APRIL

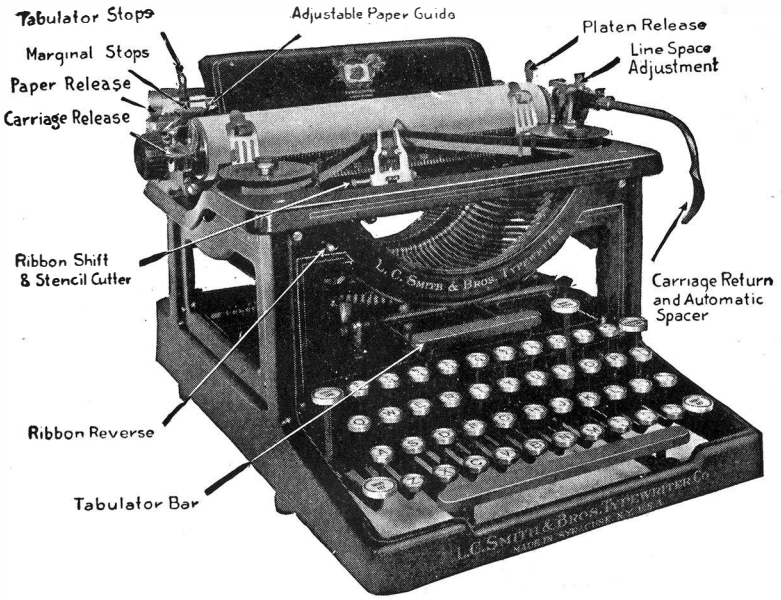
THE ARGOSY

10 CTS.

A Mystery of Roscoe Conkling Park

by Seward W. Hopkins

BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL COMPLETE



I want, through this advertisement, to establish as friendly business relations with you as I possibly can. I want you to realize also, that it is my earnest effort and intention to give you full honest value for every dollar that you spend with me. This is the only way I can succeed. The publisher of this magazine will vouch for my square dealings during the four years and more, my advertising has appeared.

I am building up my business on the foundation of good value and square dealings. I am saving thousands of satisfied customers thousands of dollars, by supplying, perfect—late style—visible writing—typewriters, at remarkably low prices.

All my transactions are handled throughout by personal correspondence. I assure you every courtesy and consideration, in your dealings with me. Your order will have my prompt, careful, personal attention. I will be glad to do business with you.

Harry A Smith

TYPEWRITER SENSATION

Free TRIAL—Use As You Pay

Send me only $2.50 a month until the low total price of $48.80 is paid, and the machine is yours

This is absolutely the most generous typewriter offer ever made. Do not rent a machine when you can pay $2.50 a month and own one. Think of it—Buying a $100.00 machine for $48.80. Cash price, $45.45. Never before has anything like this been attempted.

Standard Visible **L. C. Smith** Model Number 2

Perfect machines, Standard Size, Keyboard of Standard Universal arrangement writing 84 characters—universally used in teaching the touch system. **The entire line of writing completely visible at all times,** has the tabulator, the two color ribbon, with automatic reverse the back spacer, ball bearing type bars, ball bearing carriage action, ball bearing shift action, in fact every late style feature and modern operating convenience. Comes to you with everything complete, tools, cover, operating book and instructions, ribbon, practice paper—nothing extra to buy. **You cannot imagine the perfection of this beautiful reconstructed typewriter until you have seen it.** I have sold several thousand of these perfect latest style Model No. 2 machines at this bargain price and every one of these thousands of satisfied customers had this beautiful, strictly up to date machine on five days' free trial before deciding to buy it. I will send it to you F. O. B. Chicago for five days' free trial. It will sell itself, but if you are not satisfied that this is the greatest typewriter you ever saw, you can return it at my expense. You won't want to return it after you try it—**you cannot equal this wonderful value anywhere.**

H A. SMITH
Room 916-231 N. Fifth Ave.
CHICAGO, ILL.

Ship me a No. 2 L. C. Smith F. O. B. Chicago, as described in this advertisement. I will pay you the $40.00 balance of the SPECIAL $48.80 purchase price, at the rate of $2.50 per month. The title to remain in you until fully paid for. It is understood that I have five days in which to examine and try the typewriter. If I choose not to keep it I will carefully repack it and return it to the express agent. It is understood that you give the standard guarantee for one year.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

You Take No Risk—Put In Your Order *Now*

When the typewriter arrives deposit with the express agent $8.80 and take the machine for five days' trial. If you are convinced that it is the best typewriter you ever saw, keep it and send me $2.50 a month until my bargain price of $48.80 is paid. If you don't want it, return it to the express agent, receive your $8.80 and return the machine to me. I will pay the return express charges. **This machine is guaranteed just as if you paid $100.00 for it.** It is standard. Over one hundred thousand people own and use these typewriters and think them the best ever manufactured.

The supply at this price is very limited, the price will probably be raised when my next advertisement appears, so don't delay. Fill in the coupon today—mail to me—the typewriter will be shipped promptly. There is no red tape. I employ no solicitors—no collectors—no chattel mortgage. It is simply understood that I retain title to the machine until the full $48.80 is paid. **You cannot lose. It is the greatest typewriter opportunity you will ever have. Do not send me one cent. Get the coupon in the mails today—sure.**

Harry A. Smith 916-231 N. Fifth Ave. Chicago

Victor Records have familiarized millions with the masterpieces of music

A comparatively few years ago the soul-stirring arias and concerted numbers that have immortalized the names of the great composers were hidden mysteries with only an occasional opportunity, at rare intervals, to hear and become familiar with them.

Today millions of people are familiar with them through the wonderful achievements of the Victor. The Victor Records of these musical treasures have revealed their sublime beauty to music-lovers in every part of the world.

They are presented in all their grandeur by the world's greatest artists whose exquisite renditions are the standard by which the artists' actual performances are judged.

They are noteworthy achievements in the art of recording **that have established Victor supremacy on a basis of great things actually accomplished.**

Any Victor dealer in any city in the world will gladly play any music you wish to hear and demonstrate to you the various styles of the Victor and Victrola—$10 to $400.

Victor Talking Machine Co., Camden, N. J., U. S. A.

Berliner Gramophone Co., Montreal, Canadian Distributors

Important warning. **Victor Records can be safely and satisfactorily played only with *Victor Needles or Tungs-tone Stylus* on Victors or Victrolas. Victor Records cannot be safely played on machines with jeweled or other reproducing points.**

The Famous Sextet from Lucia
by Tetrazzini, Caruso, Amato, Journet, Jacoby, Bada (96201)

Victrola

New Victor Records demonstrated at all dealers on the 28th of each month

Chew It Over With "PIPER"

and you'll find the right solution to your problems. "PIPER" gives you real tobacco satisfaction and helpful, cheerful comfort that a man needs to bring his efficiency up to top-notch. That's the reason famous architects, lawyers, judges and scientists chew

PIPER Heidsieck

CHEWING TOBACCO—Champagne Flavor

Only the ripest, finest leaves of selected white Burley are used for "PIPER". The richness and mellowness of this superb tobacco are blended with a wonderful wine-like flavor that distinguishes "PIPER" from all other tobaccos.

This "Champagne Flavor" affords a degree of satisfying, healthful pleasure and lasting, substantial enjoyment not obtainable from the use of tobacco in any other form. A week's trial will prove this, and make you a lifelong friend of "PIPER".

5c and 10c cuts, foil-wrapped, in slide boxes. Also 10c cuts, foil-wrapped, in metal boxes. Sold everywhere.

THE AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY

THE ARGOSY

CONTENTS FOR APRIL, 1916

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A FULL BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL COMPLETE

THREE SERIAL STORIES

SEVEN SHORT STORIES

PREPARE

For an issue of a striking nature in the May Argosy, on sale April 15. Besides the extra-long complete book-length novel, replete with both thrills and humor:

"Getting Away From Thompson"

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN

There will be the opening instalments of Two New Serials. One, to be run in two parts, is a unique story of out-of-door adventure:

"The Old West Per Contract"

BY WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

And the other, in three parts, a tale of mystery that will defy your shrewdest guesses:

"From Dusk to Dark"

BY GEORGE M. A. CAIN

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 8 West Fortieth Street, New York, and Temple House, Temple Avenue, E. C., London
FRANK A. MUNSEY, President RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer
Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, $1.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; $1.50 to Canada, and $2.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered
ISSUED MONTHLY. COPYRIGHT, 1916, BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY

ENTERED AT THE NEW YORK POST-OFFICE AS SECOND-CLASS MAIL MATTER—COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department

is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rates in The Munsey Magazines

	Line Rate	
Munsey's Magazine	$2.00	Special Combination Line Rate $4.49 Less 3% cash discount.
The Argosy	1.30	
Railroad Man's Magazine	.80	
All-Story Weekly	.60	
	$4.70	

May Argosy Forms Close March 13th.

"A New Force In Business" is a booklet that tells how to advertise successfully in the Classified Department of the Munsey Magazines. Mailed anywhere on request.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

AGENTS WANTED.—WE WANT ONE GOOD LIVE Hustler in every town to represent the oldest and largest Cash Tailoring House in the World. **Make $10.00 a day** during spare time, taking orders for **our celebrated made to measure clothes.** Pants cut in latest style and made to individual measure. $2.75 postage paid. No capital needed, no experience necessary, your own clothes at wholesale prices, liberal cash profits—special inducements for good men. Write quick before your territory is snapped up. The Progress Tailoring Co., Dept. 75, Chicago.

FREE SAMPLE—NOSPLASH WATER STRAINERS SELL THEMSELVES. No talking—experience unnecessary. Daily profits $5 upwards. Send 2c (mailing cost). L. K. D. Union Filter Co., New York.

AGENTS WANTED—TO ADVERTISE OUR GOODS BY DISTRIBUTING FREE SAMPLE to consumer. Ninety cents an hour. Write for full particulars. Thomas Manufacturing Co., 507 North Street, Dayton, Ohio.

WANTED, DISTRIBUTORS, MEN AND WOMEN TO DISTRIBUTE KO-KO-FOAM with Free Borax Soap Powder. No money or experience needed. Good pay. R. Ward & Co., 730 N. Franklin Street, Chicago.

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, FURNISHING EVERYTHING; men and women, $30.00 to $200.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories," home or small room anywhere. No canvassing. Opportunity lifetime. Booklet free. Ragsdale Co., Drawer 92, East Orange, N. J.

WOULD YOU INVEST $100.00 IN OUR PREMIUM Punch Board Deals, if we could show you how to double your money within 30 days? There is a big demand for our Premiums. Washington Sales Company, Dept. A, Chicago.

AGENTS—STEADY INCOME.—LARGE MANUFACTURER of Handkerchiefs and Dress Goods, etc., wishes representative in each locality. Factory to consumer. Big profits, honest goods. Whole or spare time. Credit given. Send for particulars. Freeport Mfg. Co., 38 Main Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

SWELL SUIT FREE FOR 2 HOURS' WORK. Show it to your friends and make $5.00 an hour in your spare time. We show how. Costs nothing to try. Write quick for measure blank and our handy sample outfit. All Free. We deliver everything free. Look into this. Paragon Tailoring Co., Dept. 402, Chicago.

AGENTS—GET PARTICULARS OF ONE OF THE BEST paying propositions ever put on the market. Something no one else sells. **Make $4000 Yearly.** Address E. M. Feltman, Sales Manager, 3222 Third Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

RELIABLE PEOPLE WANTED To Place Our Orangeade Powder in stores and appoint agents. Makes the most delicious drink you ever tasted by just adding cold water and sugar. Enough for seventeen glasses and particulars 10c postpaid. Morrissey Company, 4417-20 Madison Street, Chicago, Ill.

WOULD ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS MONTHLY AS GENERAL AGENT FOR $100,000 Corporation, and a **Ford Auto** of your own **free,** introducing stock and poultry remedies, dips, disinfectants, etc., interest you? Then address Royoleum Co Operative Manufacturing Company, F. A., Monticello, Indiana.

Will $120 a month and automobile furnished free interest you? Answer quick. Secure valuable agency. Auto necessities. Guaranteed fast sellers. Quick repeaters. Remarkable money makers. Address F. A. Rayburn Co., 181 N. Dearborn St., Chicago.

PHOTO PILLOW TOPS, PORTRAITS, FRAMES, SHEET Pictures, Photo China Plates. Rejects credited. Prompt shipments. Samples and catalogue free to agents. 30 days' credit. Jas. C. Bailey Co., Desk H-1, Chicago, Ill.

TAILORING SALESMEN WANTED.—WE WANT A GOOD MAN in your town. We have the best money-maker on the market. A new and different plan. A most liberal offer. We start you with a large complete sample equipment which lands the orders every time. Only one agent in each town. We teach you the business and help you land orders. **Not one penny needed. Everything free.** Your spare time is all we want. Write today. Spencer Mead Co., Dept. 68, Chicago.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

AGENTS.—MAKE A BIG "CLEAN UP" SELLING OUR HUUSEHOLD SPECIALS. Quick sales. $25-$75 weekly a cinch. Write for colored circulars and immediate appointment. E. M. Davis, President, K22 Davis Building, Chicago.

YOUNG MAN, WOULD YOU ACCEPT A TAILOR-MADE SUIT, just for showing it to your friends? If you live in a town smaller than 10,000, write Banner Tailoring Co., Dept. 232, Chicago, and get beautiful samples, styles and a wonderful offer.

AGENTS WANTED.—AGENTS MAKE 500 PER CENT Profit selling "Novelty Sign Cards." Merchants buy 10 to 100 on sight. 800 varieties. Catalogue Free. Sullivan Co., 1233 W. Van Buren Street, Chicago, Ill.

Armstrong Earned $67.50 First Day selling our new business necessity. Retails $5.00 to $30.00. Agents profit 150%. Buyer satisfied or money back. No competition. Exclusive territory. Free sample. Sayers Co., 412 Wainwright, St. Louis, Mo.

$50.00 A WEEK UP. ALL THE FREE CLOTHES YOU WANT TO WEAR simply to advertise us. Write today for self-measuring blanks, style chart, big book of samples, etc. Send no money. A postal card brings all. We pay expressage on everything. American Woolen Mills Co., Dept. 402, Chicago.

$15.00 MADE FIRST DAY BY 13 YEAR OLD BOY WITH SHOMESCOPE. Woman made $6.00 first hour. Others doing as well. Particulars free. Shomescope Mfg. Co., 539 West 13th St., Kansas City, Mo.

AGENTS—500% PROFIT. Free Sample Gold and Silver Sign Letters for store fronts and office windows. Anyone can put on. Big demand everywhere. Write today for liberal offer to agents. Metallic Letter Co., 409 N. Clark, Chicago, U. S. A.

1916'S SENSATION! 11 PIECE TOILET SET SELLING LIKE WILDFIRE at $1, with $1 Carving Set **Free!** Enormous profits! Tremendous hit! Engle made $51 first week. Write quick! Pierce Co., Dept. B, Chicago.

There Is Always Room At The Top For Good Salesmen. Equip yourself for success through our Course in Practical Salesmanship; spare time only required. Information free. The J. F. Elam Sales Service, Dept. A, 130 No. Fifth Avenue, Chicago.

AGENTS—400 SNAPPY ALUMINUM SPECIALTIES AND UTENSILS means a sale in every home. General Sales Course Free. $50.00 a week sure. Answer quick. American Aluminum Mfg. Co., Division S-46, Lemont, Ill.

$150.00 SALARY FOR 60 DAYS' WORK PAID MAN OR Woman in each town to distribute free circulars and take orders for White Ribbon Concentrated Flavoring. J. S. Ziegler Co., 9 C-E. Harrison Street, Chicago.

WOMEN AGENTS WANTED

CORONET CORSETS! BIGGEST MONEY MAKING PROPOSITION for corsetieres. New line. Guaranteed corsets retail $2.00 to $4.00. Sell at sight. Experienced agents wanted. Get particulars now. Wade Corset Co., East 131 St., New York.

TYPEWRITERS

HYGRADE REBUILT TYPEWRITERS AT LOWEST Possible Prices, on easy terms, or rent, allowing rent on price. Free trial; free catalog No. 16, and bargain sheet. L. J. Peabody Co., 286 Devonshire Street, Boston, Mass.

TYPEWRITERS, ALL MAKES FACTORY-REBUILT BY FAMOUS "YOUNG PROCESS." As good as new, looks like new, wear like new, guaranteed like new. Our big business permits lowest cash prices, $10 and up. Also, machines rented—or sold on time. No matter what your needs are we can best serve you. Write and see—now. Young Typewriter Co., Dept. 281, Chicago, Ill.

TYPEWRITER PRICES SMASHED. Spot Cash Offer will save you money. Rebuilt L. C. Smiths, Olivers, Remingtons, Underwoods and Royals; your choice of 500 machines at $10 to $15. Guaranteed for 3 years. Send today for descriptive circular. Dearborn Typewriter Exchange, Dept. 24, Chicago, Ill.

HELP WANTED

CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATIONS OPEN THE WAY to good government positions. I can coach you by mail at small cost. Full particulars free to any American citizen of eighteen or over. Write today for Booklet C. E. 18. Earl Hopkins, Washington, D. C.

BE A DETECTIVE—EARN $150.00 TO $300.00 MONTHLY. Easy work; we show you; open to all; experience unnecessary. Full particulars mailed to you. Write Wagner, 1245 Lexington Avenue, New York. Department 206.

MEN AND WOMEN, $20 TO $35 PER MONTH EXTRA MONEY to any employed persons without interfering with regular work. No selling. No canvassing. Positively no investment. Unemployed need not apply. Address The Silver Mirror Co., Inc., 121 W. Madison Street, Chicago, Ill.

WILL POSITIVELY SHOW YOU BY MAIL HOW YOU CAN EARN $25 TO $100 week writing advertisements. Biggest field in the world for you. Information free. Page-Davis Co., 241 Page Building, Chicago, Ill.

Men And Women Wanted For U. S. Government Positions. $75.00 month. Steady work. Common education sufficient. Full unnecessary. Write immediately for free list of positions now obtainable. Franklin Institute, Dept. H-1, Rochester, N. Y.

FIVE BRIGHT, CAPABLE LADIES TO TRAVEL, demonstrate and sell dealers. $25 to $50 per week. Railroad fare paid. Goodrich Drug Company, Dept. 58, Omaha, Neb.

Study Bacteriology, Public Health and Sanitation. Positions pay $3,000 to $5,000. Interesting home study course. Previous experience unnecessary. Degree granted. We help secure positions. Write for prospectus. American College of Bacteriology, Suite 3005, Chicago.

GOVERNMENT POSITIONS PAY BIG MONEY. Examinations everywhere soon. Get prepared by former United States Civil Service Examiner. 64 page booklet free. Write to-day. Patterson Civil Service School, Box 1403, Rochester, N. Y.

BE A DETECTIVE.—EARN FROM $150.00 TO $300.00 PER MONTH. Travel over the world. Write C. T. Ludwig, 126 Westover Building, Kansas City, Mo.

MEN OF IDEAS AND INVENTIVE ABILITY should write for new "Lists of Needed Inventions," Patent Buyers, and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money." Advice free. Randolph & Co., Patent Attorneys, Dept. 40, Washington, D. C.

LADIES—MAKE SHIELDS AT HOME, $10 PER 100; no canvassing required. Send stamped-addressed envelope for particulars. Eureka Co., Dept. 41, Kalamazoo, Mich.

I WILL START YOU EARNING $4.00 DAILY AT HOME in spare time, silvering mirrors. No capital. Anyone can do the work. Send for free instructive booklet, giving plans of operation. G. F. Redmond, Dept. B, Boston, Mass.

MEN AND WOMEN WITH SPARE TIME CAN EARN A LOT OF EXTRA MONEY by our new and interesting advertising plan. No Investment. No Selling. No Soliciting. **Write to-day.** Crown Mfg. Co., Dept. H-9, 20 W. Lake St., Chicago.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

Write Moving Picture Plays, $25 To $100 Each. Big demand. Previous experience or literary talent not required. **No correspondence course.** Send today for **free details** explaining everything. E-Z Scenario Co., A-M, 609 W. 127 St., New York City.

WRITE MOVING PICTURE PLAYS, SHORT STORIES, Poems; $10 to $300 each. Constant demand. No correspondence course. Start writing and selling at once. Details free. Atlas Pub. Co., 316 Atlas Building, Cincinnati, Ohio.

PHOTOPLAYS WANTED BY 48 COMPANIES; $10 TO $500 EACH PAID FOR PLAYS. No correspondence course or experience needed; details sent free to beginners. Sell your ideas. Producers League, 331 Wainwright, St. Louis, Mo.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS WANTED, $25 TO $100. You can write them. We show you how. Experience unnecessary. New, easy, fascinating way to earn money in spare time. Get free details. Rex Publishers, Box 175, M-11, Chicago.

LEARN TO WRITE PHOTOPLAYS. COIN YOUR IDEAS INTO GOLD. Brilliant education unnecessary. We teach you in a short time. Write for our remarkable offer. Details free. Bonifide Co., Box 906, Portland, Ore.

WRITE PHOTOPLAYS. BIG PRICES PAID. CONSTANT demand. Devote all or spare time. Experience or correspondence course not necessary. Start work at once. Send for free details. Enterprise Publishing Co., A-Y, 3348 Lowe Avenue, Chicago.

MOTION PICTURE BUSINESS

$50.00—NIGHTLY—START IN THE MOVING PICTURE BUSINESS on our installment plan. No experience necessary. Free catalog. Monarch Film Service, Dept. 10, Memphis, Tenn.

EARN WHILE YOU LEARN. SMALL CAPITAL STARTS YOU. Experience unnecessary. $50.00 per day profit. We teach you and furnish everything. Write for information. H. A. Raymond, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

WANTED—STORIES, ARTICLES, POEMS, ETC. We pay on acceptance. Offers submitted. Handwritten MSS. acceptable. Please send prepaid with return postage. Cosmos Magazine, 143 Stewart Building, Washington, D. C.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS THAT PROTECT AND PAY. ADVICE AND BOOKS FREE. Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Send sketch or model for search. Watson E. Coleman, 624 F Street, Washington, D. C.

IDEAS WANTED.—Manufacturers are writing for patents procured through me. Three books with list hundreds of inventions wanted sent free. I help you market your invention. Advice Free. R. B. Owen, 68 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C.

PATENTS—TRADE-MARKS. SEND FOR MY FREE BOOK "HOW TO GET THEM." It's full of information you should know. Joshua R. H. Potts, 8 S. Dearborn St., Chicago; 929 Chestnut St., Philadelphia; 805 G St., Washington.

