerting all his strength, he forced the man's head back.

"Quick, Jimmie!" he shouted. "Grab his hands!"

Post was already beside him, but the man flung Harding aside as if he had been a child, and whirled on the junior partner, the hammer poised above his head, ready to strike.

Ducking to avoid a threatened blow, Post made a leap for the upraised arm, and grasped it just above the wrist, at the same time dexterously tripping his big antagonist. The latter stumbled, then recovered himself, and tried to throw Post off as he had Harding, but unsuccessfully.

By this time, however, Harding had picked himself up from the corner where he had fallen, and joined again in the fray. The man was enormously powerful, but, strive as he would, he could not free his right arm from Post's tenacious grip.

The three crashed to the floor together, and wrestled this way and that, stirring up the accumulated dust in

choking clouds. Over and over they rolled, the stranger livid with rage, Harding and Post white and determined. The contest was not unequal, the German's great strength being about fairly matched with that of the two younger men; but he had not their agility.

Post, lithe and quick as a cat, watched every opening, and finally succeeded in pinning the left arm of the burly German.

"Sit on his head, Rus!" he panted. "Don't let him move. I've got his arms!"

"I've got a trick worth two of that," grunted Harding, as he slipped his arm around the man's neck. There was a gasp of pain from the latter, his desperate struggle suddenly ceased, and he lay almost helpless.

"There, Dutchy," grated Harding. "How do you like that? It is what is scientifically known as the strangle hold. I guess now you'll be good."

There was a rush of feet on the stairs, the door flew open, and Caleb Harrison and two policemen burst into the room.

"Here's your prisoner, officers!" cried Harding.

In a moment, the man on the floor was shouting denunciations of the way he had been attacked, and demanding the arrest of the attacking party; but he was peremptorily cut short and jerked to his feet.

Panting and disheveled, Harding explained how they had prevented what was evidently an attempt to remove the magnet and thus destroy the evidence. Harrison wrung his hand, and then clasped that of Post, his face beaming with gratitude.

"I shan't forget what you've done; you have saved me——" he was beginning, when the big man poured forth a torrent of imprecations, waving his one free arm and working himself up into a towering rage.

"Shut up, Tauzig," interrupted one of the policemen, "you're under arrest."

The man continued to rave in German; and, after listening to him for a moment, Harrison turned to Harding, with a puzzled look.

"He says he's not Tauzig, and that he hasn't done anything," he said. "He demands his release."

"Not Tauzig?" cried Harding. "Who is he, then? And what was he doing here?"

"He claims his name is Haupt, and that Tauzig telephoned to him to come over here and remove some wires from under the flooring," said Harrison, after putting a few questions to the irate prisoner.

"That's right," put in the other policeman. "I've seen this chap before. He's got a shop a few blocks from here. We've got the wrong bird."

CHAPTER VII.

A PINCH OF SOOT.

"Then we'll get the right one," exclaimed Harding energetically. "He sent this fellow here so that he'd get caught if any one were watching. Quick! There's no time to lose!"

He ran quickly across the hall and tried the handle of the door of Tauzig's shop; it refused to turn.

"Open, in the name of the law!" shouted the policeman, banging on the panels with his night stick.

But all was quiet within. Evidently Tauzig had been warned by the clamor across the hall, and had made good his escape.

"Break down the door!" commanded Harding, as the officer hesitated, uncertain what course to pursue. "You've got your warrant. Smash away! Come on—one—two—three!"

There was a splintering of wood, the groaning of wrenched iron, as the two flung their weight against the flimsy door. For an instant it held, then it gave way with a crash, and they stumbled into the room.

There was no one there!

"Confound it!" lamented Post, who had followed close on the heels of his partner. "If we hadn't been so sure that we had the right man, Tauzig would never have got away."

"We ain't got no warrant for this

feller, Mr. Harrison," said the policeman, turning to the watchmaker. "I guess we'll have to let him go."

Haupt was sullen, and he glared vindictively at Harding and Post; but Harrison had managed to soothe his wounded feelings to some extent, and he had agreed not to make any charge for assault against them.

"Wait a minute," Harding called out, as the officers started for the door. "You'd better take Tauzig along with you."

"Tauzig?"

"Yes; I think you'll find him here." He strode to the big fireplace that opened on one side of the room. The opening was half blocked up with a tangle of wires, insulators, and various other appliances; but Harding apparently knew what he was doing.

"Come down out of that, Tauzig, the game's up!" he commanded.

There was not a sound.

"All right. Jimmie, hand me that pole—the one with the spike on the end; we'll see how he likes that."

There was a sudden rasping sound, the crash of a falling body, and a little, weazened man tumbled down in a heap in the centre of the fireplace!

With catlike quickness, he regained his feet, and darted for the door.

Post thrust out his foot, the fleeing man tripped over it, and measured his length along the floor. Before he could rise, Post had flung himself upon him and pinned him down.

"Up the chimney! Well, what do you know about that!" The policeman's voice was full of amazement.

"I thought he was there," said Harding, "and that the best way to get him down was to let him hear about the pole with a spike on it. He probably thought it would be better to be arrested with a whole skin than with a holed skin."

"That'll do," remarked Post, transferring his prisoner to the grasp of one of the officers. "We've got our man, and we'll dispense with the puns."

Tauzig was led away, a policeman on each side of him, Harrison following, and Harding and Post bringing up the rear.

Haupt had already taken his departure, shaking his head and muttering to himself. He did not relish the way in which he had been handled, and his vanity was wounded to think that he had been mistaken for Hans Tauzig, a miserable, shriveled-up piece of humanity.

"How did you know he was up that chimney?" Post asked, as they descended the stairs.

"Easy," replied his partner. "When he was crawling in, he knocked some soot down, and I saw a little of it on the top of that pile of wires. If it hadn't been for that—well, we won't speculate."

The Milky Way to Fortune

By John S. Brackett

Where nature takes a hand in the game and plays to win.

STUART TEMPLETON was an ambitious young man of twenty-four. For three years he had been possessed with the desire to go to a near-by agricultural college for a three-year course in farming. Templeton had done practical farming for his father, but the soil was poor, and the young fellow realized that he ought to study the science of the business in order to make their farm pay better.

Old man Templeton was willing to spare him for the three years, but he could not help him with one cent of money; for, together, they could scrape only a bare living out of the rambling, worn-out old farm.

"Well," said Stuart one morning, as

he came in from milking, "I think I've got an idea. I believe I can raise enough money for at least a year at college."

"What's the idea?" asked old man Templeton, with slight interest.

"I've got a matter of twenty-five dollars saved. To-day's July first. Milk and cream are cheap and plentiful around here. There's a big picnic in the grove over at Franklin on Fourth of July. I'll bet I could clean up a hundred dollars out of it easy."

"In Heaven's name, *how?*" cried his father, looking at Stuart as though he had gone daft.

"Well, it's easy enough. It's pretty hot weather. There'll be over five hundred there, an' I've just learned that lemonade is the only cold stuff provided for the picnic. It's one of them big fraternity gatherings, an' I think if I was to turn twenty-five dollars' worth of milk and cream into good old-fashioned ice cream, I could sell it without any trouble, at ten cents a plate."

"Ten cents a plate!" cried the old man. "You're crazy, Stuart."

"They're all city men who're used to payin' that price. There's a hundred dollars' profit in it, easy, and I'd take a chance at a year in college with that much money, with what I could pick up on the side."

So young Templeton, in spite of his father's protestations, went to one of the managers of the picnic and asked if he could put up an ice-cream stall. The manager was quite enthusiastic, and gave him the desired permission.

By noon, on July third, Stuart had everything ready. He had laid out his twenty-five dollars in milk and ice, and his father had volunteered to help with the freezing.

He had thirty gallons of milk and five gallons of cream. When that was turned into rich ice cream the profit would be enormous.

While Stuart was making preliminary preparations, the sky suddenly clouded up, and, without the slightest warning, a terrific thunderstorm broke. The two men took shelter in the house and waited anxiously for the storm to abate. But the thunder rolled incessantly.

"Great guns! Stuart," cried old Templeton. "It's all off. The thunderstorm will spoil the milk."

The same thought had come to Stuart in that instant. It is well known among farmers that a severe thunderstorm will sour milk and cream, although they have never stopped to determine whether it is the atmospheric condition, or the vibration from the thunder.

The moment the storm had abated, both rushed out and inspected the milk and cream. Their worst fears were realized. It was all sour and useless. It being too late to get a fresh supply and go ahead with the ice cream, both men returned, disgusted, to the house. Then and there Stuart gave up his idea of attending college.

But the young fellow, having been schooled in economy, forced himself to make the sour milk into Dutch cheese next morning in order to save it. By mixing in the soured cream a very delicious cheese was obtained. Both marveled at the taste of it. It was something new.

Old man Templeton hurried over with some of the Dutch cheese to the picnickers and sold it without any trouble. It was a new kind of cheese. The soured cream had made it, and its success was immediate.

The Templetons gave their entire attention that summer to cheese making. They bought up, for a moderate price, all the milk and cream in the surrounding country for their new industry, and, when fall came, Stuart Templeton went to the agricultural college with a good balance in the bank and the assurance that he could stay three years instead of one—long enough to master the complete science of farming.

Through an accident a man invented a superior quality of glass. A severe thunderstorm made the world look black for a while to a young man named Stuart, but that same storm was responsible for a now famous product—Templeton Cheese.

The Trolley Man

By Roland Ashford Phillips

A stirring tale of the street railroad, and a worthy member of the group of industrial romances that have done so much to win for TOP-NOTCH its far-and-wide popularity. In this field of romance, with all its riches of genuine human interest, the author has found a story well worth the telling. As you follow the fortunes of Lee Blake, beginning with his service as an extra on a Denver electric, you will see unfold a drama that calls into full play a real man's resources of courage, daring and splendid loyalty.

CHAPTER I.

NO. 216 IS DELAYED!

IT was a dejected-looking Lee Blake that waited in the big loop station for the return of No. 216. The gray, cloudy day added considerably to his gloominess. Already, here and there about him, the electric lights were beginning to spring into yellow life. An hour before, flushed and expectant, he had tramped up the stairs into the imposing offices of the Denver City Railroad Company, and asked for the general manager. A single word from him had shattered all of Blake's anticipations.

With an abrupt, clanging gong 216 shot around the far curve, and came to a halt directly before the waiting room. Blake swung himself aboard, and made his way back to the rear platform. A trim, young conductor, busy with his trip sheet, looked up and broke into an exclamation:

"Well, Blake, what luck?"

Blake sank disconsolately into the last seat.

"Nothing doing, Holland," he said. "Saw his nobs in the office an hour ago, and he told me to call again in about sixty days."

"What was his reason?" Holland leaned over, and dropped his envelope of canceled transfers into the big receiving box as the car passed it. "Didn't he say? Didn't he give you any better satisfaction than that?"

"Well, he said the extra list was full and that he didn't want to add to it until a few more extra cars were put into service. Said maybe when the resorts opened in the spring he'd use me."

"Jones is a queer fossil," Holland commented, giving the bell cord a couple of savage jerks in response to his motorman's gong. "One day he'll hire a dozen men, and the next he'll give out that he's not in the market for them at all."

"He didn't seem to be in very good humor."

"Probably not. That's generally his style. But I know it for a fact that six conductors are breaking in to-day from our division alone. I came near getting one myself," he grinned. "You know we get a five-spot for every student we break in. And I sure need the extra change."

Holland walked up front, and started collecting the fares.

The car was stopping at nearly every block now, and the closing stores were pouring their crowds into the streets. Everywhere there seemed to exist the frantic haste to get home.

When 216 rounded the curve at Broadway, and started on its straight track for Englewood, it was packed to the very steps. Blake himself, giving up a seat to a thin-faced working girl, had been wedged midway in the open end.

Suddenly, high above the rumble of the wheels, there came a sharp, heart-quickening cry:

"Stop! Stop! Thief!" It was a woman's voice. "There—that man snatched my purse!"

Instantly the crowd was in an uproar. Those who were seated stood erect, peering here and there like so many frightened children. Other voices were raised. The men in the aisles pushed back and forth, asking questions, meanwhile keeping a hand on their own pockets.

Again the woman's cry rose above it all.

"He snatched my purse, I tell you," she repeated. "Snatched it right out of my hand!"

Blake felt himself being jostled about, and saved himself from being swept from his feet only by clinging desperately to a strap. Being somewhat taller than his companions, he saw the frowning face of Bob Holland, conductor, plowing a path among the other bobbing shoulders.

"That's the man!" Holland shouted, as he reached for the bell cord and gave it three sharp jerks. The air was thrown on so violently as to pitch the crowd forward.

"I've got him!" a voice rang out.

"Hold him, then," the conductor shouted. "And watch the steps. Don't let any one off the car!" He looked around and saw Blake. "Here—give me a hand! This fellow just snatched a purse from a woman inside!"

The crowd fell back a trifle as Blake and Holland, with the slim, bewildered-looking man between them, held the centre of the cleared space. With fifty eyes upon him, Blake, at the conductor's command, went rapidly through the man's pockets. Nothing other than a few personal articles was found.

"Too late now," one of the passengers broke out, with a laugh. "He's probably passed the bag to a confederate. You'd have to search every one in the car!"

"Well, we can do that, too," Holland answered. "We'll just start with you!"

The stranger shrank back with a half-hearted laugh. Blake stepped forward to grasp him by the shoulder. At that moment, as abruptly as the wink of an eye, the lights went out! As they were midway of a dark block and with only an arc burning two squares distance, the car and all the excited passengers were immediately enveloped by utter gloom.

Blake tried to grasp the man before him, but somehow, in nimble manner, the fellow ducked, squirmed through the crowded aisle, and leaped off to the road.

But Blake was after him. Once out there, he realized that all hopes of getting the man were futile, and after a desperate chase of half a block he gave up. Returning to the car, he found Holland swearing to himself, while the motorman, evidently unaware of the bit of drama being enacted, was stamping impatiently upon his gong.

"Some fool hauled off that trolley," Holland broke out vehemently. "Another confederate probably! This is a bad mess to be in—and on our six-thirty trip, too!"

Some one on the rear platform of the car replaced the trolley to the wire. The lights flared up; a quick sigh of relief came from the passengers. Holland fumbled for his watch.

"Eight minutes late," he growled. "That means a drop back along the line! The dispatcher will give me thunder!" He reached up and gave his motorman two bells. "I'll have to spend an hour to-night making out a report on this," he added.

Later, when Blake started to leave the car at his street, Holland spoke to him. "This job isn't all sunshine, Blake," he admitted. "But here's wishing you land with us!"

"Coming over to-night?" Blake asked, swinging to the ground.

Holland frowned.

"Say, I'm awful sorry, Blake. Tell your sister I forgot this was my long night. I'm the last car in the barn. I half promised I'd take Sadie to the trainmen's dance, too. See you to-morrow night sure. So-long!"

Obedient to the quick bells, old 216, the well-known hoodoo car of the south division, shot off into the gloom like a startled deer.

Blake trudged down the dark street toward home, where, in all probability,

Sadie, faithful little sister that she was, anxiously awaited him.

Turning into the gate, Blake absently, and for the first time, since the theft in the car, thrust a hand into his coat pocket. A big lump bounded to his throat.

"By heavens!" he gulped.

Bringing out his hand, he gazed dumbly upon a rich, gold-mesh purse.

Through the meshes Blake could distinguish crumpled, yellow-backed notes.

The situation dawned upon him suddenly. Threatened with capture, the thief Blake had chased had dropped the purse into the nearest pocket, which, if things had turned out as evidently planned, should have been a confederate's. His running away was only a ruse to distract attention from the pal to whom he thought he had passed the purse.

For a time Blake stood there turning the purse over and over in his hand. A faint glow came through the uncurtained window of the house. Lifting his eyes, he caught the glimpse of Sadie spreading a cloth upon the table. With a smile, he stepped briskly upon the stoop and entered the door.

CHAPTER II.

THE UNEXPECTED.

Bright and early the following morning, Blake hurried downtown, with the purse safely stowed away in an inside pocket. Among the other things it contained had been a visiting card, across the face of which ran:

MRS. ROBERT EARL CARTER,
91 Grant Boulevard.

It was this address that Blake finally reached, rang the bell, and awaited an answer. A maid led him into a large, wide reception hall and slipped noiselessly away. In a few moments a slender, elderly lady appeared and introduced herself as Mrs. Carter.

Blake produced the purse.

"I was on the car last night, Mrs. Carter," he began, "and helped in the search for the thief. Upon my arrival home, some time later, I found this bag in my coat pocket, where it had evidently been dropped by the thief!"

The lady gave a glad little cry, and took the bag from his hand.

"Why—why—I cannot begin to thank you, young man," she faltered. "I have already offered a hundred dollars' reward for its return. I—I did not care so much for the money in it—as the few pieces of jewelry; heirlooms they were."

With trembling fingers she opened the purse, counted the bills, and then, detaching one of them—yellow-backed and with the numerals of one hundred in each corner—she extended it toward Blake.

He shook his head.

"I don't like to accept a reward for merely doing what was my duty," he argued.

"But you must accept this—or something," the lady insisted. "We won't call it a reward—but merely something to show my appreciation."

"I——" Blake began, hesitating as some one came quickly into the room. Mrs. Carter turned, smiling.

"Robert, this is the young man who found my purse, and has just returned it."

The gentleman advanced. A sudden recollection flashed across Blake's mind. This was the general manager of the Denver City Railroad Company. The recognition was mutual.

"You're the young man who was in my office yesterday afternoon, are you not?" asked Mr. Carter.

"Yes, sir. It was just after leaving there that I became mixed up in this robbery."

"A strange coincidence, indeed," the general manager returned, grasping Blake's hand. "And I understand you are not willing to accept my wife's reward?"

"I do not feel as though it is quite ——" Blake began.

"Perhaps you are still anxious for a position on our road?" Mr. Carter interrupted.

Blake's heart gave a bound.

"If there is any chance—or opening," he began. "I——"

"I am sure you are the kind of man we want in our employ," broke in Mr. Carter. "As a rule they are few and far between."

He took a card from his pocket, and wrote a few lines upon it.

"Give this to the division superintendent to-morrow morning, Blake, and he'll do the rest!"

CHAPTER III.

"PROFESSOR" MURPHY.

When the preliminary details had been attended to, such as the examination of his eyes and hearing, a number was given him, along with a new spick-and-span blue suit and regulation cap. Blake felt that he had entered a very different sphere. He found himself bounded on every side by rigid rules. He must do this and he must not do that. Instinctively he felt as if the donning of the uniform had, in some manner, lifted him out of the ordinary walks of life. He experienced sensations like those of a youth newly enlisted in the army.

By choice he decided upon the front end of the car—upon the position of motorman.

On a momentous morning he presented himself at the barns, and found his name written across the extra-list board. He found out, almost from the very first, that there was absolutely no favoritism shown the extra men. After once breaking in, under the careful eye of an experienced man, those who did not have regular runs took turns at heading the list. The extra man who caught a run to-day would be shifted to the bottom of the board to-morrow, gradually working his way to the top again.

The foreman at the barn explained these matters to Blake.

"You'll be marked up to report a certain time every day," he said. "Keep your eye on the board, and be sure you read it straight. A miss means a lay-off; three in a month means fifteen days' vacation; and the fourth is your signal to hunt a new job. Understand?"

Blake was amazed at the regularity with which the cars were taken from the barn, claimed by their crew, and started upon the day's run. He grew to appreciate the meaning of a second. When a car was to pull out at 6:42 it meant just that, and not a second before or after.

"Murphy is to break you in, Blake," the foreman announced on the second morning, after he had been allowed a day to become familiar with the rules and get accustomed to his uniform. "A good motorman, Murphy, but a bit of a crank. Don't rile him, or talk back. Just pay attention and let his advice soak in!"

Blake sat on the bench in the big waiting room, watching the different crews sign up for their runs, get change, stationery, and other needful paraphernalia. He was idly wondering what Murphy was like, and when he would show up, when, above all the clatter of the place, there came a great roaring voice:

"Where in thunder's the dub I'm to break in?"

Blake sprang to his feet, glanced toward the open door, and saw a huge, red-faced motorman scowling about the benches.

"Are you—Murphy?" he asked.

"I am that! Are you the mut that's to bother me for the next few days?"

"My name's Blake. The foreman said I was to be your pupil, I believe!"

"You believe?" Murphy growled. "You'd better be sure of it! What you doing sitting in here, eh? Think I was to bring the car through the door and lift you on the platform, eh? Just remember this, youngster, when you're breaking in with me: My tub leaves track number nine at six-three a. m.! We got twelve minutes to run up to Washington Park. Then we leave there at six-fifteen. When you're with me your run is the second daylight on Washington Park line. Get that now?"

Blake smiled, and said he "got it." Amid a chorus of laughs from the other men he meekly followed the burly motorman out of the room and across to where his car stood.

"Climb up!" Murphy broke out. "Get over in the corner out of my way until we get on straight track. By thunder," he added, giving the controller a jab and sending the car rocking across the switches to the main line, "I'm always the goat! You're the third greenhorn I've broken to harness this month. It's worth twenty dollars, instead of five. I'm going to kick pretty soon!"

Blake was not fool enough to take this brusque fellow too seriously. He guessed that at bottom he was all right.

When they were finally running smoothly upon their own line and Blake was drawing a relieved breath, Murphy turned sharply.

"Know anything about the juice?"

"Juice?" repeated Blake.

"Yes, just that! That's the proper name for electricity. Get that into your thick brain first. It takes a chump a long time to learn."

"Do you speak from experience?" asked Blake, with a grin.

"Never mind about me," growled the other, "and don't get fresh. Know anything about the juice, I asked you?"

"Well, some; I've been taking a correspondence course in electrical engineering for the past year," Blake answered. "I suppose it will help me a little."

Murphy grunted.

"Didn't tell you how to run a car, did it?"

"No; not exactly!"

"Well, what in thunder good did it do you? That's the trouble with you young fellows nowadays. Always learning something that ain't of any use!"

CHAPTER IV.

BLOWING A FUSE.

The terminus of the line was reached; the car was run over the Y and brought to a stop. Blake watched the conductor step over to a telephone box fastened to a pole. He heard the man give the number of the car and the line.

"He says seventeen this morning, Murphy!" the conductor sang out, slamming the box and climbing aboard.

Murphy bent an eye upon his watch, lying before him in a felt-lined case.

"Get that, Blake?" he began. "Always take your time from the conductor. He's boss!"

The two watched the minute hand creep around to seventeen minutes past the hour. Two bells sounded. Murphy's big, sun-hardened fingers released the air control, and the car began to coast.

"Get busy with the controller handle," he called sharply. "Swing it around one point at a time!"

With his heart in his throat, Blake did so. To feel the heavy car respond to the lever in his fingers sent a thrill over his whole body. From that moment on, orders fell quick and fast.

"No matter how late you are, never jerk the controller around in a hurry. It'll burn out the switch box and your car's a dead one. Feed her slow and you'll make better time!"

Downtown, in the crowded streets, Murphy took charge of the car, but once the pavements were left behind he surrendered it to Blake. During that day Blake learned the many tricks of throwing on and off the air without risking flat wheels; learned how to take the curves and the hills; learned the location of the breakers, and to shut off the current when crossing them. When a fuse blew out he watched Murphy insert a new one, and felt confident of repeating the act.

On their last trip that day, and before being relieved by the night crew, Murphy cautioned Blake concerning the bells—he had started before the proper signal.

"The company'll fire you quicker for passing up bells than anything else," Murphy warned his pupil. "Throwing in your juice when somebody's getting on or off means a damage suit—and to put the company in with a damage suit is like shaking a red flag in front of a bull! Remember, now: One bell, you stop at the nearest crossing; two, you go ahead; three, you stop where you are the very minute they're sounded;

four, you reverse; and five bells means to pick up no more passengers. This is only given when the car's loaded or you're late!"

The second morning of his apprenticeship found Blake promptly on time, and at 6:03 they left the barns for the terminus of the run. This day, Murphy appeared to be a trifle more trustful, and, late in the afternoon, allowed Blake to run the car straight through from the terminal to the city.

Murphy kept up a rapid fire of commands as they struck the pavements, cautioning his student to sound his gong at all street intersections, and to keep his eyes busy. After several of these trips, and under the gruff, but able, coaching, Blake's confidence increased, and he rounded the city loop amid the usual crush of traffic and the clutter of other cars with something of a vereran's calmness. To him there existed a deep and comforting sense of responsibility in guiding this dumb thing of steel and wood through the hurrying throngs, tense fingers gripping controller and air valve, his foot pounding upon the gong, his eyes straight ahead. His pulses leaped exultantly.

On the third day an incident occurred that taught him how really important even the slightest rules were.

A light rain had fallen for a few minutes, just as they were leaving the city, making the rails slippery and treacherous. At all stops, Blake was cautioned to use plenty of sand, and ease the air in order to prevent flat wheels. Everything proceeded smoothly until within a mile of the terminal, when, receiving a late bell at the street intersection, he threw off the current and applied the air.

Instantly the wheels locked, and began skidding. Forgetting the sand, he released the brakes, and reversed. A sharp explosion followed. Murphy, sitting inside the car, laughed as Blake jumped.

"You've blown a fuse," he sang out. "Better fix in a new one right away. You're a couple of minutes behind time now."

Without further question, Blake picked up a strip of the lead wire, and, with the screw driver clutched tight in his hand, swung off the car. Running around to where the fuse box was located, he started to loosen one of the melted ends of the old fuse, when—snap! He felt the stab of a thousand needles leap through his right arm and down his spine. He was hurled violently backward, as if propelled by some gigantic and invisible boot.

CHAPTER V.

THE HOODOO CAR.

Dazedly, Blake picked himself from off the damp ground, rubbing at his wrenched arm, unable to grasp, for the interval, this unexpected turn of affairs. As he came beside the car once more, he saw Murphy, leaning out of the window, grinning from ear to ear.

"Forgot to throw off your overhead, didn't you?" he jeered. "Taught you a good lesson, eh? You'll think twice next time before you monkey with a fuse when the juice is on!"

The last day but one of Blake's service in apprenticeship was long to be remembered. He arrived at the barn to find Murphy cursing and storming the foreman, who, in turn, seemed to pay no attention to the motorman's ravings.

"I told you I'd never run that old tub," Murphy was saying, shaking his fist. "Didn't I tell you, now? Two years ago I had her, and didn't I hit a milk wagon in the morning and break my arm in the afternoon? Didn't I?"

"I've marked up two hundred and sixteen for your run, Murphy," the foreman answered calmly, "and you'll have to take her!"

"What's the matter with my regular car?"

"Flat wheels, that's what. Your student's been skidding them. They're to be ground down to-day, and you can have the car back in the morning!"

"But old two hundred and sixteen is a hoodoo," Murphy stormed, his face the color of a beet. "She's queer! I tell you I——"

The foreman pulled out his watch.

"You've got just three minutes to

sign up and get out of the yard," he interrupted. "Do you want your run or not?"

Murphy turned dejectedly from the window, and went stumbling out to track ten. Blake, who had overheard the conversation, followed him.

"She'll kill us all," Murphy groaned, as the two climbed up to the platform. "Are you superstitious, kid?"

"Not at all," Blake answered.

"Well, I'm right glad of that. It's up to you to-day. Everything is in your hands. I ride inside!"

Blake tested the air, and found it working perfectly. They ran over the switches and onto the main track without a hitch. All the wild stories that the men had told concerning this car did not affect him in the least. He reasoned that a good nine-tenths of the stuff was imagination. Give a car a bad name and it'll stick through thick or thin.

It seemed that the first day it came from the shops, fresh with gleaming brass and shining paint, it had crashed into an automobile, killing two men. Another time it tipped over on a sharp curve, injuring the crew and a dozen passengers. Once again it got away on a steep hill, and had been broken almost to kindling wood. Contrary to the supposition, it had been fully repaired and the number changed, the company thinking in this manner to blot out its reputation. But, like the majority of guarded secrets, it leaked out within a fortnight, and every man on the division knew about it.

In spite of Blake's argument that the hoodoo was all imagination, Murphy did not share in the belief. He apparently looked forward to each trip in fear and trembling. When their noon relief came, and nothing had happened to break the usual routine, the veteran motorman heaved a long sigh of thankfulness.

When they took the car back again after lunch, the conductor managed to have a few words alone with Blake.

"Don't say a word, Blake, but Murphy's been hitting a little booze. If he goes to giving you any fool orders, pay no attention. But, whatever you do, keep your eyes open. I'm getting up in the air myself."

CHAPTER VI.

THE RIDE WITH DEATH.

At intervals during the long afternoon, Blake stole side glances over his shoulder at Murphy, who sat up forward in the car, half asleep. Since coming on for their last shift, neither had exchanged a word between themselves.

Without warning, as they were leaving the terminal on the next to last trip, with no passengers in the car, Murphy appeared to brace up, although by his talk Blake realized he was far from being sober.

"Blake," he said, "I'll run the old tub downtown. You come inside and rest a bit!"

"Never mind, Murphy," Blake said, to quiet him. "I'm not tired—and, besides, this is almost the last trip."

"That's all right—but I've got to make a show. If old Fowler is watching us at the loop he'll think it funny I've been inside all day!"

"I'm afraid you're not——" Blake began.

"I've been running cars for the past fifteen years, Blake, and I guess I can still handle a brake. You think I'm a trifle under the weather, don't you, eh? Well, I'm not!" He came out upon the platform and pushed Blake to one side. "If you're wise you'll go inside and sit down. Besides"—he leaned closer to Blake, as if fearing the car might overhear—"I want to show this tub who's master!"

Reluctantly, Blake stepped inside, but, keeping an alert eye on the old motorman, watched as they ran along for the first mile. In this distance, Murphy gave him no cause for uneasiness. The bells were observed rigidly, and the stops made without a jar.

All at once—and it came so sudden that Blake could not for the second understand, Murphy uttered a sharp exclamation. Blake came to his feet. Murphy was working frantically with

the air. The car was just on the brow of a long hill—a downward stretch of track that ended in an abrupt curve where it joined the main lines for the city.

"The air won't work!" Murphy yelled. "It won't work—and this hill——" The old motorman turned a white face toward Blake. "We've got to jump for it!"

Before Blake could come to his senses, Murphy stepped across the platform and leaped blindly out to the road. In a flash—with no controlling hand, the car swept on, seeming to gather greater speed at every revolution of the wheels.

With a low cry, Blake jerked open the door, and fell upon the emergency brake, worked by hand. In his terror, Murphy had evidently forgotten it. Putting every ounce of strength he possessed against the wheel, Blake wound up the chain, inch by inch. He could hear the grind of the brakes as they tightened. The plunging car appeared to slacken its mad speed. The murmur of thankfulness that was upon Blake's trembling lips turned to a groan, when, with a loud snapping, the chain parted, and the brake turned uselessly under his efforts.

"Jump, Blake! For God's sake, jump!" It was the conductor's shrill voice that arose high above the increasing roar of the wild car.

Heedless of the warning, Blake set his teeth grimly and reached for the controller. There was yet a slim hope left. Throwing the reverse lever, he sent the current into the motors. There came a buzzing as the wheels spun frantically in the opposite direction. But the car apparently had gained too great a headway. The reversing proved to be too severe a strain on the quivering motors, and, with a roar, the whole switch box burst into flame! Blake fell back as the fire bit at his face and wrapped about his hands. Half blinded, he groped for the door of the vestibule.

There was nothing to be done, now. Both the air and the emergency brakes were useless; the fuses were out, and the switch box ruined. Nothing could stop the swaying car or even check its mad dash. And, a few squares away, at the foot of the incline, it would leap the curve and hurl itself across the street, to be crumpled into a mass of twisted steel and splintered wood.

He poised himself for a flying leap from the rocking platform. And then, just at the moment he prepared to spring, something came to his eyes.

There, below, at the foot of the long hill, where the line swerved abruptly to join the main tracks, another car had halted. Even from where he stood, Blake could see that it was packed to the very running board. Evidently something had happened—a fuse blown, undoubtedly—for the motorman had left his post, and was hurrying around to the side of the car.

Apparently no one had noticed this runaway car plunging toward them. Even if they had, the time was too short for all that crowd to escape. It meant that Blake's wild car would continue, gathering more and more speed, and crash into this one below, directly at the switch.

The mere thought of it was enough to freeze a man's blood. In a twinkling, a hundred lives—perhaps more, would be snuffed out!

A wild, half-insane plan flashed over Blake's brain. The cushions! In the flash of a second he had leaped inside the car and lifted the long, six-foot cushion from the side seat. Now he was out on the platform again. He leaned over the dashboard, cushion in his arms. He dropped it! He saw it strike the ground, full across both rails; then it disappeared beneath the fender. Only a few hundred feet separated the two cars now!

The wheels struck, caught, fought desperately with the obstruction. Instantly the forward trucks, lifted by the thick cushion, twisted and left the rails, and plunged deep into the soft earth.

There came a snapping of chains, crash after crash. The car seemed to stand on end for the interval. The glass in the vestibule shivered and broke into a thousand pieces.

Blake felt himself being hurled wildly into the air, away from the rolling car. He did not lose consciousness, even when he fell heavily to the earth.

After what seemed to be an age, he dimly became aware of voices and many running feet. He lifted himself dizzily to an elbow and looked about him. Ten feet away, flat on its side, both trucks wrenched free, lay the runaway car. People were running toward him.

With an effort, he rose erect, wiping the blood away from his eyes, where, evidently, the falling glass had cut him.

"By heavens!" It was the motorman of the stalled car who spoke. "You alive? I thought when I saw you whirling about in the air it was all over!"

"I'm a fairly lively corpse," Blake muttered, his words rather unsteady. "But I don't care to repeat the trick!"

The people from the saved car now pressed around him, all talking at once. Some of the women were weeping. Most of the men were trying to shake his hand. All seemed to realize the narrow escape they had had.

Some one pushed his way through the crowd and came beside him. Blake was surprised to see the dead-white face of Murphy.

"I saw it, Blake," he stammered. "I saw it! Jingo, but that was a chance, that was! You're a brick, you are!" He wrung the other's hand. "Lucky you thought of the cushion in time. That was the nerviest thing I ever saw!"

CHAPTER VII.

FOWLER APPEARS.

To say that Blake won the instant respect of all the men, from the division superintendent to the trainmen, would be putting it mildly, indeed.

For a long time, around the barns, and whenever a number of employees gathered, the smash-up of the old hoodoo car was the sole topic of conversation. What pleased Blake the most, however, was a long, personal letter from Mr. Carter, the general manager of the company, complimenting him on his courage and coolness.

Perhaps a month passed, when one day Bob Holland, calling at the house to pay his attentions to Sadie, Blake's sister, suggested he break in as a conductor.

"You're well acquainted with a motorman's duties now, Blake," he went on, "and it will increase your chances of work on the extra list if you're able to run both ends of the car."

Acting on this advice, Blake put in his application, and within a fortnight was initiated into the mysteries of "picking nickels," as the men designated the conductor's calling. He found this position to be fully as difficult as his former one, and began to realize the strain under which the men worked during their long shifts.

Fully qualified in both these services, Blake rarely found himself out of work, and rather enjoyed the shifting about, the irregular hours, and the change of runs. Each evening when he came in he looked at the board and noted what run he was to take out, or, in case he was not marked up at all, learned the time he was to report the following day.

As the weather was beginning to grow warm, and the resorts were opening their gates, there were ball games and other occasions requiring more cars and consequently a greater number of men to operate them. Blake soon found his name gradually crawling up the extra list.

One day, reporting at four o'clock to run the back end of a baseball extra, he found his motorman to be Murphy. This was Murphy's eighth day—so called because each of the regular men had one day in eight as a vacation—but, owing to the scarcity of men, he had been compelled to take out this three-hour extra.

They made two regular trips, and were then sidetracked at the ball park to wait for the finish of the game.

It was here that Blake was able to pay close attention to Fowler, an undersized, coarse-featured man, dressed in plain clothes, who had, previous to this, been pointed out as inspector.

Fowler had a method of popping up

at unexpected moments—like the wicked fairy in a storybook—counting the passengers, comparing the number with the register, watching to see if the bells were properly given, if the conductors failed to keep on the back platform when not collecting fares, and if the streets were called out.

Needless to state, Fowler was not well liked by the majority of the trainmen. This day, he gruffly ordered Murphy to clean up his headlight, although the car was to be run in the barn before dark.

"Never you mind what time you are to be sent to the barn," he snapped, when Murphy informed him of the short run. "Something might happen, and you'll be caught napping. Get some waste, and shine her up—and be civil about it, too!

"And you"—he turned to Blake—"there's been complaints made against you for not calling the streets properly. I don't want to have to tell you again. Name's Blake, isn't it?" he added.

Blake said it was.

"Ever run a baseball extra before?"

"No!"

"Then look alive. They pack your car like cattle. Watch out that you don't slip up on any fares, and hand out transfers only when you get the nickel! Understand?"

After he had gone, Murphy savagely bit off a big chew of tobacco.

"I'll see him in a warmer place than this before I get down and polish that headlight!" he growled. "That's for the men at the barn to attend to!"

"Won't he report you?" Blake asked.

"Let him report! I know Fowler better than any man on the force, I do. And Fowler knows it, too. He makes a big play at standing in with the boys—taking their parts now and then; but I knew him back in Iowa, where he was a strike breaker. He turned two or three dirty tricks, and had to skip out before breakfast. Say," he grinned, "if any of the boys back there in Brownville caught him here——" He broke off, with a suggestive shrug of his big shoulders.

Later that afternoon, after they had made the trip to the city, carrying the baseball crowd, and had returned to the barn, and Blake was in the conductor's room balancing his trip sheet and making his turn in, he was interrupted by Holland.

"I say, Blake"—Holland appeared ill at ease, and could hardly face the other—"could you loan me a five-spot until Monday?"

