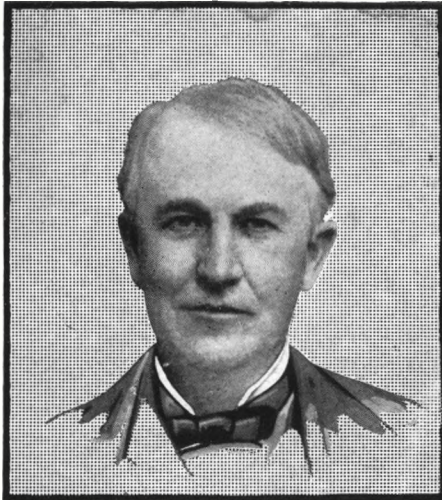


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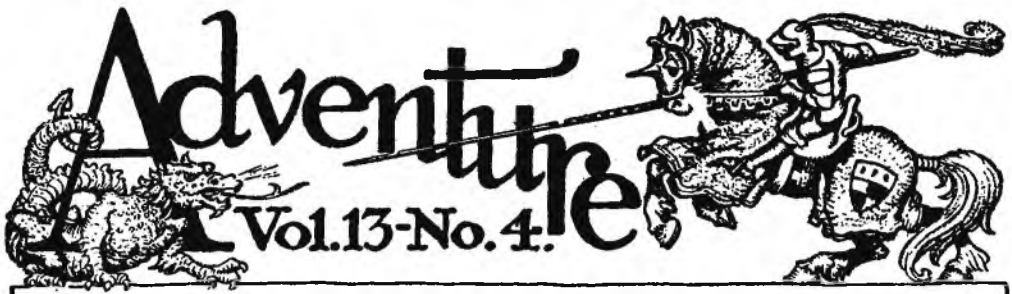
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Nobody's Island

A Complete Novel
by Beatrice Grimshaw

A BIRD was crying on the White Rock Strand.

Small Jackie M'Neill, running home in the windy dusk by a short cut from the Bushmills Road, heard the crying.

"Mither," he said, when he reached the reeking little house in Bazaar Street, "there was a boord greetin' to itself by the strand—a geyan queer one."

"What like did it greet?" asked the old fishwife.

"Like this," said Jackie, counterfeiting skilfully.

His mother looked at him strangely.

"Dade, that was no boord," she said. "That would be to be a wumman."

"A wumman, out her lane in the sand-hills, comin' on dark, and it spittin' to rain!"

"Ay," said the fishwife, reaching forward for the slung pot in the chimney.

"A wumman," repeated Jackie, his eyes large with curiosity. "Have ye ever heard the like?"

"Ay have I. Give me the muckle spoon."

"Mither, what for do they be yelly-hooin' like that?"

"Because their man has gone away and left them."

"Will he come back when they greet?"

"Na."

"Mither—it cudna be the wumman I saw, an' I crossin' the burn. She ran intae the hills—but she had a pairty dress on her, an' dimons or somethin' in her neck. She wud be from the big hotel."

"When it's men an' women, the quality in the big hotel is like the lave of us."

"Aren't people always men and women, mither?"

"Na! Thank God. Hold yer whisht, an' put yer plate on the table."

"Is it mate an' pitaties both, mither? Oh, mither!"

"It is. Fill yer mouth, and shut it."



EVERY golfer in the United Kingdom knows the station of Portrush, that wide, gusty hill above the green Atlantic. There were red coats and Donegal tweeds there by the score, in the fresh chill of the Autumn evening. Brown bags of clubs were being handed into carriages; nailed boots clinked along the asphalt. Small Jackie M'Neill, again on the prowl, saw something that interested him among the sporting crowd.

"Mither, aw, mither!" he chattered, as

he dived through the Bazaar Street doorway, after the departure of the Belfast train. "Ye was wrong!"

"Wrong? What way, mannie?" asked the fishwife absently, stirring at her eternal cooking.

"'A yesterday. I seen the wumman, mither, gaun away on the train."

"What wumman?"

"The wonn I seen in the sand-hills, an' it rainin' last night. She was geyan' fine, an' she was with her man: he'd noan left her, mither. An' sure, the poorter telt me they was on their honeymune. An' aw, the poorter says he's a geyan fine player; he won the monthly medal, an' the Craigen cup, an' he's stayin' here. An' he's that rich he could play with gowlden balls an' if he liked. He's no that young, but she's young, mither, an' aw, she's purty! Agh, ye were no wise when ye said it was she greetin' like a wild boord oot in the rain an' her man bid to have left her! Sure it was some other body."

The old fishwife—she was not so old, perhaps, if you looked past the lines and the graying hair into the blue of unfaded eyes that had yet seen sorrow on sorrow—the fishwife, shrewd with the shrewdness of Scotch-Irish poverty, turned, her frying-pan in her hand.

"Young and purty," she said, looking out through the narrow window, and speaking more to herself than the boy. "Young and purty, an' she married on a man that's no young, with a big lock of money, an' she choosin' a place where he could be playin' his golf all day, for their honeymunin'—Na, mannie, yer mither's right, I'm thinkin'."

"But her man was with her, mither!"

"Ay was he?" said the fishwife, with an accent of contempt. "I'm thinkin' he was no'."

There was rain again that evening, but small Jackie, in his anxiety to prove himself in the right, went out to the dusky sand-hills after tea, convinced that he would hear the crying bird. But he never heard it again. And so Jackie, and the old fishwife with the blue young eyes, pass from the film of the play. And Portrush passes, as it passed from the life of Edith Campbell, leaning back in the railway carriage, and shutting her eyes, that she might not see the belt of sand-hills they were running through.

She did not think she should ever again be able to look at a patch of sandy bent-grass shivering above the sea; ever smell the driven spume upon her face and in her hair; ever hear the sound of tumbling waves on a solitary beach, or feel wet dusk wrap her round, without suffering again the mortal agony that had driven her out of the hotel into the loneliness of the sand-hill ranges—after the evening post came in.

"If only I hadn't known how to swim," ran her oddly disconnected thoughts, as the train stamped on to Belfast and the English boat—on to her London home. "Then—I need never have come back from the beach. It could have been over so easily. They say there is a big run out, just off the Coran Point— Oh, my God, Ben, Ben—how am I to go on bearing it?"

"Did you speak?" said the fattish man in the fur rug, from the opposite corner.

"Speak? No."

"Anything you want?" sleepily.

"No, thank you, Godfrey."

The train roared on.

II



THERE were people who said that Slade was in the habit of leading his own special providence about with him, like Una with her lion. They were wrong. Slade, Australian of the Australians, jumped on the back of any providence that might be coming along, rode it as he would have ridden an "outlaw" horse, and made it carry him whither he would. The adaptability, the resource, the not-to-be-beatenness of the true Australian were fined down to the sharpest point in him. He was even fined down himself.

An eye accustomed to the solid brawn of England might have classed him as overlight: his five-feet-eleven carried under eleven stone of weight. But a fellow Australian would have classed him, correctly, as a man who could beat his weight in wild-cats.

Slade was handsome—incidentally and unimportantly. You saw that he knew, and that he did not care. He had fine hawk-like features, fine hazel eyes, a fine head of close brown hair, just sprinkled at the temples with the light ash of six-and-thirty. He wore the long mustache of Australian caricature; he had a hard chin, a small ear, and the long hand that goes with the leader's power.

Slade was rough-rider, company-promoter, mine-exploiter, discoverer, pioneer, and a score of things beside. If he had a home or a family, no one knew it. The young Australian flies from his home as a bird flies from the nest, and for the most part comes back to it no more than does the bird. Slade was no nestling.

Sometimes he had money, sometimes none. He did not trouble overmuch when Fortune's wheel swung round to earth. There was always more money to be made somewhere. He got what he wanted. He was never beaten.

This was what he would have said—what he did say, until a certain year when he went as far as Colombo by the P. & O., and on the voyage met a certain girl.

She was a Miss Cardillion, traveling with an invalid mother. They were important people, and yet not important. All the passengers knew that they were not very well off; some knew that the Cardillions were an exceedingly old family, descended from Richard Cœur-de-Lion. At any rate, they were exclusive, and it was not without difficulty that Slade broke through the wall of their quiet reserve. He fell in love with the daughter from the first. Unlike most strong men, he admired strong characters, and this soft English beauty, he knew, wore steel beneath her silk.

"She looks like a rose," he said to himself—Slade was no decadent: worn tropes and similes never galled his withers—"but she could fight like a Joan of Arc, if they were invading her castle and her lord was away. That wasn't Joan of Arc, by the way, but it's all the same. That's the sort she is. I shall marry her."

They were engaged within ten days: Slade's tame providence seemed to be attending to its work. Miss Cardillion was twenty-three, and had had lovers, but they had all expected her to do her share of the work: they made advances and then waited, with one foot half poised, for encouragement, for a word. Her fancy had been touched more than once; she was no snow statue—but she had never said the word. It seemed to her that a man ought to do his own work.

Slade did. She was passionately in love with him long before he asked her to marry him; her only fear was that he would not.

They had ten days of paradise, during which they kept their secret to themselves.

Feeble Mrs. Cardillion had already warned her daughter against "posting herself" with a man who certainly would not be received as a member of the best class London clubs, and the girl, Joan of Arc though she might be, did not look for a battle in mid-ocean at the very outset of her love-story.

Then came Colombo, and the end.

Leaning over the rail, in a world full of stars and sea, Slade told her that there was something she ought to know. It was not much, he said, but he did not care to keep secrets of any kind from the woman he loved. He had been married before.

She took it very well. Candor and truth itself, she told him that the fact was to be regretted. No woman, she said, liked to come second. But it made no difference—no real difference—to her love. She was glad he had told her; it was honest of him.

Slade spoke a little further. His marriage, he told her, had not been a happy one. It had been undertaken very young—too young—and had turned out as badly as was possible. He had, however, been free for ten years now, and in all that time none of the women who came and passed had truly held his heart.

"I was waiting for you—if I had known it," he told her; and the starlight was not too dim for her to see the sweetness of his smile. She had never thought that a man could smile like that. She had never thought a man's eyes could be so beautiful like a—no, not like a woman's.

"You can think kindly of her now, poor soul?" she asked.

"Certainly not. Why should I?" was his strange reply. It shocked her a little.

"Because," she said with the slightest flavor of reproach in her tone, "because she is dead."

"But she's not," said Slade, straightening up, and taking his elbows off the rail. "You must have misunderstood me. I didn't mean she was dead."

"She—is—not—dead!" said the daughter of the Cardillions, springing back in her turn. There was something in her tone that caused Slade to curse himself silently and violently for a stupid brute.

"Good God!" he said aloud. "What do you suspect me of? I thought you— She's divorced, of course. Married again, too, years and years ago—though that has nothing— Why, you didn't think—"

Edith Cardillion was standing apart from

him. Her face, in the rising moon, was the color of her white silk dress.

"Didn't you know," she said, with a little stop for breath at almost every word, "that the Cardillions are Catholics?"

"I did not," said Slade. "What does that matter?"

"Mother of God! Mother of God!" cried Edith Cardillion, and broke away from the deck, down toward her cabin.

Slade stood frozen for a minute, and then, biting his mustache, walked aft to the promenade deck and the saloons.

"There's a priest on board," he said to himself. "This has got to be settled now."



THE priest was sitting in a deck-chair by himself, under the electric light, reading a detective novel by Mrs. Henry Wood. He was a youngish-looking man, with a sensible plain face. Slade remembered that he had been genial and pleasant throughout the voyage, joining in deck games and making himself generally liked.

"He won't mind my butting in on him, I think, and if he does, it's no particular matter," thought Slade, dropping into the next chair, which was unoccupied. "I can't face the night with this hanging over me."

The priest looked up from his novel.

"Ever read this?" he asked. "It's capital. I would defy any one to guess who killed him, till the proper time comes."

"No, I haven't read it," said Slade, looking down at the deck, his hands dropped between his knees, his thoughts busy with what he was going to say. "I want to ask you a question if you don't mind."

Something like a veil dropped across the commonplace bearing of the priest. It was the professional manner, evoked by Slade's speech and tone.

"Not in the least," he replied in the impersonal voice that invites confidence.

"What," said Slade, and now he raised tortured eyes to the patient eyes of the priest, that had seen many of such looks before; that knew them but too well—"what is the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church toward marriage with a divorced person?"

"I think you must know," was the reply, very gently given.

"Tell me."

"She forbids—absolutely."

"Even if the divorced person is Protestant

—if he or she was not the person in the wrong?"

"She has nothing to do with him. She forbids her own child."

"If the Roman Catholic married all the same?"

"The Catholic would, in such a case, be excommunicated; deprived of the sacraments, and, in the eye of the Church, would be considered to be living in sin and not married at all."

"There are no exceptions?"

"None."

"Well," said Slade with a kind of cold violence, getting up, "in that case, I shall do my best to make a Protestant of her."

"You will never do that with a Cardillion," said the priest.

"You seem to know a lot."

"Only what I have seen. I do not know these Cardillions. I know the family generally. There has never been one, man or woman, who deserted the faith. They are all Lion-Hearts in the cause of Holy Church."

"I wish them a better cause," was the bitter comment of Slade, as he walked away again.

Slade did not despair, but the world looked very black. If the legend of his special providence had been true, now was assuredly the time for it to get to work.

It did not. Edith Cardillion, through floods of tears, stood fast. They parted at Colombo, shaking hands in an ordinary way on the deck before all the passengers. She went North, and he, in a week, went South again, and there was all the globe between the bodies of these two who had met and loved, and more than all the world—all eternity—between their souls.



FOR some months after, Slade realized exactly what people meant when they talked about broken hearts: a sort of talk that, previously, he had taken to be based on mere metaphor and pose.

He was just beginning to get over it, and to take something of an interest in a money-making scheme he was working in New Guinea, when two more blows fell on him that left him wondering if any sort of Providence, or every sort of devil, were in truth the ruler of the world. The first blow was the news of Edith's marriage to Godfrey Campbell, the Cocoa King. This he could

understand, just as he would have understood had he seen her jump over a bridge head or get in front of a train. He knew that her mother would press her ceaselessly; he knew, too, what she must have been suffering, and one kind of suicide was much the same as another in these matters. Whether you cut your throat or married some one else, you gained the same end—that of distraction. He had almost thought of marrying—some one, any one—himself.

The next, and worst of all, was the news of his divorced wife's death. He traveled half across Australia to assure himself of its truth. It was true; and nothing, now, could have hurt him more. Cynically, he sent a notice of it to every English paper he could think of, and then went off and buried himself in the *Louisiades*.

There was money to be made in New Guinea just then, and he made it. But one can not spend, satisfactorily, at the end of the earth. Slade felt that he owed himself a little amusement. At the end of a year he took a ticket, once more, on the P. & O.—through this time.

He had thought he was getting over that affair of Edith Cardillion. Certainly, during the weeks of sailing and camping about the *Louisiades*, he had not thought of her much. But the ship—by some malign fate, it was the *Maloja*, the very boat on which he had traveled with Edith—the lonely, sunburned, West Australian ports, the long calm stretch to Colombo, above all, the scents, sights, sounds of Colombo itself, waked up every "sleeping dog" of memory, and set each separate one to gnawing and tearing. He was glad when the *Maloja* whistled herself clear of Ceylon at last, and set her bow northward on the three weeks' run to—Edith.

That was what it came to. The Australian who had never been to England, who was now setting out on that journey to London and "Home" that is the dear ambition of every one born below the equator, was thinking not at all of Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's, of Oxford, Stratford-on-Avon, the Castle Rock of Edinburgh, the Lakes of Killarney, but of one fair, stately English girl; a girl with a gentle, lily face, and a heart as brave as the lion heart of Richard. Slade, who had seen her kill her own happiness with her own unhesitating hand, rather than let a shadow

of wrong-doing fall across her love and his, knew that courage.

He did not hope for anything, in determining that he would see her before he left London. There was nothing to hope for. Slade was no nearer to the angels than any good-looking, roving man of six-and-thirty is likely to be, but Edith Cardillion, in making herself Edith Campbell, had burned all bridges; that he knew as well as if she had spent three acts of a problem play in telling him so. He knew, too, that her marriage had in all probability been a kind of suicide; he guessed, by what he had heard on the voyage of the habits and character of the Cocoa King, that it had been a suicide bringing no peace with it. But he wanted to know with somewhat more of actual certainty, and he meant to, before he left.

Afterward, Ben Slade was led to think not a little on his friends' theory of a tame special providence; on ideas of telepathy between minds attuned to one another; on Fate, and other matters scarce germane to the mental make-up of an eminently practical man. If there were indeed, he thought, a Divinity that shaped the rough ends of our casual actions, it was surely at work on the day when he went to call upon Edith Campbell.

Still, when he left his completed business behind him in the E. C. district one afternoon and took a taxi out to Edith's address, he had not the faintest premonition that he was on the way to the hour of his life; that every jump of the registering dial swept him closer and closer to a turning-point, round which, when once he had passed, he should find his feet set upon a road that was all new, difficult, dangerous, that was strewn with stones and thorns, and yet that bore, among the thorns and dangers, the veritable rose of life.

When, outside of proverbs, does the coming event cast its shadow before? Slade, whirling on to the house in Duchess Gardens, lit a cigar as he sat in the cab, pulled down his tie, and wondered if Edith had grown fat.



THEY stopped before an exceedingly handsome house with many balconies of stone, stone pillars, stone balustrades, awnings, banks of flowers.

A woman had just come down the steps. Slade paid the driver, threw away the end

of the cigar he had been smoking, and glanced casually at the woman as he set his foot on the stone flight. She was walking away toward the park; a tall, slim, well-tailored figure, with a glittering sweep of hair. Was it Edith? Her face was turned away. He looked a second time. He was sure it was.

Why, how fast she was walking! At first he could not catch her up. Walking! She was almost running; he had to step out to the utmost. What did it mean? She looked behind her once, but did not see him. Her veil flew loose; he caught a glimpse of her face. Was that Edith? What was the matter with her? She looked ill.

In ten more strides he had caught her; had beckoned, at the same moment, to the driver of his taxi, not yet away.

"Edith!" he said. "You're in a hurry—let me put you into a cab."

She gave a little cry.

"Oh, you! You!"

And so, after the parting and the years, after long grief and pain, they met. Only for a moment they stood on the pavement, swept by the Spring wind, looking in the face of one another, before Slade saw that there was something desperately wrong with Edith, once Cardillion. Her mouth was working; her beautiful eyes showed a rim of white above and below the pupil, like the eyes of a frightened horse. There was a sharpened look about her features.

"It's like the look of death," thought Slade, with a terrible leap of the heart. "Is she ill—dying? But no one who was ill could walk like that."

"Get in," he said, with his hand under her elbow. "I can take you where you like—Drive anywhere"—to the man. The door slammed.

When they were away, spinning smoothly toward the Park, Edith glanced out of both windows, turned toward Slade and caught at his hands.

"Ben, save me!" she said.

She was exceedingly agitated, but seemed to be trying desperately to keep hold of herself.

"I'll save you," answered Slade quickly. "What is it?"

"I'm going to be hanged," said Edith and burst out laughing.

"None of that," said Slade, watching her.

"I'll shake you if you do."

She pulled herself together.

"Thank you," she gasped. "I didn't really mean to be an ass. It's the things that have happened."

"Go through it right from the beginning, quietly," said Slade, keeping hold of her trembling hands.

The white pavements, the Spring-decked people, bright parasols, white blouses, light suits, spun past them. The iron park palings reeled away.

"I—I—he's dead," said Edith, still struggling with herself.

Slade held her hands and stroked them, as one strokes the neck of a frightened horse.

"Yes?" he said. "Your husband? How?"

"I found him when I went in," said Edith.

"And I came away and locked the door. No one will think of looking for him before tomorrow night; he's so often away, and—but nothing would have mattered if I hadn't said what I did at the dinner-table; there were only the servants, but of course they—you see, he was drunk again and insulted me in that sneering way he has—Where was I?"

"You were telling me what you said at the dinner-table," prompted Slade. He kept down feeling with an iron hand; this was no time to feel. Rather he must think. The few words she had said already hinted at terrible possibilities.

"When I saw how far gone he was," went on Edith with an effort, "I got up and left the table. He had a half-tumblerful of brandy in his hand, and I said, 'It is poison—you are poisoning yourself.' For I knew he was; you see he'd had two attacks of delirium tremens already, and they say no one gets through a third. And he—he—he drank it and threw the glass at me, and it just missed my face. And he said, 'Don't you wish it was poison?' and I said, 'Oh, I do, I do!' and I ran away."

She stopped and pressed her handkerchief over her shaking lips.

"I can hardly talk—I think I'm frightened," she said.

"I believe I can guess. You found him dead today, and you're afraid they will think you killed him. When and where did you find him?"

"About eleven o'clock—just now. He was on the sofa in his dressing-room, with a glass, and whisky in it, and a smell of nuts in the whisky, and there was an empty bottle of strychnine. And he was—oh!"

"Yes. I know how they die from strychnine. Do you think he killed himself?"

"Oh no, no—he would never have had the pluck, even if he wanted. No—I think it was pure accident. He had been suffering from nerve trouble, and borrowed my *mix vomica* some time before, and I told him to be careful, because it was strychnine—poison. I—I suppose he poured it when he was half drunk, and took the whole bottle. You have to drop it carefully."

"Well, but, Edith—that can be proved, no doubt."

"It can't." The frightened look came into her eyes again; he could see the edge of white above the dark-ringed iris. "I bought the stuff myself, because I had heard it was a tonic, and I was almost giving way with all he made me go through of late. He wasn't always like this, you know, or else I'd never have— But he got to know I didn't care much for him—I suppose it was my fault in some degree. And once he really began to drink—oh, I've been through hell—everybody knows that!"

"A pity they do," thought Slade. But he said nothing, only waited for her to go on.

"No one knew he had got it from me," continued Edith, still speaking with excited speed. "I didn't want to give it; I was afraid he wasn't fit to be trusted with it—but he said he wanted something 'with a kick in it' and took it away out of my dressing-case. And I meant to speak to his valet, and tell him to take care, but I didn't; I've been so worried, I seem to have no memory left. If I had, I think it would have made a difference!"

"Is that all?" asked Slade quietly.

"Not quite. It's hard to remember—but I'm afraid he once drove me very far, and I said I wished he was dead—not like the other time; I said it of my own accord, before my maid too. It was true, I suppose, but out of books and plays one doesn't do things, Ben—nobody does—one just thinks them. Only, they might think you—did."

They might. Undoubtedly they might. Slade saw it only too clearly. A more hideous combination of harmless circumstances woven together into a veritable hangman's rope, he had never heard or dreamed of.

"Let's go over it," he said.

They went over the circumstances again. Slade, his keen intellect all on the alert,

asked question after question, and Edith answered quietly and clearly. They had forgotten that they were lovers, met again after years; they had forgotten that he was man and she was woman. They were just two souls come together in direct misfortune, one suffering, the other stretching out hands of help.

The taxi buzzed on; through its open windows rushed the airs of May, warm, laden with dust and sunshine and the smell of water-carts. Slade leaned back, as the car beat down a quiet suburban road, and spoke gently to the beautiful frightened creature at his side.

"I'll see you through. Don't be frightened, my girl. What were you going to do?"

"I was going to run away somewhere. Do you think I was right?"

Slade paused; it was a terrible decision that he was asked to make. If he advised her wrong— He saw two pictures, one following the other with the swiftness of a cinematograph film. The first showed a woman in flight, across the ocean, across the world. Money, home, friends, position, all, were left behind—perhaps, perhaps, for nothing. Who could tell what bit of evidence might turn up to save the innocent? People didn't get hanged for things they never did, nowadays.

The second picture showed a woman, a young and lovely woman, whom he loved, standing in the early morning outside the door of a prison cell, a little group of warders, chaplain, doctor, and one other, pressing close round— That one other was very near her; he was binding her limbs and placing a cap on her head. Presently, outside, he would pull the cap over her eyes, and . . .

How was one to know that people did not get hanged for things they never did? They were hanged for things that everybody thought they had done, that was all. Would not everybody think she had done this?

And if it came to that, and he knew that he might have saved her . . .



SLADE'S resolution was taken. The risk of going was less than the risk of staying. He must save her.

"I think you ought to go," he said, after a brief pause. "I never heard of a case like it in my life; certainly—"

"Oh, but don't you think perhaps there

may have been some?" said Edith, echoing his own thoughts of a moment before. "It makes one feel how terribly people are at the mercy of chance. If that could happen to me, it may have to others. Mrs. Marley may not have poisoned her husband after all, though they imprisoned her nearly all her life for it. And that man Crippen——"

"Come, draw the line; I can't have you comparing yourself to Crippen!" remonstrated Slade. "We're going to be like him in one thing, though, we're going to run away."

"We!" said Edith, growing suddenly crimson.

"Did you think I was going to desert you? And did you think you could manage it alone? Not much."

"But——" said Edith, and stopped short.

"I know all you are going to say. Try and remember that you are a widow. You'd better begin to realize it. You're a widow, and I'm a widower, and there's no law of God or man—now—to prevent us getting married at the first opportunity. It will have to be New York."

"New York! But why?"

"I'll explain presently. I'm doing the talking; we haven't any too much time. Try and think carefully. Are you sure that no one will find him before tomorrow night?"

"Practically certain. They won't look for him or expect him till quite late. And the door's locked."

"Then, listen here— Hi, you! Turn round and go to the end of Victoria Street, Westminster. Listen carefully. It won't do for you to simply get away, in disguise of any kind or out of it. To put it plainly, they'll be looking for you, and they won't stop looking, unless something happens to convince them that it's useless. We must kill off Edith Campbell."

She asked no questions. She sat with her face turned toward his, listening, her blue eyes large in her pale face.

"You'll sail for America—first of all—by the *Azuria* from Southampton this evening. You'll go as Mrs. Godfrey Campbell, and you will have nothing to do with me. You'll go on board without luggage—it won't be wanted—but you must remember to buy a large white hat, to sail in."

"Very inappropriate," spoke the woman of the world.

"No matter; it's necessary. Give me your measures, so that I can get you some

clothes—they'll be the right kind; I know what shops to go to. Your real luggage will meet you at Queenstown, where Mary Phelps will come on board."

"Who is Mary-Phelps?"

"You. This is my plan; it might be better, and might be worse; anyhow, it's all there is."

He spoke for a few minutes low and earnestly. Edith listened, and as she listened, the world, that had seemed to be swinging away from under her feet, rolled back again. She stood firmly, for the moment. The plan would work, she thought. The mists of panic cleared away; she could see about her.

"Where shall I leave you?" asked Slade, as the cab spun on toward Westminster.

"The Abbey," said Edith. "It's the last place I'm likely to see any one I know, and I'll wait there till it's time for the train. I can pick up the hat on my way."

"That's my plucky girl," said Slade. "Take it that way, and we'll pull through as right as rain."

There was a momentary pause; an unspoken question looked out of Edith's eyes. Slade answered it.

"Directly we reach America," he said; and his bright hazel eyes met hers.

She could not hold his gaze; her own eyes dropped and turned to the Abbey towers, now rising gray against a sky of pale Spring blue.

And on a sudden, the sight of those gray towers, of that pale, sweet English sky, became infinitely affecting. Tears began choking in her throat and glassing her eyes. The Abbey had never been very much to her, a Catholic, who thought a church without the Presence was not a church at all—it had been only a beautiful show place where coronations were held, and tourists came to look at monuments. Now she felt it was England—and she was leaving England.

Exile! The meaning of it struck her like a blow. Could she endure it, even for and with her lover? What kind of a life was this that she was going to? Lines of Kipling ran through her head:

I am memory and torment—I am Town,
I am all that ever went with evening dress.

. . . . Day long the diamond weather,
The high unaltered blue . . .

. . . . We'll meet you at the jetty
Quite glad to show you round,
But—we do not lunch on steamers,
For they are English ground!

Edith, descendant of Cœur-de-Lion, put her hands before her face.

"What is it?" asked Slade, bending nearer, and almost thrown against her as the cab, at high speed, bumped over the newly repaired roadway.

The slight hands dropped again.

"Is there no other way?" asked English Edith, her eyes still set on those gray towers.

The Australian, through his great love, understood.

"If there was, don't you think I'd have taken it?" he said, with a caress hidden in the curt words.

He had not the European trick of beautiful language, this son of the Southern plains; yet no woman to whom he had ever made love—and there had been many, before the one woman came—had been conscious of aught that was missing in his love-making.

"I think you would," said Edith, flashing a grateful look at him, sun shining through rain. "But there's another side to the question; I was too dazed to think of it at first. What about you? I'm ruining your life—tying it to a hunted thing like me."

There was no polite disclaimer.

"Why, yes," assented Slade coolly. "Best look things in the face—we're ruining our lives more or less, as people would put it. But then, you see, you can't help yourself and I don't want to. I find a ruined life with you much more to my taste than an unruined one anywhere else. You don't know what a decent time ruined people can have. Wait till you try."

Edith was surprised into a sudden laugh at his dry manner of speaking—a laugh very near to tears.

"There never was any one just like you," she said.

"Oh, yes, there are lots," contradicted Slade. "Australia's crawling with them. You happen to like me—that's all."

"Well—since you have told me how you feel—Ben, I'd truly, on my honor, rather be with you, hunted, in danger, going to the end of the world, than have the old life back again. I'd rather have the very worst of all happen, than remain his wife, with you in the world and free. Anything would be better than that has been. When I heard she was dead—after all; oh, my God—after all—I wanted to kill myself. And I didn't

even know what he was really like then; we had only been married a month. I wouldn't go back; bad as this is, it's no worse—it's better. You know the song—'To the End of the World With You?'"

"No, I don't, and I wouldn't bother about it if I did; songs are pastry sentiment at the best. You've hit it, though, about where we're going."

"The end of the world?"

"Just that. I'm taking you to my own island—'Nobody's Island,' I call it."

"Why?"

"That's telling. But it is at the end of the world. New Guinea is pretty near that, and the island's way off the tail end of New Guinea. I think you and I can contrive to worry along pretty well out there."

"What is it like?"

"What you would dream an island might be."

"I think you've a good deal more poetry about you than you would like to acknowledge."

"I've no such thing," said Slade, blushing visibly. "Now I'm going to leave you, to go and buy those things."

"Would it not be simpler if I bought them myself?"

"It would, a lot simpler, for the police."

"Oh!"

"Police. Yes, Edith, you've got to get used to the word. Don't be frightened of it; it isn't going to do you any harm. Now—till we meet on the *Azurial*!"

The cab stopped. Slade opened the door. The roar of Victoria Street, booming heavily past, seemed to envelop them like a fog. Edith felt almost invisible; it seemed natural enough that Slade should reach back, only half hidden by the swinging door, and take a long, close kiss.

"My girl!" he said; then he was gone.

For a moment, leaning back in her seat, eyes closed, Edith forgot that the Cocoa King was dead in his own locked room; forgot that the shadow of the hangman's rope swayed close above her own head; forgot the world, and remembered only her lover's kiss.

Then swept back the remembrance of those chill, small hours when she had knelt by the open window of her splendid, hateful house, watching the dawn come up above the jagged London roofs, hating herself and hating life, and hearing again and again

those lines that are the *Ora pro nobis* of all hopelessly parted lovers—

Oh that 'twere possible
After long grief and pain
To find the arms of my true love
'Round me once again!

It had been possible.

III



THERE was no moon. Through a cloudy windless night, and a still sea, the *Azuria* champed her way to Queenstown.

Out in the Channel it was cold for May. The officer on the bridge buttoned up his coat and swung his arms. He wished the voyage was over, and himself back in Southampton. His Southampton girl, when he thought it out, was prettier than the New York one, and as for the trip itself, you do not need to be a girl-loving young sailor to know that all the charming Americans are outward bound in May.

There had been some hope when the London passengers joined the boat, but it turned out after all that there were hardly any women, and only one was good-looking—a tall fair woman in a white picture hat. She was married, the stewardess said—Mrs. Godfrey Campbell—wife of the Cocoa King.

The young officer reflected that the nice ones always were married; that at least was one consolation for having the income of an office-boy. However, as it seemed the Cocoa King himself was not on board, there might haply be chance of amusement for a deserving young . . .

What was that?

The sailor's eye and ear, trained to keep watch even when the brain to which they belonged was busy on its own affairs, sounded an alarm. Something heavy had splashed into the water on the starboard side of the ship. Something white gleamed, fell, disappeared.

The officer's hand sprang to the engine-room telegraph, and hovered over it. It fell as the expected cry "Man overboard!" rang out, and almost instantly the great ship quivered to the jar of a sudden slackening.

People rushed out of their cabins as ants rush out of their nests when a stick is thrust in. Feet scampered about the decks—the aimless feet of startled passengers, the disciplined feet of a boat's crew rushing at the

double to its station, in answer to a sharp signal whistle.

"Where? What is it? Did you see? Jumped over and sank at once—somebody pushed him—man sprang after to save him—no, it was a child, it hasn't a chance. It wasn't either, it was a woman— Where? What do you see? I can't see a thing—might as well have stayed in my cabin!"

Question and exclamation beat about the decks like spray.

The officer on the bridge leaned over, watching. It was Harcourt's boat that had gone; the second officer. He wondered why it was that second officers always had all the luck. Even in Clarke Russell's books, it was always the second that got left alone on the wreck with the charming heiress and fed her with "claret and white biscuits." And now the second of the *Azuria* had got off in a rescue boat, with the possibility of saving some important—

The captain came up on the bridge to look about. The young officer flew to get him a pair of glasses.

"Did you hear who it was, sir?" he asked.

"They say it was Mrs. Godfrey Campbell," answered the captain, peering into the black blanket of the Channel night. "Did you see her on deck?"

"No, sir."

"Mr. Harcourt says he did. She was walking about on the starboard side, near one of the boats, not long before they sang out. By the way who was it gave the alarm?"

"I don't know, sir. Might have been the tall man in an ulster who was out about the same time."

"Know who he was?"

"No, sir."

"They're a long time with the launch," the captain complained.

He was not inhumane by nature, but companies are hard on commanders who do not keep to time-tables, no matter what the cause of delay may be—and in any case, an accident or a suicide is the kind of advertisement that no smart steamer likes.

"They're coming back now, sir."

The captain leaned over the rail and shouted through his megaphone. A faint, far-off reply came through the dark. It sounded like "No."

"Not got her—or him," commented the captain. "Well, they've been long enough to get any one who wasn't at the bottom.

I wish to God passengers wouldn't behave like fools. There was that German Jew cut his throat in cabin 'Twenty-five' last trip but one, and ruined all the fittings, besides making the cabin unsalable for the return trip. And as for steerage passengers, they'd fix you up a funeral every trip if they could—with a confounded clergyman in the first saloon only too eager to read the service at eight bells and make a fuss for the New York papers to cackle over."

"Yes, sir," agreed the young officer. "They're here now."

The captain went down to the boat deck. The launch came slowly up out of the black below, into the electric light. There was no one in her but the second officer, and launch-driver, and crew. The officer held something white and draggled in his hand.

"This seems to be the lady's hat, sir," he said, handing the sodden mass to the captain. "We saw it floating in the dark, being so light. We did all we could, but never got a sight of her. She must have sunk at once."

"This is Mrs. Godfrey Campbell's hat?" asked the captain of the stewardess.

"Yes, sir, I think so."

"Tell the passengers I'm coming down directly to search the ship for the lady. Get her under way at once!" to the chief officer.

The *Azuria* was got under way, and went champing and foaming up Channel again. The captain, doctor and purser together went through all the passengers' quarters, hunting systematically for what they knew would not be there. Each one of them was sure that the unlucky lady had jumped, or fallen, overboard, but the form of search had to be gone through.

"That'll do," said the captain at last. "I'll write a report for the Marconi officer and mention the lady as missing."

And in another five minutes Edith Campbell, hidden under the cover of the launch on the port side, listened to the "tutt—tutt—tutt—tutt—" crackling forth from the masts above her head, that proclaimed to London and the world the wife of the Cocoa King was no more.



VERY late that night, near to dawn, the electric light was turned on in Slade's deck cabin, with all the curtains carefully drawn.

It shone on a woman, alone in the cabin,

looking at herself in the glass. She was perhaps a little like Edith Campbell—not so tall by an inch or two, but the likeness would never have been noticed unless the two women could have been placed side by side. And that, the woman reflected, was not likely to happen.

The woman had reddish hair, very thick and wavy and curly—beautiful hair, beautifully dressed, but not at all like Edith's flat gold coils.

"It's one of Hyacinthe's very best," she said to herself, smoothing a lock. "Must be; there is no one like Hyacinthe."

She had eyebrows like her hair, reddish brown. You could not be sure whether they were touched up or not; lots of quite nice women, nowadays, do touch up. She wore a small, smart *pince-nez* on a gold chain, hooked over her ear. It made her look rather impertinent, but seemed to go in some mysterious way, with the unruly red-brown hair. There was a hat in her hand, a small neat traveling hat of chestnut silk, matching the dark chestnut-colored tailor-made she wore. It was a very good tailor-made indeed, and only the expert eye could have told that it had been bought to measure, not made to measure.

Edith Campbell had come on board in a rather gorgeous going-away sort of dress, more American than English in taste, a silky dull blue cloth touched with gold, and worn with a large white picture hat. She had worn her usual high-heeled French shoes, too. This woman had neat but flat-heeled boots.

"They alter my carriage," she said, twisting and turning before the glass. "Good, on the whole. But with this——"

She put on the hat and tied a silk motor veil over it, hiding three-quarters of her face.

"Now that," she said, "is much better than the blue glasses and black veil that some people— Yes, he was perfectly right. It isn't me at all. But, thank goodness, I still look nice."

She sat down on the lounge and waited. They could not be many hours away from Queenstown now, and she had to be ready to slip out as soon as the Queenstown crowd came on, and mingle with it, unseen. Things had gone well; she knew she would succeed.

"I hope poor Ben isn't cold, sleeping out there in his chair," she thought. The image in the glass looked at her with softened eyes.

She raised her left hand to adjust the red-brown curls once more, and something, as she did so, flashed bright in the electric glow.

"Oh!" said Godfrey Campbell's widow to herself, and tore the half-hoop of diamonds, and the plain gold band, from her finger. Regardless of risk, she opened the port, gaged the distance across the deck, and flung the rings cleverly out to sea.

"But I do hope he isn't cold or — un-happy," she said again, as she shut the port.

The image in the glass stared at her till she put her hand to the switch of the electric light, and snapped the cabin into darkness.



THE stewardess was expecting Miss Phelps at Queenstown. She had her cabin ready for her; the luggage had come on, new, neat trunks marked with a plain "M. P." She told Miss Phelps about the disaster of the previous night; the ship was talking of nothing else. Miss Phelps was politely interested.

"Perhaps you knew her, miss," suggested the stewardess; she could see with half an eye that the new passenger was "quality," in spite of the plainness of her appointments, and the absence of a maid.

"I never met her," said Mary Phelps. "I think I will go and lie down now; it may be rough outside."

It was rough, and continued so. Most women kept to their berths, among them Mary Phelps. Edith Campbell had been a splendid sailor and a daring yachtswoman; but this woman, who was like and not like her, did not care, for some reasons or other, to face the open decks during the five days' trip. She lay in her luxurious berth, with its satin quilt and convenient little nets and shelves, reading sometimes, sleeping sometimes, giving little trouble, and speaking hardly at all. The stewardess "wished to goodness" all her ladies were like this one.

Outside, the winds of all the world blew, and the Atlantic waves spat foam upon the wide decks of the *Azuria*. The wire rigging hummed; the feet of tramping passengers, proof against breezy weather, went ceaselessly up and down.

Sometimes, from her high-placed cabin, Mary Phelps could hear the crackling and ticking of the Marconi room, on the deck immediately above, as she had heard it when she lay hidden in the launch, waiting for Slade to come and let her out. "Tut-

tut, tut-tut-tut-tut, tutt-tut-tut-tutt," it sounded, talking on and on. What was it saying? Things about the Derby, the Stock Exchange, fashionable marriages and movements—or things about dead men found lying alone in locked dressing-rooms? Surely it was time now.

But day after day went by, and the Marconi bulletin, brought her every morning with her breakfast, contained no news about the Cocoa King. And the miles reeled by and New York came nearer.

On the last day she slipped quietly out of her cabin, to get a word with Slade. They had agreed not to meet during the voyage, except once before leaving the ship.

"One casual conversation amounts to nothing," Slade had said. "Everybody talks to everybody on board ship—but it's best not to appear to be traveling together."

She dressed herself when the stewardess had left the cabin, put on an inconspicuous dark coat, wrapped her head in the cap and motor veil that nine women out of ten were wearing, and went out. The deck was breezy, the sea fierce blue and white; bursting waves cast showers over the windward rails. All the passengers who were not sick had settled themselves on the leeward side, except one.

Slade was waiting for her; he came to her down the long white deck to her sheltered corner, dodging the bursts of spray, and laughing when he was caught. He had grown red and brown with the voyage. Edith saw that, and saw the flash of white teeth and the swing of the wide lean shoulders, as he sprang like a football player from point to point of vantage.

The breath of sea-winds was in the man, the feeling of wide plains, of limitless lands and forests and far places. One seemed, through him, as through a human window, to see things greater than himself.

English Edith, daughter of castle lawns and cathedral closes, felt this wordlessly; felt, too, the lodestone pull of things unlike. These new, wide countries, with their men who were men, their life that was earth-touching, earth-fed life—was it such a hardship, after all, that she should have been swept away from her smug, sheltered luxury, and her grocer husband, into the windy, real world?

Like most over-civilized people, Edith thought largely in quotations. She had no thought of her own now for the lover

coming toward her; she turned naturally to Tennyson and the "Princess," saying silently to herself:

And on her lover's arm she leant,
And round her waist she felt it fold,
And far across the hills they went
In that new world that is the old.
Across the hills and far away,
Beyond their utmost purple rim—

"Have you any false teeth?" was the greeting that put a sudden end to poetry.

"I beg your pardon for asking," added Slade, his hazel eyes laughing, "but nearly every one has nowadays, and if you've got any, and can slip out the plate before landing, it will make a difference in the outline of the face that's worth considering."

"I do happen to have just two—back ones," answered Edith meeting this rather unnerving candor with candor. "I will certainly take out the plate. But why is it necessary?"

Slade had got into her corner now; they were leaning up against a projection of the big deckhouse, sheltered from spray as long as they did not attempt to look for a seat. The *Azuria* tramped masterfully over the Atlantic swells; the free wind sang in the rigging. The patch of sunlight at their feet swung with every swing of the ship; it looked wonderfully whiter than sunlight on land. Wine with a tang of ice in it was the air; cold, strong, and splendid the sea. The girl—she was in truth scarcely more than a girl—felt her heart lift with the swing and scent of the waves. After all, after all, wasn't it adventure—life? She hardly listened for Slade's answer.

Slade seemed hardly disposed to give one; it was some time before he replied lightly:

"May as well be careful. That rig-out is worth the trouble I spent on it; no look of disguise, and yet the whole face changed."

He looked at her keenly.

"But—you know—there's been nothing in the bulletins," said Edith.

"Not a thing," agreed Slade. "Still, be on the lookout when you land, and don't let yourself be surprised in any way. One can't be quite sure of anything. I wanted to tell you that you had better go to the Astor Hotel after you're through the customs. I shall go to the Manhattan and leave my things, and make arrangements."

Edith, looking out at the blue and white waves, did not ask what the arrangements

were. Slade laughed a little, and pulled his mustache. There fell a moment's silence.

"What does the M stand for?" asked Slade suddenly; and Edith following the thought in his mind without any difficulty, replied:

"Mary. Edith Mary, or more correctly, Mary Edith."

"Oh—why?" There was eager interest in his tones.

"I was baptized Mary Edith, and my father called me Mary while he lived; but he died when I was a small child, and my mother, who wasn't a Catholic, thought the 'Edith' smarter, so I grew up with the name. There was a lot of dispute over it at the time I was baptized. I hardly know which name is mine really, because I was baptized by one and registered by another."

"Registered which?" asked Slade, and now there was no mistaking the interest of his tone.

"Registered as my father wanted—Mary."

"Then Mary is your name in strict law, no matter how many mothers called you otherwise."

"Oh, I dare say. I have a cousin Dorothy whose real name is Anne Sapphira, and an Augustus who signs himself Jim. No one minds these things much."

"Don't they?" said Slade, the gold-brown eyes very bright, and very near to the blue ones. "I do—because you see, that little fact removes the only rock in the way of our marriage. You can't legally marry under a false name, if both parties know it to be false, and I leave you to imagine what the effect of marrying as Edith Campbell would be, when the 'Yellow Press' gets hold of things. Mary Campbell is about the most ordinary name any one could wish to marry under. How would tomorrow suit you? We sha'n't pull out of New York till the next day's train; the boat doesn't catch tomorrow's."

Edith almost jumped.

"My husband isn't dead a week!" she objected. "Surely—"

"I just want to put one question to you," observed Slade, looking out at the sea. "Which is the greater unconventionality—marrying when your widowhood is a week old, or traveling across the world—"

"I didn't think—yes, of course I understand now, but have we got to go right on?"

"My very dear girl," said Slade, turning round and putting his hand kindly on hers, "there is extradition in America."

Edith grew a little white, but said nothing for a moment.

"Surely," she queried, when another shouting wave had gone by and a shower of spray had rattled like a shot on the deck-house roof, "that objection applies everywhere."

"The further, the less likely. America's simply asking for trouble."

Somehow, the white sunshine seemed to have grown thin and chill. The waves shouted no longer; they slammed with heavy, angry hands upon the shuddering plates of the ship. Edith felt sure that there was trouble brewing but she knew that to question her lover was drawing water from a deep well without windlass or rope.

"You'll have to trust me, you see—altogether," said Slade, and the hand on hers was more than friendly now.

Then and there Edith laid down the banner of her own will.

Here was no gross, feeble, elderly lover, tyrannizing and giving in, in the same breath, fond, abusive, authoritative, abjectly following her like a dog, turning on her with blows. Here was a man who knew his own mind and hers, and who was most worthy of her trust—her trust in all.

"Tomorrow, if you wish," said the woman who had taken Edith's place. Then, as it was full time to part, Mary Phelps went back to Edith's cabin.



WHITE monstrous towers in a blue sky; a cherry-colored sun, a glorious gray-gold figure flinging one triumphant arm to heaven.

"Ben, is *that* New York?" was the cry forced from English Edith's lips. "Why did no one ever tell me?"

Slade never pretended to misunderstand one's elliptical sayings; rather, he answered the thought behind the word.

"Because they didn't know," he said. "English people can't realize America till it gets up and hits them in the eye. Australians can. New York didn't hit me, much, the first time—because I'd guessed at it. But I can understand. See here, Edith, the sooner you forget Charles Dickens the better."

"Oh!" gasped Edith, as at a blasphemy.

"I mean it. I mean, the sooner the Eng-

lish, as a race, forget the Dickens attitude to everything foreign, the better it'll be for them. If a man brags, you take it as proof that he's got nothing to brag about. Why, think what they really had to brag about in the Chuzzlewit days—think of the magnificent future they could foresee, and we couldn't! Ah, here's the pilot boat. This looks like getting in. We'll have to separate till we meet at the Beauregard."

He gave her a few directions about customs, lingered a moment, and then, as the passengers began to swarm onto the windward side:

"Be on guard, there may be danger landing. It's possible they haven't made up their minds you're dead. I'll keep as near as I can. Good-by—Joan!"

It was his old pet name for her, never heard since the days of that magic voyage on the *Maloja*. Edith's mother had referred to the Cœur-de-Lion legend—it was really little more—and Slade, afterward, had told the girl that if it had been possible for any one to be descended from Joan of Arc, he would have said that was her ancestry, rather than the strain of the blustering Crusader.

"You have the very face of Joan, except for your long hair," he had said, "and you have her spirit, if occasion arose."

"But I am rather nervous," said Edith.

"So was Joan; she used to cry with fright. But she taught war to Dunois and La Hire, and she rode boldly in among the English. I think I can see you riding—"

The name, used here and now, was like a dash of cool water in her face. She braced herself. Whatever might be ahead, no nervousness of hers should bring about disaster.

Yes, it was possible that her death might only have been accepted provisionally. She had read detective stories. Did not Scotland Yard try to follow the mind of the murderer, and guess what he or she would do?

"I shall end by believing that I did it," thought Edith, as the wonderful towers slid near and nearer, honey-colored in a sunset of amber. She dragged her mind away from its fears.

"I will think of New York," she said.

But it was not of New York she thought; it was of a priest and a book and a ring, and a marriage that should have been—that was to be now—after all, after all!

X THE customs had released them, and they were going down the gangway, several hundred people, shouting, laughing, singing, waving American flags, greeted the travelers who were coming home. There was hand-clasping and kissing, down on the quay; every one seemed to have somebody to meet, or to be met by. Edith stood on deck, uncertain whether to push through in the crowd, or wait.

A delicate, fussy woman was looking everywhere for her nurse. She had a young baby in her arms, and another child at her skirts. She seemed on the point of crying.

Edith was seized with an idea.

"Let me take the baby," she said. "I'll carry it down the gangway, and you can come after with the little fellow."

"Oh, you are good—that wretched Rosalie! French servants are all alike!" babbled the excited woman. "And I don't see a soul— Oh, if you really would. Thank you!"

Edith took the child in her arms and glanced down at the landing-stage. Even as she looked, she saw a quiet, thin, dark man come out from somewhere or other and take his place where he could see every passenger as he or she came down. Something told her that the man was a detective. That might mean nothing; a great liner rarely came in without a fugitive or two on board. Again, it might mean—something.

She acted on instinct now, and with a perfect calm that surprised herself. In her own cabin she had slipped the plate from her mouth. She drew back her veil so as to show her face plainly, pressed the baby close to her bosom, and went slowly down the gangway.

There were the makings of an actress in Edith, as in many women who have never set a foot on the stage. In her face, as she went slowly down the gangway, holding the child to her breast, was the tender light of mother-love.

Perhaps it was not all acting. Perhaps the thought of another child, who should lie some day where this child of a stranger lay, lit that lamp in her face. At any rate, the detective from Spink's, instructed to look out for Mrs. Godfrey Campbell, not quite certainly dead, and furnished with a poor photograph which he had studied till the last minute, decided that there was no one on board resembling the picture. Mrs. Godfrey Campbell was a brilliant, some-

what hard-featured girl, well suited by her brilliant, hard diamond tiara; handsome, haughty, glittering.

The detective's eyes fell on the young woman with the baby; for a moment he almost thought— Why no. How absurd! That soft-faced girl cuddling her baby had no more resemblance to Mrs. Godfrey Campbell than she had to Queen Cleopatra.

"Must be the high-ball I had while I was waiting. Well, me for the water-wagon if one whisky is going to make me see things that aren't there," mused the detective.

The girl with the baby passed on. The detective took up his watch again. He did not see that the child was handed over to another woman, and that the girl took a taxi immediately, leaving her baggage to be sent for.

When Slade called at the Astor a little later, he went to the ladies' drawing-room as they arranged. There were a good many women in the room, islanded from one another in great seas of crimson carpet; but he could not see Edith. A girl sitting alone on one of the small furniture islands caught his attention; the figure was like Edith's, but not the head.

He looked again, walked hesitatingly up, and—

"Joan!" was what he said.

"I thought it safer," Edith answered.

The room hummed like a hive of bees; under cover of the universal talk, they could speak as if they were alone.

"It is splendid," he said. "I will acknowledge you beat my idea. Where did you see it?"

"Why, you goose!" said Edith. "Every woman's paper has it in the fashions, and quite a lot of women in this room have their hair bobbed too!"

"So they have," said Slade, looking about. "But it's not like yours."

It was not, in any case. No woman in the room had that short, shining mane of heavy gold, falling loose behind the ears, and surrounding the face as with a gilded picture-frame.

The change of appearance was startling; still more startling was the undeniably beautifying effect.

"You should have tried that before," said Slade, his eyes shouting aloud the approval that his lips did not speak.

Edith made no answer; she only told herself that all men—even the dearest—were

stupid. Who, unless driven by necessity, would cut short a head of gold hair that came six inches below the waist? She had her own private regrets that he would never see that glorious cloak of hers.

Slade came nearer and spoke, looking at her as a man looks at one woman alone, of the many.

"The priest is waiting," he said. "Will you get your hat and come?"



IT WAS a quiet little chapel in a side street, lit by amber windows that cast a honey-colored glow. Edith had hurried to slip on a dress of soft green crêpe and silver before she came down to the waiting automobile. In the strange light of the window, she looked like a mermaid sunk in a golden sea.

Slade waited for her while she glided to the confessional and knelt, half hidden under its curtain. In a few minutes she returned and joined him at the communion rails. Gold, all gold, was the light in the little church; gold the leaves and lilies carved about the altar; golden the lights that flickered above it, and the light in the deeps of Edith's dark-blue eyes, as she placed her hand in the hand of the man she loved, and was wedded to him after all.

IV



EDITH had never thought the world so wide.

When she went to Australia with her mother, she had thought herself a traveler of distinction henceforth—one who had reached the ends of the earth. But now she knew that the ends of the earth had still been far away.

Across America they flew, day after day of clanking train journey. They spanned the plains of Kansas, they ran through desert Arizona, they climbed the Rockies, with the help of two panting engines that turned round and looked at the carriages as the train wound about the loops of the track. They went down into California and sped through roses and orange bloom to San Francisco, took ship through the Golden Gate, and went on to Honolulu.

Edith here "fell in love" with the South Sea Islands, and wanted to stay, but Slade told her she had only to see his island, only to know New Guinea, wild, fierce, wonderful New Guinea, and she would never

care for the indolent South Seas again.

"Besides," he said, "you don't know its secret yet."

She did not; she had tried, womanlike, to wile it out of him, but Slade held fast to the lock of his Bluebeard chamber.

"Wait till you see," was all he would say.

And they went on, and on. Through nights of sea and stars, like that last night at Colombo—but oh, how much happier!—through days of blue sea sunshine; past islands, and islands, to great archipelagoes peopled by jolly natives with fierce faces and wild hair, to dreamy places where the brown folk sang and played and crowned themselves with flowers day in, day out, through the year of endless Summer and Spring. And more sea, and yet more. And at last came the tawny coasts of Australia, and a boat that would take them on the last stage of the long trek—New Guinea itself.

The thought that she was a fugitive, an innocent criminal flying with a rope about her neck, stayed by Edith at first; especially after the papers came that told of the inquest on Godfrey Campbell and the open verdict returned. But soon, with the passing of the miles and states and countries and wide seas, it became dim as the memories of the hateful life that lay behind her.

She had never been Campbell's wife, she told herself; she would think of all that as a bad dream. She had been engaged to Ben Slade, and nothing had ever come between them, and they were married, just as they had intended to be. That was all.



ONE morning, brown with long travel over sea, and glowing with that perfect health that is the twin of happiness, and happiness only, they were taking their daily tramp up and down the deck, and talking. They had talked across and more than half round the world, and were not yet run dry.

In the days on the *Maloja*—in the brief, danger-filled run to New York—there had never been time to "talk out." Always they had left one another with many things unsaid. Now there was all life ahead, yet they talked as if they might be separated tomorrow.

Was it the shadow—the shadow of the strangling cord round Edith's soft white neck? They had agreed to pass by that;

not to speak of it unless necessary; to forget as far as possible. Yet one thinks it was with them; that it dropped the "something bitter" in the cup of golden wine, from which no lover's cup is wholly free; nor indeed any cup of happiness or success in the wide world.

For they knew well that the open verdict was an open noose, and that if once Edith's flight were known, the noose would close in.

They spoke of unhappiness in love.

"It's the only thing people never quite get over," said Slade. "I mean the real, worst kind, when two people who care for each other in the best way can't marry—not one-sided affairs, they're not half so deep-rooted. When you miss the one who was really made for you, it breaks something that doesn't mend. You go on, but the thing stops broken; it's like traveling in a carriage with the springs smashed—one covers the road, but it bumps all the way."

"I wonder are you by any chance trying to describe what people call a broken heart?" laughed Edith, her eyes full of gaiety. It was so easy to laugh at those things—now. A broken heart seemed to her something just a little funny.

"Perhaps," said Slade. "Your heart isn't any more romantic than your liver or your pancreas, really. They just mean that something gives. And it takes the fun out of things when it dies."

"That's putting it mildly," said the woman who had left love behind her, in the starry nights of the Indian Ocean, and found it again, after all, amidst the roar and dust and hurry of Summer New York. "Did you ever read that wonderful fairy-tale of Hans Andersen's about the little Mermaid?"

"No. Sit down and tell it; we have all the time there is in the world."

"That's true," said happy Edith, with a laugh like a nesting wood-dove. "Well, this is the story, so far as I remember it:

"The little Mermaid lived at the bottom of the sea, and when she was grown up, they let her rise to the surface and look from far off at mortals and the way they lived. So she swam to a river near a palace and hid herself among the reeds, and peeped. And there she saw the king's son, and loved him.

"But she was only a little mermaid, and could not walk on the land, to which the

prince belonged. So she went home again to a witch under the sea and asked her for a charm. And the witch promised her a magic draft which would change her fish's tail into two beautiful legs and feet, but she warned her that the change would be forever, and that when she walked upon land, every step would be to her as if she trod upon knives. And she was to give her tongue as the price, and remain dumb.

"Oh, I forget some of the story, but I remember that she was dressed in beautiful silks, and danced at the prince's ball, and no one knew who she was, but they saw that she was lovely and they all cried out in wonder at the lightness and beauty of her dancing. Yet all the time, as she danced or walked, it was as if she trod upon sharp knives. And so she kept smiling through it all, and—I don't remember the rest.

"I know that she didn't marry the prince, and that on the night of his marriage with another, she faded away and passed into the foam of the sea. But that story used to come into my mind so often, after I had left you at Colombo—oh! and for long after. Because, you see, the world was paved with knives for me, that nobody else saw. Everything cut, and I had to keep on dancing and smiling, with my feet on the knives. Can you understand?"

"Yes. I can understand extremely well." Slade leaned back in his deck chair and lit a cigaret. "I've got some reason to."

"Did you feel like that?"

"Like a fairy princess under a spell? Well, not exactly. I felt—excuse the expression—as if the world had been—gutted."

"Oh, Ben, you are not poetical!"

"Should hope not. But I'm truthful. That was the way it was. Just the——"

"Inside."

"Yes, of course—the inside clean out of everything. Squash! Flat. And everything had to go on—squashed. The ginger and the fun and the getting up and feeling good of a fine morning, all about nothing, that was as dead as Queen Anne. But one ate one's meals, and went to the theater, and got up companies, and so on, and the world went 'round. Just one's own small store of goodies—like a man's little drinks of whisky that he keeps in a cupboard, and that make the world look fine for no reason, once in a way—well, the thing in your own self that corresponds was gone. As I said,

and will repeat, if you please, Mrs. Slade—guttured. That's the word.

"Now, other troubles don't do that. You know I had a pretty bad one when I was a youngster, but it was only losing the burden off my back, in the long run, but at the time I was hard hit. Yet that didn't spoil the world. And deaths—and losing all you've got and being thrown back to the beginning again—no, none of them take the——"

"Inside, please."

"As I said — the inside out of living. They hit the outside very badly for a while, but they don't break the spring."

"Mixed metaphor, isn't it?" said purist Edith, wrinkling her nice low forehead just a little.

"Yes. If I wrote, which God forbid——"

"Why?"

"Because writers are for the most part a class of men without twopence worth of—insides. If I did write, I'd mix my metaphors like a cook mixing cakes, and split my infinitives like firewood, just to show that those things don't really matter."

"Where is your island?" asked Edith, after a long gap, filled only with the sound of blue, warm sea and the pittering of flying-fish about the bows.

"At the end of everywhere. We go to Port Moresby, and change steamer for Samarai, and then we take my launch and go for two days and a half, and then——"

"We're there?"

"Not quite," said Slade, with his infrequent smile.

"I don't understand."

"Oh, you will. Did it ever occur to you to wonder where my money comes from?"

"Yes," said Edith, turning deeply pink, "it did. But there's a proverb about gift horses and mouths."

"Can't you take my money without feeling it a weight? Can't you, Joan?"

The name held deep associations. Edith's pink grew brighter.

"Yes," she answered him simply. "I can. I didn't mean that. When I was unhappy, I used to be something of a suffragette; wanted votes and independence, and couldn't stand being paid for by—by—but your money is another thing. It seems to be the only money that I've ever had a real right to. It seems to be mine, as much as the sky and the air—and you."

"Right! But you've wondered, quite nat-

urally, where it came from. Well, I want to have the pleasure of showing you. You shall know as soon as you get there."

"To your island?"

"To Nobody's Island," said Slade, and would tell no more.



GRAY as a knife was the sea at the end of all the world; knife-edged, too, with pale light, where a squall had just passed by. The high, dark island, humped with trees, lay crouched half round the bay. White ghosts of mist were whirling and spinning about its hanging woods. One gleam of pure green, clear as a violin note, rose from a high jut of grassland among the darks of the forest.

The launch's dingey touched the sand.

"Silence Bay," said Slade, and lifted Edith over the bow.

She stood uncertainly for a moment; they had had a terrible journey, and she was weary through and through with the wild tossing of the launch, all that long way from Samarai. Many times during the voyage she had been down on her knees in the little cabin, crucifix in hand, praying wildly for safety, for herself and her lover, most of all for her lover, who was fighting the fearful seas of East New Guinea in the engine-room and on the deck outside.

Long as she had known him, she had not known he was such a man. She was sure that no other in New Guinea, the country of brave hearts, would have brought the launch safely through in such weather. He had not even another white man to help him out; and the crew

A strange crew, even in this strange land. Five "boys;" a tea-colored Motuan from Port Moresby, with a combed-out head as big as a pillow; two tall bucks from Mekeo, their waists pulled cruelly in by the fashionable bark belt, their necks loaded down with beads; a hook-nosed sullen Kiwai; a tall fierce Mambare warrior. All brown or blackish; all naked, save for a cotton waist-cloth. They should by rights have spoken four distinct languages of their own, and a dozen or so of unconsidered tongues belonging to other tribes, besides the lingua franca of pidgin English. Not one of them spoke any language at all. They were each and every one deaf and dumb.

Edith had been too much dazed by the pitching and thrashing of the launch to do more than lie in her berth, and take scraps

from the odd meals somehow produced and brought in by the Jew-nosed Kiwai, during the two days from Samarai; besides, Slade was much too busy for conversation, especially when the worst weather began to get up. But now curiosity began to revive. She wanted to ask a dozen things at once. Why were the crew deaf-mutes? Was this Nobody's Island? Who had called the harbor "Silence Bay"?

Slade, leading the way to a narrow forest track at the far end of the beach, answered her. The crew were selected from various parts of New Guinea; deaf mutes weren't very uncommon, and he wanted a lot that couldn't tell what they didn't know.

This was Scratchley Island; not a pretty name, but the surveyors who had smeared beautiful Samarai with such a title as "Dinner Island" a generation or so past, weren't likely to show more mercy to an outlying place on which they had, probably, never landed. The bay had been called Silence Bay, he could not say when, or by whom, but it was a good name; better than Scratchley. The island belonged to him.

"But why do you call it 'Nobody's Island,' if it's really Scratchley?"

"I don't."

"You are mysterious," said Edith, picking her way among the layers of tinkling, sugary coral that made up the beach. "Oh, what a tree! Is it wild?"

"Very much so. They're all about here."

The shore at the place where they were passing was arched right over by the canopy of an immense dark forest tree, whose leaves drooped almost into the still tide. From the lowest branch to far invisible top, it was covered with thick handfuls of blossom, white and gold in color, and smelling deliciously. The loose flowers had fallen into the sea; along the whole length of the beach every little wave came edged with floating blossom. Their feet trod among drifts of scented snow.

"What are they like? A kind of orange-blossom, I think."

"They're exactly like miniature poached eggs, if you look," said Slade. "Don't tell me again I'm not a poet. A poet wouldn't have been much good in the engine-room of the *Black Snake* this trip."

"You are—splendid!" said Edith.

They stopped for a moment before leaving the beach for the forest. Outside the harbor, well named Silence Bay, they could

hear the sullen thrashing of the surf on the island shore. Here it was still, and the pictures of the trees in the water were like the green figurings and shadows in a polished moss agate.

"Home, girlie! Home, such as it is!" said Slade. Among the dark, silent boys they were as much alone as in utter solitude. "Let's face the truth—exile's exile—but we'll make the best of it. That's all that any one ever does—makes the best of it. If you could see into the heart of George the Fifth, I reckon you'd find him in his palace, with his crown and his Queen and those decent kids of his, and the whole British Empire at his feet, just making the best of it— This way. It isn't far."

It was not far, but it was inconceivably strange. The track in the forest wound past huge lava-flows of snaky roots, among red buttressed trunks that jutted out to enclose the oddest of triangular rooms, roofed by high leaves and boughs; through copses of pandanus, perched on sprawling stilts; through fretted and fluted arcades of sago palm.

The vegetation in this green-lit forest-world seemed alive, and actively wicked. Creepers with flat green hands held tight to columnar trunks. A pink-purple orchid hung like a basket of flowers from a main limb; something like a vegetable snake had caught it, and was stifling it in coil after coil of livid green.

A nameless thing with a brown spine and many loathsome clutching legs held tight to fifty feet of the column of a splendid red cedar, nipping it in as a hand might nip a plum. An octopus with leprous-gray, spotted arms, dangled eight feet down from an overarching limb. They were plants, but one had to look again to realize it.

Edith, with the scent of the forest—like heliotrope, and wet new hay, and odd aromas of a druggist's shop—in her nostrils, followed silently up the winding track, till it came out on the little emerald patch of grass that they had seen from the sea. There was a house there, a pretty, grayish cottage made of something like linoleum, or building felt, which Slade told her was sago-sheath, fastened down by bands of black palm to an inner wall of the hard, polished sago stalk. The door, of the same material, was closed by a simple padlock.

"Best of having an island of your own," said Slade, bending down to fit the key, "is

that there are no beastly natives to meddle when you're away."

They entered. The sunlight, now breaking through the clouds, showed a room with walls of some shining yellowish corduroyed material, each rib running the full height of the wall, and about three inches in width. The roof, rising above their heads like the nave of a church, was of a rich brown color, sago-leaf thatch supported on saplings peeled and weathered to soft yellow.

There were two rooms only, with a thatched veranda running round. The windows were mere shutters, made of the gray-brown sago sheath, which was as hard as flint and satiny to touch. Rafters and frame were smooth-barked trees, tea-brown.

Slade had furnished the place roughly with a few cane chairs and a table, and a deck-lounge. The next room had a bed, a shelf wash-stand, and a pile of boxes serving as a chest of drawers.

"Pretty poor, I reckon," he said, standing with Edith, born Cardillion, on the corduroyed black-palm floor, and looking about what he characterized contemptuously as a "shanty."

Edith, however, had the love of the over-civilized for primitive things, and the fancy of the slightly decadent for simplicity in art.

"Oh, but it's quite, quite good," she said earnestly. "The coloring is right, completely right. And the design—it's so simple, yet so complete."

"Mm!" commented the man of a younger civilization. "I think myself that bow-windows and brick, and stone, and Portland cement—and two bathrooms with hot and cold water—and electric light, and a kitchen that is a kitchen—mine's a shed at the back—would make it a long shot completer. However, I'm glad it pleases you."

"It does," said Edith, sitting down.

She threw off her hat and veil and looked critically about. Slade suddenly felt extremely married.

"I wonder if things are passably clean?" he thought with some uneasiness. "I wonder would she know dirt that was dirt from dirt that was just shutting up!"

The silent Kiwai came in with tinned food.

"You must help the dinner, my lady of the castle," said Slade, as the tray was banged down on the table.

"Where's the tablecloth?" said Edith,

much as one might say, "Where are your clothes?"

Slade blushed.

"My newspapers mostly got used up by the boys to make their cigarets with," he said feebly.

He was afraid of he knew not what—that she might think better of it, perhaps, and go back to the launch, insisting on being taken to Samarai and civilization.

But the unaccountable woman actually had tears in her eyes.

"You poor, poor thing!" she was saying in an accent of pure tragedy.

Slade did not understand, but thanked his stars.

They had lunch, and after lunch lay outside in long chairs, looking down on the emerald grass below the veranda, and the blue sea beyond and below the grass, and the arm of the island curved about Silence Bay, and away beyond everything a dark-blue islet floating like a gentian flower adrift.

And by and by the boys brought tea; whereat Slade, with Edith's demand for a tablecloth fresh in his mind, began hunting through his pockets. Even a newspaper would be better than those metal cups and saucers slammed down on a bare table. He had a newspaper; that was lucky. What was it he had wanted to remember about that paper? Probably nothing that mattered. Anyhow, it must be used.

He smoothed the paper and spread it.

"There. We'll have something better as soon as the mail can bring it," he said, beaming over his ingenious device, so that Edith had not the heart to tell him she thought it a shade worse than the bare boards.

She poured out. The wind was lessening, but it still blew hard. Outside the snug little house they could hear the breakers bursting on the sand at the foot of the cliff and the tops of the palm-trees thrashing one another. Within, there was shelter, calm, and the homely odor of the tea. Edith's dress made a faint rustling when she moved, and a small gecko lizard, in the rafters, remarked "Tut-tut!" at intervals. Other sounds, for a quarter of an hour or so, there were none.

Suddenly Edith leaned out over the table with such abruptness as to knock over her own cup and Slade's, and snatched at the newspaper tablecloth. Slade, in the same moment, tried to take it from her, but aban-

done the effort almost at once, conscious that it was too late; instead, he swore, excused himself, and then swore again.

"Ben, you forget yourself, don't you?" asked Edith, holding the paper with both hands and scanning it closely. Her face was the color of the sheet she held.

"I've just remembered myself," said Slade, suppressing with difficulty another exclamation. "I never meant to let you see that."

"But it happens I did," answered Edith, folding up the paper with a mechanical neatness that showed her thoughts were elsewhere. "Don't you suppose we'd better discuss it?"

"I suppose one must expect a woman to discuss. It's her strong suit," was the answer. "The female sex might be defined as the sex that talks things over. My dear little—Joan—what good can it do to any one to worry over the fact that a reward has been offered for information leading to the discovery of the causes of Godfrey Campbell's death?"

"A reward of one thousand pounds," said Edith.

She was sitting by the table now; her face was suddenly different from what it had been. The rope about her neck, so long forgotten, had given a nipping jerk—here, on her safe desert island; here, at the ends of the earth.

"I know who is offering it," she added. "Chris Campbell, Godfrey's first cousin. They were more like brothers—brought up together, and went to school together. Chris was—fond of—Godfrey. It seems odd. If he could have reformed him, he would. He would have done a good deal for him. And Barker, Sellars and Sellars are his solicitors. I never met him; he was at sea all that year, when— But it's certainly Chris."

"Well, if it was fifty Chrises it doesn't alter the situation," asserted Slade. He was horribly vexed with himself for having allowed her to see the paper.

"I wonder!" said Edith.

V



AFTER the storm, the morning was very fair, and as the launch ripped along through the channels and cays of the little island group, unimaginable wonders of color were displayed. Each fairy

islet, feathered with white-stemmed palms, had its circle of shallows bright as aquamarine; the wide under-water reefs, from which the *Black Snake* kept carefully away, were of an unnamable hue between turquoise and malachite; the sea itself, translucent milky blue, seemed to laugh beneath the light-blue tropic sky.

There were islands and islands in this scantily known, little-visited group of Scratchley, most of them mere toys, a bouquet of palm set on a tablet of white sand; a high rock garlanded with falling vines; but some of them good-sized areas of grass and forest, with blue hills in the background, and others large, low flats of sand and scanty trees.

The greenness of all the places was their chief wonder. One felt that one had never seen green before. The color, in the strong morning sun, struck you like a shout; such greens, such blues, such marryings of both, not brush and color, nor pen and ink, could paint.

And in the distance, the far distance, New Guinea's lone, enormous ranges, black-blue, sinister, guarded by rampart on rampart of foothills, ridge on ridge of precipice, torrent-riven gorge on gorge. No man won easily to those dragons of the mountain world; of the few who carried the defenses and assailed them close at hand, there were fewer still who returned.

Out on the launch, far from land, you could see the swing and trend of the country, and make of the map a living, visible thing. And Edith, knowing that this was but a limb of the strange beast that lies upon the atlas as New Guinea, and that in all this part and all the rest together, there were but a few hundreds of white people—that here, as far as her eye could reach over the fairy islands and high-looming coasts, there were perhaps not a single dozen—Edith felt almost frightened.

"I feel as if the country would get up and bite me," she laughed.

"I understand," said Slade, at the wheel, his short thick hair blown about by the wind, his eyes looking out as a Viking's eyes may have looked over some lonely bay in Vinland the unknown. "It's the terror of the elemental. It's like that splendid yarn of Wells, where a man gets on a time machine that takes him back or forward as he likes, and is a bit scared when he finds himself chucked into several thousand—or

million—years ago. This is the Stone Age you're in, and you feel lost in it, like a bad dream."

As if to point his words, a canoe came suddenly round the corner of an island and bore up on a course that crossed the bows of the launch. It was a large canoe, built up in several pieces; it had an oval mat sail, and was hung from stem to stern with strings of dangling snow-white shells as large as hens' eggs. The prow was carved to represent the head of some indescribable beast that was partly bird and partly serpent; the sides were ornamented with carving, scrolled and interlaced, and picked out in red, white and black.

A crowd of natives squatted on the deck; they were naked, save for fragments of dried leaves; their heads were decked with white and scarlet flowers, their faces painted in white and red stripes, with black circles round the eyes, exceedingly fierce in appearance. They carried bundles of barbed spears, and one or two had stone clubs with heads cut like a Crusader's mace.

Without a word or a sign they swept past, at a pace the launch could scarce have bettered; and when they were gone, round the lee of the next island, one would have sworn that they were the figment of a mere dream, so unreal did the silent, flying craft and her wild crew appear.

"Are those cannibals?" asked the woman of drawing-rooms, leaning over the rail to look.

"Cannibals? Would you mind handing me the rolled-up chart on the cabin table; I don't want to take my hands off the wheel to sign to the boys. Oh, yes, I suppose so. They looked like Jamieson Islanders. Most of the groups about us have a good deal of cannibalism left, though of course the Government has twisted their little tails for them, and they have to carry on more or less on the sly nowadays."

"And Nobody's Island?"

Slade laughed.

"Oh, the natives there are quite quiet," he assured her.

"Is it in sight?"

"Why, we're nearly there!"

"Nearly there? That can't be it!"

"Why not?" Slade was down in the engine-room now, doing something with wheels and levers, and a boy who seemed to know the course very well was steering the launch.

"That's only a sort of sandy reef. It isn't an island."

Edith was looking at a long stretch of barren sand on one side of the launch, an endless beach, bare of anything but boulders, of which it seemed to have plenty. They were white boulders, and very strangely shaped; some of them looked like ship's screws cast away, others like long curved beams, others like bits of giant fencing that had never been finished—all dead, glaring white in the glaring sun. Were they boulders? And if not, what on earth, or in the sea, were they?

"You'll find it down on the chart all right," said Slade, coming up and wiping his hands on a piece of waste. "Only—" with a chuckle—"you'll find it down wrong, like some other things in this country. The compilers of the original charts slipped up a bit here and there. And Nobody's Island—which hasn't any name—is down very much wrong indeed. Several miles, in fact. And being very low, you can't see it several miles off. So, if you happened to set out to look for it—not knowing that fact—it would be exceedingly hard to find."

"And is it yours?"

"It is not, and there's the milk of the coconut. You can't buy land at all under the present Government; you can only lease it for ninety-nine years or less. I bought Scratchley from a man who had had it for a good many years; he got it under a former Government. But nowadays they don't sell, they let, and they won't let islands any more, and if they do by any chance, they reserve two and a half chains all round the shore. Which wouldn't do for me. And applying for the island anyhow wouldn't do for me. Because people can come and help themselves if they know where things are, lease or no lease. And this is a bonanza, you take my word for it.

"If I hadn't had Nobody's Island to fall back upon, I might have been slower than I was about carrying you off à la Young Lochinvar. You're the only living soul—I don't count niggers; they haven't as much soul as you could heap up on a threepenny piece—you're the only soul I've told about it. Now come and see the secret!"



THEY might have been children—they were, for the hour; children with a tremendous secret, shared by no one else. Edith's blue eyes were as

bright as the sea, when she gave her hand to Slade and dropped into the dingey.

"Hurry, hurry!" she cried. "I want to see the secret so much that I can't wait one five minutes longer. What is this? A fossil forest?"

"Whales' bones," said Slade briefly, sculling away.

They landed. Edith tucked up her skirts and ran to the nearest pile of curved white beams. The glare of the sun, on the open unshaded beach, was fearful; it was as if the heat and light struck upward and downward together, dazing you with a double blow. Edith could scarcely see till she pulled a blue veil over her face.

"It's wonderful, but it's appallingly hot," she said, trying to get into the shade of a colossal backbone supported on a double arcade of ribs.

The whole island—it was nothing but one immense sand cay, with a Sahara of sand-hills in the middle—seemed to be covered by the giant bones. Vertebra like ships' propellers lay tumbled about in the sun. Jawbones ten feet in stretch seemed opened out for one more colossal swallow. There were queer things like turtle flippers seen through a magnifying-glass; loose teeth, a fistful each one, lay scattered like snow.

The arcades of ribs, the roofs of reticulated backbone, cast blue shadows on the sand; among them, some few hardy sand-creepers had managed to find a hold, hanging weird masses of red and green hair, and bunches of white fruit like mistletoe berries, about the stark curves of the mighty skeletons. Over all, the faint blue sky arched clear, and the sea-hawks planed and sailed.

"Is it a whales' graveyard, or what?" asked Edith, her voice a little lowered.

There was something curiously sobering about this lonely, last resting-place of the monarchs of the sea. So mighty they had been, so swift, so huge, so fierce, kings of the whole animal world, as the world is today; greater than any other creature that walks or flies or swims the deepest seas. Against the sperm whale of the tropic seas, no living thing but man has dared to raise the red flag of war; and too often man himself, backed by all the ingenuities of his hands and brain, has been the loser in the fight.

"I have never been quite sure what it is," said Slade. "I found it accidentally

once, trying to rectify the charts for this part of the sea. It's a place all ships keep away from; there are nasty currents, and it's simply fenced with reefs. I daresay no human being ever was within a mile of it but myself. And when I came along, I was very near going by like any one else who may have passed in the distance; but I took a fancy to land and have a look at the bones—of course, those can be seen a long way off. I wanted to know how they got there.

"I've never quite satisfied myself about that; it may have been near some submarine retreat of the whales, where they came to die, and their bodies were swept up here by the currents which are frightful, as I've told you. I've heard of such things. Or it may represent all that is left of some gigantic battle among a herd of whales, that killed a huge number at one time. Or again, a school of them may have been poisoned off by a volcanic eruption; there are some active volcanoes on the mainland within throwing distance. Anyway, there they are, and, I think, one of the strangest sights in the world."

"And is that the secret?" asked Edith, sitting down on a vertebra to rest. It made an excellent large stool.

She was not exactly disappointed, but still . . .

"No, only half of it," answered Slade. "Have you ever heard of ambergris?"

"A perfume, isn't it?"

"An ingredient in perfumes. It has rather a nasty, heavy smell of its own, but when it is mixed with other perfumes, it makes them smell like a bouquet of fresh flowers. It's simply indispensable to modern perfumery, and it is only found in the body of the sperm whale, or floating about in the sea, or perhaps cast on shore. It's really a sort of disease; old whalers say it kills the whale, and that when they see one in very poor condition, they always go for it, as there is a chance of finding ambergris. If you only get a few pounds—and sometimes you get hundred-weights—it's good profit. Ambergris sells at about three guineas an ounce."

"Why, that sounds fabulous!"

"It's true. They can't do without it, you see, and the supply's most uncertain. Well, I spent an afternoon wandering among these bones and trying to guess when they came here, and I made up my mind it couldn't have been more than a generation or so—bones bleach in no time at all on a

beach like this. And then I noticed they were all sperm whales, all the ambergris kind. And then the idea came into my head like a bullet: Mightn't there be ambergris among the skeletons? It's the sort of thing that keeps, and there was bound to be some among so many whales of the right sort.

"So I spent a day or two hunting, and I found not so much as you could make a pin's head of. I was just about going to give it up when I came upon a find of fifty-seven ounces—a hundred and seventy-one pounds all at one draw—in a lump you could hold in your hand. You can bet after that I went in for it systematically. And it isn't half explored yet, and in a year I've taken five thousand, one hundred and forty-one pounds' worth out of the place. Now do you see why I keep boys who can't talk, and run another island for a blind?"

"I do—I do! And you do something with Scratchley, too?"

"Yes; I didn't tell you that. I get red shell there off the reef, the kind the natives like to make into shell money; it has a good value in New Guinea, and I make a bit out of it. As to the ambergris, once in a while I just run the launch right down to an Australian port and sell it there. I daren't sell it in Papua. Risky? Not so bad; she's an A-1 boat. If anything ever gave the show away, she would, for she's by a long bit too good to buy out of red shell profits. However, I don't boast about her speed; indeed, I never run her within three knots of what she can do, about Port Moresby or Samarai, and it's in the speed that the money lies. Her fittings are plain enough."

"Aren't you afraid of some one seeing you here?" asked Edith.

"That's provided against. One of the first things I did was to get all my boys to work piling up a mass of bones that would hide the launch from sight, once she was through the passage in the reef—and I never run her in unless the horizon is clear. You can't sneak up on a person at sea. As for myself, when I'm working, I keep a lookout—not that I ever saw anything heave in sight, but one may as well be careful—and I always wear white, which is practically invisible against the sand at any distance. Oh, I have taken precautions enough."

"I never heard of anything so interesting!" said Edith. "Show me some at once. Is it very beautiful?"

Slade chuckled.

"I've a small bit in my pocket," he said, extracting a fragment of something about the size of a lump of sugar, and holding it out.

She touched it with a finger-tip.

"I think it's hideous—no more like amber than I am. It looks like a bit of bad cheese."

"Smell?"

"No, thanks. It doesn't look as if it smelled like a bunch of flowers."

"No more it does; it makes other things smell like that. But that dirty little scrap is worth three pounds; that smells good, doesn't it."

"Do you know," said Edith, sitting down on an arching rib, "I'm beginning to find out lots of things about the world I never knew before."

"Well, that's not strange, considering the way we've been going up and down in the world, and walking about in the same—like the devil," said Slade.

He had dropped into an easy attitude, leaning against a giant skull, and was smoking peacefully. About the two, alone on the sun-bleached cay, with the empty ring of the horizon set like a protecting moat between themselves and the outer world, there hung an atmosphere of the infinite leisure, the broad margins to life, that characterize the lands of far-away which, whatever they take—and they take much—undoubtedly give this among the gifts they offer in return.

Edith waited a minute before formulating her reply. She had something to say that was difficult of expression, and, after all, there was no hurry.

The wind sang in the bones of the giant whales; hot ripples creamed and melted on the hot sand. Out in the lagoon a flurry of silver fish like butterflies burst suddenly into air, and fell again further on with a patter like rain.

"What I meant to say," she got out at last, "is that work, and making money, and finding and growing and getting things, seem to be exciting. Interesting. I'd almost say—sport. And yet, among the people I've lived with, money-making has always been thought, well, the dust and ashes of life. I don't mean commerce or trade—the shop-keeping, shareholding kind, like my—"

She slipped away from that subject; it

skirted too near to one that she had learned, Slade would not brook.

"I mean getting things for yourself or making them, or growing them," she went on. "People really seem to love doing those things, and find it as exciting as—as hunting or shooting. Now when you showed me that bit of stuff, and told me what it was worth, I felt that getting money, and thinking of it, and counting it, weren't the mean, low things I had always fancied. I don't quite understand."

She threw back the bobbed gold hair and frowned a little. Edith did not like her mind to refuse its fences, and here was one before which it danced and backed hopelessly, unable to soar across.

"I'll explain, if I can," said Slade, smoking quietly, with slow enjoyment.

Had they not all the time there was? Could they not, if they liked, stay dreaming and talking here in the sea-wind, in the shade of the mighty skeletons, till sunset cooled the sand and set the white-winged gulls flying home to their nests among the crannies and hollows of the great sea-dead? Or if they liked, might they not send to the launch for food and blankets, and sleep out there under the crystal stars?

"It's just this," he said. "You are beginning to understand, through seeing the world, that your sense of proportion has been wrong. You've felt up to this that it was the idlers who really mattered; that only the idlers led clean and dignified lives. Money was dirty—the getting of it, you thought, was an ugly necessity, like the necessity of suffering ugly illnesses. Now you're seeing that money may be the cleanest thing on earth, and the getting of money much more dignified than the taking of it, as the kept classes do. Come, Edith, is it so very dignified after all—that land-agent's office, and the dirty, hungry creatures coming in with their scraped pounds and shillings, to feed your people?"

"But, Ben! The tenants on the estates of any of my people are awfully well looked after; in any case, my cousins always say their tenants are essentially better off than they are! Lots of them are farmers, quite decent people."

"Well, leaving the farmers for the moment, lots of them aren't," said Slade. "I don't want to go into any big economic questions; I only want to ask you, as a woman, and a sensible being, do you really like

the idea of poor people—dirty people who are dirty because they have not clothes enough, and hungry people who are hungry because they can't pay the rent if they fill their wretched stomachs—do you like the idea of those people keeping you? Of course, by you, I mean the landholding, non-producing classes. If they came to you with their saved-up shillings and pounds, and gave them into your hands, instead of an agent's, could you take the money?"

"No," said Edith thoughtfully.

"Yet you do—all of you. It's like meat. You keep some one else to do the nasty part, or you couldn't eat it. As to those farmers who are so well off—by the way, how many of them come to grief because they simply can't make enough to live on?—well, granting that they are as comfortable as people say, would you like to have a collecting plate sent round among them to keep you out of the workhouse? No? Yet the plate goes round, every quarter day and the people who live by it are thought more dignified than the people who make the money that goes into the plate.

"No, believe me, you're waking up when you begin to see that making your own bread and meat and potatoes and housing and clothing is the only way for a man to be a decent human being. That's why it's pleasant. That's why your own crust tastes good, and money you root out for yourself hasn't the curse of money on it at all. And there's the sermon preached by this little bit of ambergris. What about some lunch?"

They had it in the cabin of the launch, since the heat on the cay was growing unbearable. Edith asked questions about the ambergris: how it was found, how much was usually got in a day, who bought it down in Australia. She asked shrewd questions also about other things.

"What do the people in the townships think of your deaf-mute crew? Doesn't that 'give them to think' a bit too much?"

"No," said Slade, "because they have an idea that I am very sly and knowing, in employing deaf-mute boys; boys of that kind can't make trouble with the magistrates, if I underpay or overwork them, and they don't understand figures, and sign on for almost anything you choose to offer them. I thought the little recruiter, Sandy Jack, would have split laughing, when he met me signing on a new boy some months ago.

"You see, in Papua, a native goes to a

magistrate with you, and enters into an engagement to serve you for a certain time—mostly a year—and the magistrate takes care you don't ill-use him, or underfeed him, or cheat him of his pay; also takes care that he carries out his part of the bargain. Well, Sandy Jack, when he saw me bring in a native who could only understand the vaguest of signs, and did everything he was told without inquiry, Sandy Jack first choked, and then thumped me on the back till I nearly choked too. 'Oh,' he said, 'you know which side the bread's buttered on; you know enough to come in out of the rain.' And the magistrate looked a trifle suspicious and said, 'We'll have to consider this question of signing on natives who don't understand what they're doing; there's nothing in the existing laws against it, but I consider there ought to be.' Still, he made no difficulty; he couldn't very well. I needn't ask you whether you think his suspicions justified."

Edith looked round at the dark crew, gloomy of expression, like all deaf people, but fat and shiny of skin, and clearly as happy as natives in their condition could be.

"No," she said, "you needn't— Ben, you've got the one virtue that's above all other virtues in a woman's eyes— you're kind. If only he were kind, a woman could worship the biggest scoundrel that ever cheated the gal——"

It hurt Slade to see her break off and bite her lip. He knew what she was thinking. The shadow had stretched out its cold hand and touched her, here, even here on Nobody's Island. But he made no sign of having understood.

"Well, you know," he said, feeling slowly for his matches, which had gone astray, "most people wouldn't have to try awfully hard to be kind to you. I find it fairly easy, on the whole."

It was his way of putting things; deeds might be looked for from Slade, always, and with certainty, but of sweet words the woman who loved him might often go short. Edith, in one of those swift, silent comparisons made so often by the twice-married woman—and, if she is wise, concealed just as often—told herself that all men were wanting in something; Godfrey had been a brute of the brutes, but he could, and did, say charming things at times.

Nevertheless, she told herself—as usual, making a quotation carry the burden of

her thought for her—Godfrey was to Ben "As moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine." As for the social differences that had shaken mocking fingers at her—where were they? If there were any, they had lost their sting.

"Have you decided," said Slade suddenly, with the uncanny intuition of the person who shares board and bed with another—that intuition that has caused more divorces than the world will ever guess, when exercised over the shallownesses of life alone—"have you decided yet that a college education is not—always—indispensable? I was calculating you'd be about there along by now. Also that a man is not an unclean beast if he doesn't use the shibboleth, and call it 'Varsity.'"

There were the weaknesses of race in Edith, but also its strength. Her nature turned toward truth as the needle swings to the magnet.

"I was thinking something very like that," she said. "I was thinking that you were the best-bred man I had ever known."

"So glad!" said Slade, removing his hat with a sweep.

"Ben," said the girl, her fair eyebrows drawn down, her eyes looking out across the lagoon, "have you ever thought how little a perfect manner and courtesy really go for?"

"Somewhat. Not driven the subject to the root, as you seem to have done, by your looks."

"I have driven it to the root. You know, among my mother's people and mine, a perfect manner is the first and almost the last thing in life. And when you miss it in your hus—" the tabooed subject lifted its head, but was quickly pushed out of the way—"I mean, if you have to do with people who haven't got it, you put down all their faults to the want of the qualities represented by the perfect manner. You say, if they weren't outsiders, they would not have—those faults. And then you—oh, of course, I'm speaking of myself—I found that the other people, who were knights of chivalry to all appearance, and smoothed every crumple out of a woman's way, and treated her like a goddess—I found that that meant nothing, nothing. It was the stamp on a coin that might be bad or good, but anyhow the stamp was the same, so it was no guide to you.

"Some of the meanest things I've ever

known were done by men and women who were perfection in all the little things of life. And some of the cruellest things. And as for expecting any mercy, or help, or real chivalry, from those perfect knights, where a woman was concerned who wasn't—wasn't—plain——”

“You are not so very plain,” said Slade consolingly. “Give you a becoming veil, and the light behind you, and just the right clothes, and I'm sure lots of people would say you were quite nice—interesting even!”

Edith, secure in her beauty, as only the really beautiful woman is secure, laughed and struck him lightly.

“I wanted to say,” she went on, “that——”

“What you meant to say was that they all wanted payment to account rendered; and you thought you were going to get the goods for nothing—chivalry and sympathy, and all the rest.”

“Yes. About that. And when I saw you had the charming manner, in spite of the way you undoubtedly bark at times, I was almost afraid. I said to myself: ‘It's a stamp that may be on a bad coin. Will the coin ring true when I drop it on the counter? But it did. It rang true.’”

“I'm glad of that,” said Slade seriously. “I can't give you much, girlie. It's well the goods please you, such as they are.”

One of the pleasant long silences that befall happy people came in after that, and they lounged on the deck of the *Black Snake*, waiting for the tide to turn and help them through the passage of the lagoon, and thinking—not the “long, long thoughts,” of the lonely, but the brief, butterfly-winged musings of those who think in company.

Edith, for almost the first time, wondered what their future was going to be. How long would this day-dream among the far-out islands last? In her experience—and she had lived much, for all the fewness of her years—nothing lasted, good or bad.

“*Tout lasse, tout casse, tout passe,*” came the inevitable quotation.

She did not know what would happen to end it; but she knew something would. Something ended everything.

The more reason, then, to enjoy the present. In spite of that haunting shadow, in spite of the sense of exile which never, through all the beauty and the wonder of New Guinea, altogether left her, she was happy. She had never said that in her life

before. Perhaps she would never say it again. Well—it had been said. Again came the quotation—

“But come what may, I have been blest——”



“TIME to go,” said Slade, pulling himself out of his chair and dropping into the engine-room; the day was over.

Followed a period of strange isolation and stillness, a story with only two characters in it, that ran on and on and seldom contained an incident worthy of note. It seemed as if the clock had stopped; something that was ticking had ceased; something that struck the hours was gone. Through the red-carnation sunrises of the island—where they rose every morning at dawn, after the way of all simple-living folk—through the long, short days of reading, wandering, house-tending for Edith, care of the launch, fishing for red shell, visiting the whale island, for Slade—through walks upon beaches strewn with marvelous great shells, bathing in shoal water like melted emerald, night huntings full of laughter and adventure, after the turtle that came to lay their eggs upon the leeward shore; through all these and a myriad other small occupations, ran, for Edith, and it may have been for Slade also, the feeling of something stopped—something that was not going, but would assuredly go on again by and by.

And one morning the clock went.

They had made up their minds to shut the house for the day and spend their time exploring a series of caves that Slade had recently discovered on the far side of Scratchley Island. He was amusing himself and Edith by the manufacture of a large scale map, almost ridiculously detailed, and he wanted to put the caves in.

“Otherwise,” he said, “one needn't trouble to explore them. All caves are the same cave; they are mostly wet and dirty, too. Did you never wonder where the supply of nice dry caves, in boys' books and adventure books, came from?”

“I have,” said Edith. “I'm glad this isn't a boys' book island we are living on. I couldn't stand the learned person who knows what all the plants are, and gives biological lectures on the wild boar when it's just charging at the youngest hero.”

“Yes, but if it were you'd have all sorts of cultivated tropic plants growing wild—

just as if apricots and strawberries and asparagus were found springing up spontaneously on Hampstead Heath; and there would be a wreck, a lovely wreck that would have been loaded with pianolas and motor-plows and raspberry jam and prize pigs, and would cast them all up uninjured for you to play with, on the beach below your door. You'd really better decide for the boys' book island."

"Well, I will, since I perceive the wreck coming along already," said Edith, pointing out to sea. "At least, with a little judicious signaling on your part, there's no reason why she shouldn't be a wreck soon enough."

"Why, that's Page's schooner! He must be coming in here!"

"And not an egg left!" came the cry of the island housekeeper. "What shall we give him to eat?"

"Whisky," said Slade, running back up the track to get his glasses.

Save for the day in Samarai, when they changed from steamer to launch, Edith had as yet seen only the outlying parts of New Guinea, and had met no one at all. As soon as Hogg Perry's steamer *Mitiar* tied up alongside Samarai jetty, Slade had gone ashore, got his launch, loaded her with the necessary goods, collected his boys from the mission island where they had been spending his absence, and cleared away with his wife to Scratchley. Edith, by his advice, stayed in her cabin till the *Black Snake* was ready; and thus, all that she had seen of Samarai, second of Papua's two towns, was a bit of white sanded street, bordered by enormous old coco-palms, a few stores and government offices, frying in the sun, and a general flurry and hurry of trucks and cases along the little jetty.

Samarai residents came and went on the boat; she looked out at them from her deck cabin, and decided that they were a pale, strange people, not at all wild or wicked in appearance, as certain tales of New Guinea had led her to expect they might be; unfashionably dressed, of a certainty—it made her feel quite giddy to find herself suddenly thrown back into the modes that had been the latest thing from Paris in the year before her marriage to the Cocoa King—but, she thought, kindly, good-natured-looking folk. Every one was in white, men, women and children; every one was anxious to get on board the steamer, and hear the news,

and receive the three-weekly batches of letters and papers; every one was staring at the passengers from Sydney as if the ship had been a menagerie, and the occupants of her cabins the strange beasts thereof.

Now, to judge by the look of the crowded dingey putting off from the schooner, it seemed as if she were going to make the acquaintance of quite a fair section of Papua's white population, all at one blow. There were four people besides the crew—two men, a lad, and a boy; or at least, so Edith's eyes, which were excellent, informed her. But Slade, standing outside the house with the glass to his eyes, in his turn, informed her that the party consisted of Captain Page, Captain Page's son, Mr. Jennifer, and Mr. Jennifer's daughter.

"I don't see her," maintained Edith. "I wish she were there; I'd like to talk with a woman."

"You'll see her by and by," declared Slade.

And Edith, supposing that the girl meant to come ashore later, made the inevitable rush to the kitchen that follows the sighting of a sail, in island life. It was only a bark shed, but it held a decent cooking-stove, and Daga-Daga, one of the deaf-mute boys, was proving a tower of strength as a cook. Hasty pantomime explained to him what was wanted.

Daga-Daga, a crook-legged little fellow with a head of teased hair that seemed almost to overbalance his lean body, nodded acquiescence till it seemed as if he would dislocate his neck. Turtle soup, turtle steak, turtle egg omelet—since the hens had struck work—advertised the hunting of the previous night and furnished a sufficient menu.

The dingey took time getting ashore; the passengers were landed pickaback, one by one. Edith had five minutes to rush into her bedroom and fling on a lace muslin wrapper—the full dress of the islands—before the guests appeared; and when the party entered the room, she was standing at the door to receive them, even as she had stood at the head of the Cocoa King's marble and malachite staircase, to receive guests of a very different social caliber, barely six months before.

She remembered, as one does remember incongruous things at wrong times, how anxious she had been lest the new footman should not pronounce the foreign titles comprehensibly; she remembered how, at the

last moment, when she was taking her place, and the first guests were coming up the stairs, she had been horrified by the discovery that one of the diamond ornaments on her bodice had been sewn in upside down.

It all came back with a rush, even to the smell of the forced roses and hyacinths banked on the marble balustrade, and the playing of the Black Montenegrin Band in the drawing-room, mingling itself oddly with anxieties concerning Daga-Daga and the turtle steak, and doubts about the completely deceptive qualities of sheets that pretended to be company table-cloths.