PATENTS.—WRITE FOR HOW TO OBTAIN A PATENT, list of Patent Buyers, and Inventions Wanted. $1,000,000 in prizes offered for inventions. Send Sketch for free opinion as to patentability. Our **Four Books** sent free upon request. Patents advertised **Free.** We assist inventors to sell their patents. Victor J. Evans Co., Patent Attys., 756 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

YOUR IDEAS MAY BRING YOU WEALTH, IF PATENTED through credit system. Send sketch. Free search. Book free. Waters & Co., 4294 Warder Building, Washington, D. C.

"PRIZES FOR PATENTS." "MONEY IN PATENTS." "How to Get Your Patents and Money." "Why Some Inventors Fail." "Needed Inventions." Sent free. Randolph & Co., Patent Attorneys, 629 F Street, Washington, D. C.

PATENT YOUR IDEAS—$9,000 OFFERED FOR CERTAIN INVENTIONS. Books, "How to Obtain a Patent." and "What to Invent." sent free. Send rough sketch for free report as to patentability. Manufacturers constantly writing us for patents we have obtained. We advertise your patent for sale at our expense. Established 20 years. Address Chandlee & Chandlee, Patent Attorneys, 911 F Street, Washington, D. C.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

ADVERTISERS, MAIL DEALERS! OUR ADVERTISING GUIDE gives rates, circulation of 2,000 different publications, includes 30 mail order plans. Sent complete 10c. Dearborn Advertising Agency, 222 Franklin Building, Chicago.

TELEGRAPHY

LEARN TELEGRAPHY AT HOME IN HALF USUAL TIME and trifling cost with wonderful Automatic Transmitter, the Omnigraph. Connected with sounder or buzzer sends unlimited Morse or Continental messages, at any speed, just as expert operator would. Adopted by U. S. Government. Catalog free. Omnigraph Mfg. Co., 39 R. Cortlandt Street, New York.

STAMPS AND RARE COINS

$4.25 PAID FOR FLYING EAGLE CENTS dated 1856. We pay a cash premium on hundreds of old coins. Send 10c at once for New Illustrated Coin Value Book, 4x7. It may mean your fortune. Clarke & Co., Coin Dealers, Box 101, Le Roy, N. Y.

WILL PAY $5.00 TO $50.00 FOR LARGE CENT dated 1799. We pay cash premiums on all large cents, eagle cents, etc., and all rare coins to 1912. Thousands of coins and bills wanted. Send 4c for our Large Illustrated Coin Circular. May mean large profits to you. Numismatic Bank, Dept. M, Fort Worth, Texas.

OLD COINS BOUGHT AND SOLD. Spring catalog, list of coins for sale, free to collectors only. Buying catalog, quoting prices I pay for coins, 10 cents. Wm. Hesslein, 101 Tremont St., Boston, Mass.

PICTURE POST CARDS

COLORADO SCENIC POST CARDS—NEW COLOR Process. Send 25c for 6 unusual views, peaks, scenery, etc. Satisfaction guaranteed. Colorado View Co., Box 36, Salida, Colo.

ADVERTISING MEDIA

HAVE YOU A BUSINESS THAT "CANNOT" BE ADVERTISED? We often hear men make this assertion. They tell us that their field of operation is small and that their distribution is limited. Yet they make goods that some people somewhere need and buy. We believe that such men could use to advantage the Agents and Salesmen Wanted section of the Classified Advertising Department of the Munsey Magazines. We find that many of these advertisers use the **Classified Department** of the Munsey Magazines month after month, year after year. They tell us that these magazines have put them in touch with most reliable people, and that they have automatically established unsuspected and profitable markets—in fact, proved a new force in their business. We **have prepared a book "A New Force In Business"** that goes into the details of the subject. This book we shall gladly send to any one on request. It might solve your problem as it has the problems of thousands of others. The Frank A. Munsey Company, 8 West Fortieth Street, New York City.

(Classified Advertising continued on next page, second column.)

"Bristol"
TRADE MARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

The Prize Winning Rods

25 lbs., 47 ins. long Muscallonge caught on a No. 16 "BRISTOL" Rod at Ottawa by Frank Ault, of Ottawa, Canada.

If you want your picture printed in the Sportsmen's "Hall of Fame" and yourself recognized as the Prize Fisherman of your circle, you naturally would start out with the rod and tackle that have for years proven their superiority in landing Prize Fish and in giving the fisherman the most glorious sport.

There is no getting around the fact that "BRISTOL" Steel Fishing Rods have established their overwhelming superiority in every National Fishing Contest for the last 4 years. Their strength; ability to stand the strain and do hard work; resiliency in catching and hanging on to game fish; their elegance and beauty; national reputation for fine service and everything else about them, make them the national favorites.

19,000 dealers sell 38 different styles of "BRISTOL" Rods, ranging from $3.50 to $25.00 each. Everyone guaranteed. If your dealer can't supply you, write us.

Catalogue Free

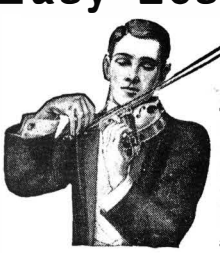
New Art Calendar—Philip R. Goodwin's famous oil painting, "Team Work," reproduced in full colors in a 1916 Calendar. Sent only on receipt of 15 cents.

THE HORTON MFG. CO.
43 Horton St., Bristol, Conn.
We offer prizes for the best Fishing Pictures—Send your Fishing Photos.

Learn Music At Home!

Piano Organ Violin Cornet Guitar Banjo
Mandolin Harp 'Cello Sight Singing

Easy Lessons Free!



No longer need the ability to play be shut out of your life. Just write us a postal today for our new Free Book, fresh from the printer. Let us tell you how you can easily, quickly, thoroughly learn to play your favorite musical instrument by note in your own home, without a teacher, by our New Improved Home Study Method, *without paying a cent for lessons!* Different, easier than private teacher way—no tiresome, dry exercises—no inconvenience. No trick music, no "numbers," yet simple, wonderful, amazingly easy even for a mere child.

200,000 Pupils!

Since 1898 we have successfully taught over 200,000 people from seven to seventy, *in all parts of the world.* Hundreds write—"Have learned more in one term in my home with your weekly lessons than in three terms with private teachers." "Everything is so thorough and complete." "The lessons are marvels of simplicity. My 11-year old boy has not had the least trouble to learn."

Wonderful New Book Free!

We want to have *one pupil in each locality at once* to help advertise our wonderful easy system of teaching music. *For a limited time,* we therefore offer our marvelous lessons *free.* Only charge is for postage and sheet music which averages 12½c weekly. Beginners or advanced pupils. We have hundreds of pupils *right here in New York,* the musical centre of America, who prefer our Home Study method in place of best private teacher. Get all the proof, facts, letters from pupils, *amazing free offer* and fascinating New Book just issued, *all free!* Write postal today. Address U. S. School of Music, Box 1A, 225 Fifth Avenue, New York.

(Classified Advertising continued from page 5.)

REAL ESTATE—FARM LANDS

MISSISSIPPI

IS HE CRAZY? The owner of a plantation in Mississippi is giving away a few five-acre tracts. The only condition is that figs be planted. The owner wants enough figs raised to supply a Canning Factory. You can secure five acres and an interest in the Factory by writing Eubank Farms Company, 783 Keystone, Pittsburgh, Pa. They will plant and care for your trees for $6 per month. Your profit should be $1,000 per year. Some think this man is crazy for giving away such valuable land, but there may be method in his madness.

POULTRY

POULTRY—A Hen And Ten Chicks in pure bred stock from beautiful, fast-maturing, egg-producing, thoroughbred Rhode Island Reds, Barred Plymouth Rocks and White Leghorns. Raise your chicks in Nature's way. Circular explaining merits of our birds free. Royal Poultry Farm, Box C, Menominee, Michigan.

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THE ARGOSY

Vol. LXXXII APRIL, 1916 No. 1

A Mystery of Roscoe Conkling Park

by Seward W. Hopkins

Author of "Too Terrible for War," "The Hoodoo Ranch," etc.

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CHAPTER I.

THE GODDESS FROM THE STREET CAR.

AS the south-bound Genesee Street trolley stopped in front of John Raymond's handsome residence the two young men seated on the broad veranda glanced toward it.

"Greenland," said one, "who is the goddess from the car?"

"Search me," replied the other, with a quiet laugh and a pronounced grunt of approval. "I never saw her before. By Jove, she's coming here!"

"Thank the Lord," was the rejoinder. "Aside from the somber contemplation of your approaching happiness, George, I had nothing to live for until this moment. She is certainly some looker!"

"The Lady of the Dawn," murmured Greenland.

"For a man who is going to be married at eight o'clock in the morning, and in this very house, your remark registers a fickle character. By Jove! What an air of possession the lady wears!"

"Independence, rather," said Greenland. "The Declaration is written all over her."

Meanwhile the object of these gratuitous phrases of commendation was approaching the gate. Genesee Street being exceptionally wide, and Mr. Raymond's house being situated fifty feet back from his front line-fence, the two men had ample opportunity

to study the new arrival, who in a moment became the stranger within the gates.

She was tall, and of fine form and carriage. Her hair glowed in the light of the setting sun, and to Greenland it was a beautiful auburn, while to Yale, who had never been engaged or even in love, it was a most exquisite red.

As a matter of fact, or poesy, one who writes feelingly upon such things would pronounce the great mass of hair atop of a well-shaped head a golden brown, and make it rhyme with royal crown, or some such foolishness. This well-dressed ruddy mass was but slightly concealed by a round something that was probably a hat, but which might masquerade under the title of toque, or turban, or whatsoever.

It is the immediate impression that she created in the minds of George Greenland and Kenneth Yale that is here being recorded, and as one was to be married the next morning to Nancy Raymond, with whom he was very much in love, and the other was stricken suddenly foolish with admiration at the beauty of the approaching visitor, nobody is going to try to make their impressions appear sane.

The visitor was not more than nineteen, nor much less. She carried in her right hand a well-traveled suitcase, in her left a tightly rolled umbrella, and from her shoulder, suspended by a strap, there hung a camera.

It was amazing how well she fitted into the picture.

From the gate to Raymond's house a marble tessellated walk led straight to the great marble steps, the cost of which might have built a cottage. On either side stretched a lawn of velvet green, ornamental trees and shrubs, and on one side a fountain sent jets of water into the air from reeds in the mouths of nymphs, and on the other a great garden of autumn flowers gave color to the scene.

"I'll bet her name is Aurora," remarked Greenland.

"I don't care a hang what her name is," said Yale. "She *is* Aurora."

They were soon to have their curiosity satisfied. From the massive front door there came a swish of skirts, the tap of light, small shoes on the marble porch, and the figure of a finely formed and very pretty girl went flying down to meet the visitor.

"Beverly Wayne, by all that's great and good!" exclaimed Miss Nancy Raymond, clasping her friend with both arms and kissing her.

"Yum!" murmured Greenland.

"Shut up," said Yale. "Those same lips have probably kissed yours often enough, and after eight o'clock to-morrow will be all yours. *I'm* the one who is suffering."

"You!"

They stopped chaffing and listened.

"I was so afraid you did not get my invitation," Miss Raymond was saying.

"Well, your fear was justified. What invitation?"

"Why, you goose, to my wedding to-morrow morning, of course."

"Oh," replied Miss Wayne in a matter-of-fact way. "I suppose there is an 'of course' to it. But you see, I have not been home in three months. I don't suppose you sent out your invitations three months ago."

"I wasn't even engaged three months ago."

"Well, you *are* taking chances! I'd have to know a man about ten years before I'd stick my third finger out for a metal hoop that represents an iron collar around your neck."

"What an absurd thing you are! It does no such thing."

"It must. I read it in an ancient book."

"Lord deliver us from battle, murder, sudden death and red-headed scoffers," said Kenneth Yale. "Does the euphonious name, Beverly Wayne, bring anything to your mind, Greenland?"

"Yes, I have heard of Beverly Wayne. She was sort of chum to Nance at Smith's College. I've heard Nance speak of her. From Nance's panegyrics I gather that Miss Wayne is a rather eccentric character, who gets away with her eccentricities on account of the hypnotic effect she has on other people. Lives with an old aunt who is also eccentric, besides having the additional merit of being pretty well fixed in shekels and some chronic ailment that has threatened to deprive her of life a dozen times."

By this time the strenuous greeting between the two girls had simmered down to reasonable warmth, Miss Raymond had taken the suitcase from her visitor, and now the two girls, arm in arm, tripped lightly and merrily up the steps.

"Come and meet my to-morrow's husband," said Miss Raymond.

"You speak as though you had them in

relays or drove tandem," observed Miss Wayne. "I hope there is good team-work between the lot."

Of course, this was not intended for other listeners. Nevertheless Greenland grunted disapproval and Yale covered his mouth with his hand.

"Such a knowledge of human nature," he murmured to George.

The suitcase and camera and umbrella were now consigned to a man-servant who appeared from the house, and the two young ladies approached the two young men, who instantly rose.

"George, this is my friend Beverly Wayne, of whom you have heard me speak. Beverly, Mr. Greenland, my—my—"

"Husband for to-morrow," finished out Miss Wayne, accepting Greenland's outstretched hand and giving him a flash from her eyes.

"And this is Mr. Kenneth Yale, who, like you, arrived without knowing anything about our wedding. Mr. Yale, Miss Wayne."

There was no awkwardness in Miss Wayne's manner. She bore herself like one who was continually being introduced to kings and princes and who never admitted that they had anything on her for looks, position or independence of spirit.

As Yale bowed, not daring to follow Greenland's example in offering his hand, he saw hers, a small, well-shaped one, thrust toward him. He took it eagerly. There was no mistaking the heartiness of her grip nor the muscular strength of the delicate-looking fingers.

When he spoke he looked her in the face, and felt as if he was gazing at the sun.

Her eyes were large, well-separated, and were of a peculiar, deep violet. Her teeth were even, pearly white, but not small. There was no sign of gold or any other filling. Miss Wayne could chew her own breakfast-food, and her complexion proved that there was nothing the matter with her digestion.

"Come and look at my presents," said Miss Raymond. "They're in the dining-room. We'll see you later, boys."

Left to themselves, the "boys" sank weakly to their chairs.

"A queen," proclaimed Greenland.

"George," said Yale, fumbling in his pocket for a cigar, "I have made a discovery."

"Shoot."

"Violet is the only permissible color for eyes, and all hair except that tint of red should be barred by law."

"You are an ass."

"That is my privilege. There is nothing in the Constitution of the United States nor the statutes of the State of New York to prevent me from rushing into the dining-room, flopping myself on the ground, and pleading with Miss Wayne to be my wife."

"I fancy Miss Wayne would bowl you over. I'm glad I'm engaged to Nance."

"So, by the heel of my great-grandfather's last pipeful, am I. And I am particularly glad that your wedding is to be early to-morrow morning. And I am glad that you and Mrs. Greenland are to take a morning train East. I am convinced that without the saving grace of Miss Raymond's individuality in this matter, Utica is too small to hold Miss Wayne and you and me at one and the same time."

"I agree with you. If I wasn't going to marry Nance to-morrow morning I'd hustle you out of town as suddenly as you came in. To my mind Miss—hush! Here they come."

CHAPTER II.

AN EARLY MORNING CRY.

THE chiming voices of the two girls could be heard even before they became visible. Greenland and Yale turned their heads, and watched the front door expectantly.

From it issued Miss Raymond with an arm around Miss Wayne's slim waist, and Miss Wayne had an arm around Nancy's still slimmer waist. And their tongues were clacking simultaneously.

"Mr. Greenland, I am delighted to have had the pleasure of seeing Nance's lovely presents. Did you ever behold so much silverware in one bunch, Mr. Yale?"

"Not outside of Tiffany's," replied Kenneth. "I'd like to melt it down and take it to the mint. I never believed in Bryan's silver theory till I saw that dining-room table. Is there an inch of mahogany to be seen?"

"Not half an inch. And there are more to come."

"Let us be thankful for mercies received, and not humiliate our souls with covetous longings," remarked Greenland. "The more

of that junk Nance gets, the more expense for me to get furniture to match."

"George," broke in Miss Raymond, ignoring this persiflage concerning her wedding presents, "do you know what? Let's take a walk on the boulevard. Dinner won't be till seven. It is after five, and there won't be many people there to gaze at me."

"I fail to see why we should deny the populace the pleasure of gazing at you. To the boulevard we will go. It will be our last walk together as mere sweethearts."

"George! Are you going to turn cold right after we are married?"

"No, I shall reserve that stunt till right after I am dead. I mean *merely* as sweethearts."

"They are all like that," said Miss Wayne with the air of one who had suffered from many experiences. "Once a man gets you he won't wear a coat in the house. Beware, Nance Raymond, your foot is in the noose."

"We don't hang people with their heads down, in Utica," laughed Greenland.

"No, but you trap wild pigeons that way."

By this time George, who was ever ready to gratify Miss Raymond's wishes, had ranged himself at her side, and the happy couple, with no sign of a cloud to dim their prospective and immediate bliss, started down the steps.

"They are magnificently indifferent to our welfare," Miss Wayne remarked to Yale. "I suppose, being only butters-in on this game, we can do no less than follow on."

"Nothing will give me greater pleasure," replied Yale, "than to follow them in all their steps and ways with you for company."

"Well! I must say for a Utica young man you are getting along."

"But I am not a Utica young man. I was, in the ages long since past, a Utica boy. I now live in New York."

"Ha! So do I. We are almost relatives. But if we don't start, Nance and Mr. Greenland will be beyond our following."

"I should weep no tears. To prove that I am not at present a Utica man, I will admit that I never knew that Utica had a boulevard. And they are going in the least likely direction for me to imagine one."

Miss Wayne had worn, when she alighted from the electric car, a neat, well-fitting tailor-made traveling suit of dark gray. In the brief period that she and Miss Raymond had been absent from the porch she had not only examined the wedding presents, but had found time, in some mysterious manner known only to herself, to make a change, and now appeared wearing some sort of afternoon street-gown that became her so well that Yale never knew the color of it.

They were soon strolling up Genesee Street in the wake of the engaged couple, and Yale felt a peculiar pang as he saw Miss Raymond's arm linked in Greenland's. He glanced at his companion, but her regal, resolute step, her very evident confidence in herself, disposed of any budding idea that she would take *his* arm.

They walked a little faster than the other two, and soon caught up with them.

"Say, George," called Yale, "since when did Utica boast a boulevard, and where is it? Methinks we are on the way to Richfield Springs."

"Shut up, you blasphemer," said Greenland, looking back over Miss Raymond's shoulder rather than his own. "Know ye that Utica has blossomed out into the City Beautiful. There is a wealthy citizen here who has taken the city in his lap and is bringing it up by hand. He has given several parks to the town, and the one toward which our lagging steps are taking us is the largest. This is called Roscoe Conkling Park. Then the city became converted to the religion of civic beauty and created a boulevard. You must remember Pleasant Street."

"I do."

"Well, that's sort of part of the boulevard. You'll see."

"How perfectly lucid. I could find it now without a chaperon," observed Miss Wayne.

"You recall old Steele's Hill," Greenland said to Yale, not deigning to reply to Miss Wayne's flippancy.

"Used to get beechnuts on the southern slope," said Yale.

"That's where the park begins—at Elm Street. The city—"

Yale felt his arm jerked backward, and, as a matter of course, lagged his steps.

"Bother their old park," said Miss Wayne. "Did we come here from Central Park, and Bronx, not to speak of Pelham Bay Park with nearly two thousand acres, to be beguiled with Roscoe Conkling Park? Who's his friend, this Roscoe Conkling?"

Yale laughed under his breath and ex-

plained that Roscoe Conkling was at one time the most prominent citizen of Utica, and a Senator of the United States.

"Let's talk about something nearer to our sensibilities. What am I to do? You seem to be on intimate terms with the Raymonds, so you can set me right."

"Intimate terms with the Raymonds!" exclaimed Yale. "Why, I never saw one of the Raymonds till about half an hour before you came."

"Bless us all! But Greenland—"

"I'll explain briefly. Matters concerning my grandfather's death and a small inheritance several miles north of Utica brought me here, where I have not been in years. When Greenland and I were boys we sat together in the Utica Academy. Well, he ran into me a short time after I left the Empire State Express this afternoon, and insisted, with his usual wooden persistence, that I go to the Raymonds' to stop over till after the wedding. I felt horribly out of place till you came."

"How did it make you feel any more comfortable to know some one else was in the same boat?" the girl inquired.

"Well, you know, as soon as I set eyes on you I had something else to think of."

"How deliciously you say it. Well, to 'fess up in my turn, I have been spending the summer at a friend's camp in the Adirondacks, and am on my way home to New York. I might better leave out home and just say New York, for I am a homeless wanderer upon the cold and still-cooling crust of the earth. I got as far as Herkimer, on the Herkimer & Malone, and remembered that Nance lived in Utica. I had never met her people, but wanted to see Nance. I came from Herkimer on a local, expecting to spend the night with Nance, and go on to New York to-morrow."

"It would be jolly if we could arrange to go to New York together."

"Some time."

"Here's the boulevard ahead," announced Greenland.

"Sure it's ahead? Thought we might have passed it with such distracted guides as you two," chaffed Yale.

"Oo—o—o!" called Miss Wayne. "Who is the solid man on the stone pedestal?" She pointed to a statue of heroic size on Genesee Street, facing a great, wide, beautiful boulevard running east and west.

"That's Baron Von Steuben," answered Greenland.

"Is he the man who gave the big park to the city?"

"No, no; that was Thomas R. Proctor. He's *alive*. Steuben has been dead I don't know how long. He was in the American army in the Revolutionary War."

"If it wasn't so late I'd wish I had my camera," Miss Wayne told Yale. "I'd take a picture of the old Baron. I'm what the Philistines call a camera fiend, Mr. Yale."

"And who are the Philistines?"

"Prominent people who will not be snapshotted."

"Well, you may snapshot me all you like."

"But I am not a millionaire. I can't *waste* films."

In half an hour they had had all of the boulevard they wanted, and all four returned to the house and Mr. Raymond. This gentleman was very rich, very grim and stern, and more than very set in his purpose when roused, as will be seen.

Dinner was soon ready, and they ate it in a room made suitable, so that the vast show of costly wedding presents on the real dining-room table might not be disturbed.

Mrs. Raymond was a little woman, refined, and evidently well educated. But she was almost a nonentity under the grim rule of the self-made man, her husband.

Dinner passed off very pleasantly, however, and Yale listened with much misgiving to a number of duties to be performed by Mrs. Raymond, Nancy and the servants that evening.

"We're in the way here," he said to Beverly Wayne. "Let's take a sneak and beat it down to the gay lights."

"Where, in Utica?"

"Well, let's take a trolley ride and lap up some ice cream, or anything to get out of their way."

"I'd like to help," said Miss Wayne. "But I'm such an outsider! Did you see Mr. Raymond eye me?"

"I did. And me. I fancy he is a bit of a Cæsar in his home, as well as in his business."