"Surest thing you know, Bob," Blake answered, digging into his wallet and passing one over.

"I—I hated to ask you," Holland resumed, taking the note and quickly thrusting it into his pocket, "but the fact is—I—well, I've played a few games on the side, and——"

"Games?" Blake interrupted, frowning.

"Yes. A bunch of us fellows have been in the habit of meeting several evenings a week and having a quiet poker party. I've been unlucky, that's all!"

"See here, Bob," Blake said pleasantly, "I don't like to see you in that class. I'm not only speaking for yourself, but for my sister, Sadie. She likes you, and I want her always to respect you, too. Nothing would please me better than to see you two married. But you've got to be straight, Bob."

Holland sank dejectedly on the long bench.

"I'm a fool, Blake, and I admit it," he said. "I've been afraid Sadie would find out about it, and—and—— She's one little woman in a thousand, and I want to be worthy of her."

"I like to hear you talk that way," Blake said, placing a hand to the other's shoulder. "Promise me you'll cut this out from now on."

"I will," Bob returned. "I sure will!"

They shook hands. Holland started for the door, hesitated, and came back.

"Then you—you are willing that I ask Sadie—to marry me, Blake?"

"Yes, if she is willing."

"Thanks, old man—I——" Holland made as if to say something more—but gave it up. With suspiciously moist

eyes, he turned and walked quickly out of the door, leaving Blake alone.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PUZZLE FOR BLAKE.

One night, a week afterward, when bringing his car into the barn, Blake caught sight of Holland standing in the shadow of one of the big doors. He was on the point of calling to him when he became aware of another form beside the conductor. When he came out and started for the conductors' room, the two were still in earnest conversation. Blake frowned, but did not let on that he had seen anything. While he was counting out his money, preparatory to dropping it, sealed in the canvas sack, into the long chute that led down to the safe, Holland came into the room. Blake spoke, and the other answered, rather indifferently.

Instead of coming toward him, Holland walked over to the monthly board, and appeared to be studying it. Blake could not help wondering at the man's appearance; he seemed nervous, upset, and his face had an unnatural pallor.

"Not sick, are you, Bob?" Blake asked, when they were alone in the long room.

"Sick?" Holland made an effort to laugh. "Why, of course not. What gave you that idea?"

"You've about as much color in your face as a piece of paper," Blake went on. "Work to-day, did you?"

"Only a supper relief. This is my eighth day!"

Blake deposited his turn in, paid off his motorman, who just came in from the barn, dropped his trip sheets in the proper box, and turned to Holland.

"I've got a six-thirty report in the morning, so I'll have to be hitting the feathers. If you like, I'll walk as far as the corner with you."

"Sorry, but I'm not going your way to-night," Holland answered. "Good night!"

All the way home, Blake racked his brain for a solution of the other's actions. Something had happened—must have happened. Bob Holland was not himself. He was laboring under a strain; that much Blake was certain of. To this he added the fact that this was Bob's eighth day!

Arriving home, he stepped into the hall just in time to hear the telephone bell ringing. He hurried to answer it. It was the night foreman of the barn who spoke.

"That you, Blake?"

"Yes!"

"Got any objections to running the Tremont owl to-night?"

"I guess not!"

"Moore was taken sick about an hour ago, and you're the only extra man I can get hold of now. Will you come right over to the barn? The owl leaves here at twelve-thirty!"

Blake hung up the receiver, called upstairs to Sadie, told her of the unexpected summons, and went into the kitchen for a bite of lunch. Finishing this, he turned out the lights, made sure the door was locked, and started back to the barn, reaching there fifteen minutes before his expected departure.

"Front or back end?" he asked the foreman.

"Back!"

In a quarter of an hour the owl left the terminal, with Blake on the back platform. It was the first time since breaking in that he had had an all-night run.

CHAPTER IX.

THE STRUGGLE AT THE Y!

The early trips of the owl were full of excitement. Until at least three o'clock, the car was crowded in both directions. A number of late dances helped to swell the total of passengers, and Blake had no time in which to become sleepy, even had he felt so inclined. As no transfers were accepted after one a. m., Blake soon found his pockets sagging with silver. Toward four o'clock the traffic became lighter, and Blake ventured to sit down inside the car.

Approaching the terminal on the four-fifteen trip, Riggs, his motorman, asked him to run the car to the Y and back while he dropped off at a

lunch counter for a cup of coffee. By this time, Blake was growing somewhat sleepy, and was glad to have this chance to stir himself.

At the restaurant, Riggs swung off, and Blake, at the controller, ran the car the remainder of the distance to the terminal. As it was against the rules to back the car up without turning the trolley, and as he rather feared, even at that hour, some spotter might be watching him, he set his brakes and walked around to the rear. He gripped the trolley rope, pulled it down, and was midway of the car, when, as abruptly as a flash of light in the darkness, something blocked his path.

Blake reeled back, startled; the rope slipped from his fingers, and the trolley flew wildly into the air. There were no lights at the Y—or, if there had been, they were out—and the car's bulbs were, of course, extinguished, so it was impossible to see barely a foot before one's face.

"Stick up your hands!" came a gruff, disguised voice. "Be quick about it, too!"

Blake's hands lifted when he became conscious of a gun pointed very near his head. He could barely distinguish the shadowy form of the other man, so intense was the gloom.

"As long as you keep quiet, you won't get hurt," the holdup continued, in the same voice. "Shell out that silver in your pockets!"

Realizing that he was "up against it," Blake put his hands slowly into his pockets and began dropping the silver into the other's hat. His eyes were becoming accustomed to the gloom now, and he had a better view of the stranger. The man was clad in a dark suit, and had a white handkerchief tied about his face, just below the eyes.

Blake worked as slowly as he dared, praying for time and a method of outwitting the thief. Yet all the time the wicked-looking revolver was pointing straight into his eyes.

"Is that all?" the man broke out impatiently, evidently becoming nervous over his job.

Without answering, Blake dug up another handful of silver, but, in reaching out, let some of it slip to the ground. This gave him an excuse for bending over. He took it instantly, heart pounding. As he stooped, and the gun was out of range, he threw himself forward, using every ounce of his strength.

As he did so, he gripped his arms about the other's knees, and the revolver fell from his hand. There followed a short, determined struggle, but taken so suddenly and at such a disadvantage, the thief seemed unable to free himself.

With a sharp twist, Blake bent his knees, and sent him toppling to the earth.

The man fell heavily, and lay quite still. Blake came erect, breathing thickly. The first thing he did was to pick up the hat and transfer the silver still in it back to his pockets. Still the other did not move.

"Must have stunned him," Blake muttered, half to himself.

After a moment's hesitation, he stooped, lifted the limp form, and placed it inside the car, and laid it on a seat. Then he ran around, once more got hold of the trolley rope, put the wheel on the wire, and allowed the lights to flash up. Leaping inside the car to where his man lay, he found him struggling to rise. In the attempt the handkerchief dropped from his face.

"You—Holland!" Blake reeled back as if he had received a heavy blow.

"Blake!" Holland's jaw fell.

The two men, both taken by surprise, stared blankly into each other's faces.

CHAPTER X.

BLAKE SHIELDS HOLLAND.

"For Heaven's sake, Bob, explain yourself." Blake was the first to regain his speech.

"I—I didn't know—it was you," the other faltered, passing a limp hand across his white face. "I thought Moore was marked up—for the owl to-night!"

"He was—but I took his place about fifteen minutes before the car was sent out! But you—Bob—this robbery——"

"I haven't any excuses to make,

Blake! I needed the money! I had to have it before morning! So I decided upon this—this trick!"

"But why—how? Explain to me, Bob!" begged Blake.

Holland wet his lips.

"It was Fowler! He got me in a game. He kept winning. I lost all I had—fifty dollars. I told him I couldn't pay up, and he—he threatened to put me in bad with the company. You know he could do that easy enough. So I got desperate, and—and——"

"Oh, Bob!" broke in Blake, more in pity than anger. "You promised to keep away from those poker games. You promised it for my sake, and—and for Sadie's."

Holland groaned. "I know. Just give me one more chance, Blake," he pleaded. "One more! If you only knew how much it meant to——"

"How am I to believe you? You gave me your word once before—and broke it!"

"I know—but this is different," Holland struggled. "I was forced into the job—I——"

Hurrying footfalls sounded in the still night. With an exclamation, Blake turned.

"It's my motorman, Riggs," he broke out.

"Don't let him—see me—know of this! You've got to give me another chance—for Sadie's sake!"

Blake came back sharply: "You have no right to——"

Holland stood erect, and put a hand to Blake's arm.

"I have a right—now," he said, his eyes lighting in spite of his tremulous voice.

"What do you mean?"

"I asked her—to be my wife tonight, Blake," he answered softly. "And she said—yes!"

Blake stared dumbly into the other's face. Sadie and Holland engaged! He knew it would come, one day or another, but now that he had heard it from the man's lips—— The footfalls sounded nearer and nearer. Something had to be done—and instantly. It would be right to make Holland suffer for his act, but now that Sadie was to marry him—believed in him, looked forward to the supreme moment of her life, it was to be looked at in a different light.

Riggs, the motorman, swung aboard the car, frowning.

"What's the matter, Blake? Do you know you've been down here fifteen minutes? We'll have to do some tall running to make up for it! Did you have some trouble?"

Blake hesitated for the moment, his eyes fastened upon Holland's bloodless face. Then, when the silence grew arwkward, he spoke:

"Yes, we did have some trouble here! While I was turning the trolley a man tried to hold me up. Holland, here, happened along just in time. I'll go out and pick up the rest of the coin that was dropped in the scuffle."

CHAPTER XI.

A REGULAR RUN.

The next day, Blake forced Holland to accept the needed money from his own slim bank account, and, although the latter shrank from taking it, finally agreed to do so, in order to appease Fowler. Also, he promised faithfully to repay every cent as quickly as possible.

"Fifty dollars is a whole lot to me, Blake, and I know it must be to you, too. There are mutterings among the boys—it is growing stronger and stronger every day—concerning our wages."

"I know it," said Blake, "and I dread to see a strike, or a lockout, because it will play havoc with not only the men concerned in it, but their families and the city in general. It will demoralize business and give us a bad name. I trust, when the time comes, as it surely must, that things can be settled in a peaceful way, without force or ill feeling."

"But if the company refuses to listen," returned Holland, "there is only one course left open to us!"

Although Blake had been with the company but a few months, he had not failed to observe, in that short time, the constantly growing feeling of un-

rest. If he shared it with the other men, it was mitigated on the first of the month, when he learned that he had at last received a regular run. On the board he found himself marked up as conductor for the second "split" on Myrtle Hill.

Over the entire system, the runs were divided into "daylights," "nights," and "splits." The daylight and split runs took the cars out in the morning. At eleven o'clock, the night crews relieved the daylight men, who, returning from lunch, relieved in turn the split men. These latter had the afternoon for sleep, and came on shift again at six, taking the daylight crews' places.

As soon as he left the extra list, a man was given a split run, this being the least desirable and often the hardest, as their rest was divided. As they advanced, they were given night runs, and finally graduated to the daylight shifts.

Twice a year the men were allowed to vote as to preference of runs on their division—the system being divided into four divisions—North, South, East, and West—each one having its own barn and governed over by a division superintendent. Thus, as far as possible, and according to length of service and good standing, the men were given the runs desired.

Blake reported at the barn at 6:15 a. m., worked until 11:15, and was off for the afternoon. At 6:15 p. m., he took the car again, and remained until it was sent to the barn, generally around midnight. Two nights a week he was sent in early, sometimes by eight o'clock, giving him time for a longer sleep.

It was during this run that Blake gave up his correspondence course in electrical engineering, and began attending classes from two until five, at the Y. M. C. A. school. This cost him but a few dollars a month, and he began to derive immediate benefit from it. Since his school days, Blake had thirsted for a knowledge of electricity, and the practical experience gained from his car, coupled with the studies taken during the afternoon, was to fit him for a higher position later on.

Frequently, during Saturday afternoons and on his eighth day, Blake worked in the shops, learning the details of the profession thoroughly, from the winding of armatures to the cleaning of motors. The men in the different departments, apparently pleased by his earnestness, took considerable time and patience in explaining the countless little things that went to make up a complete knowledge of the mysterious "juice."

Some of the boys guyed him occasionally when they ran across him laboring in the pits.

"Don't you get enough work on your car, seven days a week, without sweating down here on your day off?" they asked.

"I'm thinking of the next round on the ladder, boys," he would announce, wiping at his black hands. "I might never reach it—but if something should put it my way, I'm going to be ready!"

All during the winter, Blake worked his split run on Myrtle Hill, attended classes in the afternoons, and, whenever he could, continued his labors and his search for knowledge in the noisy shops.

CHAPTER XII.

COINERS' FRUIT.

Soon after the first year, Blake came in one night to find a crowd of the boys gathered in the big, warm conductors' room. After signing in his car, he went over and joined them.

"What's up?"

One of the conductors answered him: "Green just had a shortage slip sent him from the office for two dollars!"

"For smooth money?"

"No!" The conductor shook his head. "Four bad half dollars!"

"Counterfeits?"

"Just that!"

It seemed, in some previous turn in, Green had included these four bad pieces without noticing it. Now he had received a shortage slip for the amount, and had to stand for it. The coins, of course, were not returned, for the company always handed over that sort of stuff to the Secret Service agents.

"They must have been birds, to escape me," Green spoke up finally. "I've been picking nickels for ten years, and I thought I knew queer money when I got hold of it. Seems I don't, though," he added gloomily.

The rest of the evening the momentous question was discussed by twos and threes, and all the particulars gone over and over when a new member joined the throng. Before midnight, more than half the men were informed.

The night following, two other men received shortage slips, with the announcement that among the coins turned in for such and such a date there had been found certain counterfeit half dollars. Indignation ran high, and the men began to lay plans to get hold of the culprit or culprits who were responsible for this bit of dirty work. As the loss came out of their pockets, and not the company's, and as they could ill afford to refund it, they were keen to detect the guilty person.

The frequency with which these coins were turned in by the conductors during the next fortnight led the street car company to post a warning in the bulletin book. This useful volume, one in each division, was placed in a conspicuous place, where all the men gathered, and each new bulletin had to be signed by all employees. This insured a reading and proof that it was understood. Failure to do this resulted in a lay off. The newly posted one read:

BULLETIN NO. 2123.

All conductors are warned against a particularly clever counterfeit half dollar, bearing various dates, viz.: 1903, 1904, and 1907. By some method the coins are given a well-worn appearance, the ring of them is exceptional, and the milling is perfect. The only way in which they can be spotted seems to be by the fact that the thirteen stars around the head of the goddess are not well cut.

The Secret Service men are working on the case, but so far have discovered nothing of importance. In order to run this matter to its source, the Denver City Railroad Company offers a reward of two hundred dollars for the arrest, or a clue leading to the arrest, of the perpetrator.

THE DENVER CITY RAILROAD CO.,
J. E. CARTER,
General Mgr.

A week later, Blake was handed a shortage slip for two bad half dollars.

"That's a couple on me, all right," he said to himself, with a smile, as he paid over the money.

But he went home that night with a determination not to be caught napping agair

CHAPTER XIII.

A QUEER PASSENGER.

It so happened that for the past month or more Blake had wondered at a queer-looking old man who always took his car at a certain street and left it within a few blocks of the terminal. Sometimes this passenger carried a bag, which he seemed to watch with great care. For the first few instances, when this person came aboard, Blake had not given him any more than slight attention; but as, day after day, the same man, sometimes with the bag and sometimes without it, stopped the car at the some point and left it at the same crossing, his interest became aroused.

This strange character, of uncertain age, was dwarfed rather than of natural stature, with a colorless, seamy face, and pale-gray, watery eyes, under reddish lids. His clothes were wretched; his walk was a shuffle, and, out of pity, Blake often helped him on and off the steps. Only his hands seemed to be different from the rest of his person, as though they belonged to another being. They were extremely white; the fingers were long, and the nails well kept.

Blake had never heard the man speak, nor had he ever spoken to him, although, very often, so near the end of the line, the two would be alone in the car.

That this odd person had any possible connection with the passing of the counterfeit coins never entered Blake's mind until the night after he had paid his first shortage. What power it was that led him to connect the two was beyond his reasoning; but, whatever it was, the tiny seed of suspicion was planted, and took firm root.

The following day passed, however, without a sight of the desired passen-

ger. The next, also. But on the third evening, at the usual time of about 8:15, Blake, sitting alone inside his car, for passengers were few and far between after seven o'clock, on his run, felt his motorman apply the air. Throwing open the door, he looked out, to see the crabbed old man laboriously climbing aboard.

Gripped in his white hand, he carried the same leather bag.

Blake nodded to him, but gained no response, other than a quick flash from the half-opened eyes. Approaching him for fare, the old man held out a ten-dollar bill.

"Sorry," Blake announced, "but I can't break that to-night. I'm short on change."

The old man frowned, and put the note back into his pocket. Then he fumbled slowly through his vest. Abruptly his fingers came out with a half dollar. Blake took it, counted out the forty-five cents change, and, with throbbing heart, sat down in the corner.

The car rolled on. At the accustomed street, the old man lifted a finger, and Blake reached for the bell cord. The passenger alighted, still clutching his bag.

Once the car had started, and not until then, did Blake dig into his pocket and produce the silver half dollar which the queer passenger had offered him. Carefully he examined it, turning it over and over in his palm. It bore the date of 1903; the milling was perfect, as was the lettering. Then, looking closer, he caught his breath.

The stars about the head of the goddess were decidedly imperfect!

Beyond all doubt, this was a counterfeit! But did the old man know it? Or had he likewise been taken in? How was Blake to know?

All the rest of the evening he puzzled his head over the discovery. He resolved to keep everything to himself, not even informing his motorman. The queer old passenger might prove to be the key to the whole situation—or, again, he might turn out to be harmless. Until he was certain, Blake determined to keep his eyes very wide open, and his lips sealed.

The reward of two hundred dollars offered by the company suddenly flashed to him. Why, that was just what he needed to take an extra course in the technical school. Graduating from there would fit him for a practical engineer. If Fate would only throw this bit of good fortune in his path!

On the last trip, as his car left the terminal of the line and headed straight for the barn, Fowler got in at the same corner the queer passenger had left the car. There was nothing startling in that fact alone, and Blake might have suspected nothing at all had not the inspector carried a bag with him.

And it was the identical bag carried by the former passenger!

Blake was positive on that point by the fact that a red-and-green hotel label was pasted on one end; also, that this same label was marked in heavy pencil with the number—45.

"What's the matter with you?" It was the inspector's voice that brought Blake abruptly to his senses. "You're staring as if you saw a ghost!"

"Why — why ——" Blake replied, forcing a laugh, "I was just looking at the label on your bag! It's familiar!"

Without appearing to be aware of it, Blake saw a flash of dismay cross the inspector's face. Following up his first remark in a natural manner, Blake came closer, and read the printing on the red-and-green label.

"Why, yes. Lookout Mountain Hotel, at Golden. When I was going to school, I used to hop bells there. Let's see, that was eight years ago. Remember I used to paste those red-and-green labels on all the bags. Funny how these things come back to a fellow, eh?"

Fowler seemed to appear more at ease now. "This bag belongs to my sister. She was up there last summer."

"Golden is a dandy little town," went on Blake. "Jolly bunch of people there, too."

Then he busied himself with his trip sheets. His fingers trembled so, his writing was all but a scrawl. What sort

of a mystery had he stumbled upon? How had Fowler come into possession of that bag? And why had he lied about it?

The inspector left the car a few squares this side of the barn, bidding the conductor a cheery good night. Blake watched him swing off into the darkness, and then, rolling up the matting on the car floor, prepared to sweep out the dirt. A folded bit of paper caught his eye. It hadn't been there before Fowler entered the car. The inspector must have dropped it.

With puzzled, yet expectant, eyes, Blake opened and read the inscription on it—a meaningless jumble of typewritten figures:

92#34 28## =@'3 9:3 =7:%43% %9##@4$
8: =@#'3$ 59:8*=5. ?49$$#6

This was all the paper contained.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Another long installment of this serial will appear in the January mid-month TOP-NOTCH, *out December 15th.*

For Want of a Nickel

By Anthony Wright

Showing that time spent in being polite is not lost; also that mud throwing, even at one's self, is a questionable practice.

FIVE cents isn't much, as money goes —and it always *goes*. But when a man reaches into his pocket and fails to find even a nickel, five pennies, half a dime, a twentieth of a dollar, he begins to look around for ways and means.

The worst of it was I wasn't busted. It wasn't a case of being out looking for a job and walking my feet bare, and not having the price of car fare home. It was none of these storybook situations. It was real life, and I was up against it hard.

It was the price of a package of gum, or the trifling sum with which a man can buy a bag of peanuts. It's no joke to be without that when you need it.

I found myself wishing that I was living back in the days when shells passed current for coin. All I'd have to do then would be to run down to the beach and gather a handful for subway fare.

I had plenty of money at home, tucked under the Bible in my bureau drawer, but we hadn't a telephone in the house, and, besides, the house was in Brooklyn, and I was ten miles away, at Ninety-sixth Street and Broadway. Anyway, it wouldn't have done any good to telephone. My family couldn't have sent me a nickel that way.

I say, I wasn't looking for a job. I had one; but at that moment I would much rather have had the nickel than the job.

Approaching the subway station at Ninety-sixth Street, I looked in through the coop, on the downtown side, to see if the ticket seller had a kind face. No, it wasn't that sort. He had a face that would scare away a book agent. I saw no pity in his eye, and there seemed to be an ugly set to his jaw that kept me from explaining my predicament and asking him to trust me.

It wouldn't do much good, anyway, because he would have to explain to the ticket chopper, and get him to pass me through. The ticket chopper stood right behind the coop, and it was his business to see that each person who passed him dropped the little green ticket into his box.

I thought desperately of trying to run the gantlet and get through the gate without a ticket. But, remembering the special policemen who control the

crowds at express stops, like Ninety-sixth, I changed my mind.

If only I had had some friend in that part of town from whom I could have borrowed a nickel everything would have been all right. But I didn't know a soul!

It occurred to me that I might get the price of a ride by standing on the street corner and begging pennies; but my pride wouldn't stand for that.

The worst of it was, time was passing and I must get home to dinner. You see, there was a particular reason for my getting home to dinner that night. So, seeing no hope in the glinty eyes of the ticket seller at Ninety-sixth Street, I left the station without further loss of time, and sauntered up to One Hundred and Third Street, hoping to find a different type of man—one better suited to my purpose.

But not so. I had basely deluded myself. The man in the cage looked as obdurate and hard as a keg of nails. He seemed worse than the other, as I stood watching him from a distance. I could never summon the nerve to ask him to fix it with the ticket chopper and pass me through that forbidden gate.

I groped about for an idea to help me in my predicament. Surely a man should be able to beat the company out of a ride. I had heard of several shrewd schemes of the sort; but all depended on a crowd, and there was no crowd at that time in that section.

It was up to me to do something. I must get home to dinner. I have mentioned that there was a particular reason for it. It would be foolhardy to try to rush through and board a train. The ticket chopper would stop me at the gate, and I could never get away with it.

Suddenly something hit me squarely between the eyes, figuratively speaking. It was an idea. I reached out and grabbed the thought. Then I smiled to myself and quickly stepped to the curb beside the subway station.

Stooping down, I swooped up a handful of mud, looked around to make quite sure that nobody had observed me, and then splashed it in one big gob on the front of my new spring suit.

It was a desperate measure. But I must get home to dinner, and there was no other way out of it. I didn't have even five cents' worth of security to offer. I had made a hurried trip uptown on business, and had been unable to find the man I was looking for. My watch was undergoing repairs at the jewelers, and my gold links had been left in my cuffs, which I had neglected to put on in my hurry to leave the office. There was nothing for it but to adopt the scheme that had come to me in a flash of inspiration.

It was a shame to put mud on a perfectly good suit. But I could change the minute I got home and send it out to be cleaned.

I approached the ticket seller confidently this time, with my muddy breast well in view.

This was the idea: I had suddenly remembered that each subway station supports a wash room. This wash room is near the track and *inside* the forbidden gate. By having a good excuse, in the shape of the mud with which I had adorned myself, I was sure that I could persuade even the firm guardian of the gate to let me through without paying my fare, in order to wash off the mud.

Once inside that gate, it would be easy. I remembered that the wash rooms were situated at some distance from the entrance gates. I would go in, wait my chance, and, just before a train was pulling out, I could dash into a car and go on my way rejoicing. The ticket chopper would be busy opening the exit gates, and would never notice me.

So, pointing significantly to the daub on my coat, I asked confidently:

"Will you let me through to the wash room? I have just fallen down, and I'd like to wash this mud off. I'll come out again." I excused this last sentence to myself by adding mentally—*in Brooklyn.*

The thing was too easy. He would let me through on my good excuse, and then I could steal my ride easily, especially as the ticket chopper at that

place was stationed on a level with the ground and it was necessary to go down a pair of stairs before taking the train.

I could hardly conceal my joy as the answer came:

"Why, sure. Go ahead."

"Will you kindly tell the ticket chopper to let me through so I can wash the mud off?" I requested politely, almost unable to conceal my happiness at having succeeded with a lucky idea and a handful of mud.

"No need for that. The wash room is right there," he answered abruptly, pointing down the iron railing beside the stairs.

My hopes fell. It was evident that this subway station differed from the ones I was accustomed to downtown. The wash room was on a level with the street and arranged in such a way that it was unnecessary to pass through the gate to get to it.

It didn't do me any good to get into a wash room *outside* of the forbidden gate. That didn't get me any nearer home.

My head began to swim, and I started to blurt out something foolish in my surprise, when I suddenly noticed that the ticket seller's eyes were riveted on me suspiciously.

Collecting myself quickly, and realizing that I would have to go through with this thing that I had brought upon myself, I thanked him, and rushed into the wash room. When I was inside I realized what a fool I had been. I should have looked first, to see where the wash room was.

Now it would be necessary to undo all my dirty work. I found a towel, and began to wash off the mud, because I didn't have the nerve to go back with it still on.

It was disheartening work. My plans had been so well laid. When I was fairly clean I walked out, thanked the ticket seller, to allow him to see that I had cleaned the coat, and went up to the street.

Time was pressing. I simply could not be late to dinner. The reason was this: My sister had invited a girl friend to dine with us. Now, I had heard so much about this girl that I was half in love with her already, without ever having seen her. The girls had met at a summer resort, and my sister had told her friend so much about me, and told me so much about her, that the dinner was planned so we could meet and compare our daydreams about each other.

A girl is a good reason for anything. So I trotted on to the next subway station, at One Hundred and Tenth. I realized it was farther from home, but I couldn't go back to Ninety-sixth Street, as I had been seen hanging around there, and I knew the trick wouldn't work; besides, I was worried about the special policemen kept at that station to direct the crowds.

On my way I scooped up a handful of mud and slapped it on the wet spot from which I had cleaned the other.

I arrived at the One Hundred and Tenth Street station all out of breath, and immediately rushed up to the ticket seller and made the same bluff.

He pointed to the wash room, and told me to go ahead. Imagine my disgust when I realized that I had foolishly failed to consider that the same situation of wash rooms might occur at this station. The fact that all of the stations downtown, where I knew things better, had their wash rooms inside of the gate was what deceived me.

But time was pressing. I had wasted so much time that I was afraid that even now I would be late for dinner; so I didn't stop to wash off the mud, but turned and ran as fast as I could back to Ninety-sixth Street, realizing now that all the subway stations farther uptown would have their wash rooms in the same position as the two I had already seen.

There I tried the bluff boldly, being pressed for time and quite reckless.

Wonder of wonders! It worked. The wash room there was situated *inside* the gate.

The ticket chopper received instructions to pass me through until I could wash the mud off.

Before entering the wash room I was careful to locate the stairway leading to

the downtown trains, for in the exciting rush for freedom which I contemplated I wanted to be certain not to get on an uptown train by accident.

With visions of getting home on time to enjoy the dinner with the girl I had wanted to meet for months, I quickly removed the mud and peered out of the wash-room door.

Luckily the ticket chopper's back was turned to me; so, grasping the moment, I slid out of the door and ducked around the corner to the first stairway I saw. Luck was against me. I was confused. In the excitement I had gone down the wrong stairway, the one leading to uptown trains.

I quickly retraced my steps and dodged to the downtown stairway, the ticket chopper's back still being turned.

Just at that second, when freedom was already in sight, I heard an exclamation, and looked up in time to see that I had been discovered at the critical moment.

Hoping that neither of the men could leave his post, I made one leap, reached the stairs, ducked down, praying that a train would be in, so that I could make my getaway at once.

In my hasty descent I almost bumped into a stunning girl, and, in the instant that I paused to beg her pardon, I missed a downtown train, which was just pulling out. Instantly I was collared by a subway guard who was off duty.

They had called one of the special policemen to arrest me, and I was trembling from head to foot, realizing what I had let myself in for by stopping to be polite, when a sudden stir and rustle beside me caused me to turn.

It was the girl I had bumped into! In spite of the fact that she had been responsible for my bad luck, I could not blame her. She had unconsciously caused my trouble, so I excused her—besides, she was mighty pretty.

Well, you could have bought me for two cents. I never felt so cheap in my life as I did when this young lady took my side. She asked what the trouble was, and the ticket chopper told her I'd been trying to steal a ride, and was caught in the act.

She defended me stoutly, saying that I didn't look like a crook, and turned to ask me for an explanation. One of the special cops had come up by this time, and we had drawn a small crowd.

I had forgotten all about the dinner date and getting home. All I wanted to do now was free myself. I explained how I had been caught without a nickel; and how I decided upon the one plan which seemed to offer a chance of getting home.

The girl backed me up, took a nickel from her purse, handed it to the ticket chopper, and asked if there was anything further.

"He was tryin' to steal a ride, miss," grumbled that gentleman.

"But he's explained. You would have done the same," she answered quickly.

"I suppose so," put in the special policeman, who seemed much impressed by her action.

"Then you haven't any right to make any more trouble for this gentleman," my protectress said.

I stood by foolishly, trying to summon courage to tell the young lady that I couldn't accept her nickel.

"Oh, it's all right, now that his fare's paid," answered the cop. Then he turned to me and added: "But don't try it again."

At that moment a Brooklyn express arrived, and, being free at last to take it, I turned to express my deep obligation, and get the young lady's address, when I suddenly noticed that she had preceded me onto the train.

The door was just closing as I squeezed in behind her and took the seat next to her.

Touching my hat, I said:

"I want to thank you so much. I certainly would have been arrested if you hadn't come to my aid."

"I'm glad I could help," she said simply.

"But it was most unusual," I went on warmly. "It isn't the kind of trouble everybody would take for a mere stranger."

"It was no trouble," she answered, gazing away, as if she wished to close the interview.

"But you must accept my thanks," I pleaded. "I can't see why you did it. You never saw me before, and it's unusual for anybody to show the faith you did. What if I had been a crook and was trying to steal a ride?"

"But you *were* trying to steal a ride," she answered.

I stammered and tried to explain.

"But it was absolutely necessary. I had an important engagement to keep. I wouldn't have missed it for the world. I was desperate."

"That doesn't excuse you for stealing a ride," she said, dropping some of her reserve as she became assured of my earnestness.

"Then why did you show that confidence in me?" I demanded. All thought of the girl I was to meet at dinner vanished as she turned and gazed deep into my eyes.

"Because you were polite enough to stop and beg my pardon for bumping into me. They wouldn't have caught you if you hadn't paused to be polite."

I suddenly remembered how I had felt when I had been caught on account of stopping to excuse myself.

"But you weren't to blame," I hastened to reassure her.

"I certainly was," she replied.

"So that's why you helped me out?"

"Because you were polite," she answered.

"But I'm afraid I'm not, ordinarily."

"Yes, you are," she answered confidently. "You are the kind of man who would even go so far as to give his seat in a street car to a lady."

That took my breath away. I didn't deserve such praise. Many's the night I've gone home tired from work and hidden behind my newspaper to keep from seeing the ladies standing.

She wouldn't talk after that. I felt that she had put a check on herself for fear she was being too familiar with a stranger.

So I became businesslike at once.

"If you'll give me your name and address I'll return that five cents," I said.

"Really, it isn't necessary," was her cool reply.

"But I must," I answered firmly. "Surely, you will let me do the right thing. I shan't bother you. Don't fear that I'll take advantage of having met you under these extraordinary circumstances." I didn't wish her to misunderstand me; but I did wish that she weren't so haughty. I wanted to know her better.

"Really, I'd rather not," she answered firmly. "Suppose you give the nickel to charity. That will be paying it back."

"But I must give it back to you. I won't feel at all right about it unless you let me," I answered.

"Well, if you insist!" she reached into her purse and handed me her card.

I stared at it, and then turned and took the liberty of grasping her hand in the clasp of friendship.

The card read:

MARJORY STANTON,
439 West Ninety-seventh Street,
New York City.

It was the girl my sister had invited to dinner that night. It was the girl I had longed to meet for months.

I told her who I was in a gasp, and she returned my hearty handclasp.

Explanations followed. She had been unavoidably detained, and was worrying about being late to the little dinner party, but had felt forced to stop and help out the man who had been polite.

We went in to dinner together, and since then we've dined at the same table three or four nights a week.

Marjory and I are to be married next week. It's to be a simple little wedding at her mother's home. You have the address above. If you're in New York next Friday night consider this as an invitation to the wedding. It's easy to get to the number. Just take the subway to Ninety-sixth Street, but be sure you've got the fare; and, if you accidentally bump into a lady, no matter if you're running away from the police, be sure to stop and beg her pardon.

It pays to be polite.

The Record Mile

By J. Raymond Elderdice

Not everybody believes in college athletics—more's the pity. Here is a story of an athletic stunt that will set your heart thumping. Was there a yellow streak in Chase Kingston? His teammates thought so, but then you never can tell.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

CHAPTER I.

THE STAR MILER'S PLIGHT.

CHASE KINGSTON crushed the letter in his hand, a tumult of emotions rioting in his heart. His eyes were dim with a mist of angry tears as he gazed across the green campus to the athletic field, where the squad of track candidates were jogging around the cinder oval in a long procession. On the floor of his room were scattered the various articles of his track suit; sweater, gray jersey, and running shoes were thrown about in wild confusion, as though he had hurled them down in sudden haste. For a moment he stood looking at the athletes on the track, then he read the letter again:

> And, in conclusion, I absolutely forbid your running in any contest whatsoever. This is final. YOUR FATHER.

This was the end of it all. For over a month he had trained as only a conscientious athlete who is willing to undergo any amount of self-abnegation for his college and his team is capable of training; every afternoon had found him on the track, bearing unmurmuringly the caustic comments of the coach, and the unsparing criticism of his captain; had trained faithfully, abstaining from anything prejudicial to his physical condition.

From a novice he had won the recognition of the college by defeating Patterson, the Endmore miler, in the preliminary trials before the annual intercollegiate meet at Rockland College, thus entitling him to represent his college in the mile run.

Now, when he was nearing the very zenith of his athletic glory and was easily the favorite in the mile, his father had forbidden him to take part in any track contest.

"Why couldn't he be just?" groaned the exasperated athlete, flinging the letter to the floor in his rage and disappointment. "He will ruin my college life by his narrow-minded prejudice against athletics. Endmore relies on me to win the mile run with ease; what will the college think when I withdraw at the last minute, and refuse to run!"

He turned to the window again, his usually strong and handsome face dark with the intensity of his bitter emotion. As he stood there, trembling with anger, two figures passed beneath him on the campus.

He recognized the compact form of Whitehurst, the coach, and the slender frame of Myers, the track captain. He caught bits of their conversation:

"That freshman, Kingston—phenomenal miler—time in trials only two seconds from state record—up to him to make good now—showed yellow streak in football season—went back on his own class in basketball games—college depends on him to win mile—hope he doesn't lose his nerve—must have a talk with him."

He leaned from the window, and saw them turn into the dormitories. He knew that they were coming to his room. Standing motionless by the window, he steeled himself for the ordeal he must face, as he heard them climb the stairs, walk heavily down the long hall, and knock at his door.

Mechanically he crossed the room and admitted them; the coach, quiet and reserved, and Myers, bubbling over with enthusiasm.

"Hello, Kingston!" Myers opened up. "Why aren't you in your suit, old man? Get a hustle on and hit the track. Mr. Whitehurst is going to put you against two half-milers to-day, and you'll have to go some to beat them. Endmore is putting faith in you, Chase, in the mile. Remember that there is a state record that has not been smashed for years."

"I want to give you a little advice about the race, Kingston," the coach began. "You'll pardon me for speaking plainly of things that may be a secret source of worry with you, but I want you to do your best in this event. I don't know why you backed down on football and basketball, but I do know that by your actions you made many enemies and lost many friends. Now, this is your chance to wipe that all off the slate by winning this mile for your college. You owe it to Endmore, Kingston, to run your best and——"

Chase stooped down and picked up the letter. Crushing it in his hand, he stood upright, and his chin stuck out stubbornly as he said slowly and with painstaking regard for correct diction:

"I regret to tell you, Mr. Whitehurst, that I find it impossible to represent my college in the meet Saturday. You will believe me when I say that this is not of my doing, and that I am sorry it has happened so."

"What!" Myers broke in, white with anger. "You aren't going to run in the mile? You're going to lay down like the yellow dog you are, as you've already done twice this year? You ought to be tarred and feathered and hooted from college. Why——"

"Keep quiet, Myers!" ordered the coach, for he had seen, with an insight bred of years of experience with athletes, that something not within the jurisdiction of the star miler had happened. He walked up to Kingston, and placed a hand on the freshman's shoulder.

"Tell me the reason, old boy," he commanded quietly.

"It's my father!" Kingston burst out hotly, unable to restrain his indignation longer. "He's written me, forbidding me to take part in any track contests whatsoever. He holds that athletics are harmful and silly, and he doesn't want me to have anything to do with them. He cut up rough when I wanted to join the football squad; he made me hated and despised by my class for not playing basketball; and now, when I might have done something for my college, he won't let me run the mile!"