The humorous side of these contrasted cares struck her so forcibly that she almost laughed aloud. She did smile; the guests, entering under the sago-thatch roof, thought that Ben Slade's mysterious wife, whom he had brought back from his trip "home," seemed an exceedingly pleasant young lady, with no nonsense about her.

New Guinea was rather inclined to suspect nonsense in arrivals from the far-off place to which all Australasian ambition turns. It considered that it did not like "airs" and had a mission to suppress unwarranted pretensions. Unconsciously, it felt that—like the fly in amber of which it had never heard—there was some mystery about "how the devil they got there," in every case of superior birth and upbringing; and that mysteries, in New Guinea, were apt to be discreditable.



THEY entered. Captain Page, a well-bred looking man with a clean-shaven face and mild blue eyes, who was known as the hardest driver of men between Woodlark and Cape York; Mr. Jennifer, the Resident Magistrate, a person six feet, five inches high, and twenty-one stone weight, with a hand like a ham and a face like a tea-tray; a lad of sixteen years or so, slightly Jewish-looking, with eyes of a pale unpleasant blue, like and unlike the captain's, and last, a boy. . . .

Was it?

It was about five-feet-two in height; it wore the Papuan bush costume of khaki shirt, knickers and puttees; it had a .45 revolver weighing down its absurdly small waist; its head was covered with a wide cowboy hat, which it did not take off.

No—yes. Edith was too busy being introduced and shaking hands—which she perceived was the custom of the country—

to be certain of anything, until she heard her husband's hearty greeting:

"Well, Murua, my lassie! Glad to see you! How many cannibals have you killed since we met?"

The being with the khaki legs took off its hat and looked round.

"I have not killed any, thank you, Mr. Slade," it replied rather precisely. "I think you're laboring under a mistake. I never killed any Papuan natives."

"Hallo, Jennifer! Here's your daughter says she never potted a nigger!" remonstrated Slade, addressing the big magistrate. "Where does she expect to go to?"

Murua Jennifer shook back her hair before she replied, and Edith fairly caught her breath. The child—girl, whichever she was—had the most extraordinary crown of locks that ever graced a white woman's head. It needed all the tanned fairness of her skin, all the gleam of dead white that showed below her collar, all the clear gray of the European eye and the sharp modeling of a very high-nosed face, to convince the beholder of that head that it owed nothing to native blood.

Murua's hair was caught loosely at the back, and yet stood out a foot round her small sharp face; it was red-gold-brown, and so intensely and intricately frizzy and curly that Edith wondered how she could ever comb it. At the back, it stood out in a knob like a coconut.

"Please don't speak incorrectly, Mr. Slade," said the voice, a very small and clear one. "The Mambare native whom I was unfortunately obliged to plug in the liver did not succumb to the effects immediately; he died a week after. And the Ferguson Islander did not die at all; he recovered, though with the loss of part of one leg. Didn't he, Pups?"

The enormous magistrate let out a laugh that shook the sago roof.

"Correct," he said. "Mrs. Slade, you mustn't let my little girl astonish you too much. She's been brought up as a son to me, since Fortune didn't give me any boys. She's my little patrol officer, and has been in as many rows as her dad, haven't you, Murua?"

Murua was not listening to him; her attention was focussed on Edith's lace dress. Her gray eyes fairly lighted as they looked.

"Oh, Mrs. Slade!" she said in a tone of

intense feeling, the bookishness of her language suddenly breaking down, "if you would only let me see your trousseau by and by, I'd love you for ever and ever!"

At the memory of that trousseau—at the thought of the "models" hurriedly purchased by Slade in London, and the sets of unmarked underclothing sent with them; of the clothes more deliberately acquired in New York—of the green-and-silver dress worn beneath the flooding amber light of the chapel windows—Edith turned first pale and then very pink. Little Murua looked at her with a curious precociousness of womanly sympathy, and spoke of something else.

Edith answered, and then, turning to speak to the magistrate, saw the eyes of the captain's son fixed on her with quite another expression from Murua's. The girl had inferred some fragment of romance. The lad had guessed otherwise. He fixed her with a look of hard curiosity, in which were mingled the relentless simplicity of childhood and the ruthless edge of an intellect that was very far from being infantile. Edith experienced a momentary qualm and then laughed at herself.

"Absurd," she thought. "But that boy's too horridly clever for his age."

Lunch was served, and whisky placed on the table with it. The two male guests drank largely and steadily, especially Captain Page, but it seemed to have no effect upon either. Jennifer explained the reason of their call. He was going to Rossel Island to quell an outbreak of the natives.

"They said they were going to make a Christmas of the traders," he explained, "SG—"

"Make a Christmas?" asked Edith, with puzzled brow.

Every one else began to laugh.

"A Christmas, in pigeon-English, means a feast," explained Jennifer, his tray-like face, which seemed to magnify all emotions in the ratio of its own size, showing a certain amused condescension. "Your boys will 'make a Christmas' of the rest of this lunch."

"But they don't talk English, do they, in Rossel?"

"Oh, quite a lot of them do; it's spread locally. Anyhow, Mbhn had English enough to send the message about the 'Christmas.' And of course the Government can't permit that sort of thing."

"What did you say his name was?" asked Edith amazedly.

"Mbhn."

"I give it up. It's like the things that deaf-and-dumb people say when they try to talk."

"Well, it's quite a typical sort of Rossel name. Their lingo is scarcely human. You've hit it when you say it sounds like the mumblings of a deaf-mute. Anyhow, you ought to know, with that outfit of mutes you've got here."

"I wish every native in New Guinea was a deaf-mute," spoke Captain Page. "They spend their time running to the magistrates to complain every time you look crooked at them. Regular lawyers, every one. I suppose you get those boys for half nothing, Slade? They couldn't savvy a contract."

"Half nothing, considering the work I get out of them," was Slade's reply.

Edith admired it, and threw him a quick glance. Something caused her to look at young Page almost in the same moment. He was watching her.

"If I were Ben, I should certainly say, 'Damn that boy,'" thought Edith. Aloud she only remarked, "Mr. Page—I suppose it is Mr. not Master?—let me send you a little more green fat."

For the first time the lad spoke, and Edith almost started. His voice was extraordinarily musical.

"No more, thank you," was all he said, but it seemed as if a bar had been played on some exquisite instrument, followed by a silence that was like dark after light.

Edith considered him with interest. She did not care for the lad, but there was certainly something very unusual about him. His face puzzled her; it had a vague resemblance to somebody or something that she could not for the moment place.

"He is like his father," she thought, "and yet—I must ask Ben about him. If he were ten years older, I should say that it was a face with a history in it; but that's absurd."

They went out by and by to the veranda above the sea, while the boys cleared the table. Jennifer spread his huge khaki form on two lounges placed side by side and smoked peacefully.

Captain Page, who had enough whisky to make any ordinary man violently drunk, produced a curious little miniature mandolin from his pocket and began playing

fairlylike, dainty music upon it, with remarkable skill of execution.

"But how charming!" exclaimed Edith, as the captain, staring into vacancy, began the "Shadow Song" from "Dinorah." "What do you call it? I never saw one before."

Page looked at her with glassy eyes, and Edith saw that he could not trust himself to speak clearly. He had reached his chair with considerable deliberation. Nevertheless, he went on playing the "Shadow Song."

"It's called a mandolinetta," said the son, and suddenly began to sing the music.

All middle-aged people know the "Shadow Song," once the last ambition of the brilliant amateur, and the popular singer's pride. Most young people have not heard it. Edith thought she had, but could not be certain. However, she recognized it for something out of Early Victorian opera, and was struck with amazement at the singing of it. Up, up, up went the lad's pure voice, scaling to wonderful heights, dancing lightly as the shadows themselves over sharp staccato intervals, singing, singing.

And before one had time to draw breath, he nodded to his father and dropped into that ancient and amazing acrobatic feat, Ganz's "Sing, Sweet Bird." The elaborately vulgar imitation of a canary seemed delicate and graceful as he sang it; he put his own interpretation on it, and turned it into poetry.

The last notes sprang up like rockets, burst in a rocket-shower, and ceased.

Edith woke from something like a hypnotic trance. Where had the lad learned to sing like that? How could a pert, disagreeable-looking youth with a childish character capture the heart out of one's body, and the soul out of one's breast, by running up and down the notes of a few old-fashioned songs? Edith did not even like that class of music; German classical songs, strictly dependent on tone and expression, were her favorites. But this youth, it seemed, could make you like his likes—for the moment.

"He is a wonder, and a little beast," she thought unkindly, even while she said all the appropriate things with a society woman's easy grace.

Murua of the khaki legs and redundant hair clapped her hands patronizingly, as one who has heard it all before; Jennifer beat on the floor and called out for "An-

other—a good English sort of song like 'Home, Sweet Home.'"

The boy, however, had served his own whim sufficiently, and did not consider any one else's. He put his hands in his pockets, strolled to the edge of the veranda, and, stepping down, called patronizingly to Murua—

"You can come for a walk if you like."

"I'll get my net and box, if you will kindly wait," replied the young girl with precise politeness.

Young Page nodded a wordless reply and stood waiting and humming to himself while Murua went into the bedroom to fetch a mysterious bundle that she had brought up from the boat. He had the amazing, almost appalling air of complete self-possession and unself-consciousness that characterizes alike the very stupid and very clever of mankind. You felt that for you, or your affairs, or your opinion of himself, he did not care an appoggiatura. And this—as usually happens—made you hate him, yet at the same time try to impress yourself upon him. And you did not make the impression, and despised yourself for trying. And Harold Page, sixteen years and a half, on one count, a hundred and a half on another, saw it, and yawned at it, and was not even amused.

Edith guessed at a good deal of this, while the boy was standing with unusual and unboyish immobility, waiting for Murua.


"You are handsome, too," she thought, "very handsome—not like your father, but—there'll be women's hearts sore for you five years hence, you heartless little nightingale, and you won't deserve it, and you won't care. Still, I should like to be there to see."

Harold Page, New Guinea's only nightingale, where are the women's hearts that were to have ached for you? Where are the crowds that should have gathered to applaud your genius, the flowers that should have been thrown at your small, effeminate feet? Where are you?

Edith was no prophetess. She merely told herself that the singing boy was certainly a genius and that she hoped the country hadn't any more like him, and then, aloud, advised him and Murua not to stay too long butterfly-hunting, as it looked like rain.

Their answers were characteristic. Young Page merely bowed, looking the other way.

Murua said, "Thank you, Mrs. Slade, you are most kind to think of the matter." And the two disappeared, Murua's .45 swinging in its holster at her side, her case over her shoulder, her butterfly net in her hand.

 "WELL, Mrs. Slade," began Jennifer in his huge booming voice, "now that the children are gone, I've a kindness to ask of ye."

Mr. Jennifer was not Irish, but at times, when he wished to be effective, he put on a slight touch of brogue. He felt—and correctly—that there was a flaw in Nature's make-up of his character. Irish he undoubtedly ought to have been; he could almost think, at times, that he felt the wrongs of Erin, and shed tears over them. And his liking for Irish whisky had the marks of true patriotism.

"Oh, certainly!" was Edith's polite reply.

"May I leave me little girl with ye for a few weeks? I'm going on to Jamieson Island at once; I couldn't leave her at the station, for never a one is there but meself and the police, and she was wild to go on the patrol; but indeed I'm not too anxious to take her this time. There's likely to be some shooting done, and while I don't say me sonny-girl Murua's never smelled powder, yet, ye see, any time she did it was accidental and unexpected; I don't set out to take her right into the midst of trouble.

"If you would be so very good as to take her, Mrs. Slade—" he was seriously in earnest now, and the bogus Irish accent was dropped—"I'd be inexpressibly obliged. I heard my friend Slade had got married on his trip home, and I was sure his taste would be good. Americans—we know what Americans are! They've captured the whole world, these charming creatures."

"I shall be delighted to have your little girl. But I'm not American," said Edith, and then wished she had kept silence.

"My wife and I met near Colombo," explained Slade quietly. "She is English."

"English? What's her name?" asked Captain Page, whom every one had forgotten.

He seemed to have recovered his power of speech. As for his hands, they had never been steadier. He was rolling himself a cigaret very neatly, as he spoke.

There was a moment's electric silence. Edith felt her mouth and throat go dry. Cardillion! Campbell! How could she own

to either? And how could she lie? And even if she could, how could any one lie on the spur of the moment like that?

It seemed that some one could, and would. Slade looked up from the close contemplation of a neat set of nails and said, his long eyes looking sleepily indifferent:

"Greene—Greene with an 'e.' Gloucestershire family. Know any of them?"

"No," said Page with the slightest accent of mortification; it was his weakness to be familiar with the English "county set," at least in imagination. Edith's appearance and manner told him that the Greenes "with an e" must be somebodies—somebodies whom only a nobody wouldn't know about. Page changed the conversation.

Later, when the dingey had gone off to the schooner again, Murua waiting on the shore to say good-by, Edith asked her husband:

"How did you ever tell that lie? I don't see how it could have been avoided—but it stuck in my throat, and I couldn't do it. I—I thought you wouldn't have told a lie to save your life."

"Neither I would," said Slade, looking straight at her. "But for yours I'd tell them by the baker's dozen. And tell them well. One ought to do things well—if one does them."

There was to be a time when Edith remembered the trivial saying. Not for his own life. . . .



MURUA'S step came up the track to the sago cottage.

"There's the little girl of the legs," observed Edith. "I really like the child; I shall be glad to have her."

"She's hardly a child; she must be quite sixteen."

"So much? Why do they call her Murua?"

"It's her name. She was born on the gold-fields in Murua Island."

"It's well she wasn't born here," said Edith, and like the Vicar of Wakefield's wife, "fell into a great fit of laughter." "Her father was quite capable, I've no doubt, of calling her Scratchley."

"Or Goodenough — or Basilisk. She selected her birthplace with some judgment, seeing the sort of parent she had. Her mother died before she was born, according to Murua. Murua's a bit of a character. Brought up almost solely on books; hardly

ever with a woman; made a little patrol officer of by her father, as innocent of the world as the butterflies she chases—what do you think she does with them?"

"Puts them in a box, I suppose? Sells them?"

"By no means. She trims her hats and clothes with them and, as the trimming doesn't wear extremely well, Murua is kept busy replenishing the supply. I've seen her at a dance in Port Moresby with all that hair of hers loose—you should see it—and a wreath of the big metallic blue butterflies, the ones as large as a swallow, right round her head. It looked fine.

"But I remember one occasion that wasn't so fine, when she had some kind of a pretty dead beetle in rows fastening up her skirts, and its mate, which smells like bad oil touched with rotten eggs, saw the show, and came along by the dozen, to investigate. Murua had to fly, and burn the dress afterward, I believe. She's a queer little case, but all right—very much all right."

"She's got her streak of tragedy, like all the rest of us," said Edith. "Murua has just missed being a beautiful woman."

"Murua? Oh, rats!"

"You're accustomed to her. She has glorious hair, feet that ought to be on a Dresden china shepherdess, and a figure—did you look at her figure?"

"Well, she's mostly in boy's clothes, you know."

"A woman can see through clothes. If a man could, half of you'd be bachelors. Murua is made like a little Greek goddess."

"And yet——"

"And yet—she has not exactly pretty features; too high and sharp. But you may take my word for it, Ben, that little girl will have a lover of her own as soon as any pink-and-pretty little Gladys from a finishing school. Beauty's not necessary to happiness; and she'll never know she just missed the biggest thing a woman can have. The next biggest is a loving heart, and Murua has that."

"Sounds like it," observed Slade.

Murua's voice was now audible on the track below, quarreling violently with some one.

"You are a treacherous individual!" she cried in a shrill high voice. "You are defying God, and causing great inconvenience."

Somebody shrieked once, twice. The

musical character of the cry, even though uttered in anguish, was unmistakable. Slade leaped from his chair. Edith heard him in another moment, down on the track.

"Murua! Murua! I'm ashamed of you. Put down that blacksnake—you're not behaving like a lady."

"Let me give him just one more, Mr. Slade, please," came the precise voice of Murua.

"Certainly not. Is it dead?"

"It is, Mr. Slade. I killed it myself by fracturing the lesser vertebræ with a stick."

"Then be satisfied with that, and don't try to fracture Page's vertebræ, too. He may not be very valuable, but we don't want to lose him just now. Besides, his skin would be no good to you."

"No, Mr. Slade, none at all, and in any case I had no intention of doing him serious mischief. I only thought he deserved correction."

"The little vixen lost her temper and lamed into me with her filthy snake," came Page's musical tones. "Of course I would have given her two black eyes if she'd been a boy."

"I wonder," said Slade, "what's it all about."

"That untrustworthy wight," said Murua, "told his father and mine—I mean Captain Page and Mr. Alfred Jennifer, for we have not the same father—that you and Mrs. Slade had pressed him also to stay, and that he had put his things ready in the boat in case you did. And as he selected a moment when I was out of hearing, he carried through the fell design. For when I saw him behind me on the track——"

"Saw behind you?" put in Page with a sudden, scornful trill.

"Mr. Slade, you will remember that the track turns about on its own axis. I saw him behind me on the track, and asked for an explanation, and when he told me, I remonstrated——"

"With the blacksnake," interpolated Slade.

"But it was no use. And now you can decide if he is to reap the reward of treachery or not. The boat's out of sight."

"Why," said Slade kindly, "since the youngster's so anxious to come and stop with us for a while let him, by all means. He'll be company for you."

"If he is going to be company for me, I

hope I'll succeed in improving him," said Murua.

They all came into the house together, Page much the least embarrassed of the party. He set down his canvas bag of clothes on the floor, dusted his white coat from the earth stains left by Murua's weapon of correction, and shook hands with Edith as if he had only just arrived.

"Would you like me to sing you something?" he asked.

All his life, Harold Page's voice had been his buckler and spear against an incensed or an unfriendly world; he "went nap" on it, as a pretty little girl gambles on the power of her good looks.

Edith did like, but she wanted to give the young gentleman a lesson.

"Presently, thank you," she said, and like Eve moved away "on hospitable thoughts intent."

"If you're going to the kitchen, I'll follow you; it's impossible that you should know what I like for dinner," he observed.

"Mrs. Slade," came Murua's high voice, "I would not mind him if I were you; he is quite an example of the sinful lusts of the flesh and will want two different puddings every day, if you encourage him."

Slade's shoulders shook.

"Leave him alone, Murua," he said.

"Come, let's have a talk about closer settlement and the alterations in the tariff."

"Certainly, if I may go and skin my snake first, and then wash my hands. You know, Mr. Slade, such things will not keep; although of course I could try if it would."

"No, don't try, for Heaven's sake," answered Slade hastily. "This isn't a big house."

"I did assure Harold that he was inconveniencing you by his untruthfulness, and defying——"

"Yes, I heard you, but you needn't worry, Murua. We can put you in this room, and young Page out on the veranda, and we'll be as right as rain."

"I'm very glad, Mr. Slade, because I like you, and I am not at all astonished that Mrs. Slade left a lordly mansion to come to your cottage, like the lady who married Claude Melnotte. I admire Mrs. Slade, too; she is like Joan of Arc and Amelia in 'Vanity Fair,' and they are both favorite heroines of mine."

From the kitchen outside came a sudden burst of melody.

"*Batti, batti, O bel Masetto!*" and then, in tones almost equally musical:

"But if he does know how to make puffed loaves, with jam inside—not without the jam—it would be so wonderfully kind of you to tell him to make a lot. They don't need eggs, only you must have the fat quite boiling hot, or they aren't really good. And they want sifted sugar——"

"—*La tua povera Zerlina.*"

VI



AFTER all, the visit of the "untrustworthy wight" lasted but a day or two. Captain Page's schooner called on its way back from Rossel, and Harold took a sudden fancy to return with his father to Samarai.

"There is to be a man-of-war visit," he explained, "and I'd like to get some music from the officers; some of them are sure to have a song or two they can spare. As you've been so very kind, Mrs. Slade, perhaps you'd let me come again for a few days another time. I like this island; father's isn't a patch on it."

"Has your father an island, too?" asked Edith.

"Every one who respects himself about the East End has," explained Slade. "If you haven't an island, or part of one, with a coconut plantation on it, you're not 'in it,' in East New Guinea; if you've no boat, you're a mere beggar; if you've a cutter you're respectable, if you've a schooner with auxiliary, or a big launch like mine, you're aristocracy. I've known an extremely nice family carry on with merely a canoe for a year or two; it was certainly very daring, but, as they had a new young rubber plantation, people forgave them, and when they blossomed out into a launch, every one was ready to be really cordial.

"Father's island isn't much, but he has a bonzer boat," remarked the lad. "Father's 'it' round this end of the country. So is Mr. Slade, of course; he has a good launch, if his island isn't planted. Does that shell of yours pay well?"

"Very fairly," said Slade. "There's the dingey coming for you."

It seemed to Edith that the boy was about to ask something else, but if he was, he changed his mind and went off with a civil remark or two. Captain Page did not come ashore; his mandolinetta could be

heard tinkling out over the water as the schooner lay at anchor.

"Ah, dad's evidently drunk," observed the young singer coolly, as he climbed into the dingey. "He never plays the mandolinetta unless he is. I tried getting drunk once, to see if it would improve my singing, but I flatted like a flounder, so I went to the missionary at Samarai and asked him to witness my signing the pledge. That kind of thing might grow on you."

"Drink does," said Slade, shaking hands.

"Ah, I meant the flatting," explained Page. "Good-by for a bit."

With the departure of Page and his songs, the clock stopped again. A period of marvelous weather set in. Edith, unfamiliar with the tropics save in that hurried run across the Pacific, and inclined to think of equatorial countries as mere dens of fevers, hurricanes, and wild beasts, was amazed at the wonder and beauty of the time that followed.

The sea round Scratchley Island, running through myriad channels among the countless islets and cays, and flowing, in the open, over coral reefs of varying depths, took on, in the calm weather, such colors as she had never dreamed of—light, glowing, living blue, veined by the ice-like streaks of currents and marbled, where the reefs ran under, with curves and borderings of amethyst, purple, and vivid celadon green.

There was a strange, warm blueness in the air, as if one saw the world through a piece of palely colored sapphire. There was a perfume, a mingling of many soft-breathed scents from one knew not what or where. There was a sparkle, a spangled look; far-off white beaches were like a cut of light through the canvas of a painting, and high leaf-points were splashed with silver.

One drank the air; one felt the exquisite, soft winds pass into brain and marrow, and renew the core of life; one saw the green hills rush up with a shout into heaven, and heard the mountains clap their hands.

"I have never understood the Psalms till now," said Edith, standing one glorious noon in the doorway of the sago cottage beside her husband and looking down across the bay, across the sea to the distant, incredibly lovely group of the D'Entrecasteaux Islands. "Can't you hear those peaks of Normandy and Goodenough sending up a song?"

"I can't," said Slade. "I can see they look fine in this weather. You've got to do the poetry for both of us, Edith. Or if you really need the artistic temperament about the place, ask Harold Page to stop a bit longer."

"Page—oh, he makes me feel ashamed of the word art. There's something crawly about him, for all his talent. Ben, how did he come by such a marvelous voice, and by very fair training in a small way, too? His music all dates from the Franco-Prussian war, but he has been taught to sing."

"Second question first," said Slade. "He was taught by an old man who had once been a singer of sorts, and who died in Port Moresby Hospital of d. t.'s, two years ago. First question. Did you ever have an idea of who his mother was?"

"Dead, isn't she?"

"Not much. She's Amarilla."

"Amarilla—the singer?"

"There aren't two Amarillas in the world, that I know of. Page is her son, and exceedingly like."

"Why—yes! I was always puzzling to know who he reminded me of. Amarilla, of course! But, Ben, she's too young."

"No fear; she didn't go on the stage as young as they say. Amarilla's turned thirty-eight. Don't you know that all singers and actresses go on the stage at exactly sixteen, and that they have all been brought up in convents, every woman Jill of them—the Sacred Heart Order for choice? It used to be clergymen's daughters who crowded the music-hall stage, but we've moved with the times."

Edith laughed politely; she was too pretty a woman to have a strong sense of humor.

"But about Amarilla?" she said. "I always thought Amarilla was rather a stodgy British matron—off the stage. I've seen so many photographs of her and her husband and the children, labeled 'Madame Amarilla—Mrs. Sydney Stothard—and her Family,' and they say Queen Victoria made quite a pet of her. Why, I've met her at a Marlborough House garden-party, and she was absolutely pious!"

"Just so," said Slade, "and that is precisely why young Page inhabits the ends of the earth with his father, has no musical education, and doesn't know who he is."

"But how is that?"

"Almost no one does. I've told you in confidence. It came to my knowledge

privately. Page told me—once—when he was very low down with the results of an attack of hard drinking that I'd pulled him through. Of course, he has hated me for knowing ever since, but no one has ever heard it from me—except the other half of me." The long brown eyes gave a look that had more than words in it. "Anyhow, he didn't tell me much. None of the shocking details."

"What a pity," said Edith unconsciously. Slade yelled.

"You are vulgar, Ben—like all men. I only wanted to know what the poor boy's chance in life is."

"Oh, they were never married. I don't even know how his father got hold of him—except Amarilla forced him on him. It would be like her. They say she was a milliner's buyer before she came out; went to Australia to take goods to the big Sydney houses. Page was in the passenger trade once and a handsome fellow— Well, he's dashed fond of the boy; it's an ill wind blows nobody good."

"Let us sit down and do nothing at all for a long, long time," said Edith, "and then let us get those ebony-wood spears and go spearing fish along the reef. And then let us do nothing again."

"Right," said Slade.



IN THE cabin of Page's schooner, father and son were holding a consultation.

"It's of no use. Of no sort of—use, I tell you, Harold," the father was saying. "If I'm to give you money, I've got to know why. And I don't say I'll give it then."

"Oh, yes, you will," said Harold, his rather fat elbows on the table, his face supported in his hands. "But I don't see why you want to know about all my private affairs. And I don't see why you can't give one a fistful of cash now and again. You are as close—"

"You know how much this boat makes in the course of a year. Where do you suppose I can get money to throw away?"

"That's just it, dad. You can get money to throw away, only I must have three pounds first."

"What for?"

"Oh, dad, I've told you. To send a cable to England by the radio of that man-of-war."

"You won't send any cable I don't know about. And why can't you do like other people, and post it down to Cairns?"

Page grinned.

"I don't trust post-offices—in an affair like this. The radio officer of a man-of-war won't leak, if he takes the message for me. 'Tisn't his interest to."

"Oh—and it would be the interest of any one here, if they found out. And you're going to radio to England about something that you've got hold of in the last week or two, and it's going to bring you in money. And the Slades are the only people you've been seeing, so it's about Slade's island, or himself."

The captain, his light eyes hard and unwinking as a cat's, watched his son. Harold faced him with what he himself felt to be an absolutely immovable countenance. But it could not have been as immovable as he thought, for the man's eyes suddenly lightened, and he drew back with a laugh.

"Not hot, but warm, eh?" he said. "Not Slade himself, but—ah—Mrs. Slade. Now we have it. You'd better have told, you see. What is there about your poor old dad—" his voice suddenly became a maudlin tone of complaint—"that you shouldn't trust him? A nice dutiful son you are!"

"A nice dutiful father you are, I don't think. Where's my musical education? Where's my three years in Paris? I'll be too old before you know where you are. My voice is just going to break, and you can't go monkeying about with a tenor the way you can with a boy's soprano. You needn't say you couldn't have done something. It would have paid you to sell your old hooker and send me. One would think you didn't want—"

Captain Page bit the end of his cigaret nervously. He knew very well indeed why Amarilla's son, with Amarilla's voice and face, had not gone on the stage to shame the domestic, respectable wife of the British banker, the singer who had been Queen Victoria's favorite and friend. He knew where the small quarterly income came from that kept himself in drink, and enabled him to lose money at cards, irrespective of the earnings of the boat. He was not at all anxious to see Harold in command of money; with growing apprehension he had witnessed the lad's increasing money-love and keenness on the scent of cash, due to the Jewish blood on his mother's side.

Whatever bit of blackmail Harold might be contemplating with respect to the Slades—and the father knew the son to be capable of anything of the kind—Captain Page was not inclined to back him up. For a few ten-pound notes, it was not worth while getting into trouble in New Guinea and incurring the anger of his pay-mistress, which he certainly would do if Harold got away to civilized countries and made himself talked about.

The lad had his own shrewdness. He sensed determined opposition, and broke through it with the sacrifice of part of the secret to which he clung as a crab to a bit of carrion.

"Dad—it's a thousand pounds," he said. "A thousand—good Lord!"

Page was shaken. Almost anything might be done for a thousand pounds. One might even defy—her. A thousand pounds!

Page, like the greater part of mankind, had never in his life owned a solid thousand-cash. His schooner, most valuable of his possessions, had been bought second-hand, in instalments that were not yet quite paid up. His pay in the merchant service had never accumulated in the bank to three figures. His trading profits had barely kept him level with the stores. Like most men who have never handled big money, he felt certain that, with a thousand pounds in his possession, he could never be poor again.

That it would not be in his possession, but in his son's, and that Harold had no intention in the world of parting with a penny, did not occur to him. He had not realized that the precocious boy was in most essential things a man.

"Tell me all about it," he ordered.

"I won't," said Harold.

"Then I'll hammer you."

"You can hammer me to pieces. You'll hear nothing."

Captain Page rarely struck his son, because, as he said, "the lad was too like a girl." Once or twice, in the course of years, he had corrected him in a fatherly manner. Harold's craven bewailings, his terror at the merest threat of a repetition of punishment, marked all the more clearly now his defiance of the captain's menace. Page felt that his last bolt was shot.

"Are you dead sure it's a good thing?" he said, his mind running on evaded wives, and jealous husbands anxious to get them

back. "I did think she looked a cut above New Guinea," was his thought.

"Dead, dead, and double dead," was Harold's reply.

"There, then," said Page, sliding three sovereigns out of his pocket across the table. "We'll be in this afternoon, and you can send what you like. It would buy us a new boat."

"It would, but it won't," said Harold to himself, making a face.

The captain had dropped lazily on a locker, shutting his eyes, with the sleepy request—

"Wake me when we get near Samarai."

Harold looked at the three-quarters empty whisky bottle, and, humming very softly and very wonderfully, slipped into his father's cabin.

Page had an eye for a pretty woman, and another eye for the British aristocracy, to which—quite incorrectly—he stated he belonged. On the cabin bulkhead were pinned up numerous portraits of beauties from the *Sketch*, the *Sphere*, and other illustrated weeklies. A fairly new one represented "The celebrated society belle, Mrs. Godfrey Campbell—née Cardillion of Cardillion—wife of the Cocoa King." Edith was depicted in full court dress, with feathers and lappets, low bodice, and diamond necklace. She looked handsome and hard.

Harold, still whistling softly and beautifully, with little trills and grace notes, took down the picture, produced a small piece of paper cut to a certain shape, and laid it over the beautiful haughty head.

From the "mask" in the center of the paper, only the face now poked out. He took a pencil, hastily sketched in round the face a drooping mass of bobbed hair, cut à la Joan of Arc, and stood staring at the result. Beyond all doubting, yes. Yes, it was Mrs. Slade.

Harold, whistling gently—it was "My Pretty Jane" now—took a newspaper cutting out of his pocket and read it. It offered one thousand pounds reward for information leading to the discovery of the causes of Mr. Godfrey Campbell's death.

Now the portrait of Edith was circled with a black line, and the words underneath the title ran—

Mrs. Godfrey Campbell was drowned on the 18th inst. off the S. S. *Aruria* in the British Channel.

Young Page looked at the picture and the cutting, and remarked to himself—

"Greene with an 'e.'" Well, we aren't all so green as we look—" replaced the picture, and put the cutting in his pocket. He was humming a hymn as he came away:


Brightest and best of the Sons of the morning!
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid!
Star of the East, the horizon adorning—

He broke off.

"Now I wonder has that black pig of a cook remembered the pineapple fritters? One ought to be smelling them by now."

Angels adore Him in slumber reclining—

"Yes, there is something about my middle notes that has the true cathedral tone. What a pity I never got the chance of being an angel choir-boy, like the fellows in the pictures; I'm getting too old now."

 ON SCRATCHLEY ISLAND, the tide of time had paused once more. It hung at the full, running neither in nor out, each day like the last, and each day perfect. Slade's boys were working at the far end of the grass terrace, nibbling their way into the wall of forest with tomahawks and clearing knives; the distant chop of the tools, and smoke of the burning off, came very pleasantly up to the sago cottage in the mornings.

The former owner of the island, sowing for others to reap, as many folks do in New Guinea, had cut out a long bar of forest, and made a garden where paw-paws, rich with fruit and scented flowers, melons, oranges and limes and rough great citrons, globes of gold; custard apples like balls of cream, pineapples, huge granadillas, shining green; amethystine passion-fruit, the purple balloons of egg-plant, the trailing vines of yam and sweet potatoes, the scarlet cherries of coffee, and dull rose of cocoa-pods, filled pots and avenues of growth with the color of sun-made food.

There was nothing that Edith liked better than to go out and "pick the dinner," accompanied by little Murua, who was a perfect encyclopedia of gardening knowledge. One of the boys would be sent out to fish on the reef, and another to shoot; they would return loaded with sea-creatures like living jewels, almost too lovely to eat, and with young wallaby or wild pig, a string of pigeon, a couple of bush turkeys.

After midday dinner, everybody slept through the hot hours between one and

three; later, one bathed in the swimming-pool behind the house, where the stream had been caged in a concrete bed, dressed freshly, and came to tea. There were always exciting incidents to exchange at this pleasant hour—Slade had speared a devil-fish while he was overseeing the red-shell fishing down on the reef; Edith had met a six-foot iguana, and it had spit at her and run away; Murua was hunting for a bird-of-paradise dancing-ground, and confident of finding it tomorrow.

The maize planted six weeks ago was forming its cobs already; they would have to go out after tea and look at it. And after tea, Edith, excited and interested, would tuck up her muslin dress and hurry out to the plot she had sown herself—it could not be six weeks since she had dropped the large bright grains out of her hand along the line into the holes prepared for them by the boys! Yet there were the silken tassels of the cob, wonderfully beautiful, pink or yellow, bright as spun glass, pushing their way out of the green sheath, and there was the cob forming inside, hard to her eager touch.

All that plot of green spears, from the three maize cobs she had stripped as she went along, and most of the spears bearing twofold! And in another fortnight, if there was rain enough, the cobs would be ready for food. There would be sacks of them. All from that half hour and those three cobs.

The miracle of harvest, seen unseeingly all her life, now struck her as if she had been the only human being who ever planted corn and saw the increase.

"Ben, it's so interesting," was her constant cry. "That, and the other things. Why don't people do it more?"

"Quite a few hundred million do it quite a lot as it is," was Slade's reply. He pinched a cob. "Of course, in temperate latitudes you don't grow hard grain in ninety days, and food cobs in seventy. But you sow a grain, and it comes up, some time, a hundredfold, as the Bible says."

"Oh, Mr. Slade, the Bible's quite wrong; two maize cobs have more than fifty grains each," objected Murua.

"Why, Murua, I thought you were one of the pious people!"

"I am pious, Mr. Slade, but of course one doesn't expect literary people to understand practical things of that kind."

"Whether or no," said Slade, stroking a tassel that was like nothing in the world so

much as six inches of Edith's gold fine hair, "the whole world still grows harvest—except an unimportant few who only eat it. It's the business of the earth. Empires rise and fall by the amount of grain-growing country they have, or can get, or take. You touch the live wire, Edith, when you set those grains in, and take the increase. You're in communication with the powerhouse. To do what the whole earth is doing—is there anything better or sweeter?"

His arm around her waist pointed the saying with an added significance.

"I feel that's true," said Edith, lifting up her gold hair from the gold hair of the maize, "but—it's so totally unlike what everybody says. All the world, as I knew it, wanted to be original; it was the last and worst horror to do things like other people. Unconventional, unusual, a law to herself or himself—that was how one praised. Commonplace, just like other people, why, I wouldn't have let a beggar child call me that."

"The common things are the sweet things, all the same," said Slade.

His hat was off; he had straightened himself up and was looking down the seven-foot avenues of the growing corn. His lean, efficient figure, strong with the strength that only real work can give—the strength that is as steel beside the iron of sport and game-made muscle—showed against the sky, looking as much a part of the landscape as the rocks or the trees. Slade always seemed to grow out of whatever outdoor scene he inhabited. It came to Edith, remembering that night on the plunging launch, remembering the day of terror in London, remembering many days since that she had married a man. And he was kind. He had entertained the objectionable Page with a real pleasantness and goodness that she could only feign; he had not been put out at the delay of his work, or the inconvenience of harboring an uninvited and unwanted guest.

He was never rough with his boys; he treated them like human creatures, while he exacted their obedience, and he often thought of little things that might be done for their welfare, which, to her shame, never entered her head. He was as courteous to little Murua as if she had been a countess—probably more so—said Edith to herself with a private laugh at his socialism. Wherein she was wrong, for Slade had met

countesses in his casual wanderings, also one or two of higher rank, and had treated them no better, and no worse, than he treated his wife.

"He is too good to be true," thought Edith. But he was true, and she knew it.

They sauntered home by and by, when the sun was going down, and it seemed to Edith that sunsets, and forest pathways smelling of hothouses and spice, and cool breaths coming up from a near, invisible sea, and birds that fluted major thirds in tall trees, were good things to possess. And she did possess them. That extraordinary flame of orange-gold that lit the leaves low down, just before the sun's disk sank like a stone, and the world grew dark, belonged to her. She did not know how, but it was so. And she felt it was a thing she liked to have. So—

On her lover's arm she leant,
And round her waist she felt it fold.

And they came, in the twilight, home again. Murua had gone to "sugar" moths on the great mango tree; they were alone.

They sat on the doorstep, in their favorite place, watching Jupiter rise like a lamp of crystal over the black shoulder of the hill above the sea. The locusts began their evening oratorio in the forest; the *kita-kita* called; the sea talked on the beach.

For a long time the married lovers did not speak. Then Slade felt for a match and, striking it to light his pipe, said—

"Girlie, this is good, and I'm happy."

"Don't say it," said Edith, her hand across his lips. "It's unlucky. There are dark gods who listen to us when we say things like that; don't let us wake them."

Slade, with a husband's privilege, said—"Rats!"



NEXT day, having been to Nobody's Island, he came back with news of a disaster. Two of his boys had gone out swimming beyond the reef—a thing they were never allowed to do—and had been taken by sharks before any one could get to them.

"It was rather awful," Slade said. "There was a patch of blood on the water the size of a dinner-table, where the poor brutes went down."

"Don't," shuddered Edith. "Oh, I was right after all, and if it weren't wicked, I'd be almost—glad."

"Glad, what about?"

"You said such an unlucky sort of thing yesterday. I'm not superstitious—really, Ben—but I hate to hear any one say he or she's happy. Because, somehow or other, misfortune always does seem to follow."

"Oh, that's only the crest of the wave and the trough—the systole and diastole of life," was Slade's opinion. "When things have gone on well for a long time, a change is about due. It's like saying you have a presentiment it will rain, because it's been fine for six weeks."

"Well, anyhow, if misfortune was to come, I'm glad it wasn't you it hit."

"I'm not glad of anything in connection with the business. It's a vile nuisance. It means that I'm short-handed, and may have to go off and get more boys. I know of a place where I've marked down two deaf-mutes, fine strong fellows. I'll have to be off after them tomorrow."

"You'll take me, too?"

"Not much. I'll run you down to Samarai first. It's Jamieson Island, and they're rude little beggars up that way—sling rocks down on you from the top of mountains, and peg spears."

"Are they cannibals?"

"Don't you ever worry whether a Papuan is a cannibal or not. It doesn't matter. Some of the best natives in the country are man-eaters, and some of the most treacherous and dangerous aren't. Your best cooky boy is one, when he's at home. I always do prefer one for a cook; they're better."

"You make one's blood run cold. I sha'n't have one easy moment till you return."

"You'll have plenty of easy moments. Every man in New Guinea, except the clerks in the stores, goes off among the cannibals now and again, and comes back again all right. It's only because you don't know the country. Murua'll tell you."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Slade, the cannibals are often quite superior people and they very seldom eat any one with whom they have not a serious quarrel," averred Murua. "Pups and I have seen lots and lots of them, and we are quite good friends with them."

"Except when you plug them through the liver," remarked Edith.

Slade shrieked.

"You are quite human, when you descend to slang, Edith," he said. "But about my trip—you mustn't think of worrying; I

shall be perfectly safe. In this country, we've got to go and disappear into the unknown every now and then; it's all in the day's work. And one always comes back all right—almost always."

"What about the fifty gold-diggers who left their bags at a trader's somewhere on the coast and started to cross the main range, and never came for their bags, because they never were heard of again?"

"Oh, you've got that yarn, have you? My dear girl, it's ancient history—away back in the times of the Boer War. If that's all you have to worry about— But seriously, Edith, you must get accustomed to this sort of thing."

"Will you swear there's no danger?"

"No, I won't; that would be absurd. There's danger in nearly everything people do. You may break your leg playing tennis."

"Well, can you tell me there's no more danger in this than in playing tennis?"

"I can't. You'll just have to accustom yourself to things. I told you New Guinea wasn't a picnic. Be a good girl and go down with Murua to Samarai."

"Mr. Slade," remarked Murua, crossing her khaki legs and looking out wisely from the immense bush of her hair, "I think it would be better if Mrs. Slade and I remained here while you are away. It is a very long way to Samarai, and when the weather is unpropitious, in a launch, the hardest heart gets sick. You know I have often been left alone at the station, like a perfect Alexander Selkirk, in Pups' absence, and that's a place where cannibalism simply abounds. Whereas there are no people at all on this island except your own boys, and Captain Page's schooner will be passing before long, so we could send messages anywhere if the stores got low."

"There's no reason at all why you shouldn't," said Slade thoughtfully, "only that Edith is too new to the country to understand that she runs no risk."

"I can understand it when you tell me so," answered Edith for herself, rather proudly. "I would much rather stay."

"Very well, Joan," said Slade, with one of his kind looks. "You couldn't be with a better person than Murua. I'll be off tomorrow."

"How long will you be away?" asked Edith, turning her eyes to the far, exquisite blue island floating between earth and

heaven, that was Jamieson of unpleasant notoriety.

The answer gave her a shock. She had expected him to say three days or so, but instead—

"Somewhere about two weeks," he answered. "Of course, I might be back before."

"But if you aren't?"

"Well, don't worry."

"When should I worry?"

"Never."

"Tell me, really, when should I begin to feel anxious, if you didn't return?"


"Oh, not for a month at least. I'll be back long before that, in all probability. You never can count time in this country."

"How is that?"

"If you'd ever been inland, you'd know," said Slade with a chuckle.

Neither guessed how soon, and in what strange, tragic fashion, Edith was to know all about it.

VII

 NEXT morning the swags were got out, and Edith made her first acquaintance with packing as it is done in Papua. Sacks of coarse canvas, painted to make them waterproof, and furnished with tying-cords, and arm slings for the carriers, were laid out on the veranda and filled with Slade's clothes and personal belongings. A folding camp bed went into one, a pillow, blankets, flannel shirts, spare boots, filled a second. A tent fly was packed into another. Medicine chest, a very small array of cutlery, cooking things and cartridges, filled the next.

Edith offered a razor, but was repelled with scorn; soap and a couple of towels were accepted. Two or three books, small in weight and print came next. Tea and sugar in tins, with the lids tied down, a bottle of whisky for emergencies, followed. The swags were packed, tied up at the mouth by two strong natives straining one against the other, and set aside.

"Why do you have to tie so tight?" asked Edith.

"Because everything's wet."

"Everything?" She did not understand, but refrained from asking questions.

The tinned goods were made up into thirty-pound loads, placed in common sacks, and sewn tight, arm-slings being added. Edith, knowing that a native could trot

under a load of eighty, began to have some idea of the work that was probably ahead. But she said nothing and went and sat down with some sewing.

"I always hated that scene in 'Vanity Fair' where she follows him round all night, trailing a belt or something in her hand, while he's packing. How he must have cursed her!" thought Edith, putting in stitches that were crooked, and folds that ran the wrong way.

She was obsessed with a hideous desire to sob: Ben made nothing of it, but he was going alone into a dangerous island full of fierce cannibals, to be away for weeks. All the same she must not be a fool. "Joan" had to be brave.

Slade left early in the morning. He did not take the launch, but a smart free-going cutter that would run over to Jamieson in a day and a night. He explained to Edith that Daga-Daga, whom he was leaving behind, together with three or four others, knew how to run the launch and could take her anywhere she liked.

"It's the bad season, though," he warned her. "Don't go out for fun."

Then there was good-by, and Edith really did cry a little, to her great shame. Slade only laughed and patted her on the back as he kissed her.

"Murua'll teach you not to mind things," he said. "God be with you, girlie. Don't forget your quinine."

"I am pretty sure God will be with her, for she is very good, and as to the quinine, that's all right, Mr. Slade, for I shall see to that myself," said Murua, with an odd suggestion of impiety that sent Slade off with a chuckle; he enjoyed Murua.

Edith went back into the sago cottage, sucking at her quotations as a baby sucks its thumb, and for the same reason, Mrs. Browning flitted through her mind.

Then one stands at the door, then one looks, then one kneels,
God, how the house feels!

"If you like," said Murua, "you can go and have your cry now, Mrs. Slade, while I get afternoon tea."

"How did you know I wanted to?" asked Edith, almost inclined to laugh through the coming tears.

"Oh, Mrs. Slade, when Pups goes off without me, I always go and have a cry; partly because it's lonely without him, and

partly because I feel he's somehow glad to be away without any woman near him, though he loves me and likes to have me. Even when you love a person with an everlasting love, Mrs. Slade, you don't want her always tagging after."

Edith was dumb; little Murua had hit the truth rather hard. Certainly, Ben loved her with an everlasting love; quite as certainly the cheerful air and manner of the new-made bachelor had been about him while he packed that morning. She went and had her cry.

Murua brought the tea, and the two women—for Edith could not call the little creature a child, after that touch of wisdom—drank it together in the room where they had spent so many happy, peaceful evenings with Slade.

"Do you love any one with an everlasting love, Murua?" asked Edith by and by.

"No, Mrs. Slade. I have never seen any one in New Guinea who could call out the latent devotion I might give to a really suitable person. When a ship comes in, I look at it sometimes and—wonder."

Murua's hair had fallen loose from its pins, and lay like a russet furry cloak half over her slender body, which was indeed, as Edith said, "made like a little Greek goddess." She had taken off her cloth puttees and nailed boots, as the day was very hot, and wore stockings and shoes.

"You must look well in girl's dress," said Edith musingly. "I would like to see you in it. What a tiny foot you have, child! I wear a small three, and I'm sure I could not get your shoe on."

"Two is my size, Mrs. Slade; I have great difficulty getting shoes. Pups sends down to Melbourne for a box of them sometimes, and I try and find some that will fit, and so does he; but often I find I have to go like a turkey in long grass, to keep mine on, while my poor Pups is walking and mincing with his feet, like the ladies in Isaiah, because they pinch him. You see, he is so very big. I often think a great deal about things, Mrs. Slade, though I haven't seen much of the world, and one of the things I think is that it always seems expensive—to be very."

"To be—very?"

"Very anything, Mrs. Slade. Very big, or very small, or to feel things very much, or even, like Harold, to sing very well—it's because he can that he is unhappy, and it

makes him treacherous and annoying to be unhappy. I have always wanted to be very beautiful, but it seems to me sometimes that a rule is a rule, and if I were, I might find that being beautiful wasn't such a catch after all. Is it, Mrs. Slade?"

The girl who had been put up to auction in her teens, and knocked down to that high bidder, the Cocoa King, in her twenties, shut her hands very tight on her muslin lap and shook her head.

"No, Murua, it is not," she said, looking through the doorway down to the wide, blue, free Pacific.

Murua rose and looked over her shoulder. "You are dreaming, and you see things," she said. "I would like to see what you are seeing."

"God forbid!" said Edith. "Be happy, Murua, and don't trouble about beauty—and pray you may some day meet a man who won't love that cloak of hair of yours, or your pretty feet or figure, more than he loves you."

"I pray for God to send me a good husband by the boat some day, every night of my life," said Murua simply.

All good things, in Pacific lands, come by the steamer: food and clothes and books and papers, and news of the world, and friends and presents and lovers. Murua, like other New Guinea girls, turned to the steamer as a flower turns to the sun. Yet haply, had she known all that might be comprehended in the answering of her simple prayer, she would have hesitated before sending it, in just that form, upon its winged flight.



A FORTNIGHT went by. After the first few days, Edith found herself turning constantly to the sea, and looking, as a million million women have looked since the beginning of the world, for the home-returning sail.

It used to come upon her with a rush, how her own ancestresses had stood, in Crusading times, upon the seaward battlements of Cardillion, straining their eyes down Channel, and watching the windy east, whence suns rose out of the sea-line, and warriors and troubadours came home—how women like herself, perhaps with her very own face and eyes, had seen the steel-jerked men-at-arms crash with their horses down the sand of the beach, to the boats that were getting up sail for Dauphiny or

Aquitaine; and afterward, how the women had looked and looked and looked for the sails that should some day beat back. And the sails had come, but not always the men.

Sometimes people did not come back. The thought ticked like a clock in her brain. She could forget it, as one forgets a clock in busy hours, and in daylight. But when she was idle, or at night, the tick came back, insistent and relentless—

"Sometimes they don't come back."

He had said that he might be away for weeks; that she had no reason for being uneasy, unless at least a month went by. And it was only two weeks and a half. But she was uneasy.

Upon Scratchley Island, which was after all not so far out of the road, as New Guinea and the sea-roads go, an empty calm had descended. The auxiliary schooner that usually came up from Samarai once a month had missed her trip; steamers never called; and all the stray launches and cutters of the East End might have been sunk together, for anything one saw passing by.

Only the island dweller knows what those long, blank tracks of time can mean, when "the boat has missed out," and there is all another month, and maybe more, to go, before the connecting thread is spun once more and the world linked up with the little sea fortress again.

Page's schooner, too, was overdue up that way; she had "no power" and so might be any time, or no time, in coming in, sailing vessels being notoriously unreliable. Edith began to watch for her as anxiously as for Slade's own cutter. The schooner could at least go and get news.

One morning she worked herself up to such a pitch of uneasiness that it seemed inevitable she should kilt up her skirt and run to the boys' sleeping-hut to order out the launch as soon as the sky turned gray in the east, while all the forest track was soaked in heavy dew. Daga-Daga had just come out; he was yawning and stretching himself, with the hideous hoo-hoo-ing noises of the deaf. Edith gave him the sign for the launch—a rippling wave of the hand, meant to imitate water.

Daga - Daga, scratching his enormous woolly head, stared for a moment at the apparition of the fair, tall woman in her white dress, and then motioned with his hands, as if snapping something. To make

his meaning more clear he shut his eyes and lolled his head back, acting death.

"Oh, Daga - Daga, she's not broken down!" cried Edith, as if the Papuan could hear her. "Oh, he can't mean that!"

A small footstep trod the grass behind her. Murua had followed.

"I'm afraid he does, Mrs. Slade," she said. "The boys who can speak always say a launch is 'dead' when it won't go."

"What am I to do?" said Edith. She was speaking to herself, and not to Murua, but the girl answered.

"Indeed, Mrs. Slade, you have no reason to be troubled—yet."

"When will it be time to trouble?" asked Edith, turning to Murua as to a much older person; after all, this girl-child knew the country like any man.

Murua did not answer immediately. The sun was shooting up now; a breath of wind had begun to stir in the forest, and the giant Goura pigeons were chiming like carillon bells. It was full morning.

"*Kawk, kawk!*" shouted something on the top of a huge calophyllum tree, and came down past with a rush like the sound of torn silk.

"That's a beautiful bird of paradise," said Murua. "See his tail? It looked like a chimney on fire, or the burning bush of Isaac. I wouldn't be uneasy yet, Mrs. Slade. Do you know, I have found a scrub-turkey's nest, with twelve eggs, and each of the eggs is equal to four hens'. What shall we have—omelets or cakes?"

"Murua, dear child, never mind the eggs. Tell me, when you think it will be time to be uneasy?"

"Why, Mrs. Slade, I am never uneasy, because in a country like this, if you go out to meet trouble, you'll never be free from it. But if it were Pups, I might begin to think—not yet, but by and by."

"And, in New Guinea, what does one do when one begins to think?"

"Oh, then one goes to find out, Mrs. Slade, but that's quite in the lap of the future, and I really would like to know about the eggs. Because, even if some of them are bad, here we have the equivalent of four dozen hens' eggs, and there's nobody to eat them but you and me."

"It's a pity Harold Page isn't here," commented Edith.

She was ashamed, in the face of Murua's calm courage, to show further nervousness;

but the break-down of the launch seemed to her an ill-omen. What if the *Black Snake* were wanted, badly wanted?

They went back along the dewy path together. The young palms, growing low, shook their innumerable glittering fingers to the early sun. Red rosettes of hibiscus dangled an offering at the end of spraying boughs. A black, blue-eyed crow in a citron tree saluted the new day with its cheerful "*Ha-ha-ha-ha-haaah!*" By the sago cottage, as they descended, the cook-boy was busily chopping wood for the breakfast fire. Day had begun.

When they entered the sitting-room, a fattish lad with a handsome face rose out of the longest long chair and greeted them with an embroidered version of "Beloved, It Is Morn."

A redder berry on the thorn
A deeper yellow on the corn
For this good day newborn,

sang Harold Page, breaking off with a brilliant cadenza.

"Oh, Mrs. Slade, now we shall know what to do with the eggs!" cried Murua.

"Why, yes, I generally do know what to do with eggs," agreed Harold, offering his hand.

He was neatly dressed in a clean white suit, seemed well pleased with himself, and looked, somehow, less childish than before.

"Where is your father?" asked Murua.

"Dad? Oh, that's what I've come about. Dad's pretty bad with fever and I think you'd better take him in."

"Fever!" said Edith. "Of course—at once. Is he dangerously ill?"

"No fear—just his regular attack. But he seems to have got it bad. Off his head for two days; pretty high temperature; can't eat any of the rotten stuff we have on board. Don't know but what he's in for a touch of black-water."

"Why, that's fatal, isn't it?" asked Edith, horror-struck.

"Not necessarily. Dad's pretty tough. But if he's going to have it, he'd better have it where he can be looked after. Shall I get a couple of boys to sling him up?"

"Certainly, have him brought. I'm so extremely sorry; it must be dreadful for you."

"Mrs. Slade," came Murua's precise voice, "I know that you mean that for irony, like Voltaire when he says things he does not mean——"

"My dear Murua! You haven't read Voltaire?"

"Yes, Mrs. Slade, I have read some of him, and I think him very apt and chic, though not quite gentlemanly— I was saying that you mean that for irony; but you mustn't think that Harold is so unnatural as to have no bowels of affection, as the Bible says. We never make much of fever in this country; Pups and I have had it lots of times, and Pups has had real black-water, and we never exhibited concern or panic, or raised a dust about it, and nobody does. I'll go down to the boat and help, if you want to make ready. Nobody minds these things in New Guinea."

Left in the house, Edith made ready a bed, hurried up the breakfast, and looked out the remains of yesterday's turtle soup. There seemed to be nothing else that she could do.

She went out on to the grass terrace overlooking Silence Bay, and waited. What did they "mind" in this beautiful, cruel country? Not storms and possible wrecks; not cannibals, not poisonous snakes, not perilous excursions into the unknown, not deadly fevers. Did they "mind" death itself?

Straight into her mind there leaped the picture of Slade going off to Jamieson Island—Ben, her "brown man," as she called him; brown as the earth his near friend, the earth that he loved—brown hair, brown skin, clothes of earth-brown, eyes gold-brown as the eyes of birds; Ben, at one with the earth and her roughnesses and kindnesses, fearing nothing that her arms might hold. No, they did not "mind" death—some of them.

"I wish I were in a house—a large house—in Sloane Square, with stone walls and stair cases you could drive a coach up, and two hall doors, and a long passage with a stone floor, and a room behind it with a thick mahogany door and brick walls three feet thick, paneled with mahogany and teak, and cushioned chairs, and a fire, and London outside, with policemen and motor-cars and trains and doctors and the Horse Guards—and inside, by the fire with me, Ben!" was her thought.

The world about her seemed to place but the thickness of a biscuit between the things of life and of death.

Then she laughed at herself.

"Oh, poor dear, how the 'brown man'

would hate it!" she said. "There's Captain Page."

They were bringing him up the track, skilfully slung in a hammock between two boys. Harold came next, singing, to Edith's extreme disgust. She hardly realized that song was with him the nearest thing to breathing, and almost as unconscious as the trembling of a moth's antennæ. Murua's khaki legs and small waist, with the .45 revolver projecting at one side, were visible immediately after, curiously foreshortened from above.

Edith had never seen a bad case of malaria before, and was shocked when Captain Page was carried in and laid upon the bed. His graying hair lay damp and stringy upon a yellow forehead; his eyes were closed, and one could see a shadow of the pupil through the transparent sunken lid. He was unshaven; his mouth, half open, was dry and dark with the laboring breath.

Harold helped to lay him on the bed and change his clothes, softly humming the "Habanera" from "Carmen" the while, until Murua stopped him.

"Presence of mind is presence of mind, Harold Page," she said, "and I know you don't mean anything particular by it. But unless you want Mrs. Slade to think you a cockatrice and an asp, you had better stop."

"I don't believe you know what a cockatrice is," said Harold, tugging at a pajama button.

"It is a fabulous monster, an unnatural creature, supposed to be the same as a basilisk, that destroys its very nearest and dearest."

"I am sure," said Harold with an air of picking and choosing his words, "that Mrs. Slade would no more think me such a fabulous monster than I would think her." He looked at her with his shrewd, unboyish glance.

Edith felt just the slightest qualm, and then laughed at herself.

"I am obsessed with that idea," she thought. "I mustn't let it get the better of me. It will be like the 'persecution delusions' of half-insane people, if I do." Aloud she said a little precisely: "I am sure you are all that a dutiful son ought to be. Will you kindly lift your father till I tie this string?"

"My man," said Page very suddenly and clearly, "if you will refrain from hauling

that brace taut, until I give the order, you will very much oblige me."

He opened his eyes and looked at Edith, frowning.

"Is that the way he orders his crew?" asked Edith, astonished.

"It's the way he begins," said Harold, betraying some slight anxiety. "He warms up— Here, dad—dad! You're in Mrs. Slade's. Have some soup. It's good turtle flipper. I've tried it."

"Mrs. Slade," said Page distinctly, still frowning, "is the lady who bolted from her husband."

Harold crammed the cup to his mouth.

"Don't mind him," he said hurriedly.

"What does he mean?" asked Edith, her heart shaking.

"Mean? Oh, well, if you will have it, there are a good few histories in this country, and we don't know—always—who's really married to who. Better than it used to be, a lot, but things do happen sometimes. Dad's thinking of one. It's not quite—not quite a proper story, Mrs. Slade; that's why I stopped him."

"Try and get him to take a little more; I am sure it would do him good," said Edith.

Decidedly she was making mountains out of mole-hills, she thought. But she did not—no, she did not—like that boy.

For some days Captain Page continued so ill that there was no time for thinking of Slade's delay and what it might mean. Always, there was a little sore place in the back of Edith's mind, steadily growing larger and sorer; but it was like a hurt that one has not time to dress. By and by she would take off the bandage she had hastily wound round it, and see how things really were. At present, with life and death hovering together about that little room with the yellow corduroyed walls, there was no leisure for one's own affairs, however pressing.

But there came a day when Captain Page was conscious and sensible; when the furious temperature had burned itself out, without at the same time burning out the life it fed on; when Harold's carefully made custards and broths—for the youth showed his devotion after the fashion that most appealed to his own feelings—were eaten, instead of being merely tasted and refused. Then Edith had time to go out into the fruit garden and walk up and down above the blue of Silence Bay, among the citrons' hanging

lamps of gold, and to count the days and weeks of her husband's absence, and to ask herself, with uncertainty that was all but certain, whether it was not time, now, to be anxious.

And fear, and love, and time, together answered that it was.


"The launch! The launch!" was the cry that beat about in her mind, as a moth beats about in an imprisoning glass. If the launch had been in order, one could have sent it down to Samarai; she could have had a government officer back in four days. One could have done anything.

But the launch was unavailable. She had gone down to look at it, and a certain amount of knowledge, learned from driving a motor-car, had assured her that the *Black Snake* would not move again until repaired by a competent mechanic.

What to do? The question clipped her stranglingly, as she went down the track to the house. That far, faint glimpse of blue beyond the edge of Silence Bay—what might be happening there, seventy miles away? Slade had allowed that it would be "time to worry" if he did not come back in a month. It was five weeks and a day now.

"Sometimes they don't come back." The thought began its restless ticking again. "Sometimes they don't come back."

If Captain Page would only get better. But when he did, he would have to be taken down to the hospital in Samarai and left there. It was doubtful whether he had had black-water fever or not—it might have been merely a very bad attack of malaria—but whatever it was, there was no doubt that it had been complicated in certain dangerous ways by his drinking habits. If the captain were to sail his boat much longer over the seas of this earth, it was clear that he must be patched up to do it.

 EDITH came back to the house with a certain resolution, of which she was hardly conscious herself, hardening in her mind. She found the captain conscious, though very weak. Harold, beside him, was eating hot pancakes from his fingers, with incredible speed.

"Dad couldn't worry down more than one, so I kept them from spoiling," he remarked. "Have some?" he asked Murua with a certain effort.

"Thank you, but I do not believe in mak-

ing a god of your belly at eleven o'clock in the morning," was Murua's reply.

"Murua, I want to ask you something," said Edith, breaking in on the threatened controversy. "From what you know of the country, don't you think my husband is too long away? You know, he meant to be about a fortnight, and it's over five weeks."

The reply came not from Murua, but from the bed where the captain lay.

"Where?"

"Where is he gone to? Jamieson Island, to get some boys in the interior."

"They're dashed swabs in Jamieson Island," said the weak voice from the bed. "I've a boy from Jamieson Island on board; he can hand, reef, and steer, but he's the two ends and right of a dashed brute."

The dim idea was becoming clearer, but it was not quite shaped yet.

"Does he speak English?"

"Some. I could drink a lime drink."

Harold, whose heart was always responsive to gastronomic needs, went off to get fresh citrons.

"I'll make you a bonzer one, dad," he said in the doorway. "Pineapple and things. I'm glad you haven't winked out this time, dad. And a tablespoon of whisky in it."

"A table glass," said the captain weakly but firmly.

Harold vanished, singing sweetly from "Trovatore"—

Rest thee, my mother, I will watch o'er thee,
Rest may restore sweet peace to thy heart.

"One of the very worst things about Harold," observed Murua, "is that he has no sense of humor, which makes you quite certain that he is 'fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils.'"

Edith hardly heard her. Things were shaping themselves. Captain Page would not be well for some time; could not, when he was better, undertake the fatigue of a search party. The schooner, with the present succession of calms and head winds, might take weeks getting to Samarai. Jamieson Island was at least in sight, and the wind was fair for it. They were shaping.

"I want to see that boy of yours," she said.

"Boy?" said the captain. Then, after a moment's silence, with a roar that made Edith jump: "Breakers ahead! Down helm! We'll be on the reef."

"He's off again," said Murua. "Shall I get the boy?"

"I'll go down to the ship and see him," said Edith.

A quarter of an hour later she returned. Captain Page had had his lime drink, with the stiffener requested, and had gone to sleep. Murua and Harold were on the veranda.

The day had turned very hot; there was not a stir on the peacock-colored sea below, and the long green hair of the ironwoods about the house for once hung motionless. There came no sound from the forest but the mocking note of the leatherneck, repeating a phrase which sounded like: "Do oysters chew tobacco? Do oysters chew tobacco? Do oysters chew—" and then beginning again.

Murua looked up from the long sheath-knife she was polishing—no soldier ever kept his arms in better condition than she—and saw that the face framed by the Joan-of-Arc gold hair was exceedingly pale. "Have you heard something?" she asked.

Edith sat down.

"I have," she said. "Tell me, Murua, would it be impossible for me to go to Jamieson Island myself? You have done such things."

"Have you heard of Mr. Slade?"

"Yes—no matter. Tell me, could I go at once?"

"I'll go with you, Mrs. Slade. Is it bad?"

"The boy says—" Edith broke off, and then determinedly went on. "The boy says there is a white man in a village among the mountains; and that something has happened to him. He doesn't know what, and he won't tell how he knows."

"Oh, Mrs. Slade, we can never get them to tell us that. They find out things by some signaling system of their own, but they always deny they have one. It's wonderful that he told you even as much as he did."

"You must tell me, Murua. Could I go? I don't care if I can or not—I must. Captain Page is too sick, and Harold wouldn't be any particular use, I'm afraid—"

"Oh, thank you," said Harold, with a bow. "You're quite right. I adorn the earth with things of beauty, and have a good time. Like Stevenson, I'm not meant to be merely useful."

"I don't think," said Edith—she was very quiet and deliberate, though still pale

to the tips of her small ears—"I don't think, from what I have heard of the country, that it would be the smallest use sending out boys alone; one can't trust them enough. And if one delays till a boat happens to come along, or till something can beat down to Samarai, it may be—" she stopped and then took hold of the word—"it may be too late."

There was a moment's pause. Edith was fighting for self-control. The leatherneck in the forest went on asking determinedly whether oysters chewed tobacco.

"Do oysters chew—" it broke off again.

Murua raised gray, thoughtful eyes.

"Mrs. Slade," she said, "I don't know what to propose. If you and I went together, it would be all right. But I forgot—I forgot—"

"I should think you did," said Harold. "Dad's only beginning to turn the corner, and he wants sitting with night and day both, if he's going to get round it, and get down to Samarai. Every one for himself. Murua, you know I can't nurse worth twopence, except the cooking. If you go off, and dad winks out in consequence, you'll just be a murderer. Mr. Slade isn't any of my funeral. Besides, he'll come home all right; it's ridiculous to make such a fuss. Why, you can't believe a word one of these natives say; they're all fearful liars. I defy you to say they aren't."

"About some things," said Murua. "Not everything. I believe this is true."

"Well, and if it is, you, or Mrs. Slade, or both of you, couldn't go chasing after. It's only the other day that prospector, Coates, got killed up in the main range beyond Mafulu, and the natives cut him up and cooked him in his own billy-can. Didn't they? And that German at Cape Nelson—they rolled rocks down on him when he wasn't looking, and picked every one of his bones. And when they do get a prisoner for kai-kai, they don't bother to knock him on the head before they roast him—they frizzle him alive. And they put out his—"

"Oh, stop, stop!" said Edith in a voice that was almost a cry.

"I told you," said Harold triumphantly. "I knew you couldn't go. A nice thing it would be if they—"

"Harold Page," came in Murua's slow tones, "you are pestiferously bird-witted and have no common sense. Can't you see that Mrs. Slade is thinking of her husband?"

"Well, it doesn't alter what I said. She can't possibly go."

"You seem extremely anxious for her to stay; but as you haven't changed your skin or your spots, I suppose it's because you want something from her."

"I don't want anything from her," declared Harold a little hastily. "I only think she oughtn't to do such an insane thing. You can worry it out between yourselves; I'm going to dad."

He went, singing lightly—

Angels ever bright and fair
Take, O take me to your care!

"When you hear him sing that," commented Murua, "you would think he was half-way to heaven, and half a spirit himself, whereas I have known him make himself sick twice in a day with unaccustomed pastry on the Dutch boat. And as for telling lies——"

Speed to your own courts my flight
Clad in robes of virgin white,

sang Harold divinely, with a "turn" as sharp and clear as a string of diamonds.

"Murua dear," said Edith, "there's no time to waste. I want you to tell me everything. You've been out in these bush districts with your father, haven't you? And aren't there women in Papua who have gone out up country alone?"

"Why, yes, Mrs. Slade, there is Mrs. Carter—she has been out arresting native murderers in her own island, and got them too, and Mrs. M'Cammond used to go and recruit boys whenever she wanted them, anywhere and everywhere. As for me, I've always been with Pups and his police, but I've gone into more remote and unfriendly places than any of them, and I know all about how to manage."

"Tell me," said Edith. "I mean to take all the boys that can be spared and go tomorrow."

"What are you going in, Mrs. Slade? I'm afraid none of the boys could sail the schooner alone."

"I sha'n't ask them to. I can sail her myself."

Murua looked at her wisely.

"I think there are things about you that none of us know, Mrs. Slade, but I'm not a spy-cat so I won't ask. I suppose you have sailed yachts."

"Yes," said Edith. She had, indeed,


been a prominent figure on her cousin's yachts before marriage, and on the *Cocoa King's* fine racing vessel afterward; the deck of a ship was a second home to her.

"What do you mean to do about Captain Page?"

"He won't be well enough to want his schooner before she is back again. Whatever I am going to do, I sha'n't take five weeks over it."

"And if you don't succeed?"

"I shall," said Edith. "Tell me all you can."

 HAROLD PAGE proved strangely opposed to Edith's going, but Harold was not the sort of person whom any one minded, unless when he was singing. He declined to allow the schooner to be taken; when he was reminded that he was not the owner, he tried to rouse his father and induce him to forbid the loan. Captain Page, however, answered nothing more to the point than:

"Up with her, bullies! Heave and raise the dead!" and was therefore counted out.

Before the sun had climbed over the woods to touch the waters of Silence Bay next morning, the schooner was making ready for sea. Tents, swags, provisions from Slade's store, were stowed away in the hold. The anchor was being raised, with long savage shouts from the boys.

Murua, in the dingey, was coming out over the reef, in charge of a consignment of rifles and bandoliers. She had told Edith that Slade was bound to have them somewhere, and they had searched till the store, hidden away from thievish natives, was discovered.

"Your boys can have rifles, but you had better have my revolver yourself," she said, buckling it round Edith's waist. "I suppose you can fire it off?"

Edith, modern sporting girl to her fingertips, smiled a little, thinking of her bag of pheasants, last Autumn's shoot at Cardilion.

"I think I can, and a rifle also, if necessary," she said.

She was on the deck of the schooner when Murua and her cargo arrived. Murua looked admiringly at Edith's dress, which indeed was picturesque if unorthodox. She wore a khaki suit of her husband's, with the inevitable boots and puttees; a felt slouch hat with a scarlet trade handkerchief

tied round it, to guard against sunstroke, and another handkerchief knotted under her collar and falling a little way down her back, for the same purpose. Murua's revolver was at her side, and the big sheath-knife, always worn for walking through the tangled forests of New Guinea, hung behind it.

Most women either look bandy and unhappy in men's dress, or swagger like a "principal boy." Edith did neither; the freedom of riding breeched and booted, of swimming in frankly bifurcated dress, that are the lot of the twentieth-century girl, had accustomed her to male clothing, and she trod the deck as easily and naturally as she walked through a drawing-room in evening dress.

"May I ask a boon of you, Mrs. Slade?" said Murua, coming over the bulwarks, and leaping lightly down.

The two women, one half a child as yet, one in the full tide of her beauty and ripe youth, both dressed in man's clothing, and standing among a crowd of wild, black, naked savages, made a curious picture, had any one been there to see it. But to the natives, a *taubada*—chief—was a *taubada*, male or female, and if this white woman could sail a schooner and give them orders, they were ready enough to do as they were told without comment, almost without surprise. Who could tell where the strange habits and extraordinary powers, of the *dim-dims*—white people—might end? They were all sorcerers, more or less. This woman was a sorceress of unusually high powers. Be it so. They would chew their betel-nut, take up their swags, and follow her orders.

"Well, Murua?" said Edith, with a kindly smile that she had, unconsciously, picked up from Slade, as husbands and wives do pick up the mannerisms one of the other.

"Mrs. Slade—I have not had a girl's dress since the last time I was at Samarai, and that's ever so long ago, and I am just hungering and thirsting after another. May I, while you are away, wear just one of yours for a little?"

"Of course—any or all of them—if you can make them fit," answered Edith a little absently.

She was casting a yachtswoman's eye over the running gear and wondering how much of it would hold together till they reached Jamieson Island.

"Oh, Mrs. Slade, may angels ever bright and fair take care of you!" was Murua's impulsive reply. "I shall be too happy to live when I get into a pretty dress for a little."

"Oh, that's nothing; I'm very glad," said Edith. "Pumpkin—" to Captain Page's boy from Jamieson Island—"you must seize that with rope-yarn before we can go out. Hurry!"

"This *sinuabada*—lady—plenty big-fellow *sinuabada*; I doing what this *sinuabada* tell," was Pumpkin's reply.

"I must go," said Murua. "Thank you a thousand and a thousand times about the dress."

"But if I had known everything that was going to happen," she said long after, "I would have thanked her, not a thousand, but a million, million times!"

The anchor was up; the blocks creaked as the sails were raised.

"We shall have a slant that will just take us out of the bay," said Edith. "Good-by, Murua."

She had not the heart to make the bright farewell she had intended. Was not Ben in distress, in danger, somewhere on that far-away blue island among the natives who did not knock you on the head before they roasted you?

She was very much of a woman, too, and had a woman's weaknesses. For all her bravery, and for all the Cœur-de-Lion blood, Edith's heart was heavy, as the schooner *Tagula* swung to the pressing breeze outside the harbor, and sailed away to sea.

VIII



MURUA'S tiny feet crept slowly up the path to the sago cottage. She was disturbed in her wise little mind about Edith; no one knew better than she, who had encountered them, the risks of an inland journey among the still unbroken tribes of the interior. Further, she missed her new friend already, and did not much look forward to an unbroken duet with Harold Page.

"He ought to be shut up in a barrel and fed through the bunghole, and only let out to sing," she thought to herself.

The thought of the dresses consoled her. Finding that Captain Page was still asleep, and needed nothing, she searched through Edith's pretty London-bought things, made after fashions she had never even guessed

at, till she came upon one that fairly captured her heart—a pale green muslin, inlet with white lace butterflies. It had green silk stockings to match, and there was a pair of green shoes, Parisian, and so beautifully cut that they were hardly at all too large, even for Murua's foot.

Trembling with excitement, she took up a fold there, and drew in a ribbon here, until the well-made dress had adapted itself to her figure, smaller but not less perfect than Edith's own. She let down her cloak of bronze hair and tied it with a green and silver ribbon. She clasped a silver necklace with an emerald in it about her neck. Then she looked long and eagerly into Edith's mirror.

"I am not exactly pretty, but—" she said to herself.

The image in the glass looked back at her. There was something about it that she liked.

"Are there other things than prettiness?" thought the child of the wilderness. "And are they—are they as good?"

It was very quiet, alone there in the outer room, with Harold in the kitchen, and Captain Page asleep within.

"Are they as good?" she thought in the stillness.

"Do oysters chew tobacco?" asked the leatherneck suddenly, from the forest. "Do oysters chew——"



MURUA, dressed in her khaki clothes, with her hair coiled tight, was rather thoughtful that night. She did not once snub Harold, who in consequence bloomed out into extra cheerfulness and greediness, saving from waste almost everything on the supper-table, and offering to sing anything that she wanted him to sing. She refused the honor at first, but, after supper, when the sick man's wants had been attended to, and there was a little time before taking up night duty, she came out on to the veranda in the moonlight and told him that he might sing to her if he liked—something, anything.

"You can choose," said Harold amiably. "I can sing any song in the world."

"'Annie Laurie,'" said Murua promptly.

"Oh, Murua!" remonstrated Harold. "I did think you had some taste."

"Well, if you can't sing it——"

"Can't!" said Harold indignantly, and

broke at once, with delicious purity of tone, into the outworn song.

Like many singers, he had the knack, or gift, of putting into a song far more than he had ever felt, or was capable of feeling. Harold despised "Annie Laurie" from the bottom of his soul, but nevertheless he sang it with a tenderness and romance that would have brought tears to the eyes of a tax-collector.

Murua, sitting on the veranda edge in her khaki clothes, turned her head aside and brushed one small, burned hand over her cheek. Afterward, in the moonlight, she walked up and down on the cliff, and often, unconsciously, her eyes turned to the empty sea, as one seeking she knew not whom or what.

Harold Page, also, seemed to be interested in the sea that night, but in a perfectly definite way. Ships coming from Samarai always sailed round the southern horn of Silence Bay. It was on the southern horn that his eyes were fixed; he watched it constantly. But not from south or north did any ships appear.

Captain Page, when he recovered sufficiently to know what was going on about him, did not take the compulsory loan of his schooner hardly.

"Either she'll be lost, or she won't," he said. "If she is, why, there's always Slade's launch as a security for compensation. And the launch is worth more than the old *Tagula*, any day in the year."

It seemed that his own chance remark about the value of the two boats came back to the captain again, for he repeated it one day and then sat thinking silently, his head laid back in the long chair that Murua had placed out on the veranda for him.

A light breeze came from the southeast; the plummy ironwoods about the sago house sang as a sea-shell sings when you lift it to the ear. There are heavy days in Papua—days when the air lies dead as water about you, when the skies are lead and livid plum-bago blue, when the sea, darkly rich, runs in lakes of indigo and gulf streams of green, like green marble.

These are the days when mosquitoes scream and stab with fever-poisoned daggers; when something sinister, formless, yet formidable, inimical to human life, stalks abroad; when the native squats in the dusk of his hut and stares silently, head upon knees; and the white man, wandering as in

a nightmare of the day, feels "Mortality lie heavy on him, like unwilling sleep," and senses, for one black moment, the thinness of the bubble that walls in the dream of life.

There are light days—days of crystal skies and dancing, glass-blue sea, of diamond points on swinging leaves of palm, of winds like warm wine that one may drink open-lipped and feel leaping through the current of the blood. These are the days when the mighty tide of life that is in the tropic world, the life that thrusts a seedling tree to a forest king in five years, can almost be felt and seen at work. On such days, women bloom to beauty, children grow like flowers in rain, sick men are healed. Papua, that strikes with treacherous talons in other hours, at such times sheathes the claw and caresses you with a paw that is all velvet.

Captain Page was growing well. And as he grew well, he thought. And as he thought, he began to wonder.

Slade had no private fortune, though he came of good people. The house was simple and cheap enough in all conscience; the man spent little on clothes, hotels, cards or drinks, and took few trips on the steamers. So far, so simple.

But then came something that was not simple. Slade's launch was a flyer. Not all her determined plainness of fittings, her ascetic avoidance of glass and brass adornments, her wooden seats and curtainless bunks, could possibly have kept her price under four figures—four rather large figures, too. Captain Page had never been on the *Black Snake* when she was doing her best, but he had seen her, once, in the far distance, cutting up the skyline at a rate that made him take his pipe out of his mouth and whistle. He had not been quite sure at first that she was not a torpedo-boat destroyer, going somewhere on some mysterious errand.

Now, red shell is a fair business, if you have a good stock of the stuff; for the Papuan native, civilized and uncivilized, still prefers native coinage, ground out of the lip of the money-shell, to any of the white man's sixpences and shillings, and it is easier to make shell-money for trading use with a civilized drill and wheel than to squeeze white humanity until it exudes golden coin.

But red shell—red shell alone—will not pay for launches that do sixteen knots an hour. What does pay for them?

"Gold," thought the captain. All sudden fortune in Papua is referred to gold, though the instances of men who have really made money out of gold disinterred from earth, as distinct from gold—legally—filched from mining shareholders' pockets, are amazingly few.

"He has struck it rich somewhere on the island and doesn't tell because what he can get himself is more than a reward claim would give him, if he let others in," thought Captain Page.

Excitement began to creep up and down his spine like a scurrying spider. Gold in New Guinea is the *Fata Morgana* that builds glittering cities and palaces in air for men who toil in desert sand, that weaves bright cloud before the eyes of workers, so that they can not any longer see their work, or the hard sure silver it brings in, but only the glittering, promising, gold-colored mists before them.

Page had had his day on the cruel gold-fields of Papua; had escaped with his life, as many men do not, but had brought away with him the bite of the "gold-bug," from which no man ever quite recovers.

"Gold!" he thought, and his hands trembled on the cigaret he was trying to roll. He felt like a thirsty beast that sees water. When had he had enough of gold, all his life? Then a spasm of righteous indignation seized him.

"Why, the beggar's acting illegally," he said. "Fellow who finds a gold-field is supposed to give notice of it and take the reward claim. I don't believe in running against the law. It's like boxing the ears of an elephant; the beast has got four legs and a trunk to get hold of you with, and would rather smash you to semolina than not. No unlawfulness for me!"

He rolled the cigaret; it was leaking a little, but it would do. It lit all right.

"Gold," he said again. "Harold's mare's nest is nothing to this. As likely as not it's just some of Harold's lies. The boy does lie like a nigger. Don't know where he got it; I don't lie, though I suppose I'm a pretty bad egg on the whole."

He felt almost virtuous as he said it, being, like most men, very ready to compound for the possession of vices by the open acknowledgement of them.

"She did, though," he thought. "Poor Amy, she jolly well had to, since she was flying for higher game than—well, well, it's

long ago. But that's where Harold gets it. Like as not he only wanted the three pounds. I'll hammer him when I get better."

The cigaret was soothing, and it was good to feel oneself grow well again. Captain Page lay and listened to the sounds of the house and garden: Murua feeding the fowls somewhere out at the back, with much calling, clucking and scrambling; Daga-Daga chopping wood for the kitchen fire, grunting out "*Hool!*" with every stroke; Harold beating up something good in a bowl and singing very sweetly—

My bread is sorrow and my drink is tears—

"I'll have a whisky now," said the captain to himself, "and tomorrow I'll take a look round generally."

He walked slowly into the house, feeling the weakness of his fever still about him. The whisky was on a shelf. Captain Page reached to take it down, and at the same moment noticed a roll of charts laid away on the shelf above.

"Now I wonder—" he thought, pausing with hand outstretched.

He drank his whisky hurriedly, then reached to the upper shelf and took down the charts.

"If he goes to the place by sea," said Page, "there'll be some sign of it on the chart. Nobody knows better than I do that you've got to landscape-garden all over an ordinary Admiralty chart before it's going to do you much good, in these outside places."

He took down the chart of Scratchley Island and neighborhood, and studied it. There was no result. It had been corrected to some extent, but only about the anchorages of Silence Bay.

"I'll try the boys," he thought. "Anyhow," with a grin, "nobody can overhear me talking to them."

He walked slowly out to the garden, sitting down to rest by the way, and found the native who acted as general help on board the launch, called Dai by his own boys, busy digging up sweet potatoes.

The captain summoned him with the gesture that Slade used for his boys, and that is often used among white deaf-mutes—a side-to-side, wagging motion of the forearm swung from the elbow, which catches the eye very readily. Dai looked up, shaking back his door-mat of black hair.

Page gave the sign for Slade—height indicated by a hand held above his head, long mustache shown in pantomime upon his own clean-shaven face. Dai nodded.

Page took a nugget pin out of his tie and showed Dai the bit of gold. Dai looked at it blankly. The captain pointed north, south, east and west. Dai stared.

"Oh, the brute!" said Page to himself. "He's no better than an idiot. Nobody could make anything out of him."

He strode away in a passion. Dai went back to work without troubling his head as to what the white man might have wanted, or meant. Dai was not much interested in any one or anything but himself.

"Why," said Captain Page, suddenly breaking off his profane exclamation, and standing still underneath a paw-paw tree laden with green and yellow fruit, "that proves it, by Gad! Proves it! He has got a mine or something. We all thought he kept those dummies because they could be signed on for anything, and worked any way he liked—and not half a bad idea, either, when you consider the way the Government pokes its nose into a man's dealings with his boys. But I'll swear now he didn't."

The captain went back to his chair on the veranda. He felt chilly and grown old.

"I'd have worried a thing of the kind out somehow, ten years ago," he thought. "I'm not the man I was when she— Well, well! Let's hope for luck. I might chance on something."

And then, with the aid of another whisky, he went to sleep.

Page and his son, both utterly selfish, were not troubling themselves much about Edith and her dangerous expedition to Jamieson Island; but Murua, as the days passed, grew anxious.

She had told Edith everything that could be told, and warned her of every danger that must be guarded against. She had made it clear that carriers and provisions are the hinges on which every trip to the interior turns; that the boys must be kept in front, stores checked and carefully given out, and native food purchased whenever possible.

She had explained that friendly natives must not be taken at face value, that the revolver must never be away from the hand that might need it, but that rash shooting must above all things be avoided, partly

because the Government was down on it, partly because it was a short-sighted policy. It cleared ground for the moment, she explained, but the natives were sure to take a treacherous revenge later on.

All her varied stock of bush knowledge had been poured forth for Edith's benefit; she had told her how to find camping ground, how to make a camp, how to get a view of where she was going, among the forests, by making the boys fell trees on the top of the highest hill she could find; she had told her how stores were protected against the constant rain of the upper altitudes, and the way to get dry sticks for fire on a wet night by splitting big ones open, and what to do for the bites of leeches and scrub tick, and how to avoid being eaten by alligators when crossing a river. She knew that, given strength and endurance enough, the journey was no more impossible for Edith than for any new man, in this country of Papua where every one might do what he or she could do.

Still she was anxious. If only Pups would come back from Rossel—gigantic Pups, with his armed police, and his vigorous personality, and the whole authority of the Government at his back!

One couldn't feel uncertain of anything when Pups was about. But it was impossible to say when he would be back from Rossel, the last outlier of the long tail of New Guinea, far away, and seldom visited by anything in the shape of a vessel. He had his whaleboat, but a whaleboat takes weeks to come in from the outer edges of the scattered island country.

No, Pups must be counted out. As for herself, even if she could have got a boat to go in, she could not have fitted out a second expedition with the few boys remaining on the island, and could not, in all probability, have caught up or even found Edith without the aid of the Jamieson Island guide lent by Page.

There was nothing to do but wait—especially since Captain Page had inspected the launch, and pronounced that the boys had been monkeying with it, and there wasn't the least chance of getting her to go unless another launch with a competent engineer in it happened to come along.

For that, Murua hoped and almost prayed, busying herself in the meantime with housekeeping, poultry tending, sewing, butterfly catching, and twenty-and-one

other occupations. She was never idle a moment; the neat khaki legs seemed to be always twinkling up and down the house and veranda, and the tied-back mass of hair to be swinging out behind as she passed rapidly by the captain, making the most of his invalid condition on a couch, or Harold, lying on his back in the shady veranda, eating something and singing in the intervals. And always, passing the door, she threw a glance out toward the sea.



LATE one night, sleeping under her net in the outer room, Murua was awakened by the sound that rouses an island dweller from the heaviest sleep—the *pit-pit-pit* of a screw. She sat up.

It was full moon; the light made streaks of Chinese white upon the shining corduroy of the sago-stem walls. On the veranda outside, where a bunch of bananas hung, a flying fox was drumming about like an aeroplane, and the locusts' chirr in the forest was loud as escaping steam. Nevertheless, she could hear the beat of the screw. Something was coming in.

Murua listened, sitting up in bed. The *pit-pit* ceased.

"It sounds very like the *Diamond*," she said to herself, "but I can't think what would bring her up here. Pups couldn't get the Government to let him have her when he asked, only a few weeks ago. I wonder, has the R. M. at Samarai heard anything and come himself? But if he had, he'd go straight to Jamieson Island."

A sharp rattle from Silence Bay announced that the boat was dropping anchor. Murua listened, but no dingey put out for shore.

"They'll wait till morning," she said. "I wonder—I do wonder!"

Unrelieved wonder was not to be borne, with the anchorage in full view below the house.

Murua slipped out of bed, put on a wrapper, and went barefoot and silent on to the veranda. In the bright moonlight, she could see the Government launch, *Diamond*, lying at anchor far below, a toy boat on a sheet of silver glass.

Looking through Captain Page's binoculars, Murua tried to find out who might be on board. She could see the engineer, a small plump man, standing on deck; beside him some one of medium height, in a white suit and Indian helmet.

Now the Indian pith helmet, especially if worn with a pugaree, proclaims a stranger in Papua, where almost every one uses the colonial soft felt hat. Murua felt sure this was some one she had not seen before.

"What can he want?" she breathed, sensing some mystery afoot.

"After you with the glasses," said a musical voice at her elbow. Murua jumped.

"Harold Page, you are perniciously ubiquitous," she said. "There are the glasses. If you knew how like a not-enough-poached egg you look at this minute, you would never wear yellow pajamas again."

"Now that shows what different tastes we have, for I think you look rather well in a wrapper," replied Harold, unperturbed.

"You should not allow yourself to see it," said Murua severely.

"Well, if I didn't see it, you know, it would be worse," replied Harold, screwing at the glasses.

"I don't care to bandy words with a bloated canary," Murua answered scornfully, retreating from the battle-ground.

"Do you know, that sounds next door to swearing," said Harold. "Those people have gone in; they aren't coming up till morning."

"Who is it?" asked Murua, putting her small sharp face and cloud of hair round the corner of the door.

"How should I know?"

"Ask me no more; the moon may draw the sea,
But O, too fond, when have I answered thee?
Ask me no more."

warbled Harold softly.

"That is the limit," came in an angry whisper from Murua's room. "Fond of you!"

"I sometimes think you must be, or you wouldn't scold so much," remarked Harold with a shrewdness beyond his years, as he shut up the glass and went back to his room again, neither whistling nor humming nor singing—an abstention that would have suggested to any keen observer that something out of the common was holding his mind.

How much or how little truth there may have been in his lightly thrown-out words, was one of the things that were not to matter in the future. If any careless tendril of a young girl's straying emotions had been caught, unknown to herself, by the beauty of the one thing beautiful he possessed, it was to hold but a very little while.

Murua lay down again, quite aware that she would sleep no more that night, and waited for the two hours before daylight to be over. As soon as the first gossiping chuckle of pigeons, and raucous cry of parrots from the woods, announced the coming light, she was up and making ready.

Her khaki clothes lay ready on a chair, with the pistol belt on top. She looked at them, and then went to the curtained row of hooks where Edith's green muslin hung.

"One may have a neat pair of legs for private publication," she thought, "but that is no reason why a girl should flourish them in the face of all the outer world."

She dressed in the muslin, tied the green-and-silver ribbon in the mass of her hair, and took a good look at herself in Edith's big glass.

"If I'm not pretty, I'm an excellent substitute," she said with satisfaction.

There was some one coming up the gravel path. Murua shook out her skirts.

"Quite prepared to meet the King, or the Bishop of Carpentaria," she said to herself.



IT WAS not a king, or a bishop, who came smartly to the veranda steps and mounted them like a bird hopping up a twig. It was a man of about forty years of age, rather gray, and so sharp and keen-looking of face and even form that he looked, thought Murua, as if you'd only to get him edgeways in order to slice bread with him.

He had a red-brown skin, and a pair of eyes so blue that they seemed to shout at you. His mouth was set in a tight line, and his nose jutted like the ram of a battleship. Over every line of him was written his profession; it did not need the card he presented to Murua, in the absence of any visible servant, to announce him naval officer. The name on the card was "Commander Christopher Campbell."

"Can I see Mr. Slade?" asked Commander Christopher Campbell briskly.

"I'm sorry, but he has gone to Jamieson Island," replied Murua.

"Mrs. Slade, then?"

"She has gone, too, to look for him."

"Hullo! Was he lost?"

"Won't you come up on the veranda? The sun's getting quite hot. Yes, he was lost; he's lost still, and I'm not quite sure she isn't. She went after him ten days ago,

with ten armed carriers and a Jamieson boy for guide."

"Oh, she did, did she? She must be quite an Amazon—regular suffragette type," said the sailor, looking — Murua could have sworn—a trifle disappointed.

"She isn't," contradicted the young girl at once. "On the contrary, she is young and exceedingly loved."

The sailor laughed a wide, white-toothed laugh.

"Oh, I say, you know, you shot awfully near the bull's-eye there, if you only knew," he said.

"I know many things," said Murua gravely. "If you are brought up as a son instead of a daughter, you learn with two minds at once; and when I'm patrolling with Pups I count as a boy."

"A pretty boy you must make," said Campbell with the sailor's gallantry.

Murua flushed; it was the first time any one had called her pretty—people admired her hair, or her figure, or her feet, but they had said so little about herself that she could have found it in her heart to be jealous of those much-mentioned beauties. But now a man had said that she, Murua, was pretty. She felt a sudden flush of gratitude, and showed it by the light that came over her face.

"Why, it's a taking little witch!" said Campbell to himself. "And what hair! That famous wig of Edith's that they talked so much about couldn't have been a patch on it."

Aloud he said—

"I have the Government launch *Diamond* down below if she can be of any use in going after Mr. Slade."

"We shall accept her with the utmost gratitude," said Murua. "Armed carriers are one thing, but the Government is another, and as we do know that they break their prisoners' legs and put their eyes out with sticks, and that even the dogs get a taste of the horrid feast that ensues, one feels that no possible precaution should be omitted."

"By Jove, no!" said the naval officer. "May I smoke out here?"

"Certainly," said Murua. "If you will excuse me, I will go and see to the breakfast; one must keep up a rigid superintendence, because they have been known to clean the knives by spitting on them."

"Nasty beggars," said Campbell. "Is there a Mr. Page here?"

"Harold Page? Oh, yes. If you listen, you will hear him having his bath."

"Having his bath?"

"Yes; he always sings the 'Cavatina' out of 'Il Barbieri' while he's bathing. When you hear him begin the 'Carmen' 'Habanera' you'll know that he's out and getting dressed."

"By George, yes, I hear the beggar. How uncommonly odd!" said Campbell.

The bath-house was outside, but no one with the usual number of ears could have missed the vivid clearness of Harold's entreaties to some unnamed person to "beware."

"But that's good singing!" he said as "Love will like a wild birding fly," began all over again.

"Commander Campbell," said Murua, pausing in the doorway, "if you had to live in the same house with Harold and his voice, you would pray that you might never go to the same heaven with him. Of course, I am not at all sure that he will get there, but if he does, it makes me perfectly sick to think of how he will show off on all the high notes and keep making attitudes with his harp."

Campbell laughed.

"I think I know other singers whom that might apply to—a few," he said. "Imagine fat Margherita da Siena in a nightie and a palm leaf, trilling with her head on one side, and one eye on the chorus of saints—and little Pieta—you know her way of running on to the stage."

"I know nothing," said Murua, looking at him out of a pair of rather sad gray eyes. "I've been brought up in the bush of Papua and never seen or heard anything in all the world."

"Lucky little beggar—I beg your pardon, lucky young lady. You've all the world to see, then. I've seen it all; had my cake and eaten it, and gobbled up the crumbs and licked my fingers. All gone. No more."

"I hope I'll have a cake too, some day," said Murua with some wistfulness, and went off to unseen outer regions at the back.

Campbell, left alone on the veranda, looked about him.

"Going off on a filibustering expedition with a pack of armed niggers doesn't sound much like my cousin's wife," he said to himself. "I wonder, has that human gramophone out in the bathroom brought me on a fool's errand. Lord, he's at it again. It

must be as bad as living in a bird-shop with all the little devils squeaking all the time.

"That girl is what you'd call local color, I suppose. Well, if there's any more local color of the same sort, they can bring it on. I could stand a lot of it. She's a clean-made little vessel, with as neat a for'ard as ever I saw, and I like the way she seized that hair of hers."

Murua, in the kitchen, was getting breakfast ready, restraining the boys from unsanitary and heathen practises with plates and cutlery, and thinking hard all the time. She did not, however, know what she was thinking about. It seemed odd. Something or other had happened somewhere to somebody; she couldn't be clear what.

"Daga-Daga!" she said uselessly to the mute who was loading the tray, "you must not dust the forks with your tunic. Here!" she snatched them from him.

The mute grinned and grunted. Even a deaf-and-dumb native could see that the *sinuabada* was not quite herself.

IX



"EXACTLY why do you think Mrs. Slade is Mr. Godfrey Campbell's widow?" demanded Captain Christopher Campbell in the crisp, sharp, now-hurry-up-and-don't-equivocate tone of the typical naval man.

Things had been on the move that day in Scratchley Island.

Breakfast was not two hours over, but in that space of time Captain Campbell had walked round the island, gone all over the garden and small plantation, had a brief look at the red-shell fishery, inspected Slade's launch, and ordered the engineer of the *Diamond* off to repair it. Page, overcome by the bitter feeling of social inferiority that haunts the merchant captain confronted by the "Service," was shamming a relapse in order to avoid the necessity of entertaining the guest. Murua was busy somewhere.

Harold, swept away by the smart breeze of authority and efficiency that seemed to follow Campbell wherever he went, somehow found himself in a quiet spot on the coral beach, going through an examination that promised to dig down to the roots of everything.

Only the vision, never quite absent from his waking or sleeping hours, which showed

him himself in the blue silk tights and waving feathers of a *primo tenore*, upheld him during this awkward quarter of an hour. It was plain that Captain Campbell meant to have very full value for his money. He had wanted to know what Harold's interest in the matter was; why he had cabled to him—the cable, forwarded to Australia, had brought Campbell up to New Guinea in a few weeks after its despatch—how he had obtained the knowledge he said he had, what he wanted the reward for, why he had not told his father about it.

Harold, plump and perspiring, confronted with a man who seemed to value people for quite other things than their ability to take upper C's and do a shake that was like twin stars, felt unpleasantly at a disadvantage.

"He's a bellowing beast, anyhow," said the youth to himself. "Without a shade of artistic feeling. He seems to think I'm just—just like anybody else!"

Wherein he was wrong. The naval officer scarcely classed him so high.

In answer to the question asked, he pulled out the picture of Mrs. Godfrey Campbell cut from "The Sketch," and showed it.

"H'm," said Campbell. "Yes, this is my cousin's wife. I've seen the picture often enough. What then? She was drowned off the *Azuria* the day after the murder. If she did it—"

"She wasn't drowned," interrupted Harold, gaining confidence; after all, he knew much more than this blatant, peremptory, red-faced swell did. "I saw there was a screw loose about her somewhere, from the first. She blushed when Murua asked her about her trousseau, and wouldn't answer. Didn't seem sure what her maiden name—"

"Wait a moment," interrupted Campbell. "Do I understand you to say that the little girl with the hair is in this business, too?"

"Certainly not," declared Harold. "No one but myself is. No one has anything whatever to do—"

"Ah, I thought she wouldn't be. Well, proceed!"

"I saw she was hiding—that's the word—but I couldn't make out why; and I thought at first she'd bolted—as some do, you know."