Yale and Miss Wayne started out soon after dinner, although the evening was then well advanced, and did not return till all the household except Sims, the butler, was asleep. He admitted them, and then went to bed himself.

Yale was tired and dropped off almost the minute he touched the pillow. He had

bidden Miss Wayne good night, and she had waved her hand at him from her room door. His dreams were pleasant.

He was an early riser, and it was but about half-past six when he woke and began leisurely to dress, intending to take a walk before the household was astir.

So far as he could tell, the silence was so profound, not a soul was stirring except himself.

Suddenly the air was split with a shrill cry of terror or pain, or both, and the voice was the agonized voice of a woman.

Yale flung on a few remaining garments, hurled himself out of his room, and crashed into Greenland, clad only in his pajamas and but half awake.

CHAPTER III.

UNDER SUSPICION.

"HEY! Hey! What's all this row? What the devil—"

"Let me alone, you fool," shouted Yale, whom Greenland had grabbed by the throat. "I didn't holler, and I didn't make anybody else holler. Get your clothes on."

He hurled Greenland from him and rushed down-stairs. The main staircase led to the wide main hall, and against the wall of this Yale found a maid of the household leaning, screaming and beating her breasts with her hands.

"What's the matter? Who hurt you? What have you seen?" asked Yale, putting his arms around the maid, fearing she was going to faint. "Stop that noise."

"They've gone! They've gone! They've gone!" she yelled shrilly, and nearly beside herself, she caught Yale's hair in both her hands. "Where have they gone?"

"Who's gone? Let go my hair," shouted Yale. "Who's gone? What's the matter with you? Greenland and Miss Raymond haven't gone. I just met Greenland."

"Not them! Nobody! Them things in there." She pointed to the dining-room door, having released Yale's hair.

By that time Mr. Raymond and Greenland had arrived on the scene. Mr. Raymond had on his trousers, a dark brown dressing-gown, and slippers. Greenland wore the Tuxedo he had sported the previous evening, and the vest belonging to it. These had been put on over his striped pajamas, and he was barefooted.

"What's the ding-dong ringing for? What's the matter here?" Greenland demanded to know.

"They've gone! They've gone! They've gone!" howled the maid, pointing toward the dining-room.

"What the devil does she mean, Yale?" asked Greenland, while Mr. Raymond stood looking daggers at the visitor.

"Has this man offered you hurt or insult, my girl?" he asked sternly.

Yale laughed.

"They've gone! They've gone!" continued the hysterical maid.

"Explain this thing, sir," said Mr. Raymond to Yale.

"I can't explain it and prevent this girl from falling at the same time. Can't you see she's about lost her senses? Help me get her to a chair."

Greenland rushed to the drawing-room and dragged out a small, armless divan sort of thing, upon which they placed the girl, who immediately rolled off on to the floor.

"They've gone!" she screamed once more, and then fell silent in a faint.

"She pointed to the dining-room," Yale said to Greenland. "Let's take a look."

He, the coolest because it was his nature to be cool, and because he was less concerned than the other two in whatever *had* occurred, led the way, followed by the grotesque Greenland and the utterly incompetent self-made Raymond.

They stood in a row inside the newly decorated dining-room and gazed stupidly at the mahogany table they had left loaded with wealth the night before.

Not a vestige of that wealth was visible now. All the expensive and rare pieces of silver, the costly dinner and tea-sets, candelabra, urns, silver table baskets, fruit-dishes, all, or nearly all, of solid silver of sterling grade, had disappeared. One window of the dining-room was open.

"Rouse the house!" roared Mr. Raymond. "Get everybody out. I say, George, wake everybody! Good Heaven, what have you got on? Would you present yourself to my wife and daughter in that ridiculous garb? Go to your room and dress. *I'll* wake the house."

It occurred to Yale that Mr. Raymond, though undoubtedly an able man in the business world, was not the man to grapple with a problem like the one before them.

He went into the hall, and found Sims, the butler, and another female servant working over the maid who had fainted.

"Mr. Raymond wants the entire household roused," Yale said to Sims quietly. "The house has been robbed."

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Sims. "Yes, sir."

He sped away, and the woman had the maid revived before any one else appeared.

But the services of Sims were scarcely needed. The shrill screams of the hysterical servant had penetrated almost every corner of the house, large as it was, and now excited and wondering people came from the main hall and the servants' staircase in the rear.

Mrs. Raymond, with a dressing-gown over her night attire, rushed down and up to her husband, who had followed Yale out in a mechanical manner. Miss Nancy followed, and was swallowed up by a horde of se vants who flocked from the rear hall, in all gradations of terror and bewilderment and almost all conditions of dishabille.

Mr. Raymond swung around in a half circle, and viewed the group with eyes that flashed ominously. He was the chanticleer of this flock, and they should know it.

"There is one missing," his steely voice rang out. "I said everybody! No person under my roof is exempt from my orders at a time like this. Where is Miss Wayne?"

Miss Raymond, still surrounded by excited servants, and still ignorant of her great loss, looked around in a bewildered sort of way as if she half expected Beverly Wayne to appear out of the walls, or to drop from the ceiling. But Miss Wayne did not appear from anywhere.

"I ask again, where is Miss Wayne?" thundered the millionaire.

"I'll bring her down, papa," said Nancy. "Don't be cross."

"Cross," he muttered, as he watched her.

Nancy worked her way through the mass of servants, and ran upstairs with light feet. Somehow she had dressed more completely than any one else.

Greenland, who had gone back to his room to exchange his pajamas for trousers, came down and joined the group. He wore a troubled look, but was far from the excited creature Mr. Raymond was.

For some reason or other that cannot be explained, a hush, an air of expectancy, came upon all those gathered in the hall. And while silence reigned Nancy came running down the broad stairs.

"Beverly is not in her room," she cried. "Has anything happened to her?"

"To *her*," repeated Mr. Raymond, in a tone that all remembered afterward. "No, but to you a thing has happened. Come here."

He seized her arm, and hurried her inside the dining-room with a roughness born of his own great agitation.

"Look at that table!" he thundered. "Last night it held thousands of dollars' worth of wedding presents. Where are they now, and where is your pretty friend?"

For a moment the girl stood staring at the bereft table. Then she cried: "Not Beverly! Oh, don't tell me it was Beverly!" and sank in a faint in her mother's arms.

"Telephone the police!" commanded Mr. Raymond.

CHAPTER IV.

A DETECTIVE ARRIVES.

THE Utica headquarters of police is situated on Pearl Street, and locks arms with the City Hall, which is on the corner of Pearl and Genesee.

A stone-paved court lies between the two buildings, and this paved court answers to the famous Bridge of Sighs in the New York Tombs. For from the cells beneath the police headquarters the morning batch of prisoners is marched across this court to the courtroom of the city magistrate.

In a little office largely occupied by telegraphic apparatus and telephone the chief of police sat reading reports, and listening to the clicking of the telegraphic instruments. The telephone bell rang and the operator took up the receiver.

"For you, chief," he said, relinquishing the wire to the outstretched hand of his superior.

"Well?" said the chief into the mouthpiece.

"Police headquarters, yes. I am the chief, yes. Who is this? Mr. Raymond's house on Genesee Street? Robbed? Who is this talking?

"Oh, Sims, the butler. Go ahead, Sims. All the silver wedding presents? Mr. Raymond much excited? Miss Raymond prostrated? One guest missing? Hold on. You needn't tell me any more over the wire. I will send the best man I have. Tell Mr. Raymond not to worry. Nobody can get away with a job like that in Utica."

The chief hung up.

"Get Blake in here," he said.

His boast was not an idle one. Following the course of able predecessors, and himself an able police officer, the chief had kept the name of Utica a ringing terror to evil-doers. Few escaped his vigilance and the activity of the small force at his command. Blake soon appeared, in citizen's clothing.

"John Raymond's house, Genesee," explained the chief laconically. "All Miss Raymond's wedding presents gone—in the night."

"Any information, inside or outside job?"

"No information except there is one guest missing."

"Man or woman?"

"Don't know. You will learn that when you get there. Make it a quick job. A thing like this will spread all over the State."

"I'll wind 'em up," said Blake.

A few strides took him to the Genesee Street trolley line. A few minutes sufficed for the car to reach Raymond's house. Detective Blake, though he knew the place well enough, could not forbear a moment's survey of the beautiful lawns, and the splendid front of the mansion.

"George Greenland knows the right butter-tub to sit down in," he said to himself, as he strode up the tessellated walk.

He rang the bell. He knew he rang the bell, for he heard the heavy gong through the massive oaken doors. Yet the door did not open.

Blake rang again. And again he waited.

"What the devil is the matter in there?" Mr. Blake asked of himself.

Suddenly Sims appeared around the corner of the veranda. The face of Sims wore a bewildered look. As a butler Sims was superb. As a factor in the unraveling of a crime he was a sheep.

"Sir," said Sims, "I must ask you to enter by way of the *porte cochère*. The front door is locked, and we cannot find the key."

"I'll enter by way of the chimney, if you say so," answered Blake. "Lead on."

He was soon in the dining-room, now occupied only by Mr. Raymond and George Greenland. Mrs. Raymond was with Nancy in her bedroom, where with the assistance of two maids the distracted mother was bringing the girl back to consciousness.

"I am Blake, from headquarters," announced the detective. "You know me, Mr. Greenland."

"I certainly do. Mr. Raymond, this is Detective Blake."

Raymond turned a fierce face toward the detective.

"Look!" he said with unnecessary energy, as he swept his arm over a portion of the mahogany table. "Last night when the household retired this table was laden with thousands of dollars' worth of silver wedding presents. Thousands, sir! Now look. A maid in the house discovered about half-past six this morning—what you see now, sir. All gone—gone in the dark of the night. A pretty place Utica is getting to be for wealthy people. An entire silversmith's establishment could hold no more than this table did last night. Where has it gone?"

Blake scarcely repressed a smile. He knew that Raymond was not a native born Utican. He had lived in many mill and factory towns, moving from one to another, always on the upgrade in his choice of population, location and opportunity for displaying wealth.

It had been rumored that John Raymond was not an easy taskmaster to the employes who created his wealth. There was a merciless glitter in his eyes now.

"You speak only of silver, by which I suppose you mean plate mostly, and ornaments. In such a collection of wedding presents one is likely to find jewels. Any jewels stolen?"

"Ha! I never thought of that," said Mr. Raymond, who, as a matter of fact, had not thought of anything except to have Sims telephone the police. "There were jewels. But they were put in my wife's boudoir safe."

"And you have not ascertained whether that was molested?"

"That has not occurred to any of us. The oversight can be easily remedied. Sims, go to Mrs. Raymond's room and see if the safe is locked. If Mrs. Raymond can be seen, ask her to open the safe and make sure if the jewels are there."

While Sims was gone Mr. Raymond paced to and fro in the dining-room, showing great agitation. At that moment Yale, who had taken the opportunity to go to his room to rearrange his clothing, came in, looking as though no excitement had ever entered his uneventful life. He glanced curiously at the detective.

"Kenneth, Detective Blake," explained Greenland. "Mr. Blake, my friend and old schoolmate, Kenneth Yale. We went to the Academy together."

Blake shook hands with Yale and looked at him searchingly.

"You don't live in Utica now. Your father was Frederick Yale. He lived on Oneida Street, and was cashier of the Oneida County National Bank."

"The same, sir," Yale replied.

"Blake," suddenly broke in Mr. Raymond. "I want no expense spared. I want no leniency shown. Those wedding presents must be found if I send my best friends to prison."

"They will be found, Mr. Raymond."

Yale looked at Raymond with some curiosity. There seemed to be something almost pointed in his remarks.

Then Raymond swung upon him.

"Mr. Yale," said the self-made and self-willed man, "you appear surprised at my agitation. Well may you marvel at it. Others would no less. I lost, in a factory fire in Little Falls, half a million dollars in one hour, and slept like a top the rest of the night. In a Gloversville fire—I had a glove factory there—I lost two hundred thousand in the same way. In an industrial strike I lost a million. I was not broke.

"Factories can be rebuilt. Strikes can be settled. More money can be made. I recuperated my losses. But who is going to replace stolen wedding presents? Tokens of love and affection from those who have known my daughter all her life and know her worth? I would rather lose a million in money than have this thing happen. Now you understand my excited condition."

"Yes," said Yale soberly, "I think I can appreciate your feelings in the matter, Mr. Raymond. But do not be too quick with suspicions."

Raymond was evidently about to make an impatient reply when Sims reappeared, and the millionaire's open lips closed soundlessly.

"There is no evidence that the safe in Mrs. Raymond's boudoir has been touched, sir. Miss Nancy is now recovered from her swoon, and Mrs. Raymond examined the contents of the safe. She told me that everything was all right."

Blake heard this, and stood a moment in deep reflection.

"Are the jewels valuable?" he asked. "As valuable, let us say, as the silver?"

"Well, on the whole, more valuable," answered Mr. Raymond. "It would take quite a collection of silverware, even of the purest, to equal in value a diamond dog collar with four rows of diamonds, and a ruby pendant."

"Who gave her that?" asked Blake sharply.

"I did—her father."

Blake mused.

"It is clear," he said, "that this was a planned job, and the thieves, while they knew all about the silver, did not know about the jewels. This job has been done by some one familiar with the premises, and who knew just what the table held. Let me examine that front door."

"This window was found open this morning," interposed Greenland. "It was closed when we retired last night."

Blake walked to the window and looked out.

CHAPTER V.

YALE SPEAKS HIS MIND.

THE view that was spread before the detective's inquisitorial gaze was beautiful, but limited. Looking down, he saw a velvet spread of closely cut lawn. Here and there well trimmed ornamental shrubs added their various shades of green.

Toward the rear a maple or two showed bare limbs, with a few yellow and red leaves. In the garden were fruit trees and vines.

The next house on that side was three or four hundred feet away, and could not be seen, except the upper floor and roof, the vista being cut short by a row of closely grown flowering shrubbery that stretched, as a line fence, the entire length of Mr. Raymond's lawn.

This was the side ornamented by the *porte cochère,* through which Blake had entered. The carriage path lay almost beneath the window.

Blake seemed, for a moment, about to jump out.

"That won't do," he said to himself. "I might spoil a good clue."

He went from the dining-room into the hall, and to the front door.

"Turn on the nearest light," he said. "I want to see if there are any thumb marks."

Sims pressed the switch, and Blake found some thumb marks.

"A woman—and a young one," he said. Then, straightening up, he looked keenly at Mr. Raymond.

"I was told by the chief that a guest was missing from this house. There are finger-prints on this door that seem fresh, and are undoubtedly the prints of the fingers of a young woman. Is the missing guest a young woman?"

"Yes," blurted Mr. Raymond, "and to my mind a very strange young woman, too. She arrived here late yesterday afternoon, armed with a camera. I believe she had had an invitation sent to her by my daughter to attend the wedding, which was to be this morning. Nevertheless, she came as an uninvited guest, for she has been away from her home, wherever that may be, and received no invitation—so she says.

"She knew nothing about my daughter's engagement or proposed marriage—so she says. As a matter of fact, none of us know anything about her or her people. She is a school acquaintance of my daughter's."

"What is her name?"

"She *calls* herself Beverly Wayne."

"Stop!"

Blake, Raymond and Greenland faced Yale, who stood ready to meet their anger or physical blows if they came.

"You cannot, Mr. Raymond," he said, "take away the character of a young girl in my presence without giving her a chance to be heard. I sympathize with you in your misfortune. Your deductions, however, smack of hysteria.

"I myself came to Utica ignorant of George Greenland's impending marriage. I did not know you, nor one of your family. Greenland insisted that I should come here as his guest, and yours, till after the wedding. I knew of these silver wedding presents now missing. I did not know of any jewels. You might just as well accuse me as to charge Miss Wayne with the robbery without a hearing."

"I may, before I'm done," thundered Raymond, beside himself with rage.

Blake looked at Yale with eyes that were reduced to narrow slits.

"Don't talk too much," he said. "Youth is liable to mistakes of the tongue. Did you spend all night in bed?"

"Between the time I went to bed and the time I got up, I was in bed," answered Yale coolly.

"Don't get impudent to me, or you'll go visit the chief."

"I expect to before I leave Utica. He was my father's friend."

Mr. Raymond had stiffened visibly as though he had received a shock. It was clear that Yale had furnished him with a fresh idea.

"You and Miss Wayne were out last night when we all retired."

"Yes, we went out because we knew the family had much to do, and we were too much outsiders to help."

"What time did you come in?"

"I don't know, exactly. Sims may know. He admitted us. I saw Miss Wayne enter her room. I went to mine, to bed, and right to sleep."

"But you were the first to hear the maid scream. You were the first down-stairs, except the maid."

"I am an early riser. I intended to go out for a walk."

"You took a walk with Miss Beverly Wayne. How long have you known her?" asked Blake.

"Since about five o'clock yesterday afternoon."

"What do you know about her?"

"She is a very pretty girl, and a camera fiend."

"This is no joking matter, Mr. Yale," said Blake with rising anger. "Levity is out of place here."

"I am not trying to be facetious. You asked me what I know about Miss Wayne. I have told you all I know."

"Where do you live now?" asked Blake, cooling a little.

"New York."

"Where does Miss Wayne live, do you know, Mr. Raymond?"

"New York."

"Ah! And you wish to have it understood that you did not know Miss Wayne in New York, Mr. Yale?"

"There are several millions of people in New York. There are a few that I have not met."

At this moment Mrs. Raymond and Nancy, now properly dressed, came down the broad stairs. Nancy went at once to Greenland and put her arm in his. Mrs. Raymond crossed to her husband's side and turned to face the others, but she showed extreme nervousness and lack of guiding force.

For a moment there was silence. The entrance of Mrs. Raymond and Nancy ended the interrogation of Yale.

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Raymond, turning to the detective, "in Heaven's name why don't you do something?"

"I intend to do something, perhaps a great deal," answered Blake, considerably nettled. "Before, however, I can take any steps, I must know more about your mysterious guest. Miss Raymond, what do you know about Miss Wayne?"

"Why—" Nancy's voice faltered.

"Speak out, please. I can't afford to waste time. Trains are running."

"Beverly Wayne is a very, very lovely and fascinating girl, to me," said Nancy. "I have always found her true and honorable. She is, I will admit, rather odd. She has her own ideas, and lives up to them. She is practically alone in the world. She has a home with an invalid aunt in New York, who supports her."

"Have you ever seen this aunt?"

"No, I have never been a visitor at Beverly's home."

Blake's face took on a perplexed expression. He turned, and stood looking contemplatively at the locked door. Then he turned again. Sims stood in the background, with his arms folded.

"Sims, what time did Mr. Yale and Miss Wayne return from their walk?"

"Some time before midnight, sir."

"After they came in you locked this door? The key was here then?"

"Yes, sir."

Blake walked into the dining-room, and to the open window. Again he stood contemplating the green lawn, the shrubbery, the chimneys of the house next door, over the screen of shrubs.

"Let me out the way I came in," he directed.

Sims guided him to the *porte-cochère,* and then returned to the family group.

This now separated into two, one at each of the large dining-room windows, eagerly watching the detective.

Blake first scanned the pebbled carriage-path leading from the wide gateway that was about twenty feet south of the pedestrians' gate. Then he took a foot-rule from his pocket and made some measurements. Next he extracted a notebook and fountain-pen from his pockets and wrote something down. Finally, with a puzzled look, he went down to the gate.

From the dining-room windows the groups could not see him. Mr. Raymond muttered something about "useless waste of time," and led Mrs. Raymond to a chair. Greenland and Nancy were engaged in earnest and not very agreeable conversation.

Yale and Sims went to the drawing-room from the windows of which they could once more watch Blake. The detective was going through the same movements as before.

"A strange thing to happen in Utica, sir," Sims remarked to Yale.

"Why Utica any more than any other place? Such things happen everywhere, Sims."

"But such a fine young lady, sir."

"Don't worry about the young lady, Sims."

"You don't believe she—that she did this?"

"Certainly not."

"I hope not, sir." Blake now walked toward the house, and Yale returned to the dining-room. Blake entered, again by way of the *porte-cochère.*

"Miss Raymond," he said, "are you able to write out a list of the stolen articles?"

"I think mama and I can manage."

"Now," said Blake again, while Nancy had gone for pen and paper, "who, besides those present, and Miss Wayne, has seen all the presents?"

"Well," said Mr. Raymond, striving to think, "I don't believe anybody saw them all. They kept coming up to a late hour."

Nancy returned with paper and a little gold-mounted fountain-pen. She sat down at the denuded table by her mother's side.

"Mama, you must help me remember," she said.

Suddenly she jumped up.

"Goodness, gracious!" she exclaimed. "We are forgetting the minister!"

"What about him?" asked Greenland.

"Go telephone him at once that the wedding must be postponed."

Greenland stared at her, and Yale saw his lips move to form a word that is not usually spoken in good society.

CHAPTER VI.

DEFENDING THE ABSENT.

"WHY don't you hurry, George?" demanded Nancy, as Greenland failed to move. "Mr. Jakeson may be getting ready to come now."

"Well," blurted Greenland, "let him come. He was told to come. Guests have been invited, and they will come. We can't reach them all by telephone."

"We can reach a good many."

"But I don't see why we should. Just because some silverware has been stolen, why should we postpone our wedding? It isn't necessary at all, my love."

"Not necessary! That's the man of it. All you think of is getting married and having it over with. What condition am I in now to go through the ceremony? And by the time I have explained to twenty or more guests that all my presents have been stolen I won't be worth a rag. It must be done, dear. Now, please."

"But the guests will be here at eight, and all the breakfast stuff is in."

"I'm all in, too," she answered, with a wan sort of smile at her lapse into slang.

"I think myself," boomed Mr. Raymond's voice, "that it will be better to postpone the wedding. We may have a house full of police by eight o'clock. Anyway, you could not leave on your trip, because we shall need Nancy here to identify the articles when they are recovered."

"Do you mean to tell me," demanded Greenland, with rising choler, "that we can't be married till that junk is found?"

"Junk!" screamed Mr. Raymond, "I am amazed at you, George. That junk, as you call it, came from Nancy's friends, not yours."

"Thank God, I haven't got so many fool friends," answered Greenland. "So far as identifying the presents is concerned we could be married and stay home."

"No, no, no!" Mr. Raymond paced the floor again. "That won't do at all. My daughter's wedding, when it does take place, must not be marred by unpleasant incidents. Be good, George, and I will double the check."

"First time I've heard anything about a check," growled George. "I am not marrying your check-book. Damn your check. I want my bride."

"You shall have your bride—anything you want. Fine house, plenty of money, servants, automobiles, anything. But be good now, George."

And George subsided, and was good.

A few minutes later he passed close to Yale.

"What Sherman said war was isn't a patch to a postponed wedding," he whispered. "I've got to hang on here, I suppose. So must you."