"What is his reason?" asked the coach calmly, while the captain literally boiled over with wrath. "Is he one of these old fogies—beg pardon—who think that athletics are the ruin of the young, and that a boy ought to regard them as bad habits? Or does he simply take the modern view that competitive athletics take away from the scholastic standard of a college?"

"He opposes them from a hygienical standpoint," murmured Kingston. "He says that football is virtually a free fight, basketball is a return to the Roman arena, and that running of any kind will bring on heart disease in a short time, citing as proof the way the runner who brought the news of a Grecian victory to Athens fell over dead. I wish he hadn't written until after next Saturday; I wouldn't have cared so much if I had been able to win one race for my college. He probably saw my name in the paper as a possible winner, and he wrote to me at once."

"What's the difference?" questioned Myers eagerly. "He never goes to the meets, does he? You can run, win the race, and then take the consequences, if there are any. Perhaps he will never know that you disobeyed him. How about it, Mr. Whitehurst?"

"You mean well, Myers," said the coach, " but we've got to do the honorable thing. No, Kingston, you can't afford to disobey your father. But isn't there a chance that he will relent and let you run if you explain things to him?"

"You don't know Judge Kingston," said Chase, smiling at the thought of

the stern and iron-willed old judge ever yielding. "When his dictum is issued, there is no appeal. But I'll make a desperate try, Mr. Whitehurst; I'll run home on the four-o'clock train—it only takes half an hour to run to Stanford—and I'll do my best with him. If I fail, you'll have to enter Patterson. Don't say anything about this until I know definitely what fruits my trip home bears."

CHAPTER II.

TWO POINTS OF VIEW.

Judge Kingston was placidly reading a newspaper in his library, at Stanford, when the door was swung open and Chase sprang in.

The old judge was surprised, but he had been accustomed to keep his emotions under control all his life, and now he merely raised his eyes from his paper.

"Expelled?" he demanded caustically.

"No, sir, I am not expelled," began Chase indignantly. "But I have come to talk with you about your letter, which I received to-day, forbidding me to run on the track team. Father, you can't mean that I am not to run in the mile Saturday. Why, my whole college relies on me to win that event—I am slated to clip a second from the state record.

"Won't you say that I can run, sir?" he went on eagerly. "I obeyed you when you wouldn't let me play football and basketball; as a consequence I haven't a friend in college, I am sneered at wherever I go. Now I have a chance to redeem myself in the eyes of my fellow students, won't you let me do it?"

"Chase," replied the judge, looking squarely at his son, "no! You must not think I am harsh with you, for what I decide is best for you is done with best wishes for your own good. You must not care for public opinion. I know that athletics are terribly harmful. Many a boy has shattered his system by engaging in them; they are mischief-making sports to the mental as well as physical man. I do not intend that a son of mine shall ruin his life with them. Once and for all, no!"

"You are unjust!" exclaimed Chase passionately. "My record as a student is perfect, and yet you will not let me serve my college! You are making me a misanthrope, miserable and friendless. I am shunned because I do not take part in athletics when I have the ability. Can't you understand that I am capable of doing what is best?"

"I have made up my mind," answered the judge sternly, turning over some papers on his desk. "I lived my life without athletics, so shall you. I know they are fatal; football claims its victims, running hurts the heart; there is no benefit to be derived from athletics in any form. I cannot allow you to injure yourself blindly. That is all."

"Then you won't let me run the mile?" asked Chase, with quivering lips.

The judge did not reply. His face had turned a deathly white and he was staring with terror at a paper which he held in his hand. He sank back in his chair, uttering a groan of despair.

Chase hastened to his side.

For once in his life, Judge Kingston had lost control of himself.

"What have I done!" he moaned. "I thought I gave this paper back to Mr. Hendricks. Unless I can get this stay of execution to him before he leaves Preston on the five-thirty train, a man who may be innocent will be put to death in Sing Sing Prison to-morrow morning! The five-thirty is the last train to New York, and it doesn't stop here, but at Preston, a mile away!"

"What do you mean, father?" cried Chase, in alarm. "Is Mr. Hendricks going to New York on the five-thirty, the last train, to save this man with the stay which you now hold?"

"Yes," was the anguished reply. "He brought me this stay of execution, signed by the governor, for me to examine, together with papers which show that the man I sentenced to death may be the victim of circumstantial evidence. Hendricks was going to Sing Sing on this train to get a respite for his client, and he overlooked the only paper that will save the man. He will die unless Hendricks can show this document. I sentenced the man, believing him guilty;

since then evidence has been discovered which may mean he is innocent. An investigation must be made, in the name of justice. What shall I do? Your brother has the horse and buggy, and I cannot get to Preston with this paper. It must be in Hendricks' hands before he goes!"

"There is ten minutes before train time!" shouted Chase excitedly. "I can run the mile to Preston in less than five, for the road is soft dirt, and I have my running shoes with me."

He was peeling off his coat and collar as he spoke. Hastily opening his suit case, he pulled out his spiked shoes and put them on. Glancing at the clock, he saw that he had six minutes to make the mile in.

His first thought was of saving the man who might be innocent, but even in the intense excitement of the moment he did not forget the purpose for which he had come home.

"Father!" he called to the judge, who was pacing frantically up and down, "if I get these papers to Mr. Hendricks in time, will you let me run in the mile Saturday? Tell me quickly!"

"Yes, yes, anything!" cried the judge wildly. He would have promised his total worldly possessions to rectify the terrible blunder that had been made—a blunder that might prove the death of an innocent man, and he literally pushed his son from the room. "Run, Chase, run!"

CHAPTER III.

A RUN FOR A LIFE.

With his keen spikes ripping little gashes in the carpet, the athlete dashed from the house, down the porch steps, and out on the smooth road. For a mile it stretched away, level and inviting, toward Preston.

Chase's spirits rose as he shot away, with a long, regular stride, for he was conscious that his father was watching him feverishly from the porch.

He was running to win his father's permission to enter the meet; but, more than that, he was running to save the life of a man who was probably wrongly condemned to die!

Having no pacemaker, and no timer to shout the quarters to him as he passed, he resolved to settle into a rapid pace and hold it as long as he could, relying on the excitement of the event to carry him through to the finish.

He knew that he did not have much more than five minutes to make the distance in, for he had spent a few precious seconds in getting his father's promise, so that if he failed he alone would be to blame.

Down the road he sped, maintaining a beautiful stride, that carried him over the ground at a pace that would have astonished the astute Endmore coach.

People whom he met or passed on the road stared at him and thought him a wild man, but never a second did he abate his ground-gaining stride.

His breath was coming a little hard now, and there was a dull, persistent ache in his thighs that told him he had run himself out in the first half.

The road bent slightly, now running parallel with the railroad tracks. Somewhere, far behind him, he heard the faint whistle of the express, and he knew that it was a race to the station with the fast train.

The third quarter-mile was slower. Already the ache had become a series of grinding pains, and he knew that he must reserve a little for the finish.

Again the whistle sounded, this time startlingly nearer, and it roused him from the lathargy which was overcoming him. The knowledge that now he had something tangible to race nerved him, and cleared his brain wonderfully.

It was a question of the mastery of his mind over the tired body and muscles, and he increased his speed with a supreme effort.

Now the station was in sight, looming up a quarter-mile away. With a definite goal before him, Chase set his teeth for a supreme effort.

A hasty backward look told him that the express had rounded the curve and was thundering along behind him.

Two hundred yards from the station it swept past him with a shrieking of air brakes and a ringing of the bell.

He dimly saw it stop at the station, and a few passengers got on board. It started; could he catch it before it gathered speed again?

Putting all his reserve energy into a final desperate sprint, Chase, inch by inch, gained on the train, which was pulling out with increasing speed.

He saw a man standing on the rear platform of the last car, watching the strange race with startled gaze.

Through the dancing spots before his eyes, he recognized the lawyer, Hendricks, and waved the paper in the air.

Past the station and the amazed crowd he sped, panting for breath. He was beginning to go blind, but he staggered on bravely.

Just as he was about to give up in utter despair, he heard a voice calling to him wildly:

"Make the last platform, Chase! For Heaven's sake, make it!"

It was Mr. Hendricks. Instinctively he had realized the cause of this mad race of his friend's son, and he searched his pocket—in vain, of course—for the precious paper which meant life to his client, and perhaps liberty.

It was not there!

He shouted to Kingston, and his words nerved the staggering runner for a last effort.

He tottered to within a foot of the last platform, holding out the papers in one hand stretched at arm's length.

The lawyer, on the bottom step, leaned back as far as he could reach, made a frantic effort, and his fingers closed on the stay of execution.

CHAPTER IV.

TRAPPED.

For a minute, Chase Kingston lay in the dust of the road, where he had dropped limply, panting and filling his chest with air. Then he rose and limped slowly and painfully back to the station.

The thrilling scene which the crowd had witnessed needed no explanation, and the athlete was surrounded by a group of enthusiastic admirers.

In spite of his protests, a man insisted upon taking him home in his automobile, and Chase accepted.

A hundred yards from home he saw his father walking rapidly down the road toward Preston, his face pale and anxious.

Chase leaped from the car, after thanking the owner, and hastened to meet his father and reassure him as to the success of his run.

The judge looked at the dusty, grimy figure of his son with pathetic eagerness.

"It's all right, dad," laughed Chase, to conceal his gladness; "I got the stay in his own hands just before I toppled over like a weak baby. I got the paper to Mr. Hendricks in time; now do I run?"

The judge was fairly trapped.

He had given his word, and there was no evading the keeping of his promise.

He looked at the manly, self-reliant figure of his son, well built and sturdy, ready for any emergency, as he had just proven. And as he looked his eyes glowed.

"A Kingston never breaks his word of honor, my son. I said that you could run Saturday if you got that paper to Hendricks, and I shall keep my word. You may run, but," he added cautiously, "that applies only to Saturday. Did you run all the way to Preston? Wonderful! Why, you must have made it in remarkable time, for the train was half a minute ahead of the schedule when it passed Stanford."

"I would like to have had a stop watch on me," smiled Chase. "Well, father, as I have accomplished the purpose of my flying visit home, I'll take the accommodation back to college. Good-by. Come along to Rockland College, Saturday afternoon, and see me run."

"Nonsense!" exploded the judge. "You may run this once, but I'll not permit it again, remember. Good-by, sir."

It was a very exultant athlete that burst into Coach Whitehurst's room that night and told him the joyful news.

The track captain was there, and the

trio had a few minutes of felicitations among themselves.

Then Chase recited, in dramatic fashion, the story of his sensational race with the express to save a man's life, and how he turned the race to his own account with his obdurate father.

"But I have his permission for one race only," he lamented. "And there are six fine meets yet this year."

"Never mind that," advised the coach. "Get a good rubdown, Chase, for this mad race may lame you considerably. Keep in fine trim, and make a record mile Saturday. A lot depends on you, remember, both for the sake of the college and for yourself."

CHAPTER V.

ON THE TRACK.

Four entrants faced the starter's pistol in the mile run in the big meet, Saturday. Chase was not feeling confident, for he had strained a tendon in his race with the express three days before, but he was determined to do his best to win the race for his college, as it would be his only race of the year.

He would be satisfied to win the race, and let the state record remain intact.

Not only did Endmore's reputation in the mile depend on him, but the event would decide the outcome of the meet, as Rockland was one point in the lead.

In the first half, Chase left two competitors hopelessly in the rear, amply justifying the predictions of his teammates; but, try as he might, he could not pass the Rockland runner.

With barely a yard separating the two athletes, they swept around the cinder track, each running his best.

The Endmore students were wildly yelling for Chase to pass his man, and break the state record, but vainly did he call into play every ounce of power he possessed.

Fifty yards from the tape the two retained the same relative positions they had held during the whole race.

Chase could not gain, his tendon was paining him cruelly; he felt that he must give up, and lose the race. It was all over, he thought, when——"

"Don't let him beat you, son! *Get those papers through on time!*"

It was his father's voice!

Dimly, Chase realized that some one was making a great commotion in the grand stand, whooping and yelling for him to finish ahead of his rival.

The thought that his father was there, and that *he* had shouted encouragement to him, sent a thrill of new vigor through him, and he shot ahead at a pace that brought everybody to his feet shouting.

He sprinted the last fifty yards at a wonderful speed, and crossed the line far ahead of the Rockland runner.

As he felt himself caught in the arms of Myers, he looked up, to see Coach Whitehurst, accompanied by an elderly gentleman whose high silk hat was decidedly "mussed up," and whose general appearance was one of great exultation.

He could not believe the testimony of his eyes. This certainly was not the dignified judge, but it was his father, minus the dignity, and plus an extraordinary enthusiasm.

"It was glorious, son!" shouted the judge. "Glorious! They say I went mad in the stand and smashed a dozen hats in my joy. I couldn't see a son of mine get defeated in a magnificent race like that, and I got up and yelled. I knew I had to say something to make you run, and I thought of that race the other day. Boy, I have been an obstinate old fogy. You have converted me by your two races, and you can run all you like."

"Do you mean it, dad?" gasped Chase.

"I surely do, Chase."

A uniformed boy pushed his way through the crowd to the judge, and placed a telegram in his hands.

Chase was anxiously silent as his father opened it and scanned the words eagerly.

Then the judge reached out his hand and took that of his son in a firm clasp, holding the telegram up for him to read:

My client innocent! Guilty man confessed to-day. HENDRICKS.

The Snapshot Chap

By Bertram Lebhar

What looks to be a dire misfortune sometimes turns out to be the best of good fortune. The unexpected always happens, and what we think a mistake is frequently not a mistake, after all. The camera fiend of the *Sentinel* found out the truth of this in a striking way.

GETTING EVEN WITH GALE

CHAPTER I.

WORTHY OF HIS STEEL.

"HAWLEY," said the city editor of the *Sentinel*, "get up to the residence of the Reverend Doctor Horgan, on West Twenty-ninth Street, as fast as you can. We've just got a telephone tip that Kitty Dare, the actress, is to be married there, this afternoon, to Thomas W. Falconer."

"Falconer, the steel magnate!" exclaimed the camera man, in a tone of surprise.

"Exactly. It's a secret marriage, and will cause a sensation in society and Wall Street when the news comes out. Falconer has only been divorced six months, and nobody had any idea that he intended to marry that soubrette.

"It will be a good yarn," went on the city editor enthusiastically, "and we've got to have a picture to go with the story. I haven't any idea what time the ceremony is to take place; but I want you to go up there and hang around outside the minister's house all afternoon, if necessary, and snap the bride and bridegroom as they come out."

"Very good, sir," replied the camera man joyously.

This was a job after Hawley's own heart. He felt sure that his victims would do their utmost to dodge his camera; for Thomas W. Falconer hated newspaper notoriety even on ordinary occasions, as all newspaper men were well aware, and certainly would not relish the idea of having his sensational marriage featured in the press.

To take snapshots of people who did not want their pictures taken was Hawley's absorbing passion. The more risks he had to run in order to get a photograph the better pleased was he. On account of this characteristic he had been nicknamed "The Camera Fiend" by the members of the staff of the *Sentinel*.

With his camera hanging by a strap from his right shoulder, he now proceeded uptown, and when he reached the residence of the Reverend Doctor Horgan, who was known far and wide as "The Marrying Pastor," he pressed the doorbell and inquired of the maid who responded to his summons:

"Is the minister at home?"

"Yes, sir," replied the girl, "but he is engaged at present. He is performing a marriage ceremony in the parlor."

"Oh, he is, eh?" exclaimed Hawley, inwardly congratulating himself that, apparently, he had arrived just in time. "Mr. Falconer and Miss Dare, I presume?"

The maid smiled.

"I don't know who they are. They naturally didn't tell me their names. It must be an elopement, though, I guess, for I heard the gentleman tell Doctor Horgan that he didn't on any account want anything about the wedding to be published in the newspapers."

Hawley's eyes flashed.

"It's they, all right. Now, my dear girl, I want you to do me a little favor."

As he spoke, he produced a two-dollar bill from his pocket, and slipped it into her hand.

"What is it?" she asked.

"I want you to get me into the parlor while the marriage is going on."

CHAPTER II.

A SNAP IN TIME.

The giri looked at him in astonishment.

"Why, that's impossible. I should get a terrible scolding if I tried anything like that. I suppose you are from a newspaper, eh?"

The camera man nodded.

"It is no use trying to deceive a girl as bright as you. Yes, I am from a newspaper, and I have been sent up here to take a picture of that couple. If I could snap them in the act of getting married, it would make a bully photograph!"

"Yes, but it's quite out of the question," she declared. "Doctor Horgan would be wild if I let you into the room."

"Couldn't you sneak me in without his seeing? I could hide behind a curtain, or a screen, or something of that sort."

He looked at her appealingly. He was a very good-looking young man, and the maid was impressionable.

"If only I dared," she murmured hesitatingly.

"Of course you dare," he coaxed. "I can't tell you how much it means to me to get that picture. I know that you're not going to disappoint me. You look like a good sort, and I'm sure that you wouldn't see an honest young man lose his job when it lies in your power to prevent it."

"Would you really lose your position?" she inquired sympathetically.

"There's no telling what will happen if I don't get that picture," replied Hawley, pretending to shudder at the thought. "Come, be a nice girl, now, and let me in."

"I suppose I could sneak you in through the basement entrance, and put you in the room back of the parlor," said the maid hesitatingly. "There's sliding doors between the two rooms, which are always left slightly open. Yes, I might do that."

"Fine!" exclaimed Hawley enthusiastically. "You're a good girl, and any time you want any pictures of yourself or your friends, let me know, and I'll come up and make as many as you wish."

She led him through the basement door, and up a flight of stairs into the room she had mentioned. Through a slight space between the sliding doors he could see the wedding party in the front room, and he speedily, but noiselessly, got his camera into position.

Just as the bridegroom was placing the ring on the bride's finger, Hawley squeezed the rubber bulb in his hand, and the picture was taken.

"It's a peach," he muttered joyfully to himself. "The city editor will rave over it. There won't be another paper in town which will have such a picture as that."

CHAPTER III.

HARD LUCK.

"Young man," exclaimed a stern, high-pitched voice behind Hawley, "what are you doing here?"

The camera man turned, with considerable apprehension, and found that the clergyman's wife, a very austere-looking lady, was regarding him with an expression of mingled astonishment and indignation.

"I beg your pardon, madam," he said, with as much calmness as he could muster, "I am very sorry if I am intruding, but——"

"You certainly are intruding," interrupted the lady acidly. "I never heard of such impertinence. How did you get in?"

"The basement door was open, and I took the liberty of walking in without asking anybody's permission," lied Hawley, anxious to shield the accommodating maid. "Of course, if I am

not welcome here, madam, I shall be glad to leave."

"I shall be glad to have you leave immediately," snapped the clergyman's wife. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself for taking such a liberty. If it were not for the notoriety, I should have you arrested."

The sound of their voices had by this time attracted the attention of the wedding party in the adjoining room, and Doctor Horgan threw open the sliding doors, and demanded sternly:

"What is the meaning of this, please?"

"I caught this rascal in the act of taking a photograph of the wedding," replied Mrs. Horgan, her bosom heaving with indignation. "Fortunately, I entered the room just in time to prevent him from succeeding."

Hawley was very pleased to hear her say this. He had been apprehensive that they would insist upon his destroying the precious plate before they would permit him to leave the house. It was a great relief to learn that they did not suspect that he already had a picture.

"What do you mean by this outrage, young man?" demanded the clergyman. "Have you no regard for the privacy of people's homes?"

"I am very sorry, doctor, if I have done anything wrong," said the young hypocrite contritely. "I didn't mean any harm. You see, I am from the *Daily Sentinel,* and, having been informed that Mr. Falconer was to be married here this afternoon, the city editor sent me to get a picture."

"Mr. Falconer!" exclaimed the clergyman, in a tone of surprise. "Are you laboring under the impression, young man, that this gentleman is Mr. Falconer?"

He pointed toward the bridegroom as he asked the question.

"Yes, sir," replied the camera man, suddenly seized with a discomfiting doubt. "I was under that impression. Isn't it right?"

"Certainly not," was the dumfounding reply. "You have had all your trouble for nothing. This is not the couple whose picture you want. The Falconer party has not arrived yet."

"Will you permit me to stay here and photograph them when they do arrive, please, doctor?" pleaded the irrepressible camera fiend.

"I should say not, indeed," was the angry retort. "Leave this house immediately."

"Stung!" muttered Hawley savagely to himself, as he walked out of the front door. "What rotten luck—to have succeeded in getting the picture, only to find that I've got the wrong people."

There was no doubt in his mind now but that he had blundered. In the first place, Doctor Horgan's word was, of course, to be believed; and, besides, while he was not familiar with the physiognomy of the steel magnate, he remembered, now that he came to think of it, that Miss Kitty Dare, the actress, who was to marry Falconer, was a much more matured woman than this young bride in the front parlor.

"I've lost my grand opportunity," he sighed. "I can't expect to be able to sneak in again when Falconer arrives. I'll have to hang around here, and take an ordinary picture of them as they come out. What a pity! This would have made a corking good beat. Falconer slipping the ring on his bride's finger. Gee! What a snapshot it would have been!"

CHAPTER III.

HAWLEY ECLIPSED.

With a regretful sigh, he paced up and down in front of the house, waiting for the wedding party—the one that he wanted—to arrive.

The other wedding party, whose useless picture now reposed in his camera, came out of the clergyman's house soon afterward. Hawley scowled at them as they walked up the street.

Fifteen minutes later a taxicab drew up in front of the house, and two men and two women got out. This was the Falconer party; Hawley was sure of his people, this time. He recognized Kitty Dare from the lithographs of the footlight favorite which he had seen on billboards.

As they climbed the stoop and rang the clergyman's bell, another taxicab came to a halt a short distance up the street, and two young men stepped to the sidewalk, after cautiously peeping at the Falconer party to make sure that they were not observed.

One of these young men carried a camera; the other, a dapper, alert-looking fellow, frowned as he caught sight of Hawley, and nudged his companion.

There was a look of disgust on their faces as they approached the *Sentinel* man, and the dapper, alert-looking young man said sourly to Hawley:

"I suppose you're here on the same errand as ourselves, eh?"

"I guess so," replied Hawley, with a good-natured smile. "I gather that you, too, are newspaper men, and that you're here, like myself, on the Falconer story."

"Yes," growled the other. "Hang it all! I thought we had the tip exclusive. We didn't suspect that any other paper knew a word about this marriage."

Hawley chuckled.

"It's pretty difficult to get a beat on the *Sentinel*. We're generally Johnny-on-the-spot when there's anything going on.—What paper do you represent?"

"The *Daily News*."

"And you?" asked the *Sentinel* man, addressing the man with the camera.

"I'm on the *News*, too. He's a reporter, and I'm a staff photographer. Can't say that we're glad to meet you, because we'd very much have preferred to have this yarn to ourselves. However, since you *are* here, we might as well be friends."

"Sure!" agreed Hawley.

They stood chatting on various topics for the next forty minutes, when suddenly the clergyman's front door opened and the wedding party came out.

"Here they come!" exclaimed Hawley, rapidly focusing his camera. "Now for it! Good luck to you, old fellow!"

"Thanks," replied the other photographer, walking away from Hawley, and bringing his camera into position.

As Falconer and his bride reached the sidewalk and were stepping into the waiting taxicab, the *News* man's camera clicked, and his picture was taken.

But just as Hawley was about to follow suit, the *News* reporter took a quick step forward, and deliberately planted himself squarely in front of the *Sentinel* man's lens.

"Get out of the way," growled Hawley. "What the deuce are you trying to do? Get out of the way, darn you, or I'll——"

The *News* reporter stepped aside—just as the door of the taxicab slammed, and the vehicle started off with the wedding party inside.

"That was a dirty, contemptible trick!" he growled. "And I think you are a cur!"

The reporter shrugged his shoulders.

"I wouldn't lose my temper if I were you, just because you have been outmanœuvred," he said. "It was a perfectly fair act. If you understand anything about yachting, my friend, you must know what the term 'blanketing' means. In my opinion, blanketing is just as fair in photography as it is in yachting. I am sorry you missed your picture, old man, but we really couldn't afford to let you spoil our beat."

Hawley stared at him.

"Is your name Gale?" he demanded.

The other bowed coolly.

"Yes, sir. Lester Gale, at your service."

"I thought so," growled the camera man. "There's nobody else in the newspaper business as mean. You're the fellow who stole the plates from my camera, the other day, while I was locked up in a police-station cell, and my camera was on the lieutenant's desk. This makes the second dirty trick you've played me. I can thrash you, Gale, and I'm going to do it right now."

"Oh, naughty, naughty," retorted the reporter calmly. "You must not be such a bad boy, or mamma will tell papa when he comes home, and papa will whip you."

"Will you fight?" cried Hawley savagely.

"Fight—I should say not. Fighting is so silly, and it does muss up one's clothes so." He turned to his compan-

ion with the camera. "Did you get a good picture, Bill?"

"Yes, I think so," was the grinning reply.

"I am glad to hear it. I guess we might as well be starting on our way, Bill. The weather looks very stormy. If this hot-headed young man behaves himself we will send him a copy of the *Daily News* to-morrow morning, and let him see the picture which he didn't take."

The enraged *Sentinel* man aimed a savage blow at his tormentor's head. It would have felled the *News* man if it had landed, but the latter dodged skillfully to one side.

"I wouldn't do that again if I were you," he said, turning pale, "because I'm not going to hit you back, and there can't be much satisfaction in striking a man who won't defend himself.

"And besides," he went on, taking a police whistle from his pocket and putting it to his lips, "I shall be compelled to blow this if you attempt to hit me again, and the police will come and place you under arrest."

"You coward!" sneered Hawley. "I guess you are right; it's no use striking you, if you won't hit back. I'll wait and find some other way of getting even with you."

"Well, so-long," said Gale, over his shoulder, as he and his friend with the camera walked away. "Give my regards to your city editor. I'd like to see his face when you tell him that you didn't get that snapshot."

CHAPTER IV.

A PICTURE ON THE WALL.

Hawley groaned at this parting shot. The thought of having to go back to the *Sentinel* office and report failure was not a pleasant one.

The city editor was not a sympathetic man. He was mad clean through when Hawley told him that he had come back empty-handed.

"You blithering idiot!" he snorted. "I sent you up there because I thought you were a competent, reliable man. One of our office boys could have done better. Now we'll have to use ordinary stock portraits to illustrate that yarn, and I wanted something better than portraits—I wanted a good live snapshot of the couple coming out of the minister's house after being married."

"I'm awfully sorry that I didn't get it," said Hawley contritely. "I assure you, sir, that you can't feel worse than I do about it."

The city editor was about to make a bitter retort when a copy boy handed him a slip of paper. He glanced at the five typewritten lines it contained, and then jumped from his chair like a madman.

"Johnson," he yelled to a young man who was pounding a typewriter in the reporters' room, "drop whatever you're doing, and rush right up to the home of Andrew Fargo. We've just got a tip that his daughter has eloped with her riding master.

"If it's true, it's the biggest yarn that's turned up for months. Go up and get an interview with old Fargo. Try to get him to confirm the rumor. We can't print a line without some confirmation—it would be too liberous."

As the reporter was hurrying out of the office to cover this assignment, the city editor halted him.

"Here, you'd better take Hawley along with you. We'll want pictures of the old millionaire and of his mansion on Madison Avenue to go with the story—if we get it."

When the reporter and Hawley reached the magnificent marble residence of Mr. Andrew Fargo, one of the wealthiest and best-known men in America, they found a score of newspaper men already on the spot.

Every newspaper in the city had received that same brief, typewritten tip which had been sent anonymously. Every city editor was highly excited and worried. Each realized that if the rumor was true the story was worth columns.

Miss Hortense Fargo was a member of the most exclusive social set. She had suitors by the hundred, among whom had been several lords and counts, and even a prince of royal blood.

If she had really eloped with her riding master, it was one of the biggest sensations that had ever shocked high society.

But was there any truth in the rumor? That was the question. All that the newspapers had was an anonymous tip which might have been the work of some malicious person. As the city editor of the *Sentinel* had said, no newspaper—not even the most sensational and reckless—would dare to print a line of the story without some confirmation.

It was to get that confirmation that the score of eager reporters were now besieging the home of the millionaire, clamoring for an interview with him.

As Hawley and Johnson joined the group on the front stoop of the big mansion, the former recognized Gale, of the *Daily News,* in the throng. The sight of his enemy set every vein in the camera man's body a-tingling.

"If only we could land this yarn and get a beat on that dirty cad," he thought wistfully.

The butler was inviting the representatives of the press to step inside, when Hawley and Johnson arrived. Mr. Fargo had consented to see them, and to make a statement.

"Looks promising," whispered Johnson to Hawley. "The old millionaire very rarely stands for an interview. I didn't expect such luck.

The group of reporters were ushered into a magnificently furnished reception room, and sat there for five minutes awaiting the entry of the master of the house.

"Have you your flash-light apparatus with you?" whispered Johnson to the camera man.

"Sure," replied the latter.

"That's good. You can take a flash of old Fargo addressing the newspaper men. It will make a dandy picture to go with the story. Be sure, though, not to attempt it until the old gentleman has got through saying all that he has to say. Otherwise, he is likely to get mad and throw us all out."

The camera man made no answer. In fact, he had not heard a word of what his companion had said, for while the reporter had been talking, Hawley's gaze had been riveted upon a fine, life-size oil painting of a young woman, which hung on the wall.

"Who is that girl?" he whispered excitedly to Johnson.

The reporter glanced at the picture.

"Oh, that's Miss Fargo—the girl who is supposed to have eloped. I've seen her picture often in the society journals, and know her face. Pretty fine painting, isn't it?"

"Good heavens!" gasped Hawley, his eyes glittering with excitement.

CHAPTER V.

A NEEDED LESSON.

Mr. Fargo entered the room just then, and the reporters rose to receive him. The old millionaire's face was deathly pale, and he looked very worried.

"Gentlemen of the press," he said, "I am not in the habit of granting interviews to the newspapers, as I presume you know, but in view of the sensational rumor which, I understand, is current regarding my—er—a member of my family, I have decided to see you all, on this occasion.

"Gentlemen, there is not a word of truth in the story that my daughter has eloped. Miss Fargo is now upstairs in her bed, suffering from a bad cold. Any newspaper that prints a word of that rumor will be sued for libel by my attorneys."

The reporters looked at each other in blank dismay.

"And now, gentlemen, I will bid you all good evening. There is nothing more to be said," he went on. "Only please remember that my attorneys will bring suit against any paper which publishes a word of that rumor."

As the newspaper men filed out moodily, one of them said:

"I feel sure that the old duffer is deceiving us. He's trying to keep the scandal out of the papers. His white face and worried look show that the story is true, all right. What are we going to do, now?"

"We can't do anything," sighed Gale. "I, too, am convinced that he is lying, but in the face of his denial we don't dare print the yarn. I'm going back to tell my boss that there's nothing doing. So-long, fellows."

A street car came along just then and Gale made a leap for it. Some of the other reporters were about to follow suit, but they were halted by Hawley.

"Wait a minute, you fellows," said the camera man quietly. "Let that big stiff go back to his office and report failure. The rest of you shall have the story."

They looked at him in astonishment.

"What's the joke?" inquired one, with a scowl at Hawley. "This is a bad time for kidding, my friend."

"I'm not kidding," retorted the camera man. "Old Fargo's daughter has eloped, and he lied when he denied it. I've got the proof in my possession. I'm going to let you all in on this—on condition that you all agree not to tell Gale."

"We'll cheerfully agree to that," declared several, together. "Gale isn't any too popular with us. He doesn't play the game fair."

"You bet he doesn't," growled Hawley. "That's why I am determined that he shall be beaten on this big yarn.

"Listen, you fellows! Miss Fargo was married this afternoon by the Reverend Doctor Horgan, at the clergyman's home."

"How do you know?" they cried, in an eager and incredulous chorus.

"Because I was present during the ceremony."

"Wh-a-a-a-t?" gasped Johnson, of the *Sentinel*. "Why on earth didn't you say that before?"

"Because I didn't have the slightest idea who the bridal party was until I saw that oil painting of Miss Fargo in the millionaire's reception room," replied the camera man. "As soon as I set eyes on that picture I recognized the face as that of the young woman whose marriage I witnessed this afternoon."

The excited reporters proceeded to the home of the Reverend Doctor Horgan as fast as they could get there.

The clergyman was at first averse to giving them any information; but after a great deal of persuasive talk they prevailed upon him to let them see his register, and take a copy of the entry of the marriage of Miss Hortense Fargo to William Buhler, riding master to the Four Hundred.

The next morning every newspaper, except one, contained several columns of the big, sensational story. The *Sentinel's* account of the elopement was illustrated by a genuine photograph of the riding master slipping the ring on the finger of his heiress bride—for, fortunately, Hawley had not destroyed that plate.

The only paper which did not publish a word about the elopement was the *Daily News*. The city editor of that unfortunate journal foamed at the mouth when he saw the other newspapers.

As Hawley was walking across City Hall Park that morning he met Gale.

The *News* reporter's head was bowed, and he looked a picture of dejection and despair.

"Ha!" chuckled the camera man to himself. "I guess we're quits now. That was even a better stunt than giving that fellow the thrashing he deserved. Maybe he'll play fair in future."

On the Gloomy Side

MORE trouble," sighed Murphy, putting on his coat. "If it ain't one thing it's another."

"What's the matter now?" queried his good wife.

"More labor troubles," answered Murphy.

"Not another lockout, I hope?" said the partner of his sorrows.

"No, it's worse than that," answered the alleged head of the house. "The boss has yielded, and I've got to go back to work again!"

Mystery Castle

By J. S. Fletcher

What a fascination there is about treasure trove! Captain Kidd's famous chest of valuables, possibly mythical, has been sought for decades, and undoubtedly will be sought for decades to come. But when a real Spanish treasure chest is stumbled upon—well, you'll follow the explorations of Turco Bullworthy and his friend, who tells the story, with breathless interest.

(A COMPLETE NOVEL)

CHAPTER I.

A STARTLING PROPOSITION.

WHETHER it was Turco Bullworthy, or whether it was I myself who first thought of exploring Dead Man's Cove that autumn afternoon I cannot now remember—it may have been he, and it may have been I.

What is certain is that we went there and fell on an adventure which we had little anticipated.

To me Turco Bullworthy was a hero. To begin with, he could fight any fellow in the town of St. Botolph of his own size and age, and had more than once tackled adversaries who were half as big again.

Then, he could swim like a fish and dive from fascinating heights into the harbor.

There was not a rock or a cliff that he had not swarmed up somehow, and more than once he had all but broken his neck by falls upon beach or into water.

Then, he knew all sorts of stories and tales of the sea and the coast, having a marvelous gift of picking such things up from his grandmother, a queer old crone who smoked a pipe and was said to be a witch, and from the sailors, whose company he was always seeking in all sorts of places.

I think my mother was somewhat anxious about my growing intimacy with such an Ishmaelitish young gentleman as Turco, but my father, having sometimes accompanied me on my swimming excursions and exchanged views with my youthful mentor, said that I might associate with Turco as much as I liked, and that he would do me no harm.

Turco, by fishing and doing odd jobs, kept the household himself, the grandmother, and a mongrel dog, Shrimp by name, which had somehow attached itself to him, and was the oddest and ugliest, and yet most faithful creature, man ever knew.

It was a beautiful afternoon about the end of September, and when I went out as usual, after our early dinner, to find Turco, I felt disposed to do something out of the ordinary. On this particular afternoon I said so.

Turco, who sat on the harbor wall eating an apple—he used to trade off fish with the greengrocer—nodded his head.

"What you've never seen yet," he said, "is Dead Man's Cove."

"Dead Man's Cove!" I exclaimed. "Why, you've never been there yourself, Turco. You don't know the way."

Turco nodded his head again.

"Didn't know it yesterday," he said, "but I do to-day. And we'll go, but we're not going to say anything."

I stared at him wonderingly.

Dead Man's Cove, so called because a ship had been wrecked there some years before with great loss of life, was an indentation in the coast, two miles from the town, and was of such a fash-

ion that it was said to be unapproachable except from the sea.

I had seen it from the sea, and had looked into its gloomy recesses with awe.

It was a horseshoe-shaped indentation, terminating at the extremities in two promontorylike cliffs, or headlands of rock, which projected far out into the sea, so far, indeed, that there was quite ten or fifteen feet of water at their bases even at low tide.

From these two spurs the cove ran round in a semicircle of black, frowning rock, high and precipitous, the home of myriads of sea birds, which I had often seen sitting on the ledges in long white and gray rows.

It was a common belief that there was no path or way down these cliffs to the strip of beach left at low tide, but I had heard—through Turco, of course—that there was, and that some of the older St. Botolph men knew it, or knew of it, having got the information from their father or grandfather, all of whom had been great smugglers.

"Last night," said Turco, "I sat on the cobbles outside the window of the Three Mariners, listening to Miles Johnson, and Peter Wraye, and old Dan'l Cornish, argufying, as they often do when they get a drop too much. Old Dan'l had got more than too much, and he was letting the other two know that he knew a good deal more than they did. And that's how I found out the land way into Dead Man's Cove."

"But how, Turco?" I asked.

"'Cause he told it," answered Turco. "It's a way the smugglers used in the old days. Come along, and I'll show you how it's done. I said it all over to myself many a time after I'd heard old Dan'l tell it. And it's got to be done at low tide, too."

We went off without another word, off the harbor, through the old market place, up the hill past the church, and on to the breezy headlands.

We might have walked half a mile in silence, for Turco, except when telling stories, was not a great conversationalist, when my companion suddenly turned round and looked about him.

"Where's Shrimp?" he exclaimed. "I thought he was behind."