"Oh, yes, I know," said the naval officer crisply. "Well? Well?"

"And then I saw your advertisement.

And I wondered could she have had anything to do with it? I was in the house at the time, and I looked at her a lot, and that fixed her features on my mind, I suppose, because when——”

“A moment. You thought the lady was hiding, and you came here as her guest to find out?”

“Not that exactly. I——”

“Oh, that's good enough. And, being constantly with her, you watched your hostess, off her guard, and came to certain conclusions?”

“Yes,” said Harold doggedly.

“You are a nice boy. I like the kind of boy you are—very much,” said the captain. “And then?”

“I sha'n't tell you, if you make yourself so —— un——”

Captain Campbell reached out and took him gently by the scruff of the neck.

“You will,” he said. “You will go on and tell me everything.”

He shook him a very little; it felt like an elephant playing, with the imminent possibility of play dropping into earnest.

“Will you give me the reward?”

“The thirty pieces of silver? If you furnish the information wanted, you shall have them.” He gave another shake, and let go.

“It wasn't thirty shillings, it was a thousand pounds!”

“Right. My mistake. Go on.”

“Well, I went on my dad's ship again, and I couldn't think who the picture he had pinned up on the bulkhead reminded me of, and then suddenly I thought of something.”

“You thought of something?”

“And I fixed the picture up—like this.” He displayed the mask with the bobbed hair sketched in.

“And this is like Mrs. Slade—so?” asked Campbell, holding it in his hands.

“Like? It's her.”

“Mrs. Slade,” mused Campbell. “There always was another man—old Godfrey used to say he'd a rival at the ends of the earth who stood between. The ends of the earth—ah!”

“But the evidence,” he thought, “proved that no stranger had been seen about the house. If she did it, she did it 'on her own.' Well, my angel boy, is that all?”

“I went back again,” said Harold, “because dad had fever, and we had to stop there till he was better. And I saw more of her.”

“While she was nursing your father?”

“Murua did quite as much for him.”

“Dear boy! And you went on with these clever guesses of yours?”

“I said things—about people running away, and people killing their nearest and dearest—and she couldn't look me in the face.”

“No wonder. And then?”

“She took father's schooner without by your leave or with your leave, and went off on a wild-goose chase with it.”

“She borrowed your father's ship and went to rescue her husband. It doesn't sound like the kind of woman who would—but one never knows. Any more?”

It was almost a bark. Harold answered hastily.

“No, no more. Isn't it—isn't it enough—all right?”

“Oh, yes, it's enough to buy you your potter's field if the thing turns out as it looks likely to. Take care you don't go and hang yourself in the midst of it when you get it.”

“I wish to complete my musical education,” said Harold with dignity.

Campbell took not the slightest notice; he seemed to have sponged Harold off his mind with the last sentence. He called an inquiry to the engineer of the *Diamond*, who was coming up the beach.

“Fixed the battery?”

“Yes, sir.”

“She'll 'bat' all right now?”

“Yes, she's a beauty—she'll make rings round the *Diamond* if you ask her.”

“Good. Have her ready at one o'clock.”

“And the *Diamond*, sir?”

“That helper of yours can run her?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Send her off at once for Rossel Island to pick up the Resident Magistrate and his boys. Tell them to follow us to Jamieson Island.”

“Very good, sir,” said the engineer, shoving down the launch's dingey to ferry himself out.

He had the letters R. N. R. after his name, and it was meat and wine to him to hear a real officer command. Like the captain, he took no notice of Harold.

Nobody seemed to be noticing Harold. He felt aggrieved. It entered into his head that he would sing—some of his best things, with high notes and runs—just an absent-minded burst of warbling, as if . . .

On second thoughts, he would not. The talisman might fail, with these beefy brutes of captains and engineers who didn't know how to treat a genius when they had one in their company.

"He thinks a lot of that bellowing shout of his," thought Harold, "cultivated it to carry half a mile; and my voice——"

The tears came into his eyes, as they often did when he thought of his own genius.

"My voice—it'll sound across all the world. It'll sound after they're dead and gone, and after I am. And they treat me like a dog."

They did not. Both the captain and the engineer had a knowledge of dogs, and a fine respect for them.

Harold drifted off by himself under the great calophyllum tree, where the ivory and yellow blossoms had fallen in sheets of scented snow a few months ago. They were gone now; but the beautiful arch of green remained, curving over the sea-water and dipping long fingers in the foam.

"Neither of them could appreciate that to save his life," thought Harold; and the idea gave him some comfort—which might have been less had he known that all the Campbells were noted and judicious picture-buyers, while the engineer of the *Diamond* took the most artistic photographs that had ever been seen in New Guinea.

Campbell, walking swiftly up to the house again, was met on the veranda by a small figure in a khaki suit, its hair tightly bound underneath a cowboy felt hat, a revolver from Slade's store dangling beside its amazingly slender waist.

"Captain Campbell," it said, "since you have set us spinning down the ringing grooves of change today, and organized an expedition to go and give the Jamieson Islanders gyp, I suppose you are in command. So I thought it well to ask your permission to bring my butterfly net and boxes. I always take them on patrol. They are really no weight, but if you don't want them, you have only to speak."

You can not surprise a naval officer; as soon try to frighten him. Captain Campbell looked at the puttees and boots, the revolver, cartridge-belt and knife, with an expression of cool interest.

"Always—on patrol?" he said. "Then I take it that you do this sort of thing pretty frequently?"

"What sort of thing, Captain Campbell?"

"Legs. Very good legs, too," he added incidentally.

"Oh, yes, I've been brought up as a boy, practically, Captain Campbell. Pups was so disappointed at not having a son—and mum was dead—so he made a boy of me. I've been on lots of his punitive expeditions, and I know how to take cover and reserve my fire till I'm told."

"Adventures?"

"Ever so many," said Murua, without offering to tell them.

Captain Campbell, who had in his day suffered more than enough of the torments that afflict the brave and modest man constrained to listen to boasting of half-baked adventurers, nodded approval.

"How do you keep your side-arms?" he said.

Murua unslung the revolver and unsheathed the knife.

"Good," said the captain, inspecting them. "You're a little soldier, my dear. How old are you?"

"Sixteen and three-quarters," replied Murua.

"Then I mustn't call you 'my dear,' must I?"

"I think you had better call me Murua," was the young girl's answer. "Everybody does."

"Well shot," thought the captain. Then aloud, "What does Murua mean?"

"The name of the island where I was born."

"It's a pretty name."

"It's rather a custom in Papua. I always think it's a pity that Harold here—" indicating the young singer, who had toiled up the path considerably behind Campbell—"wasn't born in Samarai."

"Why?" asked Harold injudiciously.

"Because they might have called you Samarai—and that would have been singularly appropriate, since the other name of the place is Dinner Island."

The captain, who had seen Harold at table, burst out laughing, and suddenly checked himself.

"This won't get us on," he said, "and we have to get away for your Jamieson Island immediately after lunch. Miss Murua, you may take your nets and boxes, and I shall be happy to have yourself; you'll be worth two men to us, knowing the country as you do. Mr. Harold Page, I'm sending the *Diamond* to Rossel to fetch Mr. Jennifer, but if

you're anxious about your father, I can have her take him down to hospital in Samarai first, and you can come on to Jamie-son Island with us."

"I can't leave dad," said Harold hurriedly. "Besides, he's a lot better and says he doesn't want to go to hospital now; they'd only cut him up to find out things. I'll stay and look after him."

He expected the usual broadside from Murua, but none came. She looked at him curiously, and then turned her eyes to the stranger. Murua would make fun of him no more. Through all his fat and his selfishness, Harold felt it, and felt the pang that has so often been the lot of the known, and old, forced into competition with the dazzling unknown and new. He realized now that he had enjoyed the way she used to bait him.

But the captain and Murua were talking. Harold listened, while they spoke, passing him over as a thing of no more importance than the locusts that sang in the grass.

"There is not nearly so much risk about these things as one would think," Murua was saying.

And then came talk about native spears, and how far they could be thrown; ambushes; the time to attack a village; the number of men with rifles equal to a given number of natives using their own weapons.

"They are nearly always hostile there, and of course they do eat their prisoners—but it's not very dangerous; Papuans are such cowards," Murua was saying.

"And your own boys?" Captain Campbell snapped out.

He did not particularly fancy this pitting of coward against coward, but it was a job that had to be gone through. This was a plucky little devil, anyhow, this girl with the legs and the hair; he wondered had they many more like her in the country.

"Pups never had trouble with his."

"Ah? He must know how to manage them."

"There were regrettable incidents," replied Murua a little primly, "and after that they knew what was good for them."

"Good man," said the captain, aloud; then to himself: "This Miss Murua can hold her tongue. I'm quite sure now there can *not* be many like her in the country!"

"There's no need to wait any longer," he added. "If Slade's in difficulties, the sooner the better. Have all the boys up at once,

please. I'll look over them and see which I'll take. Do they speak English?"

"They are all deaf and dumb."

"Great Scott! Why?"

"Pups thinks it is because they are cheaper."

"And you think?"

"I'm Mr. and Mrs. Slade's guest, Captain Campbell, so I don't trouble about their private affairs."

"Ah. Good idea. Pity it isn't more generally followed. Now we'll have the boys, please, such as they are, and then you, I and the *Black Snake* will be off."

"Very well, Captain Campbell. I shall feel quite at home again, out on a patrol among the ranges, and I'm sure you will be just as good as Pups."

"I'll try, Miss Murua. I haven't any little girls of my own, or any Mrs. Campbell either, but I'll be as near your—what do you call it—your Pups to you as I possibly can."

"Thank you," said Murua politely; but somehow, the saying left her a little cold.



A BLACK spot on the horizon of Silence Bay was the Government launch; a black speck was Slade's. Scratchley Island was left to Captain Page and his son.

Harold danced up and down in his joy.

"Dad, they're gone! Dad, they're gone!" he half sang, half shouted. "I'm glad right down to my boots. I hate that sneering beast of a captain. And Murua hasn't eyes for any one else but him—silly little thing! I hope they'll stay away for weeks."

"Do you?" said Page unpleasantly, laying down the mandolinetta on which he had been lightly tinkling—a sign that the whisky bottle had been let out of jail. "Then what becomes of your thousand pounds?"

"My thousand? Oh, but that man has nothing to do with it. What made you think he had?" asked Harold, turning up limpid blue eyes to his father's.

"I don't think. I know. I saw you with your heads together down on the beach. What is it—divorce, embezzlement, what?"

"Well, if it was, and a dozen other things besides, do you think I'd tell you?" demanded Harold. "You'd go and claim it yourself like a shot."

The captain lifted himself up on his couch; he seemed stronger than one would

have thought, judging by his invalid appearance of the morning.

"Whether I would or wouldn't don't matter," he said. "But I can tell you this—there's something in this island we're on better than any reward, if we can only get hold of it; and it'll pay us both to work together. Now's the time, when they're all away."

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," said Harold. "But perhaps we may get all the lot. I wouldn't mind."

He burst out into song—

"Sing, sweet bird, and chase my sorrow,
Let me listen to thy strain——"

X



OVER Jamieson Island, dawnlight broke upon a fairy scene.

Edith sat up on the deck, where she had lain during the night, upon a few cushions borrowed from the cabin, and looked about her.

"I wonder am I dreaming it all?" she thought.

It was extraordinarily like a dream—the day and night of driving over blue foamy sea in Page's queer little schooner; the dark wild faces, and naked bodies decked with beads and shells, of her Papuan crew; the looming up in last night's starlight of a mysterious, high, black island, before which they cast anchor at a safe distance out, to wait for day; the swift flashing out, at sunrise, of a monstrous blue castle draped with green-hanging woods and laced with white threads of waterfall; the long, pale beaches, leaned over by dreaming palms; the empty bay, the moveless forest, the waiting and the hush.

Herself—Edith of the Cardillions, of England, London, society—in man's clothing, armed as a man, with her golden hair clipped short and manlike about her face, mustering a wild band of savages to fight her way into a dangerous island!

"Who would ever have thought it?" she said, handling the haft of her knife.

Like the sudden flash of the sun above Lalang, the great peak of the island, came a recollection into her mind, of the days on the *Malaja*, in the Indian Ocean, when the Australian lover of whom she knew so little had prophesied almost this very thing.

"You could fight like the women of the Middle Ages, when their lords went away,

and they defended the castles—you could be like Joan of Arc."

And she had laughed at him. And now! How much better he had known her than she knew herself!

"No, I am not afraid," she said. "Perhaps I was—a little—when I started. But I'm not now. I shall go through with this, and whatever the troubles, I'll find it out. And I shall be in time."

She called the boy known as Pumpkin to her again. He had already been questioned as to what he had heard, and how he had heard it.

The first part of the question he was willing enough to answer. The white man was in trouble; what trouble, he did not know. The white man was not dead, so far as he knew, but he could not be certain. He could not tell how he had heard; when pressed, he declared he had dreamed it, and later, that a "spilit long bush"—forest demon—had told him; later again, that he "no savvy."

And the nearer they got to Jamieson Island, his birthplace, the more determined he was to know and remember nothing at all. When the *Tagula* cast anchor at night below the indefinite black mass of Lalang Mountain, Pumpkin had got to the point of declaring himself a liar. He had heard nothing anywhere, at any time—it was mere "gammon" on his part. The *sinuabada* must not mind what he said.

Edith, guessing that he feared some vengeance from his countrymen, was quick to drop the subject and turn to another. Pumpkin must show the way to the village where the *taubada*—chief—had gone after boys. Of course, belonging to the island, he knew where the deaf mutes were whom Slade wanted.

Pumpkin was nervous and uncertain. He had not been back to the island since the term in jail that had taken him away from it—which he evidently regarded with pride, as a kind of university course, embracing all the elements of a liberal education. He knew that if any harm came to Slade's expedition, "Government he wild alonga we-fellow," but he also knew that his countrymen, who had not enjoyed his advantages, would scarcely realize this. And the cooking-pot was always waiting for men of Lalang Mountain who made themselves unpopular among their friends. He squatted the deck like a monkey, silent, chewing

betel-nut and spitting scarlet foam between the rails, his monkey-like face showing indecision and alarm.

The sun was creeping down the side of Lalang; crimson and emerald parrots were wide awake and flying from palm to palm; white cockatoos, far off, wheeled and screamed against the hanging green of the forests.

And still not a sign of life on the long white beaches; not the ripple of a canoe on the golden glass of the bay. Jamieson Island might have been Deika-Deika, the island of the dead, inhabited only by ghosts, for all signs of life it gave. Edith, knowing that the place had a fairly large population, read hostility into the unnatural quiet of the place. It was time to make a move. As for Pumpkin—when one must, one must.

Edith, daughter of castles, and descendant of crusaders who may or may not have been scrupulous in their dealings with inferior races, bent down over Pumpkin and pricked him shrewdly with her knife. Pumpkin sprang into the air, yelling.

"Suppose one boy not doing what I tell him," said the terrible *sinuabada*, "first time I cut him up altogether alonga this-fellow knife, behind—afterward—I shoot him along gun, behind altogether I *kai-kai*—eat—him."

"I going, I going!" cried Pumpkin, trembling for his life.

The crew who had been watching as they munched their betel-nut, gave vent to a savage clang of laughter. If they had seen Pumpkin tortured before their eyes, and then roasted alive over a slow fire, they would have laughed still longer and still more. Many of them had assisted at such scenes before they were old enough to wear the armband of manhood or carry the warrior's bow.

The laughter, however, was mingled with something that told Edith she held the men in her hand, bar treachery—the exception that must always be made with the New Guinea savage. Openly, not one of them would defy her.

"Lower the boat and land the stores," she ordered, standing guard at the rail with her rifle while they did it.

There was no knowing whether the silence of the forest might not break up and produce a howling war-party, ready to loot anything that was left on the beach between trips.

The stores were landed, the carriers drawn up beside them. Edith followed in the last trip of the boat, leaving instructions behind her. The crew were to anchor well away from land and keep a good lookout till her return. No natives were on any pretext to be allowed on board, and a watch was to be kept at night.

As for running away with the schooner, if anything of that kind were attempted, the *sinuabada* would send "spilits" of the very worst kind out of the bush, with instructions to wreck the boat and drown every one on her. Also the Government would be "wild" exceedingly, and send the crew to Daru, which is the penal servitude of Papua.

The crew, unobservant of the two mutually destructive propositions thus presented, shivered and promised to obey. And Edith, dropping into the boat, prepared to make a start. Lalang Mountain, a wave of hanging forests tossed from sea to crown of sky, looked at her threateningly.

"Who are you, to challenge my secrets?" it seemed to ask.

The feeling of the dream was strong again, as Edith, in the rear of her carriers, turned her face to the mountains and entered the dark, narrow track leading upward from the palm-trees and the sea.



UNDER her tent-fly, in the dark, Edith lay and thought, through the roaring of the mountain rain. How it stamped upon the thin duck of the fly! How the ground outside seemed actually to vibrate with the shock of the beating torrents!

There was a river not far away; its voice was only heard as a low grumbling through the heavy boom of the rain. On such a night as this a hundred men could creep up to your very pillow, and you would never know that one was there until you felt the wicked barbed spear strike through your body.

Was that a shadow on the shadow, there in the inverted V of the tent opening—just where one could see the faintest difference between the dark that was inside and the dark that was out? No, she had seen it before; it was the big tree-trunk that stood in front of the camping ground. She must not be nervous. For the sake of the man she loved, she must not be nervous.

All day the feeling of the dream had

persisted; it seemed as if she were fancying everything that happened, with the odd detachment of the sleeper who acts and suffers, and yet looks down at his own acts and sufferings. She saw Edith Slade, the wife of Ben Slade, or perhaps his widow—in the dream she could take that quite calmly, since she knew it couldn't be true—lifting her booted and putteed limbs over and over again, a hundred million times, up on to roots that were level with her waist, up on to stones all slimed with moss, up over huge rotting logs that one had to straddle like a horse—always up and up, along a track that was no more a pathway than the crashed-down gap of a fallen tree is a road.

The boys found it unerringly; she herself would have wandered off it into the bush a dozen times in an hour. They carried their huge bush knives in their hands and swung them almost ceaselessly as they went along, cutting their way through overgrown places where the hooked tentacles of vine and thorn-palm barred the way. They climbed like cats, scrambling with their heavy loads up the face of appalling precipices, where Edith held on with both hands and scarcely dared to look back, catching, when she did, sudden disquieting glimpses of the whole world spread out underneath her own elbows.

The mountain that had looked like one great curtain of forest, seen afar off, turned out to be a kind of devil's switchback of razorbacks and gorges—down, down to the bottom of a cañon of dense green foliage, where the air was hot and thick as soup, and leeches stood on the end of the branches, waving their tails in the air in eagerness to drink one's blood; then over a rattling stream that one crossed by jumps along huge rocks, with an eye ever watchful for alligators; then up and up and up, scrambling and holding on, streaming wet with heat; then the feeling of a gust of cool air on one's face, and the glimpse of a ray of light through the trees, and then down, down, down again.

It was killing work. And in addition to the physical strain, there was always the fear of islanders; every shadow concealed—it might be—a crouching war-party; every stone that was loosened by a crashing descent into some gorge might bring about an answering shower of stones from an invisible fastness in the bush.

Edith, in the dream, watched Edith going

through it all, and said to her that it was not real. It was something read in a book and reproduced in restless sleep.

"You have a touch of fever, probably," said Edith to Edith; "you are bound to get it some time, you know, and that is why you dream these unpleasant dreams."

Twice in the day the dream-cloud broke. At noon they stopped to rest and eat on a little sand beach formed by the bend of the torrential river that had been barring and impeding them all day. Edith, in the dream, noted idly that they had crossed and recrossed it thirteen times since day-break. It was heaven to cease the fierce exertion, and to rest for a little while; in the dream, Edith was quite sorry for Edith, and told her kindly to lie down and take what repose she could.

The river beat angrily along over its stones; innumerable locusts chirred in the jungle beside; a long way off in the forest something sounded like a drum—"Oom-oom"—a cassowary challenging his rivals to a fight. Edith in the dream listened and drank her tea out of a tin pannikin and thought of nothing at all.

Then, slinkingly, out of the unbroken jungle slipped a thin black dog and began to drink in the river. And it was still silent, save for the sound of the water, and the locusts and the birds. But the dream was shattered like a mirror when a stone splits through.

For Edith remembered that the Lalang Mountain men, the worst and most dangerous in Jamieson Island, kept black dogs, and that the dogs—so Murua had told her—never strayed far from their masters, seeming to understand the dangers they ran if they did.

The carriers saw the small, black, inoffensive dog lapping silently in a pool, and their countenances changed. They stayed their hands with the food halfway to their mouths. They stared at the forest curtain. What was behind?

There was no sound but the river and the chirring locusts, and far away the drum of the angry cassowary.

It was strangely like the scenes in the old-fashioned stereographs—motion suddenly struck into tense stillness and arrest.

Edith, very clear in mind now as to where she was, and what might be going to happen, acted from instinct—instinct, perhaps, inherited from the many who had

gone before her. She sprang to her feet and fired her revolver into the bush, on the side where the dog was drinking.

There was no sound but the river and the locusts; not a leaf shook in the wall of jungle. But the small black, slinking dog, which had not noticed the shot, lifted its head immediately after and seemed to listen to something behind it. Then it turned round, slunk into the shadows, and was gone.



EDITH and her men left the gorge and began the weary climb again. And the dream came back, and Edith wondered at Edith, struggling there in the jungle, torn, dirty, wet, worn out. And then, just as she was going to call to the carriers to wait a little, since they were going too fast for her, four yards of the limb of a tree cast itself loose from the trunk, and swung itself at her with such hideous speed that only her sudden start and fall saved her.

She cried out, and the boys came running back, and in a moment some one had struck and struck again with a two-foot knife, and a great python head, mottled like tortoise-shell, was rolling loose on the ground, snapping powerless jaws, while two boys slashed with furious cries at the kicking coils of the brute. When they went on and left it in the track, it was still jerking, though cut into pieces.

Edith sat down on a table-topped root and fought off a fit of crying.

"It didn't get me," she kept repeating, to encourage herself. "It didn't get me—and I must not be nervous."

She rose as soon as she could and followed the carriers, who had loaded themselves with portions of the great snake, and were telling one another about the feast they were going to have round the camp-fire that night.

The day ended in the dream again—a bad dream. Camp was pitched near a stream, two fires put up, food cooked, sentries planted out. There was no sign of any hostile tribe, but . . .

Edith, going aback along the path to find a place to wash, noticed a bright croton leaf, such as natives wear for ornament, lying on the open way. She did not think it had been there when they passed before, and none of her own men had any croton leaves with them.

She looked at the long streak of scarlet as if it had been a snake. Did it mean that the Lalang tribes were trailing them? Impossible to say. She would not ask her boys, knowing that they assuredly would not speak the truth; and she did not know enough about the mountain tribes to guess whether they would be likely to follow up in such a manner, or not.

One thing was sure—if they were doing so, they meant no good. Coupled with the appearance of the dog, the incident was disquieting.

Edith resolved that she would set her alarm watch for half-past four o'clock. Murua had told her that native night attacks almost invariably took place just as dark was lifting, and that would be about five o'clock.

"I wonder why I mind so much?" she said to herself, walking back. "It isn't real. It is all a dream."

She found she could not eat her evening meal. She felt well, but food had lost its taste; biscuit was wood, meat was rag.

"I must be overtired," she thought. "I will try my best to get some sleep. If I break down—but, of course, I mustn't do anything of the kind."

She slept after all, a dead, heavy sleep, in which there were no dreams. At half-past four the tiny buzz of the alarm watch under her head roused her.

She sat up on her camp bed, and looked and listened. She might as well have done so with her head buried under the pillow. Sight and hearing, in that dead dark, that thunderous downpour of night-long rain, were alike useless.

"What does one keep watch for? How does one know?" she asked herself. "What do other people do?"

The roaring of the rain was her only answer. Unable to see or hear, she listened and strained her eyes; one could not help trying, though one knew it to be useless.

Then something did happen. She smelt. She had grown so accustomed to the strong savage odor of her own boys that she did not notice it as a rule, and could hardly have said what it was like. But she knew, instantly and with sharp certitude, that this was different. It was the indubitable reek of a Papuan, but not of her Papuans.

Who was it? How near was he, or they? What was she to do? What would a man

do? That thing she must compass, whatever it might be. She tried, with her heart thrumming against her ribs, to think what Ben would have done. And the answer came back, as if spoken in her ear:

"He couldn't be heard or seen in the rain and dark. He would creep over to the boys' fly, wake them quietly, and have them hold their rifles in readiness. Then, if the cannibals made a rush, he would order them to fire."

She had been frightened before, when danger was not certain. Now that the lowest of her senses had taken duty, in the eclipse of the others, and told her that danger was truly at hand, she felt steady and quiet. And the dream feeling was quite gone.

One foot after the other, she crept off her bed—she had lain down fully dressed, even to her boots. In the dark, she slipped, inch by inch, to the opening of the tent, feeling her way, for even the dim triangle of faintest gray that marked the doorway had disappeared in this dark hour before the dawn.

Once she almost fell; she gritted her teeth and got her balance back. The faint smell seemed fainter; she must be moving away from it. How long it took to creep across to the boys' fly! Yet it was but a few yards away.

She found the slope of canvas with her hand, and dipped underneath. Even through the noise of the rain, she could hear the snoring of the tired carriers.

Her sentry, placed at the door of the tent, was lying curled up in a dead slumber. She had expected nothing else.

How did people wake other people, when it was necessary to be quiet? Instinct taught her again. She felt for the nearest carrier, knowing him to be Pumpkin, as she had seen the boys turn in, and very cautiously passed her hand down his arm, with a stroking movement, at the same time placing her fingers lightly on his mouth.

Pumpkin had not been brought up in Jamieson Island for nothing. He woke at once and tapped her arm to let her know it. She put her mouth to his ear.

"Bushmen," she whispered. "Wake the boys. Take the guns."

She could feel him trembling under her hand, but he acted with unexpected promptness. He slipped off the staging of the fly,

woke the other carriers by some means of his own, and made each man take the rifle that lay cocked and loaded beside him.

Edith could feel them shuffling and moving about, and catch the vibration of the gunstocks as they set them down on the staging, crooked in their arms. She drew her own revolver, preferring to trust to it at close quarters. They waited.

The rain thundered on; wet smells from the forest, deadly sweet, wafted past them on a stray puff of wind. The carriers, huddled together on the staging, shuffled their malodorous bodies now and then, and one or two of them trembled as Pumpkin had done. Obviously, they were very much afraid.

It seemed a long time, but judged afterward by the watch, was not more than half an hour, before the light puffs of breeze began to increase to a steady flow, the air was touched with the faintest tinge of gray, and the rain slackened, died away, ceased.

Dawn came quickly. A swamp pheasant sent up its long bubbling note, like the cry of a drowning man. A leatherneck in the bush cried piercingly:

"O do come here! O do come here! O do——"

Edith stretched out her cramped limbs and slipped off the staging.

"Pumpkin, I think he no coming, this man-bush," she said; day was a wonderful heartener.

"I think," said Pumpkin.

The carriers got down and began to roam about the little clearing where they had camped, looking for the "man-bush." They were very brave, now that the sun was up. They still carried their rifles in their hands, and told each other what they were going to do to the Lalang mountaineers. Suddenly one of them yelled and began pointing to Edith's tent-fly.

Edith came over. The canvas was rent through in a long ugly jag, and her camp bed, underneath, was split by a spear.

The carriers began to chatter like a lot of parrots, vying with the real parrots that were now awake in the trees, and squealing and squawking after their morning meal. Edith did not know what the men were saying, but she needed no words to tell her what she had escaped.

She stood looking at the rent canvas of the bed, the jagged duck of the tent, and

thought of the rent that might have let out her own life, had she not awakened in time. Why had the attacking party gone no further? Evidently they must have gathered, somehow, that the camp was awake and on guard. And yet she would have sworn that nobody made noise enough to be heard in that thunderous downpour of rain. Perhaps the man who struck his spear through her tent realized that he had only hit an empty cot.

At any rate, it was broad daylight now, and there was no sign of any enemy, and she was not really sick, as she had feared she might be. She was only tired—bone-tired, dog-tired, partly with the excitement of the night, and partly, she knew, with the deadly weariness of incipient fever.

But tiredness didn't matter. One could make oneself go on.

They went on. Edith kept close behind the carriers today; she had seen a tiger-snake or two the day before and realized that she was safer in the immediate rear of a big party. Besides, there might be more pythons. She did not think there was anything else that could harm them, apart from natives.

Up they were mounting steadily. Whenever a break came in the trees, one could catch glimpses of a blue sea-horizon, wonderfully high in heaven.

The air began to change; in the shadows it was very cool, and the innumerable small torrents that broke across the track were icy cold. Scarlet begonias showed like scattered fire in the bush. Wild raspberries began to peer from underbrush. At noon, when they halted, long beards of gray moss were hanging on the trees below which they rested and cooked food.

"That's the three-thousand-foot mark," said Edith, remembering Murua's talk. "And by and by there should be pines. And then we ought to be getting near the villages; she said they were mostly about four thousand feet up. I wish—I do wish—little Murua was with me!"

But there was no use wishing. No use wishing for rest, either, for night and the tent and the cot. One must go on, with the fever poison bubbling up like a boiling kettle, and scalding one's bones, and simmering in one's brain.

Edith was pretty sure now that she had a touch of fever. She set her teeth, and tramped ahead.

"The patrol officers do their duty sick or well," she thought. "I can do what they can. So long as I don't get delirious—"

But the dream feeling came back so strongly that sometimes she really had to remind herself where and who she was.

"I am Edith Slade," she said out loud. "I am climbing up the Lalang range, to look for Ben. I must keep going on. It isn't real—this ground under my feet is just fancy, because I shall be in camp and resting at once, and then it will be in the past, and past and present are all one. This is a dream, but I must remember to dream it right."

She stopped to take breath on the summit of one of the heart-breaking razor-backs. The carriers were climbing on ahead. She noted that one of them with a fifty-pound load on his back, was calmly decorating his hair with wild pink balsams as he ascended the next slope which was much steeper than the roof of any house she had ever seen; and another, equally weighted down, was playing a Jew's-harp as he climbed.

They seemed utterly unconscious of the different steepes of the way; they were mountain boys from Ferguson Island, and level ground was the only type of country over which they could not travel with ease. Edith, apart from the fever weariness that was dragging at her limbs, felt like a fly in a dish of treacle when she compared her movements with theirs.

"If they chose to run away!"

The thought went through her like a knife. She had been long enough in New Guinea to know that runaway carriers are the supreme misfortune. Against everything else you can fight; against that, nothing is to be done. Your food, your trade goods for purchasing from the natives, your tent, your medicines, your very life, in truth, are in those packs upon the shoulders of the irresponsible cannibals who carry for you. If they leave you. . . .

"And they could, like birds flying away from some creature that can only creep," she thought.

God! The country was full of death. Snakes, pythons, alligators, hostile natives; precipices and torrents, fevers—and this other peril. Should she ever get through?

Again, a saying of Murua's came up.

"Mrs. Slade, when you are in the bush, you must never think of what might happen,

because it doesn't happen, and you'll get the fear of the bush if you let things take hold of you."

The fear of the bush! She knew it now. But it should not take hold of her.

Another night, and another day. Edith, swallowing quinine till her head seemed ready to spin loose from her spine, fought off the fever and climbed on. There was no attack on the second night, but she woke in the small hours and heard through the slackening rain a sound that made her turn and reach for Murua's .45.

Scrape—scrape. Scrape—scrape.

A wild boar was sharpening his terrible tusks—how near to her?

"Whoof!" came the answer; it was very near indeed.

"What would Ben do if he was here?" she asked herself as usual. But the answer brought no comfort.

"He'd light a lantern and go out and shoot it. But if I do that, and miss, it'll charge and rip me up."

She weighed the chances, and then, at the sound of another "Whoof!" hastily lit her lantern and set it on the ground.

"It may bring natives," she said, "but if I don't do something the beast will go for me, and the carriers would wake up just in time to run up trees and howl. Wild beasts are afraid of fire. All the boys' books say so. I wish I had read more boys' books."

It seemed that she was right, for the whetting and the "whoofing" ceased, and there was a crash among the bushes near the camp. Edith turned over and slept, well pleased.

"I don't believe the light matters a bit," she said.

On the following day she began to count the provisions carefully and to calculate how much was left. To her dismay, she found that more than half had been consumed. Of course, the way back would be shorter. But how if they were another day or two getting to the villages?

"Your stores are your life," ran Murua's words in her mind. "Never take chances with your stores. If you are short, try and find sago, and take a day off to make it."

Early in the day they came upon a sago swamp. Edith did not like the situation; it was in a closed valley, overlooked by high rocks among which an army could have hidden. But what was one to do? She gave the order to halt.

"I haven't any idea how they make it," she said, "but I know that is sago, and they can just do what they like with it."

Most of the boys were well pleased; anything that enabled them to stop active work was sure of approval. They dropped their loads at once and began chopping down a big sago-palm.

The axes went through the thin shell of snake-skin-patterned bark and bit deep into the inner mass of white sago-pith.

"Ho! Ho! Hoosh!" sang the carriers, delighted at the prospect of a feast.

Pumpkin alone did not look satisfied.

"My word, *simuabada*, I no like me for this place," he said, coming up to Edith as she sat on a fallen log. "Too much — stone he stop along this place."

"What's the matter with the stones?" asked Edith.

But Pumpkin's English, limited at best, seemed to fail him.

"I think so," he replied gravely.

"What for you no like stone?"

"Where?"

"There! What's the matter? Don't you want your food—kai-kai?"

"Kai-kai?"

"Yes. Why don't you want to get it here?"

Pumpkin appeared to reflect, scratching in the wet ground with one prehensile toe. Then he looked up as if he had solved the problem, and said confidentially—

"I think so."

"Oh, go away!" said Edith, realizing for a moment how it was that most white men in Papua were fluent in the use of bad language. "I could almost swear at him myself," she reflected; and then, with a laugh, "Well, I know this time what Ben would have done!"

In spite of the elevation, it was exceedingly hot in this enclosed valley. Edith drew out of the sun under the curved arcade of a mass of sago-palms. She saw the boys were keeping no watch, and that they were so well pleased with the prospect of a mess of sago as to sing and shout regardless of possible risk. It was no use telling them to stop; they began again in a minute.

Pumpkin worked as hard as the rest, making a washing trough from the sheath of a twenty-foot leaf, setting it up on a slope, and washing the starch out of the sago pith as the others handed it over. It

was interesting to watch; Edith forgot her uneasiness about the light last night, and the noise today, in the sight of that easily prepared mass of food.

"They say one tree makes enough to keep a man and his family for a year; and Murua told me there were places in the west where the sago forests are as big as an English county," she thought. The wonder of tropic fertility struck her yet again, as it had struck her many times before.

"I can see the rush coming," she thought dreamily, "the rush that is bound to come, some day, from the small cold countries to places like this. Fuel free, clothes cheap—it's the warm things that cost—land for nothing, houses for a few weeks' labor of your boys, food growing in tons when you scratch the soil, or cut down a tree. So much for nothing! And then they grumble because there are no trams or picture-shows."

The boys were chopping away, chattering like parrots. The inevitable leather-neck, excited by the talk, kept breaking in from the top of a palm with sharp querulous remarks.

"Oh, do get up now!" it exclaimed. "Oh do—"

Another answered it excitedly.

"A pretty frilly white petticoat," it squawked. "A pretty frilly white petticoat. A pretty frilly white pet—"

Edith looked down at her knickerbockered legs and laughed.

"You may well call for that," she said. "But I think it would be quite as inconvenient as Absalom found his hair."

Day was passing. The shadows of the sago-palms stretched out, as the boys worked on. Edith nursed her rifle on her knee, and kept herself from thinking about Ben and what might have happened to him.

"Murua was so right," she said. "One must not think."



EDITH lifted the rifle along her arm and tried its weight, her finger resting lightly on the trigger. Then she looked through the sight. And right in the little nick of the V a long way off and above, appeared a small black head.

Edith realized instantly that the head could not see her; she was sitting in the shelter of drooping sago leaves, and the

sight had been taken between two of them.

She kept the rifle up. She noticed that the beating of her heart made it shake a little.

Then the small black head rose higher, and half a body was to be seen, working hard at something. In another moment a big boulder began skipping and rumbling down the side of the gorge, straight for the working boys. They separated, with yells.

Another boulder started from a different place, and caught up the first. From a thicket of betel-palm another and another started off. They sounded like horses galloping; they kicked and swerved all over the hill; it was impossible to tell where they might be coming from.

The boys had laid down their rifles in a heap; they could not collect themselves sufficiently to run back and get them. Instead, they rushed howling about the valley that had turned into a death-trap, trying to dodge the boulders.

Edith saw one boy knocked over and crushed into unconsciousness or death. Another was hideously pinned against a tree; he shrieked and writhed.

"Wow, wow, wow!" sounded from the rocks above, as if a hundred dogs had been let loose; and down from the sides and summits came a flood of Lalang men.

Afterward, Edith remembered what they had looked like. She recalled how they had plunged down the precipices as though their feet were winged; how their stocky little bodies and backward arched chests seemed to be made of whalebone and India rubber; how their faces were painted white and red, and their necks hung with swaying human hands, loose jawbones and strung teeth.

A spear struck the ground beside her with a loud *whump!* It went three feet into the earth. She never looked at it; she kept her sight steady on that little black head up at the top, that seemed to be directing the rest. Her finger shook on the trigger. Could she pull it? What would Ben . . .

Then suddenly came a howl down the mountain-side, in good emphatic English:

"Shoot, you blazing idiot! I can't get him. Shoot!"

"It's Ben," she thought, and was not the least surprised.

She fired. The small black head disappeared, and a body began bumping down the rocks. The attacking horde paused and

wavered. Even at that moment, she wondered how anything that had not wings and a tail could stop itself midway in such a plunge.

"Hallo!" came Ben's voice again. "Come up here, you chap; I can't come down to you. Go behind the big banyan."

Then followed a volley of shouts to the boys, directing them what to do. Shots from a rifle accompanied the calls, and brought down one mountaineer.

The carriers stopped howling, ran for their guns, bunched together, and began to shoot like old soldiers.

Edith, as she hurried behind cover of the banyan, and went up the track that disclosed itself among the myriad columns of the air-roots, was conscious of an odd, mixed feeling of surprise, in that Ben should swear as he was doing before her, and in that she was for the first time hearing the talk of men among men. She scrambled up and up, seeing the Lalang men in flight ahead of her, clutching with her small burned hands at the hot rocks on either side, and thinking, now, of nothing at all.

Then she was out on a platform of dry beaten earth, cunningly hidden behind a rampart of rocks, and built over with a dozen or so of low round huts like mushrooms without the stalks. And the Lalang men were gone, and the high sunlight of the mountains shone clear upon the all-but-empty village, with one man standing in the midst of the low huts—a tall man, a white man, a man who was lame, and leaned upon a crutch—Ben!

She made two steps forward. Slade let out a shout of "Edith!" and in a moment his arms were round her fast, so fast that it seemed as if he never would let go again. He did let go, however, and his next words were more husbandlike than loverlike:

"Good God! My dear girl, are you mad?"

"It looks as if there was some method in my madness," said Edith, laughing and crying.

"Where's your party?"

"I'm it. What's happened?"

"Did you come up here alone?"

"I had the carriers. What have you done to your leg?"

"These beggars dislocated my ankle with that pretty trick of chucking rocks. How was it you weren't killed?"

"I don't know. Does it matter? Has your ankle been put in?"

"Oh, Lord, yes, the carriers yanked it in for me with a bush rope before they deserted. What did you do with Murua?"

"Left her to nurse Captain Page; he came in sick. Your carriers deserted? Where to?"

"I don't know where to, but they'll wish it had been to the infernal regions when I get hold of them. They're always liable to do it if you get under the weather in any way. The only chaps that stuck to me were the two dummies I'd recruited; they're here yet. Only for them, I wouldn't have had much chance. The local beggars gave me food enough—rather too much."

"Too much?"

"Yes. Thought I wouldn't get away again, you know; wanted me nice and fat."

"Oh, Ben!"

"But they wouldn't give me any carriers, though I offered a fortune in trade for six men down to the coast. They thought it was a trap. And, of course, I'd have had to be slung along in a hammock; couldn't go alone. And those two beggars of mine—" pointing to a couple of gloomy, beetle-browed natives squatted in a corner—"couldn't have done it; it wants changes. So I stopped where I was and hoped it would occur to somebody to—"

"Hadn't you any firearms?"

"Just the six shots in the revolver on my belt. The carriers took all the rifles with them. They're probably in the ranges above, making a happy day in the country for any tribe they've got a grudge against. I kept the six shots in case of emergencies, such as any one wanting to poke my eyes out with a firestick, or tie me up and bite off my nose."

"They wouldn't do such awful things!"

"Oh, wouldn't they? Edith, my girl, you never ought to have ventured—I'd rather they had *kai-kai'd* me ten times over. My brave girlie! My little Joan of Arc!"

He spoke with the abruptness that—he she had learned to know—covered his strongest feelings. There was, in any case, no time for more talk; one could not tell how soon the Lalang men might not return, and two of Edith's carriers were lying injured or dead below.

Slade, by signs, ordered the mutes who were with him to go and fetch them up. One they left in place, signing to say that

he was dead; the other, who had been crushed against a rock, they brought into the village; and in a few moments, lying on the ground, he too gasped away his life. At this Edith began drying her eyes with a handkerchief that had suffered much from its journeyings through the bush.

"He didn't think he was going to die when we broke camp this morning," was all her explanation. "He'd have liked to live and go home again—and now I've led him to death, and I've shot a man myself. I feel like a murderess."

Slade saw her bite down on her ripe lower lip at the word, and knew that the long-forgotten hangman's rope had jerked again. But he only answered what she had said.

"Don't worry about that. Where is he? Look."

"I—I can't see him," said Edith, gazing up and down the rocky slope. "And yet I did see him fall and roll down."

"Yes. You winged him, and when he picked himself up he ran away, and the attack collapsed. I finished mine all right."

"I'm glad," said Edith. "I fired without knowing what I was doing—it seemed to fire itself. But I didn't want to kill any one."

"It takes a woman," observed Slade, "to draw a bead on a man, press the trigger, and then explain that the last thing she wanted was to do him any harm. All the same, I think I understand. I wonder are those beasts coming back?"

The carriers were all up in the village now, the deaf and dumb ones—Slade's own boys—staring wildly about them and making odd animal sounds, the others beginning to calm down, and, as a corollary, to chew betel.

For the first time there was leisure to look about and to admire the amazing scene.

The little cluster of mushroom-brown huts occupied the top of a hill as sharp as a pyramid, which had been artificially leveled at the summit. It seemed to float on a sea of magnificent blue ranges, wave after wave tossing up to the white-hot sky. Beyond the last wave of all, the plain of the Pacific, lit by the afternoon sun, glowed like the sea of brass in the Israelitish temple.

Edith, looking down as from some far-off bastioned cloud, felt once again the wonder and the awe that wait upon those who journey in the unknown lands—the feeling that

she had once expressed to Slade as a fear that the country would get up and bite her. She spoke something of this, but Slade was busy. He had spied five Lalang men sneaking back among the rocks, and darted out with his boys to capture them.

When Edith turned round from the far-off scenery, it was at the sound of a violent scuffle, punctuated with howls. Slade and his boys had fallen on the mountaineers and secured four out of the five.

"The headman of the village, and his son, and the chief sorcerer, and the principal buck of the place. This is a haul!" cried Slade joyously. "I was afraid they wouldn't come back, but they thought they'd get in a spear or two under cover of the rocks. Just what I wanted. Edith, I'll trouble you to go into one of the huts and stop there for the present. This won't be pretty."

"Are you going to kill them?" asked the girl, her eyes widening.

"Certainly not; nor am I going to leave them to the chance of a Government patrol catching them later on. I'm going to kill all their pigs, and give the men themselves the wallop of their lives."

"Oh, Ben, don't be cruel!" entreated the woman who had drawn a bead on a man half an hour before.

"Certainly I sha'n't be cruel. I'll only make them wish they hadn't ever been born; my ankle's well enough for that."

"If you're going to kill pigs, I can't stand it," said Edith inconsequently, and fled.

Crouched in the ill-smelling dusk of a reed-and-thatch hut, she listened to the cries of delight emitted by the boys who were rounding up the pigs; to the wails of distress from the savages who saw their most valued possessions about to be destroyed—one cried so hard for mercy on the pigs that she would have sworn he was pleading for his wife, had she not known that no peril to a mere wife could elicit such wails from a Papuan.

She heard the shots and grunts that followed—not a pig squealed; Slade's aim was too sure—and then she put her fingers in her ears, for it was plain now that justice was being executed on something else than pigs, with the aid of a length or two of lawyer cane.

But the howlings of the cannibals pierced through her defenses. Clearly, they thought that the tortures before the final


dismembering and cooking were just beginning, and expected even worse to follow.

There was silence in the village at last. Edith rose from her crouched position and came forth. Four villainous looking black men fled limping into the bush as she went out. They had not a cry remaining in them; they could scarcely believe that their lives were left to them. Slade's and Edith's boys, after a pause in the hope of some more fun, lay down on the dry earth and rolled about, yelling with laughter.

"My word!" Pumpkin kept ejaculating. "I think so! I think so!"

Even the deaf mutes gibbered with delight. It had been as good as a theater to them.

"I've taught them to behave to the next injured man that comes along this way—if any one ever does," observed Slade, throwing away a broken length of rubber-like cane. "Now, march! Two boys can carry me; the rest of you look after the *kai-kai*, and carry the *sinuabada* when she is tired."

 FAR from the cannibal hill towns they camped that night, in one of the little paradises that the strange land of Papua, half devil-country, half fairy realm, can show to those who love her. It was in a grove of pawpaw, that curious Jack-and-the-Beanstalk kind of palm that springs up from seed to fruit in a single year.

Half of the palms were hung with amber globes of fruit, half were decked with drooping racemes of flowers whiter and sweeter than orange-blossoms; for the pawpaw fruits and flowers on different trees. They stood up slim and dainty, fine ladies of the forest, in a clearing where one could see the grass and the evening sun; and one huge banner-leaved banana heaved its mighty load of sweets beside them, and by the edge of the clearing a small ferny stream from the mountain summits, cold and thin, glassed itself over a sloping shelf of rock. The formidable wall of the forest clipped round the beautiful glade, save at one point, where a break and a fall-away showed, all in a single cleft, green lower slopes, hills of far blue, and farthest away, the sea.

"I feel like Deirdre in the 'Children of Usna,'" said Edith, lying on the stage of boughs that the boys had put up, and looking about the fairy ring of flowers. "This

must be like the glen hidden away in the hills of Alban, where Deirdre and Naisi lived and were happy."

"If memory serves me," said Slade, who was stumping about on his crutch, ordering the boys, "they weren't happy long. You aren't so superstitious as you used to be, Edith."

"Well, you are," said Edith with a royal disregard of sense. "I believe you think the reference unlucky."

Slade left the boys to make their cooking fire and came over to the couch of boughs. He was more than ever the son of Earth tonight, skin burned as brown as the trunks of the forest trees, hair and beard grown furry as brown moss, eyes brown-yellow like the eyes of beasts and birds. He was handsome, as always, and as always seemed not to know, or if he knew, not to care.

Edith, who knew every line of her own beauty, and loved it, was always impressed by this unconsciousness of her brown man's. It seemed, now, almost as if a piece of the landscape had got up and sat itself down beside her.

The fire snapped and spat at the other side of the clearing; the boys hammered on the tent-poles. There was a smell of wood smoke, of blossom, of the great lonely forest, as the sun went down and down. Slade, seated beside his Eve in the wilderness, looked and found himself in her eyes.

"I'm glad the beggars didn't get me," he said; it was his way of making a tender speech.



MEANTIME, the boys left on the schooner *Tagula* were getting uneasy. The harbor they were in was a good one, and the weather was fine; they could safely anchor far out. But nevertheless no one could be sure that the nasty little men of the mountains, with their mischievous spears, would not creep up some night in canoes and take the ship by surprise. It was just the sort of trick that would delight Lalang mountain men, than whom no cleverer night-raiders existed in the Territory of Papua.

The boys—who came from so many different tribes that they were obliged for the most part to converse in pidgin English—squatted at night on the main hatch, discussing matters and working themselves by degrees into a state of panic. After four days they gave up hope of seeing Edith

again. Quite—certainly the Lalang men must have caught and eaten her.

The verdict of the ship's company was "served her right," with a rider to the effect that they could have enjoyed the feast as well as any one had they only known it was attainable; but without doubt the *sinuabada* was mistress of great sorceries, and only the Lalang men, who were sorcerers of the first class themselves, had a fair chance of overcoming her spells. Still . . .

"She been good *kai-kai* all together," regretted a dark Orokolo with a feathered head. "That *sinuabada* no old-fellow, young, good all-e-same young pig."

"All-e-same young pig," chorused a wistful band of mixed New Guineans.

The Orokolo went on.

"Altogether finish that *sinuabada*. I think this-fellow schooner he belong we-fellow boy. More better we take him, we go along country belonga we-fellow."

"E!" came an approving yell.

"Suppose we no go — quick, some plenty spilit come out alonga bush, bite New Guinea boy. I think more better we go today."

"E, more better," came the chorus.

And the *Tagula*, with much creaking and flapping, much shouting patterned on the example of the white man's strong talk, spread her dusky wings with their zig-zag tears and patched weak places, and sailed clumsily out to sea. And the bay below Lalang Mountain was empty.

So, when the launch *Black Snake* came in tearing up the red shadows of sunset in the quiet waters of the bay, and disturbing the silent cliffs with the fussy *pit-pit* of her engine, there was never a hull or a sail to guide the passengers on the launch, Campbell and little Murua. And, the place being Jamieson Island, there was never a visible native about the shore or the edge of the forest, never a brown hut showing among the green, where they could find a guide.

Murua, hanging over the rail, looked puzzled.

"Captain Campbell," she said primly, "I don't understand the ways of these man-eaters beyond a certain point, but it does look to me as if somebody had been playing the goat about something."

Campbell, cool, polite, and a trifle snapped-off in manner, as became a naval officer on something very like duty, came out of the cabin and remarked—

"Was this the bay you thought they had gone to?"

"I thought so, but this is a country you mustn't think in, Captain Campbell. You have to know. It's no good thinking, or saying you will do this or the other. When a thing is put on your plate, you eat it and don't make faces."

"I shall endeavor not to make faces," said Campbell gravely. "In this case, it seems that something's been taken off the plate rather than put on it. We thought we had a guide to the place Mrs. Slade went, but it seems we have none. Let's have a look at the chart."

He spread it on the cabin table.

"Only thing that I can see to do is to run round the island, looking for the *Tagula*. That shouldn't take long."

"It shouldn't, but then nothing ever ought to take as long as it does take, in Papua," was Murua's comment. "There are ever so many places where a schooner of that size could be lying without your knowing anything about it, if you only looked as you passed."

"I see them; well, we'll rout them all out as quick as this very decent launch can take us. So you know this island well, Miss Murua?"

"Oh, yes, Captain Campbell. Pups and I have been all round it, and some way inland too. We have acquired a considerable knowledge of the natives, though they are not often seen. It was in this island that Pups found Larder Valley."

"Larder Valley?" asked the captain, spread out over his chart, and studying it. "Lalang Bay—Siporo Creek—Clive Bay—Rainy Bay—hallo! Larder Valley! What was it?"

"It was an unpleasant and deleterious arrangement of the natives, Captain Campbell. Pups went up the valley on a patrol after a man who had eaten one of his wives."

"Whose?"

"The Papuan's, Captain Campbell. It is quite true that Pups was a widower when he married my mother, but neither of his wives died any but a natural death. And he found this valley on the way, and there had been a feast in it the week before when the natives had disposed of some neighbors who were very unpopular in the district. And they had left a good deal of the meat, meaning to come back and finish it another day, and it was hung up on trees, and did

not look at all nice. So Pups and I called it Larder Valley. It was a strange thing, because these people are extremely tidy and systematic as a general rule.

"Pups has written reports telling how they joint and stuff and bone their captives for cooking. We could only suppose that the idea of hanging up in trees was meant to emphasize the fact that the victims were very much disliked."

Captain Campbell choked a little over his spread-out chart.

"I hope you did nothing to make yourself unpopular," he said.

But Murua was not to be drawn.

"Pups did his duty as a Government officer," she replied. "You know yourself, Captain Campbell, that a Government doesn't always want what one might call a verbatim report."

"I do know," answered the naval officer, with something of a chuckle. "For a small person like yourself, you seem to shoot pretty straight sometimes."

"I suit my conversation to my company, Pups having told me that it is the first condition of good manners to do so," replied Murua.

"You've paid me rather a pretty compliment there, my child."

"Have I?" said Murua, watching the black and emerald coasts of Jamieson Island, mingled forest and grassland, run past the foaming sides of the launch. "I didn't mean to, but I appreciate your command of this vessel, Captain Campbell; you are exceedingly competent."

"Lord, I should hope so!" said the outspoken sailor.

"It was particularly gratifying to hear you putting the fear of God into them with a length of rubber hose this morning, when you thought I was asleep," observed Murua. "These police boys are apt to become luxurious and comparatively Capuan, when left too long on the launch."

"There'll be no Capua about her while I'm here," promised Campbell.

They ran on, past bay and headland, still keeping a lookout.

"You haven't got mat fever, Captain Campbell," remarked Murua presently, crossing her small feet and looking down at the mat on the floor.

"Mat fever? Don't know it; tell me what it is."

The captain took his place beside her on

the lounge. She had undeniably a figure, this little Amazon, and a foot. And there was something about her clear, straight-looking gray eyes . . .

"Mat fever is very common in the Pacific. One often uses a mat to lie on, and when a man gets lazy, and will not go about his work, that's what they call it."

"Mat fever, eh? I think I've seen it outside of the Pacific. What else have you got here that's peculiar to the country?"

"There used to be many strange things, but we are in a period of transition now, and we shall be very civilized soon. It's only a few years ago since nearly every one had the D. S. O."

"D. S. O? Distinguished Service Order? Why, how——"

"No, Captain Campbell, it was not the Distinguished Service Order, it was the Done-Something-or-Other, and they didn't wear it outside."

"Oh! And the order is less frequently granted now?"

"Much. And when you are introduced, you never, never make the joke they used to make."

"What was that?"

"They used to say, 'Very pleased to meet you. What were you called—before?' But sometimes it hit too near home to be a joke."

"I'm learning ancient and modern history, it seems. What else?"

"A few years ago they all wore pajamas outside of Port Moresby, and some of them wore them in Port Moresby, in pink and green and blue stripes, and in the broad light of day. And now they are never worn except when, like the poem, the shades of night are falling fast. But some years before that, in Samarai, when they heard my Pups and I were coming in on the *Dove*, the stores sent down to Cooktown as fast as they could for pairs and pairs of trousers."

"For you?"

"No, Captain Campbell, I always wore tailor-made knickers and puttees. It was for the white men who lived there, because they were all going about in native calicoes, which is just two yards of stuff tied on like a kilt. But instead of that, they now have a library and a fire brigade, and when they go to dances in the School of Arts, they will even take two collars, one on and one off. Yes, in Samarai and Port Moresby, the country has changed till one wouldn't know it. But outside——"

"Outside—what?" asked the sailor, looking, with an interest that he would never have believed possible to his battered forty years, at the slender child-woman who had seen so many strange things, passed through such a rough-and-tumble of a life, and yet who was dainty, womanly, and refined. Yes, even in her boy's dress, with her knife and pistol, and nailed boots, and the kiss of the sun strong on her face and little, roughened hands

"She looked uncommonly well yesterday in that nice little green rag she was wearing," he thought, "with her hair—Lord, what hair!—seized up with that green and silver thing. She's as smart a boy, too, as ever I saw, but her father ought to be hanged at the yard-arm for—"

"Outside," Murua was saying, "New Guinea's New Guinea. You mustn't think it's like Africa; so many people do. Africa's civilized compared to it. Here, when you get outside the towns, you just put your hands up, and—pop! You dive into the Stone Age. I feel quite Stone Age myself, Captain Campbell, sometimes, through living so much at the end of the world with Pups."

"Do you know what ought to be done with you, young lady?" asked the sailor.

"I think not," answered Murua after some consideration; she always took a question or a statement strictly on its merits.

"You ought to be taken away somewhere and made to

Sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam,
And feed upon strawberries, sugar, and cream.

That would be good for you. Little girls with hair down to their heels—"

"Oh, no, Captain Campbell, it scarcely reaches my knees," corrected Murua.

"Well, little girls like you should have the pleasant side of life and leave the bush-whacking Amazon business to great smashing women like Mrs. Slade."

"Oh, Captain Campbell, Mrs. Slade is perfectly lovely—she's more like an angel than an Amazon. She's like those heads of Sir Joshua Reynolds', the little angels with the short wavy hair and the lovely eyes. And she resembles Joan of Arc too, and Amelia Sedley."

"Now why Amelia Sedley? She was all downcast eyes and bread-and-butter, wasn't she? Can't fancy Amelia Sedley going off whacking into the bush with a gun."

"No, Captain Campbell, but Mrs. Slade

has one thing in common with Amelia; you will remember how most of the men in 'Vanity Fair' wanted to marry her. Well, I am quite sure most men would want to marry Mrs. Slade, and that's the most important thing in a woman's life. So the point of resemblance is more considerable than you would think. Why, I am quite sure you would want to marry Mrs. Slade yourself if you saw her, only that, of course, she is married, so you couldn't think of her that way."

"Of course not, Murua," said the Captain gravely. "It's a thing that isn't done."

"Oh, but it is, Captain Campbell; if you've read novels, you must know that. And even here in New Guinea I've known married people who actually fell in love with some one else. I suppose sailors are so good they think it's impossible. All the books speak about sailors as 'brave and true,' and the songs always say that 'his heart was true to Poll,' and 'the sailor's wife the sailor's star shall be.' But everybody's wife or husband, outside of sailors, isn't everybody's star, which is such a pity."

"So sailors are good—very good—and their wives are always their stars! Well, little girl, you have a good heart; believe those nice things as long as you can, and I hope you'll be the star of the man you marry. If you aren't, I should like to punch his head for him."

Murua fell silent. The captain hummed "Nancy Lee" in a pleasant but not very musical voice, and the *Black Snake* tore on past the blue airy castles and cloud-white shores of Jamieson Island. Still, never a brown canoe rippling the glass of the inlets, never a dark, bare islander stealing through the palms of the beach. The Lalang men were, too evidently, "not at home."

Campbell, seated on the cabin lounge, and keeping a sharp lookout to landward through the windows, mused while he watched, as a sailorman can do. He did not like the job he was on.

When the news of Godfrey's death had come to him, he had taken the first train to London to investigate—being free of duty since his retirement some months before—and had immediately, with the snapping sharpness of the naval mind, decided that foul play was toward. The verdict of the jury—that the deceased met his death by strychnine poison, by what means administered there was no evidence to show, did

not satisfy him. He was certain that they would have given a very different verdict but for Mrs. Campbell's sudden and equally suspicious death.

Poor old Godfrey hadn't been popular; that was it—and nobody cared to push things to a point, once he was gone. Fact was, nobody cared a brass cent whether the old boy was dead or alive. Well, he cared; whatever Godfrey was of late years—and, Campbell fiercely added to himself, it was that mercenary icicle of a girl he married who drove him to it, as much as anything else—he had been a good sport to him, in the days when they were boy and young man together.

Many a sovereign and five-pound note had come to the hard-up midddy from the prosperous young business man; many a day's good shooting or fishing for the boy had been obtained from Godfrey's father, at Godfrey's special request.

Campbell, mostly on foreign stations of recent years, had seen little of Godfrey's unlovely middle age; he remembered him chiefly at his best, and with a heart that was indeed true to all good things, had kept every kind deed in his recollection through all his years of wandering. To return home and find Godfrey dead by poison—murdered, as he himself held—was a blow that struck far back in his life.

As to Edith, he had heard of shabby, scheming old Mrs. Cardillion and her handsome daughter, and had perversely pictured them in his mind after the fashion of good Mrs. Brown and her Alice—being of the Dickens generation. The fancy took hold of him and he carried it across the world, when he went back to Sydney, to renew acquaintance with some friends of the Australian Station days.

He had left instructions with his lawyer to advertise a reward for information leading to the discovery of the causes of Godfrey's death; the offer of a thousand pounds, in view of a large legacy left him by his cousin, seemed to him to be a mere act of common justice, from which result might, or might not, be expected.

But the result came. The lawyer cabled to Sydney, sending a copy of Harold's telegram, and Campbell, being within a week of New Guinea, immediately took ship for that strange country, wondering much what wind of chance had blown his bit of evidence so far. It was not till after he had

met, and much disliked, that artistic youth, Harold Page, that he remembered a saying of Godfrey's, in a letter written, too evidently, under the loosening influence of drink:

Never you marry, old cock. They're none of them to be trusted. If they don't play you false, they're just looking for the chance to. She's got another man somewhere at the ends of the earth; Lord send he stays there, if I'm not to bash his head in with a poker. I don't know who he is, but she has got some news of him in a paper from some beastly colony, and she's never been the same since.

A string of bad language followed. Campbell had burned the letter, but its maudlin misery and pain had stayed with him.

Young Page's story set the letter simmering in his brain again. Something told him he was on the right track; something whispered to him that Edith, once Cardillion, afterward Campbell—now what?—had not died after all. The clue must be followed, now it was in his hand. But it was—no, not dirty work, but not exactly clean work.

Well, it seemed that the woman had got herself and her husband—he must suppose, in the absence of contrary proof, that this Slade was her husband—into some mess with the natives, and the only thing for an officer on His Majesty's reserve to do was to get her and the man out of the said mess, first of all, and make inquiries afterward.

He hoped no accident would happen to them. Not because he cared a straw whether the cannibals picked the bones of his cousin's widow or not, but because he really did want to see the end of the matter, now he was committed to it.

The launch could run round the island, looking at all likely places in a day or two; it was a splendid boat to have charge of, and Campbell appreciated it. He could run a launch as well as any average engineer. There was no reason at all why they should not find the place where the party had gone. Some traces must have been left.

Nevertheless, and with all Murua's knowledge to help him, the captain did not find what he was looking for. It was only when he sighted a schooner in the distance, obviously worked by natives who did not know what they were doing, and ran her down, that he got the clue required. Murua informed him that the schooner was Captain Page's, and that the boys were running away with her.

Campbell, fairly on his own stamping-ground now, took charge of the vessel and towed her back to Lalang Harbor, with a very scared crew of blacks aboard.

The delay had not been long—three days altogether—but he did not quite like to think of what it might mean, since Mrs. Slade had certainly gone in at that point, and as certainly had not been heard of again.

As for Murua—Murua had not quarreled with the delay. This captain, with his eyes of sailor-blue, and heart like the sea, was indeed more than old enough to be her father, but—the days were days of fairyland, the nights on deck, under the great white equatorial moon, with sea-fires breaking about the launch's bow, were nights of wonder.

Campbell was scarcely gray; his figure was young and active; under the moon no one saw his vanished youth. Under the moon, sitting by a girl with mermaid locks that strewed the deck, and soft voice and eyes and hands, the sailor found his vanished youth. He said the things that sailors will.

Murua, half hidden in the mermaid hair, looked and was silent, and listened. And then she went to her little cabin, where the all-night-open port let in the salt smell of the sea, and wash of the waves along the vessel's hull, she dreamed—dreamed the dream of the island girl—that the steamer, bringer of all pleasant things, had brought to her—a lover.

XI



"DO YOU smell anything, Captain Campbell?" asked Murua.

"Smell?" said the sailor. "I smell flowers like the heavy white things they have at weddings and funerals—and dead leaves and dirt—and rain, somewhere not far off."

"Nothing more?"

"Don't think so. Why?"

"Because I think I do, Captain Campbell, and I've been so much in the bush that it isn't very likely I'd be mistaken."

"Fee, fo, fi, fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman!" hummed the captain carelessly.

He had been taking the day's march through the forest as a kind of picnic, amusing himself with the sight of curious insects and beautiful birds, and troubling

not at all about possible Lalang cannibals. Campbell, wisely, never crossed bridges till he came to them. Which may have explained the fact of his being a young man at forty plus.

"I wouldn't undertake to say you did not," said Murua dryly. "What I smell is a cooking fire, but it might turn out one way as well as another. It's all according to whose cooking fire it is."

"Ah?" said the captain, picking a pea-green praying mantis six inches long off a bush, and setting it up on the palm of his hand, where it immediately knelt down and put up its treacherous spiked fore-legs in an attitude of unpretending piety. "Look at this beggar, he's the funniest thing on earth. Pecksniff in an insect."

The mantis, with fore-legs upraised, turned its long-necked head toward Campbell and looked at him reprovingly out of two enormous eyes. "You disturbed my prayers," it said as plain as actions could say.

"If you put a grasshopper near him, he will take it in his arms and hold it tight while he eats it all up with a noise like a man crunching celery," remarked Murua. "It is very disgusting, but somehow funny. Nearly all the birds and beasts in Papua are humorous. The common crow laughs like a man laughing till he chokes, and then begins again. And there are birds that bark, and mew, and ring bells, and crack whips, and chop wood. I've heard people talk of funny devils often enough, without meaning anything, but Papua is full of them. Things are both—they are funny, and devilish too.

"Those laughing crows will follow you if you are lost, and sit on a log and laugh at you when they think you are dying, and come and pick your eyes out before you are dead. And the natives are so funny sometimes you can't help laughing at what they do. While all the time— Why, Pups and I arrested a man who had killed and eaten his wife, because he said she talked to him when he was making poetry!"

"Come now, that's too much, even from you, Miss Murua!"

"It's perfectly true. The man was the tribal poet—they generally have one; he makes all their songs, and they give him presents when the songs are good."

"More than most white poets could say."

"And this man, Susu his name was, had a

very scolding wife who was always shouting and storming at him, so one day he hit her on the head with a pineapple stone club, not meaning to do her any harm, but being annoyed at the continual interruptions. He explained it all to Pups. He said it made him 'too much wild,' and 'he no savvy what he do.' And then, when he saw she was dead, it seemed to him that there was no use wasting so much good food, so he called in the village, and they had a party, with dancing and songs, and finished up every bit. But of course Pups, though he sympathized with the provocation, could not allow that sort of thing. So we hunted him out and took him to Port Moresby for trial."

"And I suppose he was hanged?"

"No, Captain Campbell, the Government does not hang a Papuan for killing his wife. He had five years in jail, and afterwards he was nurse to the jailer's little boys for two or three years. He was a very good nurse. But I think I smell that fire again, so perhaps we had better say nothing more at present. You see the boys are going quietly. Do you think you——"

The sailor nodded. There was no more talk.

The two whites, followed by their boys, crept through the jungle as silently as snakes, stopping now and then to make sure of the direction of the fire. It was getting very late. The light had begun to die in the forest depths, though in rare openings among the heavy trees they could see the fire of sunset still lying on the far-up summits of banyan, coconut, and mighty cottonwood.

The giant green frogs of the jungle were starting their goat-like belling among the swampy places; verdigris and violet parrots flew squawking past; once a flying-fox, black, silent-winged, obscene, fled like an embodied nightmare across a darkening glade.

If they were going to camp, it was full time. But that cooking fire must be traced before rest and food could be thought of. Who knew what it might be?

Murua crept as swiftly and as quietly as the natives themselves, but she was no better at the game than the tall sailor beside her. Captain Campbell had graduated in the West African bush, and there was not much in the way of tropical scoutcraft that he did not know. The girl felt

her admiration rise. Was there anything he could not do?

"I smell it now," whispered Campbell; the reek of the fire was growing plain.

"We must be near," whispered Murua in reply, and paused for a moment.

They listened. Then Campbell, with his sea-trained lungs, let out a call that tore the forest like a rocket.

"Ahoy!"

"What is it?" asked Murua, straightening up, and stepping out.

It was clear that Campbell had decided no native was in question.

"Why, we've crossed their track. Didn't you see the prints of boots, fresh as can be, and the cigaret end—gilt cardboard—just now?"

Murua had not seen. She had been too busy admiring Campbell's bush-craft to remember her own.

"It's the lot we're after—the Slades and their boys. They must have got through all right. Ahoy!"

This time a faint "Cooee!" replied.

"Slade," said Campbell with a hold-cheap accent. "I suppose the woman is with him, or he wouldn't be down on the coast."

"Mrs. Slade is probably in his company," said Murua a little coolly.

She thought Campbell's manner scarcely respectful to Edith, but could not guess why he spoke so. And for the moment, a wind of coldness blew across her liking for the man who had come by the steamer. For the first time—not for the last—Edith had come between.

"Cooee!" came again, louder and nearer.

"That beggar can sing out," said Campbell. "Voice of a bull. He a singer like your Harold?"

"Please, Captain Campbell—he is assuredly not my Harold, and I should not desire him to be. No, Mr. Slade does not sing, or very little. I have an idea he thinks it effeminate. He is not at all an effeminate man."

"Mrs. Slade doesn't seem to be particularly effeminate either," said Campbell.

"I think you don't like her, Captain Campbell, but I can't think why. Have you heard anything against her from that batrachian little basilisk, Harold?"

"If you mean he's a toad, you aren't so far out," evaded Campbell; he was not going to be drawn by the little girl with the

figure and the feet, jolly companion though she was.


"Ahoy!" he hailed again. "Is that Slade?"

"Yes!" came the strong voice again. "Slade and Mrs. Slade. Who are you?"

"Just coming," called the captain; he had no particular desire to give his name.

It was assuredly very late for bush-walkers to be wandering without a camp. The sun was really down now, and twilight had come on as fast as the sea comes up a sandy shore. They could scarcely see their way.

The camp-fire was visible, glowing ahead of them with a cheerful orange flame, and there was a heartening smell of smoke and frying meats. Their carriers chattered and laughed and made joyful noises suggestive of eating.

 THE forest opened out. There was a small clearing, where natives had been cutting logs for canoes. Some of the logs remained in place, old and covered with fungus. Two people were seated on them, watching the carriers prepare supper. They were sitting fairly near the fire, though the night was warm, in order to keep away the mosquitoes.

The full light of a great log of blazing timber streamed up on Edith's face. Slade beyond her, was in shadow.

Campbell looked, looked, and looked again. God! What a beauty she was! In the loose white shirt and khaki knickers she wore, the outlines of her splendid figure and limbs showed as if in a bathing dress. Her hat was off; her short, thick mass of gold hair shone like metal in the flame-light. The pointed, cameo-cut face with its great spiritual blue eyes showed clear against the background of black forest. One hand, as she leaned slightly forward, rested on the haft of her long knife.

"Armor," breathed Campbell, not knowing that he spoke aloud. "A steel breast-plate, and standard in her hand. Why, she would be Joan of Arc come to——"

"Do you think her so like?" whispered Murua.

"Why, Murua! I had forgotten you were— Yes, yes! Very like. And that's the man she risked her life for. Well—well!"

A curious hatred of Slade flowed up in his heart, like a hot spring bursting through a

tranquil lake. Who was this man that he should own that splendid beauty, that she should fight for him, slave for him, perhaps sin for him, stain those fine hands in blood for his sake.

Yet her loveliness altered not at all the idea he had formed of her. Campbell, as a roving sailor, had met too many beautiful women to judge their characters by the set of a shoulder, or the hang of a mass of hair. If this Mrs. Slade were indeed his cousin's widow—and he had little doubt of it—justice should not be balked of fullest inquiry, simply because the woman was very fair.

There is perhaps no class of man in the world so keen for justice as the man who has trodden the bridge of His Majesty's fighting ships. In the nineties, there had been a Spanish-Tahitian half-caste girl among the eastern islands. He could see her now, the beautiful wildcat creature, with the blood of a leading seaman of his ship splattered down the front of her fine silk dress, and the light of that ill-famed house in the orange thicket falling on her defiant face, as he had her arrested and taken to the supine governor who dared not, though he would, pass over the killing of a British sailor. She had hanged in her silk dress next week, in the public square of the town, and Campbell had looked on, with a face of wood, while the local executioner bungled the dreadful task through.

"You look at her cruelly," said Murua of a sudden in his ear. "I think you sailors of the King have hearts that are hard and soft too. Why are you hard to Edith?"

"I'm not hard to you," said Campbell, putting a ready arm round her waist. It was always the easiest way of diverting a woman's attention.

The little thing trembled and drew away; but he could feel that she moved reluctantly.

"Aren't you going to join the Slades?" she said.

Slade had already noticed them. His inscrutable brown face, like some carving on an Egyptian monument, was turned half away, but he had seen the clothed figures creeping up in the bush and had wondered silently who it was that Murua had got with her, and why the deuce he couldn't come out and look about him like a man.

He said nothing to Edith. The making of unnecessary and uncalled-for statements

was in Ben Slade's clear-cut opinion accountable for half the troubles in this rather troublesome world.

Campbell, at Murua's hint, pulled himself together and stepped out into the mingled twilight and firelight of the glade. The moon, a bright half-circle, was just showing above the jagged rim of the forest. Moon, dying day, and flame, made strange lights in the strange place. It seemed as if they were all moving in a dream.

Old wanderers of Papua, do you remember the dream of the bush, and how it followed you, day after day, till you scarce knew if your feet still rested on the soil of the spinning planet called Earth or had strayed through the door of some unthought-of fourth dimension into a world that was, and was not, yours?

Edith rose to her feet, the instinct of the London hostess coming uppermost under odd conditions, and came forward to meet the stranger. She wondered, as did Slade, whom Murua had brought with her, but was not much surprised or concerned. She had half expected that somebody would come to look for them.

"My dear Murua!" she said, kissing the young girl. "How good of you to come! But you see Mr. Slade and I have got down all right, though he hurt his foot and has to go on crutches or be carried. Won't you introduce your friend to me?"

"I'll introduce myself, Mrs. Slade," said Campbell, stepping forward. "I'm Captain Campbell, your late husband's cousin."



THERE was something of the wild-cat about Ben Slade; not assuredly in character, but in a certain lightning rapidity of action and of stroke. Mentally he leaped on the enemy now with no more pause than a tiger-cat would make before springing at the claw that menaced its sleek, gold-eyed mate of the forests.

"I don't know that I'm late," he observed, taking the cigaret out of his mouth and holding it in one lean brown hand while he spoke. He put it back, and looked at Campbell. "Somebody seems to have been a little premature. And I don't seem to recollect you as a cousin of mine, either. My fault no doubt. One may have miscellaneous-cousins one hasn't met. Won't you come along and have *kai-kai*? The boys have just made the tea, and we've a leg of wild pork; it's quite good."

Campbell eyed him. Was this the "man at the ends of the earth?" And had he been concerned in the matter? By the quickness of his guard, it was clear that he knew something about it.

"Thanks," he said, accepting the situation for the present. "I may be wrong, of course, but I did think I had the pleasure of meeting the lady who was married to Godfrey Campbell, and who some people supposed——"

He paused for Slade to fill the blank. But Slade looked at him with innocent curiosity.

Edith, standing where the shadows of the flames fell dark on her face, said nothing. She looked a little bored; but then Edith, like most women who have been much in society, had rather a habit of looking bored.

Campbell's sentence hung broken on the air. Nobody spoke for a moment, and then Edith, moving with perfect dignity in her scant attire, seeming almost indeed to wear an invisible bodice and train, walked across the glade and signed to one of the deaf and dumb boys to serve tea. She brought it to Murua herself. Campbell, of course, sprang to his feet to take the tin cup from her hand and to forestall her by fetching his own. She did not speak. She had not spoken since Campbell fired his shot. That night, of course, be mere coincidence, but. . . .

Little Murua, watching them all with her serious gray eyes, drank her tea and said nothing. She understood that something was amiss and her innate good breeding prompted her to avoid all notice of the trouble.

The boys spread the camp table, made anew every night from twigs set level across a frame on four uprights. They placed a length of trade calico on it—Edith would not eat her meals without at least the appearance of a cloth, though Slade was willing enough, in the bush, to do without even the table. Logs up-ended were placed for seats, and the odd meal began.

Some malign spell seemed to have descended on the party. Campbell was staring boldly and unashamed at his two hosts and saying as little as he could. Edith made insipid remarks about the mountain tracks and the flowers in the bush, with a heart pounding so hard and fast that she dared scarcely lift her tin cup in her hand lest it should shake. Murua watched them all, and wondered.

Only Slade seemed quite natural. He asked Campbell the usual questions put to every traveler—how long he had been in the country; was he making an extended stay; what he thought of the scenery. No one alluded to the mistake about cousinship; no one seemed specially interested.

The meal was quickly eaten. After it was over, every one sat round the table while the boys cleared away. It seemed as if some one—did not want to move. The moon climbed over the forest tops and looked down at them.

Murua got up. She was quite sure now that something was wrong, but she put her own curiosity—of which she had as much as any normal woman—aside, and let her instinct of helpfulness have free play.

"Captain Campbell has been so splendid seeing to things," she said. "He didn't waste a day getting off to see after you when he heard what had happened."

"Captain Campbell is a friend of yours?" asked Edith.

She knew she was talking nonsense; her voice did not sound right to herself. Would other people notice it? How absurd this feeling in her throat was—purely subjective and yet somehow she felt as if she were strangling! She longed to put her hand up to her neck.

"A friend of mine?" replied Murua. "Why, Mrs. Slade, he is a friend, certainly, but I never saw him till——"

"Miss Murua and I are excellent friends," broke in Campbell, trying to get a closer look at Edith's face.

Edith knew the short thick hair hung forward half over her face. She was thankful for it. Would he never stop staring? Had she really a sore throat, or did she fancy. . . .

He was speaking to her now. She must answer.

"I can't help thinking that I have seen you before—somewhere or other—Mrs. Slade. Have you ever had your portrait in any paper?"

Edith braced herself.

"Yes," she answered. "I have appeared in several groups of bridesmaids."

"Ah! I don't remember that. I wonder was it your own wedding photograph I saw—or perhaps a court photograph? Perhaps you have been presented?"

"*Behit!*" bleated a giant frog in the slight pause that followed. Edith tossed back

her hair and looked Campbell straight in the face.

"I have—left society," she said. "Is there anything more that you would like to ask?"

"I beg your pardon most sincerely," bowed Campbell.

"Clever," he thought. "Suggests a scandal to make you shut up."

"But of course," he went on, "when one sees a face so memorable, so—however, you are probably as sick of compliments as a sailor is of being asked 'doesn't he get tired of being at sea.' If one could only answer fools according to their folly, life would be easier."

"Yes," said Murua, picking up the ball deftly, "and the merchant service suffers even worse, Captain Campbell. The captain of the *Moronia* has been home lots of times, and he told Pups that the passengers ask him fifty-four times on an average every trip, 'were you ever in a wreck?' And thirteen times a day, 'when shall we get to the next port?' And right through any breeze they ever had, every time any one saw him, 'Captain—do you think there's any danger?'"

"And the Captain had the same answer ready every time, to save his brains for the running of the ship. He said, 'Did your husband ever fail in business, my dear lady, and does he liked to be asked about it?' And, 'The chief cook is the person to ask about that, it all depends on the stores.' And, 'I never think, dear lady. The rules of the company don't allow it.'"

"Ah—very funny, very funny," said Campbell tolerantly. "Master of the *Azuria* did you say?"

"Why, no, Captain Campbell—the *Moronia*. I never heard of the *Azuria*. Where does she run?"

Campbell did not hear her. He had got the answer he wanted at last. He had seen beautiful Edith's hand spring suddenly to her neck, and drop again, while her face grew slowly white—yes, the moon was strong enough to show that.

Almost he had begun to doubt, but now. . . .

"She is very lovely," he thought to himself, with a surprising pang. "So was that devilish little Giannetta—but she hung at last. Lord, to think that the end of the rope is probably in my hand, and it rests with me to pull! If that sulky Australian

of hers knows—and I would bet my African medals he does—he must be ready to eat me without salt now.”

Then, at the word “salt”, he suddenly remembered how he had cut Harold Page with the lash of his scorn, even while he used him, for taking the hospitality of the Slades, and at the same time plotting against them. He himself. . . .

“Oh, tommyrot!” ran his thought. “A slice of pork and a tin of tea in the wilderness! Was I to sit like a mummy and decline to eat?”

“But all the same,” he thought again, “old superstitions hit you hard when you give them a chance. I suppose I ought to have some ill luck due to me through the ‘handsome gal,’ to make up for having trodden on the toes of the fates. Well, she’s good-looking enough to bring a fair share of ill luck in her train. They mostly do. If a man wanted to marry now, a taking little thing like this alongside might be safer. But all the same the sulky fellow’s a lucky dog, however he got her or keeps her.”

Slade proposed a game of cards, but the mosquitoes were too troublesome. They broke up soon. The tents had been standing ready since sundown.

Every one hastened to get under the nets as soon as possible. And the night closed down on a peaceful scene of grouped white roofs, clear moon, and dying fire, with wild scents blowing in from the jungle, and birds of the night beginning their strange music.

Something fluted, silverly and clear; something cried at regular intervals “*Chit-terit-chit!*” as if it were wound up; something imitated a cuckoo-clock, bell-stroke and all, “*Tang-Cuckool Tang-Cuckool*” The wood-chopper was silent; it was not late enough for his steady “*Chop-chip*” to begin, nor for the whip-cracking bird that keeps him company in the dead hours of the night. But volleys of almost articulate curses from the flying foxes burst now and then, high up in a wild mango-tree, and some little, plaintive thing whistled sadly as if it were lonely and shut out from home.

Campbell and Murua sat at the opening of their tents for a while and looked out, beating away the mosquitoes with a spray of palm. The wonder and the beauty of the moon-filled glade made the girl silent and rather sad. What the sailor was think-

ing of, as he smoked a cigar before turning in, only he could have told.

“That is the Marconi locust beginning,” said Murua at last. “It must be time to go to bed.”

“Marconi locust?” asked Campbell. “I don’t think——”

“Oh, Captain Campbell, that’s not the scientific name. I’m afraid I don’t know what it is. It’s only my name for it. If you listen, you’ll understand.”

“By Jove, I do! Yes—yes, for all the world like the wireless of a steamer sending out messages. Why, you could hardly tell them apart.”

“Do you hear the longs and shorts—*Tutt-tutt-tut-tut-tut-tut-tut-tut*, like the Burns Philip steamer when she’s lying off Samarai? Well, there’s only one locust that wirelasses as well as that, though some of the others do it more or less. This one always begins after ten o’clock, and I never stay up when he starts. Good night, Captain Campbell.”

“Good night,” said the sailor, rising to his feet. “Pleasant dreams.” And to himself, as the little girl with the figure dived under the flap of her tent, “I’m blessed if mine are likely to be.”



AT THE other side of the clearing, in the tent that held the two netted camp-beds, two people, reckless of mosquitoes, were sitting on the edges of the beds talking. The hurricane lamp, swung from the ridge-pole of the tent, threw an ugly orange light on Edith’s face, casting shadows that whispered premature hints of her coming thirtieth year. She had grown older in that day, and there was a tired look on her face for which no precipice tracks, no long, muscle-straining downward plunges of the march since dawn, could be held accountable.

“Oh,” she said, leaning forward as one weary. “I wonder if we did right—after all? I wonder could anything—anything at all be worse than this cat-and-mouse business—creeping away and thinking one is free, avoiding one pounce of Fate, and avoiding another, and then—pounce again—it has you! Life’s not worth keeping on at some prices.”

Slade said nothing. It was best to let her free her mind. By and by was time enough for anything he might have to say. And in the meantime a firm warm hold of

a slim hand that was colder than it need have been, seemed to do some good.

"I like your hand," said Edith suddenly. "It's such a kind sort of hand. I liked it before I liked your face. Women are funny things. Ben, I'm nearly hysterical tonight; but don't let me, it's so dreadfully 'Early Victorian,' and I've always hated the idea."

"All right. You aren't going to be hysteric, and if you were there's a water-bucket outside, and if there wasn't, why, I should think anyhow you'd earned the right to some little luxury of the kicking and crying kind about as well as any woman on earth ever did."

"One — doesn't — let oneself go," said Edith, speaking her creed of race and class with an effort that almost contradicted the words. "But we've got to think, and somehow I can't. I've been chased and worried too much. Ben, what is it—*what is it*—that is chasing and worrying you and me? It makes one think that the Furies and Fates in the Greek plays weren't so imaginary after all. Things kept happening, just like— What are we going to do?"

"In the first place," said Slade, closing both of his hard, dependable hands about Edith's clinging fingers, "we're not going to lose heart about anything at all. This cow who says he's your cousin by marriage is evidently the estimable person—who has been advertising. Well, he may suspect what he likes, but he can't prove anything. Mere resemblance goes for nothing."

Edith did not seem to be listening.

"I wonder if it—hurts?" she said slowly, staring at the smoky hurricane lamp slung from the ridge-pole.

Slade, as always, understood. He knew what grisly vision floated there between those blue eyes and the flame. He answered her thought.

"No. But put that out of your mind, now, and for always, my girl. That's, never— Do you think I would stop at anything that—"

"I know you wouldn't," she answered low and hurriedly, taking the full significance of the thought so thinly clothed in words. "But Ben—how do you think I could stand being set free from something I never did, at the cost of your really doing— Oh, we must be mad to sit here talking like this!"

"It's partly the country," said Slade, handing her a cigaret. Take a light

from mine, it'll do you good. You see, one feels differently about things in New Guinea. I suppose because things *are* different. But feelings or no feelings, the thing you're afraid of is never going to be. Get that into your frizzy head. About this cow of an English—I beg your pardon, I forgot you're only a 'vert to Australianism yourself—well, about this estimable naval officer, then. Just take him as if you'd never heard of him before and thought him a little mad, but meant to be polite all the same.

"He can't stay on Scratchley forever. He'll have to go down to Samarai if he wants to really do anything. When he goes to Samarai, I'll go too, and he won't get there first because either he'll go in the *Black Snake* with me, or whatever he goes in will be overtaken and waltzed rings round by the *Black Snake* on the way. And when he gets there, either he'll go right away—which would be all right, though not likely—or he won't. If he doesn't, he'll wireless by the first ship to somebody or other."

"Well?" said Edith; the end seemed unsatisfactory to her.

Slade laughed a little.

"I haven't told you all my secrets yet," he said.

Then he put his mouth to her ear and whispered three words. Edith's eyes sparkled.

"Why, that's good!" she said. "But then, if he—"

"Oh, in that case, dear love, the world is wide, and there's a shot or two in the locker yet. Life's an adventure, isn't it?"

"It's a—it's a much too—"

"There is one of the many disadvantages of being a woman. What you really want to say is, 'It's a — sight too much of an adventure sometimes.' Instead of which you have to pay a coarse man to say it for you."

"Pay? Oh, I'm not quite stupid. There's your pay. Yes, I did feel like that. You have made me steadier somehow, Ben. I feel as if I might sleep if I tried. Thank Heaven, I haven't to lie awake with my boots on listening for cannibals and wild boars tonight."

"No, Joan of Arc. You needn't."

He turned out the lamp, talking pleasantly as he did so. But Edith, in the little toilet-glass she had set up above her bed,

caught a glimpse of his face, and she laid down her head none the more peacefully for that sight.

In the glass she had seen the face of a strange man. Eyes fire under fur, mouth clinched to a steel line. That was not Ben.

No use telling her after that, when the light was out, that luck always changed with the moon, and that there was quite a big block of good fortune due, after so much bad; and that the moon changed on Wednesday.

The little scraps of nonsense sounded light enough. But she had seen.



NEXT day, it was as if no one had ever mentioned Godfrey Campbell, or the *Azuria*, or anything connected with what newspapers were pleased to call the "Park Lane Tragedy."

Slade was carried, and Edith, Campbell and Murua, walked all day down to the coast, and no one spoke of anything but the rivers they had to cross, and the possibility of alligators in the swamps, and the best way to keep leeches from getting through the laces of your boots.

And behold! When they got down to the beach late in the afternoon, there was quite a fleet of ships awaiting them in lonely Lalang Bay. The *Black Snake* was there, and the *Tagula* was anchored out where they had ordered her to stay, and there was the *Diamond*, too, with Jennifer's incredibly huge form looming under her shade-deck.

"Hooroo!" bellowed the magistrate, who was in a pseudo-Irish mood.

"Oh, Pups! Oh, Pups!" cried Murua, flying down to the beach on khaki legs that fairly twinkled.

She was into a dingey and sculling out to the Government launch before any one else had got to the water's edge, and once over the rail of the *Diamond* she cast herself upon Jennifer's mattress-like chest as if she were diving into a pool. Jennifer received her without apparently feeling the shock.

"How's my little patrol officer?" he shouted, lifting her off her feet and kissing her with loud smacks. "Have you had a good time, and are you all right?"

"Oh yes, I have, and I am, and everything's all right," said Murua.

Then suddenly she put her head with its weight of heavy hair, down on Jennifer's shirt pocket, and said—

"Pups, Pups, take me away!"

"Five grains of quinine is what you want," said Jennifer, swinging her apparently with three fingers on to the saloon bench, and taking down a bottle. "Got the shivers, boysie?"

"No, Pups, I'm quite, quite well, but I wish you could run off in the *Diamond* with me, and let's go on patrol again somewhere, quick—just you and me, Pups, and no one else. I'm tired—of people."

"Tea!" bellowed the magistrate to the cooky-boy who was squatting beside the chicken-coop of bent iron called a galley.

"If you don't want quinine, Mur, it must be tea. And what's the news, and who have you got with the party? Sure I don't seem to know his face, at all." He restrained a visible tendency to double the words.

"It is Captain Campbell, Royal Navy," answered Murua, lying back on the cushions, her small keen face very pale under its tan.

"And what's he doing here?"

"He came—I don't know why, Pups. It seemed to be an unpremeditated jaunt on his part. But he heard about Mr. Slade getting lost, and Mrs. Slade going after him, and it was the work of a moment with him to order out the launch and go to the aid of beauty in distress."

"And why did Slade go junketing off into the bush anyway? He isn't a slave of a Government officer who can't have a day at home."

Murua told him the story of the trip.

"So you see, Pups, that'll mean another inland journey for you," she ended. "You'll have to go up to that village, I suppose, and explain the wishes of the Government to the sons of Belial, flown with insolence and yam."

"I'll explain all right," promised Jennifer. "That'll be a nice trip for you, Murua, and not too risky. I'll say this for Slade, that he's liable to leave a peaceful disposition behind him, whatever he may have found. This'll keep the *Diamond* here. Well, sonny-girl, you won't have to get off her again, except to shift your things from the other boat."

Murua colored and looked back at the beach where the rest of the party were now embarking.

"I think," she said slowly, "I think Mrs. Slade wants me pretty badly just now."

"Why, sonny-girl, you were asking me to take you away a minute ago!" exclaimed Jennifer, his full-moon face displaying quite a large area of pure astonishment.

"I know, Pups, but I forgot."

Murua's face was turned a little toward the bulkhead as she lay on the cushioned bench. Jennifer could not see what she looked like.

"Well," he said after a pause, "maybe it's better so. You're getting rather old to be bushwhacking all over the country in pants. You'll be a young lady some of these days, Murua, and then I'll have a daughter, but where'll my sonny-girl have gone?"

Murua took his huge hand and caressed it, laying it against her cheek.

"You must lose him sometime," she said a little sadly. "We've played this game a long time now, Pups. And I wish——"

"What, then?"

Murua was looking out across the still waters of Lalang Bay at a man in a smart white suit handing a tall woman over the gunwale of a boat. She did not answer for a minute.

"I think," she said presently, "that I won't wish anything. Or else I'll wish that things may go on just the same, in an unvaried even tenor, not including— I did want new dresses, but what use would they be away in the bush?"

"Why, not much, sure," agreed Jennifer, somewhat puzzled.

"Or out of it?"

"Or out of it, for the matter of that," repeated Jennifer.

"Well, sonny-girl, stay with Mrs. Slade if she wants you this time, and afterward—we'll see, we'll see. You are growing up. We'll have to give you a trip to Sydney one of these days."

But the promise of a passport to the heaven of the island girl did not awake the eager burst of thanks that he had expected. Instead, Murua leaned her head against the mountain of khaki shirt and said with almost a break in her voice:

"Oh, Pups, I'd rather stay with you. Let me always stay with you!"

"Right," agreed Jennifer; he always agreed to everything women said, and never expected to understand them. "Now we'll take the dingey and row over to Slade's launch and see what plans they have."

The day had been a trying one to Murua.

Campbell had walked beside her, and helped her through bad places—which, indeed, she was quite as competent to manage as himself—had talked to her quite a good deal, and right through the walking and the talking and the helping, had never, she thought, taken his eyes off Edith for one moment. She was sure that he did not like her, and yet thought that he did. She could not understand, and her great, small heart was sore.

As for Campbell, he had been delivering useful warnings to himself off and on all day.

"No nonsense," he told himself, even while he climbed in Murua's rear and talked to her, as the slope and the ground allowed. "Don't lose that brass-bound, teak-built head of yours about Godfrey's widow at your time of life. Or if you do, don't let it matter.

"Aye, aye, sir," he answered himself. "Very good, sir. I'll remember.

"Mind you do," he warned himself, and then——

"Miss Murua, can you tell me what they call this very odd little beggar of an insect—the thing like a little peacock with a white tail, strutting on my hand?" To himself, "The woman's a queen, yes, but there are two kinds of queens, spelled different ways. Then aloud: "Oh, I don't want the scientific name—I shouldn't remember it two minutes. I only thought you might have some funny name for the beggar. That's the first glimpse of sea. We shall be down in half an hour now, and that'll be the end of our warlike trip. Good thing it turned out that way, wasn't it?"

Again he thought:

"One can almost see him swaggering over her—like a kid with a feather stuck in its cap. I hate your miscalled Australian independence, it only means——

"No, Murua, I'm not exactly disappointed," he went on, "but I wouldn't have minded a little more fun, since we really were out in the bush. I'm sure you are disappointed, though, my small fire-eater, aren't you?"

Murua was. She had been beaten by Edith on her own ground, as well as on Edith's, and it smarted. But there was not a grain of spite in the little creature's composition. She answered bravely:

"No one ought to be disappointed at anything, so long as our friends are safely back."

And she walked rather silent for the rest of the afternoon.

Next day at sunrise the *Black Snake* left for Scratchley Island, going slow, as she had to tow Page's schooner behind her, and the *Diamond* stayed alone in Lalang Bay, with Jennifer aboard getting ready for a trip into the forest. Murua hung over the after rail to watch the Government launch until the corner of the island shut her off from sight.

"I wish I had stayed," was the thought that beat in her brain. "Why didn't I stay? Nothing matters — nobody matters — as much as Pups."

But Edith, with that strange new shadow on her face, came out of the cabin and sat down near Murua; and the young girl, seeing, felt that, after all, there might be more need of her at Scratchley Island. Besides . . .

She would not follow up that "Besides."

XII



ON SECOND and sober thoughts, Page repented having told his son anything about possibilities of spoil on the island. He knew—none better—that Harold was not to be trusted; that the quarter or so of Jewish blood in his descent made him keen after money to the point of greed, and that once on the scent of gold—for gold it must be, argued Page; what else was there to get out beyond the Louisiades—he would cheerfully and willingly "do" his father at the very first chance, if it seemed profitable.

"And it mostly is profitable when there's two in it," mused Page, his thoughts wandering to experiences of other days. "Well, if I say nothing more about it, likely enough he'll forget. He's pretty well taken up with this reward business of his. Reward! More like blackmail, I call it. I always drew the line at business of that sort. As to the other thing, it's fair game. A man has no right to keep gold-fields to himself. Why, I believe the law compels him to proclaim them. Nice thing for a haw-haw, set-yourself-up sort of swab like Slade to go against the laws of his country. It will be only an act of justice if I can find it."

For several days Captain Page worked harder than he had done for as many years, tramping morning and afternoon through every swamp and gully, over every peak of

Scratchley Island; searching for traces of gold-working everywhere he went; testing a stream or two on his own account. The man who has knocked about for years in Papua, and who can not do a bit of prospecting when called upon, is a very rare bird indeed.

He satisfied himself before long that there was nothing on Scratchley Island—nothing but the red-shell fishery, and that seemed pretty well worked out.

"Looks to me as if he kept it up more as a blind than anything else," thought Page. "Why a blind?"

His soul grew hot within him at the thought of the valuable secret that might be shielded behind that veil. He wandered aimlessly. He searched where he was sure that nothing could be found. He could not rest.

Harold in the meantime was enjoying himself after his own fashion in a carnival of laziness. Page was scarcely a hard worker, but sheer sensuous indolence, indulged for its own sake, was hardly in his way, and he used to wonder at times, when Harold took one of his indolent fits, whether the strain of mixed blood was, after all, more mixed than the word "Jewish" would imply.

"He's an odd beggar, Harold," the father would say to himself over a meditative pipe. "After all, are the Jews really white? They're Orientals—and her mother was a Jewess. Seems to me sometimes as if Harold didn't think altogether white. But bless the boy, there isn't another like him in the world, if he is a nuisance sometimes. Handsome—clever. And as for his dashed laziness, why, just now I couldn't have asked for anything better."

It seemed, indeed, as if he could not. Harold lay in bed till the growing heat of late morning drove him out, went barefoot and in pajamas, and spent his time cooking, eating and lying on the coolest lounge with a novel and a bit of something to nibble at. Occasionally he sang, when he did not happen to have anything in his mouth, but that was not very often.

Slade had brought up a number of small dainties in tins and cases for Edith's use, and Harold found much happiness and content in going over them and sampling everything he could find. At times, well fed and growing noticeably fatter, he would sit out on the edge of the veranda overlooking the

island, warbling something exceedingly high-flown and spiritual. Life was pleasant in these days to Harold Page.

But the captain actually grew thinner with vexation and unappeased desire. He had searched the whole island from beach to summit, round and round and round—it was not over two hundred acres, so the task was feasible—and had found no trace of anything more profitable than red shell.

"And if it is red shell, and if any dashed red shell ever bought any dashed boat like the *Black Snake*, why, I'll eat it!" mused the captain bitterly as he tramped up the path to the house.

It was appallingly hot. There was no shade nearer than the veranda, a hundred feet above him. Harold was sitting on the veranda, very happy with a tin of chocolate biscuits.