"That depends on how Miss Wayne fares at the hands of the police," replied Yale.

"Why? What the devil is Miss Wayne to you?"

"At half-past six this morning she was a new acquaintance. Now that a calumny has been sprung against her good name she is everything."

"You are a fool!"

"Same to you, Greenland. If you wish to quarrel because I am standing up for fair play for an absent girl, go ahead and quarrel. I can take care of myself."

Greenland muttered something under his breath and moved away. Blake took his place.

"Mr. Yale," said the detective, "I have been watching you. You have the only cool head in the house. Permit me to apologize for the way I spoke some time ago. Now, tell me your honest opinion. Do you connect the absence of Miss Wayne with this robbery?"

"No, I do not," answered Yale promptly. "Nor do I connect the absence of the front door-key with the robbery. But I do connect the absence of the front door-key with the absence of Miss Wayne."

"Please explain your conundrum."

Yale laughed.

"Miss Wayne is a camera fiend. For an amateur photographer there is a lure in a clear, bright, early morning light. Have Miss Raymond ascertain if Miss Wayne's camera is in her room."

"But—the hour!" exclaimed Blake. "The discovery was made at half-past six. There would not be light enough for an outside picture before seven or eight."

"Miss Wayne may have planned a long walk to get her views. It was light enough for that at half-past six."

"You are a stanch defender of Miss Wayne."

"And when you see her you will not be her enemy."

"Suppose, now, that this rich aunt should prove to be a myth. Suppose Miss Wayne should have no visible means of support, but lives by her wits. What would you believe?"

"A man must believe anything that is proven beyond a doubt. I should require absolute proof."

"Let us go out into the hall. I want to know more about your meeting. You must have had considerable conversation during that long walk."

Blake led the way, and stopped near the front door.

"It wasn't all walk. We rode in about all the cars. Miss Wayne was interested in the peculiar lighting system of Utica, in the light-towers, and after we had been all around we had a light supper at the Hotel Utica."

"And what did she say about herself?"

"No more than you have already been told."

"She is, then, a reticent, non-communicative girl. Conversation with her is difficult."

"Quite the contrary. Miss Wayne is the most delightful companion I ever met. She is witty, and, in a measure, unconventional. She can talk on any subject under the sun. Look into her eyes, which, by the way, are violet, and you will believe everything she says."

"But Mr. Raymond seems to suspect her."

"He has not looked into her eyes."

"By Jove, I would like to see a girl who can make such an impression on a man in so short a time."

Yale stiffened. He held up a warning finger. Distinctly the two heard a clicking sound at the door.

"You will probably have that pleasure now," said the young defender of Miss Wayne's good name. "Here she comes."

Blake stood staring at the still unopened door.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ASTOUNDING ADMISSION.

YALE'S prediction was immediately verified. The heavy oaken door swung inward, and a vision of the dawn appeared to Blake. Yale heard the quick intake of his breath as the Lady of the Camera entered.

She was dressed in the dark gray tailor-made suit she had worn when first she burst upon the vision of Greenland and Yale as she alighted from the car. Her violet eyes were clear and sparkling with bounding health and the pleasure of being alive.

Her gold-brown hair was becomingly arranged, and atop of it perched a small cap, primarily designed for a man with a diminutive head, or a boy, and held in place by two hat pins with red and yellow gems as heads that would have been worth vast sums had they been anything but cheap glass.

They pretended to be nothing else. They would not fool a blind man.

Miss Wayne's cheeks were flushed with the early morning exercise, and she was the most beautiful creature that Blake had ever seen. He was stricken dumb. This was the girl against whom a charge of burglary, or complicity in a burglary, or conspiracy, must be made.

The inevitable camera hung from her shoulder. The key of the front door twirled defiantly on her little finger.

"Morning," she said, beaming at Yale, and giving Blake a quick, inquiring look.

His presence needed no immediate explanation. There was to be a wedding at eight o'clock, it was almost that now, and Blake might easily be one of the guests.

"I got him," proceeded Miss Wayne with an air of having triumphed in some great endeavor. "Got him right, too. I had to get up early because the——"

"Got who?" blurted Yale, disregarding manners and grammar and everything except the fact that a detective was there to get somebody and Miss Wayne had "got him."

"Why, Baron von Steuben, of course."

Miss Wayne spoke as one who was accustomed to get barons and things like that, and turning calmly to the door, inserted the key in the lock.

"Mr. Blake," came the voice of Miss Raymond from the dining-room, "the list is ready, as far as we can remember."

"Oh, is Nance in there?" said Miss Wayne. "I'll go in."

The entrance of the Queen of Spades could have caused no greater sensation.

"Oh, Bev!" cried Miss Raymond in a tone of reproach. And there was reproach, depths of it, in her glance as she looked at the returned photographer.

"What's the matter? Are you ill?" asked Miss Wayne. "Where are your guests? You are not dressed for a wedding! Oh! You've put away all your beautiful things! I'm so glad I didn't miss them."

"We miss them sorely, Miss Wayne," snapped Mr. Raymond. "We miss them very sorely indeed. I wish you would be more explicit in your remarks. Do you know anything about the presents?"

"Do I what? What do you mean? Do I know anything about the presents? I think you are the one to be explicit, Mr. Raymond."

"I will. Those presents you saw last evening, and which you do not see now, have been stolen. I am asking you if you know anything about the matter."

"Do I understand that you are asking me if I am a thief? I did not come here to be insulted. I came here to visit Nance. I did not know that she was to be married, but she tells me that she sent me an invitation. So it's all the same, Mr. Raymond. I would have been here anyway. But, as I came, I will go."

She started with regal stride toward the door.

"One moment, Miss Wayne," interposed Blake. "I must have a few words with you. I am a detective."

"Oh!" she said dryly. "I thought you were a guest. Well?"

She stood a moment looking straight into Blake's eyes. Then as he seemed to be stricken speechless she started for the door again.

"Wait, Miss Wayne," Blake commanded. His face was rather flushed. "Don't compel me to use harsh measures. Will you answer me a few questions?"

"No, I will not. I have understood from friends who know that it is a dangerous thing to answer questions to a policeman or detective. If you want me to answer questions take me before a magistrate. I'll answer *him*."

While this dialogue was going on Miss Raymond sat slumped down in a heap, with her eyes fixed in a wild stare on Beverly's flushed face. When Miss Wayne had finished her defiant speech Nancy cried:

"Bev! Oh, Bev! Don't break my heart! You know I don't believe you know anything about it. You *couldn't!*"

Miss Wayne waved her hand as though brushing aside all entreaty.

"You *say* you asked me to come to a wedding. I came without being asked, to see you because I loved you so. Now I am accused of being a thief. Break *your* heart! What about mine, then?"

"Miss Wayne," spoke up Blake, "histrionics won't help. If I take you before a magistrate I must first place you under arrest."

"Go ahead and do it. It wouldn't be the first time."

This speech, hurled with all the defiance that could be expressed by flashing eyes and red, writhing lips, was a staggerer to all that amazed group.

They all stared at her aghast. That this beautiful girl, scarcely more than child in years, with a form like Diana, and a crown of red-gold hair like Aurora, could stand there defying the representative of the law, and brazenly make the announcement that an arrest now would not be the first one, was enough to shatter any one's belief in anything like goodness in the world.

"For what were you arrested the other time—or times?" asked Blake, when he had recovered his breath.

"I told you that I would answer none of your questions. Do as you please. I believe, though, it is not customary to let a prisoner go hungry. I'd like something to eat before I am locked up."

She spoke with superb disdain and coolness. To Yale she presented a picture of queenly grace and beauty that fairly swept him off his feet, mentally speaking.

She stood erect, facing Blake. Her camera strap ran from her right shoulder across her swelling breast, and the camera rested against her left hip. Yale felt that the camera might have been a sword, and she an honorary colonel of hussars.

Oh, she was rich in her defiance, and all the chivalry of Yale burst into flower.

Blake seemed nonplused. Whether this was the bluff of guilt, or the natural stubbornness of a willful woman, or the outburst of injured innocence, was a problem that seemed to have him up a tree.

He looked at his watch.

"So far as breakfast is concerned," he said, "there is plenty of time. I presume, since the discovery of the robbery was made so early, that Mr. Raymond's family has not yet breakfasted. I can wait while you eat."

"Wait! What, here? Do you think I would eat in this house? Not a crumb!"

There was infinite scorn—scorn of the hottest kind—scorn that burned and scorched and seared in her tone, in her manner, in the words as she flung them out. Her beautiful red lips writhed with passion. The tigress was roused.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SURPRISE FOR YALE.

MISS WAYNE'S outburst of scorn was followed by a moment of absolute silence that was a better form of praise for her dramatic talent than any panegyrics.

Yale was speechless with admiration, Blake speechless with amazement, Mr. Raymond speechless from consuming rage. Greenland, after one brief stare, walked away by himself to the window and stood looking out.

Suddenly Miss Raymond woke to something like life.

"Oh, Bev! Oh, Bev!" she wailed. "Do you want to kill me?"

"You say you asked me here."

"Oh, Bev! That you should speak to me in that tone after all our lovely days at Smith's!"

"I never accused you of stealing anything at Smith's."

Miss Wayne had dropped her scornful tone and manner, but there was no sign of faltering, no weakness. Her voice was as firm as though she was carrying on an ordinary conversation, but there was nevertheless a metallic irony in it.

Yale's mind was in a whirl. Here, he said to himself, was a girl who, if she loved, would go through all the hells on earth with, and for, the man of her choice.

Fearless, she would brave the snows of the north, the wild beasts of the wilderness. She would build and tend the camp-fire, nurse him if he were wounded or sick, encourage him if he grew weak. Strong, she would carry her half of the load.

It was a scene so dramatic, and so powerful in its intensity, that it is a safe conclusion that no person present ever forgot the vivid picture it made.

Yale felt such a thrill as had never before stirred his pulses. Right or wrong, innocent or guilty, he felt that this was his woman—his mate.

But Blake was growing restless.

"Miss Wayne," he said, and the stern detective, supposed by tradition to be emotionless, actually spoke pleadingly, "why all this nonsense and shilly-shallying? Why not answer me a few questions? It is possible that you may satisfy Mr. Raymond that you know nothing about this matter."

"Satisfy him!" she repeated, and her lip curled again. "Why, he disliked me the moment I entered his house."

"We are not accustomed here to young women who carry themselves with so bold a manner," said Raymond sternly.

She swung at him like a flash.

"Bold! Put your daughter Nance in my place. Deprive her—suppose you could—of a father and mother at the age of six. Let her be brought up by an aunt who occupies her time with her own miserable ailments. Let her fight her way among the temptations that assail a good looking girl without even a brother to protect her. Bold! I might be bolder now if I had been weaker before."

"We understand that, Miss Wayne," said Blake, trying his best to be soothing. "We want to help you all we can. Now answer me this. *Do* you know anything about the robbery?"

She drew herself to her full height.

"Mr. Policeman, I have spoken to that point quite enough. I refuse to say anything more in this house."

"Then I must place you under arrest and take you before the city judge, who acts as examining magistrate in all such cases."

"I have already asked you to do so. I will answer any question a magistrate asks."

Blake touched her lightly on the shoulder with one finger.

"Then," he said, "I place you under arrest on suspicion of complicity in the robbery of Mr. Raymond's house. Are you ready to go?"

"I would like a moment to make a change or two in my raiment and fix my hair."

"Take all the time you want. You have my confidence."

"Thank you." And with that she left the room.

All those left behind took in a great breath which ended in a long, sobbing sigh. All seemed to realize that the great tragedy of a young life had just begun.

"Mr. Raymond," said Blake, "of course you will be in court to give your testimony."

"I? I go to court? Why—why—"

"Certainly. I did not catch the young lady in any crime. I am arresting her on your charge. What would the judge say if I presented a prisoner—*such* a prisoner—before him without a charge of my own, or a complainant? What about a witness? There is no witness available. Without you to press your charge I can show no good reason for having arrested her.

"I have heard the judge on such occasions. I have seen policemen turn red. It takes a good deal to make a policeman blush, believe me. Either you go to court at ten o'clock and make whatever charge you like, or I walk out of here without a prisoner."

"Huh! She refused to answer your questions. There is such a thing as hindering

an officer in his duty. Can you not arrest her for that?"

"No. How am I to prove to the judge that I was justified in asking her any questions? She's something of a tigress, that young woman. She's no puling babe to wilt under an examination. Suppose she turns on me and tells the judge that the arrest was merely persecution because she refused to *listen* to me, not answer me. Without a witness her word is as good as mine before the city magistrate."

"Well—I'll go," said Raymond reluctantly. "I'll be there. Ten, did you say? This morning, I suppose."

"Yes, I shall not humiliate her by locking her up first. If the judge remands her that's his business, not mine."

"Well—it's a hard thing—to be compelled to go. But duty is duty, and I still believe I'm right. I feel assured that she could tell something about the robbery if she would."

By this time Nancy was weeping bitterly, and Mrs. Raymond had very nearly collapsed. Greenland kept his position at the window.

There was a light footfall in the hall, and Miss Wayne came in, armed and weighted as when she stepped from the Genesee Street car. She had her umbrella, suitcase, and camera. The suitcase she placed on the floor, and to everybody's amazement walked straight up to Yale.

"Mr. Yale," she said, "we met last evening for the first time, and after dinner spent a few hours together. You talked like a *man*. Do *you* think I am connected with a gang of thieves?"

"I do not," replied Yale, his heart all aflutter.

"You are acquainted in Utica. I have no one here except my very good friends who have accused me of being a thief. I am in need of a friend. I have walked several miles this morning and I am hungry. I expected to return to this house to a merry wedding and a good breakfast. I return to be hustled out of it a prisoner of the law. I want you to take this, and take me to a good hotel for breakfast. The detective will be my guest."

With a quick, impatient movement, she thrust a well filled purse into Yale's hand.

"But—but Miss Wayne," he stammered. "I shall be pleased to do all that you require, but I cannot accept your money."

"When you ask me to dinner I will let you pay for it. I am asking you to breakfast now. Please oblige me."

There was nothing else to do, and Yale thrust the purse into his pocket.

The room was as silent as a sealed tomb. Mrs. Raymond was all down in a formless lump, with her eyes hidden by her hands. Greenland had turned and his eyes were bent on Yale with a stern, disapproving look. Nancy was sobbing violently.

"Yale," Greenland's voice crashed on the stillness, "when you have performed your chivalric duties you will return here, I suppose."

"No," said Yale. "I shall remain as closely as possible by Miss Wayne's side till she is out of her trouble."

"You may go to jail yourself, young man," thundered Raymond, stung again into uncontrollable anger.

"Come," said Blake. "We have nothing further to do here."

Yale picked up Miss Wayne's suitcase. Sims sped to the front door and opened it. The prisoner, the arresting officer, and the prisoner's champion passed through. To their ears came a frantic cry:

"Oh, Bev! Oh, Bev! Oh, Bev!"

And then:

"My God!" in Greenland's voice.

And then the sound of a falling body. Miss Nancy had fainted once more, and with a vengeance.

CHAPTER IX.

NOT A WEDDING BREAKFAST.

YALE realized that his position was almost unprecedented, and when the strangely associated trio boarded a northbound car for the down-town district he sank into a reverie in which violet eyes and alluring lips were intermixed with Greenland's angry looks, and Mr. Raymond's rage. Had he done the right thing, after all?

It was not like Yale to falter, and this mood quickly passed.

By his side sat a girl who had, for no adequate reason that Yale could discover, been accused by an infuriated old man of complicity in a unique robbery. For a moment chivalry held full sway and he thought only of the girl and the situation, forgetting her wondrous beauty. But who, for long, could forget those eyes? Those lips!

It would be difficult for a mere chronicler to tell what emotions stirred the thoughts in the quiet Blake. It was clear that he was a man who would perform his duty under any circumstances. It was equally clear that he had made an arrest that he did not want to make.

But Blake was not the only detective who ever did that, and this was not the first time it had happened to Blake.

As for the lady herself, she was perfectly serene. It was she who broke the silence.

"I never heard of such a thing," she said, and her voice vibrated with anger.

The detective laughed in a subdued manner. "Neither did I, to tell the truth. Utica has not had such a sensation as this will be in many years."

"And I thought Nancy Raymond was my best friend."

"Miss Wayne," said Yale, "I don't believe that Miss Raymond has turned against you one little bit of a turn. Analyze the situation in that house for yourself. Mrs. Raymond is entirely subservient to her husband's will. Nancy is under his sway to a like degree. This morning she is upset, distraught, because all her nice wedding presents have been stolen. You might be as weak as she under the same conditions."

"The same conditions are inconceivable connected with me," replied Miss Wayne with a mild laugh. "*I* would never get a table filled with silver."

The clanging car was now half way to the City Hall.

"That's a grand park," observed Beverly, with enthusiasm. "Of course, it does not equal Central Park, nor Bronx. But then, it is younger. For a city the size of Utica it *is* a grand park. But then, Utica is nothing but an inhabited park."

She was looking at the giant elms on either side of the wide street as she spoke.

"I am glad you like my native city, Miss Wayne," said Yale.

"Oh, I don't like it because it is your native city. It *is* a nice city, notwithstanding my first experience is not very pleasant. I wish I knew some nice people here."

"So do I," laughed Yale. "Stick around a while and we'll get acquainted together."

"I fancy I am in line for acquaintances I may not like. Where do we go first, Mr. Policeman? To jail? Where is the Utica Tombs?"

"I hardly think you will go to jail before you go before the examining magistrate," answered Blake. "But it is my duty to take you to police headquarters."

"Can't we have breakfast first?"

"I don't think you will be detained long enough to add to your hunger. It will make the sledding smoother if we go see the chief first."

"Is he a nice man?"

"All men are nice in Utica."

"Is the judge a lenient judge?"

"He is, to innocent persons," and Blake chuckled.

"I hope he's a big man—fat, you know. They are always better natured. They eat more good things."

"Well, if that's the way you sample a judge," said Blake, "the city magistrate will suit you?"

The square tower of the City Hall, with its four clock faces that keep time sometimes, and occasionally agree, soon loomed up before them. "Here we are," announced Blake.

The car stopped at Pearl Street, the trio soon walked the short block to police headquarters, and in a moment the grim gray eyes of the chief were looking into the violet ones of the prisoner. He did not remove his fixed gaze from her face while Blake was telling his story.

"So," he said, when Blake had finished, "you don't like policemen."

"I like you and Mr. Blake."

"'M. I think you are something of a jollier, but then, if a man must be jollied in this world, I couldn't pick out a fitter person to do the jollying. My duty, I suppose, is to lock you up, or at least hold you in custody till court opens. But you've brought a lot of paraphernalia for a prisoner. We have no wardrobes in our cells."

His grim face relaxed in a smile.

"Oh, I shall get a room at a hotel. Anyway, I must go now. I am hungry. I have had no breakfast."

"Oh, I—"

"Come, Mr. Yale. Come, Mr. Policeman. Thank you, chief. For a chief you are awfully nice."

Blake gave the chief a shooting glance and received one like it in return.

"Ten o'clock," said the chief, and he actually went to the door to watch the prisoner depart.

"Well, I'll be hornswiggled," he remarked to the doorman. "I'd like to be city magistrate for just one hour."

"Are we going to the same hotel where we had supper last night?" Miss Wayne asked Yale.

"No," he answered, with an air of proprietorship. "I have chosen the Butterfield House. I choose it because it is convenient to the city hall and police headquarters. You will need a headquarters of your own, and convenience is to be considered. You want a room immediately. You can't lug a suitcase, umbrella and camera into a court-room."

"No; that would look as though I was a runaway and had been arrested *en route*."

Blake attended to the business of obtaining a suitable room for Miss Wayne, while Yale ordered breakfast for the three. They were soon cosily ensconsed at a table in a corner of the dining-room.

"I tell you what I'd like to do if we have time," Miss Wayne observed when breakfast was nearly over. "I'd like to find a photographer's place. I mean one who deals in supplies. And one who develops films. My reel is exhausted, and I want a new one, and to leave this one to be developed."

"I know a good one who will treat you right," said Blake. "Phrey, of Broad Street."

In a short time the three, with Miss Wayne in the middle, carrying her camera in the usual fashion, were walking down Genesee Street toward Broad.

Mr. Phrey, fortunately, was in the store beneath the studio, and leaned far across the counter looking into such eyes as he had never seen before, while Miss Wayne told him what she wanted.

"Certainly," he said. "I will put in a cartridge at once. Are you in any particular hurry for the developed films?"

"Oh, no," answered Miss Wayne nonchalantly. "Take your time, Mr. Phrey. I shall perhaps be a guest of the city for some time. My plans for the immediate future are in the air—I mean in the city magistrate's head."

The astonished photographer stared at the retreating figure, paying no attention to her male companions.

"Where the devil did that bundle of dizziness come from?" he asked himself. "If she walked up and down Genesee street Saturday night the mayor would have to call out the Fourth Battalion to clear the way."

Oblivious of the commotion she had created in the breast of the seasoned photographer, Miss Wayne walked between her escorts up Genesee once more, and glanced at the clock in the tower.

"What a funny City Hall," she said. "Is that clock right? I've just time to leave my camera and things in my room. Mr. Yale, will you get my suitcase and umbrella from the clerk?"

This was done, Miss Wayne carried her traps to her room herself, and rejoined her companions. In three minutes more they were in the city court.

CHAPTER X.

A STARTLING ADMISSION.

IT was a barren enough interior. The wooden benches had done service for many years. The only person in evidence beside themselves was a doorman. They took seats in front.

The first to enter after them was the stalwart chief.

"You didn't run away, did you," he said to the prisoner.

"Oh, no. I may, though, if I get frightened."

A quizzical look came into the chief's eyes.

"That danger is not very imminent," he remarked, and sat down by Blake.

A clerk came in, then a policeman. Persons who had heard something of the arrest of Miss Wayne strolled in to have a look at her. There are always a few who make a practice of hearing all cases, whether interested personally or not. These are not as a rule very important persons in the world, and took the rear seats.

Finally the rotund, great shouldered judge entered.

"Oh, I'm glad," whispered Miss Wayne.

"Glad of what?" asked Blake.

"You know what I said. *He* never has indigestion like Mr. Raymond."

"By the way where is that gentleman?" asked Blake. "If he doesn't appear there will be no case."

"How sad!" murmured the prisoner. At that moment Mr. Raymond, accompanied by Greenland, arrived.

It was clear that the millionaire was suffering agonies of mind. Excitement and nervousness had him in their coils. He was pale, flustered, ill at ease, and evidently felt himself out of place.

He glanced furtively around the courtroom, as if fearing to see any of his acquaintances, or have them see him. Then he nodded to the judge.

The chief of police at once left the bench and spoke to the judge. The magistrate lent an ear to all the chief had to say, all the time keeping his gaze fixed upon Miss Wayne.