I had a vague idea that I had seen Shrimp disporting himself with several more vagrants of his sort at the end of the harbor, and said so.

"We don't want him, either," said Turco. "He knows his way home."

And he went on in his usual fashion, walking swiftly and easily, as all young fellows do who have never known shoe or sock.

It was his habit to walk a little in front, his hands thrust into his trousers pockets, his sun-bleached head a little bent, while I followed in the rear and caught up such scraps of wisdom as he threw over his shoulder.

"We'd ought to find something in Dead Man's Cove," he said presently.

"What, Turco?" I asked.

"He said there was something, did old Dan'l. But he wasn't drunk enough to say what, and he'd spent all his money, and so had Miles and Peter.

"'Maybe I don't know what there is to be found in the Cove when you do get there!' he says. 'But don't I?'

"And then, of course, he wouldn't say another word because they wouldn't treat him to more rum. But we'll see."

CHAPTER II.

THE TELLTALE FOOTPRINT.

It was about the middle of the afternoon when we came to the edge of Dead Man's Cove, and from the fencing which closed it in looked down into its silent, gloomy depths.

It made a striking scene, that lonely, cavernous place, when compared with the sunlit sea, stretching, quiet as a lake, from its foot as far as eye could reach.

"Come on," said Turco, moving off. "It's farther on."

He led the way along the headlands until we came to a point clear of the landward side of the Cove, and well northward of it.

Here there suddenly opened out a ravine, wooded with thickly grown trees of low stature, beneath which was a considerable mass of undergrowth.

This ravine dropped away sharply to the sea beneath.

"We've got to go down here somehow," said Turco. "I don't see any signs of a path, but there was one once. Look around."

We plunged into the undergrowth, and then perceived that running through the middle of the ravine was a tiny stream, by the side of which the ground was not so much encumbered with wood.

Along this stream we made our way, sometimes having to clamber over rocks, sometimes having to go round some obstruction that prevented us from keeping a straight line.

And crossing some soft pebbly sand that lay at the foot of one such boulder, Turco, who, as usual, was in front, suddenly uttered a sharp exclamation, and stopped, pointing in front of him at the ground.

"A footprint!' he said. "And a fresh one!"

We were each very keen at that time on such matters, and we dropped on hands and knees and examined the print.

It was certainly fresh, the imprint of a man's boot of a very large size, heavily nailed, and having a horseshoe-shaped iron on the heel.

"Didn't know anybody ever came down here," said Turco. "Let's look carefully for more."

But we saw nothing more until we came to the foot of the ravine.

On stepping out on the beach, however, there were footsteps plainly to be seen, tending in the direction of the north side of the northern arm of the Cove, and we saw at once that they were identical with that we had seen in the wood above.

They pointed in both directions, and they were fresh.

We looked at these footsteps, at each other, and at our surroundings.

The part of the coast on which we stood was desolate enough, so far as human society or its evidences were concerned.

On our right rose the great headland which formed one circular arm of the Cove; on our left the shore curved away for miles and miles to the promontory called Hartras Head.

With the exception of the lighthouse upon the Head there was not a vestige of any human habitation in sight.

And we both knew that there was no human habitation nearer than St. Botolph in one direction, and St. Mary's Bay on the other.

A curious sense of desolation and of loneliness seized me, and I believed I wanted to go back.

But, looking at Turco, who was examining the footprints, I saw that no such thought was in his mind.

His eyes were glistening as he crept along, examining the marks in the sand.

"Seems a funny thing anybody should come down here," he said. "What if that man has gone where we're going?"

"May have been Miles Johnson or Peter Wraye, just to see if old Dan'l Cornish was telling the truth," I suggested.

"No," said Turco, shaking his head. " 'Cause they're little men, and their feet aren't as big as all that. This must be a very big man. Come on; let's follow the tracks. 'Cause I believe they do go where we're going."

We followed the footprints straight across the sands for four or five hundred yards, and then came to a mass of pebbles, boulders, and rocks at the foot of the cliff, where we lost trace of them.

At any rate, I did, but Turco kept declaring that he was following them, and that they led in the direction which old Dan'l had talked of.

He went on in front, after our usual fashion, and suddenly he paused at the foot of the great mass of rock towering above us, and pointed to a sort of rift or split which seemed to divide it just where it began to run into the sea.

"He wasn't telling no lies, old Dan'l," said Turco. "That's just what he said. That's the way into the Cove. 'You climb up between where it's split in two, like; then you go through a sort of passage,' he said, 'and you climb down

again, and then you're in the Cove.' But what can that man have gone there for?"

I stopped, and considered matters.

"What if we were to find him there, Turco?" I said.

Turco turned round, and stared from under his tangle of sun-bleached hair. He reminded me of my mother's Irish terrier as he blinked at me.

And as he did not speak, but looked as questioningly as a dog, I motioned him to go on.

We set to work climbing.

Now, from considerable experience, derived, of course, from Turco's tuition, I had become quite an expert cliff climber, and had lost all sense of fear, but I had to confess to myself as we set out on that climb that it seemed likely to be the stiffest piece of work we had ever undertaken.

We had to go up a sort of chimney, with twists and turns in it; then to make a sharp turn round a corner, and effect a risky jump over a particularly ugly fissure on to a narrow ledge; then to follow that ledge for some thirty or forty yards, with a sheer precipice at our feet and a wall of rock above us, and then to take another jump across a second fissure before commencing the descent into the Cove.

And it was as we were resting, after effecting the second jump, that, glancing back in the direction by which we had come, I felt certain that I saw a man's face watching us from behind a rock, and cried out to my companion.

But before Turco could turn his head the face had vanished.

"I'm certain I saw it!" I protested. "A bearded man, black bearded, with a red knitted cap, like Miles Johnson's. I saw him!"

Turco's answer was to jump the fissure, and run along the narrow ledge as nimbly as a squirrel.

I saw him gain the turn, and look about him.

He came hurrying back.

"Nothing in sight all the way down, and nothing above where anybody could hide," he said. "Let's get on."

CHAPTER III.

A FORMIDABLE ANTAGONIST.

Down in Dead Man's Cove itself the footprints began again in the sand; just the same footprints. It seemed as if somebody had gone and returned once, one set pointed one way, the other the reverse way.

And they led straight across the floor of the Cove to the middle, where the great wall of rock was particularly black and forbidding.

"Those have been made to-day," said Turco, "and since high water, 'cause the last tide always washes marks away."

"Must have been somebody who heard what old Dan'l said, just as you did, Turco," said I.

"Let's see where they lead," he replied, and went quickly forward, keeping his eyes fixed on the footprints. "Maybe they've got to do with the something that Dan'l wouldn't tell of unless they treated him. He said there was something in the Cove."

We were not very long in doubt as to what that something was.

The sand stopped at a sort of platform of black rock thickly covered with seaweed; Turco's quick eyes soon pointed out where the weed had recently been pressed down.

And, struggling through it, we presently found ourselves looking into a cave, retiring into the rocks at a point just above high-water mark, and reached by a series of ledges which served as natural steps.

"This must have been a smugglers' cave, like the one at Hartras Head, Turco," I said, as we climbed the ledges and entered the cavity. "It's just the same sort, only the roof's higher, and not——"

There I stopped, for as we entered we both saw that the place had been recently tenanted.

The silvery sand of the floor had been trodden all over with hob-nailed boots, and on a ledge of rock which might have served as a natural couch there was carelessly thrown a man's greatcoat, old and worn, but still serv-

iceable, while near it lay a bundle, wrapped up in a piece of old sacking.

There was a smell of acrid tobacco about the place, and near the bundle stood a bottle which looked to contain rum.

"There's somebody been here," said I. "It must be that man whose face I saw up there among the rocks, Turco, I knew I saw it! What can any man be doing here? What——"

But Turco, who never wasted words and was keen on actual facts, was busily turning out the pockets of the coat.

There was nothing at first but some pieces of stout twine and a length or two of cord, but from the last pocket he drew out a tool such as neither of us had ever seen before, a bar or rod of highly polished steel, one end of which terminated in the shape of an oar, and was trimmed off almost to sharpness.

He laid it down on the coat, and ran his fingers over the bundle.

And all of a sudden he uttered a sharp cry and began to tear at the knots with the eagerness of a hungry dog tearing at a bone.

He stripped off the sacking and the dirty neckerchief within.

And then both of us shouted the same words.

"It's the church plate!"

It was at that very moment that an enormous hand fell on my neck while another fell on Turco's.

Those enormous hands slowly twisted our heads round in very painful fashion until we found ourselves looking up from an equally painful angle at their owner—the biggest man I think I have ever seen.

I knew then that I had been right in saying that I had seen a man's face among the rocks.

There was the face—a black-bearded, cruel face, with small eyes, set close together, and great, irregular, fanglike teeth which gleamed through the ragged mustache.

It was a face that went well with the hands—and they were cruel enough in their grip, which made us well aware that we were in for something we had not counted on.

Our captor began by knocking our heads together.

Then he held us apart and screwed our faces round to the pieces of silverware which Turco had exposed to view.

"And what might that be?" he asked, giving our necks a squeeze to hasten an answer.

"It's the church plate that was stolen night before last from the church at St. Botolph," I said, while Turco growled and wriggled.

"Oh, indeed!" said our captor. "And of great vally, no doubt?"

"The vicar says it's worth an awful lot," I answered. "Ever and ever so much because it's so old. I heard him tell father so."

"Oh, indeed!" he said again. "And who may your father be, young man?"

"My father is Major Wynyard," I replied. "And if you do me any harm you'll be sorry for it. Let go of my neck."

Instead of doing so, he gave it a tighter squeeze, and proceeded to knock our heads together again several times, after which he flung us both down on the floor with anything but gentleness, and administered a kick to each with much impartiality.

"I'll make you sorry before I've done with you," he said, spreading his legs, and folding his arms, and glaring at me as we rose into sitting postures and rubbed our sore places. "You dare to move, either of you, and I'll shoot you both."

He drew a revolver out of his pocket and laid it on the coat, afterward proceeding, with many growls and curses, to wrap up the beautiful bejeweled chalice and the other sacramental vessels, some of them dating from Pre-Reformation times, whose loss everybody in St. Botolph was lamenting.

And, that done, he took a swig at the rum bottle, and, drawing a pipe from his pocket, lighted the tobacco, and, sitting down, stared at us as he puffed out the smoke.

"And what brought you here?" he demanded. "What made you come a-picking and a-stealing of what's now my property? Who sent you?"

"Nobody sent us," I answered. "We came to explore Dead Man's Cove—that's all."

"Oh, that's all, is it?" he said. "And who told you the trick of climbing the chimney? 'Cause when I left St. Botolph a good many years ago there weren't many as knew it, and them as did wouldn't be likely to tell young fellows like you—unless they wanted to break your necks."

"Turco heard old Dan'l Cornish tell it," I answered.

"Then old Dan'l Cornish—as I should have considered of to be dead—must have been in rum, as usual," said our captor. "Old Dan'l Cornish, indeed! Oh, very well, my young venturers, you'll get more than you bargained for. 'Cause, you see, matters standing as they do, I can't permit you to leave until I have left, which may be this next tide, or the tide after that, or again the tide next but one, and according as my private yacht puts in to take me off. And this ain't no hotel nor yet a resty-rong, and so you won't get no grub, which will be unpleasant. What d'ye say to that, my hearties?"

We had nothing to say to it, and sat staring at him, I with curiosity, Turco with a lowering brow which made me think he was like a dog that is thinking of flying at somebody's legs.

I was wondering who the man was.

Now that we sat captive before him I could look at him. He was, as I have said, the biggest man I have ever seen; of vast height and great breadth, but wiry and muscular as a panther; he wore a blue jersey and rough trousers, and his feet, bare like Turco's, were brown and scarred.

He looked so big and formidable as he sat there gloating over us that he made me think of some giant feasting his eyes on prospective victims.

"There'll be a reward offered for these things," he said suddenly, nodding at the bundle. "How much might the figure be, now?"

"It's a hundred pounds," I answered.

"Ah!" he said, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, and calmly refilling it from a tin box. "If it had been five hundred, now, and a poor man could say as how he found the stuff lying in a field, or somewhere, there might be something to say in the matter. As it is, I can do better. What I want to see at present is that there yacht of mine a rounding the point. And that reminds me that you interrupted me in making an observation."

Here he took another pull at his bottle, regarding us with great solemnity, and then rising to his full height, he picked up his revolver and commanded us to march out of the cave before him, emphasizing his orders with a heavy kick to each of us.

And in this way he conducted us down to the strip of sand, and there bade us sit down.

"Now, my hearties," he said, "listen to me. I'm a-going to the top to cast my eye over the free and bounding wave, and in the meantime you'll sit there where I can see you, and behave yourselves. As you can't fly and can't pass me in the chimney you're pretty safe. You can sing hymns to each other 'till I come back."

He administered more kicks, and went off in the direction of the path over the rocks, and Turco and I sat down on the sand.

CHAPTER IV.

SHRIMP TO THE RESCUE.

Turco was very white, in spite of his tan, and there was something like tears in his eyes, and his fists were clenched, and I heard him grind his teeth.

He glared after the man as I have since seen captive animals glare at their captors.

"Dick," he whispered, using my name for the very first time. "Dick, as soon as he's got to the top there and round the corner, I'm going to swim for it!"

I gasped, and stared at him in amazement.

"Swim for it?" I exclaimed. "Turco! You couldn't do it—swim right round to St. Botolph! You can't!"

"I can, and I will," he said. "It's a smooth sea. Besides, I needn't swim to

St. Botolph. All I've to do is to swim round the point there and into Scarne Bay, where the mills are. It's not more than two miles, and I've swum three. Wait till he gets to the top, and then I'm off."

I still gasped and stared, but I saw that Turco meant to do it—he was already making ready to strip off his clothes.

"You needn't be afraid," he said. "He'll not hurt you, beyond another kick or so."

"I'm afraid about you," I answered. "What if you're drowned?"

"I shan't be drowned," he said, setting his teeth. "I'll be careful. See how smooth it is!"

We watched the man until he had come to the top of the path on our side, and had turned the corner.

And in an instant Turco had slipped off his clothes—he wore nothing but trousers, and shirt, and jersey—and, with a word of good-by, ran across the sand, waded out, and in a minute was swimming strongly and steadily in the direction of the southern arm of the Cove.

And, scarcely knowing what to do, whether to burst into tears or to dance with excitement, I threw myself on the sand.

It was a long time before I looked up. When I did I could no longer see Turco. Neither was there any sign of our captor.

But, gazing up the dark rocks, and wondering how he would treat me when he came back, I suddenly became aware of something white, something that moved, coming down the path by which we had gained the cave.

It came nearer and nearer; at last it reached the foot of the cliff; at last I saw what it was.

Shrimp!

The queer, absurd-looking beast came, nose down and tail up, across the beach on the track which Turco and I had traversed not much more than half an hour before.

That track passed within ten yards of where I sat.

As Shrimp came up I called gently to him. He paused, looked at me with almost human intelligence, wagged his tail, and smiled in his doggish way—he knew me well, of course, and we were the greatest friends—but with something like an apologetic nod of his fiddle head went on toward the cave.

In another minute he was back at my side; another, and he was nosing his way by the hurried run which Turco had made to the edge of the surf.

The mongrel stood there, smelling out to sea, a pathetic paw held up to the incoming waves for a moment or two; then he came back to me, and did the trick which Turco and I had taught him, the trick of sitting up on his hind legs and pawing the air with his front ones.

I could swear now, at this length of time, that there were tears in his eyes; but perhaps it was the brine that had got into them.

Anyway, he kept turning his head toward the sea, and then looking at me, as if he were asking: "Where is he? Where is he gone?"

And at that I got a grand inspiration.

Turco had trained Shrimp to fetch and carry. At my suggestion—for we had dogs of our own, and I knew something about a dog's capabilities—he had also trained him to take anything home, which meant to Turco's grandmother's cottage.

Shrimp wore an old collar which I had given Turco for him.

I had a notebook in my pocket, and I pulled it out, wrote a letter to the old grandmother explaining the situation, and fastened it securely to the collar.

You may talk as you like about mongrels and ugly dogs with fiddle heads and ridiculous bodies, but what intelligence they have! I believe that poor beast understood.

And when I whispered into his ear: "Home, Shrimp, home, home!" he gave one joyous bark, joyous because he felt he was called upon to do something—and went off across the beach, and up the cliff, as if he had been a dog of the old days with a tin kettle tied to his nondescript tail.

And now came the big moment—the

moment which I waited for in an agony of apprehension.

Would the man up there on the promontory see the dog, see the letter tied to his collar, see, looking down, that one boy had gone, and shoot the poor and faithful beast as he made his way along that narrow path?

Almost before this thought had shaped itself the moment came, quickly, surprisingly, as such things do.

I saw Shrimp toiling dogfully up the steep rocks until he gained the part where the ledge began—the wall of rock above, the precipitous fall beneath.

And at that moment the man appeared at the corner of the ledge. There was a clear, sharp-lighted sky behind him, and as he stood there silhouetted against it, I saw him stop at sight of the dog.

I saw him move an arm—I saw a puff of smoke—heard, a fraction of a second later, the crack of the revolver, and then——

I saw Shrimp rush along, never stopping, but the man trying to stop him with his legs and feet.

And the man seemed to slip—no, not seemed, but did slip—and, all of a sudden, the sky behind him was clear.

But as I gazed, fascinated, horror-stricken, I saw the patch of white which was Shrimp vanish round the corner of the ledge, head down, tail up.

I have no very clear recollection of what happened just after that.

But I know that at last I got up from the beach, sick and queer, and went across to the foot of the cliff and saying to myself, over and over again: "I will do it! I will do it!" clambered up, and made myself go along that ledge and at last look down.

I lay down to do it, clutching at what hold I could get, still saying to myself, over and over, and still over again: "Turco was brave! So will I be!"

On a mass of black rock, sixty feet below the ledge, the sea birds crying and circling about it, lay a tumbled lump of something very quiet and still.

It's color was mainly dark—but there was a patch of vivid red which I knew to be the big man's knitted cap.

And, although he had knocked our heads together, and had kicked us, I felt a curious sort of sorrow for him.

And then I made my way down again to the beach and the cave, and carried the church plate out of the cave, and waited.

Something told me—it must have been Shrimp—that Turco would win through.

And as the September twilight came over the cliffs and the sea, there were voices of men on both—men coming down the cliff with a justifiably anxious mongrel barking before them, and men rowing up the cove on the swiftly rising tide.

And in their boat Turco! in the strangest garments, but alive, and anxious, and—— Well, never mind what we said to each other!

That was how Turco got a hundred pounds to buy a share in a coble, and why Shrimp wears a collar of which many patrician dogs, if they had the sense to know it, would be prouder than the dog of fable who was said to have two tails.

CHAPTER V.

PROSPECT OF FURTHER ADVENTURE.

It was during my first holidays from college—whither my father, much against my mother's will, had dispatched me—that Turco Bullworthy and I had that adventure of the Spanish treasure chest, which was not the least exciting of our many experiences in those days.

I had not seen St. Botolph nor Turco for six months when I came home that August.

During that time I suppose I had grown and thickened, but not as Turco had.

Now that he had the share in a fishing coble, bought with the money which he got for finding the stolen church plate in Dead Man's Cove, he seemed to have suddenly shot up to complete manhood.

The salt spray, the clear winds, and the sun had stiffened and hardened him until he was as tough as leather and as supple as willow.

Otherwise he was just the same Turco as ever—blue-eyed, fair-haired, bronzed, and freckled, still going about bareheaded and barefooted.

But he now wore a blue jersey and blue trousers, after the fashion of the other fisher folk, and when he was not working he stood on the quay side with his hands in his pockets, staring out to sea.

You may be sure that I lost little time on my arrival home in setting off to find Turco.

I found him at the quay head, watching a Norwegian ship that was going out of harbor, and when we had greeted each other we sat down, after our old fashion, on the sea wall, with our legs dangling over the rocks and boulders far below, and talked of all that had befallen us since our parting six months previously.

I told him of my college experiences; he told me of days and nights in the coble.

I think my doings seemed as strange to him as his were exciting to me, for Turco had never been to school in his life, and though he could read and write he had taught himself to do so.

"Any adventures, Turco?" I asked him, when each had finished his budget of news. "Anything like our affair at Dead Man's Cove?"

Turco shook his curly head; nothing could keep his sun-bleached hair in order.

"No-o," he answered, but somewhat doubtfully. "No-o. Yet I'm not saying there mightn't be."

"What, Turco, what?" I demanded eagerly.

"I was saving it up till you came home," he said. "I knew you'd like to be in at it."

"But what is it?" I repeated. "Of course I'm in at it."

Instead of answering, he half turned and pointed to the gray outline of a rocky island which rose out of the sea some miles down the coast.

On the heights of that island, sharply outlined against the sky, stood the ruins of an ancient stronghold.

"That's Magnusborough Castle," said Turco. "You've never been there."

"No," said I. "Father and I have often talked of going, but somehow we never got off. Besides, it's very difficult to land there, isn't it?"

"Uncommon," replied Turco, "unless you know the trick of it."

"Do you, Turco?" I asked.

Instead of answering this question directly, Turco merely nodded his head sideways, and thrust his hands still deeper into his capacious pockets.

"It may have been a month or it may have been five weeks ago," he said, "but about that time that I was sitting in the Three Mariners one night—not that I go there to drink, for that I've no liking for, but to hear some of 'em talk about what they've seen—and old Dan'l Cornish was there with Miles Johnson and Peter Wraye, and Dan'l had had plenty of rum, and he was letting off what he knew about Magnusborough. And 'twas from his talk that I learned the secret of the landing."

"And then you went there, Turco?" I said. "What's it like?"

He made no direct reply to this, either—Turco liked to answer questions in his own way.

"I borrowed John Mason's boat," he said. "She's a good one to go, and I knew I could just manage her by myself. And I found that landing, all right. It's about the only place where you could land, for there's no beach—nothing but high rocks. And I made the boat fast and went up to the ruins."

He paused there, and sat for a moment staring at the far-away island.

"They're queer, are those ruins," he said at last. "I haven't ever seen anything like 'em. They're that old, and big, and—lovely. They gave me a queer feeling, as if there were ghosts about. But there's nothing alive there at Magnusborough but sea birds—thousands and thousands of 'em. And underneath the castle there's lots of queer places. And there was a passage. I went into that passage as far as ever daylight lasted, and then I hadn't the chance to go farther, 'cause I'd no light. But when——"

He paused at that, and began throwing pebbles from the cracks in the sea wall into the sea below.

His eyes were moody and speculative.

"Old Dan'l Cornish," he said presently, "reckoned that there are things hid away in Magnusborough Castle. Left by the old smugglers, very likely. And when Dan'l has had a lot of rum, he in general speaks the truth."

I was eager with curiosity and excitement by that time.

"Turco!" I said. "Let's go to Magnusborough and explore it. Who knows what we mightn't find?"

He nodded his head.

"That's what I was thinking," he said. "What we want is plenty of lights—a couple of good lanterns, well filled, and some extra oil."

"And something to eat and drink," said I.

Turco looked about him.

"If this wind holds good we might go to-morrow morning," he said. "I can borrow John Mason's boat again, and make her ready to-night."

So we settled it at that.

In the event of the wind being favorable, Turco was to knock at my window at half-past four in the morning, and we were to be off with daybreak.

And, the evening being now come, Turco went to borrow the boat and fit her out, while I returned home, and got our cook to put me up a basket of provisions sufficient to last two hungry young men for at least twenty-four hours, and to include in it a spirit lamp and a kettle.

After which I went to bed, and dreamed of smugglers' caves and hidden treasure.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CASTLE.

It was scarcely half-past four when Turco smote upon my window with a fishing rod, which I had left outside for the purpose.

I jumped out of bed and looked down at him.

"It's a grand morning, and a fine breeze," said Turco. "We can run down the coast in an hour and a half. Don't stop for anything; I've got some hot coffee ready at our cottage."

It did not take me many minutes to hurry my clothes on, to seize a thick overcoat, and to rush down the cliff to the cottage where Turco lived with his grandmother.

Turco's promise of hot coffee proved to be provision of a breakfast; he had got up early, and cooked some fish that had been caught late the night before, and, like most men of the sea, Turco could cook fish better than any professional chef.

So we ate and drank, and at last set off in the fresh morning as eager for adventure as any pirate or buccaneer that ever sailed the sea.

It was a trim little craft, that of John Mason's, and we soon had the sail up, and were heading away down the harbor.

There were one or two early risers at the quay head, and, recognizing us, and knowing of our previous adventure, they hailed us jocosely, and wanted to know if we were going to the North Pole or to the Fiji Islands.

We made them some laughing reply, and ran on out of the harbor into the dancing sea, which seemed all alive with joy and happiness, and was very welcome to me who had been immured in a small collegiate town for six months, and had pined a good deal for a breath of sea air.

Now, although we had lived so near it for many years, I had never seen Magnusborough, except from the harbor walls of St. Botolph's or from the railway which runs near the coast line.

Most people have seen it from the railway—a great, gray mass standing on a pile of rock which rises abruptly out of the sea about four miles from the mainland.

It is a familiar object on that coast, yet few people visit it, because it is almost inaccessible.

As we drew near it, after running along the coast for nearly two hours, I saw that the rocky walls rising out of the sea were high and precipitous, and were covered with what seemed to

be myriads of sea birds of several varieties, who were circling and screaming everywhere in every nook and corner, or sitting in long rows on the natural shelving.

From the side by which we approached it, it looked to me as if Magnusborough was unscalable; but Turco, who was in charge of the tiller, ran us round a rocky point, let down the sail, took to the oars, and presently pulled us into a fissure in the rocks where there was a natural landing place with a smooth, pebbly bottom.

I can scarcely describe the silence and gloom of the fissure in which we found ourselves.

The walls of almost black rock rose above us on both sides to a height of a hundred and fifty feet; at their foot was the little stretch of sand and pebble on which we had landed; from it a steep, rocky path appeared to lead to the top of the cliff.

Save for the screaming of the sea birds without, everything was heavy with silence.

"Turco," said I, glancing at the steep path in the recesses of the narrow cove, "if this is the only way to reach the head, however did they get the stone up it to build the castle with?"

Turco grinned.

"They didn't," he said. "They quarried it on the top—I'll show you where. Come on—let's be getting up."

We made the boat fast by drawing her well up the beach, and wedging her anchor between two projecting rocks; and then we set out, I carrying the provision basket and Turco two lanterns, a can of oil, and a long coil of slender rope, to which was attached something of his own devising, in shape not unlike a grappling iron.

He also carried a short, but unmistakably stout, crowbar.

It was stiff work, climbing that path, and we were often glad to stop and rest.

But at last we gained the summit, and I was gazing on one of the wildest and most singular scenes I have ever known.

The top of the island was about three-quarters of a mile long by half a mile wide; it was ringed about with a natural fence of irregular-shaped rocks; and at its farther, or seaward, extremity was a mass of rock on which the castle had been built—in fact, the first twenty feet of the castle was solid rock.

Near where we had emerged from the steep ascent lay the quarry of which Turco had spoken, a great, cavernous hole, from which an immense amount of stone had been taken.

And over castle and quarry and the rock-strewn ground between them, the guillemots and kittiwakes forever circled and screamed between us and the blue sky.

"Let's have a look at the old castle first," said Turco. "When I was here before I couldn't make out what they wanted to make it so strong for; any two men could hold that path we've just come up against a hundred. But it is strong."

It was strong, and strongly defended.

All around the platform of rock, which formed its pedestal, there had been excavated an uncommonly deep trench, the soil of which had been thrown up on the outer side to form a high breastwork.

Time had done little to fill in this trench—I estimated it to be at least twenty feet deep.

There was no sign of any drawbridge before the one entrance; we had to scramble in and out of the dry trench at a place where it was more broken down than at others.

I noticed that the gateway, which was set between two towers, pierced with arrow slits, had been furnished with a portcullis. Whoever had built this castle had taken all precautions against invasion.

But now that one was at close quarters with it, it was not a big castle.

Once within the entrance, we found ourselves in a square inclosure, some forty-five or fifty yards each way.

All around it were the various chambers, halls, and apartments; the wall above, which made their outer walls,

formed ramparts, and at their four corners were turrets, save at the northeast angle, where stood the high square keep which I had so often gazed at from St. Botolph.

Everything was in a more or less ruinous condition.

We set down our loads in the courtyard, and rambled round the place.

We made out what seemed to have been a banqueting hall and the chapel; in the latter were some ancient slabs with queer inscriptions which I now know to have been Runic.

Nothing remained perfect but the stairway in the keep, and that had steps missing here and there.

But Turco and I recked little of danger in those days, and we made our way to the top, and looked out over the wide, glittering sea, and at the familiar objects along the coast, and at the steamers puffing out clouds of trailing smoke far away in the distance, and at the flash of the sea birds' wings as they wheeled and gyrated far beneath us.

And then Turco proposed that we should get to work with our explorations, and we went down again.

But before we began our task we decided to eat and drink, for the two hours' sail in the keen morning air had made us hungry.

So I lighted the spirit lamp and set the kettle on.

Turco, on his previous visit, had discovered a fresh-water spring among the rocks; and while he trimmed his lantern and prepared his rope, I made breakfast ready.

It was a novel experience to sit there among those gray walls, eating and drinking, where long ages ago half-savage warriors had doubtless often caroused, and I think the thought of them made each of us very silent, though we were both in high spirits and full of energy.

We spent little time over that meal, anyway, and when we had bestowed the provision basket in a safe place, not wishing the greedy gulls to get at its contents, we set out to explore the passage which Turco had ventured into at his first visit.

Now, in the centre of the courtyard there was an opening, unprotected by anything, but going straight down into the earth by a series of steps, which, so far as we could see, were artificial, as was the wall on either side of them.

At the head of these steps Turco drove his grappling irons firmly into the ground with the crowbar, which he afterward suspended over his shoulders by a cord.

Then, carrying his lantern in one hand and the coil of rope in the other, in such a fashion that he could pay it out as he went along, he commenced the descent of the steps, I following closely at his heels.

Some fifteen steps down he paused, and held his lantern close to the walls.

"This is where the made steps and walls stop," he said. "We're entering the solid rock now. Mind your head and your feet."

That was good counsel, for the roof was low—we had to stoop uncomfortably—and the steps cut in the rock were not only very much worn, but rough and uneven.

I counted twelve more from the artificial ones; then we came to a level, and Turco once more repeated his admonition, especially about minding my head.

We went forward some twenty yards or so, and then Turco stopped.

"This is as far as I came before," he said. "See, there's the mark that I scratched on the wall. I'd have gone farther, but I'd only one or two matches left. Now, come on!"

CHAPTER VII.

A GHASTLY DISCOVERY.

But before we went on we both swung our lanterns above our heads, and peered into the gloom which lay before us.

We were looking along a passage, hewn out of the solid rock, which was about five feet six or eight inches in height—I know that Turco had to stoop and that I could touch the top with my

head by standing on tiptoe—and about three and a half feet in width.

The walls were rough hewn, as was also the floor. As to the length of this subterranean burrow, we could only guess at it, because our lanterns afforded us only a moderate light.

We went on cautiously, paying out our rope as we proceeded, for some little distance, when the passage suddenly turned at sharp right angles to the right.

Ten yards farther, and we found ourselves in a circular chamber, the roof of which was at least two feet higher than the passage, while its diameter was perhaps fourteen or fifteen feet.

And walking carefully around it, we found that there were four passages leading into it—that by which we had come, one directly facing it, one going off to our right and another to our left.

"We'll go down there one after the other," said Turco. "We can't lose ourselves because of the line. Let's take them in order."

We turned first to the one on the right hand.

It was fashioned after the same style as that we had just traversed, and at the end of twenty paces it terminated in blank rock.

It was evident that it was in process of construction when something occurred to interrupt the work, for there were some fragments of tools lying about, and a pile of chippings from the surface of the stone lay beneath the remains of a sort of barrow.

We went back, and tried the passage opposite that by which we had entered.

This was shorter, and terminated in a small, square chamber in which were some ancient casks, the wood and iron hoops of which had fallen asunder.

There was naught else to be seen there, so we retraced our steps and tried the passage on the left—the last of the four.

And we had not gone many yards along it when Turco, who was walking first, uttered a sharp exclamation and stopped short.

I stopped, too, and peered anxiously over his shoulder.

There, immediately before us, at two yards distance, was a door, set in heavy lintels, and thickly studded with great iron nails.

It was a formidable door; the sort of door that one associates with jails and dungeons and similar places.

And it stood partly open.

Now if that door had been closed fast or opened to its full extent, I do not think I should have felt the least sense of fear. But it was about six or eight inches ajar, and the blackness within revealed by that slight opening was nerve-disturbing and awe-compelling.

I clutched Turco's shoulder.

"Turco! Turco!" I whispered. "What will there be behind it? Turco!"

I felt Turco's muscles stiffen and harden under my grasp, and he made a sort of hissing sound between his teeth.

He dropped the coil of rope, and, reaching round, grasped his small crowbar.

"That's what we'll find out," he said. "Come on!"

He advanced upon the door and gave it a push with the crowbar.

But the door was heavy, and we had to use our united force to swing it back.

On the threshold we paused, holding up our lanterns.

And as their yellow light shone into the cavity a simultaneous exclamation broke from us, and we started back from what we saw.

There, not six feet from us, was the body of a man, lying face downward on the floor. And in his back, just by the left shoulder blade, was a dagger, driven up to the hilt.

It seemed a long time before we could summon up sufficient courage to enter that dreadful place and look more slowly.

But at last we went in, side by side, and bent over the dead man.

And then we saw that he was a gentleman, a brown-bearded, clever-looking man of about fifty-five or sixty, dressed in a Norfolk suit of gray. His

Homburg hat and a short walking cane topped with silver lay near him.

And just in front of him, his arms outstretched toward it, as if he meant to clutch it as he fell, was a small, black, iron-bound chest, which had been forced open, and was half full of rolls upon rolls of great golden coins.

Some jeweled ornaments lay in confusion on the top layer of these coins, and near the murdered man's right hand was a rosary of precious stones, which terminated in a gold crown studded with diamonds.

"This is murder!" whispered Turco. "And it's been recent—perhaps to-day. See! That's what they were after—a treasure chest!"

He pointed beyond the body to a cavity in the flooring, close by which lay a small steel pick and a steel bar, pointed at the end.

Near them was a stone slab, which, it was easy to see, had fitted into the cavity to a nicety; close by that, again, was a piece of parchment, very old and time-stained, but quite legible, on which a rude chart of the underground passage appeared.

There was some crabbed writing, very much faded, upon it, which I knew to be Spanish.

"There must have been two, or three, of them in at this," said Turco, "and one of the others has stabbed this man as he bent over the chest or was examining that chain thing. Then he's set off with what he could carry—and he'll come back for the rest! Come on—come on, Dick!"

Turco never called me by my name except in cases of great excitement.

He hurried me out of the place, paid no attention to the rope, but ran along the passages as fast as he could.

I kept closely at his heels, fearful lest anything should be behind us.

"Turco!" I gasped. "Supposing——"

"Well?" he threw back. "What?"

"Supposing he—they—should meet us in these tunnels? They could kill us easily!" I panted.

"Take our chance of that," he muttered, making on. "Come on; we'll be out in a minute or two."

But it seemed a long time before we were out in the blessed sunlight, and running across the courtyard.

Turco blew out his lantern, and hid it behind a wall; I followed his example.

He set off again toward the path which led to the landing.

"Hurry, Dick!" he said.

"What are we going to do?" I asked.

"Make for Marshport," he said. "The wind'll carry us there well, and we must let the police know at once. Whoever killed that old gentleman would make for Marshport."

CHAPTER VIII.

CAUGHT IN THE TOILS.

Marshport was a small seaport town about three miles south of Magnusborough along the coast; we could see it quite well from the top of the island.

Between it and our own town, St. Botolph, ten miles to the northward, there was not even a fishing village; in fact there was nothing but a long, dreary stretch of sand dunes and marshland.

"Must have come from Marshport," said Turco ruminatively. "So to Marshport he'd go back. He——"

We were making our way down the steep path when Turco said the last words, and he suddenly checked himself to wheel round, seize me by the arm, and drag me behind a rock.

Once there, he cautiously advanced his head over the top of it and motioned me to do the same.

He pointed downward to the sea.

"Look!" he said.

I looked in the direction he pointed out, and my heart began to beat faster than ever.

From the direction of Marshport a boat was approaching the island; in fact it was within a quarter of a mile of the landing place, which, however, was hidden from it by the rocks.

We could see it quite clearly. It was a small boat, pulled, very clumsily, by a single man, who, we could see, was not too much accustomed to rowing.

As he drew nearer we could make him out—a slightishly built man, who had discarded hat and coat. They lay on a seat in front of him. In the bows were two leather bags—so new that the sun made them glisten.

"Watch!" said Turco.

The man came toiling on.

He passed the corner of rock which had so far hidden the landing place from him, and he turned and looked over his shoulder.

Then he caught sight of our boat.

"See!" said Turco.

The man stopped rowing.

The boat drifted on a length or two —it had no great way on it—and became motionless.

The man stood up in it, staring at our boat.

He was near enough now for us to see his face.

He was a young man—perhaps twenty-five or thirty—and he looked like a foreigner; we could see his dark skin and black hair and mustache.

We could see, too, that the presence of our boat disturbed him. He stared at it for some time; then began to search the rocks and the path above the landing place.

"Duck your head!" said Turco.

It was some time before Turco wriggled along the ledge on which we were standing to a more convenient position, and carefully looked round the corner of the rock.

He called back to me.

"Look!"

I looked over the top of the rock in front again. The man in the boat had pulled her round and was setting off for the coast.

Turco got up and came back.

"That's the murderer," he said quietly. "It's as I thought—he's carried off what he could after killing the other man, and now he was coming back to fetch that gold. Did you see those bags?"