"Belovèd, it is day," he sang.

"No blooming error about that," said the captain, toiling upward in a sun heat of a hundred and sixty.

"And lovers work as children play," sang Harold, putting his feet upon the lounge.

He found a new kind of biscuit in the tin. It was lemon cream.

"Dear love, look up—look up and pray!" was not quite so clear as it ought to have been.

Harold bolted a wad of biscuit and repeated the line, silver-clear—

"Look up and pray!"

The captain looked up; he was very far from praying. He had had a long, hot, fruitless hunt. He was irritated at the sight of Harold, cool and comfortable at the top of the hill. Worst of all, the hill itself was giving him hints that forty is forty and, still more, fifty is fifty, and that the wheel of time rolls back for no man.

"Old," said the captain to himself commiseratingly, "old and tired and poor. That's what I am, dash me! That's what I'm going to keep on being. Only more so. Poor old Page. Nobody's sorry for him."

He had missed his eleven-o'clock whisky. It irked him to think that a hundred feet still lay between him and the heavily perfumed tumbler out of the cupboard.

"Pray, sweet, for me," went on Harold, in a voice that made you see stained-glass windows and white-surpliced choristers, and a kneeling congregation, dim in the religious gloom. "Pray, sweet, for me——"

He broke off to lean back on his cushions and shake with silent laughter. It was so funny to see the old dad hunting about all over the island, without the least suspicion that Harold knew exactly what he was after, and meant to come in at the right moment, as soon as somebody else had done all the work.

"Good old dad," he thought, "he can't help not having any brains. Thank goodness I've enough for two. When I'm as old as he is, Lord, what a lot I shall know!"

He found a more comfortable hollow in the cushions, picked up a ripe passion-fruit from a heap on the floor—the sweet biscuits were beginning to pall—and carefully split it open.

"I shall have had a royal good time," he thought. "Covent Garden Opera, Paris, Milan, St. Petersburg, New York. Bouquets, royal performances. Things to eat and drink I've never even dreamed about. Lovely clothes—girls mad after me. One wouldn't mind getting old, after all that."

The sun was a little way down the western sky. It was hot, terribly, meltingly hot, but day was on the decline. In a few hours now it would be night.

"Night, and dark," thought Harold.

He felt inclined to linger on the thought. There were streaks of poetry in him, as in all musicians. He fancied just now he had a poetical idea roaming about the twilight spaces of his mind, if only he could capture it.

"Dark—for evermore," The words wove themselves to a march—a dead march it had to be, of course. Not the march in "Saul."

Another march, that he had never heard. He thought it must be his own. What, a composer as well as a singer! Well, he was a genius, and one need never be surprised at anything a genius might do.

The march played on; it seemed to go to his head. He felt exalted, glorious. All the splendor of those coming years ran riot through his brain. He was lifted off the earth.

"What does it mean?" he thought a little fearfully. "Am I going a trifle mad, or is it just the genius in my brain working up? I can't remember feeling like this before. But it is pleasant. I could laugh and dance. I must sing—sing—sing!"

The song set to Rubinstein's "Melody in F" rushed to his lips, and the captain,

standing stone-still on the hill below, heard and wondered at the gushing melody.

Welcome, sweet spring-time, we greet in song,
Murmurs of gladness fall on the ear——

Never before had Harold Page, New Guinea's only nightingale, sung so well. It was a pure fountain of crystal song.

Page, down on the sun-parched track below, forgot the blasting heat, forgot his disappointment, remembered nothing but the sweetness of that song.

"Lord, Lord!" he breathed, "it might be her, herself. He's improving wonderfully! I never heard him sing so well. It's clipping a song-bird's wings to keep him—and yet, it would just be the death of her if I let him go to disgrace her with royalty and all. Besides——" a cunning look came into his face—"her payments are small, but sure. Now Harold—he's not sure. Bless the boy, I know him. As to this reward or blackmail, or whatever it is—ten to one he'll never get it. But if he does—why, the law gives a man his son's earnings when the son's not seventeen."

The song was over. The captain sat down to rest; it is not prudent to rest in the New Guinea sun, but his aging legs had had enough for the moment. He sat on a stone that almost scorched him through his clothes, and idly he turned the ground about with the stick he carried, thinking the while.

"He sings like a bird, and he's been as gay as a bird all day," ran his thoughts. "If I was a superstitious fellow, I'd think he had some bad luck coming, for things go by contraries. Sing before breakfast, cry before night. And cry before breakfast sing before night. I've been feeling like a hank of chewed string all day. Where's my luck coming from?"

The china-green sea frothed over pearly reefs below. It had a falsely cool and refreshing sound. Alone of all the myriad birds of the forest, the leathernecks talked on through the afternoon heat.

"Fanny's lost her shoe," called one. "Fanny's lost——"

"Somebody stole my *piripos*," joined in another complainingly. "Somebody stole my *piripos*."

"*Piripos*—South Sea for trousers," said the captain. "Ain't he plain! Well, he hasn't got them now, so they must have been— There's another."

It was the old call:

"Do oysters chew tobacco? Do oysters chew——"

They all took up their cries together now, and the clatter became maddening. The captain's nerves, frayed by weeks of unlimited whisky, revolted.

"I can't stand the beggars," he said, pettishly striking the loose coral sand of the track with his stick.

And instantly he forgot the leathernecks as if they had never been.

"Somebody stole," went on the trouserless bird.

"Fanny's lost her shoe. Fanny's lost— chew tobacco. Somebody stole Fanny— Do oysters—Fanny chew tobacco——"

The clatter swelled to a chorus. Page did not hear a note of it. He was staring, with quickened breath, at something that his stick had thrown up from under the sand—a small lump of putty-like stuff, lying at his toe. He could scarcely make up his mind to lift it. It was so like—and yet it mightn't be.

He bent down and snatched at it, as if it might possibly bite.

"The devil!" was what he said. And again, "The devil!"

"So that's it!" he said in a few seconds, gasping like a hen on a hot day. "Gold, indeed! There's things better than gold!"

"Why,——!" he muttered with a cautious remembrance of Harold, not so far above. "It's a fortune, if he's getting that! Ambergrease! But where?"

He jumped to his feet. The weariness was gone.

"I'll find it—or die," he said. "Why, the beggar! What does he know of such things? A sailor like me, now—I can run it down. Hooroo!"

He slipped the little bit of ambergris in his pocket and went lightly up the hill.

That night, more than half drunk, he got out his mandolinetta and played like Oberon, King of the Fairies, while Harold, silent for once, sat watching him with curious eyes.

"Why don't you swing—sing—tonight?" said the captain; he had got into an odd way of misplacing similar words lately, drunk or sober.

"Don't feel like it," answered Harold. "It's jolly odd, but I feel as if I'd never want to sing again."

"Well, you did a fine swan-song, then,"

chuckled the captain, feeling that he had made a clever joke. "Fine son swang."

"You've had too much whisky," said Harold.

"Only a glass or two," said the captain, and spoke very near the truth.

"You can't talk correctly," said Harold. "I'll take off your boots. You ought to be in bed, Dad, and you know it."



HAROLD never got up early. Page was sure of that. He took down the charts again by the earliest morning light and began studying them furiously. He knew now that the clue must be there, if he could only find it.

Scratchley Island—nothing there. He had been all over it. Anchorages, passages, reefs about the island. Corrected here and there. Right. He knew the corrections; they did not interest him. Jamieson Island, on the edge of the chart. Nothing there. The whole chart was too clean, too little handled. If there was anything to find . . .

He took down the whole roll of charts and went over them carefully. One was certainly more worn and sea-stained than the others; yes—a good deal. With an expression of infinite cunning, Page raised that chart to his nose and smelled it.

There is no odor on earth more clinging, more definite, more persistent, than the faint oily, earthy, sweetish smell of ambergris. About the handled chart, faintly, yet unmistakably, that odor hung. Not unless one actually nosed it. But then . . .

Page took a lead pencil and scraped some of it to powder. He cast the black powder on the chart and smeared it lightly. Lines, formerly penciled but erased, came out under this treatment.

The captain studied the chart, looking closely into it. Presently he slapped his thigh. He had seen a few faintly marked soundings about a reef, seen a correction of latitude.

"Now we have it," he thought, his eyes glinting.

He rolled up the chart again, put it under his arm, cast a glance into Harold's room to make sure that the youth was still sleeping, and went out to order the big whale-boat.

"Not half a day's run, with this fair wind," he thought. "What luck! What luck!"

He had scarcely left the house when Harold arose, put back a mirror that had been standing on the floor near his bed and reflecting the outer room, indulged in a slight dance about the floor, and put out his tongue at his father's retreating figure. Then he jumped for his clothes.

A quarter of an hour later, when Captain Page came down to the beach, he found the whale-boat ready—somewhat more than ready. The boys were at their oars, the sails set to catch the breezes as soon as they should be round the point, the breaker of water and tin of biscuit without which, as an old sailor, he never traveled, were stowed in the boat. And in her stern, comfortably settled upon a cushion from the veranda, sat Harold. He grinned as he saw his father.

"I'm coming, too," he said.

"I don't want you," was the captain's brusque answer.

"I'm coming all the same. Do have common sense, Dad. I know you've found something."

"If I have, it's not for you."

The captain was getting over the bow of the boat. He looked very much as if he meant to swing his rebellious son into the water as soon as he got within reach.

"Look here," said Harold, sitting up. "We'll make a bargain. You let me in, and I'll let you in. No use working apart, when we've each got something."

"Well," said Page hesitatingly, calculating the possible value of a good find of ambergris.

"Might be all got by now," he reflected, "and Harold hasn't touched his cash yet."

"It's a go," he said aloud. "Now, what's the trouble about the Slades? Spit it out."

Harold knew how far his father was to be trusted. He told him the affair of the advertisement, and then demanded his reward.

But Page seemed very little impressed.

"That it?" he said. "The Cocoa King! A Penny-dreadful sort of yarn, but——"

"What?" asked Harold, a trifle offended.

"I don't think there's much in it."

"Isn't there, then! You tell me yours, and we'll see if there's as much in that."

"Ambergrease," said Page somewhat reluctantly. "Found a bit. Think it's out among the reefs somewhere. Must be a fair bit of it to find, though I don't understand how he knows where to look. Still,

there's beaches in New Zealand where it's turned up time and again. Maybe this is the same sort."

Harold knew what ambergris was; there are few men in the world of the outer Pacific ignorant of its value. His small bright eyes sparkled.

"Good old Dad," he said. "What luck to have the place to ourselves like this! You may bet Slade would never have allowed Scratchley to be left in our charge, if he'd known."

"No," agreed Page.

The boat was pushed off. The boys began to row.

"I never did like that Ben Slade," he said, as they swept round the corner of Silence Bay, and confronted the Pacific.

The boys shipped their oars. The beautiful boat leaned over to the shouting wind.

"He's a supercilious sort of beast. Doesn't value a good old English family as he should. It's true I went to sea as a kid, but we're *the* Pages, and people ought to remember it."

"Who are *the* Pages, Dad?" asked Harold lazily.

"Why — why — they're the Pages, of course. Everybody knows all about them," said the captain vaguely; he had never fined the question down to a point.

"Oh," said Harold; the subject did not interest him much.

Slade's whaleboat sailed magnificently with the favoring breeze, and the captain was moved to remark again, this time before the interested audience presented by Harold, that red shell never did it.

"She's a beaut," he pronounced admiringly. "Sydney-built, and I could name her builder. She was never landed here under a hundred pounds. And if you tell me that red shell——"

"I don't," said Harold. "How far is this blessed place you're going to, Dad?"

"Why, I judge we'll get there by about two o'clock. You won't see it till we're pretty near. It's almost awash, according to the chart."

"And how are we going to get back with the wind ahead?"

"You ought to be sailor enough to know. Beat, if we have to."

"That means a night out in the boat," said Harold, looking almost ready to cry.

"Maybe," replied his father indifferently. "You can have the spare sail to lie on——"

softening a little—"and that cushion you have will make you a pillow. You won't be too badly off."

"If I'd known what kind of a sleeping-place I was likely to have tonight, I'd have thought twice——"

"Ah well, you've made your bed and must lie on it," said the captain with a feeling that he was quite witty.

"I wonder where we'll be when the sun sets tonight," said Harold.

He was not smiling. He seemed a trifle unlike himself.


"Overeaten," thought the captain kindly. He was kind to Harold in little ways, on the whole. The lad was everything he had to love.

"Why," he said aloud, "that all depends on what we find, and what we do, when we get to this place of Slade's. If I'm not mistaken, we've sighted it. I told you near two o'clock."

He looked through the glass and handed it to Harold.

"I think it looks a beastly place," said the youth, returning the glass and humping himself up in the stern of the boat.

"Well, nobody asked you to come," snapped the captain.

 THEY ran rapidly toward the cay. The boys, sighting it, poked each other and made the ugly sounds of the deaf and dumb.

"They recognize it, the beggars," said Page. He gave the tiller into the hand of a native.

"Better let them steer us in," he pronounced. "These passages among the reef are no picnic for strangers."

The boy steered ably, and headed for the best opening in the reef. It continued exceedingly hot. The sea was like molten Venice glass, just ruffled by the dying breeze; the blues and greens of the reef-passages seemed to scream at you as you passed.

Nobody's Island lay stark and bare in the pitiless sun; the shadows under the giant bones were blue as shadows in snow. A gaunt, sun-crackled, wind-beaten place it looked, full of sea-sounds and loneliness.

"I don't like it," said Harold. "I told you it would be a beastly place."

"Don't be sulky, son," said the captain, giving him a friendly slap on the shoulder. "You were keen enough about coming."

Now, I like the look of it. I can understand. Oh, yes, I've got a pretty good notion how things came about."

"How?" said Harold. He seemed to have shaken off his sulks; the hint of money and money values had evidently cheered him up.

"Well, my notion is that he just sighted the place and went ashore to look at it, or maybe to pick up a few whale's teeth—they'd be worth carrying away; in the Central Pacific, they're the grandest trade there is. And there happened to be a lot of the ambergrease, and he found it, and's been gathering it here and there ever since. Well, son, here we are on Tom Tiddler's ground, picking up gold and silver. At least, we'll have a try to."

He ran the boat into a narrow inlet.

"Aha!" he remarked gaily. "See where somebody's piled the whale bones up to hide the boat as she lays? Now that may be useful to us, whom it wasn't ever meant to be useful to. Cast thy bread upon the waters—no, that wasn't exactly what I meant either."

He jumped over the bow, followed by Harold. They stood on the sand and looked about them. Blue sky shone between the arching ribs of the mighty skeletons. The breeze went winnowing through them. Small crabs walked among the bones, with a ticking sound.

It was neither sea nor land, this salty cay; neither life nor death. In spite of the vivid sun and dancing waves, there was something infinitely depressing about the spot.

Harold, his lips closed, stood on the sand, looking about him and humming a queer, windy melody, meant apparently to express his thoughts.

"What's that?" said the captain, speaking loudly to drive away the ill-omened influence that seemed to hang about the place.

"Something of my own. Tennyson's 'Sailor Boy.' I don't think it's been set."

"What, that thing:

"The sands and yeasty surges mix
In caves about the dreary bay
And on thy ribs the limpet sticks,
And in thy heart the scrawl shall play."

"Yes, that's how it runs. A good set of words for music, isn't it?"

"No. Don't think it is. Well, you can do as you like, I'm going to have a dashed

good hunt after the ambergrease. It won't be light forever."

"I'll come," said Harold, ceasing his dreary melody, and picking up a bit of driftwood. "You get a bit too, dad. We'll want to scabble about. Dad, I say, I mean to keep all I find."

"Oh, yes," said Page indulgently, "you can keep it."

"Perhaps we sha'n't find any," he thought, "and if we do, why, I can always see he doesn't get too much. I don't grudge the lad a bit of plunder for music and lollies and so on."

They hunted like terriers, with their heads down and their backs grilling in the sun. They scraped with their bits of driftwood and rolled over great wing-like flipper-bones, and masses of vertebra, big as tea-tables, and ribs like ivory beams.

At first, and for a long time, they found nothing; they had inadvertently taken a tract already well searched by Slade. But at last they came upon a patch as yet untouched, and then things became exciting. Page uncovered a nugget of ambergris as big as his fist, and a handful of small bits clotted loosely together. Harold, darting and pouncing like a hawk, and sweating fearfully with fat, heat, and excitement, secured half a dozen bits from the size of a marble to that of a good-sized pear.

They hunted on; the sun went down the sky; the gulls began to whistle among the windy arcades of the looming skeletons; the sea, as the light slanted more and more on its surface, grew deeper and colder blue.

Harold had undoubtedly the better luck. The cushion-case that he had brought from the boat was crammed almost to the mouth, though Page's pockets were hardly full. Harold chuckled and hunted on. He seemed to have forgotten that such things as weariness, as rest, as night, existed on the earth.

"Here, Hal, my boy, I've had enough, and it's near sundown," called the captain across a narrow spit of sand. "Come on and get back to the boat, we can come any day, now we know the place. How do you think we're going to pick our way through those reefs in the dark? This isn't the place to go and get capsized or split up in; it ought to be fairly popping with—good God!"

"What?" asked Harold, straightening himself up.

But there was no need to ask. Only too

plain was the outline of Slade's fast launch, the *Black Snake*, cutting the sea like a torpedo boat not a mile away.



HAROLD dodged down again like a hare in its form.

"Have they seen us, Dad?" he called across the sand-spit, terror in his voice. "Perhaps they haven't. We could get over to the boat and lie hid in her among all those big bones—they'd never know if they weren't looking."

"They mightn't have seen us," said the captain, bending low under a mass of skulls and jaws. "They mightn't think of coming here. It's on the road from Jamieson Island. Ten to one it's only Slade and her coming back.

"Why, don't be so scared, lad. What could Slade do to you? You're within your legal rights."

"Slade's a beast," called Harold over the sand spit. "He told me once that I was an interfering little beggar, and that if he caught me snooping about after any private affairs of his, he'd give me the damndest hiding I ever— He would, too. He's a triple-distilled beast. I—I can't face the brute! He doesn't understand me."

The boy seemed to be working himself up into a panic.

"Easy as she goes, son," came the captain's voice. "Slade won't meddle, my lad, while I'm about."

"You won't always be about," shouted Harold, "and he's sure to know by now about other things, let alone this. I'll hide. You can stay there if you like. I'm going to get across that creek to the boat; it's the only place where you're sure not to be seen as the launch turns out for Scratchley. I won't go back there. You'll have to take me away in the whale-boat. I—"

He was running along the sand, among the bones, bent double, as he spoke; the captain could not hear half of what he said. Had he heard, the thing that happened had never happened.

Page was a failure and a drunkard, but he was a seaman who knew the sea, and he could have told any man who asked him—or did not—what was likely to be found in a narrow deep channel running between a reef and a sandy cay—a channel that must, in the nature of things, be full of fish, and of those tigers of the sea for whom the fish are prey.

But Page did not hear. He went on picking up stray bits of ambergris for a minute or two, and then, finding that there were no more about that spot, lifted his head a little and began to move cautiously toward the shelter of the boat. One could only reach it either by a long crawl round, or by the short cut through the channel.

It never occurred to Page to take the latter. It never occurred to him either that any one else would.

But Harold, never observant about the things of the sea and ships, though he lived on the one and in the other, had made up his mind—so far as any one in a state of utter panic could be held to have a mind at all—that the only way to safety was to be found in swimming that brief passage of enclosed waters, borne up by his bag of ambergris, which he knew to be lighter than water.

The sun was swinging low to the west; its rays struck red on the water, as he ran down the shelving beach and plunged in almost immediately overhead. And in the midst of the red, far out, but yet far too near, rose as Harold splashed clumsily out into the channel, the black, swift-moving, pointing finger of Death.

He saw it—too late—and screamed a hideous scream. He stopped swimming and began to beat the water with his hands, still screaming—screaming.

The captain heard it, and his heart turned to water within him. He ran down the cay, crying out and waving his arms in a mad, vain thought of frightening off the horror. He saw it all.


Just as his frantic feet touched the water's edge, the black finger reached the beating, screaming form, and with one last cry that seemed to tear his throat open, Harold went down.

When the *Black Snake*, five minutes later tore into the opening of the reef at full speed, those on board of her saw a spreading stain of red upon the waters of the channel, a stain that was not the red of sunset. They saw something else—Captain Page with his mouth and one eye drawn askew in the paralytic attack that had been so long impending, seated on the sand, laughing and trying, with a cracked voice to sing:

The sands and yeasty surges mix
In caves above the dreary bay
And on thy ribs the limpet sticks
And in thy heart the scrawl shall play.

A whale's flipper-bone lay across his knee, and he seemed to be playing the mandolin upon it.

XIII

 THE *Tagula* lay out at anchor in Silence Bay.

It was a day of fearful heat. The schooner seemed to float in the midst of a ball of white-hot brass. Sky and sea reflected back glare for glare; the horizon had almost vanished in the universal blaze.

The sea was not quite still; ring-shaped and bow-shaped ripples stirred on its gelatinous surface and sent forth blades of light that stabbed the eye. Once and again a silver spray of tiny fish leaped out and swept sparkling through the air, to fall again with a sound like a pattering shower. On land, nothing stirred, nothing cried but the indefatigable locusts, winding their wooden rattles in the trees.

Aboard the *Tagula* there was silence and mourning. She had been a cheerful, careless, happy-go-easy sort of ship; Page had sworn at the natives, rope's-ended them, once in a while, but had let them "slack" their work as the Papuan loves to do, and had always fed them well. Harold had been familiar with them as the white man rarely is familiar; they had not respected him, but they admired him and thought his gift of song pure sorcery of the highest order.

When the schooner was limping about between ports, and the long indolent afternoons were full of loafing-time, Page's mandolinetta with its fairy tinkle, Harold's song, black bottles that were shared out, against all laws, among the crew, free allowances of betel-nut and food, made a very paradise for the Papuan sailors. It had been a good ship.

Now, all was over. The *Taubada* lay in his cabin, his genial, sailorly face changed out of all recognition; changed into a twisted, gibbering horror that frightened the wildest cannibal of them all when he peeped in. They had seen things unspeakable, up in the fastnesses of the Gira and Waria Rivers, and in their own main range villages, without turning a hair; but this thing was too much for them. They fled to the fore-castle, and sat there spitting red betel-nut about the boards—after all, the *Taubada* could not rope's-end them now—and weeping.

Like English middle-class folk at a funeral, they took the most out of their sorrow, and rather enjoyed it on the whole. Most of them had been making part of the whale-boat crew when Harold met his end, and they went over the details again and again, gloatingly, and wept the while, ever and anon chewing and spitting the exalting, intoxicating betel-nut.

Only one thing troubled them—there was no pig. Pig being inseparable from all the higher emotions of Papuan life, from wedding merriment, funeral grief, birth, parting, meeting, religious festival, they felt the ill-defined emptiness so often experienced by minds of a higher order, and would have said, had they known how; that life was hollow.

Installed in the second of the *Tagula*'s two cabins, and keeping watch for any sign of a change of wind, was Captain Christopher Campbell. He meant to take the ship down to Samarai if the weather permitted, and hand her over to the authorities there, pending Page's removal by steamer to Australia. There is no place in Papua for paralytics, or for lunatics; and the formerly gallant captain, the gay officer of great passenger boats, the well-beloved of nightingale Amarilla, was paralyzed and mad.

Campbell thought him likely to remain so. He knew that the man had been drinking for years in the slow, soaking way that is the most mischievous of all; he knew that the shock experienced by Page, in his son's terrible death, had been enough to craze a sound and steady brain. He himself, tough sailor though he was, had felt shaken at the sight of that spreading stain of blood in the blue sea-water. If only they had arrived a few minutes sooner!

He had reason enough himself to regret Harold's sudden departure from the strange drama now being played upon Papua's wide stage. The lad was important in the action of the piece. He had hinted at other and more definite proofs he possessed—letters, which the Captain judged to be stolen—words overheard— It could be carried on without him, but undoubtedly the goal was further off, for his death.

At the moment, there was nothing to be done but run the *Tagula* to Samarai—Campbell, unlike most naval men, could sail a yacht, and sail her well—see a doctor on Page's behalf, and get him off to Australia.

He would never recover. If he had known anything about the "Park Lane Tragedy"—and Campbell, sometimes, had been a little inclined to guess that he did—it would not come out.

To Samarai, then—and the wireless.

Nothing could have been simpler, only for the wind. The wind would not blow. It remained dead, obstinate calm for six days, and then blew in the wrong direction. Campbell lost his patience.

"There is no reason," he said, "why the Slade fellow shouldn't tow her down. He'll get paid out of the sale of the boat; she'll have to be sold. And I shall get to Samarai at the same time. What a ——— difficult country this is to get about in! A hundred miles or so from a place, and you might as well be in the moon!"

He tapped his boot thoughtfully. Captain Campbell, R. N., did not much like using "the Slade fellow" for his own ends. It seemed hardly— But then, Page could not be left indefinitely without medical help.

Yes, the *Black Snake* would certainly have to tow. She was such a high-powered launch that there would be no difficulty about the practical part, anyhow.

Having made up his mind, Campbell felt his spirits rise. It would be pleasant to leave this uncomfortable little hooker for the rest of the day, and go up to the plantation house. His sense of honor had kept him from accepting the Slades' invitation to stay in their house; but now that he really had to go . . .

The cabin lately occupied by Harold possessed an ample looking-glass. Campbell got into a good light before it, slapped down his hair with the hardest of brushes, changed his crash coat for one as white and smooth as the icing on a wedding-cake, tied a dark-blue tie, chose out a pair of shoes that were worthy of the coat, decided that the trousers were not worthy of either, and thought he would shift all through, and have another shower. Three changes and baths in the day was none too much in such weather.

Then the hair-slapping had to be gone through again, and the tie re-tied. And then the Captain was ready—a sharp, hard smart-looking king's sailor as ever trod the deck of a fighting ship. He had another good look in Harold's glass and decided that he carried his years extremely well.

"I wonder how old the fellow Slade is?" ran his thoughts. "Getting on for forty,


anyhow. Adventurer—no profession, no people. Where does he get that clinking launch from? Mysteries there, if one cared— But he can go and be eaten by sharks for all I care about his affairs.

"I wonder what a woman like that, familiar with decent people, can— But then they're all ready for romance, and love in a cottage, and following the baggage wagon, and going to the end of the world to live on a desert island, with Him—until they find out what it's really like."

"She ought to have found out by now," ran the busy thoughts, as he took his pipe-clayed helmet off a nail and set it on his head. "She ought to be nearly sick of it—nearly ready for— I wonder, are they married? Oh, Lord, who cares, and what is it to me? All I've got to do is to sheet old Godfrey's death home to her, if I can. Crime is crime, and punishment's punishment, and that's all there is about it. And don't you, Chris Campbell, sir, make a fool of yourself. Do you hear, sir? Aye, aye, sir. Then carry on."

He lifted the betel-chewing boys out of the forecabin with one blast of sharp command. They tumbled, they hopped, they flew.

The dingey was in the water and being rowed across to the beach before any man of them had recovered his breath. But this was the way of the new *Taubada*. Oh, how much better had been the ways of the old one!

 SLADE and Edith, sitting in the garden in the cool of the evening, saw the smart white suit coming up the track.

"Let's move back," said Edith. "I don't want to go in and talk to him. Come further out to the forest."

They went. Under the pillared roof of the banyan trees they stood and watched, arm linked with arm.

The sun was swinging low to the molten-silver sea; among the thousand trunks of the banyan tree its rays shot reddened spears. The goblin birds of Papua began to mutter and moan in the bush; one would have thought they feared the coming of the night.

"Dark!" they seemed to cry. "Dark! It is coming, surely coming; who knows if it will ever lift to day again?"

A change had passed over Edith. It

was as if some blurring hand had been drawn across a fine miniature, dulling the colors and blunting the clear detail. She was lovely; she would be lovely to her grave; but her loveliness shone no longer. The golden hair was less bright; the eyes seemed veiled; into the carriage that had been so imperial, something like the droop of a flower had crept. Unbroken she stood, but the soul of her was flexed.

From Slade, too, something had gone—the calm, outward-looking gaze that is worn by happy faces; the even set of feature that tells a heart at ease. Nothing shows more clearly the rocks and rapids of life than the marks of time, even on the least expressive face. There, where you see those two downward ripples at the corners of the mouth—that is where the tide broke over a rock of death; the rock is hidden, but the ripple of the tide remains. That spot where the lines run straight and streaked from hair to eyebrow root—there the stream met with sudden depths, hiding dark things. No one has heard of it; no one will ever know. But the lines of the current of life have marked the spot.

The faces of Slade and Edith were changed. The angel with the flaming sword was on his way to the gates of their island Paradise, and they heard the flutter of his wings. Their bodies walked in the Garden of Eden still, but their souls were already abroad in the wilderness. Whatever might come of Campbell and his visit, one thing was sure, that things would be as they had been no more.

And Edith, as we all do when the face of the known and common is suddenly turned away from us, leaving instead the face of something dark and strange—Edith regretted with unspeakable bitterness the calm that had passed before that storm.

She had actually wondered if she could endure a life, a few years even, of this wild existence at the ends of the earth. She had hankered after things that were not worth the smallest note of the wild birds in the forest, on those evenings when she and her lover-husband wandered out beneath the moon of Paradise. She had— Oh, what did it matter? The end was come.

They talked, these two; they were afraid of silence. They spoke about the weather and the island and the garden, and the strange sights on Jamieson Island, and the last news from Samarai. And all the time

they trod, smiling, on sharp knives, like the Little Princess of whom Edith had spoken, laughingly, in the happy days that lay behind.

Everything they spoke of had its edge. The island, the garden. Who would sail into Silence Bay? Who would gather the fruits they had planted, in the time to come? Jamieson Island? One could not speak of that without thinking again of the fairy valley with the blossoming pawpaw trees, where Edith and Slade had called themselves Deirdre and Naisi in the glens of Alban, and laughed at the thought of misery or ill-fortune, such as followed on those lovers of the Children of Usna. What subject in the world was there that they could speak of without treading on the invisible knives that sprang up everywhere?

But they talked. "It will keep her mind from worrying." "It will keep him from imagining what may happen," each thought; and each called up smiles, and the ghosts of the light, merry words that had danced at their bidding, only a few days ago. And so they went together, in the Garden of Paradise, that was the Garden of Paradise no longer.

In the sago cottage the Captain found only Murua, sitting alone, busy with some kind of sewing. The young girl was dressed in plain white, without a touch of color; in her hair was a wreath of something that looked like black flowers, and the same black flowers caught up her light dress here and there. There was a suggestion of mourning about the dress; and it was carried out by the quiet gravity of her face.

Murua had not loved Harold Page in life, but she regretted him when dead, perhaps more than she would have cared to acknowledge. He had been such a creature of the sun, and his end—for one who should have died among flowers and sunshine, with the music that he loved about him—had been so terrible, and so unthinkably alien from his light, butterfly life, that it carried a horror all its own.

Murua did not color on seeing the sailor's straight, lithe figure march into the sitting-room; she turned a little pale, and rose to greet him.

"I am sorry that Mr. and Mrs. Slade are out," she said. "I will have them sent for; they can not have gone far, because Mr. Slade is still a little lame."

She beckoned to a boy and gave him her

message. Campbell took a chair, and sat looking at his neat pink nails.

"How have you been, Miss Murua?" he asked.

Murua always answered a question carefully and literally.

"I have been well in body, but somewhat oppressed in mind, Captain Campbell. I have not been acquainted with trouble before, and I find it weighs upon the spirits."

"Other people besides you have remarked as much," said Campbell dryly. "You are fortunate in having waited so long to find it out. Haven't you ever been under the weather before?"

"In some ways I have. I have thought I was going to die more than once, but that is different. It does not weigh upon your spirits."

"Right, small lady; it does not. Quite the contrary sometimes, if you've reasonable grounds for thinking that some one else is about as likely to die as you, and that you're going to help them to do it."

"I had not that consolation," replied Murua narratively. "The last time I remember it was when I was on the Woodlarks——"

"On the how much? Anything to do with 'on the bust'?"

"No, Captain Campbell, nothing at all—at least, I would not say nothing at all, because the Woodlarks is the biggest goldfield we have, and the miners go busting, as you call it, oftener than they should. Pups and I were on the Woodlarks for some weeks, owing to a revolt among the natives, who threatened to attack the miners employing them and roast them alive on sticks. Of course such impudence could not be tolerated by the Government for a single moment."

"It certainly would be impudent to roast you on a stick," mused Campbell.

"So we went to talk to them; and while Pups was up at the mines, conversing with the white men, after he had talked to the natives and succeeded in convincing them that they were in the wrong, I went for a walk to get butterflies. Pups was stopping to handcuff the natives——"

"Whom he had convinced?"

"Yes, Captain Campbell. And I got into a place in the bush where I had never been before, and while crossing a creek, I found something objectionable in it—the head of a white miner."

"Very objectionable, for the miner."

"Yes, it was, of course. And the question then arose, what must I attribute it to? So I unslung my rifle and began to think. And before I had thought a minute, I smelled musk, very strong."

"Ah! Same as West Africa. Did he go for you?"

"No, Captain Campbell, he did not go for me; I have no doubt he would have, but I went for him first, and I have his skin and teeth in my room at the station, nineteen feet, six inches long. I mean the skin."

"Where'd you get him?" asked the Captain interestedly, looking with fresh wonder at this child-woman in the pretty dress, who went forth to slay alligators in their native swamps.

"Plugged him one in the belly, near the arm," replied Murua calmly. "You do not often get the chance, but he had thrown his head up to open his mouth, and I was rather underneath, on the bank of the river. May I give you some tea?"

"Thanks. What are the flowers you are wearing?"

"They are not flowers, they are butterflies—black butterflies. I am wearing them as mourning for Harold."

"Why, so they are!" said the sailor, looking at the beautiful black velvet wings that almost seemed to flutter on the snowy dress. "You're a bit of a poetess, aren't you? You make me think of Mrs. Pat Campbell and her famous recitation, 'Butterflies.' You must have been thinking of it, surely, when you chose the 'Butterflies—all black!'"

"I never heard it," answered Murua a trifle wistfully. "Is it very pretty?"

"Well, it wants Mrs. Pat to do it justice, but listen:

At sixteen years she knew no care:
How could she, sweet and pure as light?
And there pursued her everywhere
Butterflies all white.

A lover looked, she dropped her eyes
That glowed like pansies wet with dew,
And lo! there came from out the skies
Butterflies of blue.

Before she guessed, her heart was gone;
The tale of love was softly told;
And all about her wheeled and shone
Butterflies of gold.

Then he forsook her one sad morn;
She wept and sobbed, ah, love, come back!
There only came to her forlorn
Butterflies all black.

Murua drew a long breath, and was silent. She cupped her pointed chin in her hand and sat looking out and down, across the burning sea.

"What are you looking at?" asked Campbell curiously.

She answered, oddly, with a text—

"The round world, and all that therein is." Then, after a moment's pause, "You make me see."

"The world?"

"Yes. But there is no good. I think your tea is cold, Captain Campbell; let me pour you out another cup."

"I will, when you tell me why there's no good," said Campbell, who had to the full the sailor's temerity in venturing on dangerous ground; he was not going to marry this woman-child with the butterflies in her hair, he thought, but she had certainly a flavor of her own.

"There is no good in fancying things that I can not ever have," replied Murua simply.

Then she changed the conversation with quiet dignity. And Campbell did not venture to bring it back. Dressed as she was today, her boy's clothing and her weapons laid aside, her small, pale, pointed face under the piled load of hair, looking altogether womanly, she was not to be treated as a child.

"Now I wonder," thought Campbell, "why it is that little Murua, who really understands that swashbuckling business about the bush, looks feminine all through, no matter how many daggers and pistols and breeches and boots she sticks about herself, while Edith Slade, who couldn't have walked a yard in the jungle, unless to save her man, is Joan of Arc to the life, so far as looks go?"

He found no answer. But the magnificent picture of Edith in the forest, Edith sitting by the camp-fire, in her man's dress, with one hand on the hilt of her knife, flashed up before him and hid little Murua from his eyes.

"Giannetta was like her a bit," he thought. "I wonder why it's always the handsome ones who do these things? You'd think it would be the plain-headed kind, who can't keep their men; but if ever there's a knifing or a poisoning with a woman in it, look for the handsome girl. I suppose the other kind won't throw away a man when they do get him, no matter what he

does. Well, Edith Slade could have her choice among most. Pity—pity."

"What about seeing Mr. Slade?" he said aloud. "Can't the boy find him?"

"Is it important?" asked Murua, who guessed that the Slades were none too fond of Campbell's company.

"Very. I must arrange about getting Page taken down to Samarai."

"I will go and see," said the girl, flitting out of the room as lightly as if the black velvet wings about her dress had borne her up.

She found them beyond the garden, under the many-pillared tent of the mighty banyan. They were sitting upon a tangle of roots, talking with busy politeness. Each was resolved the other should not see her, or his, own trouble. And each saw the other's as clearly as if two human heads and hearts had been made of glass.

"Captain Campbell is at the house and wants to see you about getting Captain Page down to Samarai," announced Murua.

Slade and Edith looked at each other.

"You needn't bother," he said, rising to his feet and reaching for the crutch he still used a little. "He wants the *Black Snake*, I suppose. He seems to want, and manage, and take over, everything in the blessed country."

"Are you going?" asked Edith quickly.

"We are," he answered, and limped down the track, leaving her with Murua.



CAPTAIN CAMPBELL was pacing the veranda of the cottage as if it had been a quarter-deck. He turned sharply when Slade's crutch began to tap upon the gravel outside.

"Ah," he jerked. "I wanted to see you about the launch."

"Won't you sit down?" asked Slade, taking a seat himself, and leaving Campbell's statement to stand without comment—a way he had when he wished to be annoying.

There were people who said that Ben Slade could be silent in fifteen different ways, each one of them more aggravating than the other.

"Thanks."

The sailor took a chair, and lit a cigar. It did not burn up just at once. Slade sat and watched unwinkingly.

"Oh!" began Campbell, puffing lightly. "I want to know if you could tow the *Tagula* down to Samarai. Try one of my cigars?"

"I can tow the *Tagula*. Thank you, I will not try."

This was a little nasty. The literal repetition suggested want of quality in Campbell's cigars, delicately, but distinctly.

"Ah," was all that Campbell found to say.

He waited for Slade to ask him what he wanted in Samarai; why he was taking the *Tagula*; what business of his the whole affair might be. It was, on the surface, not very much his business; but Campbell somehow never quite realized, in foreign parts, that he was off the active list—and there is hardly anything on earth or sea that a captain of His Majesty's ships may not meddle in, at the far ends of the world.

Slade, his hard brown face looking more than ever like the face of a Pharaoh cut in stone, said exactly nothing.

Campbell was obliged to go on:

"You see, Page isn't going to get better. I've seen a lot of that sort of thing."

Pause. It was now up to Slade to drop an "Indeed!" a "Really?" a "Sorry to hear it," into the conversation.

He dropped nothing.

Campbell began to feel nettled. The man was not rude, but— "I'd give a year's income to go outside with him and punch his head," he thought. "And that's her fancy, is it?"

"Of course some one has to see to his being sent to Australia and taken care of."

He dodged another pause, seeing silence in Slade's hard topaz eye. Hurriedly he went on—

"I suppose the ship will be sold, so you will get your fee for towage."

"My what?"

"Fee. Pay. Expenses."

Slade let the definition drop to the ground with a thud. In the gap that followed, one of the well-trained house-boys came in with spirit decanters and glasses.

"— him! He must talk now," thought Campbell.

And Slade, with the trick of divination that men of the wilderness often possess coolly replied to his thought.

"So I must. Will you have a drink?"

The sailor was too much taken aback for a moment to answer. He stared at Slade. The latter poured a very stiff glass, handed it to Campbell, poured a still stiffer one for himself, and took it down at a draught. He scarcely ever touched spirits, but some freak

of heredity had made him almost proof against their effects.

Campbell sipped at his glass. He had not the best of heads; the whisky was old and good and did not taste as potent as it undoubtedly was. In spite of his care, his brain began to feel the effect. It seemed to him that he must have imagined Slade's piece of thought-reading.

"The fellow is really stupid," he said to himself. "Just a decent-looking head and fairly good figure; that's what got her. He'll never know what I'm really going down to Samarai about."

"Yes," he said, as if continuing the conversation which had never begun. "I've got to get away as quick as possible; so if tomorrow morning will suit you and Mrs. Slade—I suppose she'll come down with us."

"Why?"

There is no word in the English language that can be used with more devastating effect than a carefully aimed and fired

"Why?"

"Well—we can't leave the women here alone," said Campbell rather weakly.

"Why?"

There was no why, and he knew it; in Papua, white women often live in lonely places about the bush, with their men away, for weeks at a time. He was all but goaded into replying—

"Because I don't choose."

Campbell was a cautious man, but the whisky had certainly been a little stronger than he thought. And other influences, stronger and headier yet, were afloat in that little room. The sailor was a man who had shed blood in war-time; who had seen all the brutalities of war. At that moment, civilization lay very loose upon him. He could understand the feelings of the victor who slew a husband and carried off a wife, perhaps to give her also over to a speedy death, in time.

With an effort he restrained himself. He might as well have let himself go altogether, as far as those keen gem-eyes opposite were concerned. Slade had read what he had read.

"I think," said Campbell with strained politeness, "that you would find it undoubtedly better to bring Mrs. Slade with you."

The gage was thrown down now. Slade nodded his head, as one who attends and assents, and rose to his feet.

"The launch will be ready at six o'clock tomorrow," he said.

Campbell found himself shaking hands, and taking leave.

"So he is going to telegraph," thought Slade, as the smart white back went down the path. "Well, now to have it out with Edith."



SLADE went back to the garden; it was growing dusk very quickly, but Edith could see and read his face. Glance met glance. He sat down beside her.

Murua, with her unflinching tact, glided away to the house. She knew that in New Guinea no two who sit in a garden together wish for the presence of a third. Every private interview has to be carried on outdoors, since not a house in the country, from Mamba to the Fly, but is built like one gigantic sounding-board.

In the dusk of the garden, with the ghostly flying-foxes wheeling past, and the great white stars of the tropic world lighting crystal lamps among the orange-bloom, they two sat and talked who had come to an end of Paradise.

"Joan, you've got to be brave again," said Slade, his hand on a small smooth hand.

"I'm very, very tired of being brave," said Edith.

There was a pause. She did not immediately ask him what she was to do.

"I suppose," said Slade, with one of the smiles he kept for her only, "she—the little peasant girl of the fields—got very, very tired, too. Only she went on."

"Have we got to—go on?" asked Edith, turning round to face him.

It was really dusk now; the fire-flies were making emerald sparks among the boughs, and there was nothing to be seen of Edith but a blur of white dress and a spot of white face, with something dark for eyes. There were night-owls crying in the forest. Far below them the sea mourned on the sands of Silence Bay.

"He means to telegraph from Samarai. He could get authority for an arrest pending inquiries. He wants you to come down to Samarai. Says it isn't safe to leave you and Murua."

"What does he know about it?"

"What do you think? It doesn't matter anyhow; that's only an excuse."

"So—it's come," said Edith in a tone di-

vested of all expression. "I—want to realize it. I can't, somehow."

She was breathing rather more quickly than usual. She held onto the firm manly hand at her side.

"I'm quite cool," she said. "I just want to—realize—and look it in the face."

"There is not," said Slade, "the slightest need for doing anything of the kind. As I said before, there are other things to do."

"You don't mean——"

"No. I'll allow I thought of it at first. I wouldn't stop at anything; neither would any other man in my place, if he was a man at all. But it would be no use. I can see that now. No, there's another way."

"What way?"

"The world is wide," said Slade, and made his arms say that which his tongue could not.

"You have me," they said. "You have me and my love, wherever we go."

Edith shook a little in his embrace.

"Oh, Ben, Ben!" she said, drawing away so that she could look into the white blur that was his face. "Where now?"

"I have thought," said Slade deliberately, "of two places. Timor is one. It's a great island between Australia and Java and the end of Dutch New Guinea—a long way from here. It's owned by Portugal, and it's rather a wild sort of place; not much law, and something like Uncle-Tom's-Cabin slavery as regards the natives. But Portugal is the only European country that refuses to allow extradition for offenses carrying the death penalty, and——"

"Why did we not go to Portugal then?"

"Because, dear girl, like Owen Wister's drake, they have 'means of their own,' in Portugal. There are frontiers, and there are ways of inducing people to go across them and not give trouble on the spot. But a Portuguese colony——"

"I don't like the sound of the place," said Edith. "It sounds criminal, somehow."

"They say odd things about Timor, it's true. There's another choice."

"What?"

"There are large tracts of Arctic and Antarctic regions, some with Esquimaux, some without, not owned by any power in the world."

Edith shivered a little.

"An igloo with you—a snow hut," she said. "Hunting walrus by moonlight with spears, crossing frozen seas in a kaiak—"

Ben, if you'd asked me that at first, I don't know but what I—but it's different now."

"How different?"

She was silent for quite a long time.

"Well?"

"Not now," said Edith's voice. The dark had come; he could not even see her face in the gloom of the orange trees. "I can't run any more. I'm done, Ben. Let them have me."

Slade swore something beneath his breath, and his arm tightened round her till she gasped.


"It can't be helped," she said. "You would fight the world, I know—but it's the law—we can't save those we love. Send down and tell Captain Campbell tonight, and tomorrow—when did you say she was to start?"

"Six o'clock in the morning."

"No—not the morning. Not till night. Take me away in the dark, and don't let me see, when we go——"

She broke from him and ran to the house.

XIV

 THE island town of Samarai stands on a mere scrap of sixty acres of land, covered with plummy coconuts, laced with white coral walks, and surrounded by the tumbling, tide-marked seas of China Straits.

At night, when there is a moon, all Samarai turns out from its small tin houses and walks round the island, under the giant arcade of old, old coco palms, where the moonbeams scarcely sift through; past Magazine Point, where the seas come beating and roaring in from the rocky coasts of Basilisk and Sariba; along the open path where the moon turns the shallows to a plain of silver; and back by the pretty cottages decked with coral and giant clams, to the jetty-side again—round and round and round, lovers and their lasses, lonely girls and solitary men, looking at each other under the teasing rays of the moon; middle-aged married couples who have left the babies tucked up under the mosquito nets at home—round and round and round.

All the island was out that white night when Slade's launch was lying at Clunn's jetty; when Slade and Edith were standing in the dusk of the great calophyllum by the stores, listening for something that should go floating out upon the night, away from

Samarai, across the islands and the seas.

The *Morinda* was in, lying beside the Burns Philp Wharf. The passengers were ashore, walking round the island. All the place was white—white galvanized roofs of stores and cottages, looking as if snow had fallen upon them; white coral roads and paths; white shine of sea; white suits and dresses passing and passing by.

It was a merry night. The trade wind whistled in the palms and struck their vanes together with a sound like bursting waves; the steamer lights shone all in a row half down the little street; people, passing up and down, laughed, chattered, ran from one group to another. News had come by the steamer, friends had come by her, goods and parcels and letters, food and pretty clothes and pleasant people. She lay at the wharf, a very palace of light and splendor in the quiet town, and from her decks swung bales of goods, and along her gangways poured the people, passing in and out; and from her high masts went forth to the wide seas of all the world, a steady click-click-clicking. Samarai was sending its telegrams.

And Slade, who had had a year at a Marconi school in his earlier days, and had kept up what he learned—kept his knowledge to himself, too, since the man who learns and leaves is not much better liked by the clan of Marconi than is the postulant who deserts her convent after trial.

Slade stood and listened. He heard much that was not his business, but that troubled him little. So long as the knowledge did not pass beyond him, what did it matter that he should hear that A. could not meet his liabilities, and begged for time; that Mrs. B. wanted her blue silk dress finished and sent up next boat; that Miss C. wished to know whether anything had happened to her *fiancé*, as she had not heard from him for two mails; that the D.'s were urging immediate sale of all the Blank Company shares they held? He scarcely heard; he was waiting for the message that he knew must come—Campbell's. It was night now; the Queensland messages, relayed on to England, were always sent by night.

"*Tut-tut, tut-tut, tut-tut-tut-tut.*"

There was a pause. Some one was talking to the *Morinda*. Slade waited. The wind struck the heads of the palms together. Past the houses, with their false look of snow on the roofs, over the coral sand that

looked like snow, went the white-clad people of Samarai.

"Tut-tutt."

Edith felt his hand tighten on her arm. She knew their message was beginning.

It was a long one. Slade stood as still as the Marconi mast of the ship, listening. Edith almost held her breath.

"Tut-tutt."

That was the last. The operator stopped sending and began to take a message.

"Smith - Jones, Samarai. Para rubber dropped ninenpence. Do not——"

Slade drew her away.

"Got it, girlie," he said. "Campbell's cabled home that he's identified you and wants authority to arrest."

"We knew it before," said Edith, walking with the white, merry crowd down the white street; every one in Samarai was abroad, every one seemed gay.

"We knew, in a way; not dead certain. And now—there's the *Black Snake* at Clunn's wharf, Edith; nothing to touch her in these seas. Say the word and we're off for Timor or Adelle Land."

"No," said Edith in a low voice. "No, no. I've made up my mind. Life isn't worth it. Perhaps we were—I don't know. I know we are going to Campbell now, to tell him."

"He won't believe——"

"No. But that doesn't matter. We'll go down with him to Australia on parole, and—wait."

"Till they drag us home in a locked cabin?"

"Ben, no matter what they do, nothing—nothing could be worse. One can't run forever. If we could have stayed on in Silence Bay—and no one had ever come—I wouldn't have minded living out of the world. But I—can't run—any more. Don't ask me."

They walked on down the street. Slade was silent. He could not trust himself to speak, at that moment, without using words too rough for Edith to hear. He ached to say exactly what he thought about Campbell, exactly what he felt like doing to him. And then—to go and do it!

"He'd want gloves, though," thought the man contemptuously. "Want a twenty-foot ring and Queensbury rules, and a second. He's plucky enough; naval men are. But they're sheer rolls of red tape."

Then, as the recollection of certain looks

cast at Edith came up in his mind again, he realized that Campbell was no roll of red tape, from some points of view.

"Dear," said Edith's voice at his elbow, "if you want to say anything, say it, but don't mutter so dreadfully; it sounds almost as if you were swearing."

Slade burst out into a bitter laugh.

"Almost—I suppose," he said.

They neared Campbell's hotel.

"We shall have to ask him outside," said Edith. "You couldn't have a really private talk in any house here."

"No. People talk secrets when it's raining hard on the tin roof, and no one can hear beyond a radius of six feet. Or else they go out-of-doors. Let it alone tonight, Edith."

"Why? As well now as any other time."

"Let it alone."

Slade was in one of his impracticable humors; she saw it, and gave in with the wisdom of the doubly married.

"We'll talk about it again. I'm sure you have walked enough on your weak ankle. Let's go in," she said mildly.

When Ben's eyebrows came down like that into his eyes—"fire over fur"—she was too wise to argue with him.

He was, of course, the best and dearest soul in the world, but he was not perfect. She did not think she would have liked him quite so well if he had been. One could not have mothered and patronized, and aggravated and soothed and forgiven, a Perfect Arthur of the Round Table.

When Edith had gone to bed, Slade sat out alone on the windy, moonshiny veranda, looking at the long row of electric lights down half the street that marked the big *Morinda*. She was a small ship in Sydney harbor, a mean figure beside the regal *Orients* and *P. & O.'s*. But here in New Guinea, tied up to the toy town of Samarai, with little launches and fragile cutters and schooners clustering about her like chickens round the hen that cares and feeds them, she seemed an ocean palace.

Slade sat and smoked, and looked, and thought. He was as obstinate as are most men with a hawk nose and a jutting chin. He was as jealous as are most men with strong feelings and character. He had the innate, scarce conscious contempt for women's intellect, women's decisions in great matters of life, that mark the man who, most of his life, has lived near to primitive

things. He did not mean to give Edith her way.

To let Campbell win all along the line—to see his slightly brutal admiration for “Joan” giving itself free play, while he tied a rope round “Joan’s” white neck—no, this thing should not be.

His tame providence seemed to have lost its way of late. Well, the more reason for the old plan of jumping on the back of unkindly circumstance and breaking the wild thing to his will.

Slade smoked and thought on.

Edith had weakened, given in, given up. He never would have thought it of her; he could even yet hardly understand it. But he did not love her, or wish to protect her, the less. She needed both all the more.

He could take the *Black Snake* to Timor; it was something like two thousand miles, but through waters untouched by hurricanes, and the season was, in any case, the season of calms.

At Dilli he could, if necessary, raise enough capital by selling the launch to start a plantation. The place was a kind of Alsatia. The whites in all probability not more than three-quarters white; the natives half rebellious, half beaten down and cowed; the life isolated and dull. But it was not a gallows or a jail. It offered freedom and safety.

He could understand, to some extent, the attitude Edith had taken up, though certain aspects of it puzzled him. He could see how her soul sickened at the thought of flight after flight, of hiding in holes and corners. But . . .

Slade threw the end of his cigar away and got up.

“There are worse things,” he said. “She’ll go.”

It was simple enough. He had only to run away with his wife; that was all. Slade’s ineradicable sense of humor made him shake with silent laughter as he made his way to his door at the far end of the veranda. The situation had its comic side. How innocent and sweet she looked, sleeping under her white gauze net in the moonlight! How little she thought that this time tomorrow night she would be far, far out at sea!

“And, ‘Once on board the lugger,’ my girl,” Slade laughed grimly.

Then he went to bed.



EDITH complained of weariness next day, and kept her room in spite of the heat. Little Murua, whom they had all forgotten, sat with her, fanned away the mosquitoes, read aloud to her, was quiet and sisterly and tactful, and never by so much as a word or a look, hinted that she knew there were mysteries about.

The girl who spent most of her time “swashbuckling about the bush in breeches” was the gentlest and kindest of little nurses, and in all her white soul there was not a drop of envy or malice against the woman who had stolen from her the things she prized most in the world.

For Murua, who looked at life with the calm directness of one who lives near to Nature, did not deceive herself in this matter. She knew that, short as their acquaintance had been, the sailor was falling in love with her, up to the time when he met Edith by the camp-fire in the forest. She knew that the feeling he had for Edith was far below Edith’s deserts, that it was mere common, almost coarse, appreciation of her beauty; that he had a low opinion of her, in spite of his admiration. But she felt in the very core of her heart, that for all that, and all that, he was gone from her.

So the little girl, scarce woman yet in years, folded something away and hid it in the inmost corner of her mind, not to be looked at till—when? It might be—it probably would be—never.

She had found the words of “Butterflies” in the Samarai library, and made them her own. It was not by chance that she fastened her white dresses now at the throat with a jet butterfly worn long ago by her mother for some forgotten Royal mourning. “Butterflies, all black,” were, to the fanciful child of the wilderness, the symbol of her love.

Slade busied himself during the morning out on his launch. He meant to load her toward evening, take Edith on board at half-past six, when the whole town of Samarai, without any exception whatever, is dining, and get thirty miles away before his absence should be discovered. After that—who knew where to look? What vessel that plowed the waters of the Coral Sea could catch the *Black Snake*, even if any one did know?

He laughed a little when he thought of Edith’s surprise at the extent of the little

evening run to which he meant to invite her. He thought that, on the whole, she would not be so sorry to have her mind made up for her. And if she was, it didn't matter. What was a marriage service for?

On the whole, Ben Slade, still amazingly young despite his almost forty years, felt the affair to be a rather jolly adventure and looked forward to it as fun. And the best spice of the fun would be the thought of "that cow of an Englishman" left behind.

The "cow of an Englishman," meanwhile, had been busy in his own methodic way. He had handed Page over to the hospital—which was not at all glad to see him, regarding the care of lunatics as none of its business—had arranged for his passage to Brisbane, settled with a hard-up third-class passenger to take care of him on the voyage down, given over the ship and all she contained to the official representing law and order in Samarai, and then marched up to the top of the hill whereon the hospital was placed, through a fierce morning sun, to see the patient and ascertain that all was well. When Captain Campbell put his hand to any plow, he was apt to see the job of plowing through to the last furrow.

The nurse in charge—one of a long series who had spent a brief few months in the isolated little town, deprived of the interest and excitement that attend hospital work in larger places—received him rather crossly. She had two cases of blackwater fever, a hand smashed by dynamite, and a delirium tremens in her charge, and it seemed to her that Page was really the last straw.

"We aren't supposed to look after lunatics, you know," she told him sharply.

"My dear young lady," said the Captain soothingly, fixing his eye admiringly on the nurse's neat figure, "this is a case of paralysis. No matter what else he has, you can't deny that. I brought him here as a paralytic. Besides, he'll only be with you till the steamer comes back."

"And that will be four days, at the earliest, going and returning from Woodlark," complained the girl, a little softened by the fine blue eyes that Captain Campbell knew so well how to use. "People think that because there are only a few beds in the place, I can have nothing to do. I'd rather have my share of the beds in a ward of eighty—with ordinary help. Day and night work like this is killing, when my only helper is away."

"I'm sure you do your very best for every one," replied Captain Campbell. "Pretty girls are always the kindest."

"Well, at that rate of going, it would take an angel or a fairy to put up with Page," answered the nurse. "He has been worrying my life out all day about some precious box of papers. He can hardly speak so as to be understood, and his mind isn't more than half there, but you never saw anything so persistent. Just come and listen to him."

The Captain followed her into the small clean ward, with its walls almost all door and window, its white mosquito nets, and its wide protecting veranda.

Page was lying in a quiet corner; his net was up, since it was morning, and no mosquitoes were about, and his face was plain to be seen, one eye drawn down, the mouth badly twisted. Out of the sound corner of the mouth words were pattering ceaselessly, blurred, unfinished, hard to understand. But Campbell could gather that a box of papers was in question.

"The shark ate it," he understood Page to say, a great many times. And then, "The old lady—the old lady."

It seemed utter nonsense, but poor Page was evidently distressed. Campbell, who was as kindhearted as most men, outside of what he conceived to be his duty, asked the nurse whether she could form any idea of what he wanted. If there were anything of Page's on the schooner that he needed . . .

"It's just delirious nonsense, if you ask me," said the nurse crisply. "Sharks and papers and old ladies! If you want to do anything for him, you could send up a case of good soda-water from the hotel. He's on the edge of D. T.'s, in addition to everything else, and I daren't give him stimulant."

"He shall certainly have it," said Campbell, and went away rather puzzled.

It seemed good to him, on the whole, to inquire after any box of papers that might have been found on the *Tagula*.

"One might quiet down the poor brute," he thought, with the healthy man's shudder at sickness. "Well, whatever way I may 'wink out,' as Slade calls it, it won't be that particular one, thank God!"

He ordered the soda-water and made inquiry about the papers. Campbell was never happier than in ordering, inquiring,

seeing about this and that. He felt his morning's work quite a tonic.

The inquiry about the papers produced no particular fruit. If Captain Campbell liked to take the trouble of looking, it would be very good of him. The official in charge of these matters didn't know what was the proper method of procedure, but no doubt Captain Campbell would take every care of the property.

Captain Campbell did like the trouble; would take the care. There was no apparent way of getting out to the schooner, and no boat available.

The sailor walked round the island till he came to a dingey drawn up on the sand, called a native policeman to assist him in shoving her down, and rowed himself out through the green water to the ship.

No one on board. The *Tagula* swung idly at anchor in the tearing current of the Straits. The doors of the cabins were all open; nothing had been locked up.

Campbell, with a frown at such irregularity—in an island where thieving was practically unknown—entered the first cabin and set to work.



SLADE did not think it wise to set about the business of provisioning the *Black Snake* immediately. He waited till he had seen Campbell go up Hospital Hill before he went to the stores to give his orders. No one in Burns Philps's or Whitten's would see anything remarkable about his buying goods by the case and bag, but the naval man, knowing what he knew, might smell a rat.

He had scarcely finished giving his orders when he saw Campbell coming down the hill again. This was awkward. It would not do to have the store boys carrying off cases of meat and butter, benzoline, tins of biscuits and mats of rice, under Campbell's very eyes. Slade told them to wait till he sent for the stuff, and went back to the hotel veranda.

Passengers from the steamer were all over the place. She was to sail before dusk—Slade had taken care to ascertain that; he did not want to have her wireless at the immediate service of Campbell—and the travelers who had ventured tremblingly up from Sydney and Melbourne to have a peep at terrible New Guinea were asking for impossible articles of food and drink, and hunting unobtainable souvenirs all over the

town, eager to make the most of their time.

One rather vulgar-looking woman attracted his attention by staring at him as if he were one of the shows of the country, like Cape Nelson or the Suau Passage. She was middle-aged. She carried a sunshade and wore a veil, so that one could not distinguish her features. Slade thought he had seen her somewhere before, a long time ago; thought she was rude to stare as she did; and then dismissed the woman and her decency and respectability and evilness, out of his mind. He wanted to watch Campbell. He could not load his cargo until Campbell was out of sight again.

Rather to his astonishment, he saw the sailor take possession of the dingey, row out to the *Tagula*, and disappear inside the ship. He did not trouble himself much about what Campbell's possible business might be; he saw his opportunity and made the most of it.

Campbell was a good while on board the boat. Slade had brought the *Black Snake* close to Clunn's wharf, and he busied himself with loading his stores for the trip to Timor. It did not take long.

In half an hour he had seen everything on board and dismissed the boys. But still Campbell stayed on the *Tagula*, invisible.

He came out at last, dropped into the dingey, and began rowing toward the Burns Philp jetty, very fast. Slade looked at him through the windows of the launch, wondered mildly what he had been doing, and laughed not at all mildly at the thought of the way Campbell was going to be tricked that night. His sense of humor, too, was tickled by the idea of eloping with Edith.

He hummed gaily and not too unmusically, as he moved about the launch, examining this and that. There was a long and somewhat risky voyage ahead; it would not do to break down or run short of anything.

The light sank toward the sea. The steamer hooted twice, three times, four times, and was away. He saw her going out through the Straits, a black spit against the reflected red of the east. Westward, the sun went down in a flare of fierce color like the explosion of a blast furnace; the skies seemed to blare and shout their blood-reds and thunder-purples. The sea, dead, oily calm, heaved in interlacing rings of flame.

Slade sat in the cabin of the launch, waiting till dinner-time should clear the street of people. The wild spirit of the adventurer

was awake in him tonight. The perilous wastes of the Coral Sea, scarce charted, full of reefs; the Gulf of Papua, with its restless waters yellowed, miles out of sight of land, by the flow of the great Western rivers; the run through Torres Straits, among the bright green islands of Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, the long, burning Gulf of Carpentaria; the far, uninhabited coasts of Northern Australia, reeling past and past his boat; Arnheim Land; the strange Sea of Arafura; Timor, blue and high, looking out of the trade-wind clouds—all the journey ran before his eyes like a film in a cinematograph.

He thought of Bligh and the *Bounty* mutineers, and the voyage right from Pitcairn to Timor, many thousands of miles further than his projected journey, with scant provisions, too, and in an open boat. Why, this was child's play, and a royal adventure into the bargain.

He had felt the wrench when leaving Scratchley Island, bitterly enough. But it was not to him what it was to Edith. He had not been averse to leaving in the daylight; indeed, it was only his love for her that made him understand why she had begged to be taken away in the dark—not to leave the dear island in the light of broad, cruel day. It had been home to her. To no man on earth does that word mean what it means to woman, the home-maker, the nest-builder.

So Slade, the adventurer, sat and smoked, and whistled in his launch, waiting for the dusk and the hour, and well enough pleased, now that the necessity had come, with the thought of a new adventure.

The evening tide began to run in and rock the launch as she lay. It was a four-knot current; the *Black Snake* felt its pull and strained a little at her moorings.

"She wants to be off, the beauty!" said Slade. "She smells blue water. My lass, you'll walk tonight."

A smart, light step came down the wharf.

"Now I wonder," thought Slade, looking out through the windows, "if by any devilish chance——"

He had scarcely time to form the words before Campbell was aboard.



ONE flame of fury, Slade knotted his fists and made a step forward. He was quite clear what he was going to do; his mind worked like a dynamo.

He would knock Campbell down. He would tie up his mouth. He would take him off in the launch with Edith and himself, and would maroon him; marooning was a good old custom for which there was still much to be said, in these lonely, untrafficked seas, and there were any number of isolated islands on the course. He'd trouble Campbell to send off radios from Bramble Cay, or some unnamed atoll further out toward Dutch New Guinea. Of course he would be found and taken off—but a thousand to one it would not be soon enough to spoil the game for Slade.

If service in the British Navy teaches anything, it teaches quickness of thought and act. Campbell saw, before he was fairly inside the cabin, that Slade meant mischief; and in the same instant, guessed why. The man was going to bolt with her!

An hour—half-an-hour—earlier, the sailor would have closed promptly with Slade and given him as good as he could. But now nothing was further from his thoughts or desires. He stopped the rush that he saw coming by one prompt statement—

"Page has poisoned himself!"

Slade stood still and looked at him with the hard, unwinking eye of a hawk. Was this a trap?

"Mr. Slade," went on Captain Campbell, holding out his hand. "I have to apologize, in the humblest possible manner, to yourself and to Mrs. Slade. I think you are man enough to forgive."

Slade answered not a word for some moments; his face grew white as the coral road beyond the wharf, and his heart began to beat as if it would beat its way out of his chest. For once, the man was shaken. God! Was it possible that the rope was loosening at last?

He spoke, withholding his hand.

"I can forgive, when I have proof that I should do so," he said. "Not before."

"May I sit down?" asked Campbell.

They both seated themselves. The launch rocked gently on the tide that ran in through China Straits.

"No one but would have thought——" began Campbell, and broke off. "I'm not here to excuse myself," he said.

"It would be difficult," said the cold voice beside him.

"I can take my medicine, and I see you're going to make me," said Campbell. "Well—you know what I came out to Papua for."

He paused for an answer. None came. The bold hawk-eyes stared at him.

"I'll let that go as said. I had every reason—but that is no matter now. You know, I suppose, that young Page telegraphed in answer to an advertisement of mine? Probably you guessed. Well, all that I saw and heard made me more and more certain. You see, the point was this:

"The jury only refrained from bringing in a verdict of wilful murder against Godfrey Campbell's wife because they thought she was dead. I thought the same, but did not think it absolutely proved she was. You see, after the affair was over and forgotten, I'd engaged detectives on my own account, and they raked up a thing or two—not much, but it made me think. So I spent a good bit on advertisement. And then came the cable from young Page."

"I thought it was that little devil," commented Slade pitilessly. "He has got his own."

"And I was quite certain then. It found me in Australia; I'd gone to renew some old friendships of my Australian Station days—and as I was so near, I came on."

Campbell paused for a moment, obviously collecting his thoughts.

"To go back. The Campbells are what's known as a 'good' family, in an ordinary way; commercial on a large scale, and all that. There was a mésalliance in my great-grandfather's time. His brother married a pretty barmaid of a very low class; no one knew anything about her people. She died mad—mad with drink; put an end to herself. It was hushed up. Godfrey's father, my granduncle, was her son. My father, thank God, had a different sort of mother. Well, you can imagine the family wasn't proud of the alliance, and it was never spoken of; people didn't bother about heredity in those days anyhow. So when poor old Godfrey pegged out——"

Slade interrupted; the suspense, underneath his Egyptian-granite calm of countenance, was sickening him.

"Do you mind—this is what I'd call rather much yap before the beginning of the story. Do I understand you to say you've concluded Mr. Godfrey Campbell committed suicide?"

"Not on that evidence alone; it wouldn't satisfy any jury in the world. There's more. Godfrey's father had an old housekeeper till a year or so ago; woman named

Riddle, attached to the family and all that. Seems she was twice married, and poor old Page was her son. He was too much of a snob to say anything about a mother who was only a servant, so nobody here knew, not even his own boy. He used to try and pose——"

"I know. Go on!"

"But all the same I judge he was fond of her; used to write and get letters, and hear all the news. Now it seems old Mrs. Riddle was really a connection of the family, and they gave her a job to keep her from talking; her husband was the brother of the barmaid. So Page was a cousin of the Campbells; he didn't brag about that, because he couldn't have done it without letting out that his mother was a servant.

"I must tell you how I know all this, by the way. The box of papers the poor old boy wanted—I found it on the ship this morning—was one that contained his mother's letters, and a bit of her hair, and a photograph of her grave. I think, in some dim way, he knew he was very ill and hankered after her, as one does, when it's getting on that way.

"Well, he couldn't read the letters when he got them, so I tried to read them to him. Poor old beggar! You should have seen his twisted face on the pillow, looking at me out of one eye. I saw he didn't understand a word, so I stopped, and put them in my pocket. And I told the nurse to look out for him all she could, and went out on the top of the hill to read the letters myself. It occurred to me there was more about the Campbell case in them than any man had a right to keep to himself. I needn't bother you with all the details; but it struck me very hard that the old lady kept warning him against drink as she did. In one of the letters——"

"Give it to me, please," said Slade.

Campbell felt in his pocket, sorted some papers, and handed over a letter written on handsome note-paper, in an uneducated hand.

MY DEAR SON:

This leaves me well, hoping it finds my dear boy the same, and if you ever think of coming home to England to see your poor old mother, I shall be very, very thankful, but if not, God's will be done. My dear boy, I hope you keep well and that above all things you keep off the drink, for it is what has been the ruin of your father's people. And more than one has died by his own hand, being out of his mind, the worse for drink.

My dear son, your cousin Mr. Godfrey—but we do not say he is a relative for it would anger him and ruin your mother—Mr. Godfrey was married a year ago to a very handsome lady much too young for him we think in the household, and his father thinks the same. But Mr. Godfrey would have her and she was ready to have him. And they are not happy together and Mr. Godfrey he is drinking something terrible, which makes me very much afraid.

My dear son I know you have a boy of your own, a love child, but I am sure you love him and I hope you will bring him up well and remember the curse of the drink. I am very, very tired, for your mother is growing very old and I think I shall not see another Winter out, so I will end this poor letter written with a bad pen but with all my love from your affectionate mother,

ARABELLA RIDDLE.

Slade let the letter drop on his knee.

"God!" he said. "And Edith told me she was sure that whatever it was, it wasn't suicide. She said he was the last man to——"

"I should have said so myself," commented Campbell, "but not with that letter before me. And not—above all, all things—with the proof that's lying above in the hospital there. I hadn't left the room ten minutes when poor Page crawled out of bed—he was just able to move—took a bottle of poisonous lotion off a shelf, and drank it. The nurse was busy with an accident case, and when she came back, it was too late. He's dead.

"It proves the whole thing to the hilt. If Godfrey's father had been alive, he'd have put his finger on the truth at once—but the old generation has been dropping off like dead leaves of late, as old generations do—and he went before Godfrey. With him dead, and the old woman too, there was nobody. Of course I knew Mrs. Riddle was a humble connection of some sort; never bothered to find out exactly what. And she was the only person who knew the whole history of the Page lot, who contributed Bella Page to our family-tree. I don't suppose poor old Goddy himself knew what a risk he ran in drinking as he did.

"Well, Mr. Slade, you can count me out in future as far as this affair's concerned, and I think you would be perfectly safe in bringing Mrs. Slade back to life in any way you choose. The affair will never be carried any further. Do you feel like shaking hands now?"

There was that in Slade's mind that made the action difficult; but he stretched out his hand to Campbell. The man might admire

Edith too much; still, he had done nothing that was actually open to question, and he had acknowledged the mistake that set him on his bloodhound quest, openly and candidly. Friends they could never be, but . . .

"You can congratulate yourself," said Campbell, "on having blocked an awful tragedy. With the evidence they had, and without the evidence they hadn't, any jury in the world would have convicted her. I suppose many a man—and woman—has been hanged on lesser proof."

"That," said Slade, "was why I took her away."

"Well, of course I knew you did. If you ever care to spin me the whole yarn——"

Slade was looking down at the rubber carpet.

"I don't know that I should care," he said presently, lifting his eyes to Campbell's face. "The truth is, I don't take to you."

"I'm sorry for that," said Campbell, "because, upon my word, I'm beginning to take to you."

Slade answered nothing; the quality of his silence was not hostile any longer, but Campbell saw that a steel wall stood between him and the inner courts of the adventurer's nature. He left it at that. In the future, Slade would never cross his path. He was sorry to think that the deprivation would extend also to the society of Slade's wife.

And yet, since he had been convinced of her innocence, he knew that his admiration, strong, sudden, a little contemptuous, was withering at the root. Edith, the honorable and innocent wife, did not attract him as did Edith the clever murderess, concealing a cruel nature under a cloak of clever pretenses. She was nothing but bread-and-butter after all—a commonplace sort of beauty, with no fiery sauce to her charm. A sort of . . .

"By Jove!" said Campbell to himself, hiding a grin. "And I thought little Murua was talking nonsense, when she said she was like Emmy Sedley! That little girl makes more bull's-eyes than any other human being I know, in spite of her odd way of talking. Not much bread-and-butter about her—no."

He rose to his feet. Slade rose also. They shook hands, with a nearer approach to friendliness than had ever yet been theirs.

"I think of taking the steamer back to Sydney," said Campbell. "It we shouldn't happen to meet again—good luck!"

"Good-by and—good luck," said Slade.

The sailor walked smartly off the boat and down the jetty.

Slade, without a moment's wait, snatched at his hat and made for the hotel. He was drunk on the news that he had heard; he

had kept himself in with difficulty during the interview with Campbell, and now he felt as if he must dance and sing, or go mad.

He had not a thought to spare for Page, lying dead in the hospital; time enough to think of him by-and-by. Now was his. Now was Edith's. Now was the end of all their troubles, the defeat of the dark gods, at last!

SKULL AND BONES

BY REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

WHERE are all the merry men that put their curse on Spain,
 Drake's and Flint's and Morgan's men that sailed the Spanish Main?
 Where are all their gold doubloons, where their fancy free—
 Gentlemen Adventurers? Underneath the sea!

Theirs were days for hardy hearts; red-cap, ear-ring days;
 Hairy men with tarry hands, chanting shameless lays;
 Doing shameless deeds as well, all the way to France,
 Laying down the keel in blood of our good ship *Romance*.

Irons, rum and cutlasses, flaming towns ashore,
 Planks to walk and yard-arm shifts, love and gold and war;
 Then the New World isles were young, then the ocean free,
 Gentlemen Adventurers underneath the sea.

'Vast! A yellow galleon! Here's your work to do:
 Run the *Jolly Roger* up! See, she's heaving-to!
 Pipe all hands for boarding her! It's over ere the dark;
 She's raided, ravaged, scuttled, sunk—a palace for a shark.

O, my boyhood heroes, bred on a purple lee,
 Gentlemen Adventurers underneath the sea,
 How I dreamed and dreaded you, what my love and fears
 In the days I read your lays, bearded buccaneers!

Don't you also have your dreams? Aren't you dreaming true?
 Give us back the old *Romance*; we have need of you;
 Send your stories up to us; set our spirits free,
 Gentlemen Adventurers underneath the sea!

In Self Defense



Author of "For the Love of Annibel," "All Wool," etc.

"**P**ROHIBITION," remarked Ike Harper, loosening up a notch in his belt and rolling a fresh smoke, "is goin' to make two roses bloom in this country where only one bloomed before. 'Cause why? One drink uh bootleg hooch will bring blossoms to th' face of uh wooden Injun, and also it's goin' to work uh hardship on real old maids and homely females of all descriptions. Lissen, and I'll orate how I knows.

REN MERTON was uh trouble-huntin' fool of uh puncher, and Sig Watson was his first assistant. I might say that Sig was his aid-de-camp, secretary and treasurer. Them two hombres punched cows fer uh livin' and hunted trouble fer pastime.

If th' combined brains of th' two was turned to powder and put into uh .22 ca'tridge shell it wouldn't blow th' bullet out of uh six-inch pistol barrel, and if it was black powder it wouldn't foul th' shell.

They punched fer th' Triangle outfit all one Summer, and then decides to go into th' cattle business fer themselves. Not havin' saved enough between 'em to buy uh green hide, they decides to go into th' business anyway.

Magpie Simpkins was th' sheriff at th' time and, havin' uh real friendly feelin' fer

th' boys, he don't arrest 'em a-tall. He jist shoots th' hot cinch ring out of Ren's hand, cuts th' heifer loose and fergets th' whole affair.

They rides back to town, where Ren gits prodigal with his six-gun ammunition, with th' result that th' atmosphere gits too warm fer comfort, and they grabs their hosses and fogs off to th' Seven A ranch and go to work again.

Well, fer th' next month they behaves fine—said month bein' spent on th' roundup out in th' Sweetgrass hills, so far from town that it takes two days hard ridin' to find anything except personal animosities, which ain't sufficient.

Th' nearest town is Piperock. Piperock ain't what you'd call uh thrivin' city—not havin' uh Chamber of Commerce or an Ad Club, but she manages to angle along anyway. It contains about uh hundred human beings and a Greaser settlement.

Well, as I said before, Ren and Sig works steady fer uh while and then collects their stipend, rolls their war-sacks and moseys to town to revel amid th' bright lights and enjoy th' fruits of their labor.

They says "Klahowya" to Buck Master-son, th' saloon keeper, and proceeds to pay rent on th' saloon fixtures.

"Boys," says Buck, "curb yore feelin' fer this time. There's uh heap uh sentiment

agin' yuh both here, and if yuh behave it's bound to die out in uh little while. That Chink is still in th' hospital at Helena."

"Pshaw!" exclaims Ren. "That's too danged bad. But I asks yuh, Buck, how was I to know that th' Chink was behind that box, too? That Greaser ducks behind it and I never once thinks that there's room fer two people. It surprises me so I lets th' Greaser git away."

"I allus told yuh," stated Sig, "that you depends too much on th' jump of that ol' .41. Now, uh .45 is heavy enough that she don't jump. To illustrate my point clearly——"

Right then Buck cuts in and talks 'em out of it. Uh six-gun demonstration ain't no pink tea, especially when th' demonstrator has about six scoops uh hooch under his belt.

They has a few more drinks and then decides to eat, so they ambles across th' street to Jimmy Peyton's Boston Chop House, th' only eatin' place in th' town. There ain't nobody in sight, so Ren yells——

"Jimmy, yuh lop-eared son-of-uh-sea-cook, bring us uh meenoo!"

Right then they gits uh surprise. Instead of Jimmy, with his dirty apron and a half-smoked cigaret hangin' out uh one side of his mouth, out waltzes th' swellest lookin' female person they ever saw, and she single-foots right up to 'em with uh smile, and then out comes another she person, but this last one ain't noways in th' same class as Number One.

They're both wearin' li'l dinky white aprons and uh head full uh hair, but here th' similarity ceases some abrupt. Th' first one is packin' class by th' ton. She's——well, she looks uh lot like th' lady on th' Empire Packin' Company's calendar, which ol' man Padden has hangin' over his bunk.

Th' other is older by twenty years and seems sorta sprung in th' knees. She's got uh forearm like Jefferies and needs uh shave. Th' first one leans over th' table and hands uh printed bill uh fare, but Ren don't read it a-tall. He says, "Thanks, ma'am," and puts it in his pocket.

Th' older one grins at Sig and says, "Nice day."

"Uh-huh," agrees Sig. "It shore is. Don't hardly look like it might rain."

Ren just sits there lookin' at th' pretty one, like uh chickadee lookin' at uh rattler. He ain't able to even wink.

"Soup?" asks th' lady.

"Are we?" asks Ren, turnin' to Sig, who is also industriously sizin' up th' beauty show.

"Intensely," agrees Sig, and th' two females beat it fer th' kitchen.

"Do you gentlemen live here?" asks th' pretty one, when she deposits th' soup on th' table.

"We——huh——yes'm I reckon yuh might say we do," stammers Ren, tryin' to eat soup with his fork and keep both hands out of sight.

"We don't usually live here," amended Sig. "But we can. You livin' here?"

Th' other female has jist come out of th' kitchen and she answers:

"My cousin and I bought this place a week ago from Mr. Peyton. I am Miss Matilda Beebee, and my cousin here is Miss Rosalind Madeline McGuire."

Ren spilt his soup gittin' up and reaches out his hand.

"Pleased to meet yuh," says he, sayin' th' same thing to both of them. "I'm Sigismund Alexander Watson, and my friend here is Ren Merton."

"Christened," says Ren, "Renley St. Clair Merton. I welcomes yuh to Pipe-rock."

"Ren," says Sig, when they had managed to tear themselves away from th' eatin' house, "where did you git that l-e-y on Ren, and also that St. Clair?"

"Slick-eared 'em," grinned Ren, "jist like you did i-s-m-u-n-d and Alexander. Do you think fer uh minute that I eats dust from any bow-legged cow trailer when it comes to names? Not a-tall. Sabe?"

"Some filly!" states Sig. "Mama mine! Some filly!"

"We're goin' to have preachin' tonight in Piperock," states Buck, as he slides th' poison vial down th' bar to th' boys.

"What for is this preachin'?" asks Ren. "Somebody dead?"

"Nope. Jist common Gospel. I figgers to take one of th' girls across th' street."

"Asked her yet?" asks Sig, with uh grin.

Buck polished off the bar and replaced the bottles before he replied——

"Nope——not yet."

They imbibes their drinks and wanders out on th' porch.

"Dog-gone!" exclaims Sig. "I reckon I leaves my quirt over to th' restaurant. Better go and git it."

"Th' walk will do us good," grins Ren. "Come on."

"Quirt?" asks th' pretty one. "Oh yes, you mean that thing hangin' on your wrist don't you?"

"I—I reckon I plumb overlooked it," stammers Sig. "Much obliged."

"I jist come over, ma'am," says Ren, "to see if you'd go to th' Gospel meetin' with me tonight." He looks up and he's gazin' into th' eyes of Matilda Beebee.

"Charmed," says Matilda. "Yore pardner, Mr. Watson, might care to go with Rosalin."

"Ma'am," chuckles Sig, "I takes off my hat to you as uh mind reader. That lost quirt was jist an excuse to git over here. *Sabe?* I agreed to let Ren have first choice, ma'am, and yuh shore can depend on Ren to make no mistakes on th' draw. Why I've seen that *hombre* discard one small pair to git uh chance to——"

"Sig," says Ren sort a hard like, "if we're goin' to church we'd better stable them broncs."

And when he gits Sig outside he continues:

"You dog-goned, ossified, bow-legged, paralytic son of— Sig, what did I ever do to you, eh?"

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" roared Sig, leanin' against his horse and laughin' so hard he almost pushes th' bronc off its feet. "Mama mine, Renley, when it comes to pickin' 'em yo're there! 'Charmed,' says she and yore face looked like you'd been caught stealin' uh sheep."

Well, they takes th' gentle sex to th' meetin', which is held in th' old Mint dance hall, and, while Sig sits there and smiles into Rosalind's face like uh dyin' calf in uh mud-hole, and gittin' hated fluently by th' male portion of Piperock, pore old Ren is fidgitin' alongside uh Matilda. Yuh could light uh match on his ears every time he hears anybody clear their throat, and it shore did seem as though every one in church had uh frog in their throats.

After th' preacher gives th' crowd th' exit sign, Ren sort-a stalls around with Matilda and lets th' crowd drift out ahead. Th' preacher, bein' uh stranger, shakes hands with Ren and asks his name.

"Ah," says he. "And this is Mrs. Merton. Well, well, I shore am pleased. May I call?"

"Shore," grunts Ren. "What yuh got?"

"Ha, ha!" laughs th' preacher. "Men will have their little jokes, Mrs. Merton. You see I understand a few poker terms. Ha, ha!"

He slaps Ren on th' shoulder, and hurries to round up another prospect.

"Ha, ha!" snorts Ren. "—— of uh—I beg yore pardon, ma'am. You see I didn't——"

"How quaint," sighs Matilda, like uh turtle-dove with uh full crop. "Didn't it seem comfy to be mistaken fer married folks, Renley? Isn't th' moon lovely tonight. Lets take a little walk, Renley, it's too lovely to go inside."

"That moon," says Ren, "shore is lovely. It's full. I wish I—shore I'd enjoy uh walk."



AN HOUR later Ren climbed th' rickety stairs of Holt's hotel and busted th' lock off their door gittin' in. Sig is lyin' on th' bed, with his leg draped over th' foot and he's playin' "Good Night, Beloved, Good Night," sort-a soft like on his mouth harp. He rolls his eyes at Ren and lets th' organ slip out of his hands and slide under th' bed. He turns over and points at his six-shooter hangin' on th' wall.

"Don't, Ren!" says he sort-a sad like. "I'm unarmed."

"Yo're safe," groans Ren, sinkin' into uh chair. "I ain't in no killin' mood, Sig. I'm borderin' on uh fit of despondency and I needs sympathy and advice like uh calf needs milk. Honest, I feel like uh Digger Injun would if somebody washed his neck and ears. My liver ain't noways fresh an' I feels that my lights is burnin' low."

"When I used to be uh lawless character," stated Sig, as he fumbled under the bed for th' mouth harp, "preachin' allus affected me thataway. Gospel truths seem to—don't strike me, Renley!"

Ren slumped down in the chair and held his head in his hands.

"I knowed it, I knowed it! Dang it all, them last two drinks——"

"Did she accept yuh?" grinned Sig.

"Accept me!" wailed Ren. "Dog-gone it, Sig, she didn't wait fer that. She took me fer granted! She said—oh Lord! She said she didn't care if I did used to act wild and shoot Chinamen and Greasers. Can yuh beat it, Sig? She gits me by th' arm and leads me 'way off down th' road—it was

awful hot in that church and th' hooch gits to bubblin', and I ain't no ways to blame—leads me to that old cottonwood tree, which th' lightnin' hit last Summer, and sits me down on uh log. Cripes! Why can't lightnin' hit twice in th' same place? Then she—aw, I dunno—I do know that in th' argument I didn't have no more chance than uh snowball in Yuma!"

"Goin' to marry her, Ren?"

"Not by a danged sight!" wailed Ren. "Mebby she'll marry me though."

Sig took a deep breath and the strains uh "Moonlight" permeated the room. Ren slipped his boot off sort-a unconcerned like and, "*Bing!*" Sig saw it comin' and ducked off the other side and the boot hit the other side and started the nails.

"Hey!" yelled the voice of the harness drummer who was in the next room. "Cut out th' orchestra practise, you drunken sheep-herders!"

"That," states Ren, "makes me forget personal animosities, Sig. Here's yore gun. Pull jist below that bunch uh cauliflower pitchers on th' wall paper and it'll jist about rake his bunk. Ready?"

Th' door of th' opposite room closed quickly and th' drummer padded off down stairs and slept in uh chair.

"Sig," says Ren, as he rolls into bed, "I'll allus blame my downfall on uh quirt."

"Misspelled," mumbled Sig. "Should 'a' been 'quart.'"



THE next mornin' Sig saddled his horse and sat down in the stable door to roll a smoke.

"Ren, you're uh lucky devil," he stated.

Ren dropped his latigo strap and stared at Sig.

"What do yuh mean?"

"Have another aig, Renley?" mimicked Sig. "Them cakes is all cold. Let me git yuh some hot ones, Renley. Take all th' cream yuh can use, there's a plenty. Have some more nice maple sirup, Renley."

"Sig!" Ren snapped his cinch hook and walked over to th' door.

"When it comes to bowels of compassion, you don't show uh gut. If you was uh real friend you'd be figgerin' some way to save me, instead of passin' out low comedy."

"She ain't much to look at," agreed Sig, as he swung into th' saddle, "but many uh kind word is often hidden by sparse whiskers."

"——!" snorts Ren. "There's Matilda, of th' angel face, wavin' at me to come back. I wonder what she wants?"

"She probably wants to know whether you prefers uh Methodist or uh Baptist preacher. Tell her yore folks raised yuh in th' Mormon faith, Ren, and you can't consider no other. That'll delay proceedin's until she can send to Utah and——"

But Ren was on his way out of town, and Sig followed suit.

Well, they goes back to th' Seven A and goes to work again. Th' boss, Old Man Padden, sends Sig with uh couple of other punchers to ride th' breaks of th' Shell River after strays, and he keeps Ren at home where there ain't nothin' to do but water some stock and go to town after th' mail. Sig is away fer ten days, and when he returns he's plumb lonesome fer company—Rosalind's especially.

Ren is sittin' on th' corral fence braidin' uh quirt when Sig rides in.

"How's Old Man Merton's boy Renley?" greets Sig, yankin' his saddle off and hazin' his bronc into th' pasture. "How's everything?"

"She's fine," grins Ren. "I seen her and Ricky Henderson ridin' along th' Dancin' Prairie trail twice this week, and I hears that she's furnishin' Buck Masterson with uh clean napkin at each meal. Buck's uh changed man, Sigismund. He's usin' ba'r ile on his boots and bay rum on his head."

"That ol' pelican?" yells Sig. "If that's all that's tryin' to beat my time I'm as good as married right now."

"I hates to tell yuh," states Ren sadly, "but them Piperock fellers, takin' 'em as uh tribe, are shore beatin' yore time with Rosalind. I reckon you made uh hit th' first time she ever saw yuh, but she's heard too much agin' yuh since. I done talked with her and I finds out that she's partial to heeroes. *Sabe?* Nothin' but uh heero need apply, and, Sig, there ain't no use you tryin' to be one uh them.

"Anyway, yuh can't see her before Monday. She went down to Curlew uh few days ago, and said she would be back Monday afternoon on th' stage."

"Likes heeroes, eh?" mused Sig. "Jist about what causes uh man to be uh hero?"

"Uh heero," states Ren, "is uh feller who does jist what any one else would have done in his place, but he beat 'em to it. *Sabe?* He allus saves th' girl."

"Saves th' girl, eh?" Sig runs his fingers down th' creases in his shaps and thinks deeply.

"Ren, I got a idea."

"Shoot."

"I'll save Rosalind."

"Huh!" Ren spat his cigaret out and stared at Sig. "Save her from what?"

"You," stated Sig, eagerlike.

"Haw! Haw! Haw! Save her from me! That's uh hy-iu idea, Ren. What am I supposed to be?"

"Uh desperado. Lissen. Art Miller carries money sometimes on th' stage and almost every trip he has uh passenger or two what would assay six bits or uh dollar, and they're liable to be held up any trip. Here's th' big idea:

"Remember them big rocks on this side of th' Hell Gate crossin'? Peach of uh place fer uh holdup, Ren. Now, on Monday afternoon, you be up in them rocks, with uh mask on, and when Art drives out of th' ford you throw down on him with yore rifle and yell, 'Hands up!' Mebby yuh better shoot once or twice so as to make th' play good. We'll pull th' bullets out of some ca'tridges so nobody won't git hurt. When you yells and shoots uh few times, here I comes across th' ford ridin' like th' devil and starts throwin' lead and you ducks, *sabe?*" I'll save th' stage from bein' held up and, bein' as Rosalind is on th' stage, I'll be uh hero. Ren, are yuh game to help uh needin' friend?"

"And mebby go to Deer Lodge and wear uh number like uh box-car," objected Ren sarcastically.

"Nobody'll know yuh," pleads Sig. "Don't throw me down, Ren. How many times you been to Piperock since I left?"

"Every day," grinned Ren.

"Gosh! When is it comin' off?"

Ren shook his head and looked thoughtful.

"There's th' cook yellin' 'supper' now. Let's eat."

Ren slid off the fence and looked at Sig.

"Are yuh goin' to help me out?" he asked pleadingly.

"I've decided to give it uh whirl," stated Ren. "To make th' play good I'll go to Curlew on Sunday mornin' and circle th' stage from there in the mornin', after givin' it out that I'm on my way to Mica. *Sabe* th' play, Sig? I'll also hint that when I comes down th' trail I sees uh person who

looks like Pete Melcher to me. Pete is holed up somewhere in th' west part of th' state, but he's liable to start operatin' over here any old time."

"Good stuff!" yells Sig "It's shore white of you, Ren. Dog-gone, there ain't no chance of uh slip-up and me, I'll be th' li'l hero and save th' girl, eh?"

"Don't worry about th' slips in th' game," states Ren. "If Art Miller does rim me with his ol' riot gun, or if I gits uh free ride to Deer Lodge, I won't have to marry—huh! Every cloud has uh silver linin', Sigismund Alexander."



TH' NEXT mornin', bein' Sunday, Ren throws his saddle on his brown mare and points off across th' hills towards Curlew, and on Monday mornin' Sig puts his ridin' gear on Old Man Padden's best lookin' bronc, polishes up his boots and slips off across th' hills towards Hell Gate Cañon.

Sig breezes across th' hills with joy in his heart, so much joy that he thumbs that bronc, with th' result that he almost gits set on foot. He has time to burn, so he decides to go out of his way to say "hello" to Pete Gonyer. Pete lives in uh li'l cabin up in Roarin' Gulch, and Sig ain't been up that way fer some time. It will give him an excuse fer bein' seen in th' Hell Gate hills.

He finds that Pete ain't home, so he ambles down th' gulch, ties up his bronc and takes uh nap under uh bush. He sleeps about an hour and then moves on. He ain't got no watch, but th' sun looks about one o'clock, so he drops off th' hills to th' road and turns back towards Piperock.

He jogs along slow 'till he gits to th' spring near th' Rock of Ages, and he swings off to git uh drink. Right there he spies uh letter layin' near th' spring under uh bush, and nacherally he picks it up and looks it over.

"Huh!" says he. "Addressed to Jack Elberton, Helena. I reckon Art must 'a' lost it goin' out."

And then like anybody else would, he opens it to see who to send it back to. He reads it through twice, takes off his hat and reads it again. It says:

Mr. Elberton:

In reply to your letter I can say that you've got more real nerve than a mule. Just because I let you kiss me don't prove conclusively that I love you. Also your statement (or hint) that I've got

a perfectly good husband in the land of the living doesn't feaze me either.

Your threat to come to Piperock to see me is amusing. I've made a hit with a big cowboy up here, who would take you apart like a picture puzzle if I said the word. Take my advice, Jackie, and forget that you ever knew
Rosalind

Sig looks at th' letter for uh while and then stares at th' road. He gits up suddenly and looks at th' hoss tracks in the road and then hops for his bronc.

"Gosh!" says he. "Th' stage is past!"

And he spurs up th' hill and throws th' quirt into that bronc and fogs th' hills. He's plumb miscalculated th' time, and by racin' fer three miles across th' hills he's got uh chance to cut in ahead of th' stage.

"Lord A'mighty!" he whoops, when he hits th' road agin and sees uh cloud uh dust still hangin' around th' first turn of th' road. "Mebby I'll catch 'em yet. I shore got to do somethin' to crab this hold-up play! I can't let Ren take uh chance like this now. Cripes! Mebby Art is lookin' fer uh play of this kind and he'll fill Ren full uh buck-shot. Git a-goin' yuh buzzard-headed, bunch uh coyote bait! If I can git close enough to attract Art's attention before he drives out of th' ford, Ren will *sabe* that somethin' has gone wrong and keep out-a sight."

The four hosses of th' stage had jist finished drinkin' as Sig races in sight, and as they starts out th' other side Sig waves his rifle and starts shootin'.

That bronc wasn't noways gun broke, so it starts sun-fishin' at th' first shot and bores straight fer th' stage. Sig sees Art Miller stand up in his seat and throw th' whip to his leaders with one hand and fire both barrels of his riot gun with th' other.

Sig ducks jist in time to save his life. Art shoots uh li'l high and when Sig ducks all he gits is th' rakins of about six shot across his shoulder. One shot punctures th' bronc's ear and it shore moves up and down a-plenty.

Th' stage is rockin' and swayin' up th' road as fast as four scared and whipped cayuses can yank it and Art Miller is bracin' hisself and throwin' leather promiscuous. Sig lost his rifle and is now ridin' with both hands.

Art drops his whip, wraps his lines around his arm and, in tryin' to put more shells in his gun, swings his team off th' road. They go good for about ten jumps and then they're into th' timber.

Natcherally th' leaders goes on opposite sides of uh tree, with th' result that th' wheelers skid to one side and th' stage turns uh handspring. I reckon that Sig's bronc thinks it's uh real party fer its benefit, 'cause it pitches right into th' tangle and Sig lights sittin' down through th' glass door of th' stage, which is reposin' serenely on its' side when he arrives.

Sig sits there fer uh few minutes collectin' his thoughts, when he discovers that he's sittin' on somebody's head.

"Rosalind!" is th' first thought that comes into his head, so he slides part way out and takes said head between his hands.

"Rosalind!" he wails. "My Gawd!" He can't see very plain until he climbs out and leans over th' casing. "Speak to me, Rosalind!" he sobs. "Hu-honey, I wants yuh to—the devil!"

A figger rises up from th' coach, looks him in th' eye and spits out three perfectly good teeth.

"I begs yore pardon," says Sig, in uh dazed sort of uh way.

"Yo're welcome," says th' other party, puttin' his finger into th' place where his teeth used to be, and lookin' foolish.

"Uh—hu—huh!" says a voice behind them, and there stands Art Miller.

Most of his clothes are missin' and he's nursin' uh skinned elbow and leanin' agin' uh wheel fer support.

"What happened, driver?" asks th' party of th' missin' teeth.

Art looks over th' wreck and then back at th' bald head stickin' out of th' stage.

"If it was yore eyes instead of yore teeth I might take th' trouble to explain," he snaps. "Take uh look and form yore own conclusions."

"We—huh—seem to have wrecked."

"We—huh—have!" snapped Art, and then to Sig: "What do yuh mean by stampedin' my outfit thataway, eh? Comin' along a-shootin' like uh crazy half-breed!"

"Art," says Sig, "I shore begs yore pardon if I done wrong, but I'd almost swear that I hears somebody yell 'Hands up!' at you, when you pulls out of th' ford, and I comes to yore rescue. Dog-gone it all, that's allus th' way. When yuh tries to do uh feller uh favor he don't appreciate it."

Sig looks sorry fer himself and rolls uh smoke.

"Yore hearin' is fine," states Art, after thinkin' fer uh minute. "Jist as we pulls

out of th' ford, that rattle-headed, Roman-nosed, off leader uh mine leans back and lets th' pinto wheeler into th' stretchers. What I yells was—I begs yore pardon, preacher, did you speak?"

"Please," mumbles th' party of th' missin' teeth. "Things are bad enough without repeatin' your former exclamations."