"Miss Beverly Wayne to the bar," he called, when the chief had finished and straightened his tall form.

"Come," said Blake.

He led Miss Wayne to the railing, and Yale followed. For the moment Yale's part was absolutely that of a mute.

"Officer Blake, what is the charge against the prisoner?" asked the judge, looking at Beverly, instead of at Blake.

"No police charge, your honor. I made the arrest upon the demand of Mr. John Raymond. I did not see the prisoner engaged in any unlawful enterprise."

"Is John Raymond in the room?"

Inasmuch as the judge had just returned Mr. Raymond's salutation, the question was not flattering to the millionaire's self-esteem. Accompanied by Greenland he went forward.

"Your honor," he said, "the prisoner refused to answer questions put to her in my house by Detective Blake concerning the theft of my daughter's wedding presents."

"A prisoner is not compelled to answer questions asked by the arresting officer. What is the charge?"

"Oh! Ah! I did not understand the law, your honor. The situation, then, is this. My—"

"We will get at the situation in good time, Mr. Raymond. What is the definite charge you make against the prisoner at the bar?"

"That she is in league with the robbers, or knows more about the robbery than she will tell. Her actions are suspicious."

"Go ahead now, and expatiate."

"Your honor, as you probably know, since it has been a matter of newspaper prominence for several days, the marriage of my daughter to Mr. George Greenland was to have been solemnized this morning. My daughter received a great many costly presents. The dining-room table, when the household retired last night, was loaded with silverware. This morning at half-past six a maid made the discovery that all the silver had been stolen."

"What connects the prisoner with the robbery?"

"Why, circumstantially it would appear that she could tell something if she would. When the maid screamed I at once assembled the household, and this young lady, who was a guest of my daughter, but about whom we know nothing, was missing. When, in response to my butler's telephone message to the chief of police, Detective Blake arrived, we discovered that the front door was locked and the key missing. After a time this young lady came in *with* the key. The detective asked her a few questions and she refused to answer."

The magistrate leaned his elbows on the desk before him, and rested his chin in his cupped hands. He studied, with eyes that had long ago learned to pierce the armor of dissimulation, the beautiful prisoner at the rail.

"What was your objection to answering the detective's questions?" he asked.

"I have been told that it is dangerous to answer a police officer's questions. The answers, if the police want to get you, can be so twisted in court as to mean just the opposite to what you said."

"'M. You are an experienced young woman, somewhere. Where do you live? Where is your permanent home?"

"New York."

"I thought so. That may be good enough advice in New York, but in a small city like Utica we do not have the intricate and deep lying criminal strata to quarry that the New York police deal with. I judge from the phrasing of your reply that you are not averse to answering a judge."

"She told me that, your honor," said Blake.

"Miss Wayne, come up here and take the witness chair."

The beautiful prisoner obeyed, and took a long step to her own advantage, for the judge now was close to the violet eyes, and he did not forego the pleasure of looking into them. The fearless and graceful stride with which Miss Wayne stepped to the witness-box won the chief's approbation.

"That girl would walk to the electric chair in the same manner," he whispered to Blake. "I almost hope she's guilty."

"Why?"

"Because I think she'd beat the game."

"Now," said the judge, swinging his chair to face the lady, and looking straight into her unflinching eyes, "answer me straight,

and don't put on any sidelines of talk. Yes or no will do unless there are necessary statements at length. One question, now, answered either way, will settle the business. *Did you take those wedding presents?"*

"I did."

The audience stiffened. A grim smile appeared on Raymond's face. Greenland shot a glance of triumph at Yale, who looked as though he felt an earthquake under him.

The great shoulders of the judge heaved forward, and he rested one arm on the desk as he stared into Miss Wayne's face, which was now full of suppressed laughter.

"Young lady, don't fool with me," he said. "You are not telling me the truth. How could you, a young girl, get away with a big dining-room tableful of silverware? It would weigh hundreds of pounds."

"Oh, I didn't get away with it—as you mean. I got away with it though. I didn't steal the silver. I took it with my camera."

The judge fell back in his chair as though he felt weak. Yale grew suddenly strong again. Half a smile showed on his face.

"That is a falsehood," said Mr. Raymond. "This young lady arrived at my house at about five o'clock yesterday. There was not sufficient light at that hour to take a photograph. The silver was gone at half-past six this morning, and there was not light enough then."

"What have you to say to that?" the judge asked Miss Wayne.

"I took a flashlight picture at one o'clock this morning."

"At one o'clock? Was the silver on the table then?"

"Of course. How could I have taken a flashlight of it otherwise?"

"Where is the picture you took?"

"It is undeveloped, on the reel, left with Mr. Phrey, on Broad Street."

"Tell me how you came to take a flashlight of the wedding presents without asking permission."

"It didn't hurt anything, and there was no one to ask. Let me explain. Last evening Mr. Yale—that's Mr. Yale, over there—Mr. Yale and I took a walk and a trolley ride, to get out of the way, knowing that Nance Raymond and her family would have a lot to do. We went to the Hotel Utica for supper, and got home somewhere around midnight. Everybody except Sims, the butler, was asleep.

"I went to bed, but lay awake thinking about Nance's wedding, and the presents, and all that sort of thing. Then it occurred to me that a picture of the tableful of silver, just as it was, would be a nice thing for Nance and me to keep. You see, judge, amateur photography was ordered for me by my physician after I had fallen from a horse and had a long spell of nervous trouble. He forbade any more riding or yachting, but said I must have a fad that was not dangerous. Now it seems that photography is the most dangerous fad I could take up."

"Go on with your story of what you did at one o'clock."

"Well, all I did was to get up, put on a kimono, pick up my camera and a flashlight, go down to the dining-room quickly, and take the picture. I found some boxes the presents had come in, and put one on top of another till I had a pile high enough to rest my camera on, instead of a tripod."

"Did you turn on any light?"

"No. I have a small electric sticklamp that I use. It gives me all the light I want to make my arrangements."

"You are sure *all* the silver was there?"

"Yes. I rearranged the pieces to bring the smaller ones forward and put the tall ones in the background."

"But doesn't a flashlight go off like a pistol? Wouldn't it be likely to rouse the house?"

"Most of them do. I use a newly invented flashlight that makes very little noise, and leaves very little odor. It compares to the old flashlights as smokeless powder does to the old black powder."

"You are a—you know a good deal for a girl. You are not an anarchist, I hope."

"I am not even a socialist. But this isn't a political meeting. So far as noise is concerned, everybody in the house was dog tired and a pistol shot wouldn't wake 'em."

"Well, so much for the flashlight. How now about the front door key?"

"Your honor," said Blake, stepping forward, "I don't wish to injure the young lady's chances, or mar the effect her defense may have upon the court. But when I told her that in order to take her before a magistrate I must first put her under arrest, she told me to go ahead—that it wouldn't be the first time."

"Were you ever arrested before?" asked the judge sharply. He could resist the violet eyes when there was duty to perform.

"Oh, yes," said Beverly, tossing her red-

gold head. "But I was never before so nice a judge as you."

Then she laughed and showed her teeth of ivory-pearl.

CHAPTER XI.

WAS SHE TELLING THE TRUTH?

THE judge leaned forward again, and looked sternly at the prisoner.

"Are you telling me the truth?" he asked.

"Well, of course. What else would I tell? I have been arrested two or three times."

"On what charges?"

"Oh, the same old charge every time—exceeding the speed limit."

"I shouldn't wonder," whispered the chief to Blake.

"Do you own an automobile?" the judge asked.

"Oh, no. I don't own anything except what my aunt gives me. *She* owns two or three automobiles."

"What is your aunt's name?"

"Miss Charlotte Wayne."

"An elderly lady?"

"Not so very, in years. She's an invalid."

"But you don't seem to be very solicitous about your aunt's welfare. She seems to be very generous to you. You do considerable traveling around away from her, do you not?"

"Yes. That's the only way I can return her generosity. My aunt is rather odd. She fancies she is going to die every minute. She has doctors and nurses on the verge of neurasthenia all the time. Her attendants go around the house in slippers with cloth soles. They are all fogy-molly."

"What's that?"

"Oh, they are pussy-footed kowtowers. They get paid for it, you know."

The judge gazed at her earnestly.

"Tell me about that front doorkey," he said after a silence that was felt. "What time did you leave Mr. Raymond's house this morning?"

"About half past five, or a quarter to six."

"What did you go out for?"

"To take some snap-shots."

"But it was not light enough."

"Well, I am not afraid in the dawn. I'd rather wait for the proper light than miss it, and I wanted a long walk, anyway."

"Did you take any snap-shots?"

"To be sure I did. I took the statue of Baron von Steuben. Then I walked along the parkway and went up the hill in Roscoe Conkling Park, and took a picture of the big boulder with the bronze plate. And I took a snap-shot of some deer in their enclosure. Oh, I took several pictures."

"Why did you carry away the front doorkey?"

"What else could I do with it? No one was up in the house. I expected to be back before anybody needed to use the front door. I didn't know a hullaballoo was going to be raised about a robbery. I couldn't leave the key in the lock outside the door, nor could I lock the door and leave the key inside. I couldn't get out, or if out, I couldn't lock the door on the inside. The only thing I could do was to lock the door and take the key with me."

The judge leaned both elbows on the desk and rested his head. Perhaps it ached. Never, in all the years he had occupied the bench as city magistrate, had such a case, or such a prisoner, come before him.

Was she telling the truth? Or was she the most fascinating liar in all the world?

As an honest, adventurous girl, she was charming. As a beautiful criminal she was superb. He turned to Blake.

"When you examined the premises was there any evidence that the robbers had any other means of exit than the front door?"

"Your honor, there was no evidence that the robbers used the front door as a means of *exit*. A window of the dining-room was open. Outside, under that window, I discovered footprints in the grass and on the gravel carriage-path. The same footprints show near the gate. Miss Wayne may have let them in by way of the front door, but they assuredly left through the window."

"Like love, under certain circumstances," observed Miss Wayne. "I did *not* admit anybody by way of the front door."

"Did you see the presents when you went out?"

"No. I did not go into that room."

"Who discovered the loss?"

"A down-stairs girl," answered Mr. Raymond.

"You do not suspect her?"

"Not at all, your honor. My servants are above suspicion."

"You never had a tableful of silverware before?"

"Jewels have been left around. Nothing was ever stolen before."

"Have you anything further to say about the prisoner? Her answers are straight enough, even though she has little regard for the sacred dignity of the court. At least she has not prejudiced her own case."

"Well, I have this to say, your honor, that your pleasant conversation with Miss Wayne has revealed nothing. I am not surprised. I am old, and know the world. I never saw a more fascinating young woman in my life. But that is not to the point. I know nothing—my daughter really knows nothing—concerning Miss Wayne. Their acquaintance began at Smith's College, and they have met nowhere else, so far as I know. I am still of the opinion that Miss Wayne is either an accomplice of the robbers, or is concealing information that might be useful."

"Your honor," said Beverly, "I swear I know nothing about the robbery."

"A woman," continued Mr. Raymond, "lightly regards the sanctity of an oath. I do not wish to humiliate this girl. She is still my daughter's friend, and I have aroused a feeling of animosity in my daughter by the step I have taken. It is not the value of the presents that actuates me. But I am determined to have them back if I spend a million dollars and put every friend of my family in jail. And to prove my sincerity I will say right now that I will give fifty thousand dollars to the person furnishing the first evidence that leads to the detection of the thieves and the recovery of the stolen property. I want the girl kept within the jurisdiction of the court until further search is made."

"Well, I can place Miss Wayne under bond. Can you furnish a bondsman?"

"He must own property in Utica, mustn't he?"

"Not necessarily in Utica. In Oneida County."

"Well, that's all the same to me. I don't know any one who can go my bail in Oneida County."

"Your honor," spoke up Yale, "my grandfather, Latimer Yale, died a short time ago, leaving me a farm and certain buildings on the west bank of West Canada Creek, this side of Trenton Falls. The property is in Oneida County, and is a farm of about two hundred acres. There is an old stone mill on the place, and the farm is called the Old Mill Farm. I was born in Utica. Will I serve as bondsman for Miss Wayne?"

"Can you prove title?"

"I can. The papers are in the hands of the surrogate."

"The clerk will make out the papers. Next case! You may step down, Miss Wayne."

"Thanks, your honor," she said, with a flash of the violet eyes.

The judge scarcely knew what the evidence in the next case was. He discharged a prisoner who confidently expected to spend three months in the Bleecker Street Jail. Oh, violet eyes!

CHAPTER XII.

A POSSIBLE CLUE.

HAVING executed the bond to the satisfaction of the court, Yale and his charge bowed to the judge, shook hands with Blake, and walked out of the courtroom, ignoring both Mr. Raymond and George Greenland.

When the pair had reached the entrance to the city hall, on Genesee Street, Yale was startled by a rippling laugh at his side. He himself was in no laughing mood.

"What a farce!" exclaimed Miss Wayne. "But isn't it funny?"

Her bondsman glanced at her. Beautiful as he had thought her before, she was exquisite now, with her cheeks flushed, her lips parted in soft laughter, and her eyes sparkling with amusement.

And yet somehow, in spite of her beauty, her mirth jarred on him.

"I assure you," he said, in the newly acquired stern tones of a person who had assumed great responsibility, "that I see no farce about it, nor anything funny. Do you realize that I have pledged my only possession in the world upon your sense of honor?"

She stopped short on the city hall steps.

"And now you begin to regret it. You think you will lose. And of course there always is that possibility. Let us go back. Withdraw your bond, and I will—what do they call it?—give myself into custody."

"No, no, I didn't mean that," he hastened to assure her.

He was really alarmed. Her manner had suddenly changed, and from the laughing beauty of a moment before she had become an outraged Venus.

Her eyes had grown darker, her lips were set close and firm, and anger sat enthroned upon the lovely face. "You are too quick to take offense," he went on. "Nevertheles, I do not think you quite realize the seriousness of the case."

"I realize this, that I would go to prison for the rest of my life rather than cause you or any other man any uneasiness about my bond."

"I spoke partly in jest. I did not mean to hurt you."

"Your tone seemed to indicate a doubt of my truthfulness."

"Would I have pledged the only bit of earth I own if I doubted you?"

"There is logic in that. Anyway I suppose I must obey you now, and not talk back. A bondsman is sort of a master, isn't he?"

"Hardly that. He is responsible for the appearance in court of his charge when called upon."

She remained silent while he led her across Genesee Street and into the Butterfield House. The morning was gone and lunch-time at hand. They took their seats at the same table at which their breakfast had been served.

In a city the size of Utica all news is everybody's. The magnitude of the Raymond robbery, and its peculiar phases, made it a tid-bit.

The loungers in the hotel lobby, and the diners at the tables, recognized Beverly Wayne as the prisoner of the morning, and Yale as her bondsman. All eyes were turned their way. Some expressed pity, some gratification at the sureness of Utica justice, while the majority merely stared at the remarkable beauty of the suspected girl.

She bore all scrutiny well, and seemed, in fact, to be oblivious of it. Yale was more self-conscious, and wished the whole business was over.

While they ate they talked, as was natural.

"Now, Miss Wayne," said Yale, "let us look things in the face. Inasmuch as your stay here is indefinite, don't you think it would be well to notify your aunt of the situation?"

She looked at him with her eyes wide open, expressing the mild surprise of a schoolgirl.

"And kill the dear? I wouldn't think of such a thing. She knows I'm all right."

"Yes, but I don't think you are quite all right. Your position is precarious, to say the least."

"Oh, that! I wouldn't worry my aunt about being arrested. And I'm not under arrest now. I'm all right as long as I'm with you."

The words, and the glance from the violet eyes that accompanied it, silenced Yale. They ate in silence for a moment, and then she said:

"I've got to stay in the city all the time, I suppose. Will *you* stay?"

"Well, the judge accepted country property as the pledge, and I suppose you are at liberty to go anywhere in the county. Still, I can't think of many places you'd care to go. I propose to be with you till it is all over."

"You mean that you don't propose to let me get out of your sight while your farm is in danger."

That was not what he had meant, but he turned red just the same. Another silence followed, during which Yale did some prodigious thinking.

Not only was he responsible for the return of this girl to the court when she was wanted, but he was, he felt, owing to the peculiar circumstances, responsible for her welfare in the meantime. She was safe enough at the Butterfield House. No scandal had ever touched that famous old hostelry, reminiscent of General Daniel Butterfield, whose picture hangs near the windows in the lobby. But he could not very well stop at the same hotel without causing tongues to wag.

But he had all afternoon to settle that point, and nothing else to do.

"Suppose we take a motor ride around the town," he said.

"Good! Just what I should like."

"Very well. Here is your purse. From now on you will be my guest, except your hotel bills. I won't run the risk of your good name being any worse handled than it has been. Still, if you run shy of money, I'll lend you some."

"I thought you were poor—that you had only the farm your grandfather left you."

"I didn't say that—quite. It is the only real estate I own."

"Oh, visions of stocks and bonds and gilt edge securities fill my brain. I'm finished—oh, there's the ice cream. You don't eat it? I love it. Well, you go get the buzzwagon and I'll eat my cream and get my camera. I may take that, I suppose."

"Oh, yes, take your camera. Take anything. Take an elephant."

"I don't know how to carry an elephant. I could *take* an elephant though, just as I took the wedding presents. Didn't the judge look black. I could steal an elephant more easily than all that silver."

"You could—"

"Sure, an elephant is an easy problem. You pack him in his own trunk and ship him by express."

She flirted a napkin at him and disappeared toward the stairs.

Yale went to the desk, after paying the check, and asked where he could obtain a comfortable motor-car for a long drive.

"A friend of mine named Johnny Williams," said the clerk, "owns a car that he won as a prize in a big puzzle contest promulgated by a New York magazine. At first he almost wept. Said he would rather have some shirts and stockings, for the chap had little money. But now he makes a fair living taking out parties who prefer a regular car to a taxi."

"Can I get him?"

"I'll get him, and then you may have him."

Johnny Williams and his car could not have been far away. The hotel clerk telephoned. Yale had time to buy and light a cigar and reach the door, when the car hove in view and proved in every way satisfactory.

Yale turned back to the stairs to wait for the appearance of the Lady of the Violet Eyes, and his mind reverted to her elephantine joke.

"Pack him in his own trunk and ship him by express!" Did the minx mean anything? Had she tried to give him a hint concerning the stolen wedding presents?

Pack—in his own trunk, ship—by express?

The shipping by express was clear enough, but whose trunk? "His own trunk," Beverly Wayne had said.

Not Nancy's. She would not steal—"My Heaven!"

He stood still at the foot of the stairs, looking up. But it was nothing that he saw that caused the ejaculation.

"*His* own trunk."

Had George Greenland stolen Nancy's wedding presents? Yale recalled his angry words in the dining-room when the postponement of the wedding was proposed. He had called the silver "junk." The junk was worth thousands of dollars. Yale knew nothing about his old schoolmate's career for many years.

But all thoughts of Greenland and the elephant problem left his mind when a vision appeared at the head of the stairs.

How the girl managed to jam all the stuff she wore into one suitcase Yale could not imagine. She now had on something that set off her figure to a degree that made his blood leap.

"I'm ready," she said. "Don't I look nice in my new dress?"

"I—I guess so," said Yale. "Come along. Our royal chariot is waiting for the queen."

"How lovely you say it, Guardy. I am going to call you Guardy. Mr. Yale is too stiff and formal, and, besides, it makes me think of fussy and musty old professors and empty headed students. I am not long enough your acquaintance to call you Kenneth, although it is a beautiful name. Do you like Beverly?"

"Good Lord, yes, I more than like you," blurted out Yale.

"I mean my name."

"I like the first part. Beverly is sweet. But Beverly Ya—"

"Now, now, if I could snapshot language I'd take a picture of what you are saying. You would shed tears of shame some day. Is that our car? It's fine! Who's your good looking wealthy friend, Guardy? Is he married?"

"Now, look here. His name is Johnny Williams. It's his car. I've hired it for the afternoon. I never saw him before in my life. He strikes me as a very susceptible young man. You behave yourself or you'll have us shipwrecked. *Don't* let him look into your eyes unless I'm driving."

"Oh, how glad I am that you know how to drive," she said demurely.

By this time he had her in the rear of the machine.

"We don't want to go to any particular destination, Williams," said Yale. "Just tote us round and round. Go east as far as the Masonic Home, and west as far as the State hospital for the insane. That'll do."

"Both places," remarked Beverly, as he took his place by her side, "are for those who are incompetent to take care of themselves, isn't that so?"

"Yes."

"In which one are you going to put me? My father was a Mason."

"You'll have me in the blind asylum if you look at me like that. Now pay attention to the things I am going to tell you. The park we are coming to is Steuben Park."

"Oh."

The car rolled easily along the smooth Rutger Street pavement.

"See that house back in that private park? That was Roscoe Conkling's home."

"Goodness me," cried Miss Wayne. "Did nobody of any account ever live in Utica except Roscoe Conkling and the Baron von Steuben?"

She snap-shotted everything he thought worthy of her attention, and the afternoon wore away very pleasantly. It was dusk when they returned to the Butterfield House, and Williams sat still, watching the figure of Miss Wayne as she tripped by Yale's side into the hotel.

When they reached the desk the clerk said:

"Mr. Yale, here is a message George Greenland left for you."

The message read:

> YALE AND MISS WAYNE:—Mr. Raymond is very ill and perhaps dying. He wants to see you both—at once. GREENLAND.

Williams's infatuation was fortunate. Yale caught him before he had left the curb.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WORST YET.

THEY were admitted by Sims. He evidently knew they were expected, for notwithstanding the bruskness with which they had left the house in the morning, and all that had passed since, he stood aside and bowed formally and respectfully.

Greenland met them in the wide hall, his manner one of dejection, and his expression morose.

"What's the trouble, George?" asked Yale.

"Come in here."

Greenland led the way to a cozy living room, and motioned the guests to chairs. He did not sit down himself, but paced to and fro with his hands in his pockets.

"There's the devil to pay in this house," he said. "Confound it, I wish I had insisted on the wedding taking place. All this da—"

"What's the matter with Mr. Raymond?" interrupted Yale, not caring to hear Greenland's personal grievances.

"He's sick!" answered Greenland savagely. "Devilish sick. May die. When we came home from the court Nance was feeling pretty good. Then the old fool had to go and blurt out all the proceedings. Nance went up in the air, and berated the old man like a virago. After that she fainted. Then Mrs. Raymond worked so hard over Nance, leaving the old man to himself, that his excitement became too much for him, and he had a spell.

"It develops now that Mr. Raymond has suffered for a long time with heart trouble, and nobody knew it but his physician. Well, they sent for Dr. Tuller, and some fool in the house told Mrs. Raymond and *she* fainted. Dr. Tuller said that he might die any minute. So we got him to bed.