"Yes," I answered. "What are you going to do, Turco?"

"Catch him," said Turco. "We'll let him get on a bit. With this wind we can run him down long before he makes Marshport. Let him have a good start, and then he'll not suspect us when he does see us. I'm hungry. Let's go and have something to eat."

It seemed to me then a strange notion to eat and drink in that place, when we knew what dreadful deed had happened so recently, and what was lying in that underground vault beneath us; but I was hungry, too, and hunger in its degree is as powerful as fear.

So we made some hot coffee, and ate and drank, and every now and then Turco went to the edge of the rocks and made an observation of the boat's progress.

"We can catch him up easily," he said, when he came back the last time, and went on leisurely eating and drinking.

When at last we set off, the boat was a speck on the dancing waves.

I was afraid lest we had delayed too long, but Turco knew better than I; and when we had run John Mason's boat out and hoisted sail, we went off at a rate which I knew would soon carry us to Marshport.

We came within hail of the boat about a mile and a half from the entrance to Marshport harbor.

The man was laboring hard at the oars; he was plainly an inexperienced oarsman, and made little headway.

Turco did some skillful tacking about, so as not to come too near him.

At his suggestion we sang sea songs as loudly and uproariously as possible, and larked about—just to make the man think we were only a couple of fellows bent on pleasure.

But we were watching him all the time.

We were within a short distance of the shore now, and the man suddenly pulled the head of his boat round and made for it, being helped by the tide, which was then running in.

The stretch of beach which he was making for was a veritable wilderness —first deserted sand dunes, then low cliffs, and not a sign of human life about.

"He wants to land there and cut

across country without going into Marshport," said Turco. "We'll see about that."

And he turned and went after the man like a flash.

We were on him in a few minutes, and close enough to see him staring at us with fierce eyes from out a white, sweating face.

He shouted at us:

"What are you after? You will run me down!"

Turco shifted his tiller. He said nothing.

The man stared harder at us, sizing us up. And then——

It was all over so suddenly that I could scarcely realize it while it was happening.

But the man drew in his oars, whipped out a revolver, and fired.

A splinter flew out of our mast, and there was a zipping sound as the bullet cut through the sail.

"Under the thwarts, Dick, quick!" yelled Turco.

And then—how he did it I do not know—he gave a sudden twist to the tiller, and a pull at the sail, and before the man had time to realize what was happening we had run him down amidships, and he and his revolver and his bags were in the sea, and his boat, stove in, was sinking.

And as our sail came down with a crash, Turco went over the side in a hurry, and seized the would-be assassin as he came up to get his first breath.

Now, Turco could swim like a South Sea Islander, and do tricks in the water and under it, such as I never saw any other one do; and he had the stranger at his mercy in a minute.

Whether the man had received a blow as we crashed into him, or whether Turco gave him one in the water, I could not tell, but he was unconscious when Turco dragged him to the side.

"Help me to get him in, Dick!" he panted, blowing the spray out of his mouth. "He's quiet enough now."

He was so quiet when we had got him over the side that I thought he was dead; but Turco was not the sort to take risks, and before doing anything else he bound the man's hands and feet.

And that done, he went through his pockets, and from one at his hip drew forth a magnificent cross, thickly set in diamonds.

"There!" he said. "Now, what's he done with the rest?"

Then he set sail again, and ran us into Marshport harbor; and for the next two hours we had very busy and lively times.

Of course, the man was hanged—at Grandminster, three months afterward.

He was the confidential servant of the gentleman he had murdered, a Mr. Anthony Ferdinand, half Spanish, half English, with whom he had traveled a great deal in Spain, where Mr. Ferdinand had recently acquired particulars of the whereabouts of the treasure chest, which we had seen, and had been buried at Magnusborough by one of his ancestors.

They had come to Marshport, put up at the hotel, and the day before Turco and I made our expedition had rowed themselves out to the island, Mr. Ferdinand leaving word that as the weather was warm they might camp out there for the night.

It was proved that late that evening the servant dispatched a heavy bag, securely locked, from a station just outside Marshport to London, and this, being recovered, was found to contain magnificent jewels and ornaments of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

It was further proved that he slept that night at an inn in Marshport, bought two new bags there at an obscure saddlemaker's, and was seen rowing away from a lonely part of the coast next morning. But before he was executed the man made full confession, so there was no mystery in the case.

There were great things said of Turco and me, and it was uncomfortable to be stared at as we were when we went to the assizes at Grandminster.

But it was Turco who did it all.

And as Turco said all along, it was mere luck that we happened to select that particular day for seeking an adventure.

Saving Billy's Nose

By Philip R. Kellar

A heroic or a handsome husband? That is the question life often puts to a girl. The one in this story had her own ideas on the subject, and with a little assistance from Fate, she made her point.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

"I DON'T care what Mike thinks," said Toby Lyons, interrupting Billy Van Alten's long dissertation on his powers pugilistic. "You've got Mike hypnotized, that's all; but you haven't hypnotized us."

"But I can box," Billy doggedly persisted.

"Of course," Jimmie Perkins agreed sweetly, "and you can fight, too, when 'there's a reason.' But you couldn't go into the ring with the cold-blooded intention of knocking the block off some man you never had seen before.

"You're too much educated, Billy. You've retained the old knowledge and ability to fight that your savage ancestors had, but you haven't kept their love of fighting—in that style."

"Besides," Toby added, "you couldn't stand it. You're not tough enough. In the process of becoming civilized, you have become too sensitive. You leave the prize ring to those better fitted for it, and stick to your own game."

"Fellows, you're all wrong," Billy argued belligerently, with the aggressiveness that had made him a power in the financial world in the few years that had passed since his college days ended. "You forget that with this sensitiveness comes nervous endurance which will enable me to stand more than a person less sensitive. That is the result of education—the education that has given us the ability to overcome obstacles, and the ability to work on nervous force long after mere brute strength is exhausted."

Perkins knew this formula of Billy's by heart. "Oh, bosh and fiddlesticks," he shouted, "your theory is all to the bad. Shut up now, Billy, and be content to know you're the best amateur boxer of the Kicker Club—or the city, for that matter."

"If you don't," Toby threatened, "we'll make you prove your boasts."

"I'm willing"—Billy was excited—"I'll do it any time you say so."

Dolly Morgan, the fourth of the little group gathered around the table at the Kicker Athletic Club, and who had taken little apparent interest in the argument, aroused himself sufficiently to drawl:

"I say, boys, I've a scheme that ought to put a stop to this wrangling."

The others looked at him with mild interest, remembering that at times Dolly did have a real idea. "The Circle Boxing Club had a fight scheduled for three weeks from to-night, between the 'Irish Cyclone' and Kid Thumper, for the middleweight championship of the state. The Kid got sick yesterday, and the club is skirmishing about for somebody to take his place. Billy might volunteer—unless he's afraid of the Cyclone."

Billy may have felt some trepidation at the mention of the man who had been victorious in half a hundred ring battles, but he was more afraid of the others thinking him afraid, and he immediately accepted the challenge.

Dolly suddenly developed still more energy and executive ability, and in so short a time that it made the others gasp, he had used the telephone so ef-

fectually that the officers of the Circle Club, and the manager of the Cyclone agreed to the substitution of "Billy, the Blond Brute"—as Dolly facetiously described Van Alten—in the place of Kid Thumper.

"Now," said Dolly triumphantly to Billy, "chase yourself and get in training. But remember, if you win, you are never to say a thing that sounds like 'I told you so,' and we'll admit you have fighting ability. If you lose, we'll not say anything on the subject, and you are silently to admit that you are only an amateur."

Billy readily agreed to the condition, and was so elated that he made all the wagers on himself that his friends would cover; and then, ignoring the car that waited for him at the club door, walked jauntily to the home of Nettie Rembrandt.

Everybody liked Billy, including Nettie; but no one except Nettie liked to hear him brag in a modest sort of way of his boxing ability and the great things he had done in this line in his college years. But Nettie was even guilty of calling him perfect, and she was thoroughly convinced that he could defeat any man set before him.

But Nettie was half in love with Billy—though she would not admit as much, even to herself—and her conviction was not shared by Billy's other friends. This was rather strange, in view of the fact that Billy had convinced his valet, even; and Michael had, in his earlier days, come in frequent contact with professional pugilists.

Nettie received the news of the coming contest with varying emotions. At first she was carried away by Billy's enthusiasm and confidence, but a fearful thought came quickly.

"But, Billy," she exclaimed, "of course I *know* you will thrash him soundly"—it is one of the strange things about women that they so quickly drop into the habits of thought of the men they are interested in—"but—but I'm afraid you may get hurt. I——"

"If you feel half as apprehensive about my safety as you look, I'll let him beat me to a pulp."

"Don't be silly," Nettie recovered her discarded armor of airiness. "You know what I mean. Your nose might be knocked out of shape; and that would be a dreadful calamity—almost as bad as being defeated—yes, quite as bad."

Billy's nose was a prominent part of his physiognomy, but a decided addition to his general attractiveness, and he rubbed it apprehensively as he tried to visualize himself with it broken and crooked.

"I'll keep it out of the way." He laughed, and rolled up a sleeve to let Nettie see his knotty biceps. "When I get that in action it will be time for the Irish Cyclone to look out for his own nose, and not bother about mine."

"Oo-o, isn't it big!" Nettie became serious again. "Oh, Billy, don't hit him too hard! Please don't!"

"Oh, no! I'll hit just hard enough to knock him out, but I'll promise not to kill him. But, Nettie, if I win, will you let——"

Nettie parried Billy's attempt to run them into the waters of sentimental talk—she had been parrying such efforts for a year because she hadn't decided whether she wanted him or not—and said coquettishly:

"I don't want you disfigured, because—well, because I want to show you off some more. You may come up to-morrow night and take me to the Downing reception."

Billy shook his head. "Can't." The pout that came over her face caused him to add hastily: "You see, Nettie, I must train for this fight. I'm in pretty good condition for an ordinary bout, but this requires some extra work."

"But you're not going to train at night?" The pout was still in evidence.

"I should say not! Why, I'll be in bed by ten o'clock every night, and up about the time you are turning in."

"Why, how horrid! Is that the way all pugilists do? I think it perfectly ridiculous, and I don't want you to fight."

"You don't want everybody to be calling me a coward, do you?" Billy was very serious. She shook her head,

and he went on: "Well, that's what would happen. Now, I can't come to the Downings to-morrow, because I'll not be in town.

"Dolly has offered me the use of his place, Waterbrook, and Mike and I are going up there in the morning. It will be a fine training place, and no one will know I'm there."

"You don't mean that you will be gone for nearly a month?"

"Yes." He added tenderly: "Do you care?"

"Care! Of course I care. It will be stupid without you."

"Nettie!" He arose, and stood beside her chair. "Nettie, may I say those three words I've been trying to say for a year?"

"Not now." She sprang up with a laugh. "You've a battle to fight, and must keep your mind on that. What do you do when you train?"

"Oh, I'll run ten or fifteen miles every day."

"That's foolish when you have two of the best motor cars in the city."

"Then I'll work in the gymnasium a few hours. Mike says, though, that I'll have to put more time in outdoor work to get my wind in shape. He says if I don't do that, one of the Cyclone's blows will land in my stomach and double me up for the count."

"Mercy, Billy, he won't hit you in the—the stomach, will he?"

"He will if I let him." Billy smiled.

"Oh, I thought prize fighting would be fun, but that doesn't sound like fun. I—I don't want you to fight."

"But I must, Nettie. Besides, I haven't any right to deprive the Cyclone of the loser's end of the purse," Billy spoke magnanimously. "You see, he makes his living by fighting."

Nettie looked bewildered. "How much is the—this purse?"

"Thirty-five hundred dollars; twenty-five hundred for the winner and a thousand for the loser. But I'll give my twenty-five hundred to the Cyclone."

"My, that's almost as much as my quarter's income. Dear me," she sighed, "I hadn't any idea it was such a complicated affair. I always thought fighting was just pounding each other. I'll be glad when it's over. You must promise to write to me every day."

Billy promised. He would have promised other things, too, if Nettie had not stopped him. But he was a happy man when he went home to bed at midnight—very early for him—and placed himself in Mike's hands. And Mike was a very happy man, because all his life he had dreamed of being the trainer and manager of a prize fighter, only to awaken after each delicious vision, and find that the thump his principal was delivering on the jaw of the opponent was only his own head striking the floor as he rolled out of bed.

II.

Even the most fastidious of professional pugilists could have found nothing to complain of at Waterbrook. If he had known of the word, Mike would have called it ideal. Lacking such knowledge, he contented himself by calling the place a corker.

The pure country air got into Mike's city-bred body, mingled its inspiration of freedom with his new feeling of responsibility, and caused him to take undreamed-of liberties with his master. As the trainer and sparring partner of Billy, the Blond Brute, Mike felt it his duty to pummel the blue-blooded gentleman, masquerading under that title, as hard and as often as he liked.

Before the first two weeks had passed, Billy had learned several things he had not known existed in the world of professional pugilism.

When the day's work was over, Mike, the trainer, was displaced by Michael, the valet, but both man and master realized that never again could the old relations be established on the same footing. In the process of having his nose tapped and his eye blackened by Mike's fists, Billy began to have a feeling of respect for the man that he had not felt before.

And in the process of picking himself up from the floor, and recovering from the effects of Billy's blows, Mike forgot to think of his employer's

riches and social position, in his admiration for the man. This feeling of mutual respect and comradeship was strengthened on the long runs they took along the country roads, silently plodding on, side by side.

In the meantime, Billy's friends in the city were taking a great interest in the coming fight, watching the Irish Cyclone, and taking particular pains to keep Billy informed of that person's great work in training.

As the time passed, and Billy's short letters came regularly every day, Nettie grew more and more excited, and more and more apprehensive as she compared them with the stories Billy's friends told her about the Cyclone. At the end of the second week, Billy was surprised at the contents of two letters, one from Nettie and the other from Dolly.

"I've seen the Cyclone," Nettie wrote, "and he looks like a big brute. I just couldn't stay away, Billy. I had to go and see him. Dolly fixed it so I could go without any one else knowing about it."

Dolly wrote in his lazy manner, saying that Billy's opponent looked fit for the battle of his life, and was not taking any chances on being knocked out by an unknown fighter. He added in a postscript:

What do you think? Nettie made me take her to see the Cyclone at his training quarters. I tried to persuade her out of it, but couldn't. You know how easy it is to keep her from doing something she wants to do! But when she asked me to introduce her to him I nearly keeled over. And you should have seen him! Embarrassed? Oh, no, just speechless. To what will feminine curiosity not lead! Well, so-long. Don't let up on your work, old man.

Billy laughed at the idea of Dolly's seeking to combat Nettie's little whims, and then settled back into the calm routine of training. Three days before the night set for the fight, Mike told him that the servants at Waterbrook, the village authorities, and all the people were greatly frightened by a wild man that was running about the country, terrorizing the women and children by appearing unexpectedly at back doors, and demanding food and water. He had been there for two days, and there was some talk of organizing a posse to hunt him down.

"I'd better be careful," Billy said, with a laugh, "or they'll think I'm a wild man, running about in this costume."

III.

The morning of the fight, Mike started early for the city to look after a few details of the coming contest. Dolly had come down the night before, and had promised Billy to take a run with him that day, but he had been pressed into service by the village constable as one of the posse to capture the wild man, and Billy was left alone.

He rested most of the morning, and after a light lunch started out for a long run, going south and then circling around to the west, intending to return across country through the woods.

He was trotting along the country road, swinging his weights, his wet hair hanging over his face, his sweater and trousers splashed with mud, when he noticed, half a mile ahead, a trap containing two women and a driver. When he drew near, the driver turned and saw him, emitted a yell, and started to lash the horses.

"Well, that's funny," murmured Billy. "But I need a little sprint, so thank you, old chap, for setting the pace."

The driver soon distanced Billy, who continued his dogtrot; but presently, as he turned a corner, he almost bumped into the trap. The driver yelled again, and began lashing his horses into a run again. Occasionally, the women turned and looked at Billy in terror.

It finally dawned upon him that they had mistaken him for the wild man, and to spare them he turned out of the road and started through the woods.

He walked a short distance in the cool shade, and, when within two miles of Waterbrook, was startled at the sight of a face peering at him from behind a clump of bushes beside the path. Billy stopped and called. The

face disappeared, and Billy heard some one running through the bushes.

Determined to see who might be trespassing on Dolly's estate, he sprang forward in pursuit, and a few moments later came in sight of the fugitive darting across a cleared space and dodging into the trees.

Billy's nerves tingled as he recognized the wild man. He wasn't surprised that even the sight of his back had struck terror to the women and children of the country, for the man's shoulders appeared to have the power of a horse's in them, and he got over the ground with the easy speed of a machine.

After a while, however, his gait flagged, and, as Billy was the fresher, the space separating them gradually lessened. By an extra spurt, Billy caught him at the edge of the garden. The man turned a heavy-cheeked, red-eyed face covered with a stubby red beard, his matted hair hanging down over his eyes, and growled:

"Take your hand off."

"You're the wild man," Billy asserted.

"You're a liar," the man replied savagely.

"I'm going to take you along and turn you over to the constable," Billy continued calmly.

"The devil you are!"

"Yes, you owe it to the people of this neighborhood to give yourself up. I don't know why you've done it, but you've pretty near scared the whole country stiff."

"Suppose I won't go with you?" the man growled.

"Then I'll have to take you."

"You're not man enough."

The challenge was no sooner uttered, than Billy accepted it by throwing his arms around the man. He was surprised when he was thrown off as if he might have been a child, and a big fist struck him a stinging blow on the jaw.

"Better run along, now," the man growled, "and don't stay here an' get hurt."

But Billy was more determined than ever. He rushed at the wild man, dodged a blow, warded off another, and grappled with all his strength. They swayed for a moment, and then rolled over on the ground.

In the rough-and-tumble fight that followed, considerable energy was expended, although little damage was done. At the end of five minutes, they paused by mutual, though unspoken, consent, arose, and stood glaring and puffing at each other. Billy was the first to speak.

"Gee! that was a good tussle! But what's the use? You look hungry, and I know I am. So come along and we'll get some lunch, and then go down and explain to the constable. I don't believe you are wild, any more than I am."

The man grunted, and Billy started toward the house without looking back. The man stared after him a moment, then jogged along behind, presently coming up and walking beside Billy. He did not answer Billy's chatter until after they had been seated at the table and had been eating for some minutes.

"You're a queer cuss," he said. "Is this your place?" He looked about admiringly.

"No, it belongs to a friend. I'm just here for a while."

Billy, although his own appetite was of goodly proportions, finished long before his strange guest, who ate as if he had been starved for a week. When he had finished, he leaned back with a grunt of satisfaction, and said brusquely:

"That's the first square I've had in three days. I don't feel near as mean as I did."

"Good," Billy ejaculated, "then let's go down and see the constable."

"I ain't done nothing," the man returned doggedly.

"Yes, you have," Billy retorted, "you've been scaring people. It will be a fine, but maybe I can pay that for you. And, to tell the truth," he added honestly, "my chum is off with a posse hunting you, and, if I brought you in single-handed, it would prove to him—well, he thinks I'm not such a much."

"My Lord!" grunted the wild man.

"What can he be?" and followed Billy docilely enough.

But when they emerged from the gate, a constable pounced upon them, declaring them under arrest for disturbing the peace, and the wild man wanted to fight. Billy stopped him by suggesting that, since they were on their way to find the constable, they were merely saved the bother by his finding them.

"It's all a mistake," said Billy to the constable. "He's not wild."

"That's all right," the official grimly replied; "you can tell that to the justice."

IV.

It was not until they reached the little office of Justice Gormand, that Billy realized he, too, was under arrest. Justice Gormand proved adamant to Billy's explanation of who he was, and turned a deaf ear to his suggestion that he was amply able to go on the bond of the wild man, who gave his name as Jack Reilly. The justice laughed, and grew stern when the driver of the trap came upon the scene and added his accusations against Billy.

"I reckon you can stay in jail to-night," Justice Gormand said magnanimously, "and we'll hear your case to-morrow. Both of you look like wild men, and I ain't a-goin' to take any chances."

"But I must be in the city to-night," Billy pleaded.

"Tell that to your partner in the cell," the justice grinned. "This case is concluded for to-day."

"Can't I send a message to Mr. Morgan?"

"Yes, but he was called to the city a few hours ago, and won't be back till eight o'clock to-night."

Billy groaned, stormed, pleaded, threatened, and was laughed at, and finally thrust into the dirty, dingy cell with Reilly. The justice kindly permitted him to send a note to Morgan at Waterbrook, and a telegram to him in the city.

"Cheer up, cul." Reilly slapped Billy on the back. "This place looks real pleasant to me after the last week. Gee! but I've had one dickens of a time!"

But Billy refused to be comforted. He thought of the empty corner in the ring at the Circle club, and groaned at the hisses and cries of "coward" he mentally heard hurled at him.

He waited impatiently for an answer to his note, hoping against hope that Dolly would get him out in time for him to reach the ring before the evening's program was over. Finally he fell asleep from vexation and exhaustion, and was blissfully unconscious of the passing time. About half-past nine, he was awakened by the sound of a key in the lock. The constable opened the door.

"Come along. Mr. Morgan is here, and the justice wants to see if he'll identify you."

Billy and Reilly walked behind the constable into the office, dimly lighted by an oil lamp. Dolly was sitting beside Justice Gormand. In the dark corner of the room were several persons whom Billy could not recognize in the dim light. When Billy and Reilly came to a stop in front of the officer of the law, Morgan snickered.

"They're tough-looking brutes, aren't they, Mr. Justice? I don't know that I ought to admit I know either, but I suppose it is a time to be charitable. Mr. Van Alten is just who he said he was, and I think you'll be safe in letting him go."

"Thanks, old man," Billy grinned sheepishly, "but I'm sorry you didn't come two hours earlier. I can't get back to-night in time to fight the Irish Cyclone, and everybody is sure to call me——"

"What's that?" Reilly yelled. "Fight who? Say, what's aching you? Did this little thing git you nutty?"

The constable grabbed Reilly; Billy stepped back and stared at him; Dolly let loose another snicker; one of the figures detached itself from the group in the corner, and it slowly dawned upon Billy that it was Nettie Rembrandt. Before he could recover the use of his tongue, she spoke:

"Oh, Billy, I'm so glad I got here

in time." She smiled at Reilly. "I was afraid something dreadful had happened."

Reilly's chin dropped as he stared at Nettie. Dolly relieved the awkward situation by remarking cheerfully:

"Billy, your recent cell comrade is Mr. Jack Reilly, better known as the Irish Cyclone. Mr. Reilly, your esteemed prison mate is Mr. William Van Alten—Billy, the Blond Brute."

"Well, I'll be damned!" the Cyclone murmured.

"And so will I." Billy was dazed. "Talk some more. What's it all about?"

The justice and the constable were grinning. They had known what to expect, Dolly having explained the situation. Nettie answered Billy's plea for more light.

"Mr. Reilly," she said, "decided that it wasn't in accord with the ethics of his profession for him to fight an amateur for the championship, and we decided it would be best for him to disappear from sight until after the date set for the battle. I had to talk a good deal before he could see that he would not be disgraced."

"You talk?" Billy was still dazed.

"Sure," supplemented the Cyclone, "you know thirty-five hundred bucks talk pretty loud."

"Oh," Billy began to comprehend, "so you sold out?"

"Sold out nothing," Reilly replied indignantly. "I agreed not to show up, that's all. When I see how anxious the lady is to keep your nose from being smashed crooked, I can't do anything else, can I?"

While Billy looked from Nettie to Reilly and back again, Dolly decided he might be surprised and show it, and spoke to the Cyclone:

"So that was what you and Miss Rembrandt were talking about in your gym?" Reilly grinned in assent. "But what are you doing down here in this fix?"

"Well, you see," Reilly spoke to Billy, "if I'd known how hard I'd have to work for that dough when I tried to drop out o' sight, maybe I'd not been so willin' to try it. But I gives the lady my word, and I has to back that up. Say, when you get to be as well known as I am, you'll find out it ain't no easy job to lose yourself. Just take that tip from me, an' gimme your fin. You're a good man."

"And we don't fight," Billy murmured as they shook hands.

"Sure, we've already fought," Reilly answered. "An' if any feller says you can't, or are afraid to try it, just send him to me, an' I'll take care of him." The Cyclone shook his fist at imaginary foes. "What I say goes, an' I'm saying you're a good scrapper."

"But everybody'll say I'm a coward for not showing up to-night," Billy pleaded.

"Nonsense," Dolly replied, "the club called off the scrap this morning, because the Cyclone had decided he wouldn't go out of his class and fight an amateur."

Billy was convinced, but not mollified. As the others walked out ahead of them, he whispered sternly to Nettie:

"Young woman, I've something to say to you."

"Yes, sir," she replied with assumed meekness.

"Just three words."

"Yes, sir," she repeated, "only wait till we get out in the dark." There was a dancing light in her eyes as she added: "But first you must promise never to talk or even think about prize fighting again. It makes me shiver now to think of what might have happened to your nose, Billy."

He grunted, disarmed by her manner, and half convinced that he really didn't want to engage in a prize fight, anyway. "And, besides," she squeezed his arm as they went through the door, "you've got to be mighty good to me, because it took so much of my quarter's income to—to——"

"Put through the frame-up," Billy helped her.

"Yes, to put the frame-up through," she giggled, "but your nose was worth it."

The Forest Rebels

By Sidney E. Johnson

Here is a tale of outdoor adventure that combs the woods, a great lake, even the mystery of the upper air, for its thrilling incidents.

What happened in the preceding chapters.

A little group of military cadets, led by a dare-devil called Alf Farrier, have run away from the academy and taken refuge on a small island belonging to a young man, Rolf Randal. A detachment of cadets, under the command of Captain Tollard, is sent after the rebels. On board the yacht of the academy, the *Editha*, are also Professor Shallick, his daughter Marian, and his ward, Editha Morley. The cadets attack the rebels, but are repulsed. Finally, assisted by the strategic skill of Randal, the cadets capture the rebels.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGE LAKE CRAFT.

AT the right moment, Rolf rose and swung a noosed rope around Farrier's head.

Alf saw his danger, and he fired and dodged at the same time. But his shot went wild, and he could not dodge the unerring throw.

The noose dropped round his waist ere it was jerked taut. Both of Alf's hands were pinioned to his sides, and he was compelled to describe undignified attitudes as he was hauled aboard. But he clung to his revolvers.

He recognized the uselessness of further resistance, gave up quietly, and, with stoical indifference, accepted the situation.

As two cadets, under Tollard's instructions, were binding his hands together, he turned to his fellow rebels, who had been released on parole.

"Well, fellows," he said, laughing, "this doesn't argue favorably for the success of our trip to the Klondike, does it? But never mind—better luck next time! Did any one pick up the dagger I lost at Fort Defiance?"

"I did," replied Rolf, holding up the weapon, "and a mighty curious lot of engraving there is on its blade, too, I must say."

"The coat of arms of our house," explained Alf. "Oh, our family is 'some punkins,' as you Yankees say, over on the island; though you couldn't tell it by looking over my record. Every family must have its black sheep, you know, so I'm It for ours. I——"

"You've had the wrong kind of a shepherd, young man," said Professor Shallick grimly. "We'll see that you get a different kind over here."

Alf laughed.

"I'd be much obliged if you'd keep the knife for me, Randal," he said.

"All right," agreed Rolf.

But the *Editha* was now in the midst of the squall, and every one was reminded of his duty.

Professor Shallick's employee, who ran the launch, had gone aboard that craft, and he now cast off from the yacht altogether, fearing the heavy swells might smash the smaller boat against the side of the larger vessel.

Professor Shallick shouted to him, instructing him to run the launch into safe anchorage in Green Bay, and return to the island camp after the storm had blown over.

And knowing the gasoline-propelled boat was capable of making the shore in the storm, they felt no further anxiety about it.

The cadets and sailors on board the yacht snugged everything down as comfortably as possible, and prepared that staunch little craft to ride it out under bare poles.

"It's only a capful of wind," one of the sailors remarked. "We have 'em purty often at this season."

"When it is over, you will put back to the island and land me," said the professor to the young cadet captain. "Then you can take your prisoners to Milford—and some letters, also, which I will write to the principal. I—— But what on earth is this?"

What with the clouds, the fog, the driving rain, and the evening shadows, an almost complete darkness had settled over the surface of the lake.

The *Editha's* lanterns were all out.

The lookout from his place of observation suddenly saw a strange sight ahead, but he saw it no sooner than did the others on the deck.

A bright light, sweeping the shadows back, had suddenly enveloped the yacht in its blinding glare.

It was, the yacht's crew saw, the searchlight of a steel-sheeted, steam-driven vessel—perhaps as curious a craft as had ever floated the waters of the Great Lakes.

It was long and lay low in the water, with a prow of steel, which extended sharply ahead, ram fashion. The stern was blunt as any scow's, two milk-white streaks, which stretched behind it, marking the action of the vessel's two powerful screws.

The deck was entirely inclosed by a huge arch of sheet steel, rising concave over it. Out of the top of this steel-arched covering, which ran smoothly over the entire craft, there were several breaks.

There extended upward the two short and thick smoke funnels, and from each a cloud of black smoke was pouring.

There were also four round and cone-shaped towers, all in line and all forward of the bridge—or, rather, the raise in the arch beneath which the bridge evidently was.

But the greater part of the arch was a smooth surface.

And the vessel possessed absolutely no masts, and flew no flag or ensign.

The greater portion of this steamship was unlighted, appearing dark and somber in the storm and the evening's gloom; but around its bow shone a cluster of gleaming lights.

And these lights exposed to sharp-eyed Rolf a painted name. For on the steel surface in bright letters—red letters—he read this word:

"Barclay."

And beneath this:

"Remember Sept. 10th, 1813."

This most remarkable vessel was sweeping past the *Editha,* absolutely unheeding the yacht.

It would seem almost as if the crew of the steel steamship had not seen, or else refused to notice, the *Editha.*

Save for the chug of its exhaust, there was no sound to be heard on board it as it plowed its way southward in the very teeth of the gale.

Rolf, Captain Tollard, and the few members of the *Editha's* crew now on deck—the other passengers and all the cadets not on duty having gone below to get out of the rain—you may be assured, had crowded to the rail to view this extraordinary sight—this almost ghostly apparition which was sweeping past them.

A stranger happening, however, was in store for their vision.

The steamer was almost past the yacht when a circular opening suddenly appeared in the raised portion of the concave deck covering.

It would seem as if a round section of the sheet steel had slid back by the action of springs inside.

Through the opening a strong light flashed forth, and from it sounded a woman's voice, screaming—shrieks, shrill and piercing.

A man's deep voice also added to the clamor which reached the ears of the young men who clung, horrified, to the *Editha's* rail. And they caught a momentary glimpse of two persons struggling in the light.

Crack! Crack!

Two revolver shots rang out.

Suddenly a man appeared in the circular doorway.

He carried in his arms a woman—a mere girl, rather—who, resisting him, struggled and fought, and in desperation seized a projection in the circular

steel frame and held on to it with a death grip.

But the man was too strong for her.

In a bare instant he had torn her grip loose with one powerful wrench.

In another instant he had climbed through the opening, with his still frantically resisting burden, and had leaped into the storm-swept waters of the lake.

Almost immediately, aboard the steam vessel followed a wild jangle of bells, and a hoarse roar as a mighty steam whistle answered them.

The whole ship quivered from stem to stern as the machinery inside stopped.

The ship began to drift sternforemost by the side of the yacht.

No doubt, many were the impressions taken in the brains of the young fellows who witnessed this scene. But it had all flashed before their eyes so suddenly, had occurred so nearly instantaneously, that they were in a maze.

Rolf himself confessed afterward that his mind was in a jumble, and visions of *"Barclay,"* "1813," a strange, steel-covered vessel, and a man and woman struggling madly in the water —all this raced in a wild chaos through his brain.

And, to add to his further confusion, a bareheaded youth in cadet gray, his arms bound together at wrists and elbows, sprang on the rail beside Randal, balanced there a second, and then plunged into the lake!

This brought Rolf from his maze, and he acted.

He threw off his coat, whipped out his pocketknife, and, pressing a button in the handle, exposed the blade.

All this occupied but an instant, and in another second he, too, was in the water, swimming to the struggling rebel cadet—Alfred Farrier.

"Oh, thunder! Let me go!" shouted that worthy, treading water to keep afloat. "Let me go and save *her!*"

CHAPTER IX.

THE STRUGGLE IN THE WATER.

But Rolf, with a quick slash, cut the cord which bound the other's wrists.

"Here, you lunatic," he said, speaking quickly. "Take this knife and finish freeing yourself."

And as he left him, Rolf saw that the young cadet was obeying.

With powerful strokes, Randal swam toward the man and woman in the water.

She was engaged in a desperate fight for her life—he saw that at once. The man's murderous intention was only too apparent. He was endeavoring with great, muscular hands to choke and to drown her. And she was resisting bravely.

He was, Rolf saw, a burly man of great breadth of shoulder; and the muscles on his thick, short arms stood out in great knots under the sleeves of his coat.

The coat was singular—in color, at least—for it was bright red. A red cap was on the man's head, the chopping waves having not yet dislodged it. And, strangest of all, Rolf saw that both man and woman wore masks of red cardboard.

Their faces were thus entirely concealed, save for their eyes.

And as he looked into the eyes of the man, Rolf realized at once the cause of his strange actions.

Those gleaming orbs expressed no reason—the man in the red coat was a maniac!

Blood was flowing from a wound in his neck—one of the bullets having found him.

Gleaming lights now appeared everywhere in the sides of the steamship.

The swimmers heard shouts and commands from both vessels.

"Boat's crew, make ready! Man the boat! Lower away!" they heard Captain Tollard's voice shouting from the yacht, which had drifted some distance away.

"Heave out your lines! Over with the life buoys!" many voices shouted from the other vessel, which was nearer.

But Rolf was too much preoccupied to heed the attempts of the rescuers.

He was now at handgrips in the water with a crazy man, who, when rational, was stronger, no doubt, than

himself; and who, insane, seemed to the young fellow a mighty Samson.

He had, by a few well-directed blows, compelled the maniac to abandon the woman, and turn on him.

In the fleeting instant that he had accomplished this, he saw that she could swim quite well, and the only anxiety he needed to feel was that the man did not seize her again in his terrible grip—or, as Rolf found later, himself.

But as he had wrenched the maniac's grip from her throat, he had seen the girl's eyes fairly.

She, too was masked, but as he gave her a fleeting glimpse, a strong flash of lightning aiding him, their eyes met, and he read something there which thrilled him as an electric battery thrills —and he knew that her soul had gone out to him. And this in a bare instant.

The lightning faded, and darkness hid those eyes from his sight.

As the swirling waters brought them together, one of the maniac's hands gripped Rolf's shoulder, and so strong were the fingers which sank into his flesh that he felt a sharp agony throughout his whole frame.

And then it was *he* who must fight for life.

He doubled quickly, and kicked out with both feet, his heels striking the man in the abdomen.

He might as well have attempted to injure a log of wood by striking it with his bare fists, so little did his muscular kicks effect the other.

He struck the man again and again in the face, finally dislodging the mask and exposing his features.

The lightning showed him a florid-faced man with close-cut side whiskers. His jaw was firmly set; his teeth were sunk into his lower lip. His whole face was convulsed with the expression of a demon.

And Rolf saw, too, that, in spite of the man's silence, the terrific kicks and blows had not been altogether ineffective. Blood was streaming from several wounds in his face, and the maniac was, beyond doubt, in pain.

And yet he clung to Rolf's shoulder.

Again and again his free hand reached for the young man's throat. But each time Rolf prevented him from securing a grip which might mean death.

Of a sudden they sank beneath the waves, and when they came up again Rolf had drawn Alfred Farrier's dagger from its sheath.

He could not bring himself to stab the crazy man.

Perhaps, had it been vitally necessary —had there been no other way possible to save his own life—he would have done so; but he had not yet reached this extremity.

He reached across to his shoulder, and swept the edge of the dagger across the back of those fingers, which, gripping him with such terrible strength, had nearly paralyzed his left arm.

And at last a cry of pain was forced from the crazy man.

He released his grip, and Rolf felt an instant relief from the pain which had nearly maddened him.

But the other's action brought them close together, and, before he could prevent it, the powerful fingers of both the lunatic's hands had clasped his throat.

The two sank together just as Alf Farrier, coming to Rolf's aid, reached them.

The young English lad did not hesitate an instant.

He dived, and was on the crazy man's back, beneath the water, ere the other two had sunk five feet.

Behind the lunatic, he had an advantage, and with his aid Rolf freed himself from the powerful grip, which had nearly strangled him, and had all but dislocated his neck.

Obeying a common impulse, with a few powerful strokes the two swept themselves away from the man in the red coat, and rose to the surface.

A few bubbles followed them.

The wounded and unreasoning man had expelled all the air from his lungs and dived deeper.

His red cap floated to the surface, but they never saw its owner again.

Foiled in his crazy, though murder-

ous, attempt, the lunatic had committed suicide!

CHAPTER X.

PIRATES ON LAKE MICHIGAN.

All this, although it takes some time to tell it, had occupied but a few moments' time.

Rolf Randal and Alf Farrier, swimming side by side, saw the woman just ahead of them, but leaving them far behind.

She had seized an inflated life preserver, to which a rope was attached, and was being rapidly drawn to the side of the steamship.

And then another rubber ring bobbed up in front of the two as they fought with the choppy waters.

Both seized it instantly, and were also pulled toward the steel vessel.

A rope ladder was let down to them from one of the open circular doorways.

They climbed its rungs, and entered the opening—Farrier first.

He did not look out over the lake, but Rolf did ere he gained the *Barclay's* deck, and he saw that the woman had disappeared—that she had been taken up through another porthole.