"Preacher," wonders Sig out loud. "Another preacher in th' country? We done got one in Piperock now, Art. One with all his teeth, too."

"Uh-huh," agreed Art. "But he's uh Baptist. This'n is uh Presbyterian. Miss Beebee's uh Presbyterian, and she insists on her own tribe fer th' marriage *wau-wau*. *Sabe?*"

"When is this event due to happen?" grins Sig.

"Tonight," states Art. "And I'll bet Buck Masterson is runnin' rings around himself right now. We're due."

"Buck Masterson?" mumbles Sig. "I don't see——"

"Nobody does either," chuckles Art. "Ain't he gittin' uh prize package?"

Sig grunts and wonders if some of th' buck-shot didn't go deeper than just through th' skin. He feels dazed like. Art Miller is fumblin' inside his shirt and finally produces a wrinkled envelope.

"I jist happened to remember it, Sig. I sees Ren Merton yesterday in Curlew and he sends you this. Wrote it too late to mail. Li'l surprise."

He finished with a wink at th' preacher person, who is huntin' around inside th' wrecked stage fer his teeth.

Sig opened th' envelope and read th' followin' aloud:

"Dear Sigismund:

Me and Rosalind were married here today and send you our best wishes. I hated to double-cross you but I told her about our plans and she said that heroes were born and not made and that I'd be one if I saved her from a certain bow-legged person we both know. I asks your pardon and wishes to state that I wouldn't have done it if I had of been sober. You can have that new quirt which is hangin' over my bunk. You know how a feller loses his head when he's spifflikated.

Yours resp'y

Renley St. Clair Merton & wife.

P.S. The preacher what tied the not is in the stage and can tell you all about it. I hope you don't kill him during the rescue 'cause he never asked fer a cent."

"You-you performed a marriage in Curlew last night?" asked Sig, and th' preacher nods.

"Yeth thir," he states, with his tongue explorin' where his teeth used to bed down. "But I never wath paid a thent."

Sig fumbled around in his pocket for a moment and then hauled out a small roll of bills.

"Here's uh ten spot with my compliments, old-timer."

"Wath he a friend of yours?" asks th' preacher.

"Well," says Sig, feelin' of th' two envelopes in his shaps pocket, "he don't think so, but he don't know it all. If uh man would ask me I'd say, yes."

Sig recovers his horse and pulls out fer Piperock, after promisin' Art that he'll send help out to them. Buck is standin' in front of th' saloon and as Sig rides up he yells—

"Seen anythin' of th' stage, Sig?"

Sig tells him about th' smash-up and then goes in and drapes himself over th' bar. Ricky Henderson is there and they crooks elbows numerous.

"Where's Ren?" asks Ricky. "I ain't seen him since Saturday. Him and that Rosalind person is thicker than axle grease in January. Been out ridin' every day last week. I thought you had aspirations that-away, Sig."

"Not me, Ricky. Yore uncle Siggie knows when he's safe. I'm goin' over to congratulate th' bride, and then I'm goin' to come back and fill my hide with some more absent-minded juice. So long."

He ambles across th' street to th' restaurant and finds Miss Matilda tellin' th' Chink what to have fer supper.

"Howdy," says Sig. "I reckon I can congratulate you on yore marriage to Buck."

Matilda blushes through her whiskers and smooths her skirt.

"Thanks, Sigismund. I had hopes that you and Rosalind could stand up with us, but she's in Curlew and won't be back. I'll have to git Miss Harris. Would you like to stand up with her?"

"Ma'am," says Sig, "while I admires such functions uh heap, I'd uh lot rather jist sit on th' bench and watch 'em. Rosalind is uh real nice girl, I reckon, but her and me ain't——"

Miss Beebee pats Sig on th' shoulder in uh motherly way.

"Rosalind is uh nice girl but she's got uh temper that would, when it busts, make uh stick of dynamite sound like th' scratchin' of uh sulfur match. She told me that she liked yore looks th' first time she ever seen yuh, Sigismund, but it's money she wants—not love."

"She's done married Ren," states Sig sarcastically.

"Already? My, my, she shore didn't take any chances. I'll tell you uh secret Ricky Henderson told."

Sig looked foolishly at her and scratched his head.

"Ricky did, eh? Jist about how much did that *hombre* e-lucidate?"

"He came in here the other day after Renley had gone, and he told us all about Renley being the real owner of the Triangle cattle and also havin' uh big interest in th' Seven A. Oh, he told us all about Renley. Ricky had been drinkin', I think."

"So Rosalind——"

"Jist a moment, Sigismund. I want to make a little confession. Her name is not Rosalind, but Matilda. We traded names when we came up here because mine fits her better than her own. Of course all our friends outside of Piperock know that my name is Rosalind. Of course when she found out all about Renley——"

"Yes'm," agreed Sig. "She marries him fer his money. Honest, ma'am, I feels fer both of them."

Sig walks back across th' street in uh dazed sort-a way and leans against th' bar.

"Rosalind, eh?" he snorts to himself.

"Well, don't that beat four of uh kind. Renley is th' owner of th'—Gosh! There's goin' to be uh noise like uh ton of dynamite in that li'l ol' honeymoon. Huh! That Elberton person must shore be uh collector uh knick-knacks and—I wonder if he was drunk, too?"

Buck Masterson walks in from th' front and ranges alongside of Sig.

"I've sent fer th' preacher," he states.

But Sig jist grunts. He's tryin' to visualize th' face on Jack Elberton, which would want to come clear to Piperock to kiss Miss Beebee.

"Did you know her name was Rosalind?" asks Sig.

"Shore," says Buck, and then he gits confidential and talks in uh low tone. "Dog-gone th' luck, Sig, I shore wish it was all over. It's got me so danged jumpy that I flinches at everything. I wish—huh—I wish—say, Sig, uh feller hadn't ought to drink whisky a-tall. He hadn't ought to take even one li'l friendly drink. I'll——"

"Say," snorts Sig, "You don't mean to tell me that you was full when you——"

"Fuller'n uh shepherd," states Buck solemnly. "By cripes, I was so full that I'd have proposed to uh—say, where yuh goin'?"

"Me?" asks Sig, turnin' around in th' doorway, and holdin' up his right hand. "I'm goin' out to meet that preacher person and I'm—goin'—to—sign—th' pledge! *Sabe?* Self-preservation is th' first law of nature, and I'd rather be preserved than pickled. It's safer."



A Royal Flush of Hearts



I KNEW as soon as he sat in the game that he was playing for more than the money represented in his stack of chips.

He had the face of one whose ancestors hadn't worked in their shirt sleeves for many generations, but it had a worn, desperate, tense expression. Even then his face looked youthful. He wasn't more than twenty-three or twenty-four.

They were not all thoroughbreds who came to Johnny Blix's snug little apartment; but most of them had money. I got a good deal of it. Johnny thought he was indebted to me for certain minor favors in the past which he appreciated far more than I thought they were worth.

He knew that poker was more than a science with me. It was an art. The sand-papered tips of my fingers were almost like eyes, and I could feel and understand faint indentations on the cards that not many people could have discovered without a strong magnifying glass.

Johnny was a square gambler—as square as professional gamblers ever are, and any stranger really got a run for his money on his roulette table, though of course if the luck got to breaking too hard against the house, Johnny would press a little button with his toe and that made it very hard for the lucky man to put his money on the color or number that won.

Nor did I play poker for my health. I wasn't hoggish about winning, and didn't attract attention to my consistent luck,

but with the minimum of effort, and some enjoyment, I managed to have an income somewhat above the demands I made on it.

It wasn't every night or every week that I marked or held out cards. I knew and could practise about every trick that was ever devised to make the other fellow lose at poker; and many of them were what is called ethical. In poker, as in law, there are certain rules laid down by which you can cheat the other fellow. Some men use their face as a mirror and reflect into it the quality of the hands they hold.

The young aristocrat was not one of these. He was inscrutable as an oriental. He played his cards well but desperately. I went after him. I liked him, but I was determined to break him. I knew from the way he was playing that there was something back of the game, and I was interested.

Some people go to the movies for their excitement and amusement. I like to take mine off the streets and hot from the hearts of people who are living tragedies. Into some of these little dramatic episodes I now and then force myself as a super.

Every time the boy stayed in a pot where I happened to have an interest, I boosted. I didn't win them all, or didn't get a winning percentage, but that was an incident. I wanted to make him lose.

It was a stiff game, a big game even for Johnny's where the stakes were always high. I have seen honest men win up into four

figures between sunset and dawn, and sometimes they did it in spite of all I could do. Even a gambler who uses art instead of science can't dictate to luck: he can only increase his percentage, or chance of winning. It's different in roulette. Under a properly constructed wheel there is a delicate mechanism that arbitrarily puts the ball into the color that the man who has his toe on the button wants.

The boy was playing with good nerve, too. He played hard. He plunged and he bluffed and twice he caught me with a good hand, but not good enough, and materially reduced the number of blue chips before me.

Then I went after him in earnest. I stowed four tens in my pocket and waited. I could palm half a deck in either hand, and nobody would ever spot it with a casual look, so I had no trouble in switching those tens to my hand when he boosted the pot high as a house and stood pat. I drew two cards—it was a mere detail to get rid of the extra one before the show-down—and he stood pat.

He figured that he had me beaten, and calculated to give me another severe trimming. But his house-full on aces wasn't worth the paper it took to print the cards. That gave him a hard jolt.

I put three kings and a pair of deuces into my pocket and waited. Soon I caught him again—this time with a flush, and I knew that he had gone just about to the bottom of his pile. I boosted it so high the next time he stayed that he came in for only a show-down, and we both lost. But I had broken him. That was what I wanted.

He didn't say a word. He just sat there for a minute looking rather dazed, bit his lips, sighed and got up.

I cashed in and followed him out of the room.

He looked around, recognized me and said nervously:

"Did you have it in for me? You played like it."

I looked at him steadily, and with just a touch of sympathy in my tone I asked if it really meant much to him to lose.

"Meant much? Meant much! My God," he fairly shouted, his nerves were that unstrung, "it meant everything! I simply had to win!"

With a gulp of despair and a sudden relaxation of his body he added—

"And I didn't!"

"What're you going to do? Bump yourself off?" I asked a bit coldly.

"No. Bump somebody else off!"

He meant it, too.

"That's all right if you can get away with it," I said indifferently. "But the law says if you knock out a man's tooth you have to give up an eye."

"Law!" he sneered.

Then by the contrast of the ugly expression, I became aware that he was handsome, and unsophisticated. Some boys have hard faces at ten, and wear a perpetual sneer, and have seen and know things that make the sneer fitting. He was not such at past twenty.

I raised my eyebrows quizzingly. And he answered:

"You can kill a snake and it's all right. But if you kill a reptilian man, it's the electric chair for you. — such a law!"

Some people who knew something about me might have thought it passing strange had they heard me holding forth on the merits of the law and explaining how if the activities of the "reptilian man" were called to its attention the law would move toward him majestically, with the menacing sword of justice ready to strike.

"Yes," he retorted scornfully, "and put into the papers the very thing I would pay any price to keep out."

After that it was easy to get him to talk. We went to a quiet saloon and sat down. He was young enough to look askance at my glass of ginger ale, preferring a little neat brandy himself, tossing it down as men in trouble do when most in need of a cold, instead of a hot brain.

It made me impatient to hear him talking about his "life being ruined" if his parents found out the girl had a secret past, and that if her blackmailer wasn't bought off he might as well kill the fellow and then shoot himself.

When I think of all the good courage that people waste in killing themselves, I come near to losing the laboriously acquired poise and calmness I have solicitously developed for nearly twenty years; and when I hear young, healthy men talking about "life being ruined" because something interferes with the paternal pocketbook, I do lose it; but when I hear of a man or woman rubbing their bellies on the ground before a blackmailer, I get angry and show it.

Blackmailers simply capitalize cowardice

as bankers capitalize confidence: A black-mailer can't last any longer without people are afraid of him than a banker can if people are afraid of him. The best way to deal with a blackmailer is to tell him to go to the devil or to the newspapers with his incriminating letters. And if he goes to the newspapers, or to the girl you want to marry, or to your employer—what of it?

It's better to be wounded than to run away. If a community won't respect you, or a girl won't love you, or an employer won't have you because of some mistake in other years, well, there are other communities, other girls and other employers. Most of all there is yourself. I sometimes wonder how those people who have submitted to blackmail feel when they stand before a mirror.



I WOULD have left Mr. Earnest Norcross fumbling with his empty glass and gone back to Johnny Blix's except that I thought there must be a deeper streak of honor in him than was readily perceptible if he was willing himself to trust and marry a girl who evidently had made some kind of a desperate mistake that his family and friends wouldn't overlook. All interesting women have made mistakes; but those most interesting have been clever enough to conceal them.

However, when I expressed myself on blackmailers, he told me with a good deal of fire that I didn't know of what I was talking.

He was not entirely sober, and was much piqued by the parochial, lofty way in which I had spoken of disregarding blackmailing threats and facing the issue.

He put up to me one of the strangest situations I have heard of; and had I had the respect for the law and conventions that corresponded with my comments on the subject when I first approached him, I would have felt it my duty as a pious, respectable citizen to protest—much less, actively to take a small part in allowing him to cheat the State, the Church, his friends and be myself an accessory before and after the fact to polyandry.

His parents, particularly his mother, were firm Catholics. The woman—she wasn't much more than a girl—had been married before. She had never been divorced and didn't propose to get one, for the very act of applying for it would destroy the secrecy she had laboriously constructed

almost from the day of her marriage when she found that her husband was an unconscionable blackguard.

She had never intended to marry, but Norcross had met her and wooed her and won her heart. She tried to put him aside, saying it was impossible. He had pressed her for an explanation. She had confided to him the truth; and he recklessly but earnestly said he didn't care a —; that he loved and wanted her.

So bitterly humiliated and ashamed had she been of her mistake—a mistake made impulsively while at a small mining camp in Colorado—that she had bribed the clerk to destroy the page of the register.

But the marriage certificate remained. It was in the hands of one Tobias E. Findley, her husband.

She had paid monthly toll to him almost ever since; though when she destroyed the page of the register she had also planned to buy the certificate outright and so eliminate all evidence and try to forget the wretched experience. But Findley had refused to surrender such an income-producing document, except for an amount far too exorbitant for her to consider.

She loved Norcross, and against the wishes of her heart tried to persuade him that marriage would be impossible. Even if she could get a divorce his parents would set their faces against her, and perhaps against him.

But he said a divorce was useless. That she wasn't the wife of Findley any more than if she had never seen him; and that he wasn't going to allow a legal technicality to keep him from the woman he loved.

Then he made a mistake. He went to Findley and tried to negotiate for the certificate. The astute rascal instantly saw possibilities for an increased income. He not only raised his originally prohibitive price for the certificate, but frightened Norcross into believing that if he, too, did not begin at once contributing regularly that he would make the certificate public.

I was confident, as soon as Norcross told me that so cunning a crook would not be in haste to kill the goose that laid his golden eggs. But Norcross was young, inexperienced, and made the error of hastening to meet Findley's demand.

Since that hour he had constantly beset and tormented the boy for money.

"I simply have to have it!" he said with a gesture of helplessness. "My father is now suspicious because I've gone through so much more than my allowance. I thought I could win it. I've been playing at the Bristol—that's Findley's hang out. He gambles there all the time. But a fellow there that took a liking to me, one of the house men I think, told me to try Johnny Blix's. Said I could get a square deal there."

"Findley suggested that you play poker for it?"

"Yes."

"Probably gets a commission on what you lose there, and sees that you never have a chance to win. How much does he have to have tomorrow morning?"

He told me. I was surprised at the nerve of the scoundrel. Inside of a month he had made that boy dig up something over \$5,000; and that didn't include another \$1,500 that he had dropped playing poker in an effort to raise funds. No wonder his father was growing suspicious.

"How do you know he has the certificate?"

"I'm not that green. I made him show it to me. He keeps it in a safe at the Bristol."

Sometimes my mind works with amazing rapidity. I deserve no credit for so-called rapid thinking. It is done automatically. Almost in an instant I had considered the feasibility of getting the Bristol raided, of holding it up—I have done things as desperate for no more cause—of kidnapping Findley and making the certificate the ransom price. But the aftermath to each of these was likely to be embarrassing.

However I had hit upon a plan that could be tried and would be harmless if it failed, in which case something else might be done.

It is not exactly natural in me to be suspicious, but I have cultivated suspicion until it has become instinctive. I had no reason for not thinking the girl was all right, but it was just as well to make sure.

I told Norcross that if he could arrange for me to meet her I would try to get the certificate away from Findley.

"I'll pay you anything—anything—if you give me time." He grasped at my offer of assistance as a falling man grasps at a spider's web.

"We'll discuss my fee after I see Miss Rankine."

"But I can't pay him that thousand tomorrow."

"Tell him not to get excited; that you are doing some planning to get the lump sum he asked."

"But that's impossible!"

"I know it. He doesn't. He knows your father—or knows who he is."

"That's it. He says if I don't pay up regularly that he'll go to father."

It's a very small detail, perhaps, but I liked to see that the boy didn't call his father "the Old Man."

"He won't be in a hurry to go to your father. You tell him—Findley—that you have explained the situation to a friend, and he is trying to help you out. But that Findley will have to part with the certificate. Sell out for a lump sum."

"You wouldn't trust me—"

"No. Not even if I had that much money. But the fact that he keeps it stowed in the safe of William Bristol's palatial gambling joint has given me an inspiration. Poker players and diplomats have to use their heads. Most people simply use a checking account. You say this house man that tipped you off that Johnny Blix's was a square joint took a liking to you?"

"Yes."

I knew that Johnny—as does every other gambler doing business under police protection—kept ringers scattered through the rival joints to tip players off that such and such a place is a square house; but Johnny had that reputation.

"Did this fellow seem thick with Findley?"

"I should say not. Every time they got into the same game they bucked each other. Just like you did me."

"What's his name?"

"Watson."

I told him to wait a minute, and going to the telephone I called up Johnny and asked him if he knew a fellow named Watson that loafed around the Bristol. Johnny said that he did. I asked if he was all right, and the answer was satisfactory.

I didn't ask if Watson was a ringer. That was none of my business. But I did ask Johnny if he would get in touch with Watson and say to him that "I am a friend of yours and that he can go the limit with me. That I am O. K." Johnny said he would do it right away.

I coached the boy a little more in what to tell Findley the next morning, and he promised to introduce me to Miss Rankine in the afternoon. Then we parted; but first he pressed my hand, and without being maudlin said a lot of things he probably wouldn't have said if he had drank ginger ale instead of two or three glasses of brandy. But he was young, and he was grateful, believing that I was actually snatching him from what looked but a moment before to be a wretched, inextricable predicament.



I HAD an appointment with Watson the next morning and we talked matters over. He knew that I wanted to get something belonging to Findley out of the safe, to get it so I could keep it and be open about it, but I didn't say what it was. He agreed to do as I suggested. The fact that extremely high stakes were the rule at the Bristol, it being a more pretentious joint than Johnny's, made him think as I did; that is, that it would help some in getting Findley into the game.

In the afternoon Norcross took me to meet Miss Rankine. She lived with an older, married sister; and they were obviously refined, comfortably wealthy, attractive people.

With my first glance at her I understood why the boy wanted to marry her though she did have a husband, and whether or not she got a divorce. I sympathized with him, too. There was no question of her being dishonest—even if she was going to marry again without that divorce. A lot of crooked people go through life scrupulously keeping technically honest; and a lot of honest people have the misfortune to be technically at counter with the law.

Of course, I consider that her real mistake started in not openly getting a divorce from Findley as soon as she found out what he was; but having set her heart on secrecy, and worked for it, she had come to feel that death even would be better, and certainly less shameful, than to have the sordid scandal exposed. Her family position was such that the newspapers would have had a great time for a few days.

Miss Rankine plainly showed alarm when Norcross told her that I was going to help them and knew everything. She caught her breath and bit her knuckles, looking at

me apprehensively with startled, wide eyes—brown eyes, they were.

A more beautiful woman I have seldom seen. There are many who have perfect features, charming gowns, an abundance of wonderful hair, a graceful body, just as she had; but there are few so young as she who have had their emotions so strongly stirred; in whose heart the fires of tragedy have glowed without flaming up devastatingly. After all, it is only those people whose characters are without reproach and who have suffered that are beautiful. Any artist of quality will tell you that, just as one first called my attention to it.

Miss Rankine showed, however, her nervousness; and the stress of especially the past few weeks had marked, but far from marred, her face. She would be more beautiful, I knew, as soon as Watson and I, who were taking the rôle of grave-diggers, had thrown the last shovelful upon her past.

I told her I did not inquire from curiosity, but because I wanted to make sure that every possibility of Findley's getting any other evidence to replace his precious certificate had been eliminated; and asked her to tell in detail just how the marriage came about and all she had done to conceal it.

"It was five years ago," she said. "I was only eighteen, and, unfortunately, I was intensely romantic. I was with my father out West on a trip. He was interested in mines, and was unexpectedly called up to some camp far from the railroad. He didn't think it best for me to make the trip and left me at the hotel.

"I met Mr. Findley. I had met him before father left, but being lonely I then saw a good deal of him. He swept me off my feet. He made me think he was wonderful, and spoke as though he were a man of affairs; and so skilfully and subtly conveyed to me that he was a real gentleman, that I foolishly married him one afternoon—but at twelve o'clock, noon that is, I hadn't expected to.

"We were walking back to the hotel, and he was telling me how pleased father would be! Just imagine, and I was silly enough not only to listen to him, but to believe him! We were walking back to the hotel, when suddenly he stopped and stood staring a moment at a man across the street. I knew something was wrong from the way he acted and was greatly frightened, asking him what was the matter.

"He said, 'It's all right, kid. I'll explain later. Don't believe anything you hear,' and he left me. He ran.

"I shuddered. The way he said 'kid!' I wasn't too frightened to notice that.

"The man across the street came over to me and asked, 'Wasn't that Toby Findley?' I said it was. He looked at me appraisingly and said: 'I guess you're all right. But you're in bad company, little girl.'"

"I begged him to tell me what was the matter, and he did. He was a detective from Denver. He was after Findley for some kind of robbery. He showed me the warrant—and that made me remember that Findley had my marriage certificate in his pocket.

"I was sick with fear and shame. I thought when they caught Findley they would learn I was his wife. But they didn't. He had a chance to hide at first and get into another camp. He never told that we were married. I thought he did it to protect me, and admired him for it. I spent a miserable week before father returned, and I was in torment as to whether or not to tell him. Father was very stern.

"I know now that the reason Findley went to the penitentiary without telling any one that I was his wife—and he wrote me asking that I say nothing about it; as though I were 'anxious to—was that he knew father wouldn't waste any time in getting a divorce for me. And he wanted a hold on me when he came out of prison.

"He was sent to prison for two years. Father died about eight months before Findley came out. I had thought and thought the situation over, and determined to wipe out every bit of evidence of that marriage. I was encouraged because I had been fortunate enough not to have anybody notice that Findley had been recently married when they caught him. But it had been several days before the detective caught him, and then in another camp close by.

"When father died I came into some money, and I followed the plan I had decided upon and went back to Colorado. I didn't tell the clerk what name on the register I was anxious to have out of it, but paid him a big price to tear out one particular page. He said himself the chances were that no one would ever discover it.

"I went to the justice that married us, and asked if he kept a record of the people

he married. He said that he kept no personal record. Simply recorded the license.

"So in one way and another I made sure that I had gotten rid of every record. I couldn't, of course, find the witnesses. I remembered that they had been two people who just happened to be there. I feel satisfied that they don't even remember the marriage; and if the certificate is destroyed, their names will be lost.

"I wrote Findley to come to me as soon as he was out of prison and sent him the money. He tried to make me think I was his wife. I offered to pay him for the certificate, and never dreamed that he could be so detestable as he was. He laughed and said I could pay him a regular monthly income and he would keep the certificate. I told him no, and said I wanted it myself.

"His price was outrageous. It was simply unpayable. There was nothing I could do but mail him bills every month. I did have judgment enough not to send checks!"

Both she and Norcross were nervously eager to know what plans I had, and begged me to tell them if they might really hope that I would succeed, and he offered me a large, specific fee for success.

"I can't tell you a thing. Along about midnight we may know more about it. As for the fee—we'll discuss that later—after the 'success.' I believe Miss Rankine has covered the tracks about as well as is possible. But if we get the certificate, I suggest that you send rapidly as you can some wise legal friend out to Colorado to go over the ground again and make sure. Also he might investigate Findley's record thoroughly. Perhaps we can turn the tables and blackmail him into leaving the country. Things like that have been done before to my certain knowledge.

"I don't want to raise up any false hopes, but if you two can be here between eleven and perhaps one or two o'clock tonight, I may be able to bring or telephone something that will be of interest."

Before I left, I had Norcross repeat just what he had told Findley that morning about expecting to raise money to buy the certificate. Evidently Findley had believed him.

Crooks have an idea that there is absolutely no bottom to the purse of a millionaire, or a millionaire's son. With Findley

expecting to receive a large sum, an enormously large sum of money in cold cash, within the next twenty-four hours, I calculated that he would be a little more reckless than usual in the four-handed game Watson was arranging for that evening.



I ARRIVED at the Bristol promptly at nine o'clock, and was shown into a private room where sat Findley, Watson, and another party, a Mr. Jones. The game had been arranged ostensibly to trim me. I was supposed to be a wealthy young man who thought he could play poker.

I had notified the Bristol that I liked a game of cards, but I wanted to play for money. I wanted big stakes. I couldn't get any enjoyment out of the ordinary games. I wanted one that had no limit but the sky. In other words, I had talked like the typical easy mark with a fat roll.

Mr. Watson and Mr. Jones had been delegated to trim me; and when Findley had been permitted to overhear the plan, he had insisted upon being allowed to sit in the game. He never overlooked a chance to pick up easy money.

There is no need for me to go into details about the game or the money involved. Those who don't understand much about poker would find it unintelligible, and those who do would probably find it tedious; and to specify even the approximate amount of the stakes is unnecessary, for to some it might seem unbelievable, and to others it might seem insignificant. It is sufficient to say that every man at the table was an experienced gambler and each of us regarded it as a stiff game, an exceptionally stiff game for even the Bristol.

Jones and Watson were house men. That is, they were men employed by the Bristol to sit in games and make sure that nobody got away with too much money. They could be crooked when necessary, and often thought it was. Findley was playing for himself, but counted on a kind of friendship with Jones and Watson which would permit him to cheat as much as he pleased providing I was the only one who lost by it—and he didn't get caught.

My idea was to break Findley. I was willing to lose moderately if Findley would lose heavily. This would have been practically impossible if Watson had not stood

in with me. I don't believe the man ever lived who could hold his own against three clever, crooked gamblers; but there have been many men who, with a capable and secret partner, can beat two other fellows.

I didn't play my game entirely with cards. As a usual thing I don't talk much while playing. But this time I showed a mean, insolent streak, and inside of ten minutes I had Findley's "goat;" that is, I had him hating me and nursing the hope to show me that he *was* a good player, that he *didn't* give away his hands on his face, that he could bluff and not get caught, that he *had* learned to play the game more than a month before, that he wasn't afraid of a raise, and did dare to raise back—all of which things I had banteringly accused him of not doing, or daring to do.

Watson with little side remarks, apparently friendly enough, but shrewdly calculated to rub Findley's fur the wrong way, helped get him excited.

Findley was a man superficially impressive. He was big, had the carriage of a military man, a fine straight nose, a shock of dark, slightly grayed hair, but I wouldn't have trusted him with anything I wasn't anxious to lose.

Jones was a silent, cadaverous individual, who played cards and did nothing else.

Inside of half an hour I complained that the light hurt my eyes, and put on a pair of blue glasses. This gave me the advantage of staring at anybody's hands while they shuffled or held cards without him being able to see that my eyes were on him.

I kept my eyes steadily on Findley, even while talking to Watson. With my hat pulled low and behind the blue glasses, Findley couldn't tell I was watching him, and I had no trouble in seeing him palm cards and slip them up his sleeve. Besides, he was a bit clumsy.

I knew he was getting ready to make a "killing;" so I quietly put a few cards which I had selected into my pocket and waited.

Findley was in a bad position for the good of his hands. He sat to the left of me and had Watson on his left; so when Watson and I raised each other, he was whipsawed more than once into discarding the best hand of the three. It was a no-limit game, and the boosts were strenuous.

It was along toward midnight, and Findley had brought out several times a hand he had secretly picked and stowed

away. But up until this particular moment neither Watson nor I had remained, much to Findley's disgust, whenever I saw him quietly exchange the cards that had been dealt for cards that he had up his pocket, and begin betting as if the resources of Rockefeller were at his command. And he had been losing consistently too. This time I was ready and waiting for him.

Watson raised him. Jones dropped out, and I raised Watson. Findley came back with a raise that took all of his chips and he threw a roll of bills on to the table. Watson threw down his hand, and withdrew from the pot. I called Findley and hit him with another raise.

"That's all the ready money I have," he said.

"This is a no-limit game," I sneered. "It's a wonder you didn't bring along more than car-fare."

He winced.

I made further remarks about people who tried to play in a man-sized game with only chicken-feed in their pockets.

Findley asked Watson to loan him money, and showed his hand on the side. Watson refused, but signalled me for heaven's sake to get out while I could, because I couldn't win.

I wasn't in the mood to get out of the pot. Watson thought I was playing a square game. I don't let every Tom, Dick and Harry know that I can manipulate the cards.

Findley showed the hand to Jones, and he started to loan the money, but a nudge from Watson changed his mind.

The psychological moment had arrived.

Watson, carefully coached, asked—

"Say, Toby, haven't you got any collateral around here?"

Findley looked thoughtfully a moment, studied the table and then said to me:

"I've got a little piece of paper in the safe that's worth more money than has passed over this table tonight. I don't want to put it up. I won't sell it. I just want to get a little credit on it until to-morrow. I'll have plenty of money then. Of course, you have to take my word for it that it's good. But my word's good—you've made a big bluff and I want to call you. If I had the money I'd raise!"

"Aw, forget it," I sneered. "Raise nothing. Go ahead, ring in your precious document, and if it's worth anything, raise

on it. I'll show you you can't bluff me with talk like that. Is it worth anything, Watson?"

Watson said he didn't know what it was, but he had heard Bristol say Findley called it his "gold mine."

"Bring it on," I said.

"I won't have to show you what it is?" he asked.

"No," I jeered. "You won't have to show what it is—unless you're looking for a chance to crawfish! Besides, you're going to redeem it tomorrow, aren't you?"

Watson went with a note to Bristol and came back with the document, while Findley and I sat watching each other to see that neither made a false move with his cards; although I knew I could make any kind of false move I pleased right under his nose and he wouldn't see. He didn't play poker as a fine art.

He threw the precious envelope on to the table and said—

"I call you."

"Call me! I thought you were going to raise. Bah! Give me one card," I said to Jones, who was dealing.

"None for me," said Findley. He was standing pat.

I reached into my pocket for a cigarette-case; and no one could tell that in the same hand that brought out the cigarette-case were five cards—very desirable cards in poker. And when I removed a cigarette and restored the case, I had just ten cards in my hand. But when I casually pushed the deck to one side to make room for my elbows, I had laid five cards on top of it, and no one saw a thing out of the way.

I didn't spend two hours every morning practising, shuffling, dealing from the bottom, palming, stacking, marking and catching cards with the feel of my fingertips, without acquiring the dexterity of a professional magician. Poker was to me as music to Paderewski, and I made my living by it and enjoyed it as an art.

Ostensibly I had drawn one card after making heavy bets. Everybody around the board thought I had four of a kind. Watson's face was a study in apprehension and disappointment.

Jones never moved a muscle, but sat with quiet eyes watching and saying nothing.

Findley was beside himself with excitement. He begged me to let him play his mysterious document for what he thought

it was worth, promising faithfully to redeem it the next day, and emphasizing again and again the arrangements he had made to collect a large amount of money from an old debt. It was good as gold, he assured me almost hysterically.

I deliberated. I said:

"But that's hardly fair to me—and if you lose, you'll say I coaxed you into it. How do I know that isn't a Chessie Chadwick bluff?"

If I would only take his word! He was well known. Watson knew him. Jones knew him. Bristol knew him. He had independent means. He was good for any amount. That paper would be redeemed tomorrow—the rising of the sun wasn't any more sure than that he could redeem that paper.

"All right. Let her go." I said recklessly.

His voice was high, hysterical as he called out:

"I'll raise you \$20,000. Now come in you tin horn, you piker. Get aboard that if you dare!"

I will say it to my credit now—for after the show-down I couldn't claim any credit—that I never batted an eyelid. I simply reached into my pocket, drew out a check-book and wrote a check for \$20,000, and on a bank where I didn't have one-fourth of that amount deposited!

"I call," I said.

Findley jumped up gleefully and spread his five cards face upward on the table, and began raking in the pot.

"Wait a minute. Wait a minute," I said. "Let's have a look."

"Your fours ain't worth a —!" he shouted. "I've got a straight flush, jack high."

"Who said I had fours?" I demanded indignantly.

"You drew one card."

"Of course I drew one card. I needed a nine or an ace—and I caught the ace!"

I spread before his astonished eyes a royal flush in hearts—the highest possible hand in poker.

I wasn't taking any chances with Findley. I knew enough to steal as big a hand as the deck contained. He hadn't dared go so strong. It was a raw thing to do, but when I thought of that boy and girl sitting together anxiously waiting and watching for the ringing of the telephone, with their

whole future hopes and happiness shuffling and slipping back and forth across the green cloth of the table, there was no chance too desperate for me to take.

Findley crumpled into his chair and sat with open mouth and glazed eyes, staring at the hand which has but one chance in exactly 649,739 of being dealt honestly.

I tore up my own check, cashed in, stuck the marriage certificate into my pocket and stood up.

Findley was crouching forward on the table, leaning on his elbows and with face distorted was glaring at me. He knew no man would have played a four-card, even royal, flush as I had played it before the draw, without being sure that the other needed card would come into the hand.

"You stole that!" he began menacingly.

But he didn't finish. I leaned over and with open palm struck him full on the mouth.

Never, but once before, had a man called me a cheat—while looking into my face. The other man was near-sighted. He apologized when I brought my face close enough for him to see it distinctly. For what does it profit me to have all the arts of a magician at cards if there is the weakness in my eyes that permits any disgruntled loser to dare accuse me of cheating?

But Findley was well-nigh insane. He knew well he could never redeem the fabulous amount he owed me. He felt dimly that I had bilked him of his precious income, that I had deliberately trapped him.

He arose from the floor, for mine is not a gentle arm when I am angry, and in his uplifted hand a sinister bit of steel flashed as he lunged forward at me.

Watson leaped up and grabbed at him. But Watson was slow.

I shot from my pocket—one made specially to accommodate the rebound of a large automatic; and as I did it I was aware of thankfulness for the thick, practically sound-proof rooms of the Bristol, which, selected with a view of keeping the raiders of the district attorney's office outside, in case police protection proved inadequate, would not permit the report of the gun to reach the street.

Findley's arm, shattered, dropped weakly like a broken stick and the dagger fell noiselessly onto the thick carpet.

Noisy, excited men rushed in from the room outside.

"Here, what's the matter? What's the matter?" shouted William Bristol himself, terribly frightened, for gun-play was bad for his business and a death would have caused even the friendly police to clamp on the lid.

Jones, quietly, as if there were not a nerve in his body, almost listlessly, explained:

"He pulled a knife and Mr. Everhard stopped him. Broke his arm. — pretty shooting."

Bristol looked from me to Findley and back to me. Then he began abusing Findley.

I poured a few drops from the half-emptied glass of ginger ale by my place at the table on to the smoldering cloth in my pocket and remarked to Watson that it was a shame because the suit was new.

Then I interrupted Bristol.

"Let me say a word or two, Mr. Bristol. This fellow Findley's an ex-con. and I don't know what all else, in addition to being a blackmailer. And quite incidentally he doesn't even know the rudiments of poker. He seems to think he can draw again after the show-down—" I kicked the dagger away from beside the table—"and if you want to call the police—" I was bluffing, but bluffing safely—"I'll swear to a complaint for assault with intent to kill against him.

"But I want this—this blackmailer—to know that inside of a half-hour the little document I have here will be in the hands of the party to whom it belongs."

Having said that and listened to Bristol's protest against anybody swearing to any kind of a complaint, and to his round and satisfying abuse of Findley and apology to me for having had my life endangered in his establishment, I left.

As I went out of the door Watson put his hand on my shoulder and whispered:

"I take my hat off to you, Mr. Everhard. I didn't think anybody could do it."

"What? Shoot like that?"

"No. Fill a royal flush in a pot like that."

I looked at him out of the corner of my eyes and smiled slightly. He understood.



THAT'S about all there was to it.

I took a taxi and reached Miss Rankine's a few minutes before one o'clock. She and the boy were beside

themselves with anxiety and were worn with waiting and hoping against hope hour after hour.

They were too happy and relieved even to talk when I handed the certificate to Miss Rankine.

She uplifted her face and said softly but earnestly:

"Thank God! It's over at last!"

Both thought, and said, they were making a bungling of thanking me. Their words didn't come fluently nor gracefully. But they were giving real thanks.

I withdrew my hand from Norcross'—he had pressed it every since I came in—and struck a match, holding it up significantly.

Miss Rankine, after a puzzled glance, understood, and unfolding her marriage certificate touched a corner of it to the tiny flame, and silently we stood watching the fire eat its way up and across the parchment, wiping out, reducing to ashes, the record of an impulsive mistake.

I started to leave at once. I knew they wished to be alone in the first hour of full, complete happiness.

But Norcross spoiled the dramatic effect—it is strange how few people have in their own affairs the true dramatic sense; that's why they must read novels and go to the theaters—by speaking of my fee and asking how I did it.

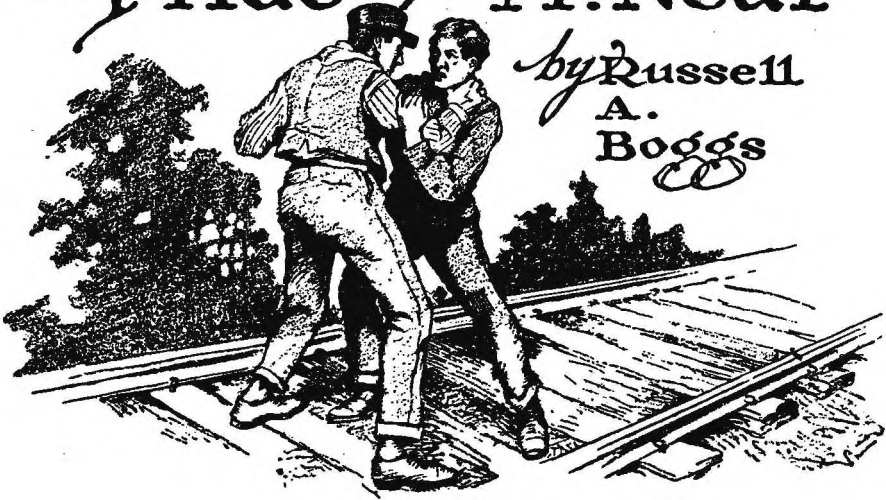
I told him that I had had a long earnest conversation with Findley over a green-clothed table and after some arguing, he had begged me to let him bet the certificate against a few dollars that he could pick out a better poker hand than I could.

"And you remember," I said, "that as a usual thing, I hold pretty good poker hands. And though he had first choice he didn't seem to know the value of cards. A slip quite apt to prove costly, you know. And as for a fee—supposing you send me post-cards from every place you stop while on your honeymoon."

So it is that among my few cherished trinkets I have a large bundle of colored post-cards from various cities in Europe, and particularly from those in Italy. And tied up with these cards is a wedding invitation—the only one I ever received to the formal wedding of a millionaire. And I think just as much of it as if I had attended. But as a little present, I sent to the bride a specially designed clasp pin of enamel—a royal flush of hearts.

The Pride of McNeal

by Russell
A.
Boggs



THE AGENT at Sidon arrived in haste. There was need, for the unheralded special snorted impatiently before the little red station, and some ten or more officials, disaffection heavily upon them, were moving about in twos and threes, inspecting the platform, the lights and the trucks, and peering with prying eyes beneath the freight house and depot.

Superintendent Kane and Robbins, the trainmaster, were there; the agent knew them personally. Also Bonner, the general manager, whom he knew by sight only. The others were strangers.

In carefully preserved, stony silence they received the agent as he came hurrying, keys jingling in hand. His young face was pale, rather haggard, with a set, strained expression, as if he were holding himself in tightly. But, oddly enough, he did not seem to mark the disapproval which lurked in the expressionless, masked faces. Rather he seemed to regard them with a kind of absent, pensive perturbation.

"Good morning," he said soberly, civilly, to Kane and Robbins.

"Good morning." They returned his greeting somewhat grudgingly—as if they would have preferred not to answer.

Unlocking the outside waiting-room door, the agent swung it wide open and the party followed him inside, and trooped after him into the little office. Then there was a great turning of heads and craning of necks,

a peeking into corners and stationery cases and drawers and under desks, and much jotting upon note-books. For was this not the annual inspection and must it not be conducted with rigorous decorum established by countless other inspections in the past, among whose mandates was this, that no question be asked and that things be noted as they were found? Therefore they inspected without words—all but Kane. His position as superintendent permitted him to speak.

"You're late, McNeal!" Kane's voice rasped crisply and he glanced up at the clock above the ticket window.

Perhaps the harshness was in his voice because he had hoped to make a good showing on his division, and here, the first station of the day, was a black mark on account of the agent's tardiness.

The agent also looked at the clock.

"Seven, five," he said impassively; it was as if his words had no relation to the superintendent's remark. His troubled eyes stared at the clock a moment, then:

"Yes—I'm late—five minutes!"

Mechanically McNeal put a small bag of change in the money-drawer and turned the key; went to the little switchboard fastened to the wall over his desk and pulled out the bottom plugs, cutting in the telegraph instruments with a sudden, popping clatter; and then he removed the sticks from the block levers, dropping the semaphores. His movements were heavy, methodical, and

in his strange absorption he seemed scarcely aware of the officials about him who in a few minutes had finished their investigations within the office.

The inwardly fuming superintendent had been regarding McNeal sharply.

"Let me have the freight-house key!" snapped Kane as he perceived the others waiting expectantly.

"Yes sir," said McNeal simply, handing it over.

The party filed out and into the freight house just behind the depot. In a minute or two Kane returned, alone, bringing the key. The general excellence of things as he found them appeared but to increase his irascibility; probably if he had found something to explode about—a disorderly freight house, a littered platform or an untidy station—he would have felt better.

"Don't you know you are to be on duty at seven A.M.?" he demanded querulously. "Not seven-five—or seven-one—but seven, sharp?"

McNeal had been standing somberly at the window, looking with unseeing eyes at the special train of engine and four coaches. It was a sort of habit with him to stand there where the morning sun came in through the east window. He faced about as the official spoke.

"Yes sir," still impassively. "I know that."

He had the air of one who debates hesitantly, and with vacant eyes fixed on the superintendent, he fumbled with a torn pocket which was hanging down, revealing a ragged rent in his coat; both knees of his trousers were smeared with mire and dirt and the soft collar of his shirt was soiled by a long, black streak as if a grimy finger had been drawn across it; and there was a raw, red bruise on his left cheek, just beneath the eye.

"I know that," McNeal reiterated slowly, nodding his head once or twice. "But you see, I was unable——"

He stopped abruptly, his brows contracted in perplexity.

"Well, what's the reason?" demanded Kane, irritably.

With an effort, apparently, McNeal tried it again:

"Why—I was—detained."

Again he paused abruptly, uncertainly.

"Go on, you," spluttered the superintendent in exasperation. "And no cock-and-bull story, mind!"

McNeal's solemn face did not alter; only his eyes opened wide for a moment.

"Why, you see, I went fishing——"

Once more he stopped unhappily, as if he had not said just what he had wished.

But the superintendent was pounding the desk wildly with his fist.

"Fishing!" flamed Kane. "Fishing!" His rage bubbled over. "You go fishing and keep us waiting—hold us up for five minutes!"

The heinousness of it seemed to dumfound him.

"You ought to be fired!" he gasped, shaking his fist. "And I would—I would—" he choked, "I'll suspend you——"

Speechless in his rage he glared at the agent. But he faced a rebellious McNeal whom the tirade appeared to have aroused. Hands clenched, angry-eyed, he faced the superintendent squarely.

"But you don't understand," he flashed hotly.

"Understand—nothing! You'll be relieved tomorrow—for thirty days!"

Kane wrathfully waved him to silence as he declared his sentence.

"I suppose the fishing was good!" he concluded sarcastically.

For a few seconds McNeal appeared to struggle with his pride, between a desire to explain and to hold his tongue. Pride won.

"Yes, it was good," he answered quietly enough, ignoring the sarcasm. There would be no further effort at explanation from him; but his eyes still burned defiantly. He suddenly thought of something: "You can——"

"Not another word! I've heard enough!"

Through the window Kane saw the general manager and party boarding the coaches and he turned away from McNeal, hastening to join them. At the door he paused to fling back a parting injunction:

"Jackson will relieve you tomorrow! Don't forget!"

The conductor came in to the window.

"Clear me," he said: "Second eighteen."

They were on very good terms, this conductor and McNeal; so that when McNeal silently gave him his clearance he observed confidentially to the agent:

"The old man seems a little riled." And when he went out he added, apropos of nothing: "Poor old Tom Brady!" But he did not note the sudden, deepening pallor of McNeal's face.

The flagman was called and the special rolled away. From the window McNeal thoughtfully watched it go, his fingers tenderly caressing the bruised, raw spot on his cheek.

II



SUPERINTENDENT KANE, in conference with General Manager Bonner the following A.M., was annoyed by disturbing voices just outside the door of his private office; he had given instructions that he was not to be disturbed. First came the protesting voice of his chief clerk, then another voice, insistent; and in a moment the office door was opened precipitately.

"Mr. McNeal—" began the flustered chief clerk; and that was as far as he got, for McNeal himself stepped in, closing the door upon him. A different McNeal from that of the day before; quite composed, quite sure of himself now.

"Mr. McNeal!" Superintendent Kane had angrily risen from his desk. "What does this interruption mean? I was not to be disturbed!"

"So they told me," said McNeal, advancing until he reached the desk, opposite to Kane, and at the end of which Bonner, still seated, was slowly puffing at a cigar and watching McNeal silently.

There was nothing of disrespect in McNeal's voice or manner as he continued—

"But I have something to say to you—something I believe important—and I could not wait."

"Impossible!" cried Kane shortly. And he added coldly: "I do not care to hear your excuses—they will do you no good now!" He waved his hand in dismissal and resumed his seat.

"You misunderstand me," said McNeal steadily, making no movement to go. "I have no excuses."

Hands resting lightly on the top of the desk he leaned and shot a sudden question at Kane—

"Do you know where Tom Brady is?"

"Brady!" ejaculated Kane; the unexpectedness of the question, or the irrelevance of it, discomposed him for a moment. "Tom Brady! No!"

"I do!" said McNeal quickly, holding the superintendent with his level gaze. "Tom Brady is dead!"

"What! Dead! Tom Brady dead!"

Kane's voice betrayed how astounded he was. And even Bonner stopped smoking to stare in surprise, his cigar poised in mid-air; he knew of Tom Brady—an employee discharged under a cloud of peculiar circumstances, a thorn-in-the-flesh festering trouble, and lately uttering wild threats.

"Tell us!" urged Kane almost eagerly. "We have heard nothing! How do you know it? Was he killed?"

"Yes," answered McNeal soberly, a momentary sadness in his voice: "Yes—he was killed. I killed him!"

With a gasp Kane sank back in his chair, fascinated eyes fixed on McNeal's immobile face, speechless for the moment. The general manager's mouth opened in astonishment; and then he closed it slowly.

McNeal stood quietly waiting for Kane to speak; which the superintendent did as quickly as he could collect himself.

"You—you killed Tom Brady! McNeal you—you amaze me! Kane bent forward in his chair, fingers gripping the arms tensely. "Why did—how did it happen? And where?"

"At Sidon—yesterday!" McNeal's voice did not vary from its composed, even pitch. "And that is why I came here this morning—to tell you. It will not take long."

Again he stood waiting, expectantly. Kane, a faint light of understanding beginning to glimmer in his brain, looked at the general manager questioningly; and when Bonner nodded the superintendent turned to McNeal again.

"All right, McNeal, go ahead! Take a chair."

Kane pointed to one beside the desk and settled back into his own. He wanted to hear this story; some way he felt it would be more than interesting.

McNeal pulled the chair to him and sat down, holding his hat in his hands.



"I WENT fishing early yesterday morning," McNeal said, "starting before daybreak. It was the first day of the bass season and it has been rather a custom for me to go the opening day. To get to the place where I desired to fish I followed the track west from the station for about a quarter mile.

"Just before arriving at the point where I left the track to cut through the fields, the track making a sharp curve there, I

saw a man suddenly step into the bushes that skirt the right-of-way on both sides for a considerable distance along that section. At least I thought I saw a man, but when I passed the spot where he had apparently disappeared I could see no sign of him and, it still being pretty dark, I thought perhaps I had been deceived by some shadow in the shifting, uncertain light. Even if I had been positive I had seen the man I would not have been disturbed any for, as you know, there are many strange characters follow the railroad; and without investigation I hurried to the stream.

"I fished for about two hours and caught some six or seven nice bass. Then at half-past six I unjointed my rod, and with my catch, started back; for I went on duty at seven A.M.

"I returned by the same route I had gone and upon coming back to the right-of-way was just about to step out from the screen of bushes and weeds when I suddenly perceived something that brought me up, motionless.

"It was, of course, quite light by that time. And, working busily on the track, I saw a man, a man whose figure some way looked vaguely familiar. Very obviously he had not heard me and I remained silently watching him, an uneasy feeling stealing over me, although uncertain at first what he was doing.

"From his pocket the man took a small coil of thin, insulated wire and, laying one end of the double strand beneath the rail, he uncoiled it, backing down into the bushes some thirty feet from me. Next he picked up a small, square, wooden box with a kind of handle at one end and took it into the bushes.

"In a moment he came out and carefully proceeded to remove the wrapper from a package which had been lying between the rails. My heart almost stopped beating when I beheld the contents of that package—round, cylindrical-shaped things with the coloring of heavy wrapping paper—dynamite!

"After removing the covering he looked around cautiously, giving me the first full view of his face; and then I knew why his figure had looked vaguely familiar. For it was Tom Brady! And Tom Brady had long been a friend of mine!"

McNeal shot a swift glance from the

superintendent to the general manager and with scarcely a pause continued:

"I was stunned at first by the shock of the discovery and the horror of the thing that he was so evidently planning to do—to wreck, probably blow up, a train! And knowing Tom Brady as I did I believed the man must be out of his head, must be mad.

"And even while I watched, crouching down in the thicket, he quickly excavated beneath a tie, using a sharp stick to scrape away the cinders; under the tie he carefully laid the explosive and, picking up the wire, he fumbled swiftly over the excavation for a little bit. In an instant he had finished, apparently, for after a searching, quick survey he arose and stepped back, a queer, ghastly smile upon his face. It was then I leaped upon him.

"Tom!" I cried as I seized him. "Tom Brady! Are you mad?"

"He struggled fiercely, cursing me. His face was covered with an unkempt growth of beard, his clothing torn and dirty. His eyes gleamed wildly as he twisted his snarling face to me.

"Tom!" I cried again. "What are you doing, man?"

"But he did not recognize me and I knew then that he was filled with some obsession of the mind, was mad.


"He was strong, fearfully strong, as people in that state are apt to be; and I doubt if I could have overcome him if good fortune had not favored me as we fought over the tracks, I always trying to keep away from the death beneath the tie, my breath beginning to come in gasps.

"But when, from probably a mile away, I suddenly heard an engine whistle, a passenger engine as I could tell from the sound, I made a final, despairing effort and pressed back upon him with all my strength. He yielded a step, his heel caught on the end of a tie, and we fell together, his head striking heavily upon the rail; and we went rolling down the embankment into the thicket.

"I could feel Tom's body grow limp when his head hit the rail so sickeningly hard, and when we brought up at the bottom he lay limp and inert, his head half-fallen across his outflung arm, as one who sleeps.

"I lay but a second, panting from my exertion; then in feverish haste scrambled up, disconnecting the wire and taking the

dynamite from under the tie. I could hear the engine swiftly drawing nearer, and the rails were singing when I picked up the last stick. And just as I stumbled into the thicket, the explosive safely in my arms, the train, a special, swept around the curve and flashed by! I hurriedly hid the dynamite, then hastened to the station."

 THE office was very still as McNeal stopped. Superintendent Kane was half-risen from his chair, drawn by McNeal's last words.

"Our train, Mr. Bonner!" Kane's voice, but little above a whisper, was the first to break in. "Our train!" he repeated, staring across at the general manager, whose cigar had gone out.

The superintendent arose to his feet, drawing his hand over his forehead as though striving to wipe away the thought of their narrow escape.

"McNeal!" he cried. "That's why you were late!"

"That is why," answered McNeal simply.

"But why did you not tell us then," began Kane; but confusion overtook him, his face flushed and he looked at McNeal in embarrassment.

"Yes." McNeal nodded as if in answer to a question. "Beside I did not know then that Tom Brady—was dead. I did not find that out until I went back to him, after you had gone."

"It was a big thing—a mighty brave thing!" General Manager Bonner suddenly boomed in with the first words he had spoken; he went up to McNeal and held out his hand. "It will not be forgotten! Let me try to thank you!"

"And let me, too!" Kane thrust his hand across the desk; he tried to make the best of a, to him, difficult situation. "And I hope you will overlook that little matter—about your suspension. I'll admit I was too hasty."

"That's all right!" McNeal shook the proffered hands. "I but did what I could." And to Kane he added: "Certainly—don't let that bother you. I believe I understand."

"Good!" said Kane. "Let's all be seated again." They sat down and Kane shoved a box of cigars over to McNeal. "Do you smoke?"

"Sometimes," said McNeal, and put one in his pocket.

The superintendent lit a cigar, turning it over in his mouth slowly; he wanted to do the thing gracefully, and McNeal had him somewhat puzzled.

"I think we'll let your thirty days suspension stand"—Kane smiled at McNeal, after a short pause—"but as a vacation, on pay!" He smiled again. "A little rest will do you good."

Kane puffed away, meditating. Idly he picked a bunch of papers up from his desk; and the sight of them offered an unexpected solution to his problem. He turned to Bonner and, when the general manager silently read the question and purpose in Kane's eye, he nodded. The superintendent, relief in his face, swung back to McNeal, cheerfully:

"And then, you could return to your job at Sidon—or, if you will, you can come in here with me. I'll need a good man about that time. That is one of the things Mr. Bonner and I were discussing just before you came in."

Once more Kane smiled at McNeal, tapping the bunch of papers meaningly.

But McNeal did not smile. He was regarding the superintendent with a sober gaze that never traveled far from Kane's face. He sat silent a minute.

"Thank you," McNeal said finally, "for the offer. And I'm sorry—but I'm afraid I can not accept it."

He took a letter from his pocket and handed it to Kane.

"My resignation," he said.

Kane was astounded.

"But—why?" he stammered; he could not seem to gather it. "You astonish me! What's the reason?"

"It would likely be just as well, probably better, if I gave none," McNeal answered quietly; and Kane felt, some way, that he was fully determined about resigning.

"But you make me feel ungrateful!" Kane protested. "I'd like very much to have you tell me!"

McNeal pondered that before he replied:

"It might look that way." He appeared to debate with himself.

"Mr. Kane," he then asked suddenly, as if he had arrived at a decision, "Why do you offer me this—promotion?"

"Why," the superintendent stumbled, slightly bewildered, and before he saw what McNeal was driving at. "Why—I want to show our appreciation—that was a

brave thing you did at Sidon yesterday."

And then, as he looked into McNeal's steady eyes, like a flash he saw what McNeal meant.

"And—and," he added, but rather lamely, "because of your faithful service at Sidon."

McNeal shook his head slowly, several times.

"No," he said. "You didn't say it quickly enough." And again he questioned the superintendent:

"How many years, Mr. Kane, have I been at Sidon?"

Kane could feel his face getting red. "Well—quite a number. Really I can't say exactly." He was going badly and he had an uneasy conviction that McNeal held the whip hand.

"You don't know, Mr. Kane," McNeal said. "You don't know if it is five, or fifteen. And it would make no difference if it was only one, for you would have made me the offer anyway. But I'll tell you—it's nine years."

McNeal laid his hat on the top of the desk and started to turn it around and around, absently.

"Nine years. Mr. Kane," he went on, "have you ever been an agent?"

"No," admitted the superintendent. "Never."

"Then, although you probably know of the endless, monotonous routine of it, you very probably can not understand it—not as some of us can. Nine years of it, Mr. Kane. When a man has put in that length of time his life begins to get colorless, he begins to lose hope and ambition. The day-after-day grind of it—"

McNeal stopped as if to cogitate.

"And so you offer me advancement because of that—that affair at Sidon yesterday, and not because of any long, hard years of service at Sidon."

McNeal was speaking in spurts and Kane did not try to interrupt.

"And my advancement from now on would perhaps be rapid, regardless of any real ability I might show. You know there is a good deal of talk about favoritism, Mr. Kane. Some people might call it that—and that you had taken me under your wing."

"But," Kane broke in on him impa-

tiently, "you deserve it! This would be your reward!"

"Reward!" McNeal echoed, and for the first time there was the slightest touch of bitterness in his voice. "Reward! For what? For helping Tom Brady to die? Tom Brady was my friend!"

McNeal sat sorrowfully, regaining control of himself.

"You know the ugly whispers that have been traveling around, about Tom Brady," he resumed presently, his voice back to its normal pitch of quietness. "That he was discharged without a fair trial—that he had merely offended some one in authority—and that the injustice of it was so preying upon him that it was driving him mad. I don't know if any of these stories are true, Mr. Kane. But I do know that something drove him—that way."

Around and around he kept turning his hat, slowly.

"And when I used to dream, a good while ago, of the time when promotion would come to me I never dreamed of it coming like this; and now that it has I can not accept it—not this way.

"For nearly all men are brave, Mr. Kane, and almost any man would have tried to do what I did—yesterday. And I had dreamed of promotion coming as the reward of some faithful effort or special fitness. So when you proffer it to me as the reward for doing what any ordinary man would have done, or would have tried to do, you hurt my pride a little, Mr. Kane, for you make me feel that I have, in some way, failed to reach the end for which I had aimed."

McNeal arose suddenly, hat in hand, and pushing back his chair, stood looking down at the superintendent.

"For," he said, "when I went back to Tom Brady yesterday and stared down at him lying so quietly there in the thicket, dazed as I was I knew that I could never accept promotion over his poor body."

He waited as if for either Kane or Bonner to speak. But as they said nothing and he met only their rather puzzled, questioning eyes, he turned to go.

"That's all," McNeal concluded. "And now I must go and surrender myself to the police. For they do not know, as yet, how Tom Brady died." And he went out.

The One Way Out



Author of "Her Beloved Enemy," "The Man-Breaker," etc.

IT HAD its beginning when the Civil War began, and it had its ending in July of last year. When the war broke out, the McNabbs of Long Bald Mountain gave their sympathies to the Union; their neighbors the Hales were Confederates. When Lee surrendered because he knew the South had no further hopes of winning, the men of the Hales and the McNabbs, those who were left alive, went back to the Long Bald country and fought on and on.

The years went by, and always it was a gradually losing fight for the Hales; the McNabbs always outnumbered them four to three.

Custom decreed that the next of kin should inherit the chieftaincy when a leader went the long way, and the decree was inflexible. The last chief of the Hales but one came into his own at nineteen, when his father fell by the bullet of a McNabb who was hidden in the laurels. Twelve months later this young leader found himself a wife in the lowland; he married a woman with bright blue eyes and brown-gold hair, a woman of much gentleness who hated the very thought of fighting.

Their one son had nearly all of his lowlander mother's characteristics; in his make-up there was no sign of the hot, red blood

of his fathers. When Albert Hale married Jenny Lovell, it meant the end of the old, old feud with the McNabbs. . . . This boy, who was to be the last and best chief of the Hales, was named Charley.

Charley found himself the leader of his people shortly before his twenty-second birthday, and he immediately gave orders that there was to be no rifle fired unless it was in defense of life or property. His kinsmen were astounded. It was the unheard-of, the unbelievable.

That there might be no misunderstanding, Charley repeated the order, and his little, blue-eyed mother stood in the cabin doorway behind him and smiled and thanked God with her whole good heart. His kinsmen were much ashamed of him. One by one they began to move with their families across the State line into North Carolina, and a year later Charley and his mother were the only Hales left there in the old home country.

Then old Gunter McNabb died at a ripe age, and his son Linderman came back from the Far West to be the McNabb leader.

Linderman was thirty-five, black-haired, black-eyed, and a huge man; he had all the evil traits of his people and none of the good ones; he represented well some queer reversion to type, some inexplicable atavism.

In the West he had been a gun-fighter; it had been said of him that he could draw both revolvers and empty them with deadly aim before the average man could fire a single shot. Loud-mouthed he was, and a braggart and a bully. He feared nothing in heaven, on earth or in hell—so long as he had his two six-guns. There never was a worse man than this bad Great Darcy of the hills and plains, this big Linderman McNabb—so long as he had his six-guns. Without them, he was dough.

When he learned that Charley Hale and his mother were the only Hales left in the Long Bald country, he decided forthwith that they must leave, that that which he was pleased to term a colossal triumph might be complete. So he went one day to young Hale to deliver an ultimatum. He found Charley busily hoeing corn in the clearing above the rambling log-cabin his father had built.

"You'll have to move out," said McNabb. He had lost his drawling hill dialect in the West, and he spoke as briskly as a Yankee. "You'll have to leave here. That's gospel."

Charley straightened and turned his boyish blue eyes toward big Linderman. In a glance he noted the dark and brutish face and the cruel black eyes; in another glance he noted the broad-brimmed cowman's hat, the blue flannel shirt, the two heavy revolvers in open holsters, the clay-colored trousers and the dusty laced boots.

"Why?" asked Charley simply.

McNabb drew down the corners of his thin-lipped mouth and stared hard; few men had ever cared to brave his displeasure by asking why. Charley did not quail before the gaze of big Linderman; he stood there with the princely spirit of him showing plainly everywhere in spite of his poor clothing, and waited for an answer to his question.

"Because there's not room enough in this section for you and me both—that's why," said the McNabb chief. "And," he added, "because I said so."

It was an insult, but it didn't reach high enough. Charley looked toward a brown wren that sat singing on a brushpile and muttered as if to himself:

"Me and mother has been a-talkin' about goin' down to the lowland to live, a-cause it's so lonesome here now," in his musical dialect. "I reckon we'd ha' done went ef mother'd ha' been well enough to make the

trip. She's pow'ful feeble. Her heart it's a right smart wore out."

His gaze wandered to a fleecy white cloud that lay against the bright blue over majestic Ironhead Mountain; his poet's fancy made it a gold-rimmed island in a peaceful, sunlit sea. McNabb growled—

"You've got three days."

Charley Hale whitened a little.

"But mother she wouldn't be able to go in three days," he said. "Yore pap wouldn't ha' been as hard as you, Linderman."

"You've got three days," sourly repeated the McNabb chief; and without another word he turned and disappeared among the thickly growing laurels that made an almost solid green wall around the little clearing.

Hale sat himself down on a rotting log and began to consider. He knew that he was no coward; his understanding of himself, illiterate as he was, was better than that of most people. He knew that his gentle mother had given to him her own disposition, her own love of all that was beautiful and good, her own hatred of brawling and bloodshed. To dare to disobey Linderman McNabb, the titanic force, would be foolish, he reasoned, even for a fighting man; and yet—and yet—

The problem was too much for him. There was an old hill preacher living on Shady Creek, two miles away, in the valley that lies between the Long Bald and the Ironhead; to him Charley decided to go with his difficulty. Old Ansie was very wise; perhaps Old Ansie could offer a solution. So Charley left his hoe lying across the rotting log and went down to see the preacher.

He found Old Ansie sitting in a home-made chair on his vine-covered cabin porch. After greetings had been exchanged, Charley dropped rather wearily to the stone step and told all that which he had come to tell.

"Ye'd better go, son," advised Ansie. "I'll see atter yore mother and fetch her to ye as soon as she's able to travel. The' hain't no law out here, ye know. Linderman McNabb'd ruther kill you 'an to eat when he's hongry. All but Linderman, them McNabbs had purty good hearts—it was their — brains 'at was wrong, Charley boy, not their hearts, which is the way with most o' the whole world. But Linderman's heart is pizen bad as well as his

brains. I heerd him brag about killin' two men out West. He made 'em so mad they reached for their guns, and 'en he beat 'em to it and made it a case o' self-defense. See? Yes, ye'd better go, son. And may the goodness o' God stick wi' ye like a leech!"

As Hale took his way slowly homeward, he gathered a handful of wild flowers for his mother. There were painted and purple and nodding trilliums, wild honeysuckles and red-spurred wild columbines, Job's tears, blue and yellow star grass in his hand.

He found her sitting in her old-fashioned, sheepskin-lined rocker in the front doorway, in the soft mountain twilight. A book lay open in her lap. He called to her.

"Mother?" he said, smiling; and he had no answer. "I brung ye some purty flowers, mother," he went on; and still he had no answer.

There was never any answer. The worn-out heart was at rest at last. The little woman had gone to her promised inheritance.



AN HOUR before sundown two days later, young Hale reached the crest of the long ridge that lay to the west of the Haynes-Norris Logging Company's camp on Pistol Creek. Ordinarily, ten miles is not a great walk for a hillman; but Hale had been weary and broken-hearted to begin with, and now he was close to exhaustion. He put his cheap canvas suitcase down in a little patch of checkerberry, and dropped to a moss-covered stone.

From away up the wooded valley to his right there came the harsh staccato of a geared logging locomotive and the screeching signal of a steam skidder's whistle. Down to his left, lying along Pistol Creek, now on one side and now on the other, was the narrow railroad that led to the big sawmill in the lowland, his mother's country, whither he was bound.

Straight before him in the valley, in the center of three cleared acres, stood two big, rough-board buildings; one of them was the boarding-house of the timberjacks, and the other held the company's commissary and the office of the superintendent. Not far from them stood a blacksmith's shop.

Hale wanted a night's lodging. Who would refuse a man a night's lodging?

He took up his suitcase and started for the camp, bearing sharply to his left because

of the steepness of the hillside, and came to the creek at a point a hundred yards below the clearing.

As he was in the act of crossing the shallow, sparkling stream on stones, something moved in the riotously blooming laurels ahead of him. He stopped still when he had reached the other bank, and looked. Then there appeared in plain view before him a slender, roundish young woman with bright blue eyes and brown-gold hair, whose arms were filled with wild flowers of many colors—and to his poor brain, which was half delirious from sorrow and the loss of two whole nights' sleep, it had to be either an apparition or a miracle out of the Almighty's own hands. Charley Hale took a few steps toward her, reeled dizzily, and caught to a sapling to steady himself; he stared, white-faced, and tried to put speech to his tongue.

The young woman dropped her flowers and went toward him.

"Are ye sick?" she asked kindly, in the musical dialect of the mountains. "Or what's the matter wi' ye?"

Hale dragged a tremulous hand across his brow, struggled to regain control of himself and succeeded. In the half-hour that followed, he told her all there was to tell about himself. The very sight of her had won his entire confidence. Few women of the hills have bright blue eyes and brown-gold hair.

"My name is Sally King," she reciprocated, when he had finished. "My pap was accident'ly killed here at this camp, and my mother she died long afore I can rickollect, and I hain't got no other nigh kin. I stay with the superintendent's wife—they've got two rooms in the down-sta'rs o' the boardin'-house. She's awful cranky—she won't be happy herself, and won't let nobody else be happy; you know the sort o' dawg in the manger she is. And ef I had anywhars else to stay, I'd shore go to it. Ef you want a job a-timberjackin', Charley, we can git it for ye. Super Bill hain't half as mean as his woman."

Hale changed his plans. He did want a job timberjacking. He couldn't leave Sally King, whom he had known for less than an hour, whom he knew he would love always. Hers was a kindred spirit; in his life there had been but one other such spirit, and that other was gone now for all time.

Together they went up the creek to the

camp clearing and then to the superintendent's office. Bill Cooley gave Hale a job as a cutter, and Hale went to the commissary and spent all the money he had for a logger's outfit of clothing—a broad-brimmed gray felt hat, clay-colored corduroys, blue flannel shirts, laced boots with spikes in their soles.

"You look bigger in them clo'es," Sally told him the next day. "But I reckon you looked big enough without 'em, Charley. Big men hain't so much punkin. Ye can buy beef 'most anywhars."

No man of the crew held his job better than Hale held his. Super Bill took a fancy to him, and promised him a foreman's place as soon as he had shown himself competent—and Sally King was at the bottom of that.

Hale was delighted. When he had a foreman's pay, he would ask Sally to marry him. He believed she would accept him. She had shown him much greater favor than she had shown any of the other timberjacks, all of whom worshiped her from their respective distances.

Had she not been the only young woman in the camp, it would have been the same. Sally was exceedingly pretty, and she had ways about her that made her charming in spite of her illiteracy; in short, Sally was a marrying woman.

The unfortunate worshipers were a mixed lot—mountaineers, lowlanders, Yankees. But they were believers in the square deal and Hale suffered none at their hands.



THEN big Linderman McNabb heard that the last chief of the Hales had not left the country after all, and he at once hied himself away for the logging-camp on Pistol Creek to run Hale off. He reached the camp late in the afternoon of a day early in July, and the first man he saw there was the man he wanted to see.

Hale was sitting alone on the rough steps that led to the boarding-house porch. He had washed his hands and his face, and combed his brown hair; he was waiting for the supper call.

McNabb wore a brown coat that hid the two revolvers on his belt fairly well. He drew up at a point half a rod from Hale, put his hands on his hips, and thrust his brutish jaw forward.

"You're not gone," he said briskly.

Hale looked slowly upward until his gaze rested on the cruel black eyes.

"No, and I hain't a-goin' to go," he said quietly.

"Who're you talkin' to?" snapped big Linderman.

"You," said Hale. "You might as well onderstand 'at you cain't play bad here. Super Bill Cooley is a depity-shuriff o' the law, and he shore keeps order whar he's at. You've lit right in the middle of a different bunch from what you ever seed afore, Linderman. Every man here loves Bill Cooley like a brother, and you shore cain't play hoss with nobody here. Now git that, Linderman. Ram it in yore pipe and smoke it. Put it in yore pot and bile it. Stick it in yore mouth and eat it."

Sally King heard Hale's voice and recognized a strange, new note in it, though she failed to catch that which he said. She went to the front doorway, and stood there looking curiously at McNabb. The Long Bald's bully had changed his demeanor completely. Linderman McNabb could be bad in a cunning way as well as he could be openly bad. He raised his broad-brimmed Western hat to Sally, and spoke as courteously as he could. As many another young man had done, he had lost his heart to Sally the moment he saw her.

"Where could I find the boss, Hale?" he asked, smiling a little. "I want a job here."

At that moment Cooley came walking up to the steps. McNabb asked for a job and got it. There was a shortage of room in the boarding-house, said Super Bill, but a vacant cabin stood some two hundred yards up the logging-track, and the commissary kept blankets for sale. McNabb bought a pair of blankets, had his supper at the boarding-house with the others, and went to the cabin.

The days went by, and Linderman McNabb deported himself so well that he became a favorite with many of the other timberjacks. He courted the friendship of Charley Hale unceasingly, and even Hale was almost deceived. Of all the camp, Sally King alone held to her first impressions of the man. The intuition of women is sometimes a wonderful thing.

"He's a snake," she whispered to Hale one evening when they were sitting together on one end of the porch. "A copperhead snake. Watch out for his bite, a-cause it's a-goin' to be bad when it comes. Charley,

ef he does anything to you, I—I'm likely to kill him myself!"

"Do ye like me thataway, Sally?" asked Hale.

Sally leaned toward him. In the semi-darkness he could see her roundish bosom rising and falling rapidly.

"I reckon I do," she whispered tenderly.

Then Hale rose, and so did his sweetheart.

"Ef I thought nobody'd see us, I'd kiss ye, Sally," smiled Hale.

"The' hain't a soul a-lookin', Charley," murmured Sally King.



THE Haynes-Norris Logging Company's monthly pay-day came on the fifteenth.

Late in the night of the fourteenth, those in the big, unpainted boarding-house were awakened suddenly by a great, dull, rumbling explosion that sounded as if it were very near to them. The timberjacks and their superintendent, no man of them more than half-dressed, rushed out of the building before the reverberations had died away.

Bill Cooley carried a lighted lamp in his hands, and he at once made for the office; the others followed hard on his heels.

The office door was properly closed and fastened, but the lower sash of one of the windows had been very neatly taken out. Cooley unlocked the door hastily and pushed it wide open. The yellow light of the oil-lamp showed them little streamers of gray haze floating here and there in the room, and there was present the pungent odor of exploded dynamite. A closer look revealed the fact that the company's old iron safe had been blown.

"By —!" cried Super Bill, dropping to his knees before the wrecked safe. "The satchel with the pay-roll is gone!"

Cooley counted his loggers. Not one of them was missing. Even Linderman McNabb, who slept in the old cabin by himself, was there among them, though he did arrive some two minutes later than the others.

Super Bill did not like to suspect any of his timberjacks. He began to look his office over for a possible clue. Soon he found a common bone-handled barlow knife lying under the front of the safe, and this he picked up and pocketed without anybody noticing it. Also he found that one of the two keys to the dynamite house was gone.

"I reckon there's nothing we can do now,"

he said presently. "Better go back to bed, boys."

They left him. Cooley put the lamp on the upper part of his old roll-top desk, sat himself down in his scarred swivel-chair, took the cheap knife from his pocket and looked it over carefully. One of its bone sides bore the crudely carved initials "C. H."

"Charley Hale!" he muttered under his breath. He went on, a moment later: "But I'll be hanged if I believe he did it. He wouldn't have done such a thing as this. True, he might have made the shot, hidden the satchel, and joined us when we gathered here—but I won't believe it. The initials must be somebody else's."

Super Bill had a big heart, but he had a bigger idea of squareness. The company had had him deputized as an officer of the law in order that he might be more able to protect its Pistol Creek interests, and he was a man to keep his oath at any cost.

As the hours wore on toward the break of day, the idea that the blower of the safe *might* have been Hale took a greater and greater hold in his mind.

When breakfast was over, he called Sally King's sweetheart to him.

"Will you lend me your knife, Charley?" he asked.

Hale unsuspectingly searched through one of his pockets after another.

"I shore hain't got it," he drawled. "I must ha' lost it, I reckon."

"What kind of a knife was it?" narrowly.

"Bone-handled barlow, with my initials cut on one side," readily.

"All right," mumbled Cooley. "Go to your work."

Charley went toward the woods.

Cooley promptly notified the company's headquarters of the robbery, and another pay-roll was sent out. The county's high sheriff came with it, and he made investigations that ended just where they began. Cooley kept his own counsel and said nothing of the knife.

Three more days passed, and Sunday morning came. In the big up-stairs of the boarding-house, the timberjacks were getting ready to go to the swimming-pool at the confluence of Pistol Creek and Little Pigeon River, a short mile down the valley.

There was the usual amount of quibbling and laughter, and Charley Hale did as much of it as anybody else. Why shouldn't he be happy? Wasn't Sally King, the sweetest

girl in the world, going to marry him? Hale did not yet know that the finger of suspicion had leveled its sinister shape toward him.

He had taken half the clothing from his canvas suit-case when his eyes beheld the black leather of the stolen money-satchel! It was small, and it had been neatly pressed flat. With a great lump in his throat, Hale closed and locked the suit-case and shoved it out of sight under his bed. Then he sat down in his soap-box chair weakly. His face was chalky white.

"What's the matter?" inquired "Funny" Hartley, whose bed was next to Hale's. "See somethin' under the bed?"

"I—I reckon I'll not go," Hale said tremulously.

He meant to stay behind and destroy the damaging evidence that some one—the man with the motive, of course, was Linderman McNabb—had so cunningly arranged against him. And he did stay behind.

Funny Hartley also stayed behind. Funny Hartley had caught a glimpse of the company's money-satchel.

When Charley Hale stole up Pistol Creek with the little satchel hidden inside his blue shirt, Hartley stole after him. Hartley was a mountaineer, and he followed Hale as a man follows wild game—soundlessly, always behind something, never in the open. Hale threw the satchel into a dense thicket of laurel and Judas trees; then he went on up the creek. Hartley found the satchel, carried it to Super Bill and told of all that which he had seen.

"Ah-hum," growled Cooley. His face showed deep regret. "We'll have to go through his baggage, Funny, while he's gone. But — me, Funny, if I don't plumb hate to do this!"

Sally King overheard them talking it over. When Cooley broke into Hale's suit-case, Sally slyly watched and listened from a near-by doorway. Cooley found forty dollars in bank-notes of small denominations, and the missing key to the dynamite house. Then Super Bill, no longer in doubt, set out with Hartley to arrest Charley Hale.

Sally reached the woods two minutes ahead of them, and hurried up the creek to find and warn her lover. She found Hale sitting on a stone above a little pool; he was absently watching a school of trout that was playing around a half submerged boulder.

"They're atter you, Charley!" she panted. "Come wi' me—quick!"

"Who's atter me?" drawled Hale. He noted that her blue-and-white calico dress was torn in several places. "I hain't done nothin', Sally, honey—ef it's the law you're a-talkin' about."

"Hush! Don't waste breath and time—come wi' me!" panted Sally.

She stooped and caught him by an arm. Another look into her drawn face decided him. He rose and ran with her into the laurels.

She knew the lay of the country perfectly, and she kept the lead. Half an hour later she led him into a deep and thickly wooded gash known as Gudger's Cove, and there, in gloom at almost midday, they sat down on a gray stone amid giant sword-ferns. Sally quickly told Hale all she knew to tell.

"Linderman McNabb is the answer," muttered Hale. "He stole my knife the day afore the safe was blowed that night—and he done the dynamitin' of it. He slipped into the boardin'-house the night after the safe was blowed, s'arched my clo'es for my suit-case key and found it, and put them things in my suit-case. He knowed somebody'd see me find 'em, a course. It's a new idee to git me out o' the way. He wants you, Sally."

"He shore won't never git me alive," declared Sally. "Ef you could jest prove 'at it was him blowed the safe!"

Hale shrugged his shoulders like a Latin.

"It's a bad hole I'm in," he mumbled dejectedly. "I don't see no way out."

"I don't neither," said Sally. "Hain't it a shame for you, Charley! And it's a shame for me, too. Jest when I'd found you! You ain't like nobody else in the world. Charley, ever sense I was seventeen I've wanted a home o' my own, and a man o' my own, and childern o' my own—and now—n-now, Ch-Charley—"

She turned her face to his shoulder, and one of her arms crept tremulously around his neck. He put an arm about her waist and bent his head until his cheek rested against her fragrant, brown-gold hair. Always, always she reminded him of his mother, that other great and good friend, who had always, always understood.

"Don't cry, honey," he finally said. Her tears had put a fine, new strength in him.

"The' must be a way out. The' has to be. I'll make a way out."

"With all that proof ag'in ye? With the whole world ag'in ye?" sobbed Sally King. Then, as an afterthought: "You hain't used to fightin', Charley. It's not in yore line."


"Fightin' with what?" said Hale. "Fightin' with fists and knives and guns? Them's the littlest, cheapest ways on God A'mighty's 'arth to fight, Sally! Anybody can do that kind o' fightin'. I'm a-goin' to fight big Linderman McNabb with jest my brains—big Linderman McNabb and his two guns! You go on back to the camp, Sally, and don't you worry none. And—listen here: I'm li'ble to want to see you, and when I do I'll sneak up in the laurels clost to the camp clearin' and whistle like a scrooch-owl—a long and a short, a long and a short. But ef the's any danger, ye needn't to come, and rickollect that."

"And ef I want to see you," replied Sally, "I'll put a light in the window o' my room. You can see it day or night. I'll meet ye in the laurels some'eres."

Their plans went no farther than that. They rose, and a wood-thrush that had been singing in a tree overhead flew rapidly away. Sally took half a dozen steps toward the camp, stopped, blushed and looked backward.

"Have ye forgot anything, Charley?"

Hale went to her, embraced her and kissed her twice.

 BY THE coming of nightfall, Hale had an idea. It was a big idea, and the help of Super Bill Cooley would be necessary. Hale wondered if Cooley would trust him sufficiently to lend his assistance to the rather daring plan. Cooley had liked him, he remembered, and he decided to run the risk.

So he crept down to the edge of the clearing, walking carefully through the thick laurels, feeling his way in the blackness—and then he saw that there was a lighted candle on a table that stood at Sally's window!

She wanted to see him! What had happened? Hale's heart went to his throat, but not altogether from fear. He whistled in imitation of the mournful night cry of a shivering owl, a long and a short, a long and a short, and in another minute Sally touched his arm.

"What is it, honey?" he asked breathlessly. "What's happened?"

Sally held toward him a bundle in a newspaper wrapping.

"I wanted ye to have somethin' to eat, Charley," she said sweetly, and the bundle of food was suddenly caught between them and pressed flat.

"Listen here," said Hale, a moment later: "you sneak to Bill Cooley and bring him to me, and don't let nobody see ye. I've thunk up somethin', Sally."

Sally slipped away in the darkness, and Hale began to unwrap the bundle of food. Come to think of it, he was hungry.

A quarter of an hour later Sally returned, and following her came the superintendent. Cooley sat down on the leaves close to Hale, and Hale gave an outline of his plan.

"I'm afraid it won't work," frowned Cooley.

"Won't work! Maybe it won't," muttered Hale. "But hain't the' a resk to take anywhars, with anything? I tell ye, Super Bill, Linderman McNabb is a coward when he ain't got his guns. He's a bluffer, and a bluffer is allus easy bluffed. Well, we'll try it, won't we?"

"Yes," nodded Cooley finally. "But I'm afraid you'll get your light put out."

That night big Linderman McNabb sat in the commissary and told stories until closing time—stories of wild Indians, Mexican outlaws and horse thieves, and in each and every instance he played himself up as a hero. Those who heard him talk believed him, for his manner was convincing; perhaps they wondered what poor little Jesse James would have done had he been so unfortunate as to meet up with big Linderman McNabb.

Then the bluffer went to his lone and lonesome cabin, lighted an oil lamp that sat on a home-made table in the center of the room, and shed his outer clothing. He took a belt and a pair of holstered revolvers from under the floor and left the floor-board out, hung the belt and its weapons on a nail in the log wall at the head of his bed, blew out the light and crept between his blankets.

Ten minutes later he was snoring. Ten more minutes, and a slim, dark figure crawled under the floor of the old cabin and entered by way of the hole. This figure moved slowly, slowly, and made no more noise than a spirit would have made; it straightened, and its two hands found

McNabb's two revolvers and drew them cautiously from their holsters.

Hale stepped backward a few feet, stopped and said evenly—

"Git up, Linderman, and make a light."

McNabb stirred, awoke. Hale repeated his order. McNabb reached for his weapons and discovered that they were gone. Then he rose, scratched a match and applied it to the lamp's wick. Three more seconds, and the log-walled room was aglow.

"Put on yore clo'es," said Hale.

Big Linderman stared. The two revolvers were trained squarely toward his breast, and they wavered none at all. Hale knew the use of firearms; his fighting father had seen to that.

"Put on yore clo'es," said Hale.

McNabb reasoned that there was nothing to be lost by obedience, and he dressed himself quickly.

"Set down thar at the table," Hale ordered sharply.

The other sat down.

"Well, now what?"

"Le's don't have no misanderstandin'," Hale frowned. "Ef you don't do what I tell ye to do, I'm li'ble to kill ye. 'At's gawspel, ef ever I spoke it. I'm a-comin' out o' the hole ye put me in, Linderman, or die."

McNabb scowled heavily and darkly, and his cruel black eyes flashed like powder-fire. Hale thrust one of the two revolvers inside the waistband of his corduroy trousers, and with his free hand took a short pencil and a sheet of flimsy note-paper from one of his coat pockets; these he dropped to the table before his enemy.

"Confession, eh?" growled McNabb. "I don't think!"

"Not edzactly," said Hale. "Dyin' statement, maybe, is a better name for it. Don't you move toward me, Linderman! Now you listen to me, Linderman, whilst I talk.

"I'm in a bad fix, and it was you 'at dawgged me and dawgged me ontel ye put me whar I'm at. But I'm a-comin' out or die. Git that. You think I'm a coward but I ain't. But—well, s'posen I am. Hain't you got plain hoss sense enough to know 'at a coward in a cawner is the wo'st fighter in the world? Now don't you make a move toward me, d'ye onderstand? Are you afeard to fight me, Linderman?"

"I'm not afraid to fight anybody," was the ready answer.

"You hain't? All right. Listen to me. S'posen we each writes a dyin' suicide statement, which will clear the man 'at lives; then s'posen we each takes one o' these two guns and goes at it?"

"That suits me," smiled McNabb. Hale was a fool! Was not he, Linderman McNabb, a gun-fighter noted all along the borderland and as far north as Denver? He could easily fill Hale's body full of lead before Hale could fire a single shot.

"Write," said Hale. "Write 'at you're plumb dead tired o' livin'. Write 'at you're a-goin' to kill yoreself. Write 'at it was you blowed the safe, and you 'at put them things in my suit-case. Git at it!"

McNabb took up the stub of a pencil and hurriedly wrote that which Hale had told him to write. Then he made as if to go to his feet. Hale jabbed a revolver toward him.

"Set still!" he clipped; and McNabb sat still. "Le' me see the statement, Linderman."

McNabb pushed the sheet across the table. Hale, still watching his man with half his eyes, read it and saw that it was all he wanted it to be. He faced McNabb triumphantly.

"Now," he said, thrusting the confession into one of the pockets of his corduroy coat, "I've got you! Don't move! What's to hender me from shootin' you and leavin' yore dyin' suicide statement and the two guns thar on the table? It'd clear me, wouldn't it? I couldn't never fight you with a gun, Linderman; you know that. It looks like shootin' you right now is the one way out for me, don't it?"

Big Linderman McNabb saw that he had been outwitted. He went very pale. As long as he had had his two six-guns, he really had feared nothing in heaven or on earth. But now—he was dough. He was speechless.

"I shore don't like to kill a man," went on Hale, carrying out his big idea to the letter. "The's one way out for you, too, Linderman. But you wouldn't never give me sech a chanst."

"What is it?" chattered McNabb. The eyes of the revolver-barrels didn't seem quite so black now.

"It's this," said Hale boldly. "You gi' me the rest o' the money you got out o' the safe, so's I'll have plenty to take me away out West whar you was at—and I'll give

ye back the statement in the bargain. Either do that, or go to prayin', Linder-man!"

McNabb's big, hairy hands gripped the edge of the table. He tried to summon courage, but—without his six-guns he was dough. Hale had beaten him cleverly; his life was in Hale's hands, and it was greatly to Hale's interest to kill him.

"And yit, I reckon it'd be a good deal less trouble to shoot ye right now," muttered Hale; and he leveled one of the weapons toward McNabb's broad breast.

"No!" cried McNabb. "Don't! You can have the money!"

"Git it!" Hale ordered sourly.

The other rose, went to the mildewed old fireplace and knelt there. With fingers that shook violently, he took out a blackened stone. A moment later he rose to his feet with a stack of bulky pay-envelopes in his

hands; he faced about and saw that which wrung a hoarse gasp from his throat—standing where Charley Hale had been standing only a moment before was Deputy Sheriff Bill Cooley! Super Bill had a revolver in one hand and a pair of irons in the other.

"Hale was right: a bluffer is easily bluffed," said Cooley, with a queer smile. "Put the money on the table, and then we'll see how well bracelets become you!"

McNabb obeyed sullenly.

Outside in the soft darkness of the mountain night the last and best chief of the Hales was holding his Sally to his heart and kissing her brown-gold hair. And Sally—she was whispering sweetly something like this:

"Ever sence I was seventeen I've wanted a home o' my own, and a man o' my own, and ch-ch-childern o' my own—and now I'll have 'em every one, Ch-Charley!"

BACK INTO LIFE

by HARRY KEMP

I MUST go forth again, for I have heard
The voice that calls the far, sky-piercing bird
To dim and distant lands where, golden, breaks
The alien dawn on undiscovered lakes.

Cramped half a life upon a four-legged stool
And eking out each day by ordered rule,
How seldom have I seen the morning star
Lost in the hills that seemed like mists afar,
Or built my camp-fire in the breaking dawn
Before the day's adventure lured me on!

How seldom in some forest wide and deep
Have I unrolled my pack and gone to sleep
While the great branches mingled with the sky
And through the night the slow moon sauntered by!

So, from the ways that cramp and hamper men
I must go forth, and be myself again.

Finished

A Five-Part Story, Part II

by H. Rider Haggard



I FIRST laid eyes on the lean, clean figure of young Anscombe, idler, big-game hunter, on that Spring morning in Pretoria, 1877, when Great Britain took formal possession of the Transvaal. A year later we met again, this time because of Anscombe's determination to hunt buffalo in the Lydenburg country back of Delagoa Bay.

I tried to dissuade him, for I knew the Basutos up-country were unfriendly; but the outcome was that I went as his guide.

From the flaming morn when we trekked out across the veld, till we entered the bush, far north, all went well. Then suddenly we came upon something which even gave me a start, and I have been in as many tight corners, and seen as many weird spectacles in the heart of Africa, I presume, as any man alive.

What startled me was a temple—a home there in the wilderness, built of snowy marble. But if the home seemed strange, a thousand times more mysterious were its two inhabitants, Marnham, an old man, and Dr. Todd, whose shifty eyes made me distrust him immediately.

I knew at once that they were anxious to be rid of us. Was it because of a mysterious Miss Heda Marnham who was expected at any time? Dr. Todd, it was plain, was not anxious to have her meet young Anscombe. Or did these forest-dwellers fear we might discover the reason for their living thus?

At any rate, we soon shook the dust of their yard from our feet, and began our hunting. But almost at the sound of our first shot we were ambushed by natives; and from a wounded black I learned that they had been informed of our coming by a white man.

All thought of fighting it out with the Basutos fled when Anscombe caught a bullet in his foot. We must win back to the Temple. We did. And Dr. Todd pronounced Anscombe's wound too serious to allow traveling for some days.

Then a strange thing happened which gave me a clue to the "trading" that Dr. Todd vaguely said was his and Marnham's reason for dwelling in the bush.

The Basutos had followed almost to the Temple. But instead of attacking they broke into song and spent the night in revelry. I knew they had somehow got hold of their greatest enemy—liquor. From this my thoughts snapped instantly to their weapons. Where did they get them? And what, beside their friendship, did they give in return?

I stumbled on the answer to the first question next morning—a box, hidden away in the bush back of the Temple, filled with rifles, powder, and spirits.

The second question, that of the payment given by the natives, Marnham cleared up the evening he and Dr. Todd taunted Anscombe and me into a card game

as partners; and that same night I learned why two shrewd, brilliant men had ducked back to cover under the shadow of Zululand.

The traders lost, for Marnham poured down drink after drink once he found we were not to be easily beaten. Anscombe totaled up their debt—£749.

His face flaming with rage, Marnham staggered up.

"There's your pay!" he shouted, and he threw a handful of uncut diamonds upon the table. He was an illicit diamond buyer.

He shook his fist at Todd.

"It's your fault, you—you medical jail-bird!" he cried.

"Don't you dare call me that—you murderer!" gasped the doctor.

Marnham seized a decanter and hurled it full at Todd's head, missing by an eyelash. Then we intervened.

After we had induced the pair to retire, Anscombe examined the cards.

"Marked, by Jove!" he exclaimed.

"Shut up, you fool," I retorted. "I'd give a hundred pounds to be clear of this place. There'll be murder done yet over this business, and I only hope it won't be us."

And again I listened for night-sounds from the near-by natives, whom I knew would cut the throats of any whites in Lydenburg at a word from the owners of the Temple.

CHAPTER VI

MISS HEDA

IT MIGHT be thought that after all this there would have been a painful explanation on the following morning, but nothing of the sort happened. After all, the greatest art is the art of ignoring things without which the world could scarcely go on, even among the savage races.

Thus on this occasion the two chief actors in the scene of the previous night pretended that they had forgotten what took place, as I believe, to a large extent truly. The fierce flame of drink in the one and of passion in the other had burnt the web of remembrance to ashes. They knew that something unpleasant had occurred and its main outlines; the rest had vanished away; perhaps because they knew also that they were not responsible for what they said and did, and therefore that what occurred had no right to a permanent niche in their

memory. It was, as it were, something outside of their normal selves. At least so I conjectured, and their conduct seemed to give color to my guess.

The doctor spoke to me of the matter first.

"I fear there was a row last night," he said; "it has happened here before over cards, and will no doubt happen again until matters clear themselves up somehow. Marnham, as you see, drinks, and when drunk is the biggest liar in the world, and I, I am sorry to say, am cursed with a violent temper. Don't judge either of us too harshly. If you were a doctor you would know that all these things come to us with our blood, and we didn't fashion our own clay, did we? Have some coffee, won't you?"

Subsequently when Todd wasn't there, Marnham spoke also and with that fine air of courtesy which distinguished him.

"I owe a deep apology," he said, "to yourself and Mr. Anscombe. I do not recall much about it, but I know there was a scene last night over those cursed cards. A weakness overtakes me sometimes. I will say no more, except that you, who are also a man who perhaps have felt weaknesses of one sort or another, will, I hope, make allowances for me and pay no attention to anything that I may have said or done in the presence of guests; yes, that is what pains me—in the presence of guests."

Something in his distinguished manner caused me to reflect upon every peccadillo that I had ever committed, setting it in its very worst light.

"Quite so," I answered, "quite so. Pray do not mention the matter any more, although—" these words seemed to jerk themselves out of my throat—"you did call each other by such very hard names."

"I daresay," he answered with a vacant smile, "but if so they meant nothing."

"No, I understand, just like a lovers' quarrel. But look here, you left some diamonds on the table which I took to keep the Kaffirs out of temptation. I will fetch them."

"Did I? Well, probably I left some I.O.U.'s also which might serve for pipe-lights. So suppose we set the one against the other. I don't know the value of either the diamonds or the pipe-lights, it may be less or more, but for God's sake don't let me see the beastly things again. There's no need, I have plenty."

"I must speak to Anscombe," I answered. "The money at stake was his, not mine."

"Speak to whom you will," he replied, and I noted that the throbbing vein upon his forehead indicated a rising temper. "But never let me see those diamonds again. Throw them into the gutter if you wish, but never let me see them again, or there will be trouble."

Then he flung out of the room, leaving his breakfast almost untasted.

Reflecting that this queer old bird probably did not wish to be cross-questioned as to his possession of so many uncut diamonds, or that they were worth much less than the sum he had lost, or possibly that they were not diamonds at all but glass, I went to report the matter to Anscombe. He only laughed and said that as I had got the things I had better keep them until something happened, for we had both got it into our heads that something would happen before we had done with that establishment.

So I went to put the stones away as safely as I could. While I was doing so I heard the rumble of wheels, and came out just in time to see a Cape cart, drawn by four very good horses and driven by a Hottentot in a smart hat and a red waistband, pull up at the garden gate.

Out of this cart presently emerged a neatly dressed lady, of whom all I could see was that she was young, slender and rather tall; also, as her back was towards me, that she had a great deal of auburn hair.

"There!" said Anscombe. "I knew that something would happen. Heda has happened. Quatermain, as neither her venerated parent nor her loving fiancé, for such I gather he is, seem to be about, you had better go and give her a hand."

I obeyed with a groan, heartily wishing that Heda hadn't happened, since some sense warned me that she would only add to the present complications. At the gate, having given some instructions to a very stout young coloured woman who, I took it, was her maid, about a basket of flower-roots in the cart, she turned round suddenly and we came face to face with the gate between us.

For a moment we stared at each other, I reflecting that she really was very pretty with her delicately-shaped features, her fresh, healthy-looking complexion, her long dark eyelashes and her lithe and charming

figure. What she reflected about me I don't know, probably nothing half so complimentary. Suddenly, however, her large greyish eyes grew troubled and a look of alarm appeared upon her face.

"Is anything wrong with my father?" she asked. "I don't see him."

"If you mean Mr. Marnham," I replied, lifting my hat, "I believe that Dr. Todd and he——"

"Never mind about Dr. Todd," she broke in with a contemptuous little jerk of her chin, "how is my father?"

"I imagine much as usual. He and Dr. Todd were here a little while ago, I suppose that they have gone out." As a matter of fact they had, but in different directions.

"Then that's all right," she said with a sigh of relief. "You see, I heard that he was ill, which is why I have come back."

So, thought I to myself, she loves that old scamp and she—doesn't love the doctor. There will be more trouble as sure as five and two are seven. All we wanted was a woman to make the pot boil over.

Then I opened the gate and took a travelling bag from her hand with my politest bow.

"My name is Quatermain and that of my friend, Anscombe. We are staying here, you know," I said rather awkwardly.

"Indeed," she answered with a delightful smile, "what a very strange place to choose to stay in."

"It is a beautiful house," I remarked.

"Not bad, although I designed it, more or less. But I was alluding to its inhabitants."

This finished me, and I am sure she felt that I could think of nothing nice to say about those inhabitants, for I heard her sigh. We walked side by side up the rose-fringed path and presently arrived at the stoep, where Anscombe, whose hair I had cut very nicely on the previous day, was watching us from his long chair. They looked at each other, and I saw both of them color a little, out of mere foolishness, I suppose.

"Anscombe," I said, "this is——"

I paused, not being quite certain whether she also was called Marnham.

"Heda Marnham," she interrupted.

"Yes—Miss Heda Marnham, and this is the Honorable Maurice Anscombe."

"Forgive me for not rising, Miss Marnham," said Anscombe in his pleasant voice

(by the way hers was pleasant too, full and rather low, with just a suggestion of something foreign about it). "A shot through the foot prevents me at present."

"Who shot you?" she asked quickly.

"Oh—only a Kaffir."