"Then, Tuller wouldn't see Mrs. Raymond because he was not her physician. So we had to telephone Dr. Hosman. They are both here now. Messages are carried from one room to another.

"Nance demands that all proceedings against Miss Wayne be stopped, and Raymond refuses. He consents to her remaining here as Nance's guest, for Nance's sake, and because he doesn't trust you as her bondsman. He says you have the appearance of wealth, and would probably sacrifice a miserable farm on West Canada Creek for the sake of spiriting Miss Wayne away.

"Then he wanted to see both of you, and I went out on the trail. The judge didn't know where you could be found. The chief didn't know. I managed to get hold of Blake, and he said you were at the Butterfield House. There I was told that you had gone out in Johnny Williams's car. So I left the note."

"And now we are here," replied Yale. "Does Mr. Raymond want to see us at once?"

"Not now. Tuller gave him a powerful opiate and says he will sleep till to-morrow morning."

"How is Nance?" asked Beverly.

"Oh, she's in bed moaning and crying 'Bev, Bev,' constantly."

"And here I sit like a bump on a log," said Miss Wayne. "She's in her own room, I suppose."

"Yes, but Dr. Tuller is with her now."

"What do I care? She isn't calling for Dr. Tuller, is she?"

Off came the lady's hat and wrap, and flinging them on a bookstand, she vanished.

"Isn't this—well, a fine kettle of fish," grumbled Greenland. "If I'd insisted on the wedding this mornin' we'd be half-way to Niagara Falls by now. Maybe there. I wouldn't be dancin' on one foot on a hot griddle like I am now. Damn a weddin' anyway. I'll go to a justice of the peace, or get married by the process of jumping over a broomstick.

"A lot of guests came and had to be sent away. But like mosquitoes, that never die before they get their poison into you, these guests got off their fool remarks about postponed weddings before I could shovel 'em out. Never heard such a lot of blamed rubbish in my life.

"One knew that the firstborn of a postponed wedding always died young. Another had heard of a man who built a house for his bride, the wedding was postponed, and the man lost his job and the house. All that sort of thing.

"We got rid of them at last, but think of the condition they left Nance in. Hang the presents. I can buy enough of that stuff."

Just then a professional looking man entered the room and spoke to Greenland.

"Who is the combination of Venus and Aurora who takes the wheel out of the pilot's hand?" he asked.

"You mean Miss Wayne?"

"What! The one who was haled before the judge this morning and put under bond?"

"The same, and here is her bondsman, Mr. Kenneth Yale."

"Young man," said the doctor, as he shook hands with Kenneth, "I wouldn't be that girl's bondsman for a million dollars. I'm a married man."

"I'm not," replied Yale, smiling.

"Good thing—for the wife you might have had. But I shouldn't wonder—no, I shouldn't be surprised—if you became one. Let me warn you. If you desire to remain single, don't let that girl fall in love with you. If she wants you, she'll get you, so just watch out."

"You seem to know the young lady, doctor," said Yale.

"Know her? Never set eyes on her till a few minutes ago. Yet I've known her for two thousand years. Greek history is full of her.

"Her lute sent Roman soldiers to war filled with patriotism and love of her. Egypt would still be something of a nation if it hadn't been for such as she. Persia rolled in the dust because men looked into eyes like hers and thought there were two suns.

"She came in, and ordered me out of the room. Said she'd take care of 'Nance.' And I went without a murmur. Aurora went to Miss Raymond's bed. Nancy was rolling from side to side in a sort of frenzy —half delirium—calling 'Bev, oh, Bev!'

"So that's Bev, is it? Well, she said, 'Here I am, Nance dear,' and Nance dear looked up into her eyes, took both her hands, and smiled away into a baby sleep. By Skulls and Crossbones! Is she a witch?"

"Rather different from the usual pictures," Yale remarked.

"Aye, and from the usual woman. Oh! Here's Hosman. How is Mrs. Raymond, doctor."

Dr. Hosman shook his head.

"Pretty bad, but not incurable. If you can pull Raymond through I'll answer for Mrs. Raymond. If Raymond dies we'll have a double funeral."

"I don't think Raymond will die. But I doubt if he ever is the same man again. I'll be here at eight in the morning."

"I'll meet you here. Together we may be able to save the family."

"Well?" said Yale, turning to Greenland, when the physicians had gone, "what about me? Raymond doesn't want to see me now, and nobody else expressed a wish to."

"I suppose as Miss Wayne's bondsman you'd prefer to stay."

"Not because I am her bondsman. I have no distrust of Miss Wayne. I shall take rooms at the Butterfield. Tell her I will send a messenger with her suitcase and other things. If anything happens let me know. I may take a run up to-morrow, or may not. I've got to go to the surrogate's office on business."

Yale left, and, having reached the hotel again, proceeded to keep his promise.

In the rush to catch Williams before he got away Yale had left Miss Wayne at the desk. At his call she had put the camera on the clerk's desk and rushed to join him. Yale now obtained the camera, got the key to her room from the clerk, and brought from it her suitcase and umbrella. Fortunately she had left none of her clothing out of the suitcase except what she wore.

A messenger was then sent to Raymond's house with the things.

The next day he did not go to the Raymonds'. He slept late, having spent the evening at a theatre and over a supper afterward with a few members of the Academy class to which he and Greenland had belonged.

After a leisurely breakfast he went to the surrogate's office. His title to the farm on West Canada Creek was established, and with the title deed and all important papers in his pocket he renewed the insurance on the buildings, looked up the taxes, etc.

He wandered about the lower part of the city till dinner-time and as evening fell darkly he returned to his hotel.

"Call for you—Mr. Raymond's—something wrong," said the clerk.

Yale sped to the telephone. It was Nancy's trembling voice that answered.

"Oh, Mr. Yale—that you, Mr. Yale—this is Nance Raymond— Come up here right away—*right away*—something terrible has happened to Beverly. We think she has drowned herself in the old Third Street reservoir near Roscoe Conkling Park. Oh, come quick! This house must be cursed!"

Those in the lobby stared as a streak of man went through the door.

CHAPTER XIV.

YALE TAKES HOLD.

IF the evening before Yale had left the Raymond house in a state of turmoil and collapse, there is scarcely a word adequately to describe the condition in which he found it now.

Sims, as usual, admitted him. But it was hardly the same Sims. He jerked the door open and stood staring at Yale with a face expressive of nothing.

"What's the matter here? What's this about Miss Wayne being drowned? Have they found her body?" demanded Yale, and Sims leaped backward, fearing the visitor would clutch his throat with his strong white hands that nervously gave evidence of his powerful agitation.

"N-no, sir," stammered Sims.

"Has she been found alive, then?"

"N-no, sir."

"Where is she? Speak, man!"

"I—I d-d-don't know, sir," stuttered the terrified butler. "Everything gone to Hades here, sir."

"Where is Miss Raymond?"

"Ill, sir, in bed, and can't be seen, sir."

"Where is Mr. Raymond?"

"Had another heart spell, sir; is in bed, doped."

"Where is George Greenland?"

"Somewhere, sir, looking."

"My God! Do you want to drive me mad? Where is Mrs. Raymond?"

"In her room, sir. Perhaps she will see you."

"Well, by the jumping Joss, somebody will see me! Go tell Mrs. Raymond I am here."

Sims sped away as though the idea was a new one to him. That a man in Yale's position, holding his peculiar relationship to Beverly Wayne, should want to see somebody after receiving a message to the effect that Beverly had been drowned in Utica's drinking water, was beyond Sims's stupefied intellect to grasp.

Yale paced up and down the hall, cursing the fates. The possibilities of the case were too horrible to permit him to remain calm. In that moment he realized fully that he loved Beverly Wayne.

Sims came back more composed.

"Mrs. Raymond is better, sir, and will see you at once. Do you know where her boudoir is? Shall I—"

But Yale had sped past him and was half-way up-stairs.

Mrs. Raymond sat in a large arm-chair, wrapped in a fur cloak, although the steam heat was on. She was in a huddled position, rocking to and fro. She saw Yale enter without moving her head.

"Isn't this a terrible thing to happen to our house, Mr. Yale?" she moaned.

"Your house!" Yale felt small sympathy for the Raymond family just then. "Your house! What has happened to Beverly Wayne?"

"Who knows? Perhaps she has defeated justice. Perhaps—"

"Mrs. Raymond," broke in Yale, thoroughly beside himself with anxiety, "I did not come here to listen to hysterical conjectures, and whatever has happened to your house has not been brought on by me. Miss Raymond telephoned me that Miss Wayne was probably drowned in the Third Street reservoir. Never mind your perhaps. What do you know?"

"Only that," said the exhausted woman, pointing to something on the floor.

Yale picked it up. It was a wrecked camera.

"Where did you get this?" he asked. He was showing scant mercy to a woman who was weak enough even at best.

"It was brought here by a man named Watson. He is a park attendant. Sit down, Mr. Yale. Walking around with that horrible telltale thing in your hands disturbs me."

"It has no quieting effect on me, Mrs. Raymond. But I will sit down. Now compose yourself and tell me all you know."

"It is very little. This afternoon Miss Wayne expressed a desire to walk in Roscoe Conkling Park. Nancy was too ill to accompany her, so she went alone. It was, as you know, a very fine, bright afternoon. As usual, Miss Wayne took her camera along.

"She did not return at four, and we remarked upon her long absence. Nancy said that she was accustomed to long wanderings alone, and was not afraid in the woods even at night. We expected her back, of course, for dinner, which will not be before seven—if anybody wants it.

"But we were all prostrated when, just before you telephoned, in reply to Nancy's call, Watson came, bringing that wrecked camera."

"How long before I telephoned from the Butterfield House had Miss Raymond called for me?"

"She rang up about fifteen minutes before that."

"Was Watson here then?"

"He had just gone."

"Why didn't you keep him here till I came?"

"Who could tell when you would come? Watson had to get back to work."

"Well, let's get on. What did Watson say? Where, in the park, did he find the camera?"

"Not in the park at all. He found it in Old Third Street near the reservoir."

"How did he know it was Miss Wayne's? What brought him here with it?"

"He said this: He had, during the afternoon, seen Miss Wayne in different places in the park, taking snapshots. Of course, he knew it *was* Miss Wayne. Who would not? He saw her go across the west drive, and into a patch of woods that reach to Third Street. Later on, his duties took him to the border of the park, and he saw this black object in the road. It was covered with dust, and he would have paid little attention to it, he said, had it not been for the strap, which seemed new, and comparatively clean."

"Well? He picked up the camera. Did he make any search for Miss Wayne?"

"No. The circumstances concerning Miss Wayne are public property, and Watson thought of suicide at once. He ran all the way here with the camera."

"Did nothing but suicide enter any head in this house? Was foul play not thought of?"

"We spoke of it. But there was no one to do any thinking after Watson left, but me, and I was scarcely able to think to any purpose. Nancy's efforts to extract more information from Watson exhausted her, and when he had gone she had just enough strength left to telephone to the Butterfield House, and then go to bed. I eliminated the possibility of foul play after I had gone over every phase of the situation.

"To begin with, Utica never has any of that kind of crime. I could conceive of no reason for any person wishing to harm the girl. If she was really an accomplice of the robbers, as my husband firmly believes, she has certainly been faithful to them and they would have no cause to do her an injury. She has said not one word to betray them. If she is innocent, and knows nothing about the robbery, they would have no reason to put her out of the way and add another unnecessary as well as horrible crime to their record."

"She may, after all, have become innocently possessed of their secret," suggested Yale.

"No, I thought of that and rejected the idea. I believe that if Miss Wayne had any innocent knowledge of the robbery she would tell it rather than go through what she has. She would not be afraid to tell. The girl is not a coward."

"But the smashed camera! Did that not suggest a struggle to any of you?"

"No, because it was found in a public road. Of course, I don't think there is much traffic on Third Street, up that way, but one farm wagon would smash a camera."

"Why should the camera be in the public road?"

"If Miss Wayne contemplated suicide she may have dropped the camera."

"Where is Greenland?"

"He went away with Watson. I suppose he is at the reservoir now. But nothing can be done at night."

"We'll see about that," said Yale, rising. "I shall find Miss Wayne, dead or alive, if it takes every able man in Utica to help me."

He rushed out, half frantic. Of course, a force consisting of every able-bodied man in Utica would be so unwieldy that it would be useless. But Yale was in a desperate mood.

It did not take him long to reach the park, and his boyhood memory stood him in good stead. He found Greenland at the water gate of the reservoir talking to the keeper.

"What do you know?" he demanded, ignoring greetings and introductions.

"Nothing definite, Yale," replied Greenland gloomily. "Miss Wayne was seen standing on the bank of the reservoir taking a snapshot of the aerator. You know, this reservoir is the last of a chain, and as the water enters from the one above it is thrown high in the air by its own pressure, and falls in a spray. This is to purify it with the oxygen of the air. When the keeper looked again she was gone. He thought nothing of it till I reached here with Watson's story."

"What do you think?" asked Miss Wayne's agitated bondsman.

"I think simply that she has run away," answered Greenland.

"What do you think?" asked Yale of the keeper.

"I don't know anything about it. I told what I saw."

Yale stood a moment in deep thought.

"Come and show me just where you saw Miss Wayne stand," he said.

The three walked along the high green bank of the reservoir, till Yale could hear the splashing of the spray as it fell from the fountain.

"Right here."

"Now about where did Watson find the camera?"

Neither of his auditors knew, and without waiting for a reply Yale walked to the country road called Old Third Street. He stood and looked back toward the reservoir.

"Miss Wayne is not in that water," he said with a finality that amazed the other two.

"How do you know that, Yale?" asked Greenland.

"If Miss Wayne had leaped into the reservoir after being seen on the brink, her camera would have been left on the brink, not here. If she had been thrown in by enemies, the camera would have been thrown in with her, and not left here as a telltale."

"Then you think she has run away?"

"I do not. I think she has met with foul play. There is nothing for us to do here. I am going down to see the chief."

"Do you want me to go with you?" asked Greenland.

"No. Go back and take care of that houseful of incompetents. I'll manage this affair myself. It is mine, not yours."

He strode away, leaving Greenland peering after him in the increasing darkness, feeling excedingly ill at ease.

CHAPTER XV.

COULD IT BE POSSIBLE?

WHEN Yale reached police headquarters the chief had gone home to dinner. A telephone message brought him to Pearl Street at once.

It did not take Yale as long to tell his story as it had taken him to drag Mrs. Raymond's from her.

"You say the camera was totally smashed?"

"Yes," answered Yale. "Looks as if a train had run over it."

"On Old Third Street, eh? Well, we'll get right at it. What is your candid opinion?"

"I think Miss Wayne has met with foul play."

"Murdered, do you mean?" asked the chief.

"Either that or abducted."

"I am inclined to think she has run away."

"She would not have left the camera behind."

The chief laughed.

"She certainly would leave her camera. As a matter of fact, the camera being found as it was strengthens my belief that she has run away from you—and justice, if she had anything to fear. That girl is no fool, Mr. Yale. Leaving the camera was a shrewd trick to make you believe, and me, too, I suppose, that she had been attacked and carried off. Had anybody with brains enough to rob Raymond's house as it was robbed attacked Miss Wayne that camera would not have been left in the road."

"Well, whatever your theory may be," said Yale rather impatiently, "are you going to do what you can to find her?"

"You may bet the nails in the heels of your shoes I am. That's what I am here for. That's what the city of Utica pays me my salary for. Whether Miss Wayne is in league with the Raymond robbers, or is their victim, or has got into any trouble unconnected with the robbery, we'll do all we can to find her. Don't worry about *that*."

"Thank you. Now—I cannot sit idle. I think a great deal of Miss Wayne, though I have seen her but little, and have known her little more than two days. More, I am responsible for her appearance before the magistrate when she is wanted. Still more, I feel a personal responsibility for her welfare. She is, as you know, friendless here, except for me."

"Hardly," said the chief, shaking Yale's hand. "You may count me in."

"Thank you again, chief. You think she is innocent, then?"

"Well, no, I don't exactly say that. Raymond has enough foundation for his charge, circumstantial though it may be. But we don't hate everybody who does wrong. There is a way to reclaim."

"Find her first. Have you any objection to my making a search entirely independent of the police hunt?"

"Not at all. The more the merrier. We have no jealousy here. In fact, it would add to the romance of the thing if you *did* find her, alive and well. Good luck to you, Mr. Yale."

Whatever the chief did Yale did not know. He did not even care. He knew the police force was competent, and the chief an efficient head. For himself, he went to the Butterfield House, obtained a room, sent an imperative message to Johnny Williams, who owned the prize automobile, and then went to bed and slept.

At daybreak Johnny Williams was at the door of the hotel in his machine. Yale was up and dressed.

"Had your breakfast?" he asked Williams at the curb.

"Cup coffee," answered Williams. "Eat when we get back."

"Oh, you will! Get out of that and come inside. There is no telling when we'll get back. I am engaging you and your machine by the day until I'm through. What's your price?"

Williams named what he thought was exorbitant, expecting Yale to beat him down. Out-of-town patrons usually did. Yale closed with him at once.

They ate a hearty breakfast. Before starting Yale made sure that he had money enough for all probable purposes. He handed Williams a bill.

"Might come in handy. Do you carry a gun?"

"Yes."

"Loaded?"

"Yes."

"Got it now?"

"Yes."

"All right. We may be going into danger. Want to back out?"

"No."

Williams was not a man to waste words.

"Now," said Yale, as they lighted cigars, "I want to go up back of Roscoe Conkling Park along Old Third Street. It used to be Third Street when I was a boy. Suppose there is another Third Street somewhere, and there may have been then. Well, we'll get along. That road that crosses Third back of the reservoir—I forget the name—I ought to know it, but—"

"Higby Lane," said Williams promptly.

"That's it. Go to that corner, and on the way pick up Watson, an employe of the park. I want to question him."

The machine sped up Genesee Street to Oneida, up Oneida to Howard, east on Howard, past Johnson Park, and south again on Seymour Avenue, which led straight to the main entrance of the park. It did not take long to find Watson, and with him as an additional passenger Williams drove to Third, and up along that road between the reservoir and the park.

"There's the spot where I found the camera," said Watson.

The car came to a standstill. Yale got out and examined the ground.

"No great struggle here," he reported, "yet—yes, it looks as if there was a mix-up of some kind. Footsteps leading toward Higby Lane. Watson, when you saw Miss Wayne in the park taking pictures did she seem—seem unsettled any way? Upset? Nervous? Any load on her mind?"

"Lord bless you, no! She walked around like a queen. You'd think the park was her private grounds, sir."

"Didn't look like a girl who contemplated suicide?"

"Her? No."

"But you told Mrs. Raymond and Miss Raymond that you thought Miss Wayne had jumped into the reservoir."

"Not I, by jinks! If I'd thought that I'd have gone to the heads of the water company, not to Raymond's. *That* was their idea. I expressed none. I answered questions."

"Very well, Watson, thank you. I'll go on now. I may run across a clue," said Yale, getting into the car.

"He's a cool one," said Watson to himself, as he watched the automobile roll away.

But Yale was not as cool as he appeared. He was now convinced that Miss Wayne had met with foul play of some kind. The smashed camera still puzzled him, but that Beverly had either been killed or spirited away against her will was a theory deeply rooted in his mind.

The corner of Higby Lane and Third Street was soon reached, and Williams slowed down for orders. But Yale had none to give just then, and got out of the machine to examine the road.

"Here's something, Williams," he exclaimed.

"Piece of paper—picnic party," replied Williams laconically.

About in the center of the intersection of the two roads something white showed in the dust. Yale picked it up.

"Piece of paper, eh?" he cried exultingly to Williams, holding up his prize. "Picnic party, eh? That's a dainty little lace handkerchief, my friend, and here, embroidered in this corner, are the letters 'B. W.' Beverly Wayne, that means. She has been here. Now—which way did they take her?"

"Which way did she go?"

"She didn't go. She was carried by force. Now, I wonder whether she dropped this bit of lace accidentally, in a struggle, or for the purpose of guiding pursuers."

"Couldn't guide anybody," said Williams. " Right in the middle of two roads."

"That's so," said Yale. "Williams, I'm glad I brought you."

"I brought you," returned Williams without a smile. "You pay, I drive."

"We won't argue about that. Who lives in that farmhouse?"

Not a great distance from the corner of Higby Lane and Third Street Yale saw a stone quarry, a farmhouse and outbuildings.

"Don't know," replied Williams.

"Drive along slowly. I'll make inquiries at the house."

Yale walked ahead of the machine in the dusty road, scanning every foot of the way. But there was no information to be gained from the dry road.

When he reached the gate that led to the farmhouse a man, looking more like a quarryman than a farmer, was coming out. He looked at Yale, who had stopped at the gate, and at the automobile which had stopped in the road. Then he touched the brim of his hat.

"Will you tell me who lives in that house?" asked Yale.

"William Jarratt. He owns the farm and the quarry, sir."

"Is he at home?"

"No, he drove to the city. Mrs. Jarratt is at home."

"Thank you. I will see Mrs. Jarratt."

Yale continued his walk to the house, and knocked at the door. In response to his imperative summons a buxom and good looking woman opened it.

"Are you Mrs. Jarratt?" asked Yale.

"I am. What do you want?"

"I don't want anything of a material kind," replied Yale, half smiling at the defensive attitude. Mrs. Jarratt seemed to be able to take care of herself.

"I am in search of information concerning a young lady who is missing. She was seen yesterday afternoon about five o'clock, on the brink of the reservoir on Third Street. She had been taking snapshots, and her camera was found in the road. Were you where you could see—*did* you see—yesterday, a young lady come from Third Street into Higby Lane?"

"I did," answered Mrs. Jarratt very promptly.

"What was she like?"

"Well, she was tall, and well dressed, and had reddish hair—not auburn, but bright, golden red hair. Beautiful hair. So far as I could tell at the distance she was a beautiful girl."

Yale was trembling. Mrs. Jarratt, with that coolness characteristic of women who live in remote places and depend largely upon themselves for protection and defense, was eying him from head to foot.

"Did she walk away?" asked Yale.

"No. I will tell you just what I saw. You seem very anxious. Is she a relative?"

"No, but I must find her."

"Is she the girl who is suspected of help-

ing rob Nancy Raymond of her wedding presents?"

"Y-yes," stammered Yale. "But she is innocent."

"Well, I don't know anything about *that.* All I know is this. I had sent my youngest boy to a store, and he was so long getting back that I went to the gate to see if I could find him. While I stood at the gate a two-seated carriage—the kind they call a surrey—came along from that direction."

Mrs. Jarratt pointed westward, as nearly as Higby Lane ran in that way.