Also, he saw the yacht not far away, and still drifting with the drift of the steamship.

But the *Editha's* boat, manned by Captain Tollard, five other cadets, and two sailors, had been caught in a swift current, and was far away from the two vessels.

Hardly had he touched the covered deck of the *Barclay,* and ere he could view his surroundings, another surprise awaited Rolf Randal—and it distracted his attention from anything else which might otherwise have commanded it.

He was rudely shoved aside by a masked man in a red uniform. Another man in red, also masked, jerked up the hanging ladder; and then, with a snap and a quick, long roll, a long and sinister-looking steel tube swung round on a carriage and projected its ugly muzzle through the opening.

And he heard a mighty voice—the voice of a man who stood on the covered bridge aft—magnified by a large megaphone, boom out above the storm and above all other sounds:

"Ahoy, the yacht!"

"Ahoy, the steamship!" Rolf distinguished Professor Shallick's voice replying through a speaking trumpet.

"What yacht is that?"

"The *Editha* — Milford Military Academy. What vessel is that?"

"That, sir, does not concern you! But you—are you American or Canadian?"

"Perhaps, sir, that does not concern you, either," came the angry reply. "What business——"

"We call on you to fly your colors. And quick, too!"

"For what reason?"

"Do not attempt to parley with us, sir! Show your colors at once, or it will be the worse for you!"

"You may go——" And here followed some very impolite language from the angry old scientist.

"Gun Crew Number Four, man your gun!" came the sharp command from the bridge.

And several alert men in red masks sprang to action at once.

Gun number four, it seemed, was the one by which Rolf and Alf were standing—both very much dazed by this surprising turn of events.

The gunner and his crew quickly made ready, and, to the horror of the young men, aimed it at the *Editha.*

Both started to protest, but were checked quickly and effectively.

Several armed men seized them, and sharp and crisp commands silenced them.

The gunner meanwhile, having received other commands, spoken in a natural voice by the man on the bridge, had made preparations in obedience, and he pulled the firing lanyard.

Boom! sounded the mighty explosion. Rolf freed himself from his captors, and sprang to a porthole—an open one—and many other eager eyes peered over his shoulder.

He saw that the solid shot, well aimed, had only been intended as a

warning; that it had swept diagonally across the *Editha's* bowsprit, and that a severed forestay whipping in the wind was the only damage the yacht had suffered.

"That, sir, should be a hint sufficient to induce you to answer our questions," boomed the megaphone across the water. "Now, then, speak out! Are you Canadian or American?"

"You bloody pirates!" The old man was almost screaming.

"Do you want more of this?" interrupted the voice. "Because if you do we have twenty port guns ready for action, and we'll send you to the bottom of Lake Michigan with a broadside! You have but a minute in which to answer our question. Make use of it!"

"Were it not for the young ladies aboard this yacht," said Professor Shallick grimly, "you could sink us, and welcome, before you could get an answer. We are American citizens, and do not fear you. And I notify you here and now that the United States Government will call you to account for this act of piracy!"

"That is as it may be. So this is an American yacht?"

"Yes, sir, it is."

"Then consider yourselves prisoners, and prepare to receive a crew who will take charge of your vessel!"

"By what authority?"

"And remember—no questions are to be asked!"

Just at this moment the girl Rolf had saved from the maniac appeared on the bridge.

She had changed her wet clothing for dry, and the boys saw that she was attired in a skirt and a long cloak of crimson, and that she was still masked.

She stood by the side of the man with the megaphone, and spoke several words to him in a low tone.

The whole roofed deck of the steamship was brilliantly lighted.

The two young men saw the scene plainly, and Alf Farrier suddenly gave vent to a mighty shout of recognition.

"By the living jingo!" he yelled at the top of his voice. "I thought I knew what it meant before. It's——"

He did not finish.

Strong hands grasped him. His speech was shut off by a throttling grip on his windpipe, and he struggled vainly in the grasp of many masked men.

"Take those two fellows forward," ordered the man on the bridge. "Do not hurt them, but fasten them securely under the forward turret ladder."

CHAPTER XI.

ALF TO THE RESCUE.

"Alf, old boy!"

"Yes, Randal, what is it?"

"You seem to understand something of this. What the deuce does it mean?"

"I understand mighty little of it, I want to tell you right now. I'm in about as much of a puzzle over it as you. And——"

"Well?"

"I guess it's up to me to keep mum."

"But why?"

"For the reason I gave you before: 'It's up to me to keep mum.'"

"But at least tell me who the girl was we saved from the loco."

"She's—well, I'd like to tell you, Randal, but I guess I've no business to."

"Then what about the man on the bridge?"

"I can't say a word, Randal."

"Oh, blazes!"

And Rolf, utterly disgusted, swallowed his unsatisfied curiosity as best he could.

The two were strongly ironed prisoners.

They were sitting on piles of baled goods in a narrow, steel-walled closet, one side of which sloped upward to the roof, narrowing the space still more.

Outside, up this slope, ran a steel stairway; and this stairway, they had observed, as they were led past it, led up to the great cone-shaped tower—the forward one—above the roof of the covered arch.

The steel-clad vessel was moving on its southward course once more.

The two prisoners had heard various and significant sounds after their incarceration, and from those they could understand they gathered that the *Editha* had been boarded, and all on board her had been imprisoned in her forecastle and staterooms.

Also, that her captain and boat crew had been picked up.

A strong cable was now attached to her, and the *Barclay* was towing her.

It was truly an extraordinary, a mysterious affair.

Was it any wonder that more than one of the captive Americans were asking themselves this question: "Have pirates appeared—at this day and age, when the nineteenth century is approaching its close—on the Great Lakes?"

But Alfred Farrier really knew something about it, while with Rolf it was all guesswork; so the above conversation records his attempt to gain some information from his companion.

He had failed utterly and absolutely.

Farrier refused to confide in him.

The two sat silent for several minutes, staring into the gloom.

Then Rolf resumed.

"I'd like at least to know why——" he began, but that was as far as his quizzing proceeded.

The closet door opened suddenly, and a stream of light poured in.

In the midst of this light, and squarely in the doorway, stood a stockily built man in red, his features also concealed with the usual mask of red cardboard —behind, which, it seemed, every one on board the *Barclay* hid his or her identity.

"Horders from the bridge," said the newcomer, in a singsong voice. "Young Mister Farrier to be freed of 'is hirons, hand Hi ham to hattend 'im to the supper table."

"Gee-whiz!" ejaculated Rolf Randal.

"I thought so," muttered Alf.

Then he said, aloud:

"Well, go right ahead, old chappie. No one is hindering you, I'm sure. Take off my chains, and welcome. I only ask that you won't forget, at least, to feed my pal here—and to get him a change of clothing, for it's most unpleasant, this sitting in wet garments. And he deserves them, I assure you, for he's a first-class A number one, all-around good fellow."

"Horders from the bridge," went on the dreary monotone—that is, it would have been a dreary tone if used in everyday conversation; under the circumstances, these two prisoners were listening eagerly to every word. "Hi ham to bring this 'ere hother young feller 'is meals hand hattend 'im while 'e heats them."

"Good!" observed the philosophic Rolf.

"Any more 'horders from the bridge'?" asked Alf, who was now free, and was only too anxious to assert his dare-devil spirit.

"Not hany, sir," replied the Cockney in red gravely.

"All right; escort me to your tuck-out—and I'll endeavor to make a tuck-in out of it. But you'll not be forgotten, Rolf," added Alf, and his words carried more significance in them than Rolf understood at the time.

Alf disappeared with the stocky man in the red uniform.

The latter returned quickly, however, bringing on a wide tray a meal which, Rolf decided, was as abundant as any he had ever sat down to—and he had, in "flush" days, put his feet under Delmonico tables, too.

It had also been well prepared, and, moreover, Rolf, being no fool, saw at once that no common chef had chosen the courses on that waiter.

Some one had done this who was not indifferent as to what he would—or might—desire to eat, who had put all the heart he—or she—possessed into arranging that meal for him. And that person——

Rolf Randal made no audible observation, but mentally many conjectures, indeed, suggested themselves.

The man in red stood before him, silent and imperturbable, but he might have been far away in Mars for all Rolf's chances of seeing him. A thousand thoughts were flashing through his brain.

The girl in the red mask—the strange ship—the strange men on board it—the attack on the inoffensive academy yacht—was it war? If so, with whom? The United States had enemies, indeed—there were the Spaniards, who were highly incensed over the filibustering in Cuban waters. But was this a Spanish warship? If so, how did it ever get into the Great Lakes? But there was that other affair with——

The chain of musings and deductions had led him thus far while he was clearing the dishes of their contents; and the many experiences of the afternoon having sharpened his appetite, he was doing justice to the daintily prepared meal.

But just as he was making an end of the last drop of coffee the urn contained, the meal was suddenly and violently interrupted.

The *Barclay* heeled over.

It was almost as if it had gone on its beam ends. At the same time, there came a roar, as if the gathered thunder of a dozen ages had burst and rent the skies asunder with the blast.

An electric glare filled the vessel from its keelson to its tower roofs; and it quivered all over from some fearful shock.

But in a moment it had righted.

Then followed panic and pandemonium—a scene which beggars description.

But it did not last long.

For above the roar of the rioting mob rose the voice of authority; and the men in red, trained to discipline, listened to it, and became quiet.

But as the crisis died away—slowly, as it takes time to cool fully aroused passions and fear—Rolf, now alone, for his attendant had deserted him when the panic came, could distinguish certain voices which he recognized.

"Bring her round, helmsman, bring her round! Can't you see you're off your course?"

This was the voice of the man who had stood on the bridge when Farrier and Randal were hauled aboard the *Barclay*—the man who had hailed the *Editha* through the megaphone.

"Pins and needles, needles and pins—that's the way our love begins!"

This came to his ears as a song or shout, rising above the rest of the clamor.

He knew well enough to whom this voice belonged.

It was the reckless Alf Farrier's, and, in imagination, Rolf could see him dancing a jig on the deck as the "pins and needles, needles and pins," ran through his heels and tickled his feet.

Other voices he did not recognize were crying:

"We've been struck by lightning!"

"Fire! Fire! The ship's afire!"

"No, you fool, there's no fire!"

"What can it all mean?"

"Reverse your engines, for Heaven's sake! Back her! We'll be beached if they don't back her!"

Bells and whistles drowned the other sounds.

The engineer obeyed the signals at once, and the reversed screws churned the water in an attempt to back the vessel.

But to Rolf's amazement—though he did have a fleeting notion as to what it all meant—and to the almost unutterable terror of every one else, the vessel would not obey their powerful revolutions.

They could not back the *Barclay*.

Some unseen force was drawing it forward in spite of its mighty marine engines? But it was over in a second.

The steamship struck with a heavy jar and buried her steel nose deep in the mud of the shoals, just a few hundred feet off the coast line which marked the water's edge of Rolf Randal's estate.

And there, too, it stuck, the screws uselessly churning the water, helpless as a rudderless and mastless derelict.

Rolf had prepared, or partly prepared, for the impact by clinging with both hands to the edge of the bale upon which he was sitting, but the shock tore his grip loose, just the same, and he fell flat upon the floor, where, as he lay, the "pins and needles" began to jab his flesh, coming from the metal surface.

Before he could rise—his hands had been freed so that he could eat, and only a steel clasp round his ankle and a yard-long chain, extending from this to the floor, kept him a prisoner—some one with a big bundle in his arms, after having taken a stumbling fall of some twenty yards, dashed open the wildly swinging steel door, and landed atop of him.

"Ugh, ugh!" The grunt was quite familiar. "That you I fell on, Randal? Good! Glad you tripped me up! If you hadn't, I might have gone through this little room and the four-inch steel which cases our craft—and maybe to the Indiana shore before I wound up. I know *I* couldn't stop.

"But here!" His tone changed from banter to business. "I've got you all fixed!"

He drew a key from his pocket, and unlocked the hinged steel clasp which held Rolf a prisoner.

Then he said: "Get up, if you're not hurt."

"I'm not hurt, Alf," said Rolf quickly, but in a low tone, as he rose.

"Then get your wet togs off, and into this red suit quick as you can. I'm going to free you, man! I'm going to free you! Here's a complete disguise—cap, cardboard mask, and all! Gee! And they'll never know you're gone, either—too much excitement to-night. And, anyway, I've got guns for both of us, so we can protect ourselves if we have to.

"This electrical storm has increased the attractive force of that big magnetic meteor ten thousandfold, and it's got this steel vessel fast here in the shoals off the island—a helpless prisoner!"

And a few minutes later when two tall young fellows, who were not marines of the *Barclay,* but who could not have been distinguished from the others who were, went ashore in one of the vessel's many boats, one of them learned that his companion's statement was true to the letter.

And so, can we wonder that the compass needle in the *Mirinda's* tiny binnacle pointed east?

CHAPTER XII.

RANDAL AND FARRIER CO-OPERATE.

"Old boy, you're the most ingenious schemer I ever heard plan anything."

It was Alf Farrier who made this statement—speaking from behind his cardboard mask.

"So you think I've done fairly well, do you?" asked Rolf.

"Fairly well? It's grand! And I'm going through it with you, too. Only remember—there's to be no report made of this matter; no arrests."

"No; if we're successful we'll settle the whole thing ourselves as peacefully as we can, and with as little bloodshed as possible."

The two young men were holding this low-spoken conversation in the safe refuge of a thicket off the island shore.

On the beach below them, in the lights of dozens of lanterns, many men were at work—toiling frenziedly. They were all about the great meteor stuck in the beach.

Continuously, on all sides and on top of it, sounded the thud of heavy hammer blows on the heads of drills of steel, and the warning cries of "Mud!" when the men who were holding the drills found they could no longer turn them and make them ready for the next blow.

A short distance away were several other hammers at work, their clanging adding to the discord of the night.

The men who were using these hammers were the smiths of the steamship and their assistants.

They were working over anvils and forges brought from the *Barclay,* and were hastily fitting out new drills from a vast quantity of available steel rods, as well as sharpening the many drill bits already in use which were brought to them dulled.

The crew of the *Barclay* had seized upon all the drills and hammers they could find in Rolf's toolhouse—the mining implements once used by the late William Randal and his company of prospectors in their search for copper.

But there were not tools enough for one-tenth of this force of men to work with; so material had been brought from the vessel to manufacture others.

The drilling was being pushed with frantic haste, the hammer men only stopping when exhausted to step out of the way so that some other of the sailors or marines could take their places.

The officers stood by, and directed the work.

The meteor was being rapidly perforated with deep drill holes!

The marines and sailors had been transformed into miners and quarrymen—and this the result of a suggestion from Rolf Randal.

When the officers of the *Barclay* found themselves helpless, facing a contingency with which they—and probably no other men—had never dealt with before, Rolf's clever brain met the difficulty at once.

The *Barclay* carried vast stores of the most powerful explosives in her magazines. Why not dissipate the meteor's magnetic force by shooting it to pieces?

This Rolf whispered to Alf, and he took the suggestion to the feverishly nervous officers, who, knowing the consequences which might follow their remaining helpless on the shoal, were in desperation.

They took up with the idea at once, but they didn't know their escaped prisoner had proposed it.

In fact, they didn't know their prisoner had escaped.

Rolf had learned another thing, too; but he kept his own council as to his latter discovery.

It was that, now that the electrical storm had passed over, the meteor had probably lost much of its tremendous attraction for steel and other metals.

It might have been possible to have freed the *Barclay* without shooting the meteor to pieces.

But Rolf kept this possibility to himself.

And of course it was only possible to blow up the exposed portion of the giant oblong stone—perhaps less than one-fourth of it. The rest was buried deep in the substratums of soft sand, layers of mud, clay, and slate, into which the force of its fall had driven it.

But to scatter this upper portion Rolf believed would be sufficient.

But why did the young fellow desire to free the *Barclay?*

Surely one would think it would be much more to his wish to see it remain a prisoner of the loadstone for days—if certain of his suspicions happened to be correct.

The reason, Alfred Farrier knew.

It was the scheme when expounded to him which delighted that young scapegrace so much.

And the two young men, wet, bedraggled, muddy from slopping about and wading the shoals, and taking their turns at the work, were now waiting patiently and alert through the night for the time to come when it could be put into execution.

The storm was indeed over.

It had extinguished the brush fire as it swept across the island, and then had passed.

The lake was still ugly, its waters rolling roughly, but the heavy wind had died down.

An occasional dash of rain, indeed, fell out of the skies, wetting this crowd of masked men, and adding to their miseries, but they were only showers, and several times the moon had peeped forth.

At last as the "wee sma' hours" had begun to appear, a number of the toilers, who had been dispatched to the ship in some of its boats, returned, loaded with canisters of their most effective explosive.

The drilling stopped.

The men began to load the holes, and two or three stretched some wires away off down the beach past Professor Shallick's former camping site, and then much farther on.

For the terrible charge was to be exploded with electricity, and it was necessary for safety's sake that all the men were out of range of the flying missiles.

Two seamen got into one of the boats, and, attaching all the others, be-

gan towing them away off down the beach to get them also out of danger.

When Rolf observed this, he said to his companion:

"Now's our time!"

CHAPTER XIII.

TAKING THE "BARCLAY."

The two stole from their hiding place, and, unobserved, made their way along the sandy shore in the darkness.

They followed the boats for some time; then, when far enough away from the meteor, and the crowd around it, they plunged into the water, and swam silently to the towing one.

Their plan had been prearranged, and well arranged, too.

Lithe as cats, the two young men pulled themselves into the boat—Alf over the bow, and Rolf over the stern.

The former, drawing a heavy revolver, struck the forward oarsman a heavy blow on the right temple with its butt.

But Rolf, more merciful, seized the other before the startled man could rise and resist; and, shutting off his wind at once by a strangling throttle, held him until Alf came with cords and a gag.

Then the foremost of the towed boats was pulled alongside the towing boat, and the two helpless men were dumped into its bottom ere the towrope was cut.

The two young fellows then took the oars, and headed their boat toward the *Barclay,* while the swift current carried the string of boats far out into the darkness, and away from the island.

"We had to do it—it's like war time," said Rolf, in self-justification.

"Oh, bosh!" returned Alf easily. "They're all right. The man I hit will come around after a while and free the other fellow. Then they can pull back to the island, but I'll bet it takes a good many hours for that to occur."

"And I hope before they get back we have won out," said Rolf, his voice betraying some anxiety.

"Oh, we'll do it—don't worry!" was the confident answer of the young cadet.

They were now close to the grounded steamship.

They quickly swung the boat around its sharp steel prow to the gangway side.

Here a collapsible steel ladder had been lowered from a door to the water, and it was down this the men had descended to the boats.

Only four of the marines remained on the deck.

These were sleepy and wearied from their long vigil.

Alf clambered up the steps, meeting them with a swift command:

"Make fast this boat."

Then: "Horders from the bridge," he mimicked. "You fellows are to go forward to the forecastle with this man," indicating Rolf. "Hi ham to notify the watch on board the yacht to go below, hand get into the cabin. The blow-up's about to tike place."

"What is it, Alf?" asked a woman's voice, as the girl in red suddenly appeared before them. "Are they ready?"

"Yes, silly; go back to your cabin. I'll be with you in a minute," replied Alf, nonplused and dropping his vernacular. "Hang it! You've spoiled my Cockney twang! Go below, I tell you!"

"But we're too well shielded to be injured by the explosion," demurred the girl rebelliously. Rolf wondered just a little at the familiarity between these two. "And I want to watch it."

"Well, you won't get to," said the boy roughly. "So go below. His Nunk's orders to all of us."

She hesitated but a second longer, and then obeyed.

Alf shouted a megaphone command to the men on the yacht, and then followed her.

But three minutes later he appeared on the deck, running at full speed, only to be met by Rolf Randal, also running.

The two nearly collided.

"It worked, Alf; it worked!" exclaimed the latter in unusual excitement. "They're locked in from the outside. And it will be some time before they break down that steel door, too."

"And I've got her locked in, also," said Alf, with unnatural satisfaction. "So everything's O. K."

Rolf ran to an open porthole.

"I wonder if we've got time to get to the yacht," he reflected. "I guess not, though. See that bunch of bobbing lights away down the beach. That means the men are getting out of harm's way."

"Well, I don't know," began Alf. "The quicker we get there the better."

"But it doesn't pay to take unnecessary risks," said Rolf. "For, while the blasters arranged those shots so that the fragments of the meteor will be blown mostly across the island, and scattered over its hills, still there'll be rocks fly in every direction."

"Yes, but if we row for it, and make the yacht just as the shot goes off, it will no doubt knock those fellows so silly we won't have to fight them."

"Well, I suppose we could try——"

But Rolf was interrupted.

A roar as of a gigantic avalanche smote their ears.

They were flung from their feet, and prostrated upon the deck.

The heavy, steel-clad steamship rocked as in a storm.

Neither injured, they sprang to their feet, and looked out.

The clouds, whipping away from the moon for a second, permitted its light to show a strange scene.

A mighty column of white smoke was ascending skyward; and above its very top a shower of stones, large and small, were still rising into the air.

The smoke drifted away across the lake. The stones descended with clatter and splash, some of them rattling on the *Barclay's* steel cover.

Meanwhile, a sudden, curious, and familiar motion beneath them told Rolf that another result besides blowing up the meteor had been accomplished.

"We're afloat, Alf; we're afloat!" he cried in glee. "The explosion not only blew the magnetic force sky high, but it knocked the *Barclay* off the shoals!"

The drifting clouds covered the face of the moon. Darkness set in once more.

CHAPTER XIV.

MISS MILDRED JOINS THE AMERICANS.

But Rolf and Alf did not allow their elation to steal their wits. They took immediate advantage of the situation.

Both, obeying an instinctive impulse, ran to the bridge.

Reaching the steps first, Rolf gained it, and seized the bell ropes.

He did not know whether the *Barclay's* captain used the ordinary bells in signaling to his engineer, or whether they had a code peculiar to the *Barclay* only.

But he had neither time nor opportunity to learn. He jangled a loud reverse.

Instantly there issued from the bridge's speaking tube a shrill whistle, and this was followed by a hoarse and discordant note as of an excited man speaking or shouting through the tube.

Rolf put his ear to it.

"Wot the 'ell it all means, hany'ow?" he heard through the tube.

"The shot has been fired, and we're off the shoal," explained the young fellow. Then, in a tone of command: "Start your engines, and obey signals after this!"

"Hof course Hi 'eard the shot, hand hof course Hi knows we're hoff the shoals," replied the voice, and the tone—the speaker was unquestionably Cockney like so many others of the members of the *Barclay's* crew—was unpleasantly belligerent. "But wot Hi wants to know is 'oo be you; be 'oo's signaling? Hand w'y is my men locked in 'ere in the hengine room?"

"Never mind that. You obey orders!"

"Not by a jugful Hi don't! Hi takes horders honly from 'is lordship, hand the mates, hand leftenants, hand Hi knows they're none hof them speakin' now!"

"And I——"

Rolf was suddenly interrupted—shoved aside, but not roughly.

The girl in the red skirt put her mouth to the tube, and called:

"Parkins, you know *my* voice at any rate?"

Evidently Parkins did.

"Then obey the orders given you!"

Rolf did not hear Parkins' "Aye, aye, miss!" but the girl did. And she was at least mistress of this part of the situation.

"But, great jingo, Millie!" roared Alf, almost stupefied with amazement. "I thought I locked you in your cabin."

"Do you think the only entrances to those big rooms below are the visible ones?" she asked scornfully.

Then: "Down with your helm, boy! Bring her over!"

She rang the bells, and stopped the engines just in time to save the *Barclay's* steel stern from jamming into the *Editha's* bowsprit.

At the same moment her mask, which had become twisted awry, fell off.

Her features, thus suddenly disclosed, Rolf saw, were very beautiful—that they justified all he had believed they would be for good looks.

But they were familiar, too, for he knew their counterpart—although perhaps in coarser mold—were now behind another mask.

"Great Jove!" he said. "You're Alf Farrier's sister!"

"Yes. Didn't he tell you?" she asked.

"He would tell me nothing," replied Rolf, his keen eyes flashing their admiration upon her. "I understand now—to some extent—why he refused," he added.

"Yes, I am Mildred Farrier, at your service, sir," she replied quickly. "Niece of Sir Jerome Berkner, of——"

"Careful, sis, careful—don't tell too much," warned Alf.

"No, I forgot. You will learn more of this matter by and by—Rolf." She spoke his name softly.

"But what are you going to do now, Miss Farrier?" asked Rolf, coming back to the situation at hand. "You have the motive power, and that seems to put the vessel and ourselves in your hands, you know."

"No, I am in yours," she replied. "But I am going to make peace—if I can. I warned uncle against this expedition and never wanted him to undertake it. But I could not help myself. And now——"

"Listen, sis; listen!" cried Alf, as a man's voice, magnified by a large megaphone, boomed across the water from the now far-away island. "That's him now—aren't you scared? And he's cussing to beat the very——"

"I don't know exactly what 'cussing' means," she said, smiling. "But if it's anything bad, uncle is certainly doing it right now."

"'Cussing,' sis, means swearing on this side of the pond," Alf explained. "And no doubt his nunkship would cuss just a little harder if he knew that two young fellows bested him, and got his vessel away from him—and that one of these two was his own nevvy. Oh, won't he take the hide off of me when he does know?"

"We'll never let him know," Mildred assured her brother.

"But what all this means——" began Rolf.

"We can't tell you just what *all* of it means," she said. "But I wish to settle it peacefully."

"And so do I."

"Well, then, we must regain possession of your yacht, and free your friends."

"And more, too, Miss Farrier," said Rolf quietly, but firmly. "We must hold this vessel until we bring your uncle to terms. Should we retake the yacht and then turn the steamer over to him he might, you know, make us prisoners again."

"Yes, I do know," she replied sorrowfully. "But it's all the fault of that lunatic now at the bottom of the lake. However, I'm with you for the present, at least. So we must plan some way to retake the yacht, and quickly, for the lieutenant in charge there may become suspicious and cast off the towrope and sail back to the island."

"Jove, Rolf, if she says she's with us she means it," broke in Alf. "She never breaks her word. Can't we——"

"Yes, just what I was thinking. There are only five of them there, I understand. We'll do it!"

"Take the wheel, Millie!" cried Alf,

"and make that engineer come ahead on it a little. There—good girl!"

"But you—you are——" she began.

"You bet we are going across," her brother finished the sentence for her, and he went after Rolf, who was already through the circular doorway.

Three minutes later, the lieutenant in charge of the captive yacht saw two young men, masked and in very wet suits of red cloth, come aboard the yacht by pulling themselves over the bow bulwarks.

They had crossed the intervening distance between the two vessels by swinging hand over hand beneath the tautened towline.

The lieutenant had been slammed pretty severely against the cabin door when the explosion on the shore knocked him off his feet, so his wits were just a little befuddled.

Also, he was puzzled and bewildered because of the strange actions of the steamship which was towing the yacht.

"What does this mean?" he asked, but Rolf cut him short.

"Engineer's gone crazy," was the ready excuse. "Send your men to the forecastle, and get them into sailors' togs. We've got to cast off, get up sail, and put back to——"

"Whose orders are these?" broke in the other suspiciously.

"They're mine!" exclaimed Alf, pulling off his mask. "I'm Sir Jerome Berkner's nephew."

"You may be that," said the man stubbornly, as the four men of his squad came up in obedience to his signals, and ranged themselves by his side, "but where do you get your authority?"

"Right here!" snapped Rolf Randal, declining to waste further time in word bandying.

And as he spoke he jerked two heavy guns from his belt.

Alf followed suit.

"Get your hands up, you fellows!" commanded Rolf.

The lieutenant ripped out an oath, and reached for his revolver.

It was—for him—an unlucky move.

Crack! spoke one of Rolf's guns, and the man fell to the deck.

"He's only wounded," said Rolf calmly. "I didn't shoot to kill—this time. You fellows get your hands up!"

And the frightened and demoralized men obeyed.

"Release the fellows, Alf, quick!" ordered Rolf, and Farrier was gone like a flash.

A moment later, the armed cadets and sailors were on the deck, and the four marines were disarmed and captured without further bloodshed.

Half an hour later.

The *Barclay* was steaming northward on an errand unknown to any of its passengers save Professor Shallick, Mildred Farrier, and one or two others.

The yacht was still in tow. But power had changed hands on both vessels.

Mildred and Alf were alone.

"You bad, bad boy," she was saying. "You have been a traitor to your family and to your—well, never mind the rest.

"Uncle would never forgive you if he knew of this, but I can," and here she threw both arms about his neck and tiptoed to kiss him. He was not yet experienced in some things, and he only partly understood why her face was so flushed and why even her lips seemed afire.

"I can, and readily," she finished. "since it has all turned out so well, and since it has caused me to meet—him."

CHAPTER XV.

REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

The same day, but long past the noon hour.

The *Barclay* and its attendant had finished the errand which had taken them north; sooner, in fact, than its crew had hoped to accomplish it.

For they had met seven great whalebacks steaming in stately majesty to the southward.

All the vessels of this fleet were loaded with men in red uniforms, masked and armed.

And all their captains, it seemed, understood the *Barclay's* signal code.

For when that vessel's machinery ran up into the air two long and slender steel signal masts, and arranged, under Mildred's directions, certain flags which commanded them to return to the port they had just left, they obeyed, but all on board were probably reluctant and dissatisfied.

But they were satisfied at least of one thing: that the attempted Great Expedition had ended in failure.

And now the *Barclay* was running to the southward once more.

One elderly man and several young persons were sitting round the dining table in the *Barclay's* handsome though narrow saloon, discussing with appetite a late dinner.

Mildred was explaining her advent in the water, while all were listening eagerly, save the professor, who was writing busily.

"He was the builder of this ship—a monitor, you can see it is, with four mounted and revolving turrets," she said. "Who it was financed the work you mustn't inquire. This inventor hated the American people, and had often been heard to say that some day he would wade in their blood. We now know, however, that he was partly insane, and became wholly so last night.

"At any rate, as I stood unsuspectingly by his side, he suddenly seized me, and sprang with me into the water, despite my struggles. Uncle fired at and wounded him, but he did not dare to shoot to kill him for fear of hitting me. The rest of this affair you saw."

"And I," put in Alf, "will say right here that I knew it was sis the minute I heard her screech. That's why I plunged in."

Here the professor looked up from the table.

"I have here," he said, "a copy of a proposition, which we will on our return submit to your uncle, Miss Mildred. I wish to—to parole him, as I may properly put it—for he, with all the others, is practically a captive on the island.

"But I know Sir Jerome Berkner by reputation, and I know he will keep his word. If we can get him to sign these articles, we will return his ship to him, and let him return to the port from which he came—and no report will be made of this affair. It is now too late for him to hope to surprise any of our lake cities, and that was really his only chance against us. So I think he will consider our terms fair enough.

"Besides, there is no war between his country and ours. Whether he was engaging in a private war, as would appear, or whether he was acting secretly for his native land, I will not inquire—if he will sign these papers."

"I think I can persuade him to do so myself," said Mildred happily.

"And as for you," went on the old man, addressing Rolf, "I am very sorry to have to report that you have incurred a severe loss. For that meteor which was blown up last night, I find from my assays, was nearly thirty per cent. gold! They have dissipated an immense fortune for you, and I shall——"

"Oh, not all of it is blown up," said Rolf cheerfully. "There's a big three-fourths of it buried, and, anyway, I rather think we can recover most of the fragments. They'll not be hard to find among the flint and lime boulders on the island's hills."

"In that case, you're in for a real good start in life, and I will furnish you the money to erect a refining mill on your estate.

"And now one thing more," turning to Alf, who had taken a sheet of paper, and, moving his plate out of the way, was busily scribbling. "This young reprobate here—well, he deserves to be hamstrung, but under the circumstances I think I'll have to use my influence with the other members of the board of directors to secure for him, with the rest of these young rebels, another chance—yes, a real good opportunity to reform. What do you say to that, young man?"

"Oh, that's all right," returned graceless Alf, as he handed the professor a closely written sheet. "I just thought I'd add here a line or two to your articles of peace."

"But this, young man," demurred the

professor, readjusting his glasses, "is a copy of a marriage certificate!"

"Well, yes, maybe it is," admitted Alf.

And then the young terror, mercilessly heedless of two scarlet faces and two pairs of eyes which glared savagely at him, added:

"But just the same, it's one of the articles of peace."

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

The incidents I have here related in story took place in the early fall of the year 1896, while a certain boundary dispute between England and Venezuela was still in abeyance, and in which the United States had also become involved.

I am glad to be able to say that this dispute was settled, and settled satisfactorily.

Perhaps the failure of the *Barclay's* expedition—with that of the seven transports, all so unfortunately interrupted in their southward journey—had something to do with the ending of this imbroglio.

There are a number of persons who do know, however, but they never express themselves upon the matter.

I think that Rolf Randal knows all about it—that Mrs. Rolf gave him full particulars long ago, but that she pledged him to secrecy.

At any rate, he will never tell me.

Rolf is now a very wealthy freighter and shipowner.

He regathered the scattered fragments of his golden meteor, finding nearly all that landed on the island and dredging many from the shallower portion of the lake bottom all about it; and he dug the rest of the great celestial visitor out of the beach, and blasted it to pieces also.

He erected a small gold-refining plant of the then new process called cyanide, borrowing the necessary capital from the rich professor, and in this plant he reduced the tons of gold-bearing meteor rock.

That precious metal being especially at a premium at that time, he finally estimated his gains, when the work was done, at three hundred and seventy thousand dollars.

And this was for him a very fair start in life indeed.

But he has since increased that amount several times over.

Besides the vessels which he owns, there is one trim steel ship which he has for years only held under lease, and which has in the last two years become his wife's property through inheritance.

It once carried much on its deck that was found superfluous—sheet-steel covering, revolving turrets mounted on great steel frames, heavy guns, etc.

But all this was removed when the swift craft was put in passenger traffic, at which service it became quite popular.

It is still called the *Barclay;* and often curious sight-seers are led to wonder why so trim a craft should have so ugly and masculine a name.

Whereupon those who know simply shrug their shoulders and answer:

"There's a reason."

I would like to record that Alfred Farrier ended his career as a would-be desperado at once upon his return to the academy, but the days of miracles having passed, I cannot truthfully do this.

But after a few minor relapses one severe one came, and its happenings sobered the young fellow thoroughly, and ended his waywardness for good and all.

I cannot for lack of space relate this occurrence, but I will say that the faculty, teachers, and fellow cadets, one and all, proclaimed Alf's popularity only a little more than a year later.

When the Spanish-American War broke out he joined a company in which Rolf Randal was a commissioned officer, and the two went south and manfully performed the duties allotted to them.

THE END.

Genial Mr. Gibson

By W. Dayton Wegefarth

From the time of the memorable case of Miles Standish, wooing by proxy has occurred both in fact and in fiction, but rarely with such an amazing outcome as that from Mr. Jasper Wells' infatuation for the beautiful leading lady.

IT requires a combination of various qualities to make a successful theatrical treasurer, and Fred Gibson possessed all of them. Fred never sold anything but aisle seats, and when some unfortunate person was obliged to climb over twelve persons to get to his seat in the centre of the row, he blamed the builder of the theatre for having misinformed the obliging treasurer. Such was the community's confidence in Mr. Gibson.

It was generally known that Gibson thought a great deal of the leading woman of the Grand's stock company, but nobody wondered. Marion Marlow was one of the handsomest women on the stage, and her admirers were numerous.

It was also surmised that the lady entertained some feeling of regard for the dapper treasurer, although this was only gossip. But it was quite certain that she smiled more sweetly and more often at him than at any one else around the theatre.

Fred knew the reason, but he kept it to himself.

For a period of three months a bouquet had been brought to the box office nightly marked for Miss Marlow.

It is the habit of every good treasurer to open the personal note attached to a floral offering meant for one of his theatre's company, and to read it carefully, whether the affair is of any consequence to himself or not.

That's just what Mr. Gibson did, but instead of inclosing the original note he substituted his personal card, without any pangs of conscience whatever.

Each note bore the same signature—Jasper Wells—but as Gibson was not acquainted with the gentleman, and didn't care much whether Miss Marlow was or not, the mere substitution of names didn't worry him.

Therefore, it followed that the fair Marion should demonstrate a kindly feeling for her ardent admirer "in front."

One morning, when the sale was rather light, a prosperous-looking young fellow presented himself at the box office.

"Mr. Fred Gibson?" he inquired.

"At your service, sir," that gentleman replied.

"I would appreciate a few minutes' conversation with you, if you will grant me the time. My card, Mr. Gibson."

Fred glanced at the card. It read: "Jasper Wells, Attorney at Law."

"Gee!" thought Fred. "Here's where I get mine with all the trimmings.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Wells," he said, in his smoothest manner. "What can I do for you?"

"My mission is rather a delicate one," began the caller uneasily. "First, let me say, I believe you can be of some service to me, and I want you to understand that I am ready to repay you for any service you may render me—to pay you very handsomely. May I speak freely?"

"Certainly, as freely as you desire."

"Thank you. Four months ago I received advice from a law firm in California that Patrick Gibbons, an old miner, had died, leaving his accumulated fortune of one hundred thousand dollars to an only niece, Mary, who had

not been heard of for twelve or fifteen years. The attorneys for the deceased were unable to locate the girl. They understood that she had come East with a stage career in view. This information and a description of the young lady were all I had to work on."

"Truly remarkable, Mr. Wells," cried the treasurer. "And you have a clue?"

"More than that, sir," replied the attorney. "I—have—found—the—girl."

"Mr. Wells, I compliment you. Your penetration is wonderful. You are a credit, sir, to the bar. I am proud to know you, sir, and proud to serve you."

"I am glad you appreciate my efforts," continued the attorney. "The lady in question is none other than Miss Marion Marlow."

"Mr. Wells, you astonish me. Miss Marlow an heiress! This is tremendous, sir, tremendous! It doesn't seem possible!"