"I am so sorry; I hope you will get well soon. Forgive me now, I must go and look for my father."


"She is uncommonly pretty," remarked Anscombe, "and a lady into the bargain. In reflecting on old Marnham's sins we must put it to his credit that he has produced a charming daughter."

"Too pretty and charming by half," I grunted.

"Perhaps Dr. Todd is of the same way of thinking. Great shame that such a girl should be handed over to a medical scoundrel like Dr. Todd. I wonder if she cares for him?"

"Just about as much as a canary cares for a tom-cat. I have found that out already."

"Really, Quatermain, you are admirable. I never knew any one who could make a better use of the briefest opportunity."

 THEN we were silent, waiting, not without a certain impatience, for the return of Miss Heda. She did return with surprising quickness considering that she had found time to search for her parent, to change into a clean white dress, and to pin a single hibiscus flower on to her bodice which gave just the touch of color that was necessary to complete her costume.

"I can't find my father," she said, "but the boys say he has gone out riding. I can't find anybody. When you have been summoned from a long way off and travelled post-haste, rather to your own inconvenience, it is amusing, isn't it?"

"Wagons and carts in South Africa don't arrive like express trains, Miss Marnham," said Anscombe, "so you shouldn't be offended."

"I am not at all offended, Mr. Anscombe. Now that I know there is nothing the matter with my father I'm— But, tell me, how did you get your wound?"

So he told her with much amusing detail after his fashion. She listened quietly with a puckered-up brow and only made one comment. It was—

"I wonder what white man told those Sekukuni Kaffirs that you were coming."

"I don't know," he answered, "but he

deserves a bullet through him somewhere above the ankle."

"Yes, though few people get what they deserve in this wicked world."

"So I have often thought. Had it been otherwise, for example, I should have been——"

"What would you have been?" she asked, considering him curiously.

"Oh, a better shot than Mr. Allan Quatermain, and as beautiful as a lady I once saw in my youth."

"Don't talk rubbish before luncheon," I remarked sternly, and we all laughed, the first wholesome laughter that I had heard at the Temple. For this young lady seemed to bring happiness and merriment with her. I remember wondering what it was of which her coming reminded me, and concluding that it was like the sight and smell of a peach orchard in full bloom stumbled on suddenly in the black desert of the burnt Winter veld.

After this we became quite friendly. She dilated on her skill in having produced the Temple from an old engraving, which she fetched and showed to us, at no greater an expense than it would have cost to build an ordinary house.

"That is because the marble was at hand," said Anscombe.

"Quite so," she replied demurely. "Speaking in a general sense one can do many things in life—if the marble is at hand. Only most of us when we look for marble find sandstone or mud."

"Bravo!" said Anscombe. "I have generally lit upon sandstone."

"And I on the mud," she mused.

"And I on all three, for the earth contains marble and mud and sandstone, to say nothing of gold and jewels," I broke in, being tired of silence.

But neither of them paid much attention to me, though Anscombe did say, out of politeness, I suppose, that pitch and subterranean fires should be added, or some such nonsense.

Then she began to tell him of her infantile memories of Hungary, which were extremely faint, how they came to this place and lived first of all in two large Kaffir huts, until suddenly they began to grow rich; of her school days at Maritzburg; of the friends with whom she had been staying, and I know not what, until at last I got up and went out for a walk.

When I returned an hour or so later they were still talking, and so continued to do until Dr. Todd arrived upon the scene.

At first they did not see him, for he stood at an angle to them, but I saw him and watched his face with a great deal of interest. It, or rather its expression, was not pleasant; before now I have seen something like it on that of a wild beast which thinks that it is about to be robbed of its prey by a stronger wild beast, in short, a mixture of hate, fear and jealousy—especially jealousy. At the last I did not wonder, for these two seemed to be getting on uncommonly well.

I think Anscombe had just told her one of his good stories, and they were both laughing merrily. Then she caught sight of the doctor and her merriment evaporated like a drop of water on a hot shovel. Distinctly I saw her pull herself together and prepare for something.

"How do you do?" she said rapidly, rising and holding out her slim sun-browned hand. "But I need not ask, you look so well."

"How do you do, my dear," with a heavy emphasis on the "dear," he answered slowly. "But I needn't ask, for I see that you are in perfect health and spirits," and he bent forward as if to kiss her.

Somehow or other she avoided that endearment or seal of possession. I don't quite know how, as I turned my head away, not wishing to witness what I felt to be unpleasant. When I looked up again, however, I saw that she had avoided it, the scowl on his face, the demureness of hers and Anscombe's evident amusement assured me of this. She was asking about her father; he answered that he also seemed quite well.

"Then why did you write to tell me that I ought to come back at once as he was not well?" she inquired, with a lifting of her delicate eyebrows.

The question was never answered, for at that moment Marnham himself appeared.

"Oh, father!" she said, and rushed into his arms, while he kissed her tenderly on both cheeks.

So I was not mistaken, thought I to myself, she does really love this moral wreck, and what is more, he loves her, which shows that there must be good in him.

The influence of Miss Heda in the house was felt at once. The boys became smarter and put on clean clothes. Vases of flowers appeared in the various rooms; ours was turned out and cleaned, a disagreeable process so far as we were concerned. Moreover, at dinner both Marnham and Todd wore dress clothes with short jackets, a circumstance that put Anscombe and myself to shame since we had none. It was curious to see how with those dress clothes, which doubtless awoke old associations within him, Marnham changed his color like a chameleon. Even the doctor looked a gentleman, which doubtless he was once upon a time, in evening dress. Moreover, some kind of truce had been arranged. He no longer called Miss Heda "My dear" or attempted any familiarities, while she on more than one occasion very distinctly called him Dr. Todd.

So much for that night and for several others that followed. As for the days, they went by pleasantly and idly. Heda walked about on her father's arm, conversed in friendly fashion with the doctor, always watching him, I noticed, as a cat watches a dog that she knows is waiting an opportunity to spring, and for the rest associated with us as much as she could.

Particularly did she seem to take refuge behind my own insignificance, having, I suppose, come to the conclusion that I was a harmless person who might possibly prove useful. But all the while I felt that the storm was banking up. Indeed Marnham himself, at any rate to a great extent, played the part of the cloud-compelling Jove, for soon it became evident to me, and without doubt to Dr. Todd also, that he was encouraging the intimacy between his daughter and Anscombe by every means in his power.

In one way and another he had fully informed himself as to Anscombe's prospects in life, which were brilliant enough. Moreover he liked the man who, as the remnant of the better perceptions of his youth told him, was one of the best class of Englishmen, and what is more, he saw that Heda liked him also, as much indeed as she disliked Todd. He even spoke to me of the matter in a round-about kind of fashion, saying that the young woman who married Anscombe would be lucky and that the father who had him for a son-in-law might go to his grave confident of his

child's happiness. I answered that I agreed with him, unless the lady's affections had already caused her to form other ties.

"Affections!" he exclaimed, dropping all pretence. "There are none involved in this accursed business, as you are quite sharp enough to have seen for yourself."

"I understood that an engagement was involved," I remarked.

"On my part, perhaps, not on hers," he answered. "Oh, can't you understand, Quatermain, that sometimes men find themselves forced into strange situations against their will?"

Remembering the very ugly name that I had heard Todd call Marnham on the night of the card party, I reflected that I could understand well enough, but I only said—

"After all, marriage is a matter that concerns a woman even more than it does her father, one, in short, of which she must be the judge."

"Quite so, Quatermain, but there are some daughters who are prepared to make great sacrifices for their fathers. Well, she will be of age ere long, if only I can stave it off till then. But how, how?"

And with a groan he turned and left me.

That old gentleman's neck is in some kind of a noose, thought I to myself, and his difficulty is to prevent the rope from being drawn tight. Meanwhile this poor girl's happiness and future are at stake.

"Allan," said Ancombe to me a little later, for by now he called me by my Christian name, "I suppose you haven't heard anything about those oxen, have you?"

"No, I could scarcely expect to yet, but why do you ask?"

He smiled in his droll fashion and replied—

"Because, interesting as this household is in sundry ways, I think it is about time that we, or at any rate that I, got out of it."

"Your leg isn't fit to travel yet, Ancombe, although Todd says that all the symptoms are very satisfactory."

"Yes, but to tell you the truth I am experiencing other symptoms quite unknown to that beloved physician and so unfamiliar to myself that I attribute them to the influences of the locality. Altitude affects the heart, does it not, and this house stands high."

"Don't play off your jokes on me," I said sternly. "What do you mean?"

"I wonder if you find Miss Heda attractive, Allan, or if you are too old. I believe there comes an age when the only beauties that can move a man are those of architecture or scenery or properly cooked food."

"Hang it all! I am not Methusaleh," I replied; "but if you mean that you are falling in love with Heda, why the deuce don't you say so, instead of wasting my time and your own?"

"Because time was given to us to waste. Properly considered it is the best use to which it can be put, or at any rate the one that does least mischief. Also because I wished to make you say it for me that I might judge from the effect of your words whether it is or is not true. I may add that I fear the former to be the case."

"Well, if you are in love with the girl you can't expect one so ancient as myself, who is quite out of touch with such follies, to teach you how to act."

"No, Allan. Unfortunately there are occasions when one must rely upon one's own wisdom; and mine, what there is of it, tells me I had better get out of this. But I can't ride even if I took the horse and you ran behind, and the oxen haven't come."

"Perhaps you could borrow Miss Marnham's cart in which to run away from her," I suggested sarcastically.

"Perhaps, though I believe it would be fatal to my foot to sit up in a cart for the next few days, and the horses seem to have been sent off somewhere. Look here, old fellow," he went on, dropping his bantering tone, "it's rather awkward to make a fool of oneself over a lady who is engaged to some one else, especially if one suspects that with a little encouragement she might begin to walk the same road. The truth is I have taken the fever pretty bad, worse than ever I did before, and if it isn't stopped soon it will become chronic."

"Oh no, Ancombe, only intermittent at the worst, and African malaria nearly always yields to a change of climate."

"How can I expect a cynic and a misogynist to understand the simple fervor of an inexperienced soul—Oh, drat it all, Quatermain! Stop your acid chaff and tell me what is to be done. Really I am in a tight place."

"Very, so tight that I rejoice to think that, as you were kind enough to point out, my years protect me from anything of the

sort. I have no advice to give; I think you had better ask it of the lady."

"Well, we did have a little conversation, hypothetical of course, about some friends of ours who found themselves somewhat similarly situated, and I regret to say without result."

"Indeed. I did not know you had any mutual acquaintances. What did she say and do?"

"She said nothing, only sighed and looked as though she were going to burst into tears, and all she did was to walk away. I'd have followed her if I could, but as my crutch wasn't there it was impossible. It seemed to me that suddenly I had come up against a brick wall, that there was something on her mind which she could not or would not let out."

"Yes, and if you want to know, I will tell you what it is. Todd has got a hold on Marnham of a sort that would bring him somewhere near the gallows. As the price of his silence Marnham has promised him his daughter. The daughter knows that her father is in this man's power, though I think she does not know in what way, and being a good girl——"

"An angel you mean—do call her by her right name, especially in a place where angels are so much wanted."

"Well, an angel if you like—she has promised on her part to marry a man she loathes in order to save her parent's bacon."

"Just what I concluded, from what we heard in the row. I wonder which of that pair is the bigger blackguard. Well, Allan, that settles it. You and I are on the side of the angel. You will have to get her out of this scrape and—if she'll have me, I'll marry her; and if she won't, why it can't be helped. Now that's a fair division of labor. How are you going to do it? I haven't an idea, and if I had, I should not presume to interfere with one so much older and wiser than myself."

"I suppose that by the time you appeared in it, the game of heads I win and tails you lose had died out of the world," I replied with an indignant snort. "I think the best thing I can do will be to take the horse and look for those oxen. Meanwhile you can settle your business by the light of your native genius, and I only hope you'll finish it without murder and sudden death."

"I say, old fellow," said Anscombe earnestly, "you don't really mean to go off

and leave me in this hideous mess? I haven't bothered much up to the present because I was sure that you would find a way out, which would be nothing to a man of your intellect and experience. I mean it honestly, I do indeed."

"Do you? Well, I can only say that my mind is a perfect blank, but if you will stop talking I will try to think the matter over. There's Miss Heda in the garden cutting flowers. I will go to help her, which will be a very pleasant change."

And I went, leaving him to stare after me jealously.

CHAPTER VII

THE STOEP

WHEN I reached Miss Heda she was collecting half-opened monthly roses from the hedge, and not quite knowing what to say I made the appropriate quotation. At least it was appropriate to my thought, and, as I inferred from her answer, to hers also.

"Yes," she said, "I am gathering them while I may, for tomorrow——"

And she sighed and, as I thought, glanced towards the veranda, though of this I could not be sure because of the wide brim of the hat she was wearing.

Then we talked a little on indifferent matters, while I pricked my fingers helping to pluck the roses. She asked me if I thought that Anscombe was getting on well, and how long it would be before he could travel. I replied that Dr. Todd could tell her better than myself, but that I hoped in about a week.

"In a week!" she said, and although she tried to speak lightly there was dismay in her voice.

"I hope you don't think it too long," I answered; "but even if he is fit to go, the oxen have not come yet, and I don't quite know when they will."

"Too long!" she exclaimed. "Too long! Oh, if you only knew what it is to me to have such guests as you are in this place," and her dark eyes filled with tears.

By now we had passed to the side of the house in search of some other flower that grew in the shade, I think it was mignonette, and were out of sight of the veranda and quite alone.

"Mr. Quatermain," she said hurriedly,

"I am wondering whether to ask your advice about something, if you would give it. I have no one to consult here," she added rather piteously.

"That is for you to decide. If you wish to do so I am old enough to be your father, and will do my part to help."

We walked on to an orange grove that stood about forty yards away, ostensibly to pick some fruit, but really because we knew that there we should be out of hearing and could see any one who approached.

"Mr. Quatermain," she said presently in a low voice, "I am in great trouble, almost the greatest a woman can be. I am engaged to be married to a man whom I do not care for."

"Then why not break it off? It may be unpleasant, but it is generally best to face unpleasant things, and nothing can be so bad as marrying a man whom you do not—care for."

"Because I can not—I dare not. I have to obey."

"How old are you, Miss Marnham?"

"I shall be of age in three months' time. You may guess that I did not intend to return here until they were over, but I was, well—trapped. He wrote to me that my father was ill and I came."

"At any rate when they are over you will not have to obey any one. It is not long to wait."

"It is an eternity. Besides this is not so much a question of obedience as of duty and of love. I love my father who, whatever his faults, has always been very kind to me."

"And I am sure he loves you. Why not go to him and tell him your trouble?"

"He knows it already, Mr. Quatermain, and hates this marriage even more than I do, if that is possible. But he is driven to it, as I am. Oh! I must tell the truth. The doctor has some hold over him. My father has done something dreadful, I don't know what and I don't want to know, but if it came out it would ruin my father, or worse, worse. I am the price of his silence. On the day of our marriage he will destroy the proofs. If I refuse to marry him, they will be produced and then——"

"It is difficult," I said.

"It is more than difficult, it is terrible. If you could see all there is in my heart, you would know how terrible."

"I think I can see, Miss Heda. Don't

say any more now. Give me time to consider. In case of necessity come to me again, and be sure that I will protect you."

"But you are going in a week."

"Many things happen in a week. Sufficient to the day is its evil. At the end of the week we will come to some decision unless everything is already decided."

For the next twenty-four hours I reflected on this pretty problem as hard as I ever did on anything in all my life. Here was a young woman who must somehow be protected from a scoundrel, but who could not be protected because she herself had to protect another scoundrel—to wit, her own father.

Could the thing be faced out? Impossible, for I was sure that Marnham had committed a murder, or murders, of which Todd possessed evidence that would hang him. Could Heda be married to Ancombe at once? Yes, if both were willing, but then Marnham would still be hung. Could they elope? Possibly, but with the same result. Could I take her away and put her under the protection of the Court at Pretoria? Yes, but with the same result. I wondered what my old Hottentot retainer, Hans, would have advised, he who was named Light-in-Darkness, and in his own savage way was the cleverest and most cunning man that I ever knew. Alas! I could not raise him from the grave to tell me, and yet I knew well what he would have answered.

"Baas," he would have said, "this is a rope which only the pale old man (i.e. death) can cut. Let this doctor die, or let the father die, and the maiden will be free. Surely heaven is longing for one or both of them, and if necessary, Baas, I believe that I can point out a path to heaven!"

I laughed to myself at the thought, which was one that a white man could not entertain even as a thought. And yet I felt that the hypothetical Hans was right, death alone could cut this knot, and the reflection made me shiver.

That night I slept uneasily and dreamed. I dreamed that once more I was in the Black Kloof in Zululand, seated in front of the huts at the end of the kloof. In front of me squatted the old wizard, Zikali, wrapped up in his kaross—Zikali, the "Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born," whom I had not seen for years. Near him were the ashes of a fire, by the help of which I knew

he had been practising divination. He looked up and laughed one of his terrible laughs.

"So you are here again, Macumazahn," he said, "grown older, but still the same; here at the appointed hour. What do you come to seek from the Opener of Roads? Not Mameena as I think this time. No, no, it is she who seeks you this time, Macumazahn. She found you once, did she not? Far away to the north among a strange people who worshipped an ivory child, a people of whom I knew in my youth, and afterwards, for was not their prophet, Harût, a friend of mine and one of our brotherhood? She found you beneath the tusks of the elephant, Jana, whom Macumazahn the skilful could not hit. Oh! Do not look astonished."

"How do you know?" I asked in my dream.

"Very simply, Macumazahn. A little yellow man named Hans has been with me and told me all the story not an hour ago, after which I sent for Mameena to know if it were true. She will be glad to meet you, Macumazahn, she who has a hungry heart that does not forget. Oh! Don't be afraid. I mean here beneath the sun, for in the land beyond there will be no need for her to meet you since she will dwell ever at your side."

"Why do you lie to me, Zikali?" I seemed to ask. "How can I meet a woman who is dead?"

"Seek the answer to that question in the hour of the great battle when the white men, your brothers, fall beneath the assegai as weeds fall before the hoe—or perhaps before it. But have done with Mameena, since she who never grows more old can well afford to wait. It is not of Mameena that you came to speak to me; it is of a fair white woman named Heddana and of the man she loves, you who will ever be mixing yourself up in the affairs of others, and therefore must bear their burdens with no pay save that of honor.

"Hearken, for the time is short. When the storm bursts upon them bring hither the fair maiden, Heddana, and the white lord, Mauriti, and I will shelter them for your sake. Take them nowhere else. Bring them hither if they would escape trouble. I shall be glad to see you, Macumazahn, for at last I am about to smite the House of Senzangaona my foes with a

bladder full of blood, and oh, it stains their doorposts red."

Then I woke up, feeling afraid, as one does after a nightmare, and was comforted to hear Anscombe sleeping sweetly on the other side of the room.

"Mauriti. Why did Zikali call him Mauriti?" I wondered drowsily to myself. "Oh, of course his name was Maurice, and it was a Zulu corruption of a common sort. Then I dozed off again, and by the morning had forgotten all about my dream until it was brought back to me by subsequent events. Still it was this and nothing else that put it into my head to fly to Zululand on an emergency that was to arise ere long.



THAT evening Todd was absent from dinner, and on inquiring where he might be, I was informed that he had ridden to visit a Kaffir headman, a patient of his who lived at a distance, and would very probably sleep at the kraal, returning early next day. One of the topics of conversation during dinner was as to where the exact boundary line used to run between the Transvaal and the country over which the Basuto chief, Sekukuni, claimed ownership and jurisdiction.

Marnham said that it passed within a couple of miles of his house, and when we rose, the moon being very bright, offered to show me where the beacons had been placed years before by a Boer Commission. I accepted, as the night was lovely for a stroll after the hot day. Also I was half conscious of another undefined purpose in my mind, which perhaps may have spread to that of Marnham. Those two young people looked very happy together there on the stoep, and as they must part so soon it would, I thought, be kind to give them the opportunity of a quiet chat.

So off we went to the brow of the hill on which the Temple stood, whence old Marnham pointed out to me a beacon, which I could not see in the dim silvery bushveld below, and how the line ran from it to another beacon somewhere else.

"You know the Yellow-wood swamp," he said. "It passes straight through that. That is why those Basutos who were following you pulled up upon the edge of the swamp, though as a matter of fact, according to their ideas, they had a perfect right to kill you on their side of the line which cuts through the middle."

I made some remark to the effect that I presumed that the line had in fact ceased to exist at all, as the Basuto territory had practically become British; after which we strolled back to the house. Walking quietly between the tall rose hedges and without speaking, for each of us was preoccupied with his own thoughts, suddenly we came upon a very pretty scene.

We had left Anscombe and Heda seated side by side on the stoep. They were still there, but much closer together. In fact his arms were round her, and they were kissing each other in a remarkably whole-hearted way. About this there could be no mistake, since the rimp-strung couch on which they sat was immediately under the hanging lamp—a somewhat unfortunate situation for such endearments.

But what did they think of hanging lamps or any other lights, save those of their own eyes, they who were content to kiss and murmur words of passion as though they were as much alone as Adam and Eve in Eden? What did they think either of the serpent coiled about the bole of this tree of knowledge whereof they had just plucked the ripe and maddening fruit?

By a mutual instinct Marnham and I withdrew ourselves, very gently indeed purposing to skirt round the house and enter it from behind, or to be seized with a fit of coughing at the gate, or to do something to announce our presence at a convenient distance. When we had gone a little way we heard a crash in the bushes.

"Another of those cursed baboons robbing the garden," remarked Marnham reflectively.

"I think he is going to rob the house also," I replied, turning to point to something dark that seemed to be leaping up on to the veranda.

Next moment we heard Heda utter a little cry of alarm, and a man say in a low fierce voice—

"So I have caught you at last, have I!"

"The doctor has returned from his business rounds sooner than was expected, and I think that we had better join the party," I remarked, and made a bee-line for the stoep, Marnham following me.

I think that I arrived just in time to prevent mischief. There, with a revolver in his hand, stood Todd, tall and formidable, his dark face looking like that of Satan himself, a very monument of rage

and jealousy. There in front of him on the couch sat Heda, grasping its edge with her fingers, her cheeks as pale as a sheet and her eyes shining. By her side was Anscombe, cool and collected as usual, I noticed, but evidently perplexed.

"If there is any shooting to be done," he was saying, "I think you had better begin with me."

His calmness seemed to exasperate Todd, who lifted the revolver. But I too was prepared, for in that house I always went armed.

There was no time to get at the man, who was perhaps fifteen feet away, and I did not want to hurt him. So I did the best I could; that is, I fired at the pistol in his hand, and the light being good, struck it near the hilt and knocked it off the barrel before he could press the trigger, if he really meant to shoot.

"That's a good shot," remarked Anscombe who had seen me, while Todd stared at the hilt which he still held.

"A lucky one," I answered, walking forward. "And now, Dr. Todd, will you be so good as to tell me what you mean by flourishing a revolver, presumably loaded, in the faces of a lady and an unarmed man?"

"What the devil is that to you," he asked furiously, "and what do you mean by firing at me?"

"A great deal," I answered, "seeing that a young woman and my friend are concerned. As for firing at you, had I done so you would not be asking questions now. I fired at the pistol in your hand, but if there is more trouble next time it shall be at the holder," and I glanced at my revolver.

Seeing that I meant business he made no reply, but turned upon Marnham who had followed me.

"This is your work, you old villain," he said in a low voice that was heavy with hate. "You promised your daughter to me. She is engaged to me, and now I find her in this wanderer's arms."

"What have I to do with it?" said Marnham. "Perhaps she has changed her mind. You had better ask her."

"There is no need to ask me," interrupted Heda, who now seemed to have got her nerve again. "I *have* changed my mind. I never loved you, Dr. Todd, and I will not marry you. I love Mr. Anscombe here, and as he has asked me to be his wife I mean to marry him."

"I see," he sneered, "you want to be a peeress one day, no doubt. Well, you never shall if I can help it. Perhaps, too, this fine gentleman of yours will not be so particularly anxious to marry you when he learns that you are the daughter of a murderer."

The word was like a bombshell bursting among us. We looked at each other as people, yet dazed with the shock, might on a battlefield when the noise has died and the smoke cleared away, to see if they are still alive. Anscombe spoke the first.

"I don't know what you mean or to what you refer," he said quietly. "But at any rate this lady who has promised to marry me is innocent, and therefore if all her ancestors had been murderers it would not in the slightest turn me from my purpose of marrying her."

She looked at him, and all the gratitude in the world shone in her frightened eyes. Marnham stepped, or rather staggered forward.

"He lies," he said hoarsely, tugging at his long white beard. "Listen now and I will tell you the truth. Once, more than a year ago, I was drunk and in a rage. In this state I fired at a Kaffir to frighten him, and by some devil's chance shot him dead. That's what he calls being a murderer."

"I have another tale," said Todd, "with which I will not trouble this company just now. Look here, Heda, either you fulfil your promise and marry me, or your father swings."

She gasped and sank together on the seat as though she had been shot. Then I took up my parable.

"Are you the man," I asked, "to accuse others of crime? Let us see. You have spent several months in an English prison (I gave the name) for a crime I won't mention."

"How do you know?" he began.

"Never mind; I do know and the prison books will show it. Further, your business is that of selling guns and ammunition to the Basutos of Sekukuni's tribe, who, although the expedition against them has been temporarily recalled, are still the Queen's enemies. Don't deny it, for I have the proofs. Further, it was you who advised Sekukuni to kill us when we went down to his country to shoot the other day, because you were afraid that we should discover whence he got his guns." This

was a bow drawn at a venture, but the arrow went home, for I saw his jaw drop. "Further, I believe you to be an illicit diamond buyer, and I believe that you have again been arranging with the Basutos to make an end of us, though of these last two items at present I lack positive proof. Now, Dr. Todd, I ask you for the second time whether you are a person to accuse others of crimes and whether, should you do so, you will be considered a credible witness when your own are brought to light?"

"If I had been guilty of any of these things, which I am not, it is obvious that my partner must have shared in all of them, except the first. So if you inform against me, you inform against him, and the father of Heda, whom your friend wishes to marry, will, according to your showing, be proved a gun-runner, a thief and a would-be murderer of his guests. I should advise you to leave that business alone, Mr. Quatermain."

The reply was bold and clever, so much so that I regarded this blackguard with a certain amount of admiration, as I answered—

"I shall take your advice if you take mine to leave another business alone, that of this young lady and her father, but not otherwise."

"Then spare your breath and do your worst; only be careful, sharp as you think yourself, that your meddling does not recoil on your own head. Listen, Heda, either you make up your mind to marry me at once and arrange that this young gentleman, who as a doctor I assure you is now quite fit to travel without injury to his health, leaves this house tomorrow with the spy Quatermain—you might lend him the Cape cart to go in—or I start with the proofs to lay a charge of murder against your father. I give you till tomorrow morning to have a family council to think it over. Good night."

"Good night," I answered as he passed me, "and please be careful that none of us see your face again before tomorrow morning. As you may happen to have heard, my native name means Watcher-by-Night," and I looked at the revolver in my hand.

When he had vanished I remarked in as cheerful a voice as I could command, that I thought it was bedtime, and as nobody stirred, added:

"Don't be afraid, young lady. If you feel lonely, you must tell that maid of yours to sleep in your room. Also, as the night is so hot I shall take my nap on the stoep, there, just opposite your window. No, don't let us talk any more now. There will be plenty of time for that tomorrow."

She rose, looked at Anscombe, looked at me, looked at her father very pitifully; then with a little exclamation of despair passed into her room by the French window, where presently I heard her call her maid and tell her that she was to sleep with her.

Marnham watched her depart. Then he too went with his head bowed and staggering a little in his walk. Next, Anscombe rose and limped off to his room, I following him.

"Well, young man," I said, "you have put us all into the soup now and no mistake."

"Yes, Allan, I am afraid I have. But on the whole don't you think it rather interesting soup—so many unexpected ingredients, you see."

"Interesting soup! Unexpected ingredients!" I repeated after him, adding, "Why not call it hell's broth at once?"

Then he became serious, dreadfully serious.

"Look here," he said, "I love Heda, and whatever her family history may be I mean to marry her and face the row at home."

"You could scarcely do less in all the circumstances, and as for rows, that young lady would soon fit herself into any place that you can give her. But the question is, how can you marry her?"

"Oh, something will happen," he replied optimistically.

"You are quite right there. Something will certainly happen, but the point is—what? Something was very near happening when I turned up on that stoep, so near that I think it was lucky for you, or for Miss Heda, or both, that I have learned how to handle a pistol. Now let me see your foot, and don't speak another word to me about all this business tonight. I'd rather tackle it when I am clear-headed in the morning."

Well, I examined his instep and leg very carefully and found that Todd was right. Although it still hurt him to walk, the wound was quite healed and all inflammation had gone from the limb. Now

it was only a question of time for the sinews to right themselves. While I was thus engaged he held forth on the virtues and charms of Heda, I making no comment.

"Lie down and get to sleep, if you can," I said when I had finished. "The door is locked and I am going on to the stoep, so you needn't be afraid of the windows. Goodnight."



I WENT out and sat myself down in such a position that by the light of the hanging lamp, which still burned, I could make sure that no one could approach either Heda's or our own room without my seeing him. For the rest, all my life I have been accustomed to night vigils, and the loaded revolver hung from my wrist by a loop of hide.

Moreover, never had I felt less sleepy. There I sat hour after hour, thinking.

The substance of my thoughts does not matter, since the events that followed make them superfluous to the story. I will merely record, therefore, that towards dawn a great horror took hold of me. I did not know of what I was afraid, but I was much afraid of something.

Nothing was passing in either Heda's or our room, of that I made sure by personal examination. Therefore it would seem that my terrors were unnecessary, and yet they grew and grew. I felt sure that something was happening somewhere, a dread occurrence which it was beyond my power to prevent, though whether it were in this house or at the other end of Africa I didn't know.

The mental depression increased and culminated. Then of a sudden it passed completely away, and as I mopped the sweat from off my brow I noticed that the dawn was breaking. It was a tender and beautiful dawn, and in a dim way I took it as a good omen. Of course it was nothing but the daily resurrection of the sun, and yet it brought to me comfort and hope. The night was past with all its fears; the light had come with all its joys. From that moment I was certain that we should triumph over these difficulties and that at the end of them would be peace.

So sure was I that I ventured to take a nap, knowing that the slightest movement or sound would wake me. I suppose I slept until six o'clock, when I was aroused by a footfall.

I sprang up, and saw before me one of the native servants. He was trembling and his face was ashen beneath the black. Moreover he could not speak. All he did was to put his head on one side, like to that of a dead man, and keep on pointing downward. Then with his mouth open and starting eyes he beckoned to me to follow him.

I followed.

CHAPTER VIII

TODD'S LAST CARD

THE man led me to Marnham's room, which I had never entered before. All I could see at first, for the shutters were closed, was that the place seemed large, as bedchambers go in South Africa.

When my eyes grew accustomed to the light, I made out the figure of a man seated in a chair with his head bent forward over a table that was placed at the foot of the bed almost in the centre of the room. I threw open the shutters and the morning light poured in. The man was Marnham.

On the table were writing materials, also a brandy bottle with only a dreg of spirit in it. I looked for the glass and found it by his side on the floor, shattered, not merely broken.

"Drunk," I said aloud, whereon the servant, who understood me, spoke for the first time, saying in a frightened voice in Dutch:

"No, Baas, dead, half cold. I found him so just now."

I bent down and examined Marnham, also felt his face. Sure enough he was dead, for his jaw had fallen; also his flesh was chill, and from him came a horrible smell of brandy.

I thought for a moment, then bade the boy fetch Dr. Todd and say nothing to any one else. He went, and now for the first time I noticed a large envelope addressed, "Allan Quatermain, Esq." in a somewhat shaky hand. This I picked up and slipped into my pocket.

Todd arrived half dressed.

"What's the matter now?" he growled.

I pointed to Marnham, saying—

"That is a question for you to answer."

"Oh, drunk again, I suppose," he said.

Then he did as I had done, bent down and examined him. A few seconds later he

stepped or reeled back, looking as frightened as a man could be, and exclaiming—

"Dead as a stone. God! Dead these three hours or more."

"Quite so," I answered, "but what killed him?"

"How should I know?" he asked savagely. "Do you suspect me of poisoning him?"

"My mind is open," I replied; "but as you quarreled so bitterly last night, others might."

The bolt went home; he saw his danger.

"Probably the old sot died in a fit, or of too much brandy. How can one know without a post-mortem? But that mustn't be made by me; I'm off to inform the magistrate and get hold of another doctor. Let the body remain as it is until I return."

I reflected quickly. Ought I to let him go or not? If he had any hand in this business, doubtless he intended to escape. Well, supposing this were so and he did escape, that would be a good thing for Heda, and really it was no affair of mine to bring the fellow to justice. Moreover there was nothing to show that he was guilty; his whole manner seemed to point another way, though of course he might be acting.

"Very well," I replied, "but return as quickly as possible."

He stood for a few seconds like a man who is dazed. It occurred to me that it might have come into his mind that with Marnham's death he had lost his hold over Heda. But if so he said nothing of it, but only asked—

"Will you go instead of me?"

"On the whole I think not," I replied, "and if I did, the story I should have to tell might not tend to your advantage."

"That's true, — you!" he exclaimed and left the room.

Ten minutes later he was galloping towards Pilgrim's Rest. Before I departed from the death chamber I examined the place carefully to see if I could find any poison or other deadly thing, but without success.

One thing I did discover, however. Turning the leaf of a blotting-book that was by Marnham's elbow, I came upon a sheet of paper on which were written these words in his hand, "Greater love hath no man than this—" that was all.

Either he had forgotten the end of the quotation or changed his mind, or was

unable through weakness to finish the sentence. This paper I also put in my pocket. Bolting the shutters and locking the door I returned to the stoep, where I was alone, for as yet no one else was stirring. Then I remembered the letter in my pocket and opened it. It ran—

DEAR MR. QUATERMAIN,—

I have remembered that those who quarrel with Dr. Todd are apt to die soon and suddenly; at any rate life at my age is always uncertain. Therefore, as I know you to be an honest man, I am enclosing my will that it may be in safe keeping and purpose to send it to your room tomorrow morning. Perhaps when you return to Pretoria you will deposit it in the Standard Bank there, and if I am still alive, forward me the receipt. You will see that I leave everything to my daughter whom I dearly love, and that there is enough to keep the wolf from her door, besides my share in this property if it is ever realized.

After all that has passed tonight I do not feel up to writing a long letter, so

Remain sincerely yours,
H. A. MARNHAM.

P. S.—I should like to state clearly upon paper that my earnest hope and wish are that Heda may get clear of that black-hearted scoundrel Todd and marry Mr. Anscombe, whom I like and who, I am sure, would make her a good husband.

Thinking to myself that this did not look very like the letter of a suicide, I glanced through the will, as the testator seemed to have wished that I should do. It was short, but properly drawn, signed and witnessed, and bequeathed a sum of £9,000, which was on deposit at the Standard Bank, together with all his other property, real and personal, to Heda for her own sole use, free from the debts and engagements of her husband, should she marry. Also she was forbidden to spend more than £1,000 of the capital. In short the money was tied up. With the will were some other papers that apparently referred to certain property in Hungary to which Heda might become entitled, but about these I did not trouble.

Replacing these documents in a safe inner pocket in the lining of my waistcoat, I went into our room and woke up Anscombe who was sleeping soundly, a fact that caused an unreasonable irritation in my mind. When at length he was thoroughly aroused I said to him:

"You are in luck's way, my friend. Marnham is dead."

"Oh, poor Heda!" he exclaimed. "She loved him. It will half break her heart."

"If it breaks half of her heart," I replied,

"it will mend the other half, for now her filial affection can't force her to marry Todd, and that is where you are in luck's way."

Then I told him all the story.

"Was he murdered or did he commit suicide?" he asked when I had finished.

"I don't know, and to tell you the truth I don't want to know; nor will you if you are wise, unless knowledge is forced upon you. It is enough that he is dead, and for his daughter's sake the less the circumstances of his end are examined into the better."

"Poor Heda!" he said again. "Who will tell her? I can't. You found him, Allan."

"I expected that job would be my share of the business, Anscombe. Well, the sooner it is over the better. Now dress yourself and come on to the stoep."

Then I left him and next minute met Heda's half-breed maid, a stupid but good sort of a woman who was called Kaatje, emerging from her mistress's room with a jug, to fetch hot water, I suppose.

"Kaatje," I said, "go back and tell the Missie Heda that I want to speak to her as soon as I can. Never mind the hot water, but stop and help her to dress."

She began to grumble a little in a good-natured way, but something in my eye stopped her and she went back into the room. Ten minutes later Heda was by my side.

"What is it, Mr. Quatermain?" she asked. "I feel sure that something dreadful has happened."

"It has, my dear," I answered, "that is, if death is dreadful. Your father died last night."

"Oh!" she said. "Oh!" and sank back on to the seat.

"Bear up," I went on, "we must all die one day, and he had reached the full age of man."

"But I loved him," she moaned. "He had many faults I know, still I loved him."

"It is the lot of life, Heda, that we should lose what we love. Be thankful, therefore, that you have some one left to love."

"Yes, thank God! That's true. If it had been him—no, it's wicked to say that."

Then I told her the story, and while I was doing so, Anscombe joined us, walking by the aid of his stick. Also I showed them both Marnham's letter to me and the will, but the other bit of paper I did not speak of or show.

She sat very pale and quiet and listened till I had done. Then she said—

"I should like to see him."

"Perhaps it is as well," I answered. "If you can bear it, come at once, and do you come also, Ancombe."

"We went to the room, Ancombe and Heda holding each other's hand. I unlocked the door and, entering, threw open a shutter. There sat the dead man as I had left him, only his head had fallen over a little. She gazed at him, trembling, then advanced and kissed his cold forehead, muttering:

"Good-by, father. Oh, good-by, father."

A thought struck me, and I asked—

"Is there any place here where your father locked up things? As I have shown you, you are his heir, and if so it might be as well in this house that you should possess yourself of his property."

"There is a safe in the corner," she answered, "of which he always kept the key in his trouser pocket."

"Then with your leave I will open it in your presence."

Going to the dead man I searched his pocket and found in it a bunch of keys. These I withdrew and went to the safe over which a skin rug was thrown. I unlocked it easily enough. Within were two bags of gold, each marked £100; also another larger bag marked "My wife's jewellery. For Heda;" also some papers and a miniature of the lady whose portrait hung in the sitting-room; also some loose gold.

"Now who will take charge of these?" I asked. "I do not think it safe to leave them here."

"You, of course," said Ancombe, while Heda nodded.

So with a groan I consigned all these valuables to my capacious pockets. Then I locked up the empty safe, replaced the keys where I had found them on Marnham, fastened the shutter and left the room with Ancombe, waiting for a while outside till Heda joined us, sobbing a little. After this we got something to eat, insisting on Heda doing the same.

On leaving the table I saw a curious sight, namely, the patients whom Todd was attending in the little hospital of which I have spoken, departing towards the bush-veld, those of them who could walk well and the attendants assisting the others.

They were already some distance away, too far for me to follow, as I did not wish to leave the house.

The incident filled me with suspicion, and I went 'round to the back to make inquiries, but could find no one. As I passed the hospital door, however, I heard a voice calling in Sisutu—

"Do not leave me behind, my brothers."



I ENTERED and saw the man on whom Todd had operated the day of our arrival, lying in bed and quite alone. I asked him where the others had gone. At first he would not answer, but when I pretended to leave him, called out that it was back to their own country.

Finally, to cut the story short, I extracted from him that they had left because they had news that the Temple was going to be attacked by Sekukuni and did not wish to be here when I and Ancombe were killed. How the news reached him he refused, or could not, say; nor did he seem to know anything of the death of Marnham. When I pressed him on the former point, he only groaned and cried for water, for he was in pain and thirsty. I asked him who had told Sekukuni's people to kill us, but he refused to speak.

"Very well," I said, "then you shall lie here alone and die of thirst," and again I turned towards the door.

At this he cried out:

"I will tell you. It was the white medicine-man who lives here; he who cut me open. He arranged it all a few days ago because he hates you. Last night he rode to tell the impi when to come."

"When is it to come?" I asked, holding the jug of water towards him.

"Tonight at the rising of the moon, so that it may get far away before the dawn. My people are thirsty for your blood and for that of the other white chief, because you killed so many of them by the river. The others they will not harm."

"How did you learn all this?" I asked him again, but without result, for he became incoherent and only muttered something about being left alone because the others could not carry him.

So I gave him some water, after which he fell asleep, or pretended to do so, and I left him, wondering whether he was delirious, or spoke truth.

As I passed the stables I saw that my

own horse was there, for in this district horses are always shut up at night to keep them from catching sickness, but that the four beasts that had brought Heda from Natal in the Cape cart were gone, though it was evident that they had been kraaled here till within an hour or two. I threw my horse a bundle of forage and returned to the house by the back entrance.

The kitchen was empty, but crouched by the door of Marnham's room sat the boy who had found him dead. He had been attached to his master and seemed half dazed. I asked him where the other servants were, to which he replied that they had all run away. Then I asked him where the horses were.

He answered that the Baas Todd had ordered them to be turned out before he rode off that morning. I bade him accompany me to the stoep, as I dared not let him out of my sight, which he did unwillingly enough.

There I found Anscombe and Heda. They were seated side by side upon the couch. Tears were running down her face and he, looking very troubled, held her by the hand.

Somehow that picture of Heda has always remained fixed in my mind. Sorrow becomes some women and she was one of them. Her beautiful dark grey eyes did not grow red with weeping; the tears just welled up in them and fell like dewdrops from the heart of a flower.

In a moment it had gone and I was telling them of what I had learned. They listened till I had finished. Then Anscombe said slowly:

"Two of us can't hold this house against an impi. We must get out of it."

"Both of your conclusions seem quite sound," I remarked, "that is if yonder old Kaffir is telling the truth. But the question is—how? We can't all three of us ride on one nag, as you are still a cripple."

"There is the Cape cart," suggested Heda.

"Yes, but the horses have been turned out, and I don't know where to look for them. Nor dare I send that boy alone, for probably he would bolt like the others. I think that you had better get on my horse and ride for it, leaving us to take our chance. I daresay the whole thing is a lie and that we shall be in no danger," I added by way of softening the suggestion.

"That I will never do," she replied with

so much quiet conviction that I saw it was useless to pursue the argument.

I thought for a moment, as the position was very difficult. The boy was not to be trusted, and if I went with him I should be leaving these two alone and, in Anscombe's state, almost defenceless. Still it seemed as if I must.

Just then I looked up, and there at the garden gate saw Anscombe's driver, Footsack, the man whom I had despatched to Pretoria to fetch his oxen. I noted that he looked frightened and was breathless, for his eyes started out of his head. Also his hat was gone and he bled a little from his face.

Seeing us he ran up the path and sat down as though he were tired.

"Where are the oxen?" I asked.

"Oh! Baas," he answered, "the Basutos have got them. We heard from an old black woman that Sekukuni had an impi out, so we waited on the top of that hill about an hour's ride away to see if it was true. Then suddenly the doctor Baas appeared riding, and I ran out and asked him if it were safe to go on. He knew me again and answered:

"Yes, quite safe, for have I not just ridden this road without meeting so much as a black child. Go on, man; your masters will be glad to have their oxen, as they wish to trek, or will by nightfall.' Then he laughed and rode away.

"So we went on, driving the oxen. But when we came to the belt of thorns at the bottom of the hill, we found that the doctor Baas had either lied to us or he had not seen. For there suddenly the tall grass on either side of the path grew spears; yes everywhere were spears. In a minute the two voorloopers were assegaied. As for me, I ran forward, not back, since the Kaffirs were behind me, across the path, Baas, driving off the oxen. They sprang at me, but I jumped this way and that way and avoided them. Then they threw assegaais—see, one of them cut my cheek, but the rest missed. They had guns in their hands also, but none shot. I think they did not wish to make any noise. Only, one of them shouted after me:

"Tell Macumazahn that we are going to call on him tonight when he cannot see to shoot. We have a message for him from our brothers whom he killed at the drift of the Oliphant's River.'

"Then I ran out here without stopping, but I saw no more Kaffirs. That is all, Baas."

Now I did not delay to cross-examine the man or to sift the true from the false in his story, since it was clear to me that he had run into a company of Basutos, or rather been beguiled thereto by Todd, and lost our cattle, also his companions, who were either killed as he said, or had escaped some other way.

"Listen, man," I said. "I am going to fetch some horses. Do you stay here and help the Missie to pack the cart and make the harness ready. If you disobey me or run away, then I will find you and you will never run again. Do you understand?"

He vowed that he did and went to get some water, while I explained everything to Anscombe and Heda, pointing out that all the information we could gather seemed to show that no attack was to be made upon the house before nightfall, and that therefore we had the day before us. As this was so I proposed to go to look for the horses myself, since otherwise I was sure we should never find them.

Meanwhile Heda must pack and make ready the cart with the help of Footsack, Anscombe superintending everything, as he could very well do since he was now able to walk leaning on a stick. Of course neither of them liked my leaving them, but in view of our necessities they raised no objection. So off I went, taking the boy with me. He did not want to go, being, as I have said, half dazed with grief or fear, or both, but when I had pointed out to him clearly that I was quite prepared to shoot him if he played tricks, he changed his mind.

Having saddled my mare that was now fresh and fat, we started, the boy guiding me to a certain kloof at the foot of which there was a small plain of good grass where he said the horses were accustomed to graze.

Here sure enough we found two of them, and as they had been turned out with their headstall on, were able to tie them to trees with the riems which were attached to the head-stalls. But the others were not there, and as two horses could not drag a heavy Cape cart, I was obliged to continue the search.

Oh, what a hunt those beasts gave me. Finding themselves free, for as Todd's object was that they should stray, he had

ordered the stable-boy not to kneel-halter them, after filling themselves with grass they had started off for the farm where they were bred, which, it seemed, was about fifty miles away, grazing as they went.

Of course I did not know this at the time, so for several hours I rode up and down the neighboring kloofs, as the ground was too hard for me to hope to follow them by their spoor.

At last it occurred to me to ask the boy where the horses came from, a question that he happened to be able to answer, as he had brought them home when they were bought the year before. Having learned in what direction the place lay I rode for it at an angle, or rather for the path that led to it, making the boy run alongside, holding to my stirrup leather.

About three o'clock in the afternoon I struck the path, or rather track, at a point ten or twelve miles away from the Temple, and there, just mounting a rise, met the two horses quietly walking towards me. Had I been a quarter of an hour later they would have passed and vanished into a sea of thorn-veld. We caught them without trouble and once more headed homeward, leading them by their riems.

Reaching the glade where the other two were tied up, we collected them also and returned to the house, where we arrived at five o'clock. As everything seemed quiet I put my mare into the stable, slipped its bit and gave it some forage. Then I went round the house, and to my great joy found Anscombe and Heda waiting anxiously, but with nothing to report, and with them Footsack.


Very hastily I swallowed some food, while Footsack inspanned the horses. In a quarter of an hour all was ready. Then suddenly, in an inconsequent female fashion, Heda developed a dislike to leaving her father unburied.

"My dear young lady," I said, "it seems that you must choose between that and our all stopping to be buried with him."

She saw the point and compromised upon paying him a visit of farewell, which I left her to do in Anscombe's company, while I fetched my mare. To tell the truth I felt as though I had seen enough of the unhappy Marnham, and not for £50 would I enter that room again.

As I passed the door of the hospital,

leading my horse, I heard the old Kaffir screaming within and sent the boy who was with me to find out what was the matter with him. That was the last I saw of either of them, or ever shall see this side of Kingdom Come. I wonder what became of them?

 WHEN I got back to the front of the house I found the cart standing ready at the gate, Footsack at the heads of the horses and Heda with Anscombe at her side. It had been neatly packed during the day by Heda with such of her and our belongings as it would hold, including our arms and ammunition. The rest, of course, we were obliged to abandon. Also there were two baskets full of food, some bottles of brandy and a good supply of overcoats and wraps.

I told Footsack to take the reins, as I knew him to be a good driver, and helped Anscombe to a seat at his side, while Heda and the maid Kaatje got in behind in order to balance the vehicle. I determined to ride, at any rate for the present.

"Which way, Baas?" asked Footsack.

"Down to the Granite Stream where the wagon stands," I answered.

"That will be through the Yellow-wood Swamp. Can't we take the other road to Pilgrim's Rest and Lydenburg, or to Barberton?" asked Anscombe in a vague way, and as I thought, rather nervously.

"No," I answered, "that is, unless you wish to meet those Basutos who stole the oxen and Dr. Todd returning, if he means to return."

"Oh! Let us go through the Yellow-wood," exclaimed Heda, who, I think, would rather have met the devil than Dr. Todd.

So we started down the slope, and I, riding behind, saw poor Heda staring at the marble house, which grew ever more beautiful as it receded and the roughness of its building disappeared, especially at that part of it which hid the body of her old scamp of a father whom still she loved.

We came down to the glen and once more saw the bones of the blue vildebeeste that we had shot—oh, years and years ago, or so it seemed. Then we struck out for Granite Stream.

Before we reached the patch of Yellow-wood forest where I knew that the cart must travel very slowly because of the trees and the swampy nature of the ground,

I pushed on ahead to reconnoitre, fearing lest there might be Basutos hidden in this cover. Riding straight through it I went as far as the deserted wagon at a sharp canter, seeing nothing and no one.

Once indeed, towards the end of the wood where it was more dense, I thought that I heard a man cough and peered about me through the gloom, for here the rays of the sun, which was getting low in the heavens scarcely penetrated. As I could perceive no one I came to the conclusion that I must have been deceived by my fancy, or perhaps it was some baboon that coughed, though it was strange that a baboon should have come to such a low-lying spot where there was nothing for it to eat.

The place was eerie, so much so that I bethought me of the Kaffirs' tales of the ghosts whereby it was supposed to be haunted. Also, oddly enough, of Anscombe's presentiment which he had fulfilled by killing a Basuto. Look! There lay his grinning skull with some patches of hair still on it, dragged away from the rest of the bones by a hyena.

I cantered on down the slope beyond the wood and through the scattered thorns to the stream on the banks of which the wagon should be. It had gone, and by the freshness of the trail, within an hour or two. A moment's reflection told me what had happened. Having stolen our oxen the Basutos drove them to the wagon, inspanned them and departed with their loot. On the whole I was glad to see this, since it suggested that they had retired towards their own country, leaving our road open.

Turning my horse I rode back again to meet the cart. As I reached the edge of the wood at the top of the slope I heard a whistle blown, a very shrill whistle, of which the sound would travel for a mile or two on that still air. Also I heard the sound of men's voices in altercation and caught words, such as—"Let go, or by Heaven—" then a furious laugh and other words which seemed to be—"In five minutes the Kaffirs will be here. In ten you will be dead. Can I help it if they kill you after I have warned you to turn back?" Then a woman's scream.

Todd's voice, Anscombe's voice and Kaatje's scream—not Heda's but Kaatje's!

Then as I rode furiously round the last patch of intervening trees came the sound

of a pistol shot. I was out of them now and saw everything.

There was the cart on the further side of a swamp. The horses were standing still and snorting. Holding the rein of one of the leaders was Todd, whose horse also stood close by. He was rocking on his feet, and as I leapt from my mare and ran up, I saw his face. It was horrible, full of pain and devilish rage. With his disengaged hand he pointed to Anscombe sitting in the cart and grasping a pistol that still smoked.

"You've killed me," he said in a hoarse, choking voice, for he was shot through the lung, "to get her," and he waved his hand towards Heda who was peering at him between the heads of the two men. "You are a murderer, as her father was, and as David was before you. Well, I hope you won't keep her long. I hope you'll die as I do and break her false heart, you — thief."

All of this he said in a slow voice, pausing between the words and speaking ever more thickly as the blood from his wound choked him. Then of a sudden it burst in a stream from his lips, and still pointing with an accusing finger at Anscombe, he fell backwards into the slimy pool behind him and there vanished without a struggle.

So horrible was the sight that the half-breed, Footsack, leapt from the cart, uttering a kind of low howl, ran to Todd's horse, scrambled into the saddle and galloped off, striking it with his fist, where to I do not know; Anscombe put his hand before his eyes, Heda sank down on the seat in a heap, and the colored woman, Kaatje, beat her breast and said something in Dutch about being accursed or bewitched. Luckily I kept my wits and went to the horses' heads, fearing lest they should start and drag the trap into the pool.

"Wake up," I said. "That fellow has only got what he deserved, and you were quite right to shoot him."

"I am glad you think so," answered Anscombe absently. "It was so like murder. Don't you remember I told you I should kill a man in this place and about a woman?"

"I remember nothing," I answered boldly, "except that if we stop here much longer we shall have those Basutos on us. That brute was whistling to them and holding the horses till they came to kill us. Pull yourself together, take the reins and follow me."

He obeyed, being a skilful whip enough who, as he informed me afterwards, had been accustomed to drive a four-in-hand at home. Mounting my horse, which stood patiently by, I guided the cart out of the wood and down the slope beyond, till at length we came to our old outspan where I proposed to turn on to the wagon track which ran to Pilgrim's Rest.

I say proposed, for when I looked up it I perceived about five hundred yards away a number of armed Basutos running towards us, the red light of the sunset shining on their spears. Evidently the scout or spy to whom Todd whistled had called them out of their ambush which they had set for us on the Pilgrim's Rest road in order that they might catch us here.

Now there was only one thing to be done. At this spot a native track ran across the little stream and up a steepish slope beyond. On the first occasion of our outspanning here I had the curiosity to mount this slope, reflecting as I did so that although rough it would be quite practicable for a wagon. At the top of it I found a wide flat plain, almost high-veld, for the bushes were very few, across which the track ran on. On subsequent inquiry I discovered that it was one used by the Swazis and other natives when they made their raids upon the Basutos, or when bodies of them went to work in the mines.

"Follow me," I shouted and crossed the stream which was shallow between the little pools, then led the way up the stony slope.

The four horses negotiated it very well and the Cape cart, being splendidly built, took no harm. At the top I looked back and saw that the Basutos were following us.

"Flog the horses!" I cried to Anscombe, and off we went at a hand gallop along the native track, the cart swaying and bumping upon the rough veld.

The sun was setting now, in half an hour it would be quite dark. Could we keep ahead of them for that half hour?

CHAPTER IX

FLIGHT

THE sun sank in a blaze of glory. Looking back by the light of its last rays, I saw a single native silhouetted against the red sky. He was standing on a mound that we had passed a mile or more

behind us, doubtless waiting for his companions whom he had outrun. So they had not given up the chase.

What was to be done? Once it was completely dark we could not go on. We should lose our way; the horses would get into ant-bear holes and break their legs. Perhaps we might become bogged in some hollow, therefore we must wait till the moon rose, which would not be for a couple of hours.

Meanwhile those accursed Basutos would be following us even in the dark. This would hamper them, no doubt, but they would keep the path, with which they were probably familiar, beneath their feet, and what is more, the ground being soft with recent rain, they could feel the wheel spoor with their fingers.

I looked about me. Just here another track started off in a nor'-westerly direction from that which we were following. Perhaps it ran to Lydenburg; I do not know. To our left, not more than a hundred yards or so away, the higher veld came to an end and sloped in an easterly direction down to bush-land below.

Should I take the westerly road which ran over a great plain? No, for then we might be seen for miles and cut off. Moreover, even if we escaped the natives, was it desirable that we should plunge into civilization just now and tell all our story, as in that case we must do.

Todd's death was quite justified, but it had happened on Transvaal territory and would require a deal of explanation. Fortunately there was no witness of it, except ourselves. Yes, there was though—the driver Footsack, if he had got away, which being mounted, would seem probable, a man who, for my part, I would not trust for a moment. It would be an ugly thing to see Anscombe in the dock charged with murder, and possibly myself, with Footsack giving evidence against us before a Boer jury who might be hard on Englishmen. Also there was the body with a bullet in it.

Suddenly there came into my mind a recollection of the very vivid dream of Zikali which had visited me, and I reflected that in Zululand there would be little need to trouble about the death of Todd. But Zululand was a long way off, and if we were to avoid the Transvaal, there was only one way of going there, namely through Swaziland. Well, among the Swazis we

should be quite safe from the Basutos, since the two peoples were at fierce enmity. Moreover, I knew the Swazi chiefs and king very well, having traded there, and could explain that I came to collect debts owing to me.

There was another difficulty. I had heard that the trouble between the English Government and Cetewayo, the Zulu king, was coming to a head, and that the High Commissioner, Sir Bartle Frere, talked of presenting him with an ultimatum. It would be awkward if this arrived while we were in the country, though even so, being on such friendly terms with the Zulus of all classes, I did not think that I, or any with me, would run great risks.

All these thoughts rushed through my brain while I considered what to do. At the moment it was useless to ask the opinion of the others, who were but children in native matters. I and I alone must take the responsibility and act, praying that I might do so aright. Another moment and I had made up my mind.

Signing to Anscombe to follow me, I rode about a hundred yards or more down the nor'-westerly path. Then I turned sharply along a rather stony ridge of ground, the cart following me all the time, and came back across our own track, my object being of course to puzzle any Kaffirs who might spoor us.

Now we were on the edge of the gentle slope that led down to the bush-veld. Over this I rode towards a deserted cattle kraal built of stones, in the rich soil of which grew sundry trees, doubtless one of those which had been abandoned when Mosilikatze swept all this country on his way north about the year 1838. The way to it was easy, since the stones had been collected to build the kraal generations before. As we passed over the edge of the slope in the gathering gloom, Heda cried—

"Look!" and pointed in the direction whence we came. Far away a sheet of flame shot upwards.

"The house is burning!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," I said, "it can be nothing else;" adding to myself, "a good job too, for now there will be no post-mortem on old Marnham."

Who fired the place I never learnt. It may have been the Basutos, or Marnham's body-servant, or Footsack, or a spark from the kitchen fire. At any rate it blazed

merrily enough notwithstanding the marble walls, as a wood-lined and thatched building of course would do. On the whole I suspected the boy, who may very well have feared lest he should be accused of having had a hand in his master's death. At least it was gone, and watching the distant flames I bethought me that with it went all Heda's past.

Twenty-four hours before her father was alive, the bond-servant of Todd and a criminal. Now he was ashes and Todd was dead, while she and the man she loved were free, with all the world before them. I wished that I could have added that they were safe. Afterwards she told me that much the same ideas passed through her own mind.

Dismounting, I led the horses into the old kraal through the gap in the wall which once had been the gateway. It was a large kraal that probably in bygone days had held the cattle of some forgotten head chief whose town would have stood on the brow of the rise, so large that notwithstanding the trees I have mentioned, there was plenty of room for the cart and horses in its centre.

Moreover, on such soil the grass grew so richly that after we had slipped their bits, the horses were able to fill themselves without being unharnessed. Also a little stream from a spring on the brow ran within a few yards whence, with the help of Kaatje, a strong woman, I watered them with the bucket which hung underneath the cart. Next we drank ourselves and ate some food in the darkness that was now complete.

Then leaving Kaatje to stand at the head of the horses in case they should attempt any sudden movement, I climbed into the cart, and we discussed things in low whispers.

It was a curious debate in that intense gloom which, close as our faces were together, prevented us from seeing anything of each other, except once when a sudden flare of Summer lightning revealed them, white and unnatural as those of ghosts. On our present dangers I did not dwell, putting them aside lightly, though I knew they were not light. But of the alternative as to whether we should try to escape to Lydenburg and civilization, or to Zululand and savagery, I felt it to be my duty to speak.

"To put it plainly," said Anscombe in his slow way when I had finished, "you mean that in the Transvaal I might be tried as a murderer and perhaps convicted, whereas if we vanish into Zululand the probability is that this would not happen."

"I mean," I whispered back, "that we might both be tried and, if Footsack should chance to appear and give evidence, find ourselves in an awkward position. Also there is another witness—Kaatje, and for the matter of that, Heda herself. Of course her evidence would be in our favor, but to make it understood by a jury she would have to explain a great deal of which she might prefer not to speak. Further, at the best, the whole business would get into the English papers, which you and your relatives might think disagreeable, especially in view of the fact that, as I understand, you and Heda intend to marry."

"Still I think that I would rather face it out," he said in his outspoken way, "even if it should mean that I could never return to England. After all, of what have I to be ashamed? I shot this scoundrel because I was obliged to do so."

"Yes, but it is of this that you may have to convince a jury who might possibly find a motive in Todd's past, and your present, relationship to the same lady. But what has she to say?"

"I have to say," whispered Heda, "that for myself I care nothing, but that I could never bear to see all these stories about my poor father raked up. Also there is Maurice to be considered. It would be terrible if they put him in prison—or worse. Let us go to Zululand, Mr. Quatermain, and afterwards get out of Africa. Don't you agree, Maurice?"

"What does Mr. Quatermain think himself?" he answered. "He is the oldest and far the wisest of us and I will be guided by him."

Now I thought and said:

"There is such a thing as flying from present troubles to others that may be worse, the 'ills we know not of.' Zululand is disturbed. If war broke out there we might all be killed. On the other hand we might not be, and it ought to be possible for you to work up to Delagoa Bay and there get some ship home, that is if you wish to keep clear of British law. I cannot do so, as I must stay in Africa. Nor can I take the responsibility of deciding what

you are to do, since if things went wrong, it would be on my head.

"However, if you decide for the Transvaal or Natal and we escape, I must tell you that I shall go to the first magistrate we find and make a full deposition of all that has happened. It is not possible for me to live with the charge of having been concerned in the shooting of a white man hanging over me that might be brought up at any time, perhaps when no one was left in the country to give evidence on my behalf, for then, even if I were acquitted my name would always be tarnished. In Zululand, on the other hand, there are no magistrates before whom I could depose, and if this business should come out, I can always say that we went there to escape from the Basutos. Now I am going to get down to see if the horses are all right. Do you two talk the thing over and make up your minds. Whatever you decide on, I shall accept and do my best to carry through," and without waiting for an answer I slipped from the cart.

Having examined the horses, who were cropping all the grass within reach of them, I crept to the wall of the kraal so as to be quite out of earshot. The night was now pitch dark, dark as it only knows how to be in Africa. More, a thunderstorm was coming up of which that flash of sheet lightning had been a presage. The air was electric.

From the vast bush-clad valley beneath us came a wild, moaning sound caused, I suppose, by wind among the trees, though here I felt none; far away a sudden spear of lightning stabbed the sky. The brooding trouble of nature spread to my own heart. I was afraid, not of the present dangers, though these were real enough, so real that in a few hours we might all be dead.

To dangers I was accustomed; for years they had been my daily food by day and by night, and, as I think I have said elsewhere, I am a fatalist, one who knows full well that when God wants me He will take me, that is if He can want such a poor, erring creature. Nothing that I do or leave undone could postpone or hasten His summons for a moment, though of course I knew it to be my duty to fight against death and to avoid it for as long as I might, because that I should do so was a portion of His plan. For we are all part of a great pattern, and the continuance or cessation

of our lives reacts upon other lives, and therefore life is a trust.

No, it was of greater things that I felt afraid, things terrible and imminent which I could not grasp and much less understand. I understand them now, but who would have guessed that on the issue of that whispered colloquy in the cart behind me, depended the fate of a people and many thousands of lives? As I was to learn in days to come, if Anscombe and Heda had determined upon heading for the Transvaal, I believe there would have been no Zulu war, which in its turn meant that there would have been no Boer Rebellion and that the mysterious course of history would have been changed.

I returned to the cart.

"Well," I whispered, but there was no answer. A moment later there came another flash of lightning.

"There," said Heda, "how many do you make it?"

"Ninety-eight," he answered.

"I counted ninety-nine," she said, "but anyway it was within the hundred. Mr. Quatermain, we will go to Zululand, if you please, if you will show us the way there."

"Right," I answered, "but might I ask what that has to do with your both counting a hundred?"

"Only this," she said, "we could not make up our minds. Maurice was for the Transvaal, I was for Zululand. So you see we agreed that if another flash came before we counted a hundred, we would go to Zululand, and if it didn't, to Pretoria. A very good way of settling, wasn't it?"

"Excellent," I replied, "excellent for those who could think of such a thing."

As a matter of fact I don't know which of them thought of it because I never inquired. But I did remember afterward how Anscombe had tossed with a lucky penny when it was a question whether we should or should not run for the wagon during our difficulty by the Oliphant's River; also when I asked him the reason for this strange proceeding he answered that Providence might inhabit a penny as well as anything else, and that he wished to give it—I mean Providence—a chance. How much more then, he may have argued, could it inhabit a flash of lightning which has always been considered a divine manifestation from the time of the Roman Jove, and no doubt far before him.



AS IT happened my speculations, if I really indulged in any at that time, were suddenly extinguished by the bursting of the storm. It was of the usual character, short but very violent.

Of a sudden the sky became alive with lightnings and the atmosphere with the roar of winds. One flash struck a tree quite near the kraal, and I saw that tree seem to melt in its fiery embrace, while about where it had been, rose a column of dust from the ground beneath. The horses were so frightened that luckily they stood quite quiet, as I have often known animals to do in such circumstances.

Then came the rain, a torrential rain as I, who was out in it holding the horses, became painfully aware. It thinned a little after a while as the storm rolled away. Suddenly in a silence between the tremendous echoes of the passing thunder I thought that I heard voices somewhere on the brow of the slope, and as the horses were now quite calm, I crept through the trees to that part of the enclosure which I judged to be nearest to them.

Voices they were sure enough, and of the Basutos who were pursuing us. What was more, they were coming down the slope. The top of the old wall reached almost to my chin. Taking off my hat I thrust my head forward between two loose stones, that I might hear the better.

The men were talking together in Sisutu. One, whom I took to be their captain, said to the others:

"That white-headed old jackal, Macumazahn, has given us the slip again. He doubled on his tracks and drove the horses down the hillside to the lower path in the valley. I could feel where the wheels went over the edge."

"It is so, father," answered another voice, "but we shall catch him and the others at the bottom if we get there before the moon rises, since they cannot have moved far in this rain and darkness. Let me go first and guide you who know every tree and stone upon this slope where I used to herd cattle when I was a child."

"Do so," said the captain. "I can see nothing now the lightning has gone, and were it not that I have sworn to dip my spear in the blood of Macumazahn who has fooled us again, I would give up the hunt."

"I think it would be better to give it up in any case," said a third voice, "since it

is known throughout the land that no luck has ever come to those who tried to trap the Watcher-by-Night. Oh, he is a leopard who springs and kills and is gone again. How many are the throats in which his fangs have met. Leave him alone, I say, lest our fate should be that of the white doctor in the Yellow-wood swamp, he who set us on this hunt. We have his wagon and his cattle; let us be satisfied."

"I will leave him alone when he sleeps for the last time, and not before," answered the captain, "he who shot my brother in the drift the other day. What would Sekukuni say if we let him escape to bring the Swazis on us? Moreover, we want that white maiden for a hostage in case the English should attack us again. Come, you who know the road, and lead us."

There was some disturbance as this man passed to the front. Then I heard the line move forward. Presently they were going by the wall within a foot or two of me. Indeed by ill-luck just as we were opposite to each other the captain stumbled and fell against the wall.

"There is an old cattle kraal here," he said. "What if those white rats have hidden in it?"

I trembled as I heard the words. If a horse should neigh or make any noise that could be heard above the hiss of the rain!

I did not dare to move for fear lest I should betray myself. There I stood so close to the Kaffirs that I could smell them and hear the rain pattering on their bodies. Only very stealthily I drew my hunting knife with my right hand. At that moment the lightning, which I thought had quite gone by, flashed again for the last time, revealing the fat face of the Basuto captain within a foot of my own, for he was turned towards the wall on which one of his hands rested. Moreover, the blue and ghastly light revealed mine to him thrust forward between the two stones, my eyes glaring at him.

"The head of a dead man is set upon the wall!" he cried in terror. "It is the ghost of—"

He got no further, for as the last words passed his lips I drove the knife at him with all my strength deep into his throat. He fell back into the arms of his followers, and next instant I heard the sound of many feet rushing in terror down the hill. What became of him I do not know, but if he still

lives, probably he agrees with his tribesman that Macumazahn—Watcher-by-Night, or his ghost “is a leopard who springs and kills and is gone again;” also that those who try to trap him meet with no luck. I say, or his ghost—because I am sure he thought that I was a spirit of the dead; doubtless I must have looked like one with my white, rain-drowned face appearing there between the stones and made ghastly and livid by the lightning.

Well, they had gone, the whole band of them, not less than thirty or forty men, so I went also, back to the cart, where I found the others very comfortable indeed beneath the rainproof tilt. Saying nothing of what had happened, of which they were as innocent as babes, I took a stiff tot of brandy, for I was chilled through by the wet, and, while waiting for the moon to rise, busied myself with getting the bits back into the horses' mouths—an awkward job in the dark. At length it appeared in a clear sky, for the storm had quite departed and the rain ceased.

As soon as there was light enough, I took the near leader by the bridle and led the cart to the brow of the hill, which was not easy under the conditions, making Kaatje follow with my horse.

Then, as there were no signs of any Basutos, we started on again, I riding about a hundred yards ahead, keeping a sharp look-out for a possible ambush. Fortunately, however, the veld was bare and open, consisting of long waves of ground.

One start I did get, thinking that I saw men's heads just on the crest of a wave, which turned out to be only a herd of springbuck feeding among the tussocks of grass. I was very glad to see them, since their presence assured me that no human being had recently passed that way.

All night we trekked, following the Kaffir path for as long as I could see it, and after that going by my compass. I knew whereabouts the drift of the Crocodile River should be, as I had passed it twice before in my life, and kept my eyes open for a certain tall koppie which stood within half a mile of it on the Swazi side of the river.

Ultimately to my joy I caught sight of this hill faintly outlined against the sky, and headed for it. Half a mile further on I struck a wagon-track made by Boers trekking into Swaziland to trade or shoot. Then I knew that the drift was straight

ahead of us, and called to Anscombe to flog up the weary horses.



WE REACHED the river just before the dawn. To my horror it was very full, so full that the drift looked dangerous, for it had been swollen by the thunder-rain of the previous night. Indeed some wandering Swazis on the further bank of the river shouted to us that we should be drowned if we tried to cross.

“Which means that the only thing to do is to stay here until the water runs down,” I said to Anscombe, for the two women, wearied out, were asleep.

“I suppose so,” he answered, “unless those Basutos—”

I looked back up the long slope down which we had come and saw no one. Then I raised myself in my stirrups and looked along another track that joined the road just here, leading from the bush-veld, as ours from the high-veld.

The sun was rising now, dispersing the mist that hung about the trees after the wet. Searching among these with my eyes, presently I perceived the light gleaming upon what I knew must be the points of spears projecting above the level of the ground vapor.

“Those devils are after us by the lower road,” I said to Anscombe, adding, “I heard them pass the old cattle kraal last night. They followed our spoor over the edge of the hill, but in the dark lost it among the stones.”

He whistled and asked what was to be done.

“That is for you to decide,” I answered. “For my part I'd rather risk the river than the Basutos,” and I looked at the slumbering Heda.

“Can we bolt back the way we came, Allan?”

“The horses are very tired and we might meet more Basutos,” and again I looked at Heda.

“A hard choice, Allan. It is wonderful how women complicate everything in life, because they are life, I suppose.” He thought a moment and went on: “Let's try the river. If we fail, it will be soon over, and it is better to drown than be speared.”

“Or be kept alive by savages who hate us,” I exclaimed with my eyes still fixed upon Heda.

Then I got to business. There were hide riems on the bridles of the leaders. I undid these and knotted their loose ends firmly together. To them I made fast the riem of my own horse, slipping a loop I tied in it, over my right hand and saying—

“Now, I will go first, leading the horses. Do you drive after me for all you are worth, even if they are swept off their feet. I can trust my beast to swim straight, and being a mare, I hope that the horses will follow her as they have done all night. Wake up Heda and Kaatje.”

He nodded, and looking very pale, said: “Heda my dear, I am sorry to disturb you, but we have to get over a river with a rough bottom, so you and Kaatje must hang on and sit tight. Don’t be frightened; you are as safe as a church.”

“God forgive him for that lie,” thought I to myself as, having tightened the girths, I mounted my mare.

Then gripping the riem I kicked the beast to a canter, Anscombe flogging up the team as we swung down the bank to the edge of the foaming torrent, on the further side of which the Swazis shouted and gesticulated to us to go back.

We were in it now, for, as I had hoped, the horses followed the mare without hesitation. For the first twenty yards or so all went well, I heading up the stream. Then suddenly I felt that the mare was swimming.

“Flog the horses and don’t let them turn,” I shouted to Anscombe.

Ten more yards and I glanced over my shoulder. The team was swimming also, and behind them the cart rocked and bobbed like a boat swinging in a heavy sea. There came a strain on the riem; the leader was trying to turn!

I pulled hard and encouraged them with my voice, while Anscombe, who drove splendidly, kept their heads as straight as he could. Mercifully they came ’round again and struck out for the further shore, the water-logged cart floating after them. Would it turn over? That was the question in my mind.

Five seconds; ten seconds and it was still upright. Oh, it was going. No, a fierce back eddy caught it and set it straight again.

My horse touched bottom and there was hope. It struggled forward, being swept down the stream all the time. Now the

horses in the cart also found their footing and we were saved.

No the wet had caused the knot of one of the riems to slip beneath the strain, or perhaps it broke—I don’t know. Feeling the pull slacken the leaders whipped ’round on to the wheelers. There they all stood in a heap, their heads and part of their necks above water, while the cart floated behind them on its side. Kaatje screamed and Anscombe flogged.

I leaped from my mare and struggled to the leaders, the water up to my chin. Grasping their bits I managed to keep them from turning further. But I could do no more and death came very near to us. Had it not been for some of those brave Swazis on the bank it would have found us, every one. But they plunged in, eight of them, holding each other’s hands, and half-swimming, half wading, reached us. They got the horses by the head and straightened them out, while Anscombe plied his whip. A dash forward and the wheels were on the bottom again.

Three minutes later we were safe on the further bank, which my mare had already reached, where I lay gasping on my face, ejaculating prayers of thankfulness and spitting out muddy water.

CHAPTER X

NOMBÉ

THE Swazis, shivering, for all these people hate cold, and shaking themselves like a dog when he comes to shore, gathered ’round, examining me.

“Why!” said one of them, an elderly man who seemed to be their leader. “This is none other than Macumazahn, Watcher-by-Night, the old friend of all us black people. Surely the spirits of our fathers have been with us who might have risked our lives to save a Boer or a half-breed.”

The Swazis, I may explain, did not like the Boers for reasons they considered sound.

“Yes,” I said, sitting up, “it is I, Macumazahn.”

“Then why,” asked the man, “did you, whom all know to be wise, show yourself to have suddenly become a fool?” and he pointed to the raging river.

“And why,” I asked, “do you show yourself a fool by supposing that I, whom you

know me to be none, am a fool? Look across the water for your answer."

He looked and saw the Basutos, fifty or more of them, arriving, just too late.

"Who are these?" he asked.

"They are the people of Sekukuni whom you should know well enough. They have hunted us all night, yes, and before, seeking to murder us; also they have stolen our wagon and oxen, thirty-two fine oxen which I give to your king if he can take them back. Now perhaps you understand why we dared the Crocodile River in its rage."

At the name of Sekukuni the man, who it seemed was the captain of some border guards, stiffened all over like a terrier who perceives a rat.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Do these dirty Basuto dogs dare to carry spears so near our country? Have they not yet learned their lesson?"

Then he rushed into the water, shaking a spear he had snatched up, and shouted:

"Bide a while, you fleas from the kaross of Sekukuni, till I can come across and crack you between my thumb and finger. Or at the least wait until Macumazahn has time to get his rifle. No, put down those guns of yours; for every shot you fire I swear that I will cut ten Basuto throats when we come to storm your koppies, as we shall do ere long."

"Be silent," I said, "and let me speak."

Then I, too, called across the river, asking where was that fat captain of theirs, as I would talk with him. One of the men shouted back that he had stopped behind, very sick, because of a ghost that he had seen.

"Ah!" I answered. "A ghost who pricked him in the throat. Well, I was that ghost, and such are the things that happen to those who would harm Macumazahn and his friends. Did you not say last night that he is a leopard who leaps out in the dark, bites and is gone again?"

"Yes," the man shouted back, "and it is true, though had we known, Macumazahn, that you were the ghost hiding in those stones, you should never have leapt again. Oh, that white medicine-man whom you killed has sent us on a mad errand."

"So you will think when I come to visit you among your koppies. Go home and take a message from Macumazahn to Sekukuni, who believes that the English have

run away from him. Tell him that they will return again and these Swazis with them, and that then he will cease to live and his town will be burnt and his tribe will no more be a tribe. Away now, more swiftly than you came, since the water by which you thought to trap us is falling, and a Swazi impi gathers to make an end of every one of you."

The man attempted no answer, nor did his people so much as fire on us. They turned tail and crept off like a pack of frightened jackals pursued by the mocking of the Swazis.

Still in a way they had the laugh of us, seeing that they gave us a terrible fright and stole our wagon and thirty-two oxen. Well, a year or two later I helped to pay them back for that fright and even recovered some of the oxen.

When they had gone the Swazis led us to a kraal about two miles from the river, sending on a runner with orders to make huts and food ready for us. It was just as much as we could do to reach it, for we were all utterly worn out, as were the horses.

Still we did get there at last, the hot sun drying our garments as we went. Arrived at the kraal I helped Heda and Kaatje from the cart—the former could scarcely walk, poor dear—and into the guest hut which seemed clean, where food of a sort and fur karosses were brought to them in which to wrap themselves while their clothes dried.

Leaving them in charge of two old women, I went to see to Anscombe, who as yet could not do much for himself, also to the outspanning of the horses which were put into a cattle kraal, where they lay down at once without attempting to eat the green forage which was given to them.

After this I gave our goods into the charge of the kraal-head, a nice old fellow whom I had never met before, and helped Anscombe to another hut close to that where the women were. Here we drank some maas—that is, curdled milk—ate a little mutton, though we were too fatigued to be very hungry, and stripping off our wet clothes, threw them out into the sun to dry.

"That was a close shave," said Anscombe as he wrapped himself up in the kaross.

"Very," I answered. "So close that I think you must have been started in life with an extra strong guardian angel well accustomed to native ways."

"Yes," he replied, "and, old fellow, I believe that on earth he goes by the name of Allan Quatermain."

After this I remember no more, for I went to sleep, and so remained for about twenty-four hours. This was not wonderful, seeing that for two days and nights I had practically not rested, during which time I went through much fatigue and many emotions.

When at length I did wake up, the first thing I saw was Anscombe already dressed, engaged in cleaning my clothes with a brush from his toilet case. I remember thinking how smart and incongruous that dressing-bag with its silver-topped bottles and its ivory-handled razors, made appropriately enough of crocodile hide, looked in this Kaffir hut.

"Time to get up, sir. Bath ready, sir," he said in his jolly, drawling voice, pointing to a calabash full of hot water. "Hope you slept as well as I did, sir."

"You appear to have recovered your spirits," I remarked as I rose and began to wash myself.

"Yes, sir, and why not? Heda is quite well, for I have seen her. These Swazis are very good people, and as Kaatje understands their language, bring us all we want. Our troubles seem to be done with. Old Marnham is dead and doubtless cremated; Todd is dead and, let us hope, in heaven; the Basutos have melted away, the morning is fine and warm and a whole kid is cooking for breakfast."

"I wish there were two, for I am ravenous," I remarked.

"The horses are getting rested and feeding well, though some of their legs have filled, and the trap is little the worse, for I have walked to look at them, or rather hopped, leaning on the shoulder of a very sniffy Swazi boy. Do you know, old fellow, I believe there never were any Basutos; also that the venerable Marnham and the lurid Todd had no real existence, that they were but illusions, a prolonged nightmare—no more. Here is your shirt. I am sorry that I have not had time to wash it, but it has cooked well in the sun, which, being flannel, is almost as good."

"At any rate Heda remains," I remarked, cutting his nonsense short, "and I suppose she is not a nightmare or a delusion."

"Yes, thank God, she remains," he replied with earnestness. "Oh, Allan, I

thought she must drown in that river, and if I had lost her, I think I should have gone mad. Indeed, at the moment I felt myself going mad while I dragged and flogged at those horses."

"Well, you didn't lose her, and if she had drowned you would have drowned also. So don't talk any more about it. She is safe, and now we have got to keep her so, for you are not married yet, my boy, and there are generally more trees in a wood than one can see. Still we are all alive and well, which is more than we had any right to expect, and, as you say, let us thank God for that."

Then I put on my coat and my boots which Anscombe had greased as he had no blacking, and crept from the hut.

There, only a few yards away, engaged in setting the breakfast in the shadow of another hut on a tanned hide that served for a tablecloth, while Kaatje saw to the cooking close by, I found Heda, still a little pale and sorrowful, but otherwise quite well and rested. Moreover, she had managed to dress herself very nicely, I suppose by help of spare clothes in the cart, and therefore looked as charming as she always did. I think that her perfect manners were one of her greatest attractions. Thus on this morning her first thought was to thank me very sweetly for all she was good enough to say I had done for her and Anscombe, thereby, as she put it, saving their lives.

"My dear young lady," I answered as roughly as I could, "don't flatter yourself on that point; it was my own life of which I was thinking."

But she only smiled and, shaking her head in a fascinating way that was peculiar to her, remarked that I could not deceive her as I did the Kaffirs. After this the solid Kaatje brought the food and we breakfasted very heartily, or at least I did.

Now I am not going to set out all the details of our journey through Swaziland, for though in some ways it was interesting enough, also as comfortable as a stay among savages can be, for everywhere we were kindly received, to do so would be too long, and I must get on with my story.

At the king's kraal, which we did not reach for some days as the absence of roads and the flooded state of the rivers, also the need of sparing our horses, caused us to travel very slowly, I met a Boer who I think was concession hunting.

He told me that things were really serious in Zululand, so serious that he thought there was a probability of immediate war between the English and the Zulus. He said also that Cetewayo, the Zulu king, had sent messengers to stir up the Basutos and other tribes against the white men, with the result that Sekukuni had already made a raid toward Pilgrim's Rest and Lydenburg.

I expressed surprise and asked innocently if he had done any harm. The Boer replied he understood that they had stolen some cattle, killed two white men, if not more, and burnt their house. He added, however, that he was not sure whether the white men had been killed by the Kaffirs or by other white men with whom they had quarreled. There was a rumor to this effect, and he understood that the magistrate of Barberton had gone with some mounted police and armed natives to investigate the matter.

Then we parted, as, having got his concession to which the king Umbandine had put his mark when he was drunk on brandy which the Boer himself had brought with him as a present, he was anxious to be gone before he grew sober and revoked it. Indeed, he was in so great a hurry that he never stopped to inquire what I was doing in Swaziland, nor do I think he realized that I was not alone. Certainly was quite unaware that I had been mixed up in these Basuto troubles.

Still his story as to the investigation concerning the deaths of Marnham and Todd made me uneasy, since I feared lest he should hear something on his journey and put two and two together, though as a matter of fact I don't think he ever did either of these things.

The Swazis told me much the same story as to the brewing Zulu storm. In fact an old Induna or councilor, whom I knew, informed me that Cetewayo had sent messengers to them, asking for their help if it should come to fighting with the white men, but that the king and councillors answered that they had always been the Queen's children (which was not strictly true, as they were never under English rule) and did not wish to "bite her feet if she should have to fight with her hands."

I replied that I hoped they would always act up to these fine words, and changed the subject.

Now once more the question arose as to

whether we should make for Natal or press on to Zululand. The rumor of coming war suggested that the first would be our better course, while the Boer's story as to the investigation of Todd's death pointed the other way.

Really I did not know which to do, and as usual Anscombe and Heda seemed inclined to leave the decision to me. I think that after all Natal would have gained the day had it not been for a singular circumstance, not a flash of lightning this time. Indeed, I had almost made up my mind to risk trouble and inquiry as to Todd's death, remembering that in Natal these two young people could get married, which, being in *loco parentis*, I thought it desirable they should do as soon as possible, if only to ease me of my responsibilities.

Also, thence I could attend to the matter of Heda's inheritance and rid myself of her father's will that already had been somewhat damaged in the Crocodile River, though not as much as it might have been since I had taken the precaution to enclose it in Anscombe's sponge bag before we left the house.



THE circumstance was this: On emerging from the cart one morning, where I slept to keep an eye upon the valuables, for it will be remembered that we had a considerable sum in gold with us, also Heda's jewels, a Swazi informed me that a messenger wished to see me. I asked what messenger and whence did he come.

He replied that the messenger was a witch-doctress named Nombé, and that she came from Zululand and said that I knew her father.

I bade the man bring her to me, wondering who on earth she could be, for it is not usual for the Zulus to send women as messengers, and from whom she came. However, I knew exactly what she would be like: some hideous old hag, smelling horribly of grease and other abominations, with a worn snake skin and some human bones tied about her. Presently she came, escorted by the Swazi who was grinning, for I think he knew what I expected to see.

I stared and rubbed my eyes, thinking that I must still be asleep, for instead of some fat old Isanusi there appeared a tall and graceful young woman, rather light-colored, with deep and quiet eyes and a by

no means ill-favored face remarkable for a fixed and somewhat mysterious smile. She was a witch-doctress sure enough, for she wore in her hair the regulation bladders and about her neck the cirlet of baboon's teeth, also 'round her middle a girdle from which hung little bags of medicines.

She contemplated me gravely and I contemplated her, waiting till she should choose to speak. At length, having examined me inch by inch, she saluted by raising her rounded arm and tapering hand, and remarked in a soft, full voice:

"All is as the picture told. I perceive before me the lord Macumazahn."

I thought this a strange saying, seeing that I could not recollect having given my photograph to any one in Zululand.

"You need no magic to tell you that, doctress," I remarked, "but where did you see my picture?"

"In the dust far away," she replied.

"And who showed it to you?"

"One who knew you, O Macumazahn, in the years before I came out of the darkness, one named Opener of Roads, and with him another who also knew you in those years, one who has gone down to the darkness."

Now for some occult reason I shrank from asking the name of this "one who had gone down to the darkness," although I was sure that she was waiting for the question. So I merely remarked, without showing surprise:

"So Zikali still lives, does he? He should have been dead long ago."

"You know well that he lives, Macumazahn, for how could he die till his work was accomplished? Moreover, you will remember that he spoke to you when last moon was but just past her full—in a dream, Macumazahn. I brought that dream, although you did not see me."

"Pish!" I exclaimed. "Have done with your talk of dreams. Who thinks anything of dreams?"

"You do," she replied even more placidly than before, "you whom that dream has brought hither—with others."

"You lie," I said rudely. "The Basutos brought me here."

"The Watcher-by-Night is pleased to say that I lie, so doubtless I do lie," she answered, her fixed smile deepening a little.

Then she folded her arms across her breast and remained silent.

"You are a messenger, O Seer of pictures in the dust and bearer of the cup of dreams," I said with sarcasm. "Who sends a message by your lips for me, and what are the words of the message?"

"My Lords the spirits spoke the message by the mouth of the master Zikali. He sends it on to you by the lips of your servant, the doctress Nombé."

"Are you indeed a doctress, being so young?" I asked, for somehow I wished to postpone the hearing of that message.

"O Macumazahn, I have heard the call, I have felt the pain in my back, I have drunk of the black medicine and of the white medicine, yes, for a whole year. I have been visited by the multitude of spirits and seen the shades of those who live and of those who are dead. I have dived into the river and drawn my snake from its mud; see, its skin is about me now," and opening the mantle she wore she showed what looked like the skin of a black mamba, fastened 'round her slender body. "I have dwelt in the wilderness alone and listened to its voices. I have sat at the feet of my master, the Opener of Roads, and looked down the road and drunk of his wisdom. Yes, I am in truth a doctress."

"Well, after all this, you should be as wise as you are pretty."

"Once before, Macumazahn, you told a maid of my people that she was pretty and she came to no good end; though to one that was great. Therefore do not say to me that I am pretty, though I am glad that you should think so who can compare me with so many whom you have known," and she dropped her eyes, looking a little shy.

It was the first human touch I had seen about her, and I was glad to have found a weak spot in her armor. Moreover, from that moment she was always my friend.

"As you will, Nombé. Now for your message."

"My Lords the spirits, speaking through Zikali as one who makes music through a pipe of reeds, say——"

"Never mind what the spirits say. Tell me what Zikali says," I interrupted.

"So be it, Macumazahn. These are the words of Zikali: 'O Watcher-by-Night, the time draws on when the Thing-who-should-never-have-been-born will be as though he never had been born, whereat he rejoices. But first there is much for him to do, and as he told you nearly three hundred moons

ago, in what must be done you will have your part. Of that he will speak to you afterwards.

"Macumazah, you dreamed a dream, did you not, lying asleep in the house that was built of white stone which now is black with fire. I, Zikali, sent you that dream through the arts of a child of mine who is named Nombé, she to whom I have given a Spirit to guide her feet. You did well to follow it, Macumazah, for had you tried the other path, which would have led you back to the towns of the white men, you and those with you must have been killed, how it does not matter.

"Now by the mouth of Nombé I say to you, do not follow the thought that is in your mind as she speaks to you and go to Natal, since if you do so, you and those with you will come to much shame and trouble that to you would be worse than death, over the matter of the killing of a certain white doctor in a swamp where grow yellow-wood trees. For there in Natal you will be taken, all of you, and sent back to the Transvaal to be tried before a man who wears upon his head horse's hair stained white. But if you come to Zululand this shadow shall pass away from you, since great things are about to happen which will cause so small a matter to be forgot.

"Moreover, I, Zikali, who do not lie, promise this: That however great may be their dangers here in Zululand, those half-fledged ones whom you, the old night-hawk, cover with your wings, shall in the end come to no harm; those of whom I spoke to you in your dream, the white lord, Mauriti, and the white lady, Heddana, who stretch out their arms one to another. I wait to welcome you, here at the Black Kloof, whither my daughter Nombé will guide you. Cete-wayo, the king, also will welcome you, and so will another whose name I do not utter. Now choose. I have spoken."

Having delivered her message Nombé stood quite still, smiling as before, and apparently indifferent as to its effect.

"How do I know that you come from Zikali?" I asked. "You may be but the bait set upon a trap."

From somewhere within her robe she produced a knife and handed it to me, remarking:

"The master says you will remember this, and by it know that the message comes from him. He bade me add that with it was

carved a certain image that once he gave to you at Panda's kraal, wrapped round with a woman's hair, which image you still have."

I looked at the knife and did remember it, for it was one of those of Swedish make with a wooden handle, the first that I had ever seen in Africa. I had made a present of it to Zikali when I returned to Zululand before the war between the princes. The image, too, I still possessed. It was that of the woman called Mameena who brought about the war, and the wrapping which covered it was of the hair that once grew upon her head.

"The words are Zikali's," I said, returning her the knife, "but why do you call yourself the child of one who is too old to be a father?"

"The master says that my great-grandmother was his daughter and that therefore I am his child. Now, Macumazah, I go to eat with my people, for I have servants with me. Then I must speak with the Swazi king, for whom I also have a message, which I can not do at present because he is still drunk with the white man's liquor. After that I shall be ready to return with you to Zululand."

"I never said that I was going to Zululand, Nombé."

"Yet your heart has gone there already, Macumazah, and you must follow your heart. Does not the image which was carved with the knife you gave hold a white heart in its hand? And although it seems to be but a bit of Umzimbeete wood, is it not alive and bewitched, which perhaps is why you could never make up your mind to burn it, Macumazah?"

"I wish I had," I replied angrily; but having thrown this last spear, with a flash of her unholy eyes, Nombé had turned and gone.

A clever woman and thoroughly coached, thought I. Well, Zikali was never one to suffer fools, and doubtless she is another of the pawns whom he uses on his board of policy. Oh, she, or rather he, was right: my heart was in Zululand, though not in the way he thought, and I longed to see the end of that great game played by a wizard against a despot and his hosts.

So we went to Zululand because after talking it over we all came to the conclusion that this was the best thing to do, especially as there we seemed to be sure of a

welcome. For later in the day Nombé repeated to Anscombe and Heda the invitation which she had delivered to me, assuring them also that in Zululand they would come to no harm.

It was curious to watch the meeting between Heda and Nombé. The doctress appeared just as we had risen from breakfast, and Heda, turning round, came face to face with her.

"Is this your witch, Mr. Quatermain?" she asked me in her vivacious way. "Why, she is different from what I expected, quite good-looking and, yes, impressive. I am not sure that she does not frighten me a little."

"What does the Inkosikaas say concerning me, Macumazahn?" asked Nombé.

"Only what I said, that you are young who she thought would be old, and pretty who she thought would be ugly."

"To grow old we must first be young, Macumazahn, and in due season all of us will become ugly, even the Inkosikaas. But I thought she said also that she feared me."

"Do you know English, Nombé?"

"Nay, but I know how to read eyes, and the Inkosikaas has eyes that talk. Tell her that she has no reason to fear me who would be her friend, though I think that she will bring me little luck."

It was scarcely necessary, but I translated, leaving out the last sentence.

"Say to her that I am grateful who have few friends, and that I will fear her no more," said Heda.

Again I translated, whereon Nombé stretched out her hand, saying—

"Let her not scorn to take it, it is clean.

It has brought no man to his death—"

Here she looked at Heda meaningly.

"Moreover, though she is white and I am black, I, like herself, am of high blood and come of a race of warriors who did nothing small, and lastly, we are of an age, and if she is beautiful, I am wise and have gifts great as her own."

Once more I interpreted, for the benefit of Anscombe, for Heda understood Zulu well enough, after which the two shook hands to Anscombe's amusement and my wonder, for I felt this scene to be strained and one that hid, or presaged something I did not comprehend.

"This is the Chief she loves?" said Nombé to me, studying Anscombe with her steady eyes after Heda had gone.

"Well, he is no common man and brave, if idle; one, too, who may grow tall in the world, should he live, when he has learned to think. But, Macumazahn, if she met you both at the same time, why did she not choose you?"

"Just now you said you were wise, Nombé," I replied laughing, "but now I see that, like most of your trade, you are but a vain boaster. Is there a hat upon my head that you can not see the color of my hair, and is it natural that youth should turn to age?"

"Sometimes if the mind is old, Macumazahn; which is why I love the spirits only who are more ancient than the mountains, and with them Zikali their servant, who was young before the Zulus were a people, or so he says, and still year by year gathers wisdom like the bees. Inspan your horses, Macumazahn, for I have done my business and am ready to start."

TO BE CONTINUED

Strict Justice, and Cheap



Author of "Riding Steel"

THE telephone on the desk of the chief deputy sheriff of Los Angeles County rang sharply. He reached out a hand for the phone without stopping his writing and called his "hello" into the transmitter while he went on dotting and crossing and punctuating the letter he was writing to a little woman up at Camp Baldy with the children.

The first sentence after he had assured his caller at the other end of the wire that this was the sheriff's office, brought his body upright with a jerk and the pen dropped across the written page, making a blot just under the words "nothing doing now" which he had just written.

"Where? Any one hurt? What? Say that again. Not Jim Lacy? Which way did they go? How much? We'll have a posse up there in the shortest possible time. Two of them. Good-by."

"What's doing, Dick?" called a deputy from the outer office.

"Holdup at Saugus, Jim Lacy killed, S. P. train robbed, nineteen thou' in bills from Wells-Fargo, six thou' in gold. Mail not touched. Band of four, headed up into the Acton Mountains. Last seen they were mounted and hiking to beat —!"

A tall man in snuff-brown clothes who had been sitting by the window looking out across Temple Street got up and walked over to the chief deputy's desk. His face

was lean and his jaws shut hard, making the muscles swell out like little balls at the base of each jaw. His hat was pulled low over his forehead and his eyes were always seeing things off at either side.

"Did you say Jim Lacy is dead?" he asked in a perfectly level tone. His face did not move as he spoke, his lips hardly showing any movement and his voice was low, but clear.

"Yes, they got him. He was messenger for Wells-Fargo, you know."

"Yes, I know. Any description of the men?"

"A little. One is short with a scar across his lip that his mustache partly hides and limps in his off leg. One is about six feet, thin, with a long nose and the left forefinger gone at the second joint. They were not masked. The other two were ordinary Mexicans. The short man is dark, with black hair, the other sandy."

"Stub Leavitt and Coyote Parsons. Any marks about the greasers?"

"Nothing but a puckered mark on the side of the biggest one's nose. The constable who phoned said some of the men claimed it was on the left side and some on the right."

"It's on both."

"How in blazes do you know?"

"I put it there. Twenty-two. Talked nasty to ten-year-old girl."

"Well, if you know three of the four you are the man to send up. Get ready to take charge of the posse."

"Let your posse go in charge of Ben Thomas. I go alone."

"What the—alone? Against four train robbers? And in the hills, too? You're crazy, man. They'll pot you as sure as Christmas."

"I've handled that gang before and I go alone."

The man in brown went over to a closet and took out a rifle, a dull-finished gun of the automatic type. Hunting around among the stuff in the closet he picked up a full box of cartridges and put them in his pocket.

"So long, Dick. See you later."

He was gone before any of the men had time to say another word to him and the door swung behind him without a sound.

"Don't he beat anything on two legs for saying a lot? Awful talkative chap, that Bill Logan. I guess that is the second time he has said anything more than passing the time of day in four months."

The speaker strode over to the window and looked down into the street.

"He gets out so still, and when he is on the street he fades out of sight like a fog wreath. Can't see him anywhere now."

"I wonder why he wants to go alone now. He never wanted to do that before that I know of. Say, Dick, who are you going to send?"

"You and Bert and the four from Lancaster, maybe pick up an extra or two. The officers of the road will be there with about a dozen men and the Acton officers have been notified. I am going to get word to every peace officer within fifty miles of Saugus to look out for the gang."

"All right. Come on, Bert. How do we go, Dick? Auto?"

"Sure! There ain't a train for two hours and an auto will get there a long way ahead of that train. Get out and tell Pete to take the Locomobile. It's in best trim for that trip."

The men started out and down the steps to the street with a pair of rifles in their hands. They caught a car and went off to the county garage to get the auto that was detailed for their trip. At the garage they asked if Logan had been after a car and were told that he had not.