"There were two men in the front seat, one driving," she continued. "There was only one horse. Two women sat on the back seat. They stopped at Third, and all got out. The two men went into the woods. The women gathered a few late wild flowers. Yes, they picked some ferns, too. And we have—there, that one—a very late winter pear tree. They picked some pears—the branches go over the fence.

"Pretty soon the two men came back with the girl between them."

"Carrying her? Was she unconscious, or was she struggling?" asked Yale.

"Bless, you neither. She walked along with her arms in the right and left of theirs."

"Willingly? Was she talking? Laughing?"

"She wasn't talking, that I could see, nor laughing. But she didn't show any unwillingness to go. I thought the four had come after her and she had made an agreement to meet them.

"One woman got up in the front seat and took the reins. The other woman ran to meet the girl, threw her arms around her, and kissed her. Then they helped the girl into the rear seat of the surrey, and the woman got in, and sat with her arm around the girl.

"The two men said something and went back into the woods. The carriage returned the way it came."

"And you really think the girl went willingly?"

"Well, she went! She made no outcry, she didn't struggle, and the woman who sat with her seemed very friendly."

"How were these two women dressed?"

"Oh, they were dressed well enough. The rig was a country rig, but the women wore city clothes."

"Thank you, Mrs. Jarratt."

Yale turned away with a sickness at his heart that made him weak. Could it be possible? Was it *true?* Had his beautiful Beverly played him false, after all?

He stood at the side of the car and gazed with aching eyes at Williams.

"Where now?" asked that disinterested party.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CLUE TO THE HORRIBLE.

"WILLIAMS, where do you get to on this road?" asked Yale, pointing along Higby Lane in the direction Mrs. Jarratt had indicated.

"Well, you don't get much of anywhere *on* this road. Get to anywhere you say. Cemeteries, Paris Hill, New Hartford, New York Mills, Utica. Say the word, governor."

"I have learned that Miss Wayne, of whom I am in search, as you know, met some people here, and went away in a surrey with two women."

"Skipped, eh? Gave you the heel?"

"What's that?"

"Footprints point away from you, eh? Well, I'm ready for anything, from marbles to manslaughter, as long as you pay for it and it is in the game."

This was a tremendously long speech for Williams, and his face glowed with the effort.

"Get to Genesee Street. I will decide as we go along," directed Yale.

The automobile moved off, and a glance backward showed Mrs. Jarratt on the front stoop watching the departure.

Yale kept a keen lookout as Williams drove slowly, not that the wheel tracks he saw led to anything, but, remembering the handkerchief, which he had in his pocket, he half expected to find some other token Beverly might have dropped as a guide. But he found nothing, and was no better off when the car reached Genesee Street than when he had left Mrs. Jarratt.

He looked both ways along Genesee, and west on a road he did not remember.

"Williams," he said, "if you had somebody in here who didn't want to be seen, but wanted to get away from Utica, which way would you go?"

"Depends on where the party wanted to go."

"Well, suppose the party didn't know the roads and left it to you?"

"Well, we've turned our backs to the east. Woman said they came west. South, New Hartford, branch off. One way Washington Mills, Sauquoit. Take train. Other way, Clinton. Take another train. Go north, go through Utica. Take train at big Central station—Union Depot. Go west, New York Mills. No train. Go farther, Whitesboro. Take train on N. Y. C."

"West they started, and we'll continue west. Get on to Whitesboro."

Yale made no further attempt to pick up clues in the road. His thoughts were bitter as he sat back in deep study.

There was nothing in the clear, intelligently told story of Mrs. Jarratt to indicate foul play. On the face of things there was every reason for suspicion that in some way Beverly had communicated with friends and that they had come promptly to her rescue.

She had left him in the lurch—the only friend she seemed to have when she needed one most. It was a bitter dose. She had fled, leaving him to pay the price.

But it was not the price that made his heart feel sore. The loss of a farm, even an Oneida county farm of two hundred acres, was nothing compared to the hurt of feeling that the girl had played him for a fool.

He loved her, even now, with all this flood of doubt and suspicion clouding her name. But she had flouted his love. Her companions must be crooks. What else could he think?

The village of Whitesboro is four miles from Utica. There is a hotel on Main Street, with a side entrance on a street running at right angles to Main. By the time the car reached that corner it was noon.

"We'll have a bite to eat, Williams," said Yale.

"Lose time," retorted Williams.

"No, we shall lose no time. Our search, I fancy, is to be a long one. We have a slippery gang to deal with. We may even now be miles off the right track. Did you ever read many detective stories, Williams?"

"All of 'em."

"What do you think of the average detective in fiction?"

"Durn fool. Walks around right clue till it hits him in the face in last chapter."

"What do you think of real detectives?"

"Worse. Sit still and let clues hunt 'em up."

"You seem to be a wise guy, Williams, but you'd never make a good monologist on the stage. Accident and coincidence play a large part in everyday life, Williams, and almost all clues are found by accident. I have absolutely no clue except that Miss Wayne went away with two women. We can't go hungry till our accident occurs. We will eat."

They entered the hotel, and went to the dining-room. Dinner was being served, for in such places they eat dinner at noon. Their table was in a corner, and Yale sat so that he could see the entire dining-room, which had few diners.

There was a door opening from the dining-room to the hotel parlor, and another from the dining-room to the bar. When Yale and Williams were about half through their meal a man appeared framed in the bar-room doorway, and surveyed the room.

His gaze rested upon Yale a moment, inconsequentially, and he disappeared. He was a thin man, not very tall, with short hair and a peculiar pallor.

His eyes were small and rather shifty. He did not strike Yale favorably.

Suddenly Yale leaned back in his chair and stared at Williams.

"Sick?" asked the chauffeur.

"Short hair!" said Yale.

"Barber," responded Williams.

"Sickly pale face!"

"Consumption," said Williams promptly.

"Both together!"

"Jail-bird."

"Right. One of that kind just looked at me from that door, and went back. I'd like another peep at him."

"Take one. Costs nothing."

"Come on in. We'll have a drink."

"Don't drink. Can't drink and drive forty-horsepower. Wreck things."

"Come along anyway. Take a cigar, sarsaparilla, anything."

"Take a smoke."

These two entered the hotel bar-room, and as they did so the gentleman they had come to see went out at the side door.

Yale was now convinced that the meeting was no coincidence. He had never seen the man before, yet the man evidently knew him.

Yale had a glass of beer at the bar, and Williams a cigar. Yale treated the bartender and had a cigar himself.

"Automobiling?" asked the man, sipping his drink. "Fine day for a long ride."

"I am not taking a long ride, just going around looking at places I used to know. I see some familiar faces, too, that I can't place. Now, that man who just went out. I seem to know him, ought to know him, but I don't. Who is he?"

"By smoke! If you know him you've been in bad company. *I* don't know him, and from your looks I don't think you ever did. I can easily believe that you *want* to know him, when you get the right line on him? What are you, Utica, County, State, or Secret Service?"

Yale smiled. " I am not connected with any police or detective department. I really thought the man's face was familiar."

"The *appearance* of that man's face," said the bartender, "is familiar. I've seen him just once before, but I can spot 'em every time. That gent is an escaped State prisoner. He came here last night with another fellow, got off a Utica electric. Came in here, both of 'em, and had a drink. Later along comes a surrey with two women and—well, she was a girl, but not like ordinary girls.

"She was very beautiful, and had hair like a sunset and sunrise put together. She was ill, apparently. One woman stayed in the surrey, the other got out. The two women drank whisky sours, and tried to get the girl to drink, but she wouldn't.

"They had some sandwiches, and the girl ate one in the carriage. The two women and girl drove off. I don't know where the men went. And I don't know where that fellow came from to-day."

"Which way did the women go?" Yale inquired.

"Well, they started as if they were going north. They drove down Baker Street, which leads to a bridge over the river, and to a road—not a very good one—that runs into the main pike that goes up through Trenton Falls, and Remsen, to Booneville. I judge they went that way, although they could have gone round into Utica as well as not."

"They did not go to Utica," declared Yale, convinced that he was right. "I am for the north theory myself. They will leave the rig somewhere and take a train north. They will cross the St. Lawrence and get into Canada—if we don't put a crimp in their plans. Come along, Williams."

"Hope you get that girl," said the bartender. "I've got my own ideas."

"What are they?" asked Yale sharply, swinging back.

"What are they? What would they be? Two harpies that drink whisky sours. Lovely girl sick or drugged. Two bad men, one a jail-bird. Gosh! I thought you were on! You're no detective, that's one sure thing. If you want to save that girl from worse than death, get a move on. You won't do it alone, either."

Yale stood still, rooted to the bar-room floor by a horrible thought that had never entered his head. He turned so pale that the friendly bartender poured him a drink of brandy, and Williams gave it to him.

"Come, Williams," said Yale. "By Heaven, I'll have lives for this if what he says is true!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A VERIFIED SUSPICION.

THEY were soon in the car, Yale sitting, as before, on the driving seat with Johnny Williams. The start was jerky, not like the former smooth moving off.

"What the devil is the matter with this machine?" growled Williams. "It never acts like this."

Yale, who had driven a machine in New York, but who knew little about the mechanism, said nothing. They were moving, and that was enough for him.

He glanced along the street, and saw the figure of the man with the short hair and prison pallor stop in a walk that led him from them, and turned back to look.

"I wonder," he muttered to himself. But he felt that Williams knew his own car, and so said nothing further.

It was not a difficult matter to find the bridge the bartender had mentioned. In fact, Williams probably knew it well. They rumbled across that, and struck into a country road which would have been chosen by no one for a pleasure ride.

But this was no joy ride that Yale was on. He cared not for the bumps and jolts, nor even for any possible damage to the car. For that he could easily pay.

They left the valley of the Mohawk and climbed hills that were clothed with evergreens, and here and there a cluster of deciduous trees laid bare for the approaching winter.

And apparently they had run into that winter. The air became sharp and chill.

Clouds obscured the sun, and there was the feel of an impending snowfall.

They rose high over ridges of hills, and descended into valleys through which turbulent streams made their uproarious way. They crossed rustic bridges and modern viaducts. They swept around curves, and sent goats and sheep and chickens flying helter-skelter.

Dogs rushed from farm-yards and barked at their swiftly revolving tires. And Williams sat, grim and steady, his hand on the steering wheel, his eye on the road before him.

Yale said little. There was, in fact, nothing to call for speech. They were on the road, the road they had intended to take; there was nothing to interest them, they saw no trace of the surrey of which they were in search, nor did they look for any.

Yale had no hope that the gang would stop more than a few hours in any village until they reached the St. Lawrence, and the horse-drawn vehicle had more than a night and half a day the start. And if the horse was left behind, and the party took to the railroad the chase would be long and difficult and hazardous.

Their progress was slow for a car of the power that Johnny's registered, and Yale began to chafe mentally at the delay.

"Can't we hurry up a little, Williams?" he asked.

"Break down," was the brief reply. The watchfulness made necessary by the unevenness of the road, and the many turnings, had plunged Williams back into his brevity of speech.

Suddenly the car gave a hitch, slowed, went on again.

"S'things matter," said Williams.

"I saw that—"

Yale was about to mention the man with the short hair. It *was* possible that he had tampered with the machinery in some way. But his desire for speed closed his lips again.

He knew that if he lisped his suspicions Williams would stop the car and tinker with it, delaying them at least, and perhaps putting the machine out of order altogether. So they bumped and hitched along till at last the rough road ran into a broader, smoother one, and Williams turned to the left.

The car seemed to feel the difference, and ran with more smoothness. Yale was glad he had not mentioned the actions of the prison bird.

They came to the foot of a long hill. On either side was forest. Not a house nor barn nor open space was visible.

"Let her out, old man," said Yale. "Straight road, nothing in sight. What does forty horse-power care for a little hill?"

"Break down," replied Williams. "Ain't act'n' right."

"But we are scarcely moving. Let her out. I'll pay for damages."

"May kill you."

"I'll pay funerals—my estate will, any way."

"Here goes."

The machine shot forward, and gathered still greater momentum as it went. The trees flew backward. The road that slipped away under them looked as smooth as a board.

Suddenly there was a tremendous upheaval, and the noise of an explosion. Yale went sailing off toward a clump of trees. Williams was pinned under the car, which turned completely over.

Neither knew what had happened. Williams knew nothing at all from the moment the car fell on him. Yale struck the bole of a great pine, and fell to the ground, a bruised and crippled lump, unconscious.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A BAD TIME OF IT.

WHEN Yale opened his eyes he saw nothing. Nor did he remember what had happened to put him in his present case. What he did know, or at least what he felt sure of, was that every bone in his body was broken, every muscle was torn, and that he was bleeding from every vein and artery.

His condition was not quite so bad as that, but it was bad enough.

He was bruised from head to foot. His body ached as he had never known it possible for the human frame to ache. He could scarcely move hand or foot.

To make matters worse, he suffered from a terrible nausea. And there he lay in total darkness on grass and fallen leaves, not knowing whether he was blind or the night had fallen in sullen humor and sable sky.

He tried to sit up, but fell back with a groan of pain. The effort was like trying

to pull out his backbone. He thought his spine must be injured.

The night breeze, making the usual melancholy sound through the firs and cedars, added none to his comfort. His right foot pained him excessively. His head was dizzy.

After lying quiet for some time his head grew clearer, but as his senses became more acute his pain increased. But memory returned.

"I've done it," he growled to himself. "Fool! I was in too much of a hurry. Why, they could go north to Baffin's Bay while I'm lying here. Oh, what pain! I wonder where Williams is. Why doesn't he come?"

For a time he lay there listening to the doleful sound of the wind among the evergreens, and then tried once more to sit up. It was again a useless as well as a painful effort. His back, he decided, must be broken.

"Williams!" he shouted, but it was a feeble cry. "Williams, here I am."

And there he might stay till doomsday for all of Williams.

He tried to peer into the blackness that surrounded him. If he could only see *something*, however little. But he could not.

"Gracious Heaven!" he muttered to himself. "Have I been stricken blind?"

And, with all his pain and misery, one of the uppermost thoughts in his mind was that never again could he look into Beverly Wayne's violet eyes.

He had the limited use of his hands, and fished a metallic matchsafe from a pocket. He managed, with great difficulty, to light a match. He saw the flame, and the trees nearest him, and the dim, dancing, reflected light of the bit of fire.

"Thank God, life is worth fighting for; I am not blind," he sighed with relief, as he threw the match away and lay flat on his earthy bed.

The discovery that his sight was uninjured acted like a pacifier. He could stand the loss of an arm or leg. His income was assured, and although he did not rank with Raymond among millionaires, and in New York was actually small fry, he had enough and to spare.

So, with his mind more at rest, and making lighter of his pains, but still unable to get up, he fell asleep.

It was broad daylight when he woke. The sky was clear, and the sun was trying to penetrate the thick foliage to the ground. Here and there a spear of sunlight did pierce through, but shade predominated. Still, lying on his back and looking up, Yale could see blue sky, the sun playing upon the upper branches of the trees, and he felt that life was his owr again.

He gathered himself for an effort and rose to a sitting posture.

"Ha! Spent the night on pine and fir. Nature's own balm," he exclaimed. "No wonder I'm better."

He was so elated that he scrambled to his feet, stood erect, and was immediately overcome by so severe an attack of nausea and vertigo that he fell flat on his face.

He lay there a full hour, and then once more his senses came back to him. He realized that although there may have been no bones broken in his tremendous catapult against the tree, something was so clearly wrong that he must husband what strength he had and make no violent effort.

Slowly he rose and put one foot in front of the other.

"By cracky! I can walk," he cried joyfully. "Now we'll go find Williams."

Painfully he picked his way to the roadside, and saw, about forty feet away, the automobile, right side up, but looking a total wreck, standing out of the way of passing traffic.

We walked over to it, but there was no trace of Williams. He made as complete a search as he was able to, but saw nothing that added to his meager knowledge of what had happened.

If Williams had not been injured, he had walked off and left him to his fate. If Williams had been killed, somebody had discovered what was left of him and taken it away. Yale knew nothing about the automobile turning turtle.

He stood, a helpless and pitiable mortal, by the side of the wrecked machine. He swayed on his feet, pains most excruciating shot through him, and he was in constant danger of falling again in a fit of vertigo. His right foot was so swollen that he could scarcely stand the pain when he trod on it.

And now, what could he do? There was not a house in sight and his recollection of the region was so slight that he did not know how far the nearest one might be.

There appeared to be little travel on the road. It was not the season for fresh green vegetables. Therefore, farm-wagons would not appear going to the city at that hour. Other traveling, men to town or village on

business, or women to shop, would come later.

It was not, as his memory served him, a road that was much traveled at any time, however. While the distance from Utica to Trenton Falls, the first village that had a station, was not too great for driving, there were few farmers along the line who had the time to spare, or the money to buy the horses, to drive twenty-eight miles for a visit to Utica, fourteen each way. The train did the business in a few minutes, and these were arranged to run at convenient hours.

Still, he knew there must be driving to and fro.

What to do? Should he sit down and wait for the first comer, or make his poor, swollen feet carry him to some more hospitable spot? He was weak with hunger as well as bruises, and he felt a burning fever furnacelike within him.

If this grew worse he might become delirious. Then what? He might, in his senseless condition, crawl off in the woods and die uncared for and in misery.

His soul revolted, and the innate courage of the man took hold. He would fight his way somewhere, pain or no pain.

Then a new thought struck him, and he looked at the summit of the long hill the automobile had been climbing when the accident occurred.

"Well, I'll be dinged," he said. "I'm almost at my own doorstep."

He knew that just beyond the brow of that hill the road took a turn to the right. The turn was more than a mere curve, and he remembered that a path through the very woods in which he had met his hurt made a short cut by being the base of a triangle, with the point of the turn in the road the apex.

And right near where that path came out again upon the road stood the old farmhouse that had been his grandfather's, and was now his.

He knew the place was now uninhabited, but knew that owing to his grandfather's method of doing business the house ought to have comfortable beds, good furniture, and the means of making a fire. He knew that a short distance from the kitchen door there had been a deep well of cold water in his boyhood days, a stone well-curb, and little stone tower down which the bucket descended on a chain that reeled and unreeled on a wheel.

His feverish lips and parched throat longed for a drink of that cold, pure water now. Better than the choicest wine it would be to his taste in his present state.

And, if the tenant who had just moved out, following his grandfather's death at the Trenton Falls Hotel, where he had resided for the last three years of his life, had been careless, a chicken or two might inadvertently have been left behind, and he knew he could cook a chicken, although he never had.

But standing there was not going to bring him sparkling cold water to drink, hot water in which to bathe his aching flesh, nor a bed to lie upon, to say nothing of roast chicken.

Strangely, in his ruinous condition he never thought of going back to Utica and receiving a doctor's care. Not he. Kenneth Yale was tenacious of his formulated plans.

He was, in a way, something like a bulldog, who, having once taken hold of a thing, will not let go, whether he wants that thing or not. Yale had started out on his own hook to find Beverly Wayne. He was not going to give up if the pursuit took him around the world.

"If I wait here till somebody comes along, he'll carry me to Utica. There I will be chucked into a hospital. They will dose me, bundle me up in bandages, and keep me in bed a month. Nixy. I'll beat that game. I'll go *home*. I'll spend a day and night in my own house. I'll doctor myself. Then on, on, till Beverly Wayne tells me the whole truth with her own lips."

The question as to how he was to obtain entrance to a house that was untenanted, and presumably locked, did not enter his head.

He left the road, plunged into the wood, and eventually found the path. But traveling with a set purpose, for a distant goal, was a painful business, and his condition grew constantly worse.

He stumbled on, overcoming frequent attacks of vertigo, his right foot so painful that if mere pain killed he would have died, and his tongue was swelled for need of water.

Suddenly he burst from the wood, and a well-known gable stared at him across a stubble-field. It was his grandfather's house—no, his own.

How well he knew it now! He gave a glad, incoherent cry. The tramp through

the thicket had been almost too much for him.

But—the old house *was* inhabited. Smoke curled from the kitchen chimney.

"Glory to God! Here's breakfast in my own home," he tried to shout.

Then a blackness settled down upon his brain, and he fell flat on his face.

CHAPTER XIX.

A DREAM AND THE REALITY.

FROM out of a silver cloud the gold-red hair of Beverly floated down almost to him, so close that Yale could see the wealth of unminted gold mingled with the red fire that did not melt it. So close that the violet eyes looked into his and stirred him with a delirious happiness, and then turned to a mocking misery all his longings.

They were very changeable, those violet eyes. At times they looked unutterable love. At other times they flashed and burned and grew dark with scorn or anger.

And he was a prisoner, changing his wearisome position only so much as the heavy iron chains that bound him would permit.

But she of the changing eyes was not his only visitor. Sometimes the man with short hair and prison pallor would come to him, tower above him like a hateful giant, leer with half-closed eyes and scornful, angry lips, and plunge a knife into his right foot. Then, as the hateful man of a prison cell faded away Beverly would come on the wings of a zephyr, for she never walked, and pull out the knife and bandage the sore foot with ribbons of the dawn just like her hair.

After a time other phantasies assailed him, and a rumbling tone of thunder and total darkness told him that he was in one of the ante-chambers of the infernal regions.

One day he realized that instead of floating in space, as he had thought, he was on a bed. He felt the warm comfort of smooth, soft blankets. His right foot had no feeling in it, which surprised him, because it had constantly pained before. He realized that a bandage so covered his eyes that no light could reach them, and he had sense enough not to disturb it.

He was entirely undressed, and wore a long night-shirt.

Where was he? Vaguely he remembered the accident to the automobile, and knew that Williams had not come to his assistance when he lay stricken among the evergreens. He wondered at Williams acting like that.

He lay there perfectly still, trying to think out an explanation. That horrible tramp through the woods came back to him with a painful vividness. He remembered seeing the smoke from the kitchen chimney of his own home.

Was he in his own house now? Was he in some near-by farmhouse? Was he in a hospital? He could not tell.

He moved his left foot, and felt no pain. He tried to move his right foot, and felt so little of anything that he did not know whether he had moved it at all. Curling himself, he touched it, and found it a bundle of bandages.

He lay thus for a long time. Then suddenly he became aware that some one was in the room. There was no noise, but a subtle instinct told him that a human being was at his bedside. The foot of the covers was lifted and a firm but gentle touch rested on the bandaged foot.

He knew when the Presence moved away. And when it returned. A strong arm, smelling of the farm, passed under his head, which was gently lifted as by a powerful lever under perfect control, and a glass was put to his lips.

He drank—a bitter dose—and his head was laid upon the pillow again. Almost immediately he went off into a sound sleep that had no visions.

When again he woke it was with eyes that saw, and he lay there marveling. The bandage was gone from his head.

Above him giant rafters slanted from the peak to the side of the room. He was in an unfinished room in an attic. He had been in such a room when a boy, and the wide, thick beams were like friends he had known long ago.