And Mr. Gibson wiped the big beads of perspiration from his brow.

"Nevertheless, it is the truth. And now we will proceed to the vital point."

Once more Mr. Wells grew nervous.

"Long before I knew of Miss Marlow's good fortune—mind you, Mr. Gibson—long before I became acquainted with the facts of the case, I had been a constant admirer of this truly wonderful woman. I admired her art, her beauty; I worshiped at her shrine; I longed to possess her; but I lacked the courage then to urge my suit."

"Until you heard the jingle of those hundred thousand simoleons," thought the attentive treasurer.

"I quite understand your manly sentiment," he said aloud, "and it does you credit, sir. Would there were more men of your character and fewer unscrupulous rogues."

"I thank you, Mr. Gibson. I repeat that I lacked the courage, and I lack it even now. I am not a fortune hunter, sir——"

"Who to meet and talk with you would dare to even entertain such a thought!" Mr. Gibson hotly interposed. "Not I, I assure you, sir."

"Well, Mr. Gibson, you will think perhaps that I took rather a childish manner of introducing myself to Miss Marlow, but blame it on my inexperience. I left an order with a florist to deliver a bouquet at the theatre every night. On each card I wrote a fitting word or two, begging her to grant me a hearing. You—you have no doubt she received them, have you?" he asked anxiously.

"The flowers? None at all, sir. And you have received no reply?" Gibson asked innocently.

"None, Mr. Gibson. And that is where you can help me. I—I—you will pardon me if I ask plainly? I have heard that you, too, are an admirer of Miss Marlow."

"You have given me your confidence, Mr. Wells, and you have a right to expect mine," Fred answered. "I have admired her for four long years, but I fear my case is a hopeless one. And, now, since she is to become wealthy, it seems more hopeless than ever."

And Mr. Gibson's voice shook slightly, very slightly.

"I know just how you feel, my friend, and I can sympathize with you. Then, as long as we understand each other, are you willing to help me? You are a good friend of Miss Marlow's. She will listen to your judgment of me. You say yourself that you cannot hope to win her. Why not break off any understanding now existing between you, and give me an opportunity?"

"And if I do all this, Mr. Wells, what then?" the treasurer inquired.

The attorney leaned over the window ledge.

"If you do all this, I will give you one thousand dollars in cash."

"When, Mr. Wells?"

"Whenever you ask for it," the attorney replied.

"And if I do not agree to help you?"

"The matter has been placed entirely in your hands, and Miss Marlow's wealth will be uncertain," Mr. Wells answered.

The treasurer thought a minute.

"I will help you, but only because I want Miss Marlow to be happy. And in the possession of her fortune and

of a man of your character, I know she cannot be unhappy. I see too plainly now that I am not the man to give her the position her fortune will create for her; I would retard her progress socially. Mr. Wells, I congratulate you. You win."

"Thank you, thank you," Mr. Wells cried, his face wreathed in a happy smile.

"And the money, sir? Are you prepared to close the matter now?" Gibson inquired.

"I am prepared," he replied, taking a wallet from his pocket, and counting off ten one-hundred bills. "It is not my custom to pay for a service in advance, but this affair is altogether different. I am trusting you, Mr. Gibson, implicity."

"That is just what I want you to do," the treasurer answered, tucking the bills in his vest pocket. "You could not trust one who has the interest of Miss Marlow and yourself more at heart. And, now, Mr. Wells, since everything is thoroughly understood, I will get busy without delay. Come here on next Monday night at eight o'clock. I can safely promise something by that time.

"We are closed this week while the company is playing Frankelburg, so I'll have plenty of time to prepare my plans. Don't send any more flowers, and don't make an attempt to see the lady until you hear from me. Remember, I am doing this for her."

"I know," Mr. Wells replied, as he warmly shook the treasurer's hand. "And you won't regret it, either. Good-by until Monday."

"Good-by, sir," Gibson replied. "You're a man after my own heart—a remarkable man. I'm sure I won't regret it."

Mr. Gibson had an assistant, and that week he was kept very busy. Frankelburg is only two hours' journey, and, judging from the treasurer's absence from his post of duty, the assistant surmised that things were not just as they should be with the company.

When an assistant treasurer is obliged to eat his dinner and supper in the office because his superior is not there to relieve him, he really can't be blamed for surmising.

When Monday came around the company straggled in. The opening play was to be an old one, so a rehearsal was unnecessary.

The sale was big, and the assistant treasurer in a bad humor, although he had received a note from the genial Mr. Gibson, with a crisp fiver inclosed, telling him to attend to everything in his own worthy manner.

The assistant knew that meant another day out of the sunshine; he also knew that the home team was in great shape to play the visitors.

The hours dragged around to seven-thirty, when the Grand generally opened its doors.

A long file of people, stretching into the street, was before the box office, grumbling at the overworked assistant treasurer for his slowness.

Assistants are all right in their way, but they are only assistants.

Cummings, the manager, bustled into the office.

"Where's Gibson?" he inquired. "Not here yet?"

"No, sir," the assistant replied. "I expect him every minute."

"Well, work as fast as you can, or we'll never get 'em in at this rate. Push the dollar seats, Tommy."

Tommy said he would; but got a bit rattled, as assistants will in a crisis, and immediately sold two dollar seats for fifty cents each.

The minutes wore on. At a quarter of eight the lobby was crowded. At eight it was mobbed.

The manager was raving like a lunatic when the private-office door opened, and a happy-looking gentleman came forward.

"I'd like to see Mr. Gibson, if you please," he began.

"You would, would you? Well, I've got a thousand dollars to put against your ten cents that you don't want to see him half as much as I do," the manager yelled.

"Isn't he here?" asked the stranger

excitedly. "I had an appointment with him at eight o'clock."

"No, he's not here! I had an appointment, too. Look at that lobby! There's a thousand dollars' worth of business there that I can't get in the house because he's not here to sell the tickets."

"A thousand dollars, did you say," the stranger repeated in a reminiscent manner. "That's just what——"

The office door swung open again, and the stage manager rushed in.

"Say, Mr. Cummings, where's Miss Marlow? Everybody's here but she. We ring up in five minutes."

"What!" the manager yelled. "Miss Marlow not here! What the—give me that telegram, boy!"

He grabbed the yellow envelope from the hands of the messenger who had been waiting for an opportunity to deliver it. He frantically tore it open, and then let it fall to the floor.

The stage manager stooped, picked it up, and read it aloud. It was sent from San Francisco, and read:

Sorry to leave you in a fix. Marion has fallen into fortune of one hundred and one thousand dollars. We left Saturday night to collect it. We're going to live here. You're welcome any time. Tell Mr. Wells we appreciate his tip. He's welcome, too.

FRED GIBSON.

"Are you Wells?" the stage manager asked, turning to the white-faced stranger.

"Yes, I'm Wells. That smooth-tongued fellow has swindled me, and, worse than that, he's eloped with the girl," Mr. Wells cried.

"Eloped with what girl?" Cummings asked.

"Eloped with Marion Marlow—the girl I wanted to marry. That's what the telegram says, doesn't it?"

"Say, my friend, I don't know what the game is, but you've got the wrong dope!" Cummings replied. "Gibson married Marion Marlow four years ago. We had to keep it quiet for the sake of business."

"No wonder he was willing to help!" Mr. Wells gasped.

When the Hounds Bay

By Joseph Ivers Lawrence

A near-sportsman, addicted to little affectations somewhat un-American, finds that there can be too much of a good thing.

"CUPID" McKELLAR, otherwise Johnstone Cuthbert McKellar, sat on the upper veranda of the country club, smoking innumerable cigarettes, while he watched the panorama on the links, with the little, red, white, green, and khaki-clad figures bobbing about, and smaller figures of weary caddies dragging along after them.

Golf had taken a slump with Cupid, and he was on the verge of one of his periodic attacks of fox hunting, which usually terminated in a broken collar bone or arm. The last golfing period had endured rather longer than previous ones, and his game had become quite dangerous; but in the last tournament the coveted cup was snatched from his very grasp by a chap whom Cupid characterized as "a regular bounder."

"No longer safe for a chap to play these beastly popular games, you know," he said, "one meets the most impossible persons. No end funny what creatures these admissions committees will let in!

"Now, in hunting," he reflected, groping already in the future, "in hunting there may be a few chaps that are a bit—er—well, just a bit queer or something like that, but every stupid bounder that gets a day off from Wall Street can't come out and follow the hounds, right off the bat, thank Heaven!"

Tom Drake and Lydia Curtis came

on to the veranda, and sat down near him.

"Is that your old gray hunter in the stable?" asked Drake.

"Yes," answered Cupid, "just had 'im sent down. Going to ride to-morrow. Haven't ridden cross country since I killed my black mare."

"Where is the meet to-morrow?" asked Miss Curtis.

"Whipple's place," said Cupid. "Aren't you going?"

"No, indeed, I'm not!" declared the girl. "I think it's idiotic to follow the hounds out here in these suburbanites' back yards. I had a ripping time down South, but it's a joke to chase a bag around here, with a crazy commuter every furlong trying to shoo you out of his country-gentleman garden."

Cupid was visibly nettled.

"I can't chase down South every time I want to feel the turf under me," he protested. "There's plenty of good country 'round here, but the bally people are jealous; Americans have no sympathy with things they can't personally afford. Every time these 'free-and-equal' guys see a pink coat crossing their worthless land, they get into a stew over the idea they're being made to play the part of peasantry."

"Poor old Cupid," laughed Drake. "You certainly ought to have been born a Britisher."

"Oh, I say now," cried Cupid, growing red from the collar up. "We've got as good a bunch of dogs as any one could scrape together in England, and we've got the horses, too; and they don't all ride as bad as I do, you know. And you haven't got any medals pinned on you for sportsmanship, Tom. If you ever tumbled off and near broke your neck, as I do most every year, you'd never trust yourself on anything but a Fifth Avenue bus again."

Drake laughed merrily.

"I'm a cheap sport, and you're all right, Cupid," he said. "Nobody questions your ambition and ability to uplift and support true sport in this benighted country."

Cupid was hardly pacified, but he subsided into guttural mutterings. "I'd settle for anything like a church or a barn or a windmill that I knocked over," he grumbled, "but I haven't any patience with you democratic soreheads when you set up a howl because I send my pony through some dried-up potato patch and knock some of the bugs off the plants. You'll get to be a regular socialist after a while, Tom."

"Go get a drink and you'll feel better, Cupid," said Lydia banteringly, but she got up and patted him on the shoulder, for every one loved Cupid, with his unswerving—if only temporary—devotion to hobbies of the moment.

"Tom is coming home with me in my motor," said the girl, after a moment. "Won't you come along?"

Cupid was mollified, and he smiled beatifically, but shook his head with resolution.

"Thanks, no," he said. "I have to go out and put Riparree over the jumps."

"Good luck, Cupid," shouted Drake, as the motor glided past the house, a few minutes later. "'Ware the windmills to-morrow."

Cupid jovially waved them a well-manicured hand, and from a jeweled case selected another cigarette. He called a servant to him.

"Go and tell my boy to saddle Riparree and bring him 'round," he said, with the air of a sheik ordering his favorite barb.

Next morning, at the Whipple place, the lawn was gay with the meeting of the hunt. Smart grooms held restive horses which never ceased dancing, champing their frothy bits, and kicking playfully at the jolly hounds, who ran hither and yon, lashing their long tails and smiling joyously at every one.

The assembly was nearly complete when a big, red motor rolled up the avenue through the trees, and, stopping suddenly, disgorged a resplendent object. Cupid was not given to any compromise in matters of dress. From the door of the limousine appeared first his bright, spurred boot, as black and shining as a dancing pump. At its top was the most immaculate of tan cuffs; and the effect was not lessened by the daz-

zling snowiness of perfectly sprung buckskin breeches. And then—oh, ye Roast Beef of Old England—what a coat! The dogs bayed at the sight of it. And, surmounting it, set off by the whitest of stocks, was that perennially cheering sight, the bland, cherubic, pink face of Cupid McKellar, crowned with the trimmest of velvet caps.

Having greeted the hostess and showered compliments upon her, he fairly spread himself over the lawn to deal out impartial measure of good will to every one.

"Come, Cupid," called Mrs. Whipple, leading the way to the house. "We're going to have a wee bite. No time for a regular breakfast—just some champagne cup and a breast of bird, you know."

Cupid would have avowed himself in the seventh heaven had she announced a dinner, but with equal gusto he bubbled over with approval.

"My notion exactly, dear lady," he protested. "None of your elaborate hunt breakfasts for me; I ride like a tub after them."

In the dining room there was much raillery, and Cupid was the centre of interest, for he had not ridden for three years.

"Here's to old Dan Cupid McKellar," cried Fitzgerald, the master of the hounds, raising his glass, "the bulliest huntsman that ever chased the aniseed across Long Island."

"Hear! Hear!" cried the company, and "Speech!"

It was impossible to guy McKellar; ridicule passed over him without touching.

"Well, people," he began, blushing to the roots of his hair, "I'm sure glad to be with this bunch again with riding things on. There's nothing quite like being here with spurs on my feet and the dogs yapping around."

Then growing comically serious—for seriousness was almost always comical in Cupid—he continued, in carefully enunciated periods: "I may say to this company, in which is represented the very flower of the sport and horsemanship of this country, that I do not have to be told that I'm one of the least of you. I'm not insensible to my limitations as a sportsman and horseman. It is commonly known that my career in the saddle has been punctuated by a series of accidents both painful and humiliating to me. But I want to bring out the point that, though I were heralded from the housetops as the only original clown and dub of this hunt, I would still deem it my solemn duty to the sport of the land to put on my spurs and do my best for the noblest pastime we have succeeded in preserving in this era of disillusioning commercialism."

Wild cheers came from the company.

"We are menaced," Cupid went on, "by a class of people——"

But Mrs. Whipple held up a restraining hand.

"Good work, Cupid," she cried. "We'd like to hear a lot more just like that, but the drag's been gone these three hours now."

"By gad, I'm always cutting loose too much hot air," said Cupid, with a look of chagrin. But the other men seized him boisterously, and bore him out of the house, laughing and protesting.

There was a busy half hour, scolding grooms, adjusting girths, and whipping in the dogs; but presently they were off, pounding over the turf to the hounds' joyous music.

There is some heavy country off to the south of the Whipple place, and the hunt got somewhat scattered around there. Cupid was feeling like a king as he bounced along, with the withers, neck, and ears of Riparree in his immediate foreground, when he found himself in a boggy meadow, well out of sight of the hunt. The only other person in sight was, of all people, the odious young Freddy Ladd, and he rode over and said:

"I think we'd best get out of this, don't you, McKellar?"

"I've no notion of remaining," said Cupid curtly, and they both cantered over toward the line of trees which hid the rest of the company from them.

"Rides like a stable boy," thought Cu-

pid, as he stole a furtive glance at the young man on the fleabitten roan. Just then Riparree stuck a hoof down under a grassy hummock, and his master came a swift cropper into a dank mess of briers and flags.

"I say, that was a nasty one, wasn't it?" cried Ladd.

"Damn it, yes!" snorted Cupid. "But don't let me keep you here." And he crawled out of the briers, caught the gray horse, and was not sparing of the spurs in his effort to pass the other man and get back among decent people.

As the two rode beyond the line of trees, they found themselves near the borders of a village, and could hear the dogs afar off. The younger man spurred ahead.

"I'm going to take this road," he called.

"Go ahead. I'm going across," answered Cupid, and turned into the fields.

As he loped across a level pasture, he saw, just beyond, a farmhouse set in a little grove. Running back from it, separating the field he was in from another one, was an old-fashioned, boxwood hedge. This appealed to Cupid as the very essence of picturesque hunting scenery, and he forgot, in a measure, his recent discomfitures, as he sent his horse at the hedge with a shout of encouragement. The green field flew under him like a sheet of smooth fabric, and the hedge loomed suddenly before him.

"Hup!" he grunted, and lifted Riparree over it like an old steeplechaser.

Gods! What was that below him? Was it water? No! For it did not splash when Riparree struck it—it crashed! Riparree was reducing to ground glass a fine range of cold frames, and incidentally gashing his legs from hoof to hock.

Cupid was rarely given to violent profanity, but he swore sulphurously, and belabored his good steed mightily with his crop. When there was nothing left of the cold frames to kick, Riparree took to a flourishing kitchen garden, and strove to ease his wounded feelings by bucking and trying in every way to unseat his rider.

By a miracle Cupid stayed on a long time, and labored with whip, spur, and tongue to check the ravages of the beast; but at last a sudden sidelong jump unseated him, and the next plunge landed him in a soft, moist heap of cinders. In taking leave, the charger drove his heels through the side of a chicken brooder, demolishing it; and then, apparently satisfied, departed through the front garden, taking with him a section of grape trellis.

Cupid sat limply on the cinders heap for a while and gave himself up to somber reflections. Presently it was borne in upon him that some one was sobbing not far off. He allowed his tired eyes to wander over the landscape, and there, on the doorstep of the house, sat a country woman crying convulsively into her gingham apron. Cupid was disturbed.

"Madam," he said, "I entreat you not to give way to such violent grief. I'm not injured in the least."

The woman suspended her sobbing and looked at him malevolently. "Wha'd' I care whether yer hurt er not," she blurted; "'t'ought ter killed yer!"

"Dear me," said Cupid anxiously, "it must be my intrusion here. I'm sorry, my good woman."

"Why didn't yer go on with yer skate, an' take the gardin and house 'long with yer?" shouted the woman, with hysterical harshness.

"This is very distressing," he sighed. "This—er—affair, here, which was covered with glass: it was—perhaps—valuable?"

"Oh, Heaven, yes!" she moaned, sobbing with renewed bitterness. "An' the stuff in it was valyerble, and we won't git another gardin started this year; an' yer skate has broke the brooder an' killed the chickens, an' 'e's broke the grapes all down, an' 'e's broke everything, an' we won't have no money to give old Smith when it comes due."

Cupid was aghast at this spontaneous catalogue of wrongs. He felt that the situation was becoming more serious every minute.

"But, madam——" he began, none too certain of what to say.

"You blamed swells," she cut in roughly, before he could get the floor, "you come 'round here, where yer hain't got no business, with yer autermobiles, an' run over the dogs an' chickens an' ducks, an' look back an' laff at it. An' it'd be all the same if yer run over us or the children. Jest because we're poor we can't get no satisfaction or damages er nothin'. An' you folks find out yer can't run yer autermobiles off'n the roads, so yer git out yer bobtailed horses an' ride 'em all over the corn an' pertaters an' everything." Here she gave way to yet more violent sobbing, but before Cupid could crowd in a breath of protest, she went on in a higher key:

"An' you! yer great red-faced lummox, yer not satisfied with tearin' up the pasture land—makin' b'lieve yer chasin' some kind o' flaxseed poultice, but yer come over the hedge an' knock th' daylights outer them cold frames."

Mr. McKellar rose slowly and drew himself up in all the dignity of his soiled white breeches, torn coat, and scratched face. The velvet cap still clung to his head, but the ribbons were untied and hung forlornly over one ear. Though he looked not unlike a figure from a Cruikshank drawing, the woman did not know that, and he was impressive, in a way, as he knitted his brows and scanned the garden with Napoleonic gravity.

"My good woman," he said paternally, "your story has given me no end of distress. I fully appreciate your chagrin over this unfortunate accident; but I beg of you to calm yourself long enough to tell me what I can do to set matters right. I have a blank check in my bill book and I will fill it out for whatever amount you consider is justly due you for the damage done by my vicious horse."

The woman heard this speech with an air of incredulous mystification. "Say," she said more calmly, "if you mean that, yer the first rich man that ever offered to do the square thing by us around here. If yer'll wait till my man comes home, he can tell yer what the damage is; but Lord knows he may kill yer when he sees all these here ructions."

"I can hardly conceive the possibility of any further catastrophe to-day," said Cupid gloomily.

The farmer's entrance upon the scene was accompanied by verbal thunder and lightning, but he was readily induced to listen to reason, and a rapid appraisal fixed the indemnity at a little more than twice what the damaged property had represented. As Cupid wrote a check with the convincing air of one who makes it a habit, the old couple visibly warmed toward him, and the woman gently insisted upon his entering the house to bathe his grimy face and hands. The old man meanwhile brought out some "uncommon decent cider"—as Cupid related—which refreshed him pleasantly.

"I guess mother must 'a' took on kinder hard," said the man deprecatingly, "but ye mustn't mind 'er. She set quite some store by that gardin; an' the autermobilists hev killed an awful sight of 'er chickens."

"I respect your excellent wife's feelings at such ruthless destruction of her property," said Cupid impressively. "I, my good man, am one of those you characterize as 'rich folks,' but I flatter myself that the condition of affluence has not rendered me incapable of seeing the little rough edges of life in their true light. I have automobiles and horses, and such things as that, but I absolutely agree with you that this destruction of private property should be checked by legislation.

"And as for this so-called fox-hunting game, I've never been more than an indifferent participant in it. As a matter of fact, this was my first hunt in over three years, and it bids fair to be my last one. Such sports are a relic of barbarism and have no place in the higher civilization."

The farmer was spellbound at this arraignment of sporting society, and for a moment was not quite sure that he did not come under the scathing ban

himself: he had trotted horses over at the fair grounds once on a time. He chewed hard at his tobacco and spat thoughtfully.

"Yer see, Mr. McKellar," he drawled, "none of us understands each other. I might 'a' thought you was just a low-down, mean, stuck-up swell, but when I come ter do business with yer like this, I find out yer just as much of a man as I be myself. Folks don't stop ter think that you rich fellers hev got all the money yer want and just have ter amuse yerselves an' show off. Ef I had this farm clear an' that barn full o' cattle, I s'pose I'd be havin' a hired girl an' a rubber-tired kerridge; an' then Sam Warren over here'd be tellin' round I was stuck up."

"You have a reflective mind, sir," said Cupid solemnly. "Why," he said to some one afterward, "the old fellow talked surprisingly. I'd no idea such people were so intelligent."

"Your wife spoke of some acquaintance," he ventured delicately; "something like 'old Smith,' I think she called him. Will you pardon my curiosity as to how the person came into the matter of the mishap in the garden?"

The farmer's brow darkened. "That gol-dasted old skinflint!" he muttered bitterly; "she's always worryin' over him. I done more ter help 'im when he was in trouble years ago than any other man in the county, an' now he's got a mortgage on this place, an' calc'lates to foreclose this fall. Ef we don't get the money together somehow, I reck'n we'll be set outer here. But, by mighty, ef he does——" Here the worthy man lost himself in impotent rage.

"I have a good deal of money idle in the banks," said Cupid thoughtfully and almost diffidently; "and I suppose, Mr. Pollock, that I might take that mortgage and make it a little easier for you in case the vegetable market should go bad, or——"

Emotion choked the utterance of the farmer. Presently he strode forward and grasped the hand of Mr. McKellar, to the latter's great embarrassment.

"Ef yer really mean that, Mr. McKellar," he cried, "why, by cripes, I'll go right down an' tell Bill Smith jest what I think of 'im to-night. And you, sir—you can ride your horses an' autermobiles all 'round my back lot an' the gardin an' right inter the best room ef yer feel like it. Excuse me, sir, while I go get mother."

And it was then that Mrs. Whipple and Archie Foster came riding by, looking anxiously to the left and right. Foster had just picked up the gray horse and was leading it behind his own.

"Oh, there he is!" cried the lady, pointing at Cupid, who was sitting on the porch of the farmhouse. "What ever happened to you, Cupid?" she called, with unmistakable amusement.

Cupid gained his feet with a painful effort and sauntered toward his friends with as much nonchalance as he could manage.

"That fractious brute," he said, indicating Riparree, "got me into a stupid mess with this farmer here, and in punishing him I got a bit banged up—that's all."

Mrs. Whipple uttered a ringing laugh. "Get on your old gee-gee and come along with us, Cupid. You're off your game to-day."

"Thanks, no," said Cupid resolutely; "I really couldn't treat the beast humanely. If Foster'll be good enough to send my man down here in the motor with some citizen's clothes, I can get home quietly without appearing such an awful ass. Meanwhile, I shall take tea here with these worthy people. Let the beast go, Foster; my man can catch him later."

"Poor old Cupid!" laughed Mrs. Whipple, as she and Foster rode away; "no more hunting for him; out for another three years. I'll bet you some gloves he's bought the man's farm and given it back to him by this time."

Bob Storm in the Line

By Ensign Lee Tempest, U. S. N.

Bob Storm is one of those heroes that have a peculiarly appealing power—strong, vigorous, manly, and yet of a kind, forgiving nature. His lack of suspicion is well exemplified in the present installment, in which he narrowly escapes a disaster he in no wise merited.

You can begin this serial here.

Bob Storm is a plebe at Annapolis. He incurs the enmity of "Handsome" Cantrell, an upper classman. Bob makes the football team. In one class game Cantrell fouls Bob. Then comes a fight between them, and again Cantrell plays a mean trick by hitting Bob below the belt, when he was unprepared. A pretty young girl, Billie Stafford, comes to Annapolis. She and Bob have long been friends. She makes a great impression on Cantrell, who pays her much attention.

Cantrell tries to belittle Bob in Billie's eyes, and she bitterly resents it. In revenge Cantrell forges a letter from Billie to Bob, saying she is in difficulty and demanding his immediate presence. Bob cannot find Billie, but he finds on the floor a note purporting to be from himself, and asking her to come to a certain sloop in the Severn. Bob arrives just in time to save her from an attack by a ruffian.

Bob finds out who wrote the letters, and goes to Cantrell. He refuses to report him to the authorities and offers him another chance. The upshot of it is that Cantrell, remorseful and ashamed, begs Bob, with all sincerity, to accept his friendship.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HEAD COACH DROPS A HINT.

"PLAY up there, Storm! Don't anchor yourself every time the ball goes back! And, for the love of Mike, show some class!"

Bob Storm's face went red beneath the tan; a hot, insufferable feeling of being wronged surged through his almost six feet of solid muscle and bone, as he listened, astounded, to the words of "Bulldog" Truxton, the head coach.

He flung himself into the next play like a crimson-faced fury—hot and eager to show his mettle, to make good in the eyes of the head coach.

His heart leaped, as he saw the scrub right half circling around his end and, getting by the scrub right end and tackle, he dived at the man with the ball with all the skill he possessed.

But the second-string man showed sudden genius. He pulled up on the instant, sidestepped quickly—and Bob Storm thudded, like a chain shot, to the turf.

Stunned and crestfallen, Bob picked himself off the ground while the rest of his team pyramided on top of the scrub half back some yards down the field.

"Good work, Storm!" sang out Bulldog Truxton in his *gentle* voice. "Great tackling for a plebe left end!" A hard, hulking battleship of a man, he strode up to the tall plebe. "See here, Storm," he said, "this isn't the Cherokee Indian Boys' High Eleven. You're an end, and supposed to use your head; but here you've missed two tackles, and fumbled a forward pass. You're playing rotten! What's the matter? Swelled head? Think you're some end since those youngster games—what?"

Bob listened with ringing ears, but did not attempt an answer. He knew he was playing "rotten," as the coach had phrased it; but so was the rest of his team. Why, then, had the coach singled him out? It was only a practice game, anyhow.

"Try a cold-water bottle every night, Storm," went on the coach, in fine sarcasm, while the twenty-one other players listened, and chuckled audibly. "When your head is sizable again, you may be able to make the second team. I had you down for it, but you can forget that now; the scrub left end, Morrow, stands as much of a show as you

do. You'll have to serve a while with the babies, and learn to control the abnormal development of your cranium before you can get a chance to play against West Point!"

And, with that, he stalked away along the side line, spitting savagely at every bar of white plaster.

And Bob Storm stared after him with mouth open, for all the world like a child watching a circus parade.

He knew, now, why Truxton had selected him for a word drubbing to the exemption of his teammates who were playing no better than he, if as well. The "call down" was a hint that the head coach had notebooked him for a chance on the second team.

"Well, I'll be keelhauled, holystoned, marooned, and a few other things," muttered Bob. "I'm certainly in luck. I never expected to make the second team before my second year, at least."

"Didn't I tell you, Bob?" piped up a voice at his elbow; and, turning, Bob discovered little Porter McCray, the plebe quarter back. "Didn't I say you'd make the navy team before all those prep school heroes?" McCray explained.

"Congratulations, Bob, old man!" broke in Bob's chum, Ralph Stafford, in his usual breezy manner. "Jemima! I couldn't realize it at first."

"Nor I, Bibulous Bobby. I thought Bull Truxton was taking a peach of a fall out of you," put in Bucky Hart, the big plebe full back.

"Waal, yo' deserve to hit the second team, shuah," said Randall Page quietly; and his Southerner's drawl caught the "bunch" in such splendid humor that they all burst out into laughter.

Bob now played with new fire; not only because of the coach's words, but because he felt the eyes of his teammates upon him. As for the scrubs, they regarded him with respect that was almost reverence.

Ezra Morrow, the scrub left end whom the coach had mentioned, never once removed his eyes from Bob during the remainder of the game; and it caused Bob no little discomfort to find, whenever he looked up, the narrow eyes of the tall, lanky plebe always watching him.

Morrow was a big-limbed "Sep" plebe—that is, a middy who had entered the Naval Academy in September. He was from Maine. He was taciturn, and had few acquaintances among the middies even for a late comer.

The one thing that had drawn him out of his shell had been football, and at football he proved fast, nervy, and strong. Indeed, but for the fact that he had worked out late, and that the plebe ends were well filled by Gault and Storm, he would have made the plebe team as a regular end.

"He'll get my position at left," thought Bob, and he felt sure it would be well played with Ezra Morrow assigned to it.

Practice over, Bob took a shower and a rub, then got into his uniform and left the gym.

As he crossed the "yard," a big, handsome middy called to him:

"Oh, Bob, I hear you're going to make the second team. Good work, old man! Another step and you'll hit the varsity."

"Well, I'm not up to your class as a football player, Sherwood," said Bob, in return. "It's because they're weak on ends this season, and I'm one of the best available, that they're giving me a chance on the second squad."

Sherwood, or, as he was more generally called, "Handsome" Cantrell, joined Bob.

He was a youngster, or third classman, who until recently had tried to injure Bob in every way he could, fair and foul.

He had sought to have Bob "bilged," or dismissed, from Annapolis, for "frenching," which is midshipman parlance for taking French leave from the academy grounds; but Bob had discovered his plot, and had made a friend of him by keeping the affair a secret and taking all the punishment for frenching on his own shoulders.

Since then Cantrell had acted in a manner above reproach, voicing his friendship for Bob in every possible way; the two had become chummy.

"Bob," said Cantrell seriously, "you'll have to play like all get out to-morrow. Bulldog Truxton will be watching you, and you'll have to show all your class, make good then or never."

"I know that," said Bob.

The following day the plebe eleven, having beaten the youngsters, was to play the second-class team which, in turn, had defeated the first class; and hence the game would, in all probability, decide the class championship.

The head coach, of course, would watch the play; he had called Bob down to put him on his mettle; and if Bob failed to exhibit qualities necessary for varsity material, the coach would pass him up and turn to greener pastures.

Cantrell left Bob at the door of Main Quarters.

Bob ascended to his room, drew a chair to the window, picked up his Chauvenet, and tried to "bone" the next day's lesson.

But very soon he gave it up; his thoughts were too much on football. He ruminated on what the head coach had said, and determined to make good in the eyes of Truxton in the plebe-junior game on the morrow.

As he mused, Bob looked through the window down upon the sward stretching softly away under the elms.

Middies in blue uniforms hurried up and down the walks, in and out of the building. Among them Bob made out Ralph Stafford and Handsome Cantrell, both of whom turned and gazed up at his window as they passed.

"They're thinking of me," said Bob, and he thought himself quite a Sherlock Holmes.

Right after, Bob caught sight of Ezra Morrow, the lanky "Sep" plebe, coming toward the building. His head was bent forward on his long, thin neck, and he seemed wrapped in thought.

But suddenly he looked up; long and hard he gazed at the window behind which Bob sat, the sunlight shining on his high cheek bones.

Then he bowed his head again, and appeared once more to lose himself in a brown study, but repeated the look not many yards nearer the building.

Bob lost sight of him when he entered the doorway.

"I'll bet Truxton's words made him think some, too," he thought.

After supper, Bob and Ralph worked for two hours over French, algebra, and rhetoric, only disturbed by the hourly visits of the midshipman in charge of the floor.

At half-past nine the plebes were free till ten o'clock; so Bob went down the hall to Bucky Hart's room to talk over the next day's game with the big full back.

He had been chatting some time with Bucky when Ralph Stafford stuck his head in the doorway.

"Hello, old ship!" Ralph exclaimed. "Hello, Wild West," to Bucky. Then he went on: "Say, Bob, there was a visitor to see you a moment ago—Handsome Cantrell. Wanted to talk over to-morrow's game; seems very friendly all of a sudden."

"Guess I'll go to Cantrell's room, fellows," Bob said, getting up.

But he found Cantrell's room, in the youngster quarters downstairs, deserted; both Cantrell and his roommate, Ten Eyke Van Slyke, were out.

"Perhaps he's paid another visit to my room," thought Bob.

He hurried upstairs and flung open his door—to reel back, as though struck, by the sight and smell that met his senses.

Out of his room curled, like the swarm of Troubles from Pandora's Box, a cloud of tobacco-smelling smoke!

At the same moment, Bob heard some one running down the hall. And he turned in time to see the back of Sherwood Cantrell, as he darted from the corridor into the staircase.

Utterly bewildered, almost doubting what he had seen, Bob stepped into his room, being careful to close the door behind him.

Then he glimpsed the cause of the smoke and smell—a brightly burning Turkish cigarette that lay in a nest of ashes on his table.

Bob stepped over and picked it up, to crush it between his fingers.

He heard the door behind him open.

He swung about, the cigarette smoking in his hand, to see Lieutenant Taylor, the officer in charge, standing, rubbing his eyes, on the threshold.

After an appreciable moment of silence, during which each gazed, wide-eyed, at the other:

"Storm," said the officer sternly, "I shall have to report you for smoking!"

CHAPTER XX.

WHO LEFT THE CIGARETTE?

Bob, in dismay, let the cigarette fall from his fingers.

"I—smoking?" he queried, unable to believe that he had heard aright.

"Well, it looks that way," replied the lieutenant. "You were in the act of raising that cigarette to your lips to puff at it when I came in."

Bob was himself now.

"I must deny that, sir," he said quite calmly. "I had just come in and found this cigarette——"

"Then you mean to say you were not smoking?" The officer was a trifle red in the face.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you can tell that to the commandant. I've got my own eyes to believe in this case. Come!"

"Certainly," said Bob.

He passed out before the officer, and, in this wise, they left Main Quarters, and proceeded across the "yard" to the commandant's office.

After Lieutenant Taylor had been closeted some minutes with the commandant, Bob was called, and he went in to face a tall, white-bearded naval officer who looked him over closely, though quickly.

"Mr. Storm," he said, "Lieutenant Taylor has explained to me the charge against you; now, what have you to say about it?"

"I wish to deny it, sir," replied Bob. "I would like to explain the whole affair."

The commandant nodded his white head, and Bob went back over the whole evening's goings on: his visit to Bucky Hart's room, then Cantrell's, then his own, and the discovery of the lighted cigarette as Lieutenant Taylor entered.

The commandant thought it over.

"Could your roommate, Midshipman Stafford, have left the cigarette there?" he asked, after a minute.

"I doubt that, sir," said Bob. "He came out of the room ten minutes at least before I found the cigarette."

"And the third classman, Midshipman Cantrell, had left the room before Stafford; so, then, he cannot be considered."

Bob, remembering the form he had glimpsed in the corridor, was silent.

"Well, it looks bad for you, Mr. Storm, at this rate," said the commandant, not unkindly. "I cannot take your word for it that you were not smoking, unless you have proof to back it up. I'll investigate the matter further tomorrow, however. And in the meanwhile you may go to your room and turn in, sir, satisfied that you will get justice. Good night, Mr. Storm."

"Thank you, sir," said Bob, his heart warm toward the just old sea dog. "And good night, sir."

After Bob had "turned in," he stared up at the blackness and pondered the matter over. Who had left that cigarette in his room?

It could not be Ralph Stafford; Bob knew Ralph did not smoke. And that cigarette had been left on Bob's desk in order to get Bob into trouble.

It was just like Sherwood Cantrell's work in the past; and, added to that, Bob had seen Cantrell run down the hall as he opened his door before the discovery.

But what motive could Cantrell have for trying to injure Bob? He owed his place in Annapolis to Bob Storm, and, to all appearances, was one of Bob's best friends.

And, as far from the solution of the mystery as before, Bob fell asleep.

The next day Bob forgot the puzzling question for a time—during the interval of the plebe-junior game for the academy championship.

He sat, blanketed and waiting, on the side line with Ralph Stafford and a row of other blanketed first-string men and

alternates, while the teams warmed up at signal work.

"Look at Ezra Morrow, Bob," Ralph remarked suddenly; "that lanky end, I mean. Notice how pale and drawn he looks? You'd think he was entering a real battle, ready to do or die."

"He's nervous, that's plain," returned Bob; "but it wouldn't surprise me if he plays a rip-snorting game to-day."

Ralph laughed.

"I hope he doesn't," he said. "If he should, it might be to your sorrow. *Comprehendo? Sabe?*"

Bob was nonplused. He shook his head.

"No," he said, "I can't see what difference it would make to me. I want him to help beat the juniors, don't you?"

"Sure; but that isn't all of it. If Morrow plays better than you do when you go in, Bulldog Truxton will put him on the second team instead of you." As Bob looked surprised: "Don't you remember what Bull said yesterday?" Ralph asked. "About Morrow having as much show as you have to make the second squad?"

Bob shook his tousled head slowly.

"That slipped by me," he said.