They fussed around and looked the car

over for some time, and it was over an hour after the lean man, Logan, had left the office before the two deputies finally left the city. They made fairly good time, but it was no racing gait that the official chauffeur took to Saugus that day.



WHEN Logan had left the sheriff's office he had gone to another office where he could use a phone without being overheard and called a number. When a man answered he mentioned the name of a celebrated road-racer who had driven in the Phoenix race three times, and the other man told him to wait a moment. Another voice called to him a little later and he told who he was.

"Oh, hello, Logan, old man. What can I do for you?"

"I don't like to ask favors, but you told me once that you would do anything I asked of you."

"I meant it then and I mean it now, Logan. Go ahead with your order and I'll be there with bells."

"I want to get to Saugus in the shortest possible time."

"Where are you now?"

"Temple and Broadway."

"Come to First and Broadway and I'll pick you up in two minutes after you get there."

The phone hung up with a click and Logan walked out of the office and headed for First Street at a rapid gait. He carried his gun under his coat so that it would not excite comment and he walked close to the buildings as he went the short distance.

At the corner he stood leaning against the Times Building with his eyes scanning every person who passed. He had only a few minutes to wait before a low racing-car, painted a dull gray, had swung to the curb and Logan stepped swiftly across the walk and slipped into the seat beside the driver. Up First Street past the police station and off to the south on Hill Street they sped, then through the Third Street tunnel and off to Hollywood they went.

The car passed three officers who held up their hands in frantic signal to halt, but the lean man in each case held up his left hand with the county shield in its palm and they were waved on their journey. Out through Caheunga Pass and across the San Fernando Valley they made speed that was like the passing of a meteor, the car rocking

over the paved highway at better than seventy miles an hour, excepting on the steepest part of the grade at the pass.

All the rough way to Saugus the car kept at a pace that would make the ordinary speeder gasp and swear that he had never ridden fast in his life before. At Saugus they stopped to ask questions of three people, the station agent, the man who sold them gasoline and a rancher who had come in from the direction of Acton. The agent said they were the first persons that had come to Saugus to take the trail, the gasoline man said the price of gasoline had gone up a cent, and the rancher said the road to Acton was fair.

Again the racing car took up its speeding and went rolling and bumping over the road to Acton at a rate that would have made an accident insurance agent cancel the policy of any one he saw riding in it at that rate on such a road. That twenty-eight miles had enough real experience in it to qualify the riders for admission to any rough-riders' regiment that might be organized in the future.

At Acton Logan hunted up a man he knew and in a half-hour from the time he had landed in town he was off across country on an old trail which he seemed to know perfectly. He left the driver of the car with only a nod and "thank you" but the driver gave him a blithe "good luck" as he backed his car around to begin his return trip.

Logan held the trail he had started out on till he was about seven miles from the town of Acton and then swung out to the northeast across an untracked ridge that led him over to another trail which he followed toward Cajon Pass.

About three miles west of the pass he turned up a cañon and checked his horse. Swinging off he examined the ground in the dim light. The sun was well down behind the ridge and it would be dark in a short time now.

He found nothing to indicate the passage of any one either on foot or on horseback. He had kept his own horse well away from the trail itself and now he led the animal back among the trees and unsaddled him. Leading the horse into a little side cañon, that held a fair supply of grass, he hobbled him and turned him loose. Going back to where he had left the saddle he carried it to a thick clump of bushes close to the trail

and prepared for the night by rolling himself in his blankets and resting his head on his saddle. He was close enough to the trail to hear a fox's pads if one passed.

"There!" he thought, "I've landed ahead of them just as I had an idea I would. They won't expect any one to be on their trail who knows their old track and camping-place. If I'd told those guys in town what I had in mind they would have spoiled it all by wanting a crowd to come along. This is one man's job and I owe it to Jim to be the man. I'll be there on the job, Jim, old scout. And there won't be any miscount made, either."

He lay with his eyes watching the sky and his thoughts far off in the past, the film that held his past life running swiftly past his mental vision. He saw himself as an orphan boy, sensitive, silent, the butt for every rougher boy's jokes and horseplay. He saw himself taken into a family and treated as one of their own. He saw the sweet-faced woman who had taught him to call her aunt, though there was no relationship. He remembered the words he had said to her at the last parting:

"Some day, I don't know when, but some day I'll show you what it has meant to me to have your care and love. Any time you need me I'll be there, no matter what it costs me, even to my life."

He would never forget the kiss she had given him then and her low-toned assurance that she knew and trusted him.

"You have been a good boy, Billy, and I have learned to love you as my own. I shall pray for you always and no matter when, or how you come home, there will always be a welcome for you here."

And the silent man that few other men understood wiped salt tears from his cheeks as he lay there with his head on his saddle.

As the stars came out and the sunset light faded from the sky the mountain forest became as still as the workings in a deserted mine. The day voices were stilled and the voices of the night had not yet awakened. It was as if the vespers call had shut every mouth and hushed every sound till the moment of prayer had passed. Before the night voices had begun to sound, Logan was well and soundly sleeping. He minded not the creeping things or the hunting noises of small animals. His sleep was as sweet and deep as that of a child, yet his ears were tuned to catch one sound.



AT THREE o'clock he wakened, broad awake as at midday, every nerve tense and his ears strained to catch the next sound. He had heard in his sleep the one sound he cared to hear and it had banished sleep as an electric-flash banishes darkness. He lifted his head a trifle from the saddle and listened. There it came again, the clink of a horse's shoe against a stone.

Letting his head sink back on the saddle he lay with his face turned up to the point where a man's head would pass, were he on horseback, and waited. Now the clinking of iron on stone came nearer and more frequent and in a little while he could hear the wheeze of breath as each horse lifted himself along the steep trail.

He had chosen his position so that directly before his eyes lay a notch in the mountain ridge like a great V that held in its compass a solitary star. As Logan watched that star he saw the points of a horse's ears just below it in the notch, then a little later the form of a rider, stooped a little and with his hat over his eyes. The figure passed, there was a short period when the star again shone in his eyes, and again the ears came.

The star and the horse's ears, the form in the saddle and the star shining down in peace. Over and over the same sequence until the watcher had counted four ghostly passers-by, silent save for that clink, clink, clink, of metal on stone and then they were gone.

As the last one blended with the shadows another form went quietly up the trail, slipping along the bordering shadows of brush and tree and rock. Stooping and gliding and feeling its silent, inexorable way along the track the marauders had lately passed over, this form kept within hearing of the clinking horseshoes until it reached a ridge where the moonlight flooded the trail and there were no trees or brush to cast a friendly shadow.

Just back of the ridge the following form paused and stood motionless while the sound of iron on stone went round the next bend and grew indistinct among the trees on the lower level. Then the pursuer went forward, crouching and swift, over the ridge and part way down the slope on eager feet.

Just as he reached the edge of the dark oak grove, a spurt of flame stabbed out at him from behind a tree, a red-hot pain went through his breast, with a numbing after-

shock, and he reeled forward to his face in the dirt.

There was a quick clatter of hoofs as a horse came out of the shadows, another flame darted at the recumbent figure and then the clattering feet went flying after the others.

"What was it? Some one spyin' on us?" asked one as the rearguard overtook the others.

"Uh-huh! He won't do no more spyin', — him!" the rider answered. "Got 'im first crack, but give 'im another fer luck."

"Good! Didn't see no sign of any one else comin', did ye?"

"Naw! He's some smart Aleck constable who got a hunch he could foller us and make a rep by tacklin' us alone."

"Some nerve! Wisht ye'd a-let 'im come on. We c'd a-had some fun with the cuss when he tackled us."

"Well, I didn't an' I ain't goin' t' take no chances. Most there, now. Gosh, I'm sleepy."

"How'd ye happen t' git wise t' that feller back there?"

"I dunno. Jest sorter sensed it that he was follerin', without hearin' a sound, lessen it were somethin' too small fer me t' know I heard it. The hunch worked all right. I got 'im cold."

Two miles farther the bandits rode, then dismounted in a little glade among the oaks, loosened the cinches and tied their horses under the drooping branches. When their mounts had been hidden, the men unrolled their blankets under other low-branched trees and turned in for a little rest before daylight. The leader had a word of warning for them at the last moment.

"Keep yer iron ready fer quick action an' sleep with one ear list'nin'. If anybody starts anythin', cut loose."

Ten minutes later a flitting owl, passing like a spirit on noiseless wing, looked askance at four silent figures, stretched at full length on the leaf mold, and as many horses, sleeping on their tired feet, with noses close to the ground.

When the gray of approaching dawn began to filter through the leaves the leader of the four sat up and looked around. His eyes searched every nook and possible hiding-place as far as he could see. After a long look that swept three-quarters of a circle he turned to regard the last quarter and again he studied the land. From his

position all was peaceful and devoid of any threat.

With a deep breath he threw off the folds of the blanket and rose to his feet. In a low tone he called to the others and they stirred instantly in their blankets.

"Come on, fellers. Let's git a bite to eat and make our whack. Then we can git out independent."

Lifting his blanket, the leader strode out into the open glade and spread it smoothly on the dirt. The entire open space was scarcely larger than a city lawn and the trees stood about it thickly. There was no underbrush and they could see far out across the gentle slope, through the more scattering growth that surrounded this central cluster.

Carrying their blankets under their arms, the other three came forward to where the leader stood. Sitting down so as to form a square, the four dug into coat-pockets and brought out fragments of meat and bread which they wolfed down in haste, their eyes constantly searching the landscape, each in his own segment.

When they had eaten, the leader rolled to his knees at the edge of the blanket and began to disgorge the contents of a leather bag that hung under his left arm. When it was empty he dug into his pockets and brought out several packets of bills which he added to the pile. Then he began to deal into four piles, as he would deal cards. Twice, while dealing, he stopped to listen and look all around, but nothing disturbed the deal. At last he sat back on his heels and snapped a gold-piece into the air. As it fell in the center of the blanket he spoke.

"There it is, fellers. Six thousand, two hundred fifty apiece an' the odd ten to match fer. Every man take his whack an' light out, all separate. Take any piles you please an' I'll take the last one. They're all exactly alike."

Just as the Mexican with the puckered nose reached for the pile nearest him, a voice called sharply, albeit, somewhat weakly:

"Don't touch it, Felipe. I take the pot."



EVERY man of the four reached for his six-gun at the first word. Only fifty feet from the spread blanket lay an old fallen tree, its broken stubs of branches sticking up like shriveled arms.

A tangle of fragments lay helter-skelter across the fork of the trunk where one twisted, gnarly section lifted its splintered end waist high.

From this tangle, this little, insignificant shelter, which they had all overlooked as being too near to harbor danger, as well as too inadequate, there now burst a pale flame of gas and the Mexican doubled forward with a grunt, his gun sending a bullet into that upreaching, splintery arm as he fell.

Two other guns barked twice and the third three times. The dead bark flew in showers and splinters ripped off the dry wood. The answers to the popping revolvers came as fast as a steady, well-drilled forefinger could squeeze the trigger of the automatic rifle that thrust its muzzle from the dead branches.

A last shot from one of the revolvers glanced through a section of the wood and cut across the chin that hugged close to the rifle-butt.

The shock threw the head back and the muzzle of the rifle rose till it pointed far above the last man of the quartet. With a quick spring he was on his feet and flying toward his horse. Before the attacker could shake the dizzy sparks out of his eyes and throw his gun down to a level again, the bandit had cut the tie-rope, vaulted into the saddle and was riding furiously out of the grove, heading for the winding trail which passed a hundred yards to the left.

With blood streaming from his slashed chin, the deputy, for it was Logan, staggered to his feet and began to run, weakly, heavily, his face white and drawn looking, the blood streaking his breast and arms, but determination setting grim lines in his face. He ran at right angles to the trail and very nearly in the opposite direction to the line of flight taken by the fugitive.

Panting with weakness, his knees wobbling under him, he struggled on, his indomitable will alone holding him to his effort. Breaking through a fringe of brush, he at last reeled out to a rocky shelf that jutted out of the mountain-wall. At one end the rocks came up to a jagged parapet about three and a half feet high. One of its convolutions received the pain-wracked body, trembling with exhaustion, and the rifle rested between two knobs of hard rock.

The bandit had sought the trail at its nearest point and had gone recklessly down

its steeply pitching course, holding the saddle from slipping forward by the grip of his legs. The curve of the trail was swinging him to the right in a wide circle that led him around the shoulder of the mountain.

Up above the curve the brush stood thick on the south slope and hid the trail from the eyes of the waiting deputy, except in little streaks or openings. Below him he could see these tiny sections of trail at three different levels and no one section over fifty feet long. The nearest one was close to a hundred and fifty yards away, the farthest nearly five hundred.

While he was still shaking from his run, Logan heard the *clup-clup* of a shod horse galloping nearer. He swung the rifle to bear on the extreme left end of the first visible section of trail, lifted it to clear the rock and waited. As the horse flashed into sight he tried to swing the muzzle in time with the hasting figure, but he did not have complete command of his muscles and it wobbled.

Racing ahead of the rider the gun lined on the second space and the nerves grew tense. In his present condition he could not do good shooting at the longer distances and must make good now. At the first sight of the bent shoulders the rifle spoke. Again and again it barked and scored a miss. Gritting his teeth and letting the muzzle drop a trifle, Logan again squeezed the trigger.

With a jerk the rider straightened in his saddle just as he went behind the first fringe of brush and again the rifle spoke, this time sending its messenger through the bushes at a man already concealed.

Faintly there came up to the ears of Logan a sound of lead striking flesh with that peculiar *thup* that is known to hunters and soldiers the world over. Then a horse appeared at the next open space, a loosely swinging saddle under his belly and his legs actively engaged in an effort to kick it off.

"Fourth and last," said the deputy grim-

ly, as he reached in his pocket for his handkerchief to mop the blood from his chin.



IT WAS after noon that day when the people of Acton saw a man ride into the village, his chin bandaged by a huge red bandanna, clinging to the saddle-horn with both hands. Behind him trailed four horses and on his saddle-horn hung four belts and holsters. Kindly hands helped him from the saddle and ministered to his needs. The village doctor removed bandages, made from a shirt, that crossed his breast, and cleansed a bullet-wound.

"Glanced out again after hitting the rib. Rib busted, flesh a good bit torn, but nothing dangerous. Let's see the chin now."

"There's another crease across the right side from the back. Down near the waist, that is." And the patient tried to turn over without help.

"Hold up, there! Let us lift you over. —, man! I should say it is a crease. Only a flesh-wound, though."

When he had been patched and bandaged, Logan asked for a blank and wrote a telegram.

MRS. HENRY LACY, Galion, Ohio.

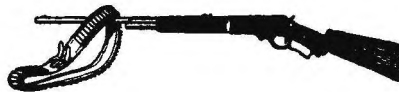
DEAR AUNT MATTIE:

Planted Jim's murderers today. Your loving nephew
BILL.

Later that afternoon the sheriff laid down a telegram from Ben Thomas, stating that he had abundant evidence that the band of hold-up men had escaped by way of Elisabeth Lake, to pick up another from Acton. He opened it and called excitedly to his chief deputy.

"Listen: 'Got them. Stub Leavitt, Coyote Parsons, Felipe Lopez and Juan Acosta. Recovered money. Meet me with ambulance 9:45 tonight. Acton buries robbers.— Bill Logan.'

"Now what do you know about that! He got 'em all and comes home all shot up, while Thomas swears they all escaped."



A Crossed Trail

by M.S. Wightman



Author of "On the Strength of the Evidence," "The Abduction of Swain," etc.

ON THE surface Asia had never been more peaceful. Ships plied between ports as usual; merchants bought and sold and made contracts for the future; the missionaries moved peacefully among the people, preaching their messages and healing the sick. There was no outward sign of the volcano which those few who control the destinies of races knew was almost ready to erupt, shattering the calm and turning the Pacific into a great battle-ground for contending fleets.

The *Peruvia* had just dropped anchor in Hongkong Harbor, and I was endeavoring to get from Ragan, her tall, lean-jawed skipper, some news of Brock.

Two weeks before Captain Brock, of the general staff, had slipped out of Manila with secret instructions for Admiral Willing in Shanghai. He had made the run to Nagasaki on the transport *Thomas*, and there transhipped to the *Peruvia* for the three-day journey up the China coast to Shanghai where the United States Asiatic Squadron was lying.

"You say he got through safely?" I asked.

"You mean did he get the papers to the admiral?" countered Ragan.

"Of course, that is what he was sent to do."

Ragan moved over and sat down in the swivel-chair before his desk, letting his glance wander through the open door across the blue strip of water to the bund with its swarms of Chinese coolies.

"Yes," he said after a moment's reflection, "I saw him board the launch which had been sent down for him, and the night we left Shanghai I had a wireless from him saying 'All right.' I take it nothing happened on the run up the Woosung River."

He picked up a pen and with it began to stab the blotter on his desk.

"Any new developments this morning?" he asked.

"No. Apparently the dickering is still going on at Washington. My feeling is that Japan will break off suddenly and try to strike a smashing blow like she did with Russia."

Ragan continued with his stabbing.

"I suppose so, and it will be the Asiatic Squadron. Their fleet was lying outside when we left Shanghai. You know what that squadron is, a mere collection of obsolete cruisers and river gunboats which are all right for overhauling junks and picking up pirates, but which would have about as much chance against a modern battleship as a man with a rock against a man with a rifle."

"And Brock," I went back to the man in whom I was interested, "I suppose he reported this to the admiral?"

"I suppose so," said Ragan laconically.

His manner piqued my curiosity. Evidently something had happened on that trip from Nagasaki to Shanghai which had left Ragan angry at the army captain.

"Look here," I asked, "what happened to make you sore at Brock? What did he do?"

Instead of answering Ragan shrugged his shoulders irritably. I did not urge him. He was in one of those moods when, if you let him alone, a man will eventually tell everything, but when trying to drive him is apt to provoke an explosion.

Morton, the purser, entered with a paper and handed it to Ragan who signed and returned it without a word. Then, as the door closed behind the officer, he threw his pen down on the desk and wheeled toward me.

"Brock is a fool," he said. "Why they should have chosen him for such a mission gets me. You want to know whether he got through with those papers. Well he did, but it would have been better if he had dropped them off the dock in Manila and never made the trip at all.

"Listen, I'll tell you what happened.

"We were on the point of sailing from Nagasaki when he came aboard. I was on the bridge and happened to notice him, because his *sampan* coolie had difficulty in getting up to the ship. I had met Brock at dinner at the Polo Club near Manila once, but I did not recognize him in the seedy little figure in a blue serge suit and shabby golf cap that climbed out of the *sampan* and lugged a brand-new leather bag up the stairs. A missionary, I thought, or perhaps a clerk from one of the China coast firms, and from the way he clung to that bag I judged he must have in it his other suit of clothes.

"I didn't waste much thought on him, however, for a few minutes later the quartermaster's launch made its way up to the landing-stage, and from it stepped a woman about whom I had also been doing a good deal of wondering since I had caught sight of her in Nagasaki on my last trip.

"Her name was Mrs. Carew and she dressed like a French doll. With her were Captain Beekman, the quartermaster whom the army keeps in Nagasaki, and a beefy major named Brooks who, I understood, had come over from Manila for his health, and was going home on the transport *Thomas* which had pulled in that morning and was lying some distance off our starboard quarter, her sides black with the coolies loading her with coal. I learned later that Brock had come from Manila on the transport and transhipped to the *Peruvia* without going ashore.

"Mrs. Carew was an old friend of mine,

our acquaintance dating back to the Russo-Japanese war, during which, as Agnes Caither, she had hung around the China coast—picking up information for the Japs. In a word she was a spy, and I suspect a good one; for she disappeared after the war, and I heard was living in considerable luxury in Paris.

"As I say, I had found her, although I hadn't spoken to her in Nagasaki on my last trip; and the sight of her more than anything else made me feel the seriousness of the situation between our country and Japan. Birds like Agnes Caither only leave their nests when the picking is good, and the picking is best when trouble is brewing.

"She was posing as the wife of a government agent who had been sent to Thibet on a secret mission; and while she pretended to wait for him in Nagasaki, she put in her time making friends with army people traveling back and forth between that port and the Philippines. I suspected that she was one of the main links in the chain of leaks that were constantly occurring, and I tried to warn Beekman; but you know how silly our people are about such things. If you talk to them about spies and secret agents, they simply laugh and put you down as a scaremonger.

"I wondered what she was doing on the *Peruvia*, but I did not suspect the truth until that night after dinner when Brock came to see me in my cabin and with a good deal of mystery and hesitation told me that he had papers for Admiral Willing in Shanghai, and there was a chance the Japanese had learned of it and might try to intercept him. He wanted me to put a man on duty to watch his cabin, without raising the suspicion that I had done so.

"I am traveling incognito," he said. "I don't want any one to spot me in case they have learned that messages are being sent."

"I agreed, of course. And, knowing how thoroughly the Japanese have the Philippines covered with their spies, I guessed—what turned out to be the fact—that they had learned of the mission. A little later I guessed—what also turned out to be a fact—that they had spotted Brock.

"He told me that for the trip he had taken the name of E. Martin, a traveling salesman for the Eastern Asbestos Company, and he took from his pocket a long, bulky envelope, whose flap had been roughly torn as though

by a thumb run underneath it. The envelope was addressed as he had said, and bore a canceled Philippine stamp. As he was returning it to his pocket I noticed some pencil sketches on its back, and merely for the sake of saying something asked him what they were.

"Sketches of gun placements on the bluffs along the Nagasaki roadstead which I made for Mrs. Carew this afternoon," he said.

"Mrs. Carew — Agnes Caither — there flashed into my mind a suspicion of the truth: she had been sent by the Japs to get those papers. I wondered whether she knew Brock had them; and a moment later he set my mind at rest on this score also.

"It was one of those accidents that you can't guard against," he said in answer to my question of how he had met her. "I was coming out of my cabin and happened to bump into Brooks who was with Mrs. Carew. Before I could tip him off, he had introduced me by my real name. Of course I am sorry—I had rather that no one but you should know who I am—but after all it makes no great difference. My secret is safe with her; she is an American and she hates the Japs like rats."

"I told him what I knew of Mrs. Carew—that a young Russian officer who had been friendly with her in Shanghai had shot himself at the Astor House, and another had been found dead in mysterious circumstances on the Bubbling Well Road near Hongkong; that she had no doubt been trying to pump Brooks and had been sent on the *Peruvia* for the very purpose of entrapping him. But it was no use. I might as well have been talking to the wind. He had, like the others, fallen under the spell of her charms.

"All right," I said at last, "I have warned you. You are playing right into her hands. Look out that she doesn't make a fool of you."

"He got up from his chair, fairly bristling with resentment and started for the door.

"Nobody's going to make a fool of me! I can care for myself. And I don't think it is nice of you, captain, to repeat the malicious gossip you hear about women."

"With this shot he left. Do you wonder that I thought him a fool?"

"I called Flaherty, the second officer, and had him send a man down to keep an eye on Brock's cabin. It was on the saloon deck

and could only be entered from the door opening onto the passageway leading to the main starboard corridor. There was no other opening in the room except a port overlooking the sea. Here, I will show you exactly how the cabins are arranged down there so you will understand what happened later."

Ragan took from a drawer of his desk a plan of the saloon deck of the *Peruvia*. Along either side of the ship, from the entrance to the dining-saloon to the after deck, ran a long corridor. Between these corridors and the sides of the ship were the cabins, opening onto smaller passages, two outer and two inner on each passage.

Brock had an outer cabin, and directly across the main corridor from its passage was the woman's bathroom. This extended entirely across the interior of the ship between the port and starboard corridors, and could be entered from either one.

"The position of the bath is important," said Ragan, "as you will see presently. Mrs. Carew had an outer cabin at the other end of the starboard corridor, having changed from the upper deck, I learned from Morton, because she thought there would be less motion down there. She had with her, although I did not discover it until the next day and even then thought nothing of it, a Japanese maid, Omata San.

"The cabin across the passage from Brock's was unoccupied, and in it Flaherty stationed the man on watch. And here, while I am explaining things, I may as well mention that the inner cabin, the one adjoining Brock's, was taken by a German, a fat, pudgy, beef-necked fellow named Schwartz. He, too, I learned after it was all over, had changed cabins, preferring an inner on account of its being less drafty.

"Well, to get back to what happened—it was Tuesday night that I had my talk with Brock. With good weather—and we had it all the way, the sea as smooth as the palm of your hand—we should reach Shanghai Saturday morning. I was convinced that Mrs. Carew was after those papers, and I suspected she would try to get them on Friday night, waiting until the last moment, so as to minimize the chances of their recovery. How she expected to get off the ship with them in case she was suspected, I could not determine; but I made up my mind that even if she got them from Brock, I would fool her about getting away. You

see, even knowing her as well as I did, I did not realize her resourcefulness.



"BROCK did not come to see me again, and, from the way he spoke when I passed him on deck, I judged that he was still holding against me what I had told him of Mrs. Carew. They were as thick as peas; he seemed to spend most of his time with her, although once I saw him playing chess with Schwartz in the smoking-room. And it was that afternoon that I first connected Schwartz with Mrs. Carew.

"He had preempted a corner in the smoking-room, in which he took his place immediately after breakfast; and there, except when he went below for his meals, he stayed until the bar closed at night, drinking beer and smoking a short, evil-smelling meerschau pipe.

"But as I was coming up the forward stairs from the main deck on Thursday afternoon, I noticed Schwartz coming toward me. His hands were clasped behind him and his big head bent forward as if it were too great an effort to hold it erect.

"Mrs. Carew stepped out from the entrance to the music-room just as he drew abreast of it, and apparently without looking he ran squarely into her. He drew back with a grunt of apology, then passed her and continued around the deck; but not before I had caught the look she gave him.

"Of course that's the sort of evidence that wouldn't hold in court; she had neither done nor said anything that I could have sworn to, but I knew as plainly as though they had talked for an hour that there was something between them. And, apparently, they had Brock sewed up; those two were the only persons he had made friends with on the ship, and, of course, they were the very two he should have avoided.

"I don't mind saying I felt pretty sore. In a way his mission was none of my business. But he had asked my aid to the extent of furnishing a watchman, and I had complied.

"I was tempted to wash my hands of the whole business, but in some way I could not. I knew the papers must be important or the Japs would not be making such an effort to obtain them. I made up my mind that the next day I would take a hand in the game—just how I hadn't determined—but I was going to get Brock through, not

for his own sake but for the sake of the mission. My intention was all right. The only trouble was I was running a day behind schedule.

"As I was finishing my breakfast in here on Thursday morning, Brock abruptly rushed in and dropped into a chair. A glance at his face and I knew that something had happened.

"He had evidently been interrupted in the midst of shaving, for one of his cheeks was pink and smooth, while the other was dark with a day's growth of beard, on which the lather had caked and dried. It gave him a ludicrous, uncouth appearance which his coat collar turned up above his pajama jacket heightened.

"He leaned forward in his chair, breathing hard, and after a moment managed to stammer out—

"'Captain, the papers—are gone.'

"It took me ten minutes and a glass of brandy to brace him up sufficiently to get a coherent story.

"'They must have been taken while I was playing chess with Schwartz,' he said at length, 'although it might have been afterward while I was asleep. Let's see, I'll try to tell you exactly what happened last night.

"'After dinner, I walked and sat for an hour or two with Mrs. Carew. Nothing unusual occurred, except that she was not feeling well, and once left me to go below for a bottle of smelling-salts in the hope that it would relieve the tightness in her head which she said a sea voyage always brought on. It did not, however, and half an hour later she said she would have to give up and go to her room.

"'I went down with her, said good night at her door, and continued to my own cabin. The papers were there then; I looked to see as I always did on entering. Ordinarily I turn in late, and I picked up a book, intending to read. But I was restless.

"'You remember it was hot and muggy last night; and when a boy came down with a message from Schwartz asking me to join him in a chess game in the smoking-room, I was glad to accept. Before leaving I glanced about the room. It was empty—no one was concealed in it, I am sure, for I looked both under the berth and the settee. It never occurred to me that any one could get in with the key in my pocket and a sailor watching the door from the opposite cabin.

"I was away for three hours or more. Four bells struck as I stepped on deck. We played two games, the first a draw after forty moves. Schwartz won the second by a brilliant but unsound development of the queen's pawn which took me unaware. I mention this because, as you will see, it took my mind off the papers.

"He suggested a third which I declined, although I wanted to play as the result had been unsatisfactory. It was late—nearly two as I noticed by the clock over the bar—and I suppose I must have had an unconscious feeling that I had been long enough away from my cabin. So I went below, leaving him sitting in his corner toying with the chessmen.

"The light was burning when I entered. This surprised me, for I thought I had, as usual, turned it off on leaving. And there was something else, a trifle perhaps——"

"Brock broke off in his narrative and ran his hand nervously over the unshaved side of his chin. He looked puzzled.

"Yes," I prompted, "what happened after you entered?"

"Brock bit his lip.

"Nothing," he said. "That is the trouble. I neglected to look for the papers. You see my mind was full of that chess game. It had occurred to me that I could have mated Schwartz by sacrificing my queen on the tenth move, and I was working out that problem. It was not until I was shaving this morning that I remembered the papers, and when I looked for them they were gone."

"He sat back staring at me with his blue eyes. There was no resentment in them then; instead they seemed to be begging me to assist him.

"I asked him where he had put the papers.

"You know each cabin has a life-preserver in a rack screwed to the ceiling. Well I had placed the package in the folds of the cork jacket in the one in my room."

"And you don't know how the intruder got in?"

"No," he said, "I don't. I locked the door when I left and it was locked when I returned."

"And what was it you noticed on entering? You spoke of something that seemed to have puzzled you?"

"It was a faint trace of verbena; and verbena is the perfume which Mrs. Carew uses!"

"I might have rubbed it into Brock, but I refrained. He seemed sufficiently cut up as it was, and from the way he mentioned Mrs. Carew's name, I thought he was through with her.

"Of course it was plain that while Schwartz kept him occupied in the smoking-room, she had entered his cabin and stolen the papers. How she had managed it remained to be explained; but that puzzled me less than her taking them on Thursday. Why had she not waited until Friday night? Did she think she would not be suspected, or was she unwilling to risk waiting until the last night before making her attempt? That seemed the most logical explanation. Yes, I admit I was fairly dense.

"Well," I said to Brock, "she may have the papers, but she hasn't gotten them ashore yet. Let's go down and see how she made her way into your cabin."

"The room was in a mess. The life-belt lay on the floor, and clothes were scattered everywhere. Evidently he had gone feverishly through his things before he came up to see me.

"It took us about ten minutes to find the manner of her entry. Brock discovered it—a big hole about a foot in diameter which had been sawed in the partition separating his cabin from Schwartz's, and in which the sawed-out piece had been carefully replaced. The hole was under the berth and so it would only be noticed by a careful search.

"We knocked out the plug and crawled through the opening into Schwartz's cabin.

"The German was lying on his back, a cotton nightcap covering his head, his pudgy hands folded across his fat stomach. His mouth was open, and through it came a succession of half-strangled, snorting grunts. I awoke him with a vigorous dig in the ribs, and he sat up dangling his short, gaudily bedecked legs over the side of his berth.

"Vat iss diss?" he asked, rubbing his eyes.

"We showed him the hole. He seemed surprised and emphatically shook his head.

"I know noding of it. I vass in de smoking-room, vere I sit all day. I don't come down here till two or tree o'clock lass night. You ask dot poy up dere; he see me ven I go out. I don't know noding."

"He stuck to his story and made no objection to our searching his cabin. But though we went through his belongings and examined the room inch by inch, even prodding the mattresses of the two berths with

a long, sailmaker's needle, we found no trace of the papers.

"It seemed clear then that Mrs. Carew had them, and, not wishing to give Schwartz a chance to communicate with her, I asked him to put on his clothes and come with us to my room. He agreed without hesitation.

"Vell, yess, I come!"

"While he was dressing, Brock crawled back to his cabin and completed his own toilet. His manner was bad enough, without adding to it by his costume."

Ragan paused to light a cigar; and before he resumed his story, Wilkins, the laconic first officer, appeared on the steps which led down from the chart-room.

"The *Empress of Asia* is just coming in."

"From Shanghai?" asked Ragan.

"From Shanghai, sir," returned the officer and disappeared up the stairs.



THE lanky captain emitted a cloud of smoke which drifted in circles across the room. He seemed less abrupt than he had when I first inquired about Brock; evidently telling the story was clarifying his own impressions.

"Hindsight is better than foresight," he continued after a brief reflection. "I should have suspected that Agnes Caither—or rather Mrs. Carew as she is now calling herself—had something up her sleeve. I confess she outguessed me. As for your friend Brock, he seemed helpless, lost, as spineless as a jellyfish.

"After we had come up here with Schwartz, I sent Wilkins down for Mrs. Carew. He brought back a message that she was sick and could not leave her berth.

"Then I went down myself; but it was not until I had knocked three times that the door suddenly opened and she stood in it confronting me. She wore a blue silk dressing-gown which she held gathered at her throat, and her light hair hung in two long plaits over her shoulders. I must say I don't wonder at her hold on men she tries to captivate.

"If she was surprised to see me—I hadn't spoken to her on the trip, and she could not be sure that I had recognized her—she did not show it in her manner. Instead she seemed hopping mad, and asked, as discourteously and shortly as though she had been speaking to her Chinese room-boy—

"What do you want?"

"I suspect you know without my telling

you, Miss Caither,' I answered, purposely using her former name.

"She looked at me levelly, apparently not the least disconcerted.

"Then you are mistaken,' she said, 'and you will please address me by my proper name. I am Mrs. Carew.'

"I then asked her to come up to my cabin, but she refused.

"I have a wretched headache,' she said. 'Please don't send any more people down here to pound on my door.'

"She made a movement to shut me out as she finished speaking, but I forestalled her by stepping inside.

"Headache or not, you must either come up to my cabin with me, or I must have yours searched with you in it,' I told her.

"She studied me for a moment; then her manner changed.

"I don't in the least know what it is all about, Captain Ragan, but I do know that you have the reputation of being a gallant sailor. Of course you wouldn't inconvenience a woman unless you felt that it was unavoidable, so I shall try to come.' Then she smiled and added: 'You don't mind my getting dressed do you? It will only take a few minutes.'

"I have known many women in my day, but never one who could put into her voice the throaty, seductive sweetness that Mrs. Carew gets into hers when she tries. It simply goes through you and takes your breath. For a moment I felt like a brute, and I think I apologized as I stepped through the door.

"Once outside, however, it occurred to me that she might try to smuggle the papers out of her cabin while I waited for her. But a glance into the adjoining cabins reassured me. They were empty, and there were no more holes—you may be sure I looked out for that. If she had the papers with her, she would have to conceal them either in her cabin or on her person; and I made up my mind that both would be searched.

"She may have brought her headache out with her, but I confess she did not look it. She wore the simple, black suit in which she had come aboard—clothes that had Paris stamped all over them—and a little round, brimless hat, pulled down over her hair, leaving a golden frame outlining her face. She looked more like a young, innocent girl than she did like the shrewdest adventuress in the Orient.

"She closed her door behind her; but I opened and fastened it so; and calling the sailor—an Irishman named Hogan—who had been watching Brock's cabin, put him on guard with instructions that no one was to be allowed to enter. Also I told him to keep an eye on the other two cabins down the corridor.

"As we came up on deck, I saw perhaps a mile ahead of us one of those little Japanese fishing fleets that infest these waters; but the sight made no impression on me. We were constantly passing similar fleets.

"My plan was to get Mrs. Carew and Schwartz together in my room, learn what I could from them, and then make a search for the papers. If we did not find them, I had not determined on the next move. But I thought we would locate them; there was more than a hint of nervousness in her manner, and I set it down to fear. Oh yes, I was feeling rather proud of my astuteness.

"Wilkins, Brock and Schwartz were waiting for us in here—Schwartz sitting there where you are, looking about as excited as a stuffed sausage, Brock in my chair with his head in his hands, and Wilkins standing guard on the stairs which led to the chart-room. At a sign from me he returned to the bridge.

"Mrs. Carew took in the scene at a glance, then she turned to me.

"And now, captain, you will perhaps tell me why you brought me here?" she said.

"I did so, and she listened without interruption, looking mostly at me, but once or twice stealing a quick, fleeting glance at Brock. When I had finished she crossed quickly to him and laid her hand on his arm.

"Surely, Tommy, you don't think I had anything to do with it, do you?"

"Can you beat that? No tears, no indignant protestations of innocence; just this simple appeal to the man who had been robbed. If you could have heard her, you would have sworn that she was the very angel of innocence.

"Brock winced when her hand touched him, but he neither replied nor looked at her, and for five minutes she continued to plead with him, as though neither Schwartz nor I had been in the room. Suddenly I became suspicious; in some way the idea that she was merely playing for time possessed me.

"I stepped forward to interrupt, but at

that moment there came the hoarse scream of the whistle, followed by a furious ringing of the reverse from the bridge. I bolted for the stairs.

"It's all right," said Wilkins as I rushed out on the bridge. "She cut square across us, and by gosh we nearly got her!"

"I followed the direction of his finger. We were passing through that fleet of fishing boats, and one, a schooner whose sails were flapping, lay not thirty yards off our bow. A brown, almost naked figure was leaning against her tiller, and I couldn't make out what he was trying to do. A number of similar figures were bending eagerly over the schooner's rail.

"And then, from the deck below came a shout, the gleam of something hurtling through the air, and a splash as it struck the water and disappeared. It reappeared a moment later; and I saw that it was a Japanese woman and she was struggling desperately to escape the suction at the side of the ship. She was stripped to the skin, and her hair which had become unbound was tossing in the water about her.

"A life-preserver thrown by some one from the deck fell beside her, but she ignored it as she went down the second time.

"Then, as she came up, two men from the fishing-boat joined her. I thought the screw had them, for I lost them in the churning of the water. But somehow they escaped it, for, as the schooner, clear of our blanketing, caught the wind and rounded up astern, I saw the three of them drawn aboard.

"For a moment in the excitement of the rescue I did not realize what it meant; then it suddenly flashed over me. Mrs. Carew had a Japanese maid!"

"And she went overboard with the papers, while her mistress was stringing you along in the cabin," I commented.



RAGAN tossed his cigar into the ash-receiver and twisted around in his chair.

"Did I begin by telling you that Brock was a fool?" he snapped.

And when I had admitted that he had, he added:

"And now I'll tell you why. You say, from what I have told you, that the girl had the papers?"

"Surely. Mrs. Carew must have taken them, given them to her maid who was hid-

ing somewhere, and thrown you off the track until the girl could make her getaway to the fishing-boat with them," I answered without hesitation.

Ragan laughed, a short, dry, unmirthful laugh.

"Exactly, and that is what I thought, too. But she hadn't. The papers were in Brock's cabin!"

He put by my exclamation with a wave of his hand; but there was a gleam of amusement in his eyes at my obvious bewilderment.

"Hogan, I told you, had been left to guard Mrs. Carew's cabin. As soon as I saw that the maid had escaped and that it would be useless to try to overhaul her, I slipped down and questioned him. He was boiling with excitement, but now and then broke off in his story to gaze somewhat stupidly at a flowered silk kimono he held in his hand.

"It seems that while he was standing in Mrs. Carew's door he noticed something flash out of the bathroom and disappear into the passage leading to Brock's cabin. He hustled down after it.

"The door was locked and it took him a few minutes to force it. The room was empty. Omata San, the maid, had slipped through the hole into the next cabin. Hogan did not know of that opening, and it was not until he heard Schwartz's door close that he realized where the girl was. He took out after her, as she raced down the corridor, and actually caught her as she climbed the rail on the after deck. But all he got was the kimono, which she slipped off as she jumped.

"A moment later, when I entered Brock's cabin, I found out what she had gone there for.

"On the settee, half hidden under some clothes, was a package wrapped in oil-skin paper; and from Brock's expression when he saw it—I had sent Hogan for him—I knew that it contained the missing papers.

"Now what do you make of it?"

"They must have copied the papers and returned the originals," I ventured. "But I don't see why they took that trouble and ran the risk of being caught by having the girl return to the cabin."

"Oh," said Ragan, "I figured that out. Mrs. Carew expected the girl to slip in without being detected. That was the brilliant part of her plan. She could not be held for stealing the papers, because the

papers were in the cabin and might, of course, have been there all the time. And then the admiral could not be certain that the contents of the papers were known to the Japs. As it was, in spite of Omata San's being discovered, her plans worked out just as she must have hoped they would."

"I don't understand," I said. "Surely the admiral must know that his orders have been reported to the fleet on guard off Shanghai."

Ragan brought his fist down angrily on the desk; then rising abruptly he began to pace the floor.

"No," he said, "the admiral doesn't. And you must warn him. My God man, if he put to sea they would pot him before he got out of sight of land! You see Brock wouldn't believe the plain evidence of his senses.

"No, it sounds incredible, but it's true. He even apologized to Mrs. Carew before he left the ship."

"But the girl going down to his cabin, and then jumping overboard. How did she explain that?"

"Explain it? She said at once that the girl must have been a spy. But she made Brock believe that she knew nothing of Omata San's intentions and that Hogan had frightened her off before she learned what was in the papers."

Ragan continued to pace the floor, gnawing at his under lip. I turned over in my mind the story he had told me. Somehow I could not escape the feeling that there was something yet to be explained. Brock could never have been as gullible as the captain had pictured him.

Presently Ragan paused.

"I don't know what instructions those papers contained," he said. "But you must get word to the admiral, Peel, that they are waiting for him. Can you do it?"

"I don't know, but I'll try," I said.



IT WAS some hours later. The crash had come. It was war.

Ragan was facing me across a lunch-table in the Hongkong Hotel. He had spoken but little since we learned the news. I suspect he was thinking of our men trapped on the hopelessly outclassed ships in Shanghai, whom we had been unable to warn. Had they ventured out? Had they gone down, giving their lives in useless sacrifice?

Suddenly he lifted his head with a start, while a frown settled between his eyebrows.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Look behind you," he said.

I followed the direction of his glance. A party of women had left the third table from the one at which we were sitting, disclosing a small table in the corner which had been cut off by their hats. Over it Brock was bending in earnest conversation with a woman whose beauty was evident even at the distance which separated us. Her face, which was turned up to his, wore, unless my eyes were deceiving me, a look of terror.

Presently she rose and with a quick nod slipped quietly from the room. As he turned, I caught his eye and beckoned to him.

He came over and sat down at our table. His face was grave and his manner vaguely abstracted as he greeted us.

"Haven't you finished with that woman yet?" exploded Ragan. "Can't you realize, man, that your country is at war? Haven't you already let her do enough damage?"

Brock glanced quietly at the excited captain.

"She will do no more damage I think. The Japs believe she double-crossed them. They are after her. You know what that means."

"Double-crossed them?" echoed Ragan. And then as the meaning of Brock's words came to him, he leaned forward eagerly. "You mean she didn't get the papers after all? The squadron is safe?"

Brock took from his pocket a yellow slip of paper and handed it to Ragan. It was a cablegram, dated from Manila, announcing that the Asiatic Squadron had anchored safely behind the guns of Corregidor.

"I found it when I arrived on the *Empress of Asia* this morning," he said.

"Why didn't you cross with them? Why did you come up here?" I asked.

Brock dropped his glance and lighted a cigaret before replying. Then, as a blue spiral of smoke curled up above his head, he said with a slight show of defiance in his manner:

"I wanted to warn Mrs. Carew. I felt that I was somewhat in her debt."

Ragan pushed back his chair, as he passed his hand slowly across his forehead.

"Either you are crazy or I am," he said. "Do you mean that you and Mrs. Carew were working together?"

With a fork Brock began to draw circles on the table-cloth.

"No, she wasn't. I'll explain. I owe it to you anyway, Ragan, because I have caused you a good deal of anguish of spirit. Unfortunately it could not be helped.

"Do you remember Poe's story 'The Purloined Letter,' the point of which is that the minister kept the letter he had stolen out of the hands of the police by not hiding it at all, but leaving it in plain view in a card-rack as if he attached no importance to it? Well, when I started on my mission, I determined to adopt Poe's ruse. The messages to the admiral were in that old envelope which you may remember I showed you the first night I talked with you, and on the back of which, as if it were of no value, I had made some sketches for Mrs. Carew.

"The package she stole was one I had put in the life-preserver for the very purpose of having her steal—a dummy, carefully prepared in advance, to throw any possible spies off the track.

"You saw how well the ruse succeeded. And your anger at me allayed any possible suspicions that she or Schwartz might have had. That was the reason I could not take you into my confidence. They might think I was stupid enough to believe her story, but they would have suspected you, if you had not been as upset as you were. I wanted them to be certain they had succeeded."

Ragan stared at Brock for a full minute, while his mind evidently went over what had happened, interpreting it in the light of this new disclosure. Then, in a voice into which a note of respect had crept, he said:

"But tell me one thing. I don't yet understand how she has placed you in her debt."

Brock dropped the fork, slowly folded the telegram and replaced it in his pocket.

"Well," he said, with a dry smile, "I thought that if they stole the papers to get information, we might as well give them the information we wanted them to have. So in those she got the admiral was instructed in no circumstances to leave Shanghai, while the ones I delivered told him to run for it. The Japs, thinking that our squadron would remain bottled up in Shanghai, drew off, and Admiral Willing was half-way to Manila before they even learned that he had come out."



The Fox-Trot of *by* David The Crazy Gleam *P* Potter

IN THE Crazy Gleam Saloon at Sandy Flat there were always faro and poker for gentlemen who cared for a quiet game; a vast deal of bad liquor, and a little of good, for those who drank—and this included everybody; and, through the wide doorway to the left of the bar, lively music and a hardwood floor for those who liked to dance with pretty girls.

“Pretty” as applied to the young women whose presence lent a feminine charm—somewhat tarnished, to be sure—to the social atmosphere of the Crazy Gleam was not the ironical misnomer one might imagine. “Utah,” the proprietor of this popular resort, boasted that he had “the likeliest girls on the Rio Grande.” Making due allowance for the fact that Sandy Flat was a “bad-man’s town” in the Texas chaparral, the boast might pass unchallenged. Besides, “likeliest” is a very vague term.

A little out of the glare of the lamplight, Nick Ramsay sat at a table with the very prettiest of the dance-hall girls. Almost any other of the male habitués of the Crazy Gleam would have counted it a high compliment to be allowed to chat with Kitty Courtney for twenty whole minutes, but if Nick regarded it as such he did not show it. Not that he lacked in courtesy. On the contrary, his bearing toward the spoiled beauty of the dance-hall was as polite and

formal as if she were of the “first circles” of San Antonio or Houston.

It was in the genial aloofness of his brown eyes and brown face that his lack of interest showed. Kitty was fully conscious of his indifference toward her. Her resentment of it was only half humorous.

“I don’t know what in the world’s the matter with you, Nick,” she said in a voice surprisingly well modulated. “You don’t seem to like me a little bit. Yet I’ve been real nice to you. If it was anybody else but a little fella’ like you who maybe don’t know any better, I wouldn’t stand it, believe me!” Her eyes and mouth mocked him. “Look here! Maybe it’s just because you’re such a kid you don’t have a man’s feelings! Or maybe I’m not pretty enough for you! I reckon somebody else would try to entertain me some if I was with him—Duke Bartlett over there, or Cactus Kimball, maybe.”

She eyed him covertly to note the effect of this last shot.

Kitty Courtney was almost as tall as the young man whom she thus challenged. Her figure was slim yet warmly molded. Her cheeks were free of rouge, and their clear whiteness was sprinkled here and there with the gold-dust of tiny freckles. Her eyes were a clear gray. But her chief claim to distinction lay in the tawny-red hair, always shining from sedulous brushings, that hung in a great braid to her waist.

Of her costume the less said the better.

"Maybe you think I'm not pretty enough for you, kid!" she said again.

Her companion regarded her with a sort of reserved gaiety.

"You know you're prettier than the Lord ever ought to let a girl be, Kitty," he answered. "That hair of yours is wonderful! Enough to keep a man awake nights just thinking about it! You know that. And I reckon pretty near' every man in Texas would give his saddle and gun just to kiss those freckles at the corner of your mouth there."

The girl could not hide a smile of gratification, but she was by no means satisfied.

"Pretty near' every man, but not you, Nick! Is that it?"

"You're plenty sweet enough for anybody to want to kiss, Kitty."

But she was alive to his evasion.

"You're just a kid, that's what's the matter with you!" she said scornfully. "You're only halfway grown up yet. I know you're quick enough at gun-play: I saw you with Black Hendricks two weeks ago when he was drunk and drew on you. You shot his gun right out of his hand and never touched him. Some shooting! But when it comes to a girl, you're sure just a baby, all right!"

He smiled faintly.

"Maybe I'll grow up to be a real man—if I live long enough."

She leaned toward him.

"Where did you come from, anyway, kid? And what are you hanging around this God-forsaken hole for? You've been here three or four weeks now, haven't you? And you don't gamble to speak of, and you don't ever get drunk, and you certainly don't pay much attention to any of us girls! What are you, Nick—a gun-runner for the Mexicans over across the river, or a boy hold-up, or what? You certainly don't look like a man-killer, angel-face!"

She studied him frankly. His brown hair was smooth and straight, but worn short, in direct contrast to the style most favored of the peculiar gentry who frequented that part of the border. His merry brown face gave him a particularly boyish appearance, not a little enhanced—despite the heavy revolver that hung at his hip—by the slenderness of his figure.

Until one noticed the steadiness of his smiling eyes or caught the potentialities of

his quick voice, a stranger might have thought there was no one in Sandy Flat who might be insulted with less chance of the insult being resented.

"No-o," she said. "You certainly don't look like much of a gunman, but I saw you with that Hendricks, and so I know you've got mighty good nerve. Look here! You aren't a real patent-medicine faker like the one you 'took off' the other night to make the boys laugh?"

Again he smiled faintly.

"If I wasn't the real goods I was pretty near it, wasn't I? Maybe that's what I am—a faker down here to dig mesquite roots and make a good-for-what-ails-you medicine out of them."

"Oh, pshaw! Of course not! But you certainly did have all their sleight-of-hand tricks down fine the other night. You picked quarters out of Hazel Kelly's hair, and out of Utah's ear, and you pulled all that paper out of Cactus Kimball's mouth like you were the realest kind of magician. And the way you took up Duke Bartlett's dare, and let him throw butcher-knives at you was a caution! You didn't have to dodge a single one—you caught 'em all! Duke threw them hard, too, and I can tell when people throw hard. I can throw some myself—I used to play basket-ball."

The boy's face showed a sudden, genuine interest.

"Basket-ball? Where?"

"Back in San Francisco—in the old Sutro High School."

"How did you ever come to drift to Sandy Flat, Kitty?"

"God knows!" Her voice had a sudden harshness. "How does anybody drift down to this hell-country! How did *you*? You're only a kid, and maybe you were a good kid once—yes, maybe you are yet! And Duke Bartlett over there! How did he come to get here? He's a rotten bad one, all right, but anybody can see he had manners once, although I reckon he always was one of the kind who couldn't ever be trusted with a woman. Yes, how did anybody ever come to Sandy Flat?"

"I beg your pardon for asking, Kitty," he said with grave formality that sounded odd on his boyish lips. "I reckon I ought to have known better than to ask what I did."

"Oh, that's all right," she returned. "A Crazy Gleam dance-hall girl hasn't got

much right to be touchy, that's sure." She smiled a little wryly, then reverted to a subject already touched on. "I reckon Duke was right disappointed when you caught those knives so easy."

"Yes. He certainly counted on my dodging and letting him clean up that twenty-dollar gold-piece."

The girl shook her head thoughtfully.

"No, I reckon he didn't want you to dodge—he just wanted you to miss one. If you had, it would have gone clean through you!"

The young man's glance flickered over her keenly.

"What makes you reckon that way?" he asked.

"Well, Duke acted real ugly, it seemed to me. He threw those knives at you hard. He certainly meant something mean. I tell you I know how people throw when they throw in earnest—I used to shoot a good basket-ball in the old Sutro High." She leaned toward him and spoke in a confidential undertone. "I've noticed Duke watching you lately when he was sure you weren't noticing. What's he got against you anyway, Nick?"

For a moment the other was silent. "If he's got anything, it's news to me," he rejoined presently. "I never saw this man Duke Bartlett until I drifted in here last month. Is he a particular friend of yours?"

"Well, he'd like to be." Her glance went to a table across the room. "He's a pretty good-looker, all right!"

Nick Ramsay's eyes followed the direction of her glance with seeming indifference. Duke Bartlett, both as to his bearing and attire, had that peculiar approach to conventionality which in the Southwest marks a man as a professional gambler. Yet that he was even more of an outlaw than a gambler might well be surmised.

He was tall and lean, and every line of body and face showed that he was as hard as iron. This hardness threw into relief, rather than diminished, the attraction of his handsome, although evil-looking face. His cheeks had a ruddiness that no tan of the Texas sun could obscure, and his teeth showing often in a mirthless smile, were very white.

Certain features lessened one's first impression of his good looks. His eyes were a pale blue and had a bleak look that readily became a sardonic and forbidding glare.

His dark hair, although his age could not have exceeded thirty years, was streaked with gray. A decided touch of the bizarre was given to his face by the straw-colored mustache that divided long thin nose from long thin lip.

At the moment Nick Ramsay glanced toward him, Duke and his chief ally, Cactus Kimball, were chatting boisterously with two of the dance-hall girls. From the latter rose shrill laughter.

The negro orchestra—piano, cornet, and three accordions—stationed on a platform at the end of the room, at that moment struck up a maddening one-step. Duke Bartlett and his painted companion rose and swung into the dance. As they swept past Nick the latter could feel the tall gambler's eye fixed keenly upon him. He turned his impassive face toward Kitty Courtney.

"Do you know anything about this man, Duke Bartlett?" he asked.

"I know he's a gunman," she said. "He's a man-killer! They say that over in Arizona there wasn't a town marshal would dare face him. It took the Rangers to run him out of Arizona, and he got a couple of them while they were doing it. That's what Utah says, and I reckon he knows if anybody does. Yes, and here in Sandy Flat, Duke has got his man once since I've been here. You'd better watch out for yourself, little boy, if he's after you at all."

"Sounds like he was real bad," commented Nick carelessly.

"Oh, he's bad, all right," returned Kitty. "But he likes me!" She leaned toward him until her tawny-red hair almost brushed his face. "Look here, Nick! Why don't you like me?"

"I do like you," he said gently. "I like you a whole lot. Yes, a lot more than maybe you'd believe!"

Although she had demanded an answer, yet its tenor seemed rather to take the girl aback.

"O - oh!" she said with plaintiveness. "You do like me! Well, if you do, why don't you ever dance with me? I've asked you—twice—if you didn't want to dance with me, but you got out of it some way or other both times. And I've looked at you I don't know how many times. I reckon you know I don't have to ask people to dance with me!"

She turned her head to gaze a moment

about the hall where the night's festivities were in full swing.

Utah, the proprietor of the Crazy Gleam, was in the act of doing something in which he took a whimsical delight—the personal direction of his “five-nigger band,” as he himself put it.

Utah was a tall man, enormously fat. His smooth-shaven face was shapeless—a mere mass of flesh; yet somehow one became conscious of a pair of blue and not unkindly eyes buried within that flesh. Respect for his mammoth proportions was sustained by the certainty of his mammoth strength and by his reputation for uncanny skill with the derringer. It was said that he always kept a half dozen of the deadly little weapons stowed about his person—in his waistcoat pockets and in his sleeves. Such was the rumor.

Just now, obedient to the brandishing of Utah's shapeless hand, the three accordeons, the cornet, and the piano, were sounding forth the tempo of a maddening tango. To the tune, men of all degrees of roughness were dancing with girls of all degrees of tawdriness, but one and all with an absolute lack of the restraint a more reputable society would have demanded.

Some of the men had laid aside their weapons in order to dance unimpeded. But Nick Ramsay noticed that Duke Bartlett—whirling past, chest to bosom and knee to knee with Hazel Kelly, still carried a heavy gun on each hip.

Kitty Courtney jerked her head toward Bartlett and his garish companion.

“Duke, there,” she said. “He guyed me a while ago, when you threw me down and wouldn't dance. Yes, he did! He and that Hazel Kelly guyed me good and hard. Some girls wouldn't stand for being treated the way you've treated me, Nick. Oh, you're mighty polite about it—but that doesn't help any! Some girls would yell they were insulted, and would sick a man-killer on to you—a man like Duke, maybe.”

“Yes, some girls would,” he agreed smilingly.

Her gray eyes transfixed him.

“Well! What's the answer? If you like me so much, why don't you dance with me—once in a while, anyway?”

For the first time he showed signs of nervousness. His hand went up to smooth his brown hair, already immaculately laid, and his eyes wavered a little before hers.

“Well?” she said again. “I'm waiting!”

“I'll tell you, Kitty,” he said. “I haven't ever danced with you just because I do like you so much!”

He paused a moment, and a shadow darkened his boyish face. When he spoke his voice was very dreary.

“You see, Kitty, I had a sister—a year or so ago—about your age, I reckon. She lived back where I come from. I hadn't seen her for two or three years, but I never reckoned any harm could come to her. Then one day I got a letter from a friend! The knuckles of his hand, resting on the table, showed white. “Well, when I got home I was too late. She—and the man—were both gone!” His lips twitched. “You see, if she ain't dead, I've always kind of reckoned she must be in a place—like this, or worse, by this time.”

His slight form seemed to shrink a little in his chair.

“So, somehow, on account of her—of my little sister Bess—it seemed to me it was more respectful to you not to dance with you.”

She stared at him, at first only half comprehending. Then gradually the conscious red crept beneath the gold-dust of her cheeks. Her eyes fell.

“I—I see what you mean, boy,” she said softly. “Any man who comes to the Crazy Gleam can dance with me. Any man who spends money—enough money—at Utah's bar, or who loses money to his card-sharps, has got a right to dance with me. And he's got a right to dance the way he wants.”

Her eyes strayed to her bare arms and to the abbreviated skirt and the pretense of stockings which left her knees in the same condition as her arms. When she spoke her voice had a harsher note.

“Any scum has got a right to treat me rotten, if he wants to—and he generally does! The way some men dance—faugh!”

She controlled herself by an effort. Again her voice sounded softly mellow.

“But you—you won't dance with me at all, because you think it's ‘more respectful' not to! Babe!—Babe! I didn't reckon there was anybody in this world would ever think of being respectful to me again!”

He nodded gently.

“That's the way I've sort of felt about it.”

She regarded him in silence.

The orchestra had begun to play an alluring fox-trot. Utah, his fat face shining with delight, still led the grinning musicians, or, at any rate, gave himself and them the pleasure of pretending to do so. Presently he began to sing aloud, not in a formidable bass as one might have expected, but in a thin, penetrating tenor that sounded even above the blare of the cornet, the strumming of the piano, and the drone of the accordions. Sang Utah:

"There's a fox—down in the rocks,
And when the moon is shinin' bright,
Takes a whirl—with his girl,
And they keep it up all night.
They prancel—and dance!
Do it right! right! right! right!"

Kitty Courtney stood up abruptly.

"You're all right, boy," she said. "I—I want to thank you—for what you've said about me. But I'd like you to dance with me—just once. Do you hear that fox-trot? Let's show all this scum how a real man—how a gentleman—dances with a—nice girl!"

They glided into the fox-trot. But at the first step Nick's heavy Colt's banged annoyingly against his hip. With an apology, he stopped and began to adjust his belt.

"My gun bothers me," he smiled, "me not dancin' much lately."

"Why don't you take it off?" she suggested. "Put it on our table there." Then, as he palpably hesitated, "You don't reckon anybody'll draw a gun on you to-night, do you?"

"You can't ever tell," he rejoined.

Nevertheless, he unbuckled his belt and put pistol and sheath on the near-by table.

"Now then, Kitty," he said.



SHE melted into his arms, and they floated softly away in the fox-trot.

Her crown of tawny-red hair and her cheeks with their delicate gold-dust of freckles were close to his face. The melody, the more passionate for its ever-present undertone of melancholy, lured the boy and girl.

All about them rouged and powdered girls frolicked with lithe and reckless men in the manner which had made the Crazy Gleam dance-hall famous even in a hard town in a hard land. But Kitty Courtney and Nick Ramsay danced with perfect propriety and decorum. The impeccable

good taste of their very motion would have made their dancing distinguished even in a Boston ball-room.

When they had circled the room once, Kitty looked up at him, her gray eyes very kind.

"You're a nice boy, Nick," she said softly. "You're a gentleman!" And half way around she spoke again. "Your sister, Nick! I'm mighty sorry about her. I only hope if—if she's dancing anywhere now, she's doing it with a fella' like you."

At that moment they were collided with violently—so violently as almost to knock Nick from his feet. A girl screamed with pain behind them.

Nick and Kitty fell apart and looked around. It was Hazel Kelly who had screamed, and Duke Bartlett stood glaring at Nick.

"Where do you think you're going?" demanded the tall gunman viciously.

"Excuse me, Hazel!" said the boy solicitously. "I hope you—"

"Shut up!" broke in Duke savagely. "You go butting around here like you owned this place. You're too gay!"

There was that in the man's tone no less than in his words, in the glare of his pale blue eyes, that disclosed to Nick Ramsay that he stood in deadly peril. Duke was deliberately forcing a quarrel. Although his impassive face did not alter, Nick remembered sickeningly that he had left his gun on the table where he and Kitty had been sitting.

"I'm sorry if Hazel's hurt," he began. "But it was you who turned the wrong way, not me."

"You're a liar!"

Nick's face set. A flame glowed in his brown eyes.

"I see through you," he said evenly. "I know you now. You yellow dog!"

Duke's glance flickered from Nick's gunless hip over to the table where the gun lay. His pale eyes glared. In a flash he swung up his Colt. For a breath, perforce, he held the muzzle of the gun aloft while he uttered the single word that even the almost complete lack of scruple of that outlaw community made imperative.

"Draw!" he snarled, and threw down on Nick Ramsay at the word.

The boy flung himself sidewise, not with the hope of escaping the shot of the

professed man-killer, but with the resolution of one who fights to the last.

The impact of the heavy bullet spun him clear around. He fell, his face toward his enemy. But instantly he propped himself on his elbow. His voice rang like steel.

"You yellow skunk!"

Duke Bartlett, his Colt again poised, glared down at him. But the boy ignored that incarnate death. His scornful eyes transfixed Kitty Courtney who stood supporting herself against the fatal table.

"You!" His voice was like breaking ice. "I'd never believe you'd be in on a trick like this!"

The girl started forward.

"No! no! Nick! O my God! I didn't know anything about it! It was just an accident my getting you to drop your gun!" She whirled on Bartlett. "—you, Duke! I wouldn't take your dare that I couldn't make him dance with me, but I never knew you meant to shoot him. You're killing a man who isn't heeled! You sha'n't! You sha'n't!"

She ran at him screaming. But Cactus Kimball seized her and thrust her roughly back.

"You keep out of this!" he ordered. "This is a fair fight. It's nobody else's business. This thing is between Duke and him."

"That's right!" said Bartlett grimly.

After his first shot the gunman had as yet withheld a second—not from any touch of compassion but for two very practical reasons. In the first place, he had shot down a plainly unarmed man, a thing unpalatable even to the lawless habitués of Sandy Flat; and in the second place, his well-founded belief in his own deadly skill gave him assurance that Nick must be mortally wounded. Why arouse the latent hostility of the spectators by a second and unnecessary shot?

But his grim assent to his friend, Cactus Kimball's declaration drew upon him the dauntless eyes of Nick Ramsay.

"Shoot!" exclaimed the boy. "Shoot! Before I tell 'em why! Before I tell 'em why—you dog!"

The devilish gleam in Duke's pale eyes showed that the moment was to be the stricken lad's last. Kitty buried her face in her hands.

"Stop!"

It was the piercing voice of Utah that

uttered the stern command—not to be disobeyed even by a man-killer in the very act of throwing down on his victim for the finishing shot. But without removing his rattlesnake glare from the fallen man, Duke protested viciously.

"This is a personal affair, Utah!"

"I don't say it ain't. But is it a fair fight? And you've downed the kid already. He's mighty hard hit for mighty little, judgin' from what I seen of this. If you're so set on killin' him, let's hear the why of it, first."

Utah bulked enormous in the front line of the lane of spectators. He bore no visible weapons, and neither his words nor his tones were menacing, but his blue eyes seemed to show large and clear from his fat face. The thumb and forefinger of each hand rested carelessly in his waistcoat pockets.

None knew better than Duke Bartlett that to fire on Nick Ramsay at that moment was to run the risk of deadly argument with the proprietor of the Crazy Gleam. It seemed best to temporize for a moment, until he had set himself right in public opinion as represented by Utah.

"It's a personal matter between him and me," he insisted. "I gave him a chance to draw. I reckoned he had another gun in his shirt. I gave him a square deal."

"It's a lie!" exclaimed Kitty Courtney. "You shot him like a dog!"

During this colloquy which, indeed, had lasted only a few seconds, Nick had been mustering his failing strength. Now, propped on his elbow, his burning brown eyes never swerving from Duke's face, he spoke evenly and rapidly.

"You downed me this way because you were afraid if you didn't I'd down you—in a fair fight! You knew me before I'd any more than begun to guess you were the man I've been after for a year! You're the man who took my sister! Ruined her! I'd never seen you, but I reckon she—my little Bess—had a picture of me. And so you placed me, but I'd only heard what you looked like. And you must have looked mighty different in other clothes. That's the reason I didn't know Duke Bartlett was Hal Lawson—the dog who ruined my sister! And then you threw her to the wolves!" The fury of his eyes was like fire. "Where is she, Lawson? Where's my little sister, Bess?"

A faint stir went through the bystanders! Duke Bartlett was instant in perceiving that, except for his staunch ally, Cactus Kimball, the current of public opinion was setting against him. He knew that if he were to carry out his purpose in regard to the brother of the girl he had ruined and then heartlessly abandoned, he must make further effort to avert the unfavorable judgment of his fellows. He turned his sardonic glance toward Utah.

"That yelping coyote there," he began.

"Duke!" exclaimed Cactus Kimball piercingly.

The gunman snapped his eyes back on Nick Ramsay. But he was too late! In the instant that Duke's head had been turned away, Nick's eyes had flickered urgently to Kitty Courtney's, then to the table beside her where his gun lay in harmless isolation.

Not very long before, but in a very different life, a girl—not called Kitty Courtney then—had often shot a basket-ball twenty yards into an iron-rimmed net for a goal. Now the wounded boy on the floor lay not twenty feet away! Kitty's hand closed like lightning over the butt of the heavy revolver. Sheer from the leather sheath she plucked the gun. Butt-end first it came like a bullet to Nick Ramsay's hand.

Duke's eyes had wandered only for an instant. Even as Kitty made her throw, he swung on Nick. In one motion, the boy caught and fired his gun. The weapons of the two men spouted fire together.

Duke's bullet fanned Nick's cheek. But the paralyzing shock of a blow in the abdomen fairly rocked Duke Bartlett as he stood. His body jerked like an over-stretched wire. Twice he fired again, but the bullets only buried themselves in the ceiling.

The man-killer sank slowly to his knees. In his pale eyes gleamed a horrible fear. The gun slipped from his hand, and he swayed slowly to one side. A hoarse whisper came from his lips.

"I've got mine! I've—got—mine!" He died as he spoke.

It was Utah's voice that broke the tense silence. His tones were pitying although his words sounded harsh.

"Take him away, boys," he said. "I reckon we're all willin' to agree he got his."

As Duke's body was borne out of the dance-hall, Nick Ramsay relaxed his sternly watchful attitude. The elbow that had so long sustained him crumpled. He sank slowly back, his eyes closed. Kitty Courtney ran to him.

"Nick!" she cried. "Are you hurt bad, boy? Oh, Utah, quick! He's dying!"

But Nick opened his eyes.

"No. I'm all right, Kitty. Just a shoulder hit. I reckon the bullet didn't break the bone."

At Utah's imperative gesture a couple of men helped him to his feet. He stood swaying, one arm sagging painfully. Then Kitty pushed the men aside and, lifting the injured arm with exquisite gentleness, laid it about her neck. They moved slowly down the room.

But Utah had already resumed his place in front of his "five-nigger band." He brandished a fat hand. At the signal, piano, cornet, and accordions broke into the luring croon of the fox-trot.

At the door of the dance-hall Nick was compelled to rest a moment. Kitty looked up at him encouragingly yet shyly.

"Some fox-trotting you and I did, kid!"

He smiled wistfully.

"You're the real thing, Kitty," he said. "I'm much obliged to you for that throw. That sure was some basket-ball playing!" He looked down at her, smiling queerly. "When—when I'm feeling a little more lively, Kitty, I want to have a real good talk with you. I want to ask you something."

His tone and the strange tenderness of his smile thrilled the girl profoundly. A deep, slow red burned her cheeks.

"Oh, Nick!" she said.

His smile held her entranced, trembling.

"There's a preacher up in El Paso," he murmured.

"Oh, Nick!" breathed the girl again.

Against Chance



WHEN he saw it first, Officer Larry McQuade was watching the noon press of humanity from the shade of an awning on Liberty Street. On the corner across there was a sudden widening eddy in the stream of pedestrians and loud excited cries. He had been standing as if at attention; but now, all thought of his official dignity gone, he ran forward, dodging street cars and motor trucks with surprising agility.

As the officer neared the disturbance a slim and dapper young man with sophisticated eyes detached himself from the fringes of the crowd and made off. He was the only individual who was moving away from the scene of the excitement; he went with a repressed haste that was unnatural.

Larry swerved instinctively. Somebody had done something; witness the crowd. Here was a fellow who might have done it; witness his endeavor to escape in an innocently casual manner.

More than that, Larry saw that the young man, out of the tail of his eye, saw him and quickened his gait with a nervous, sweeping arm gesture. Officer McQuade grasped him by the shoulder just as a portly, crimson-faced man popped out of the crowd, crying:

"That's him, officer. I'm sure that's the fellow. He picked my pocket right there on the corner."

For a swift instant the two in the street stood apart and still, the prisoner as if

justice had caught up with him, the policeman as if wondering what an older head would do next. Larry McQuade was as new as his uniform; it was his first chance to make good.

Back in the gaping crowd one man caught the full significance of that momentary indecision. He was a gray man—gray of hair and eye, and so unobtrusive that no man ever favored him with a second glance and few men ever saw him at all. Even the shape of his gray hat was designed to shroud his features, and from under it he shot a swift glance at the prisoner.

His native common sense came to Officer McQuade's assistance. He possessed no handbook on "What To Do When You Have Captured A Pickpocket," but, since he believed he had the thief, the next thing to do was to recover what the thief had stolen.

Larry searched his prisoner at the curb. A good gold watch without chain or fob, a card-case, a pocket-knife, keys, and some small change, was what he found. The fat man had lost a pocketbook and the prisoner did not have it.

"I tell you he took it not two minutes ago," blustered the victim, his voice rising as his assurance waned. "It had a hundred and forty dollars in it in gold certificates. I'm not mistaken, I know. He got it and he must have it."

By what he had seen of Larry McQuade the gray man was made bold to remain well

back in the crowd. He glanced at the prisoner again.

"It's a mistake, officer," that young man said smoothly. "This gentleman is excited and doesn't realize what he says. I am a bookkeeper and a reputable citizen."

He paused for just one emphatic instant.

"Of course, he's just a citizen and he can make a charge without it mattering, but if I were you I would be careful."

The lieutenant, a massive man with a cold gray eye, loomed large in Larry's imagination. Certainly he did not want to make a mistake. He did not know what the lieutenant would say, but he knew that it would be short, sharp, and plenty. Yet he spoke with the voice of confident authority—

"Where d'you work?"

The fat man, in growing doubt, waited for the answer.

"Why, nowhere just yet," the young man explained. "I'm down here now looking for a situation. I'm a stranger in town, from Denver."

From the card-case he extracted a card:

"Edward A. Gay, Accountant, Denver, Colorado."

Of a sudden Larry was acutely conscious than an older officer might have conducted this investigation in the privacy of the station. But he had more at stake, and he could not forget that lieutenant. Then there were the other officers, and already they were quick to laugh.

The prisoner seemed so sure of himself that the fat victim was almost ready to apologize, and Larry's suspicion seemed less justified. Then a chance curiosity-seeker kicked a pair of triangular-nosed cutting pliers out of the dust of the gutter. Larry recalled that sweeping gesture of the suspect's arm when he first saw the officer. And under his hand he felt the slim young man twitch when he saw the pliers, the chain-nipping tool of the pickpocket's trade.

"You come along," he said gruffly, taking his chance. "We'll just leave this to the lieutenant."



OFFICER McQUADE went toward the station by the shortest route.

The fat man, already late for an appointment, gave his name, his address, and his promise to appear, and went about his business.

Back in the dispersing crowd the gray man watched the officer and the prisoner turn down the cross street for the station, three blocks off. But now there was no satisfaction in the gray man's eyes. Gray Billy Henshaw knew that his partner, Slim Terrell, had realized that Larry McQuade was a green officer, he knew that the slim young man had a ready wit and tongue, and, listening to the plausible story Slim supplied, he had hoped earnestly that the officer would see fit to accept it and let the prisoner go. But the chance discovery of the discarded pliers had spoiled that.

And now, Gray Billy knew, Slim Terrell was on his way to the station, carrying in his pocket a watch that had been lifted without trouble twenty minutes before. A funning newsboy, forcing himself between the pair, had prevented the passing of the watch to Gray Billy at the moment, and thereafter the other had kept it. Now Terrell could not dispose of it, and upon his arrival at the station it would serve as a complaining witness, for surely that theft had been reported by now. Slim might escape the charge of picking the fat man's pocket, since the hundred and forty dollars was in Henshaw's pocket now, but he would have to answer for the watch. That is, unless he could be saved.

Gray Billy thought swiftly, and hurried down Liberty Street.

Larry McQuade's route took him through a district where there was almost no travel. It was a street of warehouses, mostly, with here and there an old, battered residence, empty, or at best indiscriminately inhabited, while it waited the sale of the lot upon which it stood.

It was a blank and silent avenue, where the pedestrian passed along a decrepit sidewalk, sometimes over rusty gratings opening from damp and musty cellars. At least, Larry thought, if he was mistaken in his man, that man might well remember that he had not exposed him to the public gaze any more than was necessary.

McQuade did not anticipate any trouble, but he held on to his charge, alert to meet trouble if it came. He wanted to do his duty just as the experienced officer he envied would have done it.

Larry strove to find justification, if he had made a blunder, in his first chance to earn his salary. So striving, he remembered a bulletin of a few days before. Officers

were to keep a sharp lookout for one Gray Billy Henshaw, known as the Shadow, a pickpocket of parts, who was likely to operate in the district. He was reasonably sure that this prisoner could not be Gray Billy, and he had small hope of apprehending that astute criminal; but he found it easy to wish that this man might be one of Henshaw's mob. That would make the big lieutenant sit up and take notice, maybe.

Larry's suspicion became certainty as he recognized Terrell's rapidly increasing unwillingness to visit the station. He was convinced that he had a pickpocket, and he redoubled his vigilance. Chance had helped him to capture the man in his charge, but chance should not help that man to get away. Larry was resolved upon that, and he was alive to his duty.

They arrived in front of a dingy, red brick house that sat twenty feet back from the sidewalk. The front yard was baked, hard-packed earth, fenceless, and littered with old papers and other chance refuse. There was a sagging, raised porch, the rail of which had gone for kindling long ago, and under that a sunken, brick walled area without steps.

The place squatted there, victim of time and fortune, its air part frowsily pathetic and part sinister. Then a window in the second story went up and a shrill, terrified voice rang sharply:

"Help! Murder!"



HE street was almost deserted and no pedestrian was near to help. And, although Larry hesitated while he cast a despairing glance up and down, he knew his duty. He had resolved that chance should not aid his prisoner, but here was a wild chance no man might reasonably expect. He knew that human life is the greatest of all treasures, and that any officer must protect that even if in so doing he must let a lesser offender go.

"Help! Murder! Help!" came the cry again, this time fainter and with a sort of choked horror.

Larry whipped out his handcuffs, forced his prisoner's wrists behind him, and snapped them on. There was nothing in sight to which the officer might fasten Terrell, and Larry's desire was to hold him as best he could. He pushed him forward and dumped him, protesting volubly, down

into the depression under the porch. Then he took the steps two at a time, threw open the front door, and entered the hall breathless and brave with authority.

One glance showed McQuade that at least this part of the house was untenanted. It had been dismantled, the fixtures were gone, and a coat of dust lay thick over everything.

In the instant of his strained pause Larry heard the sharp crack of a board toward the rear overhead, and stealthy, hastening footsteps. A vision of the escaping murderer flashed across his eager mind and he ran lightly down the hall toward a doorless way that led to the back part of the house.

He reached the kitchen and saw swiftly that here too was evidence that the place was uninhabited. The sink was torn away, and the plumbing gone from the grimy walls. And even as he crossed the kitchen floor there was a scrambling in the back stairway that came down by the outer door, and the fugitive—cut off, whoever or whatever he might be—returned precipitately to the second story. Larry followed, as eager as a young hound.

Upstairs it was the same. The place was undeniably vacant, and as he peered swiftly into room after room in search of the fugitive, it was borne in upon the officer that the house was also unoccupied.

His examination was the work of a moment, but there was no sign of a struggle anywhere and no hint or sound of a victim. Only that cry, having come from the front room he had just seen was quite empty, bore evidence to a crime. It was a queer thing, and as he hesitated at the head of the front stairs he could not understand it. Then the back door downstairs banged and the sound of it echoed through the house with hollow and mocking reverberations.

With a sudden sinking chill at the pit of his stomach Larry realized how he had been tricked. Some confederate of the pickpocket had come down the alley, arrived first at the old house, and cried the false alarm. And neatly McQuade had fallen for that deception.

He bolted down the stairs, crossed the porch, and leaped to the hard packed dirt of the yard. As he feared, the pickpocket had managed to jump up, throw his torso over the edge, and squirm out of the area, shackled as he was.

And so, once again, Larry was forced to

decide in an instant whom he would pursue. He knew that the confederate could not be further away than the alley directly back of the house, but as he regained the street he was just in time to see Slim Terrell turning the corner a half block below.

McQuade made his choice, blessing the handcuffs and the area wall, snatched his gun from its holster, and bent forward in clean-bodied pursuit.

To the officer it seemed all but hopeless. He did not know the district any too well and Terrell had a good half block start. There were a thousand nooks and blind hiding-places into which he might dodge. But there would be no hiding place, and no dodging, for Larry McQuade. The ghost of that fake murdered man would dog him forever. The fat man who had lost the money would want to know why there was no trial, and Larry knew that he would be compelled to tell the story. There was no shadow of doubt now of the prisoner's guilt, and every reason to believe that he did belong to a regular mob, in all probability that of Billy Henshaw. McQuade sizzled already under the zip and flash of the lieutenant's words. Then there was the laughter of the other men to face, worse even than what his superior would say, because longer continued.

He wondered if he could ever live it down. He wished fervently for a way to avoid telling the story. But he ran on, doing his best.

As Larry's flying feet pad-padded down the sidewalk after the man who had already turned the corner of the block, Gray Billy Henshaw heeled it down the alley. He had done what he could for Terrell, then left him to his own devices. He had given his partner his chance, he thought, and now he thought of his own escape.

Instinct, at the rear after he left the house, led him to turn down the alley, away from the scene of the theft. He had a slight start of Larry, even as Slim Terrell had a half block start of him. But as he burst out of the alley mouth he collided heavily with another sprinter.

Terrell and Henshaw went down, and before they could recover Larry had turned the corner and his spitting gun warned them that it would not be safe to run.



AT THE station the lieutenant listened impassively to the tale of the fat man's loss. He knew Gray Billy Henshaw, and he was delighted to see him. And Larry did not need to offer testimony to prove Henshaw's complicity, for the one hundred and forty dollars in gold certificates in his pocket convicted him wordlessly.

The lieutenant fingered the watch that had been taken from Slim Terrell, the watch of which Terrell's possession had caused Gray Billy to attempt a rescue and so bring about his own apprehension.

"What's this?" the lieutenant asked.

Terrell claimed legitimate ownership.

"Yours, huh?" the other retorted. "Well, maybe. Nobody has reported its theft—yet."

Gray Billy threw up his hands. Chance had tricked him, as neatly as he had planned to trick Larry McQuade. For with the theft of the watch unreported Slim Terrell, as yet unknown to the police and for that reason specially valuable, might have escaped without assistance. Now Henshaw knew that both himself and Terrell were in for it. He asked permission to call up a lawyer, and the superior officer smiled a wise smile, knowing this appeal to the "mouthpiece" was a confession.

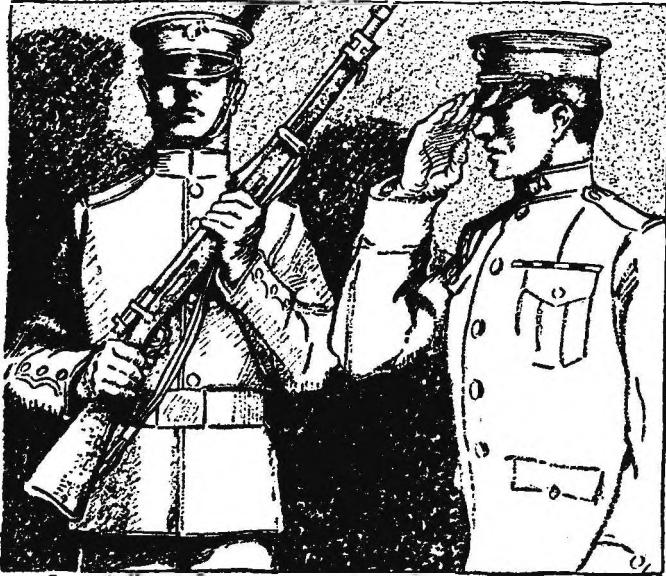
The lieutenant, exultant over the capture, looked at Larry with new interest. He had not thought much of the new man; he did not like new men. But this one had done something worthy; and he hoped now that he would do nothing to spoil it.

"They give you any trouble?" the lieutenant inquired, his voice and eyes still cold.

Larry McQuade felt like a ship captain who is nudged by a seemingly friendly iceberg. But he answered calmly enough—

"Why, no, lieutenant, none to speak of."

Discipline



by Robert J. Pearsall

Author of "Color Guards," "Wrecked," etc.

THAT was a funny liberty (reminiscent the Old-Timer). Take it all in all, it was the craziest liberty—and it had a crazier wind-up. And it all came of my bunkie, Jack Maitland, being what you might call an intellectual gum-boot. That, and the feud with the Austrians, and it was crazy too.

Sure, this was in Pekin, when I was a second hitch Marine. Well, Maitland came to us before his name was hardly dry on the muster-roll. At that, he could make most hash-marked old-timers look like rookies when it came to drill—a soldier born he was, that way. But in his mental attitude, so to speak, he hadn't changed a hair's-breadth since first he put on government breeches. You know what I mean, subordination and discipline and that sort of thing. They were still all capital crimes to him.

"What's the use of it?" he'd ask me after a drill. "Doin' one thing over and over again—no sense in it! Don't we know how to do it already? What's the use of chasin'

us around a parade ground day in and day out to prove it? Port *hup!* Order *hup!* Shoulder *hup!* Tomfoolery! And I've got three years and a butt more of it! Wish I was in the States again. I'd sure beat it."

"You're gettin' paid for it," I'd remind him.

"That's a devil of an apology. I want to do something that's some good, and I'm eternally condemned if this is. Hikin' around and around a five-acre field! And guard duty's the same. So many paces this way, so many paces that, 'keep constantly on the alert and observe everything that takes place within sight or hearin'.' What takes place? Not a darn thing. What is there to guard? The same."

"But it's discipline," says I.

"Discipline's rot, then!" snaps Private Maitland.

You see how it was. Them ideas just kept worrying him all the time, like corns on a hike. And I couldn't reason him out of them because I'd never reasoned myself out; I'd just grown out of them, like everybody else—everybody but Maitland.

So it went on for three or four months, with Maitland talking considerable less and thinking considerable more and putting most of his money away in the International Bank. That's always a bad sign. When a man figures on sticking out his hitch, he leaves his spare coin with the paymaster. He can't get it then till he draws his finals.

Then came doings. There was the fresh bunch of officers and the men from the States, for one thing. New men like that have got to be amalgamated, and our first drill with them was extra long and strenuous. It left Maitland pretty disgusted, and after we had gone back to our squad-room him and me had our crowning argument about service discipline.

"You're a fool if you can't see it," I said to him at the last. "It's got to be. You can't have order without it."

"Order!" jeered Maitland. "That's the worst yet. D'you call this place orderly, with us and the Austrians breakin' each other's heads every day? If it is, then south of the slot in Frisco is an angel's dream of peace."

He had me there. The feud I spoke of in the beginning was just then at its most interesting point. The trouble had begun over one fool thing after another, like the Austrians kidnaping our dog Spike, and us retaliating by carrying off their monkey mascot, Jocko, and their crowing over us a bit too much when they won the Tartar Wall hike, and Sheehy running amuck in a soccer football game and knocking out four of them before somebody got him with a bayonet hilt.

Then Trumpeter MacMaster and two other youngsters had caught the Austrian first sergeant when he was a bit illuminated, and kept him tied up in a room in Number Three for two days, which was a their idea of a joke. The Austrians had warned us out of Korean Charley's, and we had intimated they wouldn't be safe in Schultz's, and it got so none of us were safe anywhere much, outside our legation walls.

There were black eyes and bruised heads to spare in each garrison, but the combats had mostly been individual-like as yet. No telling how long it would stay that way, though, for there were agitators and hot-heads in each garrison, bent on dragging the rest of us into a wholesale shindy. If they succeeded, it'd likely be a nasty fight.

The Austrian uniform for liberty includes

bayonets, mind you. So far they hadn't used them, being clean enough fighters, and so we hadn't used the baseball bats and Chinese swords and other miscellaneous weapons we'd stored up in Schultz's to be ready for them. But a mob'll do what an individual won't, and the situation had the commanding officers of both guards worrying some.

"It's necessary, anyway," says I to Maitland.

"It is like blazes. What's it all about? Just because a few *fungla* fools filled up with rice champagne get in a fightin' mood, with that goat Regan to peddle rumors and stir them up——"

For once I agreed with him. That promiscuous fighting is rookies' work, anyway.

"I meant discipline," I corrected him.

"Oh! Well, what's it necessary for? But what's the use arguing? I'm going to see if I'm on guard tomorrow."



HE DIDN'T come back until nearly time for troop. I thought there was something fresh on his mind, even then. Thoughtful wrinkles kept coming and going above his eyes; and now his jaw set hard, and now it relaxed worried-like.

But after troop came chow, and police call, and more drill, and it was going on in the afternoon when he told me of his luck. And what he had to say sounded innocent enough in one way and suspicious enough in another; and it was the devil and all hard for me to decide what to do about it.

Maitland was on guard to-morrow, post number two, mid relief. And he was to get a hundred dollars Mex. just for extending his post a hundred yards beyond what his orders called for.

I'll have to tell you about number two post. The Tartar Wall, you know, is just back of our garrison, separated from it by a narrow alley. Into the wall has been dug our magazine, and on top of the wall is a blockhouse. And post number two extends around and around that blockhouse. as useless a post, to all appearances, as a sentry ever walked.

It was Chang, number one barrack's coolie, the crookedest Chink that ever collected *cumshaw*, that had made Maitland the offer. It seemed like Chang knew that Jim Li, head-quartermaster's coolie, was stealing stuff out of the quartermaster's storeroom, passing it through the window

grating to a coolie who waited in the alley.

Chang had it in for Jim Li—that was barracks talk anyway—and wanted him caught. The next theft was planned for twelve o'clock the following night; Maitland, by walking off his post a bit, would discover it; and Chang was so sure of his facts and of Maitland that he was willing to pay him the hundred beforehand, as soon as he went on post.

"Ain't I a lucky guy!" chortled Maitland. "That hundred's just what I need. Gee, think of seein' God's country again!"

"You needn't advertise you're goin' to desert," I told him. "And I don't understand this a bit. Why don't Chang save his hundred and tip off the C. O.?"

"It'd all come out at office hours, then; and what would Jim Li and his friends do to Chang? Fill him full of holes, sure. I'm telling you because I know you're safe."

"I sometimes wish you didn't," said I. You see, you can't snitch on a fellow, and yet—"What are you goin' to tell the corporal of the guard when you do catch Jim Li. You can't claim to've *seen* him, from your post.

"I'll say I heard him," said Maitland, a bit embarrassed; he wasn't a liar by nature, at all.

Well, I looked at him. I ain't finicky, but I wasn't in love with him at that minute. The drill manual's a soldier's bible, and general orders for sentries are his ten commandments, and professional ethics ain't confined to the white collar brigade, by any means.

Besides, I knew something about that post Maitland was going to leave unguarded. I'd helped build the magazine, years before. There were ten of us, all sworn to secrecy. Everybody knows it now—that's why I'm telling you—but then nobody in our garrison but me and the officers knew that a secret passage led up from the magazine to a trap-door in the floor of the blockhouse. That was so, in case of trouble, they could get ammunition to the machine guns in the blockhouse quick.

There was I, up against it. Maitland was going to leave the way open to enough explosives to blow us off the map, and I couldn't tell him without breaking my oath, and I couldn't tell the C. O. without breaking the first rule of the soldier's code. And if Chang's story were true no harm would come; but if it wasn't, and he was

being hired by somebody else—good night!

"It's your funeral," I said to Maitland, feeling it might be my own, too, "but doesn't it seem kind of low down for an American sentry to be takin' instructions from a Chinese coolie?"

He flushed hot, and glared, and then all of a sudden he laughed.

"You duty-struck old ditty-box, you do take soldierin' serious, don't you? If I thought the way you do—but I don't! I'll be more good to the Government off my post than on to-morrow night."

But at that he didn't look extra happy nor altogether convinced. You see, he was pretty near a year-old soldier by then.

"Ah, the dickens!" he says, restless-like. "Let's go out and forget it."

So we went. I don't know why I did. You can't think much of a soldier that'll sell himself for a hundred Mex., of course, and before the night was over I was to think less. Maybe I wanted a little spiritual illumination on my own problem. I'd meant to go on liberty anyway, having a few *tungles* left over from last pay-day, and—oh, well, I guess I kind of liked the kid after all. You know, you do like people that way, sometimes, against your better judgment.

Now the beginning of that liberty is plain enough, and the end, being of an extremely sobering character, is plain enough too. But between the beginning and the end is a lot that's mixed up.

We went first to Schultz's, where we killed a quart a piece—Maitland drinking for the first and last time I ever saw him—and then to Borowsky's, where there was a bunch of Austrians that didn't do anything but look at us hard; and then we took rickshaws to Chin Men. And I mind Maitland muttering to his bare-torsoed, blank-faced rickshaw coolie something like: "You're a lucky beggar. Nothing worries you, does it, discipline nor anything, eh?" A funny remark; he was beginning to feel his drinks.

That was the outstanding feature of the next few hours: everybody we met, Maitland would say something about discipline. Generally he was asking the same fool questions he's put to me for the last months, and getting, not to brag on myself, foolisher answers or none at all. For instance, there was the sort of a Limie marine we ran across in a *magie-lu* joint, sitting at a table

with nothing in front of him, and looking up at us wistful as we entered.

After we'd bought him what he was waiting for, and had some ourselves, and repeated the dose, for those little earthen saucers don't hold anything to speak of, Maitland leans forward on his stool and says thoughtfully:

"You've lots of discipline in your outfit. Maybe *you* can tell me what it's for."

"Eh, what, I don't get you," says the Limie, staring.

"Me and my friend," explained Maitland, "are seekin' an answer to that question, though he don't know he is yet. What are the whys and wherefores of doing something what somebody else tells you to do a million times without any reason at all?"

I said he was only a sort of a Limie, you'll mind. He sat there a minute gulping, and then I could see him think that he knew what Maitland wanted to hear. There wasn't any use in discipline, he explained, because discipline made soldiers, and soldiers were only slaves and butchers, and he wished he might die if he wasn't proud to 'ave met two friends who thought like he did. He looked down at his empty *magie-lu* bowl suggestively, and up again, and then began to explain how he had the misfortune to be wearing the uniform he wore. But . . .

"*Cheebal*!" I interrupted, sharp.

"What 'ave I said, matey?" asked the Limie, looking distressed.

"*Cheebal*!" I repeated. "Get out!" And the Limie got.

"Why didn't you let the insect stay?" asked Maitland. "I thought I was beginnin' to learn something from him."

After awhile we went to a Chinese theater. It was in a big square room, with an earth floor, filled with wooden benches without backs and little square tables. The spectators were sitting around with half their clothes off, most indecent, puffing on their toy pipes and drinking tea, and singsonging to each other, and watching the show. Maitland and me sat down well up in front, and sent the waiter after *saujo*.

Now in what happened almost immediate there's no reflection on the attitude of the Chinese concerning the Stars and Stripes. Since Nineteen Hundred there's no foreign flag in Pekin respected as much as that one. That's partly because of a ten-million-dollar indemnity returned by Washington

with the proviso that it be used for Chinese education, and partly because there's no precedent for looting in the American service, and the boys that beat the Boxers didn't start any. The property man must've been fuddled, and handed out the wrong ensign by mistake.

The show was some sort of a historical drama. There was a yellow hero with a dragon flag, and an army of about twenty, all with devil's masks on like you see in the Pekin Temple of Blood, carrying shields and six-foot swords and spears. After the hero had spoke a long piece he began to lead his army across the stage, and another army of about the same size came out on the other side of the stage to attack them. And . . .

"They ain't any right to do it, have they, Nichols?" asked Maitland. And I gasped.

For, by the shade of Paul Jones, the color bearer of that second army carried an American flag!

Then the heroic band of ex-coolies that had first come out hurled themselves with reckless valor upon the others, yelling and stabbing and slashing, only careful to keep about three feet out of reach of their opponents. And the ones with the Red, White and Blue were reckless too, only after a minute they began to fall back. And I gripped my seat with my two hands and held myself down, but Maitland only says again—

"They ain't any right, surely."

But worse was to come. All of a sudden the hero leaped out from among his trusty followers and straight at the gleaming steel of the enemy that parted before him to let him through. And he made a grab at the flag.

Anybody would've done the same. I don't remember getting to the stage at all, but once there, with a huddle of Chinese in front of me all bristling with swords and spears, I dove low into the legs of them like a football rush.

Then things became too jumbled to remember. I expect I have reason to be grateful that Chinese slippers are soft. When I thought I was where I wanted to be, I came up in the middle of them, like a jumping-jack, and then I got a surprise. For Maitland was there before me, with the flag in one hand and a long spear he'd snatched from somebody in the other. With that spear he'd cleared a little space,

but all around the Chinese were like a yellow sea crowding in on us, half of the audience having followed Maitland and me upon the stage, and the other half coming fast.

"Good boy, Mait!" I said, catching hold of a spear that a Chinese had thrust too close to me, and yanking it away from him.

"You're a darn fool," grunted Maitland savagely, shoving the flag inside his blouse. "What'ja start this for? How're we goin' to get out?"

It looked like a fair enough question, but just then, while the Chinese held back, jabbering uncertain, somebody from the back of the stage shouted an order that ended in "*fungla Megwas*." Which means "crazy Americans," and it is the commonest expression there is in Pekin.

Then the speaker, who was a silk-gowned Mandarin-looking individual, shoved through the suddenly quiet mob; and bowed to us, and smiled, and led us safely through the left exit to a side door that opened on a back alley.

The last impression we had of that place was of him kow-towing nearly to the ground, and murmuring his respects, while behind him about five hundred Chinese grinned unoffended and talked about "*fungla Megwas*."

The Chinese is a logical race, after all. They wanted to be rid of us, and we wanted to be rid of them—what could be simpler? But that was how Maitland got his flag.

By that time we had a sort of an idea it was getting late, and we decided to go back to barracks. But when we got to Legation Street we saw three men climbing over the back wall—restricted men breaking garrison—and that seemed to make us want to stay out a little longer.



AFTER a bit we got to Hattamen and climbed out of the rickshaws, and then we each made the discovery that the other didn't have any more money. So we got in again and told the coolies to take us to Schultz's where you can always get rickshaw fare provided you don't owe more than a month's back chits.

We bumped down the back alley to Schultz's, and went in after our *tungstses*. And we'd no more than opened the door before we saw hell-and-to-son-of-a-bitch was to pay.

The place was jammed plumb full of the

most unpeaceful men in our garrison. There was O'Hara, who fought, you may say, by instinct and necessity, as another man eats; and Breen—you remember him, the big one that whipped three men at once on the ramps at Cavite; and Regan, who was a deal more interested in stirring up trouble than in taking a hand in it himself; and Scotty, the silent one with a fist like a trip-hammer; and maybe twenty-five others. They were all bunched around tables that were filled with bottles and glasses, and to the hand of each was a club or brick-bat or rusty old sword or some other more or less deadly weapon.

They looked at the door when we came in, some startled-like, and some eager, and when they saw who it was they raised a welcoming shout.

"Two more!" shouted Regan. "Good for you, Nichols, and you, Maitland. By —! We'll wipe the Hunks off the face of the earth this night." And he motioned us to a seat near him.

But we had our coolies to pay. Schultz was behind the bar, the most nervous looking Chinaman I ever saw. He passed out the copper coins to us, and forgot to take a chit.

"Are you goin' to stay?" asked Maitland as we stepped into the alley again.

"Let's stay a minute, anyway," I said.

I was wishing just then we hadn't come at all. I didn't want the reputation of running away, and I didn't want to mix up with that bunch either.

"I'd rather land on Regan than any Austrian I know," muttered Maitland as we were going in again. "He'll be in a safe enough place when things break loose. Wonder if he's got an idea how silly he sounds."

For Regan had mounted a table and was pouring out his soul, such as it was, in oratory. It was a wild picture.

Regan was tall and thin and angular, with little mean eyes, and a long, twisted jaw, and short-cropped hair that stuck up straight on his round head. He was brandishing an empty beer bottle in one hand and a heavy Chinese sword in the other, and every now and then his high-pitched voice would rise to a shriek. And around him crowded that mob of rough-necks and youngsters, half of them on their feet by now, fingering their crazy weapons and yelling applause.

Most of what Regan said was abuse of the Austrians and pleading with the men not to give in and to stand back of him. But for the benefit of the newcomers he repeated the story of the latest outrage, that Rummy Miller had got beat up that very day by three or four or half a dozen Austrians, and was now in the sick bay from it. Which didn't stir any blood-lust in me to speak of, Rummy being both outrageously quarrelsome and an ungodly liar when in his cups, which was whenever he had cash or credit. But not content with that, Regan said, the Austrians were gathering to raid Schultz's, and by morning it'd be known who was to run Hattamen, us or them.

At that point everybody whooped except Maitland and me. It was all I could do to keep from joining in, for the atmosphere of the place was sure tense and electric.

Just then a man that it seemed they'd stationed further down Schultz's alley burst in the door.

"The Austrians are comin'," he half yelled. He came across the room, wild-eyed, imparting more information. "In a bunch. They just left Korean Charley's. They swear they're goin' to get us. Goin' to clean up every American in Hattamen."

An uneasy, blustering stir swept over the crowd, everybody on their feet. But Maitland rasped sarcastically at the messenger:

"How the devil do you know what they're saying? You don't savvy their lingo any more than I do." Then, to anybody that'd listen to him: "They've got to get home, haven't they? They've got to come this way. They're probably coming in a bunch because they've heard we're waiting for them. They're afraid to come singly."

Nobody paid much attention to him, but on the other hand nobody made any move toward the door. They were all willing somebody else should lead the way. I'm not saying they were afraid—but show me the man that likes to face cold steel!

Regan saw the mood they were in. He was no fool. He knew the men needed some other stimulus than words. And when he glanced at Maitland, angry at Maitland's words, he saw it.

Out of the front of Maitland's blouse stuck a triangle of red and white, a corner of the rescued flag.

Regan jumped from the table, his eyes gleaming wickedly. His long arm shot out. He gripped the flag, yanked it out, leaped backward to escape Maitland's blow, and waved the flag above his head.

"Here y'are, boys," he yelled. "Here's your colors." He started for the door. "Follow me, boys. Follow the flag."

It was like the four-flushing would-be-bully he was to put himself first. Little did he care for anything except the dubious sort of glory he was courting.

Maitland yelled angrily:

"You fool, give me back that flag!" and tried to get at Regan, but couldn't for the press of men all trying to get out the door at once.

And so we all piled pell-mell out into the alley.

And I knew, as the head of the bunch turned down the dark alley toward Korean Charley's, that this wasn't any little thing. With each side carrying weapons, they'd try to beat each other to the use of them. It wouldn't be a matter of a few bruises, but of bleeding dead bodies and of funeral parties.

I saw trouble without end ahead, trouble for the commanding officers, for the ambassadors, for Washington and Vienna. These men, dressed in their country's uniform, represented something bigger than themselves. I wondered if they'd lost sight of that entirely in their foolish prides and animosities.

"He'd never have got them started without that flag," grinned Maitland. "And they're disgracin' the flag at that—drunken street brawl in a foreign country!"

They were going along pretty quiet now, muttering and whispering, bunched up, filling the alley from wall to wall. Regan had fallen back till he was in the center of them. There was a reason for that. Ahead of us had begun to sound a confused murmur of foreign voices, and a heavy trampling of feet.

Maitland and I stuck together, on the fringe of the mob. I was wondering what to do. Suddenly Maitland began to laugh. "That's discipline for you," he jeered. "Discipline! A bunch of gangsters."

"There's empty-headed rummies in any outfit," I said. "If an officer was here, you'd see."

"Humph!" grunted Maitland. "I wonder—there they are."



THE Austrians weren't fifty paces away, a dark silent mass of men blocking the alley. Their scabbards rattled as they crowded elbows. They seemed to be coming in regular formation—probably a non-com. in charge.

They were going *toward* their barracks, too, while we went away from ours. They'd have by far the better story to tell when the reckoning time came.

At about a bayonet swing apart, the two bodies stopped. Then the front of our bunch began edging closer, driven by the weight of the men behind. There wasn't a word spoken.

"In another minute they'll go to it," said I. Nobody answered me. I looked to where Maitland had stood a moment before. The place was empty. I looked all around. Maitland was gone, without saying a word.

I couldn't understand it. Lost his nerve, I supposed; but why couldn't he have told me he was going, anyway? But before I could make up my mind whether to follow him or to join the bunch, things started.

There was a snarl ahead, and the sound of a blow. A club, I judged, aimed at an Austrian's head, and hitting his shoulder instead.

Our men surged forward. I heard the slithering sound of bayonets being yanked from their scabbards. A chill ran over me, and I found myself with a heavy rock in my hand. How it got there I don't know.

In another minute, in another second, there'd have been fifty or more fair-to-middling men killing each other—but then, sharp and clear, came from somewhere the command—

"Company—*halt!*"

I stopped on the instant, like the drilled human machine I was. So did everybody else. After I'd stopped I thought: "An officer! Caught! Summary courts for all of us! So that's why Maitland beat it." Then my hands slapped my thighs, the stone I held fell to the ground, and my heels clicked together. For a second command had rung out—

"*Attention!*"

And to the sound of that command given in a crackling voice, the voice of an officer born—probably, I thought, one of the new ones from the Islands—every American there had straightened, stiffened, heads and

eyes to the front, dropping clubs and swords and stones.

Then the officer stepped out from a narrow passageway right between us and the Austrians, who'd given back a little, waiting. It was so dark we could hardly see him. He took charge of us, snapping his commands out shortly and a little impatiently.

"Fall in! Count off! About face!" and finally, "Forward march!"

Never were movements executed more handily, for we were all strung-up, frightened, like kids caught in mischief. Left, right, left, we started down the alley, the officer, of course, keeping in the rear to head off possible stragglers.

At Hattamen we got "Squads left!" and at Legation Street "Column right!" and so we marched, with no thought but of the punishment we saw ahead of us.

Except me, and I thought mainly of Maitland's cowardice and desertion. For it was plain he'd seen the officer and slipped away, too mean to give even me the warning for fear of lessening his own chances of escape. A false friend, a false sentry, an intending deserter, but it served me right, I told myself, for chumming with such a man.

Up Legation Street to the garrison gate; "Column left!" and we marched past the staring sentry into the compound. And that was the last command we got.

Straight ahead until the front of the column collided with the flagpole, and we doubled up in disorder, and looked around to discover we had no more officer than a street rabble. But the sergeant of the guard was coming across with a lantern, growling.

"What fool's lark is this?" he wanted to know. "Come over here and mark in and be quiet."

And then—would you believe it?—out of the mob of them came Maitland, and joggled my elbow, and chuckled happily in my ear:

"By —! Nichols, *that's* the use of discipline!"

Sure, I'm telling you, for Maitland was the officer, and the officer was Maitland, and in the darkness that bunch of old-timers and hard nuts had been marched home by a rear-rank private. And that's about all, except that Maitland seemed to have got that night the answer he'd been

looking for, and is sergeant-major now, and bucking for shoulder-straps.

How about Chang and the hundred dollars and the imperiled magazine? Well, I helped the reformed Maitland with that affair, and I'm afraid we strained regulations a bit, too.

While I was corraling Chang, Maitland stayed by his post and fished an Austrian out from under the ramparts, and we stood the two up together and managed to get the story out of them by threatening to turn them over to the guard. Each legation had duplicate plans of every other legation's defenses, and some of the Austrian soldiers had managed to get wise to ours. And they had thought it would be a great joke to bribe their way into our magazine, and leave a note there for our commanding officer telling him what fine incorruptible sentries he had.

Maitland and me considered their crime

and punishment, and decided to indulge our own sense of humor a bit. Fellow conspirators shouldn't mind a change of raiment, so we made each strip bare as my hand, and then put on each other's clothes.

We sent Chang, dressed in the Austrian uniform, down the wall toward Hattamen, and the white man, dressed like a Chinese coolie, in the opposite direction toward Chin Men. There being no possible way they could find each other, we predicted for them great adventures.

Which they probably had, but Chang never showed up again to tell us about it, and the Austrians were always secretive and sensitive about the matter. One thing though: enough leaked out about that night and the night before to set each garrison so laughing at themselves and at each other that in a week's time the feud had blown over completely, and everybody was happy except Regan.

TWO OPINIONS

by ED. L. CARSON

The following "poem" appeared on the walls of the shack which did early duty as an office of the Dominion Telegraph line at a point near the headwaters of the Stikine River, B. C.

I REALLY believe that He made all things good,
 But on taking a hike around Telegraph Creek,
 I think He was in a satirical mood,
 Or did it on All-Hallow Eve for a trick.

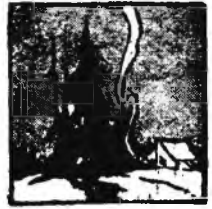
—*The Operator.*

IT MAY be the truth which this brass-tapper spoke,
 But if he is right I will bet even money
 That if Telegraph Creek is considered a joke,
 The place we call hell must be screamingly funny.

—*The Lineman.*



THE CAMP-FIRE A MEETING-PLACE FOR READERS, WRITERS AND ADVENTURERS



REFERRING back to one of our letters on the running ability of Indians, I asked permission to give it to you of the Camp-Fire, and received it, with this addition:

Although frankly, the daily hikes, the every-day work of the Colombian Indians with 100 pounds and over, on their backs, making 40 to 45 miles with apparent ease—considering the roughness of the country is to me more extraordinary. Fact is, I saw an old woman of at least 65 years come into market from a tile "factory" 35 miles distant, with 22 tiles on her back—8 lbs. per tile. Sounds preposterous, but they sure do pack heavy and far. That was on the Putumayo River, southern end of Colombia, and no one who has not been there can conceive the abomination of their trails.

Now as to the white man's running ability.

The papers of October 19th announced that Sidney Hatch, Marathon runner, had on the 18th run 100 miles, between Milwaukee and Chicago, in 14 hours, 23 minutes, 30 seconds, a world's record.

WE OF the Camp-Fire should pay our tribute of commendation to one of our number who has not only done something but done it in the real spirit of service—without self-glorification and without pursuit of personal credit. The Plattsburg training-camp at Salt Lake City, which last Summer gave the country six hundred men trained for service as army officers, was originally the idea of our comrade and contributor, Dr. J. U. Giesy. His the plan that became a reality, his the hard, thankless work of giving it shape in the minds of others, his the harder work of being always the one who stood steadfast and fought hard.

BUT the thing of which we should feel proudest is that he did all these things without self-seeking. It is the curse of public or semi-public movements in this country that their effectiveness is generally lessened by some or all of the participators who get drunk with the peculiar kind of drunkenness that comes to those who find

themselves temporarily a little prominent in the public eye. Finding themselves with some authority, they swell; worse, they become so eager for still more personal importance that a good deal of their effort is expended in self-advertisement and self-advancement—at the expense of the movement they are supposed to serve. But Dr. Giesy followed the other course; he worked for the training camp, not for Giesy, for his country, not himself.

He served on a committee, for he was too good a worker to be dispensed with. But always he was a worker, not an official personage. He served in his own camp as a private. Others, too, did yeoman service and I do not disparage it or them. But there would have been no camp except for Dr. Giesy; except for him the plan would have fallen through more times than once. And somehow, so far as I can gather from a number of sources, a very minor part of the credit has fallen upon this man to whom the whole project owes most. That, to my mind, is his most splendid testimonial. For it proves that he worked for his country, not for himself.

I WISH we Americans could learn that the most splendid monument any man can erect in his own honor is no monument at all, and that whenever we find any man being prominently prominent it is wise—and just—to look closely and determine just how much of that prominence he has gained by self-aggrandizement at the expense of something a thousand times more important than himself, the something he betrayed by prostituting some of its possibilities to his own personal ends.

It was a good camp, now permanently organized, a member of the national association of training camps, expecting fifteen hundred men this year—"a wonderful lesson," as Dr. Giesy once wrote me, seeming to regard it as something quite apart from himself, "in patriotism and democracy."

But the best lesson in patriotism and democracy lies in Dr. Giesy himself.

BEARING on the Camp-Fire inquiry concerning the Senussi or Sennussyiehs comes an interesting letter:

DEAR MR. HOFFMAN:

Looking over a back number of *Adventure*, I found an inquiry, accompanied by several guesses, as to the status and intents of the Sennussyiehs.

I happen to belong to this free-masonic lodge and have written extensively on the subject. The last article appeared in the *Forum*, March, April or May—I'm not quite sure—of 1914. In this article I explained the history, constitution and objects of the lodge. You will find other articles by me on the same subject in former numbers of *Blackwood's*, *Annales Politiques*, *Revue Musulmanne*, and *Revue Pan-Islam*. I furthermore had a book published on the subject in Paris, written in collaboration with my cousin, Syeed Mehmet Khwahajah Khan.

But let me state here, in case you can not obtain any of these back numbers—I am sure the *Forum* people will have a back number or two, though—that there is nothing mysterious about the Sennussyiehs, also known as the Benni-Snouss. They are a masonic lodge and they *do* play politics—a little—but not any more than the French free-masons did during the Dreyfus troubles and the legislation which stopped the Concordat of the French Republic with the Pope, and as they still do.

There is nothing very out-of-the-way about them. All these stories about people disappearing and having their throats cut are bosh and imagination.

If a novelist, for the sake of local color, is in need of a fantastic association of Eastern accomplished assassins, I personally would recommend some such society as the Rakaiz Al-'Utab of Cairo; if, on the other hand, the same novelist should want an individual assassin for the sake of local Eastern color, I would recommend the dregs of Europe and of America who infest and infect the Eastern lands—beachcombers, missionaries, soldiers of fortune, whisky salesmen, and what-not. There are plenty to choose from, and some of them have been and still are quite prominent—as distance and the newspapers usually provide the regular halo.

—ACHMED ABDULLAH.

ADVENTURE is going to do something it never did before. I think you'll like it.

Five years ago this month we published a short story that stirred our readers as nothing else we have published has stirred them. All the copies of that issue were quickly exhausted; even our own office files were so depleted that to meet some of the most particular demands for this story we even had typewritten copies made.

It was by Talbot Mundy. He has given us over sixty stories all told, stories so well liked that you couldn't get enough of them. He wrote this one over five years ago and

in those five years he has grown steadily in power and skill. Yet he has never written a more powerful story than this one, "The Soul of a Regiment." Simply told, short, direct, a man's story, it went straight to your heart, lifted you up, put a lump in your throat, set you tingling, left you exalted. Artistically, it is perhaps a perfect specimen of its type.

BECAUSE of these things, because it is practically impossible to obtain copies of this story anywhere at any price, because our readers have doubled in number since then and most of them have never had the chance to read it, we are going to publish it again. We know our old readers will welcome it, and such readers as have not been with us for so long as five years will have a treat in store for them.

And there is an even bigger reason for doing this. Talbot Mundy has written a sequel to it. Not the foolish kind of sequel that ruins the effect of the first story, but the tale of how *Grogram's* big idea went on living and blossomed anew from the humble breast of one of the men into whom he had instilled it. That tale, too, will stir you, stir you to your depths.

"The Soul of a Regiment" will appear in the April issue, out March 3. The story Talbot Mundy has written to follow it, a story of course new to all of you, will appear in our May number. The second story is worthy of the first.

WHEN in response to my request for data about himself for the Camp-Fire, E. E. Harriman sent the following, he did so under the misunderstanding that I wanted it merely as data for our files and my own personal knowledge. So he jotted down his information in the first words that occurred to him, recounting merely the bare facts and without thought of their being read by others than myself.

Only when the day came to send his letter to the printer did I discover the above and then there was time only to put it into type at once and write across the continent for Mr. Harriman's consent to let it go to you as it stood. I make this explanation not because of any fault in what he wrote but merely because I don't, as you might say, want Mr. Harriman to introduce himself to you without knowing he is doing so.

It would take a ream to hold the account of all the little, hair-raising but insignificant adventures of my early boyhood, such as driving cattle home after dark from a distance of five miles, part of the way in a tiny path among the thick woods, and hearing the *whoosh* of an excited bear close to me and his crashing retreat. And the way the wolves used to perch on the roof of our covered hog-pen and howl until we opened a door or window to get a shot at them and then would vanish like shadows.

I LIVE entirely alone, as all my children are married and my wife has been on the other shore for just five years. There are advantages in that way of living, though I can't say that I like it. I am never disturbed in my writing, except by the telephone.

In the early sixties we were often visited by bears, wolves, panthers, wildcats, lynxes and skunks. Oh my lord, the skunks! Our farm was a quarter-mile by a mile in extent and lay between two beautiful lakes where fishing was always well rewarded. There were six within a radius of three miles. The beauty of the forest region before men chopped the trees down was wonderful and I have always been glad that I lived there.

IN THE following pages I have summed things up in brief paragraphs that give you a fairly good idea of how lacking my life has been in noteworthy adventures, yet I had lots of them in my work that put my life in more danger than the average big-game hunter faces. They are not worth writing about, though.

I was born in northern Ohio, went with my parents to Minnesota in June, 1862, lived on a farm in the hard-wood-timber belt until I reached my majority, moved then to Minneapolis, where I lived for the next two and a half years. Then I went back to Ohio for a year and a half, at the end of which time I came to Los Angeles.

This city has been my headquarters ever since and in all probability will be until I die. I plan to radiate from this center during the rest of my days, seeing all I can that is of interest.

MY LIFE has been that of a worker, learning the carpenter trade in Minneapolis and Ohio, following it until 1893 when I began to take contracts. I continued as a contractor until June, 1915, when I made up my mind that I would try the thing that had been the dream of my life, writing. The idea of sometime doing this had been constantly with me since my twelfth birthday.

For years I used to make up stories, thinking out a chapter as I milked the cows, carrying seven to ten characters in my head and running them through twenty-five to thirty chapters. When I had finished one story I at once took up another, and the building of these romances was a delight to me.

MY ADVENTURES have been only those incident to my life as a worker. I have broken through ice and had to swim and break ice to get out; finally getting under and lifting till I smashed my way to the air again. That was done by swimming in till I was in water shoal enough to let me stand with my shoulders under the thin ice and heave.

I have fought a bull with my bare hands, shut up in a long stable with him, the door hooked on the

inside with a hook that fitted so tightly that I had to bump it up with a fork handle to get the door open. I suppose it is hardly necessary to state that I won. I would not be here to write this had I lost.

I have fought a bull with a club about like a baseball-bat when he had me cornered against a high fence; I have had a round with a mad stallion in a box-stall, I have fought a raging dog with my bare hands and killed him, and he was a good fighter with lots of size and muscle.

I HAVE sat in a house when a cyclone played marbles with it. I have ridden across a lake in a sailboat when a tornado was chasing us and we had four husky men sitting on the windward gunwale, their feet hooked under the thwarts, and leaning outboard as far as they could hang, while two others bailed for dear life.

I have disarmed a bad man who had three notches in his gun and proved him a bluff, when I was only eighteen years old. I have been left hanging to the gutter of a building by one hand when all the scaffolding went down with a crash. I have lifted so hard to save the life of my father that I was crippled for many weeks and my muscles contracted under the strain to such a degree that they split a bone. I have had the privilege of saving the lives of six or seven people and never getting hurt while doing it. I have hunted the woods over for years and never shot a deer yet. All small-game hunting for me.

Oh, yes, I once stood guard over a friend who was about to be taken out by a gang of toughs and given a coat of tar and feathers because he had expressed his mind freely about their actions. As I had sent word to them that my shotgun held buckshot and was waiting to be emptied into their hides they shied off and quit.

THE best job I have ever done was to raise two boys that go over six feet and over two hundred pounds each and are as clean and decent fellows as there are in America today. The best sport I have ever had was shooting small game with a rifle of small caliber. The winning of a contest that gave me the most pleasure was the beating of a professional crack shot, who traveled with Buffalo Bill, in two contests with .22 caliber rifles, straight and fancy shooting.

The next best was beating seven officers of the local militia in a revolver contest, they to use .38 service revolvers, Colts, I to use my 32.20 Smith & Wesson, and shoot 75 yards to their 50, five shots apiece. Made good by three points.

I AM just a plain man, with no glamour hanging about my aura. Date my American ancestry back to 1637 on father's side, to 1652 on mother's. Am fifty-five, stand six feet two and a half, am healthy, happy and husky, my digestion is perfect and lungs sound. Average weight 245 pounds and have lifted 972 pounds at one load, dead weight. Never struck the first blow in a fight since I was ten years old and have not been licked since I was fifteen. My chief amusement when young was wrestling. That is one very large reason why I have never been licked since I got my growth. I found it rather easy to wrap them up in a small and compact bundle when they got ugly. It does not look half so bad and hurts the other fellow just as much as it would to black his eye.

THE tale that follows seemed to me so amazing that I wrote asking the man who sent it to me whether he weren't amusing himself by "kidding" me. I think I even explained to him that that kind of practical joke was very crude humor and something on the order of hitting a defenseless person who'd never done you any harm. But here is the letter I got in reply—and my apologies for a natural questioning of the tale as it first reached me:

I received your letter yesterday containing identification-card for which I thank you very much. But I was somewhat surprised at the note I found enclosed. I am not given to telling things that haven't at least a vestige of truth.

I was not making sport of you in the least when I told you about finding that charm. I could give days, dates and names and absolute proof through a man who was special envoy to President Taft from Mexico in 1911. And if necessary I could show you a paper offering 700 pesos apiece reward for the three Americans who stirred up the Itla tribe of the Yaquis.

My reason for not having my name signed to this, if it is printed, is obvious.

I hope you will accept this as being true.

Now for his first letter with what looks like a record in the matter of odd places where copies of *Adventure* have been found:

I thought I would open up once and tell you of one of the places I found *Adventure*. I have found them in many queer places but this is about the strangest.

Three other fellows and myself were on a little exploring expedition in old Mexico and heard for some time of a great medicine-man or witch-doctor of a tribe of Yaquis in the hills about seventy-five miles southwest of us who had a wonderful charm in his medicine-bag that would cure all ills that the Indians were subject to and would do a lot of other wonderful things. Well, I am ashamed to tell it, but we decided to steal that charm and we did. Traveled 280 miles without rest and very little to eat, with fifty or sixty *mad* Indians after us and after we finally got clear we found that our prize was an old copy of *Adventure* wrapped in a red shirt and a piece of mountain-lion skin.

If you print this in your magazine for the lord's sake don't put my name to it.

WE HAVE word from several of our comrades at the front in Europe. Some of you have written asking for more of these soldier letters; a few have complained because we seem to approve Americans who serve other countries than their own.

In the first place, a large part of these men are not Americans at all, but Canadians, Australians, English, etc. Second, we do *not* approve the general idea of Americans serving any other country or severing, even

temporarily, their allegiance to the United States. Also, it is always possible they may be needed to fight for their own country.

BUT there is one big advantage to this country in their going. They get training and experience invaluable to the United States, which has had no experience in that new thing, modern warfare, and is notoriously in need of all the practical military training it can get. At least one of our American correspondents in the trenches, Mr. Genée, enlisted solely through the deliberate purpose of bringing home this training and experience, not only in himself as a trained unit but for propaganda in a planned campaign for teaching us his countrymen the practical lessons of modern warfare and our country's needs in preserving her own safety.

YOU who have complained, how does it happen no one of you ever complained over American adventurers who temporarily served some Latin American republic or revolutionist body? The case is practically the same, and there are plenty of instances. Perhaps you have even done it yourself.

As to an American's risking his life on foreign soil in any cause but his country's, why, tens of thousands are doing it all the time all over the world. The cause they serve is their own—excitement, profit, pleasure; it is certainly not their country's cause, and when they die of it they are just as much loss to their country as if they'd died in a European trench. And have you ever complained about it? Or even dreamed there was ground for complaint?

AT LEAST I'm glad no one has been stupid enough to complain because the men whose letters we've published happen to be nearly all on one side in Europe's war. I explained all that at a previous Camp-Fire and can cover the case briefly and finally by saying that we have never received a letter from the trenches on the other side without publishing it.

THERE have been only a very few complainers, but I don't mind saying they make me somewhat sore. Chiefly because of something that I have no doubt has never entered their heads. This is it:

They object righteously and patriotically to printing letters from Americans who

have temporarily abandoned their own country's service for that of another. I'll venture my very life that there is no single one of these complainers who has not abandoned his country's service for another service, not once but hundreds of times. The service for which he abandoned his country was his own service, his own interests or pleasures. I'm not talking now of adventures on foreign soil but of daily life at home—of failure to vote or to vote sincerely, of voting under the influence of personal interests; of public offices and trusts not administered solely for public benefit; of all things we allow or participate in and even find mildly humorous under the name "graft;" of "unimportant" laws and ordinances violated; of sins of omission in citizenship—neglect of chances to do public good, failure to protest where protests were needed, failure to be an active force for right in your community and nation.

YES, you have a wonderful sense of patriotism! The trouble with you—and with most of the rest of us—is that you can't see disloyalty or treason unless it's announced loudly with a drum-beat and plainly labeled with an American flag being trampled under foot. We spit upon Benedict Arnold because he was a traitor a hundred and forty years ago. It doesn't even occur to us that we don't have to have a war in order to have traitors. We never dream that we ourselves are being traitors to our country on hundreds of occasions. No, we consider ourselves very loyal citizens indeed and we wait till a loud drum-beat sounds on some other fellow and then rise and emit a shrill cry of righteous horror.

Perhaps, before any of us complains about another man's loyalty and patriotism, we'd better take a careful look at our own.

ANYHOW, in this case of letters from the trenches, I'll be rather slow to "cast the first stone" by barring our comrades from being heard at our Camp-Fire because of their lack of patriotism. At least till I'm a bit surer of my own practical patriotism and of that of the complainers.

Here are some letters from the trenches, the only ones on hand at this writing. I'm glad to say I've had word comparatively recently either from or of Major Foran, W. Townend, Theodore Goodrich Roberts. It was particularly welcome in Mr. Town-

end's case, for another comrade had previously written the disquieting news that he had found lying on a hospital floor an identification-disk bearing the name "W. Townend."

Frank A. Landrian, writing from England in the Autumn, gives us this report on himself:

I became fed up with my work in the Signal company. It seemed tame, although I was on outside work—a linesman—laying lines up to the trenches and keeping them repaired. It doesn't take much shelling to knock the finest system out of gear. After looking around a bit, I transferred to the 1st Canadian Machine Gun Co. and I took to it like a duck to water. Inside of three and a half months I was promoted to sergeant and did tolerably well.

We had Colt guns. By the way, I should think that a lot of the members of the Adventurers' Club know the Colt gun. Later, for several reasons, they were called in and we got an altogether different type of gun. Had a hot time of it in that last dust-up. The Canadians were in at Zillebeke—about 2½ miles southeast of Ypres.

ABOUT three weeks ago I was called back here to qualify for a commission in one of the battalions in Canada. If things don't take too long I ought to be home by Xmas. On the day I left, my service in France totaled 18½ months, with 7 days leave last November and about 6 weeks in hospital (sick). Never wounded, although I did get a darned close look several times at my ferry-ticket for the River Styx.

M. Logie also reports to the Camp-Fire:

Just a line from one of your old *Adventure* bunkies. Well, in my last letter I stated I was lying in a hospital in Belfast, Ireland, recovering from wounds and shock etc. Well, as I'm O. K. again I'm going out to see "the sport" once more. But this time it's the near East, amongst "the life." So will likely let you know how things are this time two months.

Can't very well state what the address will be, but will know by the time we pass the "Rock," Gibraltar, at any rate. I would like to join the Adventurers' Club, and have one of your identification-cards which I should have secured long ago. But anyway, I'll inform you of my whereabouts soon enough.

Am going to a country where the fighting is like the game in the "Islands" and Mexico. So am all "Jake." (Canuck slang for O. K.) Will say so long but not good-by. Am leaving in the morning for England and the troop-ship.

THE following letter from Lambert Harwood Hillyer, identified with one of the biggest film companies, came to me last Summer, adding another sea mystery and another chapter in the history of one of the famous old whalers whose photographs we printed:

I notice in one of your recent issues a picture of the bark *Morning Star* and, knowing her history

very well, I thought the following might interest you.

Last Summer I used the *Morning Star* a month, during which time I cruised up and down the New England coast with my company and produced a big sea picture from the pen of Joseph C. Lincoln. To do this we shipped a full crew and one of them happened to be a man who had served aboard the bark during her fifteen-year stay in the Arctic. From him I got much of her very romantic and adventurous history, which, although she has seen nearly seventy years of service, the following short narrative will show has not ended.

WE BOUGHT the boat outright and more or less outfitted her. After getting the most out of her as a screen subject she was sold to a man who represented himself as an agent of the United States Government and was willing to pay a price greatly in excess of the sum which she cost us from her original New Bedford owners. We were told that her hull was to be used as a torpedo target and we tried to find out the time and whereabouts of the tests with an idea of photographing them. The following facts came to light: The boat had slipped down Narragansett Bay to the sea without changing her registration or apparently shipping a crew. Trace of her ended there, no ship had sighted her and the Revenue Service was very anxious to get any information which would clear up her destination or use. Many theories are advanced but all are purely speculation. Certain it is, however, that the rugged old veteran of the sea has escaped a prosaic and undeserved end at the hands of Uncle Sam's engineers to go on to new adventures and a sequel perhaps as thrilling as her history demands.

FROM our always entertaining friend recently of Mexico—at least when he wrote—comes another of his occasional letters. Naturally, proper names are withheld or altered:

You may remember my last communication as being written from _____, Mexico, and that we were daily expecting the advent of the Carranzistas and the stealing away of the *hordas banditicos* of a certain Mr. Villa, who afterwards created some excitement in the United States. Well, the forces of Carranza finally came and the writer of this epistle failed to appreciate their coming as he should, for at that time he was very ill of typhus. The world was aware of the fact that we had no typhus, for Carranza had said so—but I treated some hundred cases and to finish it became ill of the disease myself. There was not a gringo medico in the town and the natives feared contagion too much to treat me so I fought it out with the heathen, my one-eyed old maid and a certain _____ of Oshkosh, b'gosh, whose idea of real and proper treatment was to give a sick man about a quart of red-eye every twenty-four hours.

I CAME out of my delirium one morning and asked the old *criada* if I had been drunk; she soothed me and made no comment beyond the fact that I had been very ill—and very drunk—for sixteen days. The next day she said "typhus" and I was glad to be alive. I failed to recover well and didn't walk until about the first of January. Later came

the killing at Cusi and I couldn't beat it with the rest of the Americans when they made the exodus—so I stuck around and did the American consuling after the consul had beat it for "gringoria."

I had the heathen wake me up one morning and he stated that he had been trying to wake me for some time "and," he remarked "you no come. Soldier man he come long time soon he heap beatum up door. Catchum letter—dam big heap full business." And he left me—all swelled up at this unseemly disturbance of his virginal slumber.

The letter read:

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I have the honor to inform you that should you decide to remain in _____ for three hours after the receipt of this communication, I shall do myself the honor to personally come to town, personally shoot you and personally decapitate you.

Your true friend,

_____, Major-General,
Commanding Irregular Forces.

"How long," I asked the peon after reading the communication, "has the time been running on my banishment?"

"Pues, *quién sabe?* But I gather that it will commence from the receipt of the letter."

"In which case, soul of mine, present my compliments to your general and inform him that he is over-generous with his time. I am placing in your care and charge two hours and fifty-five minutes of the time he has so generously given me—and I may get it some other time. Meantime you have my permission to inform your general that I have gone."

So I departed.

I NEED not detain you with a history of my travels, nor my recovery from a case of pneumonia, but suffice it to say I eventually arrived in the U. S. after daring an over-anxious Mexican customs official at Juarez to take the faithful .45 away from me. Discretion is sometimes the better part of valor, so he didn't remove the cannon.

. . . The first ancestor of which I have knowledge landed on the north coast of Scotland, probably expelled from some Norse pirate ship. His sole possessions were a suit of bull-hide armor and a broad, two-handed battle-ax. A man can, however, wield a small capital judiciously and increase it many fold, so, in the course of the years, _____'s possessions had increased to broad acres decorated by lowing kine, while many wives graced the farmstead—good, husky Scots that could work in the fields, you know, and eke the yellow-haired children rolled and tumbled in the duds while the mothers labored in the suds.

_____’s son was not a pirate, however; he chose the equally ancient calling of wrecking, while his son became a highwayman. So the family drifted. One became a banker (as was natural); another was hanged in chains because he cruised with Sir Henry Morgan, and still another became a priest.

. . . All of which means that I will shortly be in New York. . . I wonder, however, if sometimes the lilt of a wild viking sea-song—that I have never heard—will not ring in my ears and make my spirit uncomfortable—I wonder if I can get over the desire to hear some one cuss a gun out of the mud—at night—or if I shall ever entirely get the taste of

the alkali of the tropical desert entirely out of my mouth. I wonder.

I might add that he did come to New York—on an extremely staid and business-like business mission, that I had a bully time with him, and that, well, he went wandering down along the water-front one day, breathed of the sea and its ships, met an old friend of former adventures (Mexico is only one of many places where he has wandered) and—got back to his hotel. But he was what I'd call stirred. I think it was the rusty stacks of the tramps that somehow stirred him most.

COCOS ISLAND—the name is almost synonymous with buried treasure and with expeditions that have failed to get anything for their pains.

The older members of the Camp-Fire will remember that three or four years ago August Gissler, called the "King of Cocos Island," came in to see me several times, as I reported to the Camp-Fire. He had already spent more than twenty years of his life on the island and meant to go back. I lost track of him for a while, and of a former partner of his who also had put in a good deal of time on Cocos. Recently I had another talk with Mr. Gissler.

Both had no doubts of the treasure's being there and on the island, and probably no one else knows more about it than they, yet the treasure fails to come to light.

All of which doesn't make Captain —'s letter any the less interesting:

Believing the columns of *Adventure* are ever open to correct errors, allow me to say the author of "Lost Treasures of the World" is for the major part at sea as to his statements about Cocos Island. Cocos Island is in Lat. 5° 32' 57" N., Long. 86° 59' 17" W. I have a copy of original British Survey in 1838 with sketch from survey by officers of U. S. Fish Commission steamer *Albatross* in 1891, and French Survey in 1889.

I also have the survey, in part, of Dr. J. E. Warren, an old Forty-niner. His survey shows that in 1869 Nuers Island or Colnett Head (verified by officers of the *Albatross* in 1891) had an altitude of 341 ft. On the last day of March this year, its altitude, taken by Capt. Woods of the schooner *Bertha E. May*, was 73 ft. Again, in 1869 and in 1891 the altitude of Conic Island was 184 ft. On the last of March this year, its highest peak was only 50 ft.

TAKE both of these facts together with the fact that Cocos Island is now only between twelve and thirteen miles in circumference, when in 1874 it was nearly twenty miles, and couple them with the following and you are bound to conclude the famous island is settling back beneath the waves

from whence it came. Illustrious names once chiseled in the rocks, high and dry, are now near the water's edge. One of these names, of which I have many, is Admiral Seymour of H. M. Frigate *Samson*, 1849.

It will readily be noted that from 1838 to 1891, a period of 53 years, the relative altitudes practically remained the same. I have reason, however, to know the settling back of the island into the waters of the Pacific has begun at some period since 1874, for in that year the cave containing the vast treasures variously estimated at an excess of \$100,000,000 (this is no myth) was then high and dry. It is now submerged but can be got at yet.

IN 1874 I personally took from the cave a large cash-box of English make, but with the name of a Spanish diamond-mine owner on the top cut in a solid oval-shaped gold plate—very large. Also, a quantity of old-fashioned bull's-eye watches of guinea gold, very heavy and massive (one of these watches has the same name cut into its case—the name is that of De Soursa Cabral, Diamond Merchant of South America)—many of this kind, together with massive chains and seals of solid gold.

I took them from the wealth of the cave and hid them far up in the mountains some half or three-fourths of a mile from the cave. I was very near them in March and April of this year, but was afraid to open my mouth, as I had already found out I was to be left on the island. I can solemnly state right here, those diamonds, etc., can be had without any trouble—not more than one hour's work.

IN THE cave itself are gold statuettes, gold in bars, in nuggets, in dust, in circlets studded with gems, swords, shields, armor plate, gold slugs of California (with which I have many times pitched quoits in 1874). Also more than 150 tons of gold that was formerly the property of Peru and was loaded on the *Mary Die* of New Bedford and taken there for safety—the time Peru thought Lima would fall to the Chileans. Bonito was not the last freebooter there. Capt. Harry Blennerhassett was there after him, until sunk by a British gunboat. There was only one expedition there from England in 1912—the steamer *Melmore* in September. There was also one from Puget Sound, Captain Hackett of the old American bark *Hesper*, which he bought and fitted up and named the *Venture of Ventura*.

I can take \$5,000, leaving here with one man, and I am seventy-seven years old, and get that treasure the costly expeditions have failed to get.

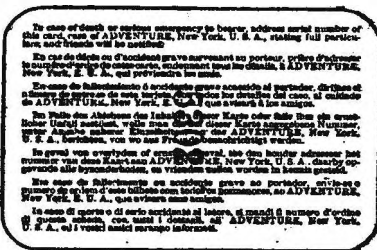
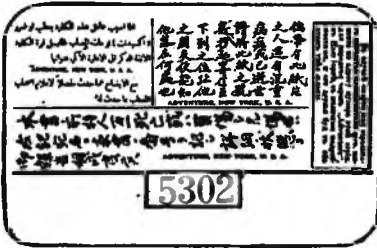
I WILL now tell you why they failed to find it.

But first allow me to say there have been no twenty-eight expeditions there. Also that the treasure on Trinidad Island was taken away many years ago by old Captain Justice Aspinwall of Newfoundland. Now as to the *Mary Die* or *Mary Dear*, as some say, her stern showed "Mary Die, New Bedford." They all go to Wafer's Bay to search for that treasure; the *Mary Die* never entered Wafer's Bay, which is on the N. W. coast of the island, while Chatham's Bay is on the N. E. coast. In 1874 five of us found the hulls of the *Relampago*, the *Hornsetter*, the *Dneipsic*, the *Don Juan Sonora* and the *Mary Die* in a very different place, and at low water we waded all over them. They had all been scuttled on the starboard bow and beam, and one of

the party found with his feet a jeweled sword-hilt with some eight or ten inches of blade on the *Relampago*. In closing I feel confident I shall never die until I recover that treasure or a big lot of it.—CAPTAIN ———, San Antonio, Texas.

P. S. It has been said by some that Capt. Harry Blennerhassett was murdered off the coast of Morocco by Moroccan pirates; truth is, he was sent to the bottom with his Lascars, Malayas and Kanakas by the British gunboat *Eberle*. It was from his ship, the *Hellenbeck*, five of us deserted in '74 after being shanghaied on board of him in Singapore, April 12, 1874, deserting June 17. Picked up October 22nd and carried to Bombay by the *Old Thorn* of the East India Co. All of us had sea scurvy at time of desertion. We buried two on the island, and one we buried in Indian Ocean en route to Bombay. Keaton and I both went into the European General Hospital there, where he died, so that I now am sole survivor.—CAPTAIN ———.

PARTICULARS concerning our free identification-cards and how to get one will be found on the next page, but here is a reproduction, in reduced size, of one of the cards. Thousands are being carried and many have already proved their vital usefulness.



Adventure's Identification-Card
(About 1/4 actual size)

THE following has to do almost altogether with swearing, but it is presented to you in such proper form that even the name of the general in question is represented by a dash. It is one of the letters I've been holding some time, waiting till space gave a chance.

Faribault, Minnesota.

I have just read Talbot Mundy's anecdote of "Tucker's Tongue" in the February number.

It recalls to mind a similar character whom we have in the army over here, a remarkably efficient officer of whom the general public know almost nothing at all.

My experience with him started when as an enlisted man I was on an expedition that had its annoyances, as most such trips did have in the old Arizona days. And on this particular day they had been a bit more frequent than usual. I stood down by the picket-line, as camp was being made that night, talking emphatically to the men, when he, at that time a lieutenant, called me.

"Sergeant, come here!"

I went up and saluted, and he asked me if I could clearly see some mountains that were about ninety miles away. I replied that I could.

"Well, sir, if you have to swear as you have been doing, you can go over there and do it! Let me attend to what swearing is necessary at this end!"

I DID not see Lieutenant ——— again for some years, until as a lieutenant of volunteers I was serving on the staff of General Lawton and, coming into headquarters after a short absence in the field, I was introduced to those who had reported during my time away. Among them was Lieut. Col. ———. He gave me one look and, grasping my hand, said:

"You need not introduce me to this gentleman; let me introduce you to the only man who was ever in the army, who could swear worse than I can!"

All I could say was, "Colonel ——— does me too much honor, when he admits me to that class."

If you could get some of General ———'s experiences for publication, they would prove very interesting to your readers. Almost any of the old-timers can tell some of them, as he has earned all the soft staff details that he has ever had.—F. J. ELLISON.

OLD readers will please note that our department, "Back Issues of *Adventure*," has been enlarged in scope. From now on, so far as space permits, it will contain notices not only from those who wish to sell back copies but also from those who wish to buy them.

FOLLOWING are the practical helps *Adventure* offers its readers. Merely "good business policy"? The other fiction magazines evidently don't believe the intangible returns warrant the time, trouble, money and space such service costs. And they are not run by fools.

Personally I believe it is good policy. But our older readers know, I think, that we do not serve for policy alone, that our readers do not mean to us merely fifteen cents a month per. I can sum up my own attitude very briefly by saying I want to be friends with all of you. But I don't ask you to believe it any farther than I can prove it.—ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

ADVENTURE'S SERVICES AND ADDRESSES

These services of *Adventure's* are free to any one whether a subscriber or not. They involve more time, work and expense on our part than you probably imagine, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thereby saving needless trouble for yourself and us.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, U. S. A., stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. The names and addresses will be treated as confidential by us. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for purposes of business identification. Cards furnished free of charge, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application*. We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later we may furnish a metal card or tag for adventurers when actually in the jungle, desert, etc. If interested in metal cards, say so on a *post-card*—not in a letter. No obligation entailed. These post-cards, filed, will guide us as to demand and number needed.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying*.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

A free department for the benefit of those readers who wish to buy or sell back copies of this magazine.

Our own supply of old issues is exhausted back of 1915; even 1915 is partly gone. Readers report that back *Adventures* can almost never be found at second-hand book-stalls. Practically the only way to get special back copies or to fill out your files is to put a notice in this department or watch for offers made by the few readers who are willing to sell or pass on stray copies or more or less complete files. Our office files are, of course, complete and we do not buy back copies or act as agents for them.

Mch. 1912 to Dec. 1915. \$1 a year, plus freight. J. MC-CARTY, 768 Commonwealth Ave., Detroit, Mich.

1912, May, Nov.; 1913, Feb.; 1914, Mch., Apl., May, June; 1915, Oct. 15 cents each, plus freight.—C. B. WHEELER, Midway, Ky.

Want 1910 also; 1911, July; 1912, Feb., Aug.; 1914, June, July. State price.—LOUIS C. MULLIKIN, 167 Hillside Ave., Newark, N. J.

Want copies containing my stories "Running a Cargo" and "The Whaler." State price.—F. W. WALLACE, 600 Read Bldg., Montreal, Can.

1912, last 6 issues; 1913, except May, July, Sept.; 1914, except April; 1915, except Sept.; 1916, except Dec. \$4 the lot, or 1912 at 20c each, 1913 at 15c, others at 10c; plus half freight.—IVAN D. SHELLEY, Birdsboro, Pa.

Complete file, except April, 1911, for best offer.—F. O. WINTERER, 113 Ceape St., Oshkosh, Wis.

1911, Aug., Dec.; 1912; 1913 except Nov. and Dec.; 1914; 1915. Name price, plus freight.—FRANCIS P. WARNE, Bracebridge, Ont., Canada.

1914, Sept. to Dec.; 1915. Name price plus freight.—DR. R. M. BARROWS, 1303 Chicago Ave., Evanston, Ill.

1911, May, June, Nov., Dec.; 1912; 1913 except Aug.; 1914; 1915, Jan. to Aug., also Nov.; 1916 except Jan. and Dec., 10 cents each plus freight.—PHIL JOURNEAUX, 5634 Laffin St., Chicago.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten; double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use only a very few fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable. (In the case of those wishing an outdoor life for reasons of health some of the editors of our "Ask Adventure" department may be able to furnish some *general* guidance.)

Addresses

ADVENTURERS' CLUB—No connection with this magazine, but data will be furnished by us. Can join only by attending a meeting of an existing chapter or starting a new chapter as provided in the Club's rules.

ORDER OF THE RESTLESS—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. Entirely separate from Adventurers' Club, but, like it, first suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 542 Engineers Bldg., Cleveland, O., in charge of preliminary organizing.

CAMP-FIRE—Any one belongs who wishes to.

AMERICAN LEGION—Suggested and first organized by this magazine. Equivalent to a voluntary national reserve of men trained to arms or in some eighty trades and professions needed in wartime. Address 10 Bridge St., New York City.

NATIONAL SCHOOL CAMP ASS'N—Military (and, eventually, industrial) training and camps for boys 12 or over. Address 1 Broadway, New York City.

HIGH-SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS OF THE U. S.—A similar organization cooperating with the N. S. C. A. (above). Address EVERYBODY'S, Spring and Macdougall, New York City.

RIFLE CLUBS—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure.")

General Questions from Readers

See our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, noting carefully its field and rules. If you do not wish your name and address printed, notify the department editor.

Missing Friends or Relatives

See our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue or the one—or possibly two—following it.

Before using any of our free services it is only fair—and will save you and us time and trouble—to observe carefully the simple, easy rules governing it.

The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help you we're ready and willing to try.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.



Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein.

Conducted by Our Large Staff of Experts, Each Specially Fitted by Personal Experience and Study to Cover His Own Definite Field. All Inquiries Must Be Sent Direct to the Expert in Charge of the Particular Department Under Which It Belongs.

THE purpose of "Ask Adventure" is to give our readers a practical personal service that our experience of years on this magazine has shown they want and need. Since we give such a service, it is our wish, and to our own best interests as well as the interests of those served, to make it as reliable and efficient as it is humanly possible to make it. Our purpose is to have it not only the biggest service of its kind in existence, but the most dependable.

This service is open and free to all. Questions should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each month in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable and standing source of practical information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine. We intend to add new departments until the whole field is covered, but shall do so only as we find experts of the required knowledge and integrity. It is necessary to build soundly and solidly.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you for details to some book or list of books or to local or special sources of information.

In short, do not expect the impossible, but do expect the best possible service that can be rendered!

Send in no questions without reading the

RULES

- 1. Service free to anybody, but no questions answered unless stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
- 2. Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
- 3. No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions.**
- 4. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
- 5. Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. **The Sea**—FREDERICK WILLIAM WALLACE, *Canadian Fisherman*, 35 St. Alexander St., Montreal, Can. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; especially, seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.
2. **Eastern U. S., Part 1**—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.
3. **Western U. S.**—E. E. HARRIMAN, 2336 West 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering west of meridian 105; game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals, mountains, desert.
4. **North American Snow Countries**—C. L. GILMAN, 708 Oneida Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn. Covering the canoe and snowshoe country of U. S. and Canada (the nearer north); methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.
5. **The Balkans**—ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.
6. **Asia, Southern**—GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 Nagle Ave., Inwood, New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.
7. **Russia and Eastern Siberia**—A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), 1255 Peoples Gas Bldg., Chicago. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

STANDING INFORMATION

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii and Alaska, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

THE next issue of "Ask Adventure" will carry some typical questions and answers, showing the working of the department and covering subjects of general interest sure to be asked sooner or later. By the issue following there will have been time for regular questions to begin coming in. Of these we shall print each month those of most general interest, thus giving "Ask Adventure" a twofold value—prompt, direct, personal replies to questions, and, in its magazine pages, a constantly increasing reference book of illuminating and practical information that will become invaluable as time goes on.

This month, so that all may know the

actual qualification of the various department editors and experts of "Ask Adventure," each of them has been asked to talk to you direct, briefly setting down an outline of his experience. Most of them are already known to our readers as authorities in their respective fields. As new departments are added in the future, their editors, too, will tell their personal stories.

First, Mr. Wallace, editor of the *Canadian Fisherman*. The sailors among you have already proved and approved his nautical knowledge as shown in his sea stories for this magazine:

The Sea

IT IS a pretty big contract to become a nautical oracle, but the skipper says I've to come forward and spin a "say-so" as to my qualifications, so here goes!

I was born of a seafaring family, my father being a master mariner of fifty years' sea service in British-American, Canadian and Italian sailing-ships, and latterly in a well-known transatlantic line. My cousins and uncles on both sides are mostly seafarers in the mercantile marine and the navy. My earliest recollections are of the sea and ships. The early years of my life were spent in Glasgow and London and the docks and shipbuilding-yards were my playgrounds in leisure hours. When eight years old I made my first transatlantic voyage with my father—both out and home, and, having the

"run of the ship," imbibed the seafaring spirit which spoiled me for any occupation unconnected with it.

FROM then on, ships and shipping, the sea and everything connected with it, became the alpha and omega of my existence. I read every sea story written; pored over books on navigation and seamanship, studied the history of ships and lived only to become familiar with nautical lore in all its phases. As a student of marine affairs I imbibed all the theory, and as a sailor on tramps and sailing-vessels became acquainted with hard knocks and practical experience. Was an ordinary seaman at seventeen aboard a big freighter, and have since sailed on almost every type of craft afloat—from a barge to a liner.

Within the last ten years the sea-spirit has taken me beach-combing up and down the Atlantic coast from New York to New Bedford with its old whalers, Provincetown, Boston, Gloucester and Portland with its coasters and fishermen. With the deep-sea fishermen I've been on every "bank" and ground on the Western Ocean, Winter and Summer, from Georges to Quebec Labrador. Up and down the Great Lakes, the Pacific Coast from Cape St. Elias, Alaska, to the Fraser River, in all sorts of craft and under all conditions. All this trailing about has been done "on my hands." The only offshore voyage I ever made as a passenger was to Cuba recently.

NOW, I don't claim to know everything about the sea or ships, nor am I infallible. I've had some experience and am only too willing to pass any information I have to the man inquiring. My stock in trade is a photographic eye, a retentive memory, and knowing where to get information on marine subjects. These, with my log-books, my photographs, sketches, and marine library, are at the inquirer's disposal. Send your questions along and we'll do our best to answer.—FREDERICK WM. WALLACE.

Eastern U. S.—Part I

MY CURIOSITY led me to accumulate a considerable fund of information about various subjects, mostly outdoor matters. I made 2,500,000 words in notes, collected tens of thousands of fact clippings, and accumulated a working library to use, now, in the interests of those who "Ask Adventure."

I have had the fun of discovering facts; having seen the Mississippi, I amused myself finding out things about the stream; questions about button-shells and pearls followed camping with the St. Francis River pearlery; and my experiences, curiously enough, have led frequently to trappers' cabins and over fur trap-lines from Lake Superior to the Louisiana swamps, in the Adirondacks and on Blue Ridge Mountains.

IT WILL be possible to answer many questions directly, but others will require that I refer to authorities who cover a subject exhaustively. I know of no pleasure greater than "reading up" ahead of hand, and then "reading back" over the territory traversed. Maps are of many kinds, and certain maps and certain books are of immense value to the tourist and adventurer going forth into new scenes.

Some people use the wonderful information which is stored away in books for hunters, fishermen, trappers, campers, tourists, sailors, roamers and adventurers, but others are deterred from seeking this knowledge because they have little or no time for seeking it, or because they doubt the book-learning being practical for service out-of-doors. An incident in my own experience changed my mind regarding book-lore for a woodsman. One Fall I went into the woods, deer-hunting; I saw twelve deer in ten days. The following Fall, I went to the same territory and saw sixty-four deer. Between the two trips I studied a book—and that book made the difference in the number of deer I saw.

ACCORDINGLY, people who wish to know where to find books that speak authoritatively about such subjects as still-hunting, trapping, pearling, woodcraft, natural history, gems, outdoor hand-books, and the like will find me glad to write them on such subjects, giving them my own experiences with books and documents relating to the territory where I have traveled.

Sometimes a traveler would like to know beforehand what chances there are for paying his way as he goes. Perhaps sometimes I will be able to make a suggestion that will help on ways and means—as for example, the floating stores of the Mississippi River, the itinerant photographers of the mountains, the herb-gatherers, log-camp jobs and the like. I've worked as deck-hand on a tow-barge, as sweep-man on a raft, as buddie in a hemlock-camp, as roustabout on a river steamer, and other things—earned money with my trapping, earned wages, and even meals!

"Ask Adventure" means exactly what it says; we are here to find the answer.—RAYMOND S. SPEARS.

North American Snow Countries

ADVENTURE'S Camp-Fire shows me the faces of men—trail-hardened and wilderness-ried—mushers of the high North, eaters of sour dough and moose-meat, old-timers, veterans of the lonely places.

It is an audience to daunt, yet an assemblage to inspire one who is called upon to hit the war-post and sing the story of his exploits. Like the little old man of Ojibway legend, I can say little more than:

"I have packed my war-sack and proceeded to the country of my enemies."

May those who hear me understand and approve as did the great warriors who sat around that other camp-fire.

My first remembrance of life has to do with a little log-cabin in a lumber-camp. My mind recalls no time when the life of the long trail and the lonely camp did not seem to me the natural, normal life of a man.

WITH this urge in my blood, handed down to me from my father and his, I have honed for the North. I have lived there when I could. When I could not, I have neglected no opportunity to learn more of it.

Tump-line and pack-sack are no academic abstractions to me. I have endured them, not as mere adjuncts to vacation trips but as necessary factors in the business of living. My toes are scarred where the snow-shoe thongs have cut them;

my knees are calloused from long hours in the canoe. I can cook, paddle, portage, snow-shoe, camp and chop wood.

Sour dough or baking-powder, it makes no difference, I can bake my bannock and digest it.

I believe I know a way to meet every demand of "the snow country."

I am aware that my way is by no means the only way.

I am even open to conviction that it is not the best way.

Our North, poets and novelists to the contrary notwithstanding, is a hospitable land and a comfortable—to the man who knows how to get along with it.

THIS is the foundation of what I have to offer in this "Ask Adventure" powwow. I am bold to speak on how things can be done and with what tools the north woodsman can work. I am humble to accept the corrections of those who are more competent to speak than I am.

What I want to do is to kindle a council-fire at which the tenderfoot may feel free to voice his desire for information and the old-timer feel welcome to rise up and disclose his wisdom.

I have lived in the north woods, Winter and Summer. I have learned much there. Most of all I have learned that woodcraft is a science in which a man must always be a learner.

ADVENTURE has long appealed to me as a magazine numbering more practical outdoor men among its readers than any other. It seems to me that the great virtue of this section of the "Ask Adventure" department lies not so much in the advice which I may be able to hand out as in the fact that it will bring to a focus the combined woods-wisdom of the readers.

I think I can suggest a workable solution for 'most any problem likely to be put up to me. But I don't want you to feel that I am setting up my judgment as final. When you know a better way, speak up and tell us all about it. When I'm stumped I'll holler for help, with perfect confidence that I'll get it.

Let's get together and help each other. Let's be conservative without being mossbacks. While holding to the tried and true equipment that has served us well, let's take a look at the new stuff and see if it's worth while.

Among us we ought to emulate the example of an Indian friend of mine who taught me a lot about handling a canoe—and copied my paddle.—C. L. GILMAN.

Western U. S.

IT IS my desire that this section shall be a place where every man who loves the West, with all that means of sport and scenery and real freedom, shall feel free to ask any question he desires answered. If I am not able to answer from my own knowledge, I shall use the knowledge of others. But this little corner shall be like a seat beside a fire, where the flickering light touches the pine-needles and the sound of the wind mingles with the sucking gurgle of water among the rocks.

WHEN the great Civil War was in its second year of agony, my father moved into the heart of the hardwood timber belt of Minnesota.

He filed on a homestead in Wright County, sixty miles west of Minneapolis, twenty-five miles south of St. Cloud. There were no roads in that section and he walked ahead of the ox-team which hauled us from the railroad fifteen miles away, and brushed out a road, "swamped" a road, to be true to backwoods lingo, for the last mile or two.

Here in the midst of the wilderness, he reared his family. There were four of us boys and one sister. It was uphill business, but the wilderness gave back to my father the health he had lost and with it a delight in the wild. For over nineteen years this was my home. Here I learned to shoot, to trap, to fish. Here I learned to love the wilderness and everything in it. It was the knowledge gained in the woods that made me take to the mountains of the west coast like a homesick cat crawling back to its old quarters.

FOR almost thirty-one years I have lived in California, and the days I have spent in the mountains have been the most golden of all. My rifles, my shotgun and my six-gun are still beloved companions and the thrill that runs along a rod is still dear to my heart. I can still enjoy one blanket on a pile of pine-tips. And I still like to ride a lively horse.

My experience with wild animals has taken in all kinds Minnesota held in the old days, except moose and elk, which were only seen far to the north. Bear, wolves, wildcats, panther, otter, beaver, fisher, lynx, and many others swarmed about us there. Here, radiating from Los Angeles, I have had some little experiences worth while. As for camping and fishing, I find the same things apply here as did in the old stamping-ground, and the zest is identical.—E. E. HARRIMAN.

The Balkans

I WANT to help all of you who read this and are curious about Balkan matters. It may well be that some of you will ask me questions I can not answer. We all of us have our natural limitations. If you do, though, I'll admit it frankly and refer you to a better source, or else own I'm stumped. Remember that the country we are dealing with in this department is one of the least known in the world, although it has been settled since the beginning of man and is situated right at the doorstep of Europe's most civilized communities and on the great central trade-routes of the Old World. There are lots of things I don't know about the Balkans, but those that I do know are at your service, and between us we'll hunt out the facts that have eluded recording up to this time.

I HAVE served with Macedonian revolutionists against the Turks; traveled in Bulgaria, Servia and Macedonia; written on various aspects of the Balkans and their problems for many magazines and newspapers in this country and abroad.—ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH.

Russia and Eastern Siberia

ACCORDING to the friendly custom, inaugurated years ago at *Adventure's* Camp-Fire, I rise to introduce myself. Was born in Petrograd, Russia, on the eleventh of August, 1871 (twenty-third of August, new style). Only son of General

M. Lochwitzky, who for thirty-six years was one of the heads of important departments. My father gave me a good education; when four years old had an English governess, and my father taught me three thousand Latin words besides; at five a French governess was added, and at six a German also! Entered a gymnasium (equivalent to grammar and high school in United States), then college; B. A., 1887.

ALWAYS wanting to be a soldier, entered a Government Cavalry School of Emperor Nicholas I.; then, Cavalry College; graduated in 1891. Was detailed to the War Office and sent on various inspection tours; worked out the plan of mobilization of Finland (1893 to 1895); Deputy Judge Advocate, 1895; sent by order of Secretary of War to Northern Caucasus on inspection. In 1897 was attached to the suite of H. H. Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria while he was visiting the Czar; was decorated by him (Knight Commander of St. Alexander of Bulgaria). Appointed Ac. Chief of Bureau of the Intelligence Department; sent to Vilna Military District. Promoted to lieutenant-colonel in May, 1897.

WAS accused of being a "suspect" and "high treason" (for opening a free school for peasants near my estate and advocating free speech and free press). Arrested on the night of the death of my father-in-law (Count of Luxemburg) and was kept in solitary confinement in the Fortress of St. Peter and Paul (in Petrograd). Then, by order of the Czar, was sent, via Bosphorus, Red Sea, Colombo, Singapore, Nagasaki and Vladivostok, to the Island of Sakhalin, Siberia, for sixteen years of Siberian exile. Remained on the island, in the capacity of acting district doctor and teacher, for four years; was bodyguard and interpreter to the famous traveler and explorer, Prof. Charles H. Hawes, of Trinity College, Cambridge University, England, and was with him on his exploration of the Black Gylacks, a tribe living in the northern part of Sakhalin. Through his friendship secured permission to go to Vladivostok, where became secretary of the British Vice-Consul, Mr. Edgar Salis-Schwabe, and secretary of the Ussuri Mining Co.

IN THE latter capacity protected the lives of three hundred white miners who were on the verge of being shot. As a result was accused before the chief of the Secret Police, Colonel Tosseff, of being an "agitator and socialist." On becoming aware of being shadowed by gendarmes, I managed, at the point of my revolver, to compel a Chinese fisherman to row me out six miles from shore to the Japanese tramp steamer —. When climbing on deck and seeking for a place to stow away, was accosted by two Russian custom-house officers. Succeeded in acting as a Jap and was permitted to go down into the dining-room, where the captain of the steamer agreed to secret me. But he had to give a bottle of brandy to the two officials before he was able to make them go to sleep. Then he secreted me in a box-couch, in the chart-house of the steamer, where I lay for thirty-six hours without food or drink, expecting any moment to be found by the new officers (they are changed every four hours) and deciding in that case "to die as a gentleman"—simply blowing my brains out. But they never took the trouble of climbing so high as the pilot-house, and so I got away to Japan.

AFTER ten months' residence in Tokyo, after the Russo-Jap war broke out, was suspected of being a Russian military attaché and hence a spy, was nearly lynched and thought it best to leave. Came to Hongkong, where was teacher in St. Stephens' College, then custom-house officer, then the Russian authorities nearly caught me and they would have given me a very "exalted position" which I did not care to accept, so left for the U. S. A.

Landed in San Francisco November 4, 1904; passed through the earthquake; became a deputy sheriff fighting the White-Slave traffickers; also a lecturer on Siberian Russia. Traveled in old Mexico and Canada. Am a Mason, and a member of the Adventurers' Club of Chicago. Last Spring was elected lieutenant-colonel of the Second Illinois Cavalry. As the Mexican trouble abated, am now interested in the International Aircraft Company of Chicago, but have enough time to answer questions on Russia and especially Eastern Siberia, and shall be glad to be of service whenever able.—ALEX. M. LOCHWITZKY.

Asia, Southern

GREETING to those of you who feel the call of "East of Suez." What am I going to say to you? Did any of you ever hear *Punch's* advice to those contemplating matrimony? Well, I won't give it to you; because the call of the Red Gods is on you and you'll go anyhow.

"Do you know the pile-built village where the sago dealers trade—

Do you know the reek of fish and wet bamboo?
Do you know the steaming stillness of the orchid-scented glade

When the blazoned, bird-winged butterflies flap through?

It is there that you are going with your camphor, net and boxes,

To a gently yellow pirate that you know—

To your little wailing lemurs, to your palms and flying foxes,

For the Red Gods call you out and you must go."

That's the great R. K. He knew the call; his writings ever since have been full of longing—and he knows enough to keep away from it now. I rather like to fool myself that I know enough, too; but there come periods when I fear that perhaps some day the call will be stronger than I. For there are traps among those orchid-scented fairy glades and pitfalls for the unwary.

HEAR, for instance, the tale of Dickinson, who has written his name big all over that country—"Kite" Dickinson of Chicago, U. S. A., the whitest man and greatest shot of all the men that I have met. I first came across him in Nepal, the country of those cheerfully bloodthirsty little devils, the Gurkhas. I traveled many miles because word came of a white man who was sick. That was Kite; he had dysentery that time. Kite had been with the Tibet "mission" of 1904, where he had lost everything he owned. He told me many things about Tibet, notably about turquoises; so I went to go-look-see for myself. All I got was entangled with official red-tape for alleged gun-running. Later I went up the Persian Gulf side to see what this gun-running thing really was; and the name of Dickinson kept cropping out, usually with a curse attached, in the most impossible places.

KITE next turned up in the back country of Elopura, British North Borneo. He was taking moving-pictures; I was hunting the "live uns" for Jamrach's, the wild-animal people. There, Kite got typhoid; I got snake-bite; and we both got malaria.

Later I went to Burma. In the ruby mines, in the orchid jungles, in the rubber tract, Kite Dickinson had always been there before me. From One-Eared Quong Ma's joint on the Singapore dock-front all the way round to Manukji's in Shanghai where for thirty-two cents you may hire a man to fall upon your enemy while he sleeps, men of all colors and nations had traded with Kite Dickinson and scrapped with him. In the former they had usually got the better of him; in the latter, never.

ONLY one place in all that world had not heard the name of Kite Dickinson. That was on the Siam border, where my ill fate consigned me to the task of persuading elephants to drag whole teak

trees out of the forest down to an alligator-haunted creek. There, for a wonder, the benighted populace knew him not.

Last I met him again in Rangoon. We were both enjoying cholera in the same hospital during one of the regular epidemics. Had a bully time together, thank you.

All this while, you will note, Dickinson had not accumulated a fortune. Neither had I. To the Apostolic Creed of our infancy—which Dickinson, godless irreprobate, had forgotten—we added the one most irrefutable item of all, that thing about the rolling-stone.

'Nuff's 'nuff! Me, I shook the dust of that place from off my feet. Dickinson, he stayed. The call of those Red Gods had him by the heart-strings, and holds him yet. It reaches out ten thousand miles to me here sometimes. What I know, I can't forget. And if there happens to be something *you* want to know, ask me and I'll tell you in so far as my knowledge goes.—GORDON MCCREACH.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal Star to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column" weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

HOFFMAN, A. C., left home ten years ago and went North. Last letter we received he was coming home because his brother Joe was dying. He lived with his parents at 1617 Oregon St., Berkeley, Cal. Please write your mother.—Address Mrs. F. B. HOFFMAN, 1740 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, Cal.

NESBIT, HENRY, last heard of about seven years ago in a hospital at Eugene, Ore. Was logging-camp foreman, previous to that time throughout the lumber region. Would like address.—Address R. E. DOLMAN, 2635 Franklin St., Omaha, Neb.

WILLIAMS (Santiago Bill), was in the Spanish-American War. Last I heard of him he was running a steam-shovel at the Panama Canal. Any one having any information regarding him, will you please write.—Address Wm. J. WILLIAMS, care Joe Lewis, Catlettsburg, Ky.

KEENE, JOHN, would like to know his whereabouts, or any of the gang who made trip to Liverpool on S. S. *Antillian*, late last February, Keene especially. "There was a Ship," quoth he. "Hold off, unhand me, Graybeard Loon." Eftsoons his hand dropt he.—Remember.—Address EVAN GORDON, Iolam, Kansas.

WHITE, JOHN S., disappeared from home Aug. 5, 1913. Light complexion, height 5 ft., age 43, weight 145 lbs., gray or hazel eyes. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his blind mother who wishes his return.—Address Mrs. SARAH J. WHITE, 198 Gibson Ave., Detroit, Mich.

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HIPPLE, CLYDE, last heard from in Mexico with Madero's Army. Left San Francisco, Cal., in Jan., 1911. Had charge of machine-gun squad. Electrician and machinist by trade. Have important news for him.—Address CHAS. E. PAYNE, care Gen. Del., Altoona, Pa.

MAC, G. F. R., will you please write your old partner.—Address C. M. C., Hotel Barbon, Central Bridge, New York.

MERRILL, RUSSELL, formerly student at Military College, Asheville, N. Carolina. Native of Florida, age 40, and musically inclined. Any one knowing his address will you please notify his old chum.—Address L. T.

REID, BLAIR Mc D., last seen in B'klyn, N. Y., having gone there from St. John, N. B. Was in the Fourth National Bank in New York, before coming to St. John.—Address A. W. HEANS, 4 Millidge St., St. John, N. B.

BEVEL, WILBY R., last heard of had finished term on U. S. S. *Dakota*, 1913. We are anxious to locate him.—Address CLARENCE BEVEL, 1323 South 7th Ave., Nampa, Idaho.

KELLOGG, KENNETH (Frank or James Barry), formerly of U. S. S. *Iowa*, stationed for some time at Guam. Any information would be gladly received by his sister. Address Mrs. E. K. BARTLETT, 350 35th St., Oakland, Cal.

DARLING, CHAS. H., last heard of in San Francisco, Cal. Your old pal wants to hear from you.—Address SIDNEY SEVERNS, Martinez, Calif.

COYLE, ARTHUR, native of Pa. Let me know where you are. Worked with you on pile-driver for U. S. Reclamation Service at Vandalia, Mont., Summer of 1913.—Address GUS ZECHEL, Malta, Mont.

KOPP, ELMER V., served with him on board U. S. S. *Barry* in China, Philippines, and South Seas. Write to old shipmate.—Address WAYNE H. PECK, Etiwanda, Calif.

WHITMORE, FRANCIS M., last heard from in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1913. Formerly medical student U. of P., Philadelphia, Pa. On trip to British Columbia. Would like to hear from you. Also good proposition in view. Write old address, F. L. B.

BOWLES, MRS. FRED, last heard of at Jersey City, and ARTHUR D. COCKS or Cox of Frisco. Brother and sister, both born at Putney, Eng.—Address JACK BRUNSWICK, care The Hage, 16 York St., London, W. C., Eng.

GULLEN, met on Joy Line boat from New York to Providence, R. I., in Summer, 1908. Later in Hof-Brau Restaurant in Providence.—Address W. BARRETT, Gen. Del., Taunton, Mass.

THE following names have been inquired for within the past two years. The name of inquirer can be obtained from this magazine.

A—C. ABERNATHY, SUMBER; Adair, Wm. L.; Adams, Eddie, signwriter; Adams, Will Holden, Vicksburg, Miss.; Aldridge, Harry C.; Allen, Robert, went West in 1910; Allen, Martin Danon; Allen, Robert, formerly of Bucyrus, O.; Alston, William E.; Alva, Stockwell; Ammann, Joseph, Grand Is., Neb., Feb., 1909; Anderson, Carl O.; Anderson, Joe, discharged U. S. Army Hospital Corps; Manila, P. I. 1901; Aniba, or Kennedy Alfred; Arhens, Helen Breckenridge; Armbruster, Joseph Anthony; Arrington, Tommy; Asher, Orlie; Ash, Capt. George, Missoula, Mont.; Ashenfelter, Loyd E.; Aveling, of London; Avery, J. F., of Ramseur, N. C.; Avirette, John A.; Bagley, Thomas H.; Baker, Edward E.; Barberm, Wallie; Barnes, William Henry; Barrette, Miss Cora Mabel; Bayse, Thomas T.; Beaton, A. W.; Beaver, Fred; Bedell, Percy John, Spokane, Wash.; Bee, Taver; Behrend, Otto F.; Belt, Dr. H. P.; Bennett, Ross; Bennett, Richard P.; Bens, Joseph, called "Jupp"; Benson, Harry; Bergholm, Fred; Berridge, Charles Andrew; Best, F. P., Mexico 1910, Cuba 1912; Billman, John (Jack); Black, Beb, alias "Big Ben," cattleman; Black, Leslie, Huntley, Mont.; Blankman, Charles H.; Bleckier, Thomas, Red Mills, Humbolt Co., Cal.; Bly, Royal R. (Richard or Dick); Bolton, Leonard, Tacoma, Wash.; Bonner, Fred; Bossard, Raymond C.; Boston, Jim; Boulton, Frederick E.; Bowhan, W. H.; Brackney; Bradford, Frank William; Bradley, Alonzo; Bradley, George Shiffer; Brantley, John William; Braut, Raymond, sailor from Ky.; Breed, Riley H.; Brice, M. E.; Brink, Clifford; Brinton, Arthur H.; Brown, Arthur, Oklahoma City; Brown, Edward G.; Brown, James; Brown, Marion M., Portland, Me.; Brown, traveling mate from Portland to Weed in 1912; Brownell, Richard; Brue, Charles (White); Brush, Don; Buckner (Blumze), Henry Ansil; Burke, Edgar, Hamburg, 1912-13; Burnett, Alice; Burnham, Frank; Burns, William, in Eldorado, 1904-06; Butcher, Bob, Kansas City, Mo.; Butler, Jack (Ormond) of Philadelphia, Pa.; Buttgenbach, Frederick (Fritz); Butterbaugh, Christian M.; Butts, or Olstrom, Godfrey; Byrd, L. B., west coast of Mexico, 1908-09; Cain, G. W.; Canavan, David; Canavan Henry; Campbell, Joseph N.; Carey, Charles A.; Carpenter, William Charles; Carr, David H.; Carrico, Ralph; Carl, B. S.; Carroll, Martin; Carson, J. G. (Jack); Cartwright, Jack; Case, John; Cecetka, A. F. (violinist); Challender, Claude; Chamberlain, Carlyle D.; Child, George, American Navy, 1876; Clancy or Clancey, Timothy; Cliff, Harry J.; Clough, Mr. and Mrs. Frank, British Honduras, 1910; Collins, Alfred (Electric); Comfort, James, Lepanto, Ark.; Comstock, Orms H.; Conley, Mark Francis; Cook, Elliott; Cook, E. D.; Cook, William; Cooke, Albert, native of Combe Martine, Devonshire, Eng.; Cooke, James E.; Cooper, B. F.; Cooper, J. Howard; Costelloe, Jack; Cotler, William T., Lake Fisher, 1890; Coughlin, Dr. Jeremiah; Cowen, J. Gordon; Cox, John Arthur, last seen in Jacksonville, Fla.; Coy, Alexander, Robert & Mollie; Craft, James M., sometimes known by the name of Taylor; Cravens, James S.; Cravens, Reecie B. and Tollie T. C.; Crawford, Geo. H., Searchlight, Nev., 1905-06; Crockett, Louis Henry, Boston, 1910; Crompton, James, Leeds, Mass.; Cronkhite, N. I. W.; Crosby, Si.; Cross, James; Cross, James Kenneth; Cross, Frederick, Dayton, Ohio; Crowell, John J.; Culver, Billy, Birmingham, Ala., 1910; Cumery, Bessie; Curtis, George, last seen at Norwood, Texas.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

D—I. Dabymple, Charles S.; Daley, Walter, Tampico, Mex., 1912; Darst, Red ("Memphis Red"—"Redshear"), Morgantown, W. Va.; Davenport, James, New Orleans, La., March, 1912; Davenport, William L., Dexter, Texas; Davenport, Phil.; Davis, James P.; Davis, Warren; Davies, "Guy"; Dawnie, George M.; DeBrenil, Aramand; Decker, E. L., Sergt. U. S. M. C.; DeLaCour, Joseph W.; Dennis, Lee A., home in Ill.; Denson, John, Hozon, Ark.; Dewitt, E. L.; Dies, Arthur W.; Digel, Julius C.; Diliert, Howard, born in Bethlehem, Pa.; Dobbert, Ed., "Kid"; Dodson, Lucion (L. H.); Douglas, Foster W., "Doug"; Doven, John; Downer, Simon (Tom); Downer, Vearne; Downing, Flora F.; Downy, Stephen; Dowet, Arthur A.; Drennan, John Matthew; Driebelles, Jack; Drinkwater, Everett E.; Du Guay, William; Duncan, George Riley; Duncan, Jasper N.; Dunlop, Tom, civil engineer; Dunn, Mark M., Sr. and Mark M., Jr.; Dyer, Michael; Ebert, Gertrude Viola; Eckles, Warren; Elliot, Robert (Bob); Ellingsen, Frithjof; Ellis, Harry; Elmsie, Donald E.; Ensign, W. H.; Ethridge, Mrs. Celia; Evans, Frank; Fairbanks, Frank G., Colombia, S. A.; Fairfax, Donald C.; Farnsley, A. A.; Fedorosci, Karol; Fernald, L. W.; Fields, Harry R.; Finley, Sam, Tonopah, Nev., 1909; Fish, Eber; Fisher, Joseph, Great Falls, Mont.; Fitzgerald, Garret; Flewelling, Ernest; Flores, Jose Timoleon; Floyd,

Harry; Floyd, Norris; Flynn, James; Foley, Mike L.; Foine, Alf.; Follett, Bob; Foster, Ben.; Frank, E. S.; Frager, Clifford, Foraker, Okla.; Frain, James, St. Louis, 1875; Frain, Roderick, Cripple Creek, Colo.; Franklin, Wm. W., Hamilton, Nev., 1883; Freeman, A. J., Chapman, Kansas, 1898; Fromme, Harry E.; Foster, John Frank; Fullmer, Frank F.; Fuller, S. J.; Galloway, Karl H.; Gallup, Cordia, known as Leon Burt; Galloway, James R.; Gardner, David Ferdinand; Gardner, Frank; Garnache, William J.; Gattev, Capt. G. G., 1901-04; Gaylord, C. W.; Gazzale, Andrew Mellers, San Diego, Jan., 1914; Gebbs, or Gibbs, Rebel Junta courier, Santa Rosalia; Getchell, Ernest A.; Gilbert, "Pink Pill"; Gilbertson, Joseph; Gillespie, Gene, "Manhattan"; Glenan, William J.; Gogg, Ikey; Goldstein, S. A.; Goodwin, James Alexander, 36th U. S. V.; Gordon, John; Gottlieb, Edward, electrician; Gourley, John H.; Gracem, E. Leslie; Grace, Mike, somewhere, Rocky Mts., 1900; Graham, Charles A.; Graham, Dan.; Graham, Joseph Alex.; Graves, "Jim"; Greenwood, Charles; Growman, Harry; Gutteridge, Edward J. (Bo); Hall, Charles T.; Hamilton, Thomas K.; Hamm, Robert E.; Hammerschmidt, Raimund, Dallas, Texas; Hammond, Paul C.; Hampton, Paul; Hammond, Warry; Hanser, Edward; Hardy, John; Harlow, Robert Pinkney, of New York City; Harper, John; Harris, Joe; Webster, N. D., 1909; Hart, Jack; Hart, Jack, once of 5th U. S. Cavalry; Hawley, or Holley, Mrs. Grace; Hayes, "Bob"; Hayman, Charles Fisher; Heckenauer, Karl H.; Heffern, Edward; Hellman, H. H.; Heyer, Milton Albert, Fargo, N. D., 1909; Hill, John Warren; Hiliman, Frank, Winnipeg, Can., 1911; Hinds, John Hamilton, Philadelphia; Hines, Ralph or "Shorty Hines"; Hyiden, Charles; Hoeker, Louis; Hoffman, Frank L.; Hoffman, S. G.; Hoffman, Clint, stowaway, Closeburn; Holbrook, Elmer H.; Holgate, Clem (Sunny); Holland, Frank; Hollis, Bach; Hoover, Ferris E.; Houston, W. T. D.; Howard, John; Howlett, Lee; Howlette, H. J.; Howley, Jim; Huber, Henry M.; Hudson, Charley, Monroe, Wash.; Huffman, J. L.; Huggard, George N.; Hughes, Henry; Hulings, Frank; Hull, Harry H.; Hunt, Arthur; Hutchison, George; Ingersoll, Harry G.; Ingram, Robert W.; Irving, James D.; Irwin, E. T., jockey and telegrapher.

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J—L. Jackson, Clifford P.; James, J. R.; Jefferson, Carl; Jefferson, John, last heard of in Needles, Calif.; Jenkins, Earl, Toronto, Canada; Jenkins, Thomas Clayton; Jessup, Theodore V.; Jette, Herbert; "Jew Sam"; Jewell, Geo. H.; Johnson, A. E., Redstone, Mont.; Johnson, Charles H.; Johnson, Ernest E.; Johnson, James Belton, St. Louis, Mo., 1868; Johnson, W. H., Mexico, 1913; Jones, Wm. H.; Juan, (message in Spanish); Juno, A. E., El Paso, Texas, 1906; Kaplan, Paul, Kemmerer, Wyo., 1914; Kellar, William S., Tampa, Fla.; Kemp, driver in Oakland; Kennedy, George F., Marcus, Wash.; Kennedy, Frank, naval hospital at Las Animas, Colo., 1913; Kern, Max, Cuba, 1907-08; Kernohan, Frank; Keys, Levy; King, Frank M.; Kinzman, Martin; Kirkpatrick, Clyde M.; Kirby, Ben (Society Ben); Klemann, Robert, Laredo, Texas; Knight, Chas. L., Cuba, 1907-08; Knight, Charles, Spokane, Wash.; Knight, Joe (Cop); Koynors, C. H. (Spud); Kretz, William, Beaumont, Texas, 1910; Kunze, Arthur; Lambert, H. L.; Lantz, Samuel Joseph; Lassen, Capt. Lorenz; Lavell, Prof. Cecil F.; Lawler, Slim; Leach, O. L. (Slim); Lear, John, Everett, Wash.; Lee, John R., of Amsterdam, N. Y.; Leigh, T. G.; Leslie, Blayne; Lewis, Harrison H. (Jr.); Liberati, Eugene; Lightowler, George W.; Lindsay, Charles; Linn, Robert Hamilton; Litchfield, H.; Lloyd, Edmund, Box, John and George; Lloyd, Ralph; Lockard, Harry; Lockwood, J. A.; Logue, Dan, St. Paul, Minn., 1910; Loomis, Johnny; Long, Harry; Long, John Wesley, native of Canada; Lorraine, Frank; Lounsbury, Herbert Harley (alias Peter Sterling); Lovett, Charles, seaman; Lyonds, Buddy (Dutch).

M—N. McArdle, James; McAuliffe, George; McArthur, William; McBride, Douglas; McCandless, Alexander; McCann, Elman C. J.; McCarthy, Dan.; McCarthy, J. J.; McClellan, William; McClintock, Harry K.; McCormack, 1912-13 on construction work in Mexico; McDonald, Jack; McFall, Joseph, formerly of Chicago; McGorray, Lawrence; McGuire, Thomas James; McIntyre, J. J., of Brandon, Man.; McIntosh, James W., last seen in Victoria, B. C., 1898; McKay, Raymond; McKenney, Hugh; MacKenzie, Thomas; McKinley, Harry; McLaughlin, Moses Hunt; McLay, Charles; McLaughlin, Dr. C. H., late of Canton, O.; MacNeill, Jack V. (Robbie), artist; McWorth, W. D. (Billy Mac); Macpherson, J. W.; Maddux, John F.; Maffei, Heck; Mahoney, Dan.; Mahoney, Ed., alias New Orleans Eddie; Maples, Clem M.; Markey, Isohm; Marlock, Dan (Shorty); Margolin, Louis, Kansas City, Mo., 1910; Marine,

Colonel Chas. A.; Marsh, Memer; Marshall, Robert; Martin, Alfred; Marsin, W. J., of Hacienda Manso Villa, Mex.; Marz, last heard of in Frisco; Mauzey, Jack; Mason, Joseph Ernest; Mason, William J.; Matthews, Will Fred; Maxwell, William; Maynell, Charles, New York, 1893; Mazurette, Alfred P.; Meade, Dan; Meek, Harold C.; Meisel, John; Mendoza, Richard; Merle, Eugene; Miller, Henry Chapin; Miller, Jacob; Miller, Marcellus Dell.; Miller, T. H., Wingfield, Kansas, June, 1906; Miller, R. H., Toro Point, C. Z., 1913; Miller, William, electrician; Miller, William Addison; Milligan, Archie; Monahan, Chas. "Top" Sergt.; Monroe, Joe R.; Moore, Frank L., Seattle, Wash.; Moore, J. A. (Jack), Tremedoc, North Wales, Eng.; Moore, William; Moreland, John L.; Morgan, Earl, Boston, Mass.; Morgan, William Hare; Moriarty, John F.; Morrissey, Warren (or Morrissey); Morine, Col. Charles A.; Morris, Frank; Morrissey, John; Morrow, Joseph; Moyer, Ted; Mudd, Clarence; Mullen, H. E. (Mac) of Peoria, Ill.; Mullen, Thomas; Mulligan, Martin; Murray, Michael; Naugler, Owen V.; Nelson, Fred; Nichols, Samuel R.; Nicholson, Harry A., or Nicholson; Nickerson, Joseph, cigarmaker; Niell, H. (Nielson); Noble, Washington Arthur; Nolan, Jack; Nolan, Michael, born in Kilkenny; Norris, Joe L.; Nugent, Richard Thomas; Nylander, C. W., left Sweden 1893.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

O—R. O'Brien, William F.; O'Callaghan, Dennis Charles; O'Flaherty, Joseph H.; O'Neal, Frank; Ogden, known as "Tex" or "Two Bar Slim"; Olsen, Abbey; Olsen, Edward T.; Olsen, Ole.; Orpen, William M.; Ott, Charles; Ovestry, Owen, G. P.; Owen, Robert; Owen, Allan H.; Owens, Clyde; Paige, Frederick; Palmer, A. M., Jr.; Palmer, Glen; Parker, O. B., formerly of Mexico; Parker, Ross; Patterson, Robert J. of Cleveland, O.; Pedder, Richard; Penault, Frank, High River, Alberta; Penney, J. C.; Pennock, Dr. Walker C.; Peraito, Jose L.; New Orleans 1914; Perry, Mark M.; Perry, Thomas Balantyne (or Balantine); Peters, W. Milton, with D. U. W., 1906; Pettinger, Eugene; Pettit, James R.; Phillips, J. R.; Phillipot, Shirley M., ex-sergeant, U. S. A.; Pickens, Osmer; Piggott, Arthur W.; Pinney, Bertie (or George Bert Pinney); Piper, E. E.; Pittenger, Fred; Pogoda, Albert; Pohl, Bernard H.; Polter, Caloin B.; Poole, Charles W.; Pope, Billy, Texas; Portwood, Alf., blacksmith; Prince, Ben, Memphis, Tenn.; Prickett, Stone J. (Rattlesnake Bill); Pritzardt, Albert; Prunty, E. W., well-driller; Quinn, Arthur; Radcliffe, Col. John; Randall, W. S.; Raven, Frank A.; Ray, Carol D.; Reardon, John Patrick; Redpath, Adam; Reeves, Paul V.; Reilly, John A.; Reitzmeier, Charley; Remes, Alexander or "Allie," East Exeter, Me.; Reynolds, William; Reynolds, William P.; Rhode, Gust; Rice, Andrew, of Bath Co., Ky.; Rice, Mark (Serrott); Rice, Charles B.; Richard, Arthur; Richard, Charlie E.; Richardson, Frank Eply; Rickard, Mrs. Lauretta; Rider, Wm.; Rimer, J. D.; Ritter, W. M., of Baltimore; Roach, Henry; Roberts, Joe, of Chicago, Ill.; Robinson, Boyd; Rogers, George John; Rogers, Henry, Memphis, Tenn., March 11, 1915; Rogerson, William L.; Romandovski, Ellia, von (Baron Eugene Karl); Rose, Jack, Melbourne, Australia, 1913; Rowe, Glen S.; Rowe, Theodore; Russell, Charles B., hospital corps; Ryan, Charles, Meacham, Ore.; Ryan, William; Ryan, Billy; Ryerson, Daniel, Sherman, Ariz.

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S—Z. Sabin, Carl; Sarries, James H.; Sawyer, Walter; Schane, Ben, left New Orleans, Sept. 1915; Scates, James A.; Scheidell, John; Schell, Fred B.; Schener, Nick; Schmidt, Louisa and Charles; Schwerin, William H.; Scott, F. B.; Scott, Johnson W.; Scott, Norwood, of Lansdowne, Pa.; Scully, John J., bricklayer; Seery (family name); Sellers, Edwin Henderson, cowboy and placer miner; Semple, James T., of Philadelphia; Seton, Capt. Robert Arthur, Venezuela, 1899; Sharp, Jesse R.; Sharpe, Melburn (Curly); Shaw, William F.; Shea, Timothy; Shea, W. A.; Sheehan, James, Orenco, Ore., 1911; Sheers, Thomas Eugene, Shakespeare, N. M., 1888; Shepard, W. C.; Sherwood, Dote (Gold-en); Shinn, J. W.; Shumaker, Robert F.; Smith, R. I., Grand Junction, Colo., 1908; Snodgrass, R. L. (Lee); Sipes, Hubert E.; Slider, Ada; Smedegard, James; Smith, Francis Basil; Smith, J. J.; Smith, William McK.; Snider, M. E.; Snowberger, Kirk R.; Snyder, Bill; Snyder, William; Sorrentzen, Paul, alias Sam Wilson; Spang, Chester; Spanoro, Corporal A. T.; Spear, Dr.; Spears, R. S.; Spencer, Alma; Spiegelhalter, Tyier; Spiering, August Frederick Wm.; Starlight, Capt.; Starnes, Edwin C.; Staley, Frank N.; Standbaugh, Lester; Stewart, Fred S.; Stewart, W. J. (Bill); Stevens, Mrs. J. S.; Stockton, Walter; Stokes, P. A.; String-fellow, Jessamine; Strong, S. O.; Bisbee, Ariz., 1907; "Struthers," Jack and Jim; Stumpf, Julius; Sullivan, Frank;

Summers, Thomas M.; Sutton, Edward Hepper; Swan-ander, Gust and Pete; Swarm, E. A.; Sweeny, Henry A.; Sykes, Grover C.; Stuart, Harry (Curly); Talmadge, George W. and Ruben W.; Tannebaum, Leslie; Taylor, Charles G.; Taylor, H. E. (Hal); Taylor, James C., and Margaret Dillon, his wife; Teisehen, Peter; Frank; Thomas, Willis I.; Thompson, Frank J.; Thompson, Jim F. (Cyclone Beach-nut Jimmy); Thomson, Roscoe; Thomson, Corp. T. John; Thurber, E. T. (Tom); Timmanus, Frank E.; Tobisen, Charles J.; Tombs, Albert; Ton, W. R.; Towne, George H.; Townsend, Harry S.; Treasdale, A. (Weasel); Trauhaut, Harold A.; Travers, Stanley, English; Travis, Joe; Treat, Roy M.; Trevor, Roland (Scotty); Troughton, J. J.; Turner, Charles N.; Turnard, Frank Albert; Tyler, George; Underwood, I. T.; Columbus, O.; Vail, Daniel; Van Pelt, Ellis Loy; Vanderdasson, Jim; Wagner, Rudolph (Ruddy); Walker, Charles T.; Wallenstein, William J.; Walsh, Billy; Walters, George (Creasy); Washburn, Bert; Watson, A. W.; Watson, Louis, Black Mt., N. C.; Weaver, Joseph C.; Weiner, Oscar; Welch, Douglas; West, M.; Weyman, Jack; Whalley, Thomas; Wheatton, H. L.; Wheeler, Joseph Harry; Whelan, Frank, Calif., 1913; White, Hugh; White, Thomas J.; Whitfield, Robert; Wickens, Fred; Wiethaler, Fred; Wildt, John; Wiley, Ellsworth; Will, John Andrew; Williams, C. E.; Williams, Elizabeth Matilda; Williams, Jack, of Tientsin, China; Wilson, Col. Robert B.; Wilson, D. L.; Wilson, Sadie; Wings, Claud C.; Wise, Johnny; Wittenkamp, Ove; Wisson, Joe B.; Wolf, Don W.; Wootton, Charles; Workman, Edward; Wright, James William; Yarbrough, Lawrence Seven (Bonnie); Young, Dale L.

MISCELLANEOUS: Any one who served in the 3rd Special Service Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry, Company D, Halifax, N. S., 1899-1900; Studabaker, Davy; "Bonnie" Bowen, Van Ochs and "Venus" Phillips; Comrades of Co. D, 17th Inf. in Mindanao, P. I.; comrades serving in Co. I of the 40th U. S.; first or second mates on the barkantine *Emily Waters* on trips to South America and around the Horn or to Australia, and Barbadoes; old comrades of the 70's that were in the Adobe Wal-Pocket Cañon and Yellow House Fight; Members of K Co. of the 18th Inf. during 1900 to 1902; any of the Florida boys who were out in the Everglades with Collecheche and Shapley the Winter of 1904-15; red-headed steward on the S. S. *Berkshire*; F. E. S.; crew of the U. S. Torpedo-Boat Destroyer *Dale*, 1903-1906; Soldier of E Co. 38th Vols., stationed in Lipa, Batangas, P. I., in Jan., 1900; Knights of the Big Stick, Peterson, William (Pete); Watson, Will; Ahl, Bill; English, "Jess" Vose, Jack; Seay, Cliff; Rooney, Bill; Fry, Joe; Baldwin, "Baldy"; Chapman; Kennedy; Molles-ter; Benner; McKinney; Tyson; Keinricks; Carlyle, Bill; Knode, Appleton; Wilkes; Butler, David; Vanienberg; Jenkins; Rice; Bergin; Sullivan; Weinell; Armstrong; Shay; Shendel, and other Knights of the Big Stick who worked for the W. E. Company in Bangor, Me., after the fire, April 30, 1911. Jim Foster, Milwaukee, St. Paul; Moore Lafon, Louisville; Mylett, Manchester, N. H.; McLain, Butte; Pay-Sergt. John Benham; all of 4 R. P. R.'s Transvaal; Red Maquire and McHenry, San Francisco, Cape Town; Ed Norton, New Orleans, Cape Town and Durban; Wild Bill Shea, Texas; Red O'Brien, Los Angeles; Daly Providence, Beira, P. E. Africa; Whitey Sullivan, Boston, Philippines and Orange Free State; Jimmy Brew, Jess Howard, Little Mack, and George Padgett, who were in Chihuahua, Mexico, in '07; boatswain's mate Holyoke, Seymour Relief Expedition; H. G. G.; Shipmates on Hamburg-American Line, tramp *Sornia* New York to Frontera, Mexico, June 2nd to 21st, 1913; Members of Stanley-Pryce and Masby's outfits in lower Calif. during 1910 and 1911, especially if a member of Troop A in the battle of Tia Juana; Members of Madero's Foreign Legion, during 1911; any one who worked in J. P. Marshall's and John Bruggar's paper-box shops; Cour-ish, Andrew, Dona Ana, N. M., 1898, also Mike Grace, somewhere in Rocky Mts., 1900 and Frank Wheland, Calif., 1913; Birch, M. C.; W. Elin or Pliary, J. M.; Clare, William, Steurtzel, Count; Leach, "Doc"; Rampby, Will F.; F. Balance or Harry Balance; Nelda, Miss Winnifred, Wilson, Francis and their father of the Mexican Central R. R. Co.; brothers, father and sister, Frazier, John, Marion, Wm., and Mr. who was last heard of in the Borax Fields of Cal. as Supt. of mines; orphan inquiring as to her identity; brother last seen in 1909; Mrs. Wm. Ross, orphan inquiring about herself; Don, A. J., veterinary surgeon, Indianapolis and Crowley, La.; Urita; Goff, or Geof; Will, mail at Sydney; J. L. F.; J. P. C.; Reckless, where are you? "Spade Tail" Joe Bennett, George Ligars, "Chicken" Gardner or any of the bunch of the 18th U. S. Inf. on Panay Island in '00-1900, also Sergt. Behi, 18th Inf.; Comrades, 30th and 4th U. S. Inf., from 1867 until 1885, especially Co. I; Comrades Co. L, 1st Regiment Maryland Vol. Inf. during war with Spain; Corporal discharged Sept. 2, '12 from Troop F, 13th Cav.; Comrades Co. G, 41st Inf., and Capt. Graves' Co., 20th Inf.; all members of Co. M-1-2; Comrades, Co. G, 5th Inf. in Central and Western States; Boys of Troop

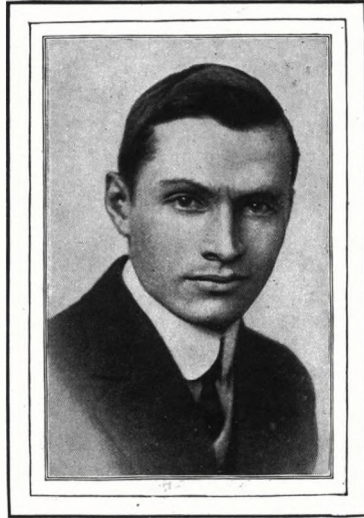
9, 13th U. S. Cav., 1908-11, also those in Parhn & Dean Lumber Camp, N. Brownville, Me., Winter of 1913; Comrades who served in the 34th Inf. Co. B. in the Philippines during the year of 1899; Comrade, B Co., 7th Inf., Jan. 15, 1897, to Oct. 27, 1898; any soldier, member of National Military Home, Dayton, O., 1900, 1910, 1911 until June 20, 1912; Comrades of 17th Field Artillery who served in Philippines; any member of Troop A, 1st U. S. Cavalry, 1887-92; any one who served in Troop L, 4th U. S. Cav., in Philippines, July 1899-1901, also Greer, James, Bunch, Wm., Witmer, Ed. A.; Higgins, Chester C. of the same troop; "Windy" Bache, "Ballyhoola," "Star Pointer" Brumby or any of the boys that were in Troop G, 5th U. S. Cav., at Aibonita, P. I., at time of hurricane in Aug. '99; James, Elias, Allegheny, Pa.; Kenny, John, Pittsburg, Pa.; Miller, Henry, Detroit, Mich., served in Co. B, 19th Inf., in Porto Rico, 1899; Comrades of the 17th B. T. A.; Comrades A Co., American Insurrectos, 1900-11; G. A. M.; any of the boys on the tug *Tatoosh*, 1911, time of rescue of S. S. *Washington*; any of the boys in the 4th or 36th Co., U. S. C. A. C., 1911 to 1913; Friend, who answered my ad which appeared

in *Adventure* during 1913; You will recognize me by the capital W and arrow on the backs of my letters; any one knowing the whereabouts of the Lablache (White) family that was settled in Southern States around Tenn. and Ark. during the Civil War, also family of John Ambeau; boys of the 97th Battalion, C. E. F., American Legion, also boys of the 16th Platoon, D Co.; parties who participated in expedition to Tiburon Island about eighteen months ago.

LAWRENCE STEWART, S. N. Morgan, Christian A. L. Damm, Gaynor Maddox, Mrs. Maude Thomas, H. A. Crafts, Hastlar Gal Breath, Bertha Wilkins Starkweather, please send us your present addresses. Mail sent to you at addresses given us doesn't reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care *Adventure*.

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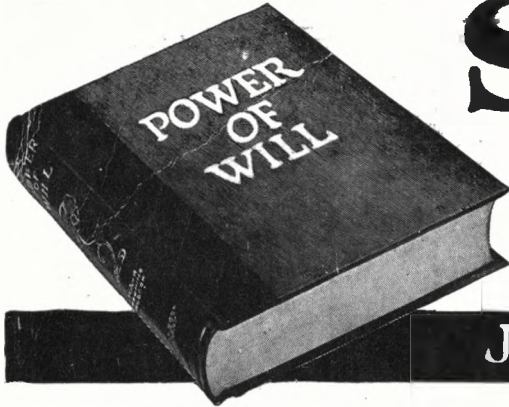


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