"Well, I'll wager it didn't slip by Morrow," returned Ralph. "Bob, he's determined to beat you out to-day, and show Truxton who's the little end to put on the second team."

Bob thought it over.

"Well," he gave out at length, "I have my little say to that, too. I want to hit the second team, and when my chance comes, I'll do my level best to beat Morrow to it. Watch me!"

Happening to look around, Bob caught sight of Head Coach Bulldog Truxton standing, a few yards behind, in a greatcoat of generous dimensions and rather "loud" pattern.

Bob nudged Ralph, and the two gazed with no little awe at the "big chief," until he turned his august head, saw them, and deigned to remark:

"Storm, I'm watching you to-day. You'll have to play some to make the second team."

He swung on his heel, then, and walked away.

CHAPTER XXI.

MORROW—END.

The second class won the toss. They spread out in the southern section of the field for the kick-off, while big Bucky Hart teed the ball on the fifty-five-yard line.

The whistle shrilled, and sharp and crisp, a moment later, rang the sound of leather meeting leather.

Up and away went the ball on its high flight before the coercion of Bucky Hart's toe, and down the field, under it, charged the conflict-eager plebes.

The pigskin dropped into the welcoming arms of the junior right half—Rolkins by name; but on his third stride down the gridiron with it, he found himself confronted by a big-boned plebe of desperate expression, who promptly hurled him off his feet.

When Morrow drew his big limbs together and got up, he was panting with the battle-frenzy of the game.

The opposing backs began exchanging punts, and here again Morrow was much in evidence. He was always first down the field under the soaring ovoid, always tackled hard and sure, always held his end.

For instance: Twice Cogswell, the junior quarter, sent his right half around Morrow's end, and each time the New Englander loomed up, big and rangy, and overthrew the man with the leather.

On the third try, the right half fell with such force that the ball was jarred from his hands, and it wabbled away on its own sweet will until Ezra carefully fell on it.

With the ball their treasure, and the goal some seventy-five yards down the field, the plebes sent Full Back Hart against the heavy junior line for a gain of seven yards; then tried a cross buck by right half, to gain only a paltry four.

Next, Walter Kinkaid, the second-string man who was holding down Ralph Stafford's position at left half, went around left end for a gain, thanks

to Morrow's clever blocking, of twelve yards.

While the pyramid on top of Kinkaid was pulling itself apart, Bob Storm removed his eyes from the checkerboard and looked at Ralph Stafford who so happened, at that moment, to turn and gaze into his chum's eyes.

"Well, I'll be bilged!" gasped Bob. "I didn't know he could play like that."

"He's playing for all he's worth; the game of his life," returned Ralph earnestly. "He's determined to beat you out, and hit the second in your stead. And he will, Bob, if you don't play like ten Chinese devils!"

"I wish Hull would send me in," was all Bob said.

The plehes tried a "one-man" forward pass.

Morrow got behind the unsuspecting junior line, received the thrown ball handily from Kinkaid, tucked it safe and firm in the crotch of his right arm, and started away for the goal far down the field.

His soul was shining in his thin face; here was his chance to make good in the eyes of the head coach and, at the same time, score a touchdown for his team.

The fifty-five-yard line flashed beneath him like a mark on a moving carpet, and sprinting, long-legged, he raced down the junior end of the field with a panting pack at his heels, eager to bring him to earth.

The big junior full back was the closest behind Morrow, and it soon became patent that he was faster than the lanky plebe left end.

At the fifteen-yard line he had so overtaken the rawboned New Englander that he had but to launch himself through space in a tackle, and down went Morrow, rolling over and over toward the goal.

As a result of this last, desperate attempt at gain, the rest of the field piled up on the plebe left end, making of him the foundation of a grotesque human mound.

When Ezra Morrow was lifted out of the mix-up of arms and legs, he was found to be limp and cold.

Water was hurriedly brought from the side lines and thrown on him, and, in time, he got the wind back into his lungs and opened his eyes.

But when he got to his feet, he still was so weak and dizzy that he reeled.

He begged to be allowed to stay in the game; but, protesting and half crying, amid resounding cheers from the plebe rooters in which his name was most prominent, he was carried off the field.

And Bob Storm, pale himself now, went in in his stead.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HEAD COACH PASSES JUDGMENT.

As Bob Storm trotted out upon the striped and barred arena, he realized that, now that his chance to make the second team had come, he must put up a better game than the ripping one Morrow had played.

He felt Truxton's eyes upon him, and he knew that Hull, the assistant coach, and his teammates would also be watching him to compare his playing with that of Morrow.

He determined to play the game of his life.

The two teams lined up on the fifteen-yard line, and Bob got on his toes at the end of the plebe line, and waited for the hurly-burly that would accompany the snapping back of the ball.

Porter McCray, at quarter, piped out the signals for a "double" forward pass; the egg flashed back, and what appeared to be chaos broke loose.

Porter McCray, Right Half Winston, Right End Gault, and Right Tackle Bauer moved simultaneously, in a desperate charge, on the left flank of the enemy.

Bucky Hart had received the ball, as if for a kick, but instead was making after the charging four.

After running some yards to right, however, the plebe full back swung on his heel, and hurled the pigskin back over the route he had come to Left Half Kinkaid behind left tackle.

Kinkaid wheeled on the instant toward the line of fighting juniors, and

cast the ball over their heads to Bob Storm behind.

Some one of the juniors cried: "Forward pass!" but before they could reach Bob, he was away with the ball for the goal not fifteen yards distant.

The space was so short that Bob tripped over the line for a touchdown before any of his pursuers could come within tackling range.

"That's the ticket!" said Captain Winston, when he came up.

"Keep up the good work, Bob, and you'll make the second team, sure!" from little Porter McCray.

But Bob fully realized that it was Morrow's brilliant run to the fifteen-yard line that had made his touchdown possible. And although he desired to outplay Morrow, he felt sorry that the tall New Englander should be robbed, as it were, of the crowning glory of his great run.

"I'll show them I can score unaided!" he determined, as Bucky Hart kicked the goal that wrote the score 6 to 0 in favor of the plebes.

But he was given little more opportunity to show his form that half, for, as they lined up for the kick-off, the whistle blasted the end of the first period, and, hot and sweating, the padded warriors hurried to the showers and the rubdown tables.

While Bob was taking a cold shower and listening to words of advice from Lieutenant Hull at one and the same time, he caught sight of Ezra Morrow moving slowly across the steam-choked room.

He waited till the lanky plebe passed near him, then said:

"Too bad, Morrow; you'd have scored sure, if you hadn't been knocked out. The credit for my touchdown is yours by rights. How are you now—better?"

Morrow seemed riveted, for a moment, to the floor. He stared, as though in wonder, disbelief, at Bob, while a ruddy glow ran up and down over his prominent cheek bones.

Then, without uttering a word, he swung about and walked quickly back the way he had come.

"Whew!" whistled Ralph Stafford, behind Bob. "He's sore at you, Bob, old man, for taking his place."

Bob nodded. It angered him a bit.

He went out the more determined to show his ~~m~~ettle—to make it apparent beyond doubt that he was Morrow's master at football.

As things turned out, the junior eleven must have come out for the second half in much the same frame of mind.

Right off, they sprang, with fierce determination, at the throats of the plebes, and, from the opening kick-off, forced the fight.

They beat the plebes in the initial punting duel, and rushed the fourth class men off their feet like ninepins, when they got the ball.

They swept the lighter plebes before them with such ease, indeed, that it became a cause for wonder why they had not fallen to line battering at the very outset; but perhaps the fact that the plebes had defeated the third class team had made the juniors rather wary at first of their nimble opponents.

A "bunch" pass from the plebe twenty-five-yard line brought a touchdown and five points to the juniors; but that was all, for their full back bungled the kick.

However, not so many minutes later they had another chance to kick a goal after a touchdown, and this time Full Back Sheldon's toe rang true, the score then standing: Juniors, 11; Plebes, 6.

By that time what with the hammering they had received, the plebes were battered and dog-weary.

A few fresh men, like Ralph Stafford, came in, but still the heavy juniors forced them back, back across the field.

And after each line thump, the plebes, fresh men and all, grew perceptibly weaker.

The juniors, on the other hand, were filled with the elixir of victory, and tore furiously through the big holes in the plebes' line time and again.

The score, after the first twenty-five minutes of the second half, had changed to: Juniors, 28; Plebes, 6.

And, during all that time, Bob Storm

was wretched. He was not making good; Morrow had played better. He told himself that over and over again.

He saw that the junior quarter no longer sent men around his end; he had felt the weight of the big junior full back, and had stopped him; yet he bewailed his luck that he could not do something spectacular, and thereby prove conclusively that he was the end for the second team.

And then, to add to his misery, he came out of a pile-up, after a delayed forward pass, with his right ankle sprained.

Winston, standing near, heard a cry escape him as he got to his feet.

"What's the matter, Bob?" he asked.

"Nothing, cap," lied Bob; but he believed that the end atoned for the means.

He did not want to be taken out of the game; he wanted to stay in and make good, although he well realized how much the sprained ankle handicapped him. He tried not to limp, or cry out with the pain, as he got to his place in the line-up.

They were fighting it out on the twenty-yard line. The ball went back to the junior right half, and he came circling around Bob's end.

His face pale, Bob sprang at him, wound his arms about his thighs, and threw him toward the junior goal for a gain.

The ball, in the fall, was fumbled. It started rolling away, when Bob shot his whole body through the air after it.

He fell on the pigskin in handy style, but when he attempted to get to his feet to run with it, his right leg bent under him, he cried out, and sank down upon the turf, very white and stiff, but with the ball hugged tight.

His chance for a grand-stand play had come, and he had been unable to grasp it!

At once the players gathered around him, and, appeal how he would, he was ordered off the field by the assistant coach, and his place was filled, for the few remaining minutes of play, by the right end of the plebe scrub.

As he was borne across the plebe side line, Head Coach Truxton approached and looked down at him. Bob shivered at the judgment he knew was coming. If only he had been able to make that run!

The square, bulldog face of the head coach was very severe.

"Storm," said he, "report to Captain Haines of the second squad as soon as your ankle is in shape. I'm going to try you out with the second, and I may give you a chance to play five minutes in the West Point game."

And Truxton gave his big overcoat a hitch and turned away, a broad smile on his battered face.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER.

In all Annapolis there was no happier midshipman than Bob Storm that night, despite a painful ankle, many minor bruises, and a great fatigue after the day's grueling game.

He reclined in a big morris chair in Room One Hundred and Twenty, his braced and bandaged ankle resting on a stool before him, while Ralph Stafford, Sherwood Cantrell, Porter McCray, and Bucky Hart sat around and talked.

It was on Bob's chances of making good on the second team that the conversation turned.

"Well, Bobby," said Ralph Stafford, "you've turned out to be a cracky player sooner than we thought you would."

"You want to make the varsity in time for the West Point game," said Porter McCray. "My dad would take me from old Ann, if the plebe class wasn't represented in the game with his old rivals."

"Well, you needn't be afraid——" began Bob, when he heard a rap on the door. "Come in," he said.

The door was flung open, and in walked the tall, white-bearded commandant and the officer in charge, lieutenant Bethel.

"The Old Man!" gasped little Porter McCray behind the broad back of Bucky Hart.

"The commandant!" muttered Handsome Cantrell.

Every one of the middies, save Bob, got to his feet and saluted.

Bob, wondering at the unusual visit, saluted from his position in the big chair.

The commandant and the lieutenant returned the gesture; then the elder officer stepped forward.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I beg your pardon for disturbing you, but I am in receipt of a note of such urgent import regarding one of you that I could not disregard it."

He looked at Bob.

"Mr. Storm," he went on, "the note I mention charges you with being a habitual smoker, and, therefore, of having lied to me yesterday. I received it not ten minutes ago. I will read it."

He fussed with an inside pocket; then, bringing forth a sheet of folded note paper, read:

"To the Commandant of Midshipmen.

"Dear Sir: I beg to advise you that Midshipman Robert Storm, of the fourth class, has persisted in smoking, even after being detected last night. To prove this charge, you have but to search his pockets and room.

"Also, he has left the academy grounds without leave, not once, as he is now being punished for, but innumerable times. I have heard him boast of drinking and dining with disreputable characters in Annapolis, and I have seen him return intoxicated at least three times.

"I cannot sign my name to these charges until they are proven by you, sir; but I ask you to look into them, and if they are true, as I know they are, dismiss Robert Storm from the naval academy as one unfit to associate with decent and honorable men.

"A Midshipman Who Speaks for the Good of the Service."

The commandant looked sternly down at Bob.

The latter was pale, dumfounded, almost unbelieving.

His fellow middies were regarding one another with bewildering glances. All, realizing how serious was the situation, were silent.

"Mr. Storm," said the commandant, after a minute, "I do not know who wrote this note; its author was afraid, for some reason or other, to sign his name. I don't like that. But the charges he makes are so grave, and so boldly and confidently stated, that I feel in duty bound to investigate them."

"I wish you would, sir," said Bob earnestly, though simply. "You may search my room; you will find no cigarettes here. I do not smoke."

The commandant, as he stroked his white beard, studied Bob's honest face.

"You know the consequences if I find you have lied to me?" he queried.

"Yes, sir; dismissal from the academy."

"And that just as sure as I stand here!" And the elder man banged a clenched hand into the palm of the other. "I can overlook these charges a bit, but a lie—never!"

And Bob, firm in his innocence, stoutly replied:

"I am entirely guiltless of the charges, sir."

"We shall see," said the commandant.

He stepped over to a chair, picked up Bob's coat from the back of it, and shoved a hand into the right-hand side pocket. Then he tried the left, and, as he did so, his face went red.

He glared a moment at Bob, then drew out his hand and held up, before the gaze of all, a box of Turkish cigarettes!

When opened, it was found that three tubes were missing.

The commandant waited a moment to collect himself, then said in a voice that quivered with indignation and anger:

"You have lied to me, Storm! Now, I am going to do all in my power to have you dismissed in disgrace! If you were not disabled by that ankle, I would have you confined on the *Santee* this very night!"

And every fiber of his soldierly body bristling with anger, the commandant turned his back on the aghast Bob, and made to leave the room

Bob's arms hung down by the side of his chair; the turn of events had sapped all life, understanding, from him; he was as stupefied as though by alcohol.

Only when the door slammed behind the departing officers did he come to himself. He snapped erect, then, in the morris chair.

"Stop!" he cried. "Oh, wait, sir!"

Porter McCray, always quick to think, sprang to the door, and, opening it, called back the two officers. The commandant came first; he no sooner appeared on the threshold than Bob cried appealingly:

"It's all a plot, sir—a plot to have me dismissed—ruined! I never smoke! I never saw those cigarettes before——"

"Don't lie!" snapped the commandant. "It will only make matters worse for you."

He broke off, as though struck by a new idea, and looked around the room; then turned to Lieutenant Bethel behind him.

"Mr. Bethel," he said, "it might be a good plan to search this room, as that note states. Also, these young gentlemen!"

Imagine the surprise, not to mention the sorrow, of all present, particularly poor Bob Storm, at seeing Lieutenant Bethel uncover two more boxes of cigarettes in different parts of the room!

But what capped the climax was the discovery of a box of the same brand of cigarettes upon the person of Handsome Cantrell!

"Yes; I smoke, sir," Cantrell admitted to the question of the commandant.

Bob eyed him with unmistakable suspicion.

So Cantrell smoked! And the same brand of cigarettes that were found in his room!

Now, to judge from that, Cantrell must be the man who had hidden the cigarettes in Bob's room, and then had written the anonymous letter to the commandant!

After all Bob had done for him, he had turned, like a snake, on the plebe. He was a meaner sneak than ever Bob had thought him.

Under the accusation of Bob's brown eyes, Cantrell went red and white by turns. And it was with evident relief that he heard the words of the commandant breaking the silence:

"Your case, Mr. Cantrell, will be attended to to-morrow morning. Luckily for you, you did not attempt to lie out of it, as Mr. Storm, here, has. I fear that Mr. Storm is in a very bad fix!"

And he left the room, to be followed, a moment later, by Sherwood Cantrell, who could bear no longer the accusative gaze of Bob Storm.

And Bob Storm found himself changed, within the space of a few minutes, from the happiest middy in all Annapolis to the most miserable, most disconsolate.

Here, after all his years of trying, at the very moment of his triumph, he was to be dismissed from Annapolis—and all because of the enmity borne him by the man he had befriended!

CHAPTER XXIV.

A ROLL CALL AND ITS RESULT.

Bob was dreaming that Sherwood Cantrell was locking him in a set of stocks before Main Quarters when he was awakened by an alarming clamor. It was about two o'clock in the morning.

He leaped from his bed, as though electrified.

At the other side of the room, Ralph Stafford was already on his feet.

"Bob!"

"What's up?"

They stood, in bewilderment, facing each other.

Still the loud, unearthly clamor shattered the stillness of the academy night; a bugle blared an incessant appeal; a bell sounded sharp and quick; the shouts and commands of middies and officers rang out, one upon the back of another, like discharges from a rapid-fire gun.

And suddenly, shouting voices in the plebe corridor added to the din with:

"Fire! Fire! Turn out!"

"The building's on fire!" gasped Ralph, and he thought of the long flights of stairs down which they must go. "Let's get out of here."

He groped his way, in the darkness, to the door, flung it open, and plunged, with the crowd of pajamaed figures, down the corridor toward the staircase, fully believing that Bob Storm was following close behind.

But he had forgotten about Bob's sprained ankle.

Bob had taken one, two, three strides after him, each with a cry of agony.

Then, unable to take one step more on his painful ankle, he had slumped down just inside the doorway.

He saw the last of a pale throng in pajamas hasten, ghostlike, in the dark, along the corridor. They said nothing, only flitted softly by his doorway.

There was a disagreeable smell of smoke in the air.

Bob realized the peril he faced, if he remained longer in the room. He started to crawl on hands and knees.

Meanwhile, Ralph Stafford and the rest of the middies had plunged through the burning halls downstairs and out upon the green lawn, where the cool night air revived their reeling senses.

Thrilling with a strange excitement, they looked back at the flames that were sweeping about the foundation of the old building and leaping up to the second story.

Once the large doorway ceased to vomit pajamaed figures, orders broke out from youthful officers' lips; and the middies fell at once into battalion formation.

In each division the roll was then called, to see that no midshipman had been left behind to perish in the blaze.

The cadet first petty officer went rapidly down the roll of his company, getting a "Here!" for every name called, until he came to "Storm."

Then there was a silence; no one answered to that name.

"Storm! Where's Storm?" repeated the young officer, although he had guessed, by this time, that Bob must be in the burning building.

"He's in his room!" shouted Ralph Stafford, remembering of a sudden. "He can't walk. His ankle's sprained."

The plebes, their hearts in their mouths at the awful truth, stared, wide-eyed and pale, at one another.

Ralph Stafford elbowed through the ranks to the officers in front.

"Let me go back!" he pleaded. "I'll get him!"

Cadet Lieutenant-Commander Durston, the commanding officer who had been a silent witness to the roll call and its result, stared astounded, for a moment, at Ralph.

Then he stepped over to the white-bearded commandant who had just arrived on the scene, and reported:

"One man missing, sir—Robert Storm, fourth class. His ankle was sprained in the football game to-day, and he cannot walk. Ralph Stafford, also fourth class, has volunteered to go after him."

The commandant scratched his head. He must think quickly. Would he allow Stafford to go, or rig up a ladder to Storm's window?

He was on the verge of deciding against Ralph when a tall middy appeared before him suddenly, and, saluting, said:

"Let me go, sir! Let me bring him out before it's too late!"

The commandant, surprised and admiring, gazed but a moment at the pleading, handsome face of the youth before he nodded.

"All right!" he determined. "Go—and God speed you!"

With an exclamation of thanks, the middy turned and raced toward the blazing building, and, dashing into the smoke-exuding doorway, disappeared from sight.

It was not Ralph Stafford; it was Sherwood Cantrell!

CHAPTER XXV.

A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE.

As Sherwood Cantrell, with face pale and drawn, plunged into the fire, and smoke, and perils of the burning building to rescue Bob Storm, he was acting on a principle he had evolved some time before.

Bob had saved him from disgrace and dismissal, and he had determined to pay Bob back with his help, or life, whenever the opportunity arose.

And this was his chance!

The corridor on the ground floor was a strange and terrible place now, with the long red tongues of flame lapping

along the floor, and the walls, and the ceiling.

Cantrell hazarded a gantlet of dangers as he precipitated himself blindly through the smoke, and heat, and flames.

The burning floor beneath him groaned, and sometimes sank; but at last he gained the staircase, and up he sped, unknowing, in the excitement of the moment, that his bare feet were blistered from contact with the fire.

On the second floor the flames were making way by now, and Cantrell found it another battle to gain the second flight of stairs.

Half suffocated by the smoke and heat, his eyes of no use to him from the same causes, his feet blistered and painful, he reeled up the last flight.

The third floor was dark, but choked with smoke, thick and black.

As he reeled onto it, Cantrell felt himself suffocating, his senses slipping from him, the life oozing out, as though through his pores.

But he staggered manfully on, unable to open his eyes, but groping his way with outstretched hands.

He tried to cry out to Bob; he failed once or twice, then found his voice.

"Bob!" he called. "Bob! Oh, Bob!"

No answer. He groped on. He must save Bob! Over and over again he told himself that.

He cried out once more, but again all was silent.

"What's wrong? Why doesn't he answer?" he thought, without being aware of it.

A fearful idea assailed him: Had Bob suffocated from the smoke?

He fell headlong, at that moment, over a soft mass that lay, lengthwise, along the hall!

Shivering, he got to his feet. He recovered himself somewhat, and, groping blindly about, put his hands on the thing. At that, he knew what it was.

"Bob!" he cried. "Oh, Bob, are you hurt?"

Receiving no answer, no move on the part of the form, Cantrell realized quickly that Bob had swooned from the smoke.

He realized, as well, that he had not a moment to lose in getting out of the burning building with the plebe.

But how?

Should he essay the perilous way by which he had come—the long flights of burning stairs and then the blazing hall—or leap through one of the windows?

He dashed to the window of the nearest room and threw it open.

Dimly, with his smoke-befogged eyes, he saw the white-clad crowd below, but he could make out no net spread to catch them if they leaped.

They must go down the way he had come, despite its many perils.

So, after gulping down another breath of fresh air, Cantrell raced back to the corridor, and gathered up the senseless form of Bob Storm in his arms.

Staggering under the heavy burden, blinded and choked by the smoke and heat, somehow Sherwood Cantrell got down those flights of stairs.

He precipitated himself down with fearful haste, for he could hear the boards groaning and crackling beneath him.

He buffeted a cloud of dense, choking smoke now and then, a sea of flame, but never did he lose his grip on the senseless figure in his aching arms.

The strength he had gained at football and on the poles would never have carried him through that; it was the God-given power which comes at moments such as those, and only when one's heart is desperately resolved to win.

At the foot of the last flight a charred board snapped under Cantrell's feet, and he and his burden crashed to the burning floor with a noise like thunder.

All in a moment Cantrell's strength seemed to slip from him; yet he made one more effort.

He staggered to his feet, and, unable any longer to carry Bob's lifeless body, dragged it grimly after him, as he reeled along the hall red with hot flames.

Of a sudden, after he knew not how long, he felt a welcome cold breeze penetrating his pajamas and fanning his feverish body; it might have been a stream of cold water.

Another step, and the floor seemed to give way beneath him; and, still tightly holding to the senseless body of Bob Storm, he fell headlong down a short flight of stairs and landed on something soft—the turf.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FACING DISMISSAL.

The academy had ceased talking of the fire and Sherwood Cantrell's heroism, and had begun to prophesy the result of the big Thanksgiving Day game between Annapolis and West Point, and still Bob Storm remained a prisoner aboard the old *Santee*.

His ankle was well and strong; his first despair had passed; and yet he waited for the court-martial, the dismissal, and the end of his career in the navy.

The dreary monotony of his wait was broken only by the visits of his loyal friends—Ralph Stafford, Sherwood Cantrell, little Porter McCray, Bucky Hart, and the boy from Georgia, Randall Page.

Cantrell, in his many visits, talked long and hard with Bob; more than any of the others he felt for Bob, for he alone knew what it meant to face dismissal from the academy.

And Bob, hearing of the great service Cantrell had done him on the night of the fire, forbore any longer to suspect the handsome youngster of being the one who had brought about his downfall. Why should Cantrell have saved his life if he had wanted to harm him? he asked himself.

Yet he noticed that whenever he spoke of the case of the cigarettes, a peculiar look came into Cantrell's eyes. It was the look of a man who knows more than he says.

Because of this, Bob grew even more puzzled by the mystery than he had been at first.

He felt sure that Cantrell had some knowledge of the plotter; yet he could not force the Kentuckian's peculiar hand, could not ask him to speak out, because he had saved his life, and thought that he was holding his peace for a purpose.

He could not see, now, how the real culprit could be discovered. He looked forward only to dismissal in disgrace from his country's service.

Ralph and his fellow plebes kept Bob posted as to the happenings at the academy.

While Main Quarters was being rehabilitated, the middies had been sent aboard the practice ships.

The chief topic of conversation had become the great Army and Navy game to be played on Thanksgiving Day at Philadelphia.

Bob learned that, right after he had been put out of the running by being "Santeed," lanky Ezra Morrow had hit the second team.

Morrow, on the left end of the scrub, had proved himself, during practice, up to the class of his team, and not far behind the varsity ends, Mortimer and Rainsford.

In his first game, however—the Princeton-Annapolis set-to—when he went in for fifteen minutes, he seemed suddenly to lose all ability to play football; men got around his end as often as McGraw, the Princeton quarter, gave them the hint, which was so often as to make Bulldog Truxton swear.

"He's got a yellow streak, or something as bad," said Ralph Stafford, in telling about it. "Truxton knows he can't rely on him in an important game, so he has bespoken the services of every end in the academy from the plebe scrub up. We're awfully poor on ends this year, and, to make matters worse, here are you, the best end outside of Rainsford and Mortimer, confined on the old *Santee!*"

Bob forced a laugh.

"You forget, Ral, that when the big doings come off on Franklin Field, I will be no longer confined. My court-martial is to be held the day before the game, and on Thanksgiving Day I will be, quite probably, no longer a plebe at old Ann!"

Although Bob attempted to speak lightly of the public and unmerited disgrace that seemed fated for him, he

could not control the note of pathos that stole into his voice at the end.

The time of Bob's trial slowly neared, and the day before the big game it took place.

Cantrell was there to speak for him; so was Ralph Stafford; but the testimony of the two officers in charge and the commandant was too conclusive.

Bob was found guilty of violating the rules of the Naval Academy by smoking, and lying to a superior. The statement of his case and a recommendation for his dismissal was telegraphed to Washington, and an answer was expected from the secretary of the navy the following day.

That day—the day of the great West Point-Annapolis game—opened as gloomy as ever a day opened to a young man facing unjust disgrace.

Not that it dawned cold and lowering; on the contrary, the sun shone down upon fair Annapolis in a way to recall June more than chill November. But what mattered a bright day to a plebe awaiting dishonorable discharge from the school of his ambition?

Bob rose at reveille with the other midshipmen; but, unlike them, he dressed, with slow fingers and a leaden heart, in his full uniform, and went out, fully armed and equipped, as a spectacle of disgrace, to parade the yard before Main Quarters.

He saw, as he paced gun on shoulder back and forth, the fortunate midshipmen pass out through the gate on their way to the train and the game.

Their merry laughter and conversation ceased very suddenly as they neared poor Bob, for there was not one but liked Storm and wished he was at left end instead of Ezra Morrow, whom all distrusted.

Ralph Stafford, Porter McCray, and others of Bob's friends smiled covertly at the plebe as they passed; but they could not utter a word of cheer, without breaking orders, to the disgraced middy.

Bob even glimpsed the Navy warriors as they hurried, amid a crowd of admirers, toward the gate.

Last of all came the middies of yesterday—the white-bearded commandant and his officers, resplendent in gold-decorated uniforms, gravely discussing the chances of their team to win over the old rival, West Point.

The commandant regarded Bob with a look of pity, for he realized what it meant for an Annapolis boy to miss seeing the great Army and Navy game, and, more than that, to face dishonorable dismissal.

Then, when the yard was deserted, Bob, silent and lonely, paced back and forth.

He heard the engine's whistle, as it pulled out of the little Annapolis railway station with its cargo of loyal Navy supporters; he even fancied he could hear the laughter, songs, and cheers on that ride to Philadelphia; but sight of the vacant yard brought him back to earth suddenly, and he remembered that, before he heard the result of the game, he might receive his discharge.

Back and forth, up and down Bob paced his lonely beat, while the hours slipped slowly by.

In the solitude of the sunlit yard he could only think, and his thoughts had no reason for being pleasant.

Suddenly, as he wheeled about at the end of his beat for perhaps the thousandth time, his heart began thumping, with excitement, at his breast; for he saw, hurrying toward him, a uniformed figure.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FOR THE NAVY BLUE.

It was Lieutenant Hull, the assistant coach.

"Storm," he panted, coming to an abrupt halt before the startled plebe, "come with me—to Philadelphia—order of Truxton!"

"What!" gasped Bob, though the meaning of Hull's words was perfectly clear to him.

"You're to play in the big game! Truxton sent me back for you!"

"But how can I? I'm in disgrace—court-martialed, awaiting dismissal!"

"That's all right. Truxton talked it over with the Old Man and got his

permission," Hull, having recovered his breath, elucidated. "The train pulls out in ten minutes; get your things; we'll run for it!"

When Bob, a changed boy, with his football togs in a tight roll under his arm, bolted, as if trying for a touchdown, through the gate, he found Hull awaiting him with a dilapidated hack driven by one of those obstreperous negroes for whom Annapolis is justly infamous.

The black charioteer, as they ricocheted to the station, awoke the sleepy old Southern town with his loud "gid daps!"

Bob sprang out, at the station, fully attired in his football trappings, and, with Hull, swung onto the train as it rolled out.

After they were comfortably seated, the assistant coach delved into an explanation.

"We hadn't gone thirty miles this morning," he said, "when Truxton came over to me with a note in his hand. 'Hull,' he says, 'the train will slow down at the next station; you drop off there and catch the first train back. Get Storm. He's to go in the game if we need him. Tell him it's O. K. I've got the commandant's permission.' "

Bob thought: Why had the commandant given him, a disgraced middy, permission to play, after having forbidden him, a few hours before, even to see the game?

It was a thing unheard of at Annapolis.

He asked Hull to pinch him; he was awake. And, best of all, he was hurrying, as fast as the train could speed, toward Franklin Field, Philadelphia, and the big Army and Navy game!

Though it was not a long time before the train drew into the big depot, it proved a weary time to restless Bob.

Hull, who had engineered every move, got at once into action; he hired a taxicab, and they dashed, at more than lawful speed, to the scene of action.

Franklin Field looked a splendid sight to Bob's eyes that day; he never before had seen its like.

On either side of the immense checkerboard of white and brown, upon which a mere handful of men, like chessmen, were doing battle, was a closely packed crowd of color, rising up tier upon tier in a great slope.

The Army adherents jammed the south stand in one vast, rising field of gray and gold. The Navy blue flaunted from the north stand.

In the mid-field boxes on the Army side were seated the President and his family, the secretary of war, grave generals, ambassadors from foreign countries, and other celebrities.

On the navy side was the secretary of the navy, besides admirals, captains, and other gruff, old sea dogs in dazzling gold lace.

"Rah! Rah! Rah!
Rah! Rah! Ray!
West Point! West Point!
Army!"

thundered the south stand; and from the ranks of blue and gold opposite crashed back:

"Rah! Rah! Rah!
Hi! Ho! Ha!
U. S. N. A.
Boom! Sis! Bah!
Navee—ee!"

The game was eighteen minutes old in its last half, and the score stood 6 to 6, when Bob Storm and Lieutenant Hull pushed through the crowd at the gate and came out upon the side line.

Truxton, wrapped in his loud-patterned greatcoat—for the weather was colder than at Annapolis—immediately caught sight of them, and approached quickly.

He nodded to Hull. To Bob, he said:

"Storm, I've been waiting for you since the team went out this half. Rainsford got his shoulder broken early in the game, and Callaghan is fit to drop in his tracks. We need a left end badly. Go in, quick! And for the love of Mike, help us beat West Point!"

As Bob took his place in the left flank of the Navy line, out on that desert checkerboard, far from the shouting thousands, he saw, from the pale and strained faces of his teammates, what a game they were playing.

Though they had been hammered

across their own field by the superior machine of the Army, they had fought every inch of ground they had given, and would continue to fight until the whistle blast vibrated through the tense stillness of combat.

With the ball, in West Point's possession, balanced on the Navy's forty-yard line, Crompton, the big Army full back, hurtled like a twelve-inch shell into the Navy line; and, just as a twelve-inch shell goes through the steel armor of a battleship, just so he went through the Blue line until big Bunk O'Connor, the middies' full back, pulled him down after a gain of eight yards.

In the next scrimmage, the Army tried the same tactics, but this time Annapolis held for no gain.

Then West Point kicked; but the leather was blocked before it had gone six feet, and Left End Bob Storm fell on it.

Bob felt good after that.

He had got the ball for his side; he was making good with the Navy team; he would help win for the Navy blue!

This was the opportunity for which he had longed, and of which the cigarette plotter had almost deprived him.

So, thrilling for action, every nerve and muscle eager to be used, Bob played, as Ralph Stafford would have expressed it, "like ten Chinese devils!"

Not a man got around his end; not a tackle did he miss.

He handled a forward pass for a gain of ten yards; he blocked his man, when Left Half Craig made an end run of five yards; he was always in good evidence as the ball moved back and forth, like a shuttle, between the two forty-yard lines.

The hoarse-throated thousands had ceased, from fatigue, to cheer.

Word came that but two minutes remained to play.

The ball was then in the hands of West Point on the Navy's thirty-yard line.

Crompton fell back for a kick from placement at the high, white target, and Stone, the quarter, threw himself upon his stomach and lowered the ball slowly to the turf.

The middies spread out.

Crompton, with practiced eye, calmly superintended the cocking of the ball.

The quarter slipped his hand, at the signal, from beneath the leather; the big full back darted forward; the crowd, expecting a goal, stood up; and, as Crompton's toe *plunked!* against the pigskin the two lines crashed together.

Up shot the ball, and full on the chest it struck Bunk O'Connor, the Navy full back, who had broken, with the rest of his team, through the protecting Army line.

The ball bounded back, and, striking the turf, bounced away to left.

And then Bob Storm, to whom it was nearest, swooped down upon it, caught it up on his side, and dashed with it straight on for the far-away, far-away goal!

The whole Army team lay demoralized behind him; he had a good start before they were panting, helter-skelter, after him.

He ran, ran, ran—until, after an interminable moment, two white posts slipped behind him, and he could throw himself down and pant in safety and comfort.

He had won for old Ann and the Navy blue!

"Storm! Rah! Rah! Rah! *Storm!*" shrieked both stands. Then, from the north, boomed:

"Rah! Rah! Rah!
Hi! Ho! Ha!
U. S. N. A.
Boom! Sis! Bah!
Navee—ee!"

Of course, Bunk O'Connor couldn't miss the goal after that, and the score stood, when the whistle trilled a moment later: Annapolis, 12; West Point, 6.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE WHY AND WHEREFORE.

After all the cheering and serpenting on Franklin Field was over with forever, and the joyous middies were on board the train, singing "Maryland, My Maryland" at every turn of the wheels, Bob Storm, the hero of the day, came

face to face with the head coach, Bulldog Truxton.

And being emboldened by a broad smile on Truxton's face, and remembering something he had forgotten in the excitement of the game: "Why—why did you send for me, sir?" he asked breathlessly.

Truxton laughed shortly, happily.

"So you'd win for us, Bob. But better ask Cantrell of the youngsters—he'll tell you all about it."

And Bob hunted up Cantrell before another mile had been covered, and asked him.

"Come with me," said Sherwood mysteriously; and in a rear seat of the last car, while the fellows up in front were making merry, he told a little story to Bob.

On the night that Bob had discovered the lighted cigarette in his room, Sherwood Cantrell, walking up the corridor to visit the plebe, had been surprised to see a fourth classman, whom he knew only by sight, come out of Bob's room followed by a whiff of white smoke and a strong odor of burning tobacco.

Now, Cantrell often smoked on the sly, and he had reasoned, therefore, that Bob was "fuming" with some plebe friends.

While he was hesitating as to whether he should break in upon the little smoke fest, Bob had appeared from the staircase.

Then Cantrell had not known what to think.

He had walked quickly away, and it was at that moment on that memorable evening that Bob had caught sight of him.

The following night, when the commandant had entered Bob's room with the anonymous letter in his hand, and the boxes of cigarettes had been discovered, Cantrell instantly had bethought himself of the mysterious plebe of the night before.

He knew, from his knowledge of Bob's character, that Bob spoke truth in denying the charges of the letter.

He realized, also, that Bob suspected him of perpetrating the plot.

And he resolved, there and then, to help Bob.

He made the acquaintance of the plebe he suspected.

And the more he came to know the man, the surer he became that he was the plotter.

But about that time he had hesitated. He himself had been a pretty bad sort, once; and, remembering how Bob had saved him from the consequences of his own act, and thereby caused him to turn over a new leaf, he decided to give the suspected plebe all possible time in which to repent and confess.

But this man proved to be of a different order from himself. Bob was court-martialed and virtually dismissed in disgrace, and yet he made no move to clear Bob.

So the night before the big West Point game Cantrell had called upon him in his room.

The fellow was not surprised, as they had become quite friendly.

From football, Cantrell adroitly swerved the subject of conversation to that of a true story about how he had kept a certain player he had disliked out of an important game, and had made him french.

The player's name was Storm.

The other's tongue began, at that, to wag, and Cantrell knew that he was going to fall into the trap.

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