His gaze roved. There was nothing the matter with his sight. At one side of the bed the beams of the outer wall were so close he could touch them. His eyes espied something like carving. He remembered that when he was twelve years old he had spent a summer on the farm with his grandfather and grandmother, and that his grandfather had given him a pocket-knife which had been the pride of his heart.

He had slept in such a room as this, and one rainy day had occupied his time by

carving his name in a beam. And there it was now, cut deep, in awkward letters:

"KENNETH YALE."

He was in his own house, and in the room he had known as a boy. Whose kind hands had ministered to his wants?

Through a dormer window the morning sun streamed in upon his coverlet!

After a time the door of the room slowly opened and a man entered and walked with noiseless tread to the bedside.

"You iss pedder?" asked a pleasant voice.

"I am better, I suppose," answered Yale. "I see I am in old Latimer Yale's house."

"Olt mans, he iss det. Young Mr. Yale, he own diss house now."

"I knew it when I fell. How long ago was that?"

"You iss here two days."

Yale shut his eyes and thought bitterly. It was not so much his own fate as the possibilities of Beverly's. His anxiety for her so filled his mind that he never thought of informing his attendant that he was Kenneth Yale. Yet the fellow was a puzzle.

"Do you live here?" asked Yale.

"No, I lif along crik."

"Did you see me fall, and bring me here?"

"No, I gome later. She dell you all apoud id. So. You lige some kruel?"

"Gruel? I feel more like tackling a barbecue. Haven't I eaten anything?"

"Nod mudge."

"What was the matter with my eyes?"

"Nodings. Pud we nod know id. She—she do vat she dink pesd."

The stranger was so hesitating with his answers that Yale knew he was holding back some sort of information, perhaps under orders.

"Who bandaged my foot?" he asked.

"Foot? Oh, dass iss all righd."

"Are you a German? You don't look exactly like a German. Swede? Dane? Norwegian?"

"No, I vas American. Dass all righd."

Yale looked at him and smiled. He was a splendid specimen of manhood, young, healthy, blond.

"I ged you some kruel."

The man backed away, went out at the door and, to Yale's surprise, locked it. The bolt made a rasping noise as though it had not been used in years.

Yale closed his eyes and gave himself up to speculation. He was a prisoner in his own house, and his jailer was a man of foreign birth who did not live in the house. Yet the house must be occupied, for he distinctly recalled seeing smoke rising from the chimney just before he fell.

Still he knew the place had no tenant who was paying rent.

The conundrum concerning the peculiarities of his situation occupied Yale's mind several minutes. The man did not return with the gruel. Yale tried to rise. He could sit up without much difficulty, and with very little pain.

He swung his feet off the bed and tried to stand. His left foot supported his weight, but an excruciating pain shot through the right one. He fell back upon the bed and covered himself with the blanket and a white coverlet.

He heard some one at the door, the sound of a key being fitted in the lock, then the shooting back of the ancient bolt.

The door opened, and Yale uttered a cry of amazement. His dream was at least partly true. A beautiful girl with rich red lips and violet eyes and a somewhat paler face than usual entered with a steaming bowl.

"Beverly!" he cried, in his joy.

"Guardy, how do you feel? I've brought you something to make you strong. I'll hold it while you eat."

She sat on the edge of the bed with the hot bowl in her hands, and a towel to prevent the heat from scorching her tender skin.

He almost choked.

"How long have you been here?" he asked.

"Why," she replied demurely, giving him one of those thrilling glances from her violet eyes, "I was here—when you came home."

CHAPTER XX.

HOW BEVERLY CAME HOME.

YALE'S hand shook awkwardly as he made several ineffectual attempts to convey the spoon filled with gruel to his mouth, and in his nervousness let some fall on the coverlet.

"Poor boy!" she said, with a smile and look of compassion that thrilled him, "Poor Guardy! He is so weak! Let me feed you. I love to feed children."

She set the bowl on the bed, steadied the steaming spoon with her left hand, and fed him with her right.

"Who made this?" he asked suddenly. "It's great!"

"I am surprised at your tactless question, sir. I made it myself."

"Gee whiz! Did you find the stuff in the house?"

"No. I bought it—with your money. Mine was stolen."

"Stolen?"

"Oh, yes; but that's a mere bagatelle. The thing is that I am here."

"I should say so. Tell me all about it."

"Not until you have licked the bowl. I am paying high prices for things here—out of your money."

"If you say that again I'll jump up and dance this game foot off me. I told you in the Butterfield House that you might have all the money you wanted."

"I remembered, Guardy, and that made me feel free to take it. I'll send Adolphus after a steak later."

"Is Adolphus the blond beauty who came in here a while ago?"

"Yes. He and his ancient mother live in a small cottage on the creek."

"West Canada?"

"Oh, I don't know the West Canada from the East India. I don't exactly see how a creek, almost big enough to be called a river, in the central part of New York State, comes to bear the name of West Canada Creek."

"Well, you can search me. I didn't name it."

"No, you would probably have called it Yale River. Do you know that your grandfather was a wise old chap?"

"What's that got to do with West Canada Creek?"

"Nothing. But it has a lot to do with the comforts in this house. This isn't a farmhouse. This is a country villa."

"So?"

"Indeed yes. Did it have hot water heating when you were a boy?"

"Hot water nothing. I slept in this very room and broke the ice in the pitcher to wash in freezing water during the holidays I spent here."

"Not in the summer vacations."

"No, no, at Christmas time. In the summer I did my ablutions in the creek."

"I thought people visited the country only in the summer."

"Next winter—well, it's almost here—when the snow is three feet deep, and a silver crust has formed, I'll take you for a sleigh ride under thick fur robes, with a team of horses strung with silver bells, and you will find a pleasure in the country with summer far away."

"You dear Guardy! Let's hope we will be able to do that next winter. Here, take this—the last."

He swallowed the final spoonful of the gruel.

She got up and put the bowl on an old oak dresser, and he watched her graceful form with a mind full of wonder.

The mystery of her seemed to deepen with every fresh meeting. And this one, of all unexpected possibilities, was the greatest mystery of all.

"Now," she said, resuming her seat on the bed, and taking one of his hands in hers, "I suppose you want to talk."

"I do not, my dear Beverly. I want you to talk."

A slight flush slowly mounted her cheeks, but her eyes flashed amusement into his.

"About you?"

"No. I know all about me. Tell me what happened to you. I know some of it. You met some friends or acquaintances and went away from Higby Lane and Third Street with two women in a surrey."

"Is that what they say in Utica?" she asked, her face turning suddenly grave.

"I don't know what they say in Utica. It is what a Mrs. Jarratt told me. She lives in a farmhouse near a stone quarry."

"I rather think I saw her—at the farm gate. But I had never seen those women before, Guardy—oh, bosh with that Guardy! I must call you Kenneth now, and you must call me Beverly, always. We are married now, you know."

"I am delighted to hear it. I can't say that I remember the ceremony. Still, that's a mere detail. I suppose you took advantage of my weakness. I'll never forgive you, never—if you take back your words."

"Listen here, brute man, I'll take them back when we are out of our difficulties. It's only make believe to smooth the way. Get it?"

"I've got you," he said, squeezing her hand.

"Now, now! Let me get through with my adventures. We are not out of the woods yet. I overheard Mr. Raymond, Mr. Greenland, and Mr. Blake talking."

"Yes?" he said, his interest sharpening. "What about?"

"Mr. Raymond is convinced that you and I stole that silver."

"You and I? Did he say that?"

"Yes. He had one of his inspirations. Blake was at the house. This was about noon on the day—the day after we were in court."

"The day you disappeared. Yes, go on, dear wife."

"Now, none of that when we are alone. Wait till I reach that point and you will understand. Blake and George Greenland and Mr. Raymond had a confab about the robbery. Blake, I rather think, would like that fifty thousand dollar reward."

"Undoubtedly. Nobody would turn his back on it."

"And I've read of people being railroaded to make a police record."

"I hardly think that could be the case in Utica."

"A frog is a frog in a swamp or a lake. A policeman is a policeman no matter where you find him. I am not saying anything against Blake. But he is after that reward.

"Now, I am no eavesdropper. But I heard your name mentioned, and I—yes—I listened. I am not ashamed, either. It developed that Mr. Raymond had got an idea crosswise in his head and it stuck like a fishbone in your throat.

"He said you were too quick about offering your farm as pledge for my bond. He said there were not many farms up this way worth twice the amount of the bond, which you swore this farm was. And he insisted upon the point till George Greenland agreed with him."

"Greenland did?"

"Aye, strongly."

Kenneth mused. His old suspicion returned, but he remembered that at the time it was born it was based upon her conundrum about the elephant, and he half believed that she knew something about the robbery.

"Go on," he said. "What did they plan to do?"

"Blake said he could not arrest you without some evidence. He did not want to muddle the thing. He said that he would endeavor to connect you with the case."

"He has my gratitude. *You* knew better."

The strange girl looked long and earnestly into his eyes.

"I knew that you were not my partner," she said.

"Wh — what — does that mean?" he gasped.

"Keep still, or I will never get my story of adventure told. Blake went away. The house became intolerable to me. I took my camera and went to Roscoe Conkling Park to get some pictures. I took several in the park, and found myself suddenly on the bank of a little lake with a fountain in it."

"That's the reservoir. The fountain is a spout to purify the water in the air."

"How funny! And water gets stagnant in the air? I'm an ignorant goose, I suppose. Well, I snapshotted that fountain. Then I went back to the road, and stood looking back at the water. Then something happened."

"Two men happened."

"Just so. Is that more of Mrs. Jarratt's information? She told the truth. A cloth was suddenly slapped over my face so that I could breathe only a stifling drug that took my senses away. They held me tight till I was quite helpless. All my will power was gone, but I still had a certain amount of muscular power. Not enough to make a fight, but enough to walk feebly.

"I knew when one held me and the other took my camera. He threw it in the road and jumped on it. Then they each got on one side of me and walked me till we met two women with a carriage. They put me in, and the women took me away. The men disappeared.

"After we had driven about an hour we stopped at a hotel and I heard the women talking to a man. I didn't see the man. I ate a sandwich. The woman who was sitting with me drank something that smelled of whisky and lemon. I was awfully sick and helpless then.

"But the effect of the drug wore off, and I began to take more notice of things. I realized that I was being taken away somewhere. We got into a rough road, a terrible road."

"I know," said Yale. "Williams and I—but go on. This is your story."

"Almost finished now. You remember, you told me, that evening before the robbery, that your farm was on West Canada Creek, and somewhere near Trenton Falls. Well, I pretended that I was still sick and helpless. I played those women all right. If they ever get their claws in my hair—Bang!

"Well, one grumbled about the road and the jolting. The other said that pretty soon we would be in the main road, and turn left, toward Trenton Falls and Remsen. I didn't know Remsen, but Trenton Falls struck a half familiar chord.

"I made up my mind to perform a circus trick right there, or die. I thought they might intend to kill me anyway, but couldn't guess why. Well, the dear kind lady who was driving had a whip with which she belabored the poor horse. The other dear lady, having had her whisky, was relaxing.

"I made a jump to the front seat, snatched the whip, leaped over the dashboard on to the horse's back, and raced him over rocks and ridges. Those women screamed something to scare devils out of their wits. First one went head first out of the surrey, and then the surrey itself was wrecked, and the other was dumped into the ditch I had chosen as her resting place.

"I rode on a while, then unharnessed from the wreck, and kept on to find your house. Luckily I called it Mr. Yale's farm, and your grandfather's name *was* Yale. If he had been your mother's father I would have had some difficulty.

"Well, you had described the place pretty well, and when I saw a vacant farmhouse and no animals, but an old stone mill, I knew it was yours. I put the horse out to grass, threw the harness up in a tree, broke a window, and got in. Very much to my surprise I found the house completely furnished."

"My grandfather was a very old man," said Yale, "and when he determined to give up farming and live in the hotel at Trenton Falls he rented the place as it was, all furnished. He had no use for the furniture, and got more rent."

"Well, I was here. I—"

"Why did you choose my house as a refuge?"

Again she gave that long, inexplicable look, from darkening eyes.

"Because I knew you would come."

"I am here, go on."

"There isn't much to tell. After waiting till I felt safe I went on a tour of discovery. I found a little old cottage on the creek, with a funny little old woman, and Adolphus, her son, whom you have seen. I told them I was house hunting—farm hunting, rather, and wanted to see Mr. Latimer Yale's house, and asked where I could get the keys. Sure enough, Dolly had them."

"Dolly?"

"Adolphus, you know. That isn't his real name. I don't know what it is. The old lady can't speak intelligible English at all. Dolly came with me, and I liked the place. Why not? I went back with him, and he explained that I would take it.

"Well, there I was now in a pickle. What would a lone girl want of a farm? I had to invent a husband. And I had no money, and was hungry. So I told them—Dolly acting as interpreter—that my husband would be along soon, and he would pay a deposit and also pay for what I wanted.

"I bought some bread and eggs and butter and a little coffee and tea—oh, and some of the finest bacon! Then with my key I came back. I spent the night very comfy. In the morning while I was cooking my breakfast what did I see but you stumbling out of the woods and falling flat on your face."

"Your husband."

"Temporarily, my husband of convenience. Otherwise—well, no need of going into that. I dragged you here, and went after Dolly. He's a good soul, Dolly is. Like a big ox, obeys orders and asks no questions. He did look funny, though, when I said we'd bring you up here."

"And why did you? There are other rooms more convenient."

"Plenty. But I didn't know what had happened to you. And I—"

"Yes," he said, as she hesitated.

"I was going to hide you if they came to arrest you—the police, I mean. To avoid unpleasant conjectures, I explained to Adolphus that you were my husband, and had enemies.

"He took it all with his imperturbable face, and perhaps he believes, perhaps not. Anyway, he is awfully good. He undressed you, and when I had gone through your pockets and found your money, and my handkerchief—by the way, how ever did you—"

"That's my story," he interrupted. "Go on with yours."

"Oh, that's about all. I sent Dolly to buy things, and his mother told us what to do. He did the man's work, and I the woman's, and now, thank God, you are going to get well."

"Yes, I am going to get well. You might,

however, introduce me to myself. What is your husband's name?"

"Owens. We are Mr. and Mrs. Owens, if anybody should ask you. Now tell me what happened to you. You got well bunged up."

"My story will wait. It is only a trailer, anyway. We are partners in deceit, if not in crime. Some day we'll be partners—"

"This is a temporary makeshift that I believed was for the best. Please don't take advantage."

"But—won't you kiss me, Beverly?"

"I will NOT!" Her violet eyes fairly blazed. "No man has ever kissed me, and no man ever will except my husband."

At that moment Adolphus entered.

"My mudder gomes. She sday mid you. He iss not midout prains now. Loogs pedder."

A withered crone followed him into the room.

CHAPTER XXI.

ON THEIR TRAIL.

THE old woman, whose only appellation among them was "The Dame," proved to be an excellent cook. With Yale's money Adolphus was an extraordinary provider. Nobody could even guess where, in that hilly, forest covered region of scattered rural homes, with villages far apart, he found the good things he provided. But they lived well.

Yale finally got his story told, but it was not till the day was ending. They sat under a spreading maple bereft of leaves, on a stationary rustic bench that ran all around it.

"So it was my poor little handkerchief that gave you the clue and led you to seek information from Mrs. Jarratt?"

"Well, partly. I thought you had dropped it to guide me, or whoever came in pursuit."

"But you thought, after Mrs. Jarratt had told her story, that I went willingly with the women."

"Yes, I thought so; so did she."

"Now you know better. And I did not drop my handkerchief purposely. I fancy that one of the men took my purse from my pocket when they put me in the surrey, and pulled the handkerchief out by accident. But what does all that matter, now that we are here, and safe?"

"We are here, and safe. But we must notify the chief of police of Utica where we are."

"We shall do nothing of the kind."

She spoke with finality. Her tone indicated that she would brook no opposition.

"But we are innocent. We have nothing to fear. And if we continue to hide away it will only add to their suspicions."

"Enough of *that,* Mr. Owens."

He made a comical grimace.

"Helpless I lie, or sit, lugged from house to bench by a huge brute of a foreigner, who lifts me like a sack of meal, and I'm a henpecked husband without being married."

"Yes, and you will continue to be. I am not going back until those stupid police have found some kind of clue to the real thieves."

"And you think—"

"That if they can make an easy case of us they will look no further. Why, think of the thing as it is. Here I am, a girl with no real home, and no firm friendships. My aunt lives in a hotel, and seldom in the same one very long. I have gone from pillar to post in search of pleasure, always welcome because—because I am I—and always criticised by the staid and good ones afterward. Who've you got to fight for you?

"You see? We are orphans indeed. Well, I'll do the fighting if there is any to be done till you get solidly on your feet, and then I'll hand the powder magazine over to you. But I'll not go to jail for a crime I did not commit."

At dinner, or, as Adolphus probably looked at it, supper-time, the stalwart blond carried Yale to the house very much as Yale had said, like a sack of meal. Still, with all his giant strength he was very gentle.

There was a dull sort of wonder in his eyes when he looked at Beverly.

He knew that a lovely girl did not ride a harnessed horse without a wagon around the country looking at farms to let. He knew that husbands did not pop out of woods and fall down unconscious with swollen feet, bruised muscles, and a fever.

Such things might occur at times, but there would always be a reason. So Adolphus wondered whether some other wife or husband had been left behind to mourn. But he never asked a question.

The old woman held a detached and impersonal position. She could not under-

stand their speech, nor make them understand hers. The glamour and romance of life had long since passed from her ken, and if these two wanted to make fools of themselves it was none of her affair. That kind paid well, and she needed the money.

The next morning they gave Adolphus a list of things to purchase at the nearest village, and Yale wrote the names of two or three papers, New York and Utica, on a slip of paper. Adolphus managed to find one of the lot, a Utica paper of the day before.

Yale looked it over carefully, while Beverly sat with her chin in her hand waiting for him to speak.

"Here we are," he said, turning the paper inside out. "Not even important enough for the first page."

"Remember, this is news to us. Utica has been fed on the stuff for a week."

"True. Let's see—" He began to read.

"NO NEWS OF YALE.

"Beverly Wayne Still Missing.

"The mystery of the disappearance of Miss Beverly Wayne, suspected of complicity in the famous Raymond robbery, which stirred Utica to the very center a week ago, has not been solved, and seems no nearer solution than it was the day her wrecked camera was found between Roscoe Conkling Park and the Third Street reservoir.

"What adds to the inexplicable problem is the utter removal from the sphere of action and from the sight of all men, of Kenneth Yale, Miss Wayne's bondsman.

"Johnny Williams, who is still unconscious in St. Luke's Hospital, can give no information until he recovers his senses, and the doctors express little hope that he will ever do that. He—

"Poor Williams," murmured Yale, interrupting himself. "I must—"

"Go on," said Beverly imperatively. "See what it says about you. Williams will be cared for."

Beverly was not heartless in Williams's case. Her care was, however, concentrated in Yale.

"He was found, as our readers know, pinned under his overturned machine on the Trenton Falls road. Just what happened may never be known. The strange thing about the matter is, that according to the testimony of the manager of the hotel at Whitesboro, where Yale and Williams had their dinner on the day of the accident, Williams and Yale drove away together. Williams was found nearly dead, and Yale cannot be found dead or alive.

"Something has been said about a mysterious man and two women, who had a girl answering to the description of Miss Wayne. But as no such parties can be found, no action can be taken upon these rumors.

"The consensus of opinion is that, contrary to their statements to Mr. Raymond's family and to Detective Blake, Yale and Miss Wayne were old acquaintances and were co-operatives in the great wedding present robbery. Efforts are being made to ascertain something of Yale's history in New York, where he is said to be a habitué of what is called the 'White Light District.'"

"Well, how do you like yourself?" asked Beverly. "Didn't I tell you on the City Hall steps that the thing was a farce?"

Yale laughed lightly.

"Oh, I don't know. These young newspaper fellows have got to write something, or starve. Wait—here's something else:

"It was ascertained yesterday that the farm which Kenneth Yale pledged to back his bond for Miss Beverly Wayne is called 'Old Mill Farm,' and was inherited by Kenneth from Latimer Yale, his grandfather. The Old Mill Farm is the most valuable between Utica and Trenton Falls, and is situated just north of the Holland Woods."

"They will come here! We shall be discovered after all," cried Beverly in consternation.

"But what can you expect?" asked Yale, with a frown. "We couldn't hide forever, here or anywhere else. Your aunt will demand some sort of information as to your whereabouts, and I have business to look after."

"Now you are cross," said Beverly. "It's only sick men that are being nursed who are nice."

"Because you women can boss us around then," retorted Yale with a laugh. "Now, look here, Mrs. Owens, we are going back to Utica."

"*Mr.* Owens, we are not!"

How far this pretty little quarrel would have gone is hard to conjecture. An interruption, in the shape of Adolphus, took place. He came into the dining-room, where they were sitting, and walked straight to Yale.

"You gome," he said, lifting the near-six-footer with ease. "You go oop. Laty go hite, too. Mans loog ad house from drees."

"Oh, my Lord!" exclaimed Beverly, starting up. "They have found us, oh, our enemies. That newspaper did the trick. I mustn't leave it here."

With the paper in her hand she followed Adolphus and his burden.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHAT NOW?

THE farmhouse was supplied with green shutters. Those on the first and second floor were of the slatted kind, called by many people blinds, and those in the dormer window of the attic room were solid, with small half moons cut in them to let in two rays of light in the daytime, but no sun. This was to keep the attic cool in summer.

Adolphus, knowing his business as thoroughly as though he had been engaged in secreting fugitives from justice all his life, laid Yale on the bed, and went to the window to draw the shutters.

"See anybody, Adolphus?" asked Miss Wayne.

"See man looging. There."

Phlegmatically he closed the barriers to the light, and the refugees were in almost total darkness. Beverly laughed.

"Cimmerian, I call it," she said. "I'm going to look out through a half moon. I've often seen the man *in* the moon, but never expected to look at a man through a moon."

She went to the darkened window and placed her eyes at the opening in the left shutter. For a moment there was total silence. Then she uttered an exclamation.

"By—Good Lord! Adolphus, help Mr. Owens here. Kenneth—it's George Greenland."

"The devil it is! Why should he come spying—but then he sympathizes with Raymond. Is he skulking?"

"Sneaking, I call it. Pussyfooting, I've heard it called. He keeps pretty well to cover."

Adolphus assisted Yale to the window.

"What can the fellow want?" he growled, one eye glued to the hole. "Why doesn't he come out like a man and fight?"

"Here he comes," whispered Beverly, though why the whisper is hard to tell. Greenland was too far away to hear anything less than a shout. "He is walking to the kitchen door."

"He will scare the old woman into letting him in," said Yale.

"My mudder no can sgare," quoth Adolphus. "My mudder's fadder an' my fadder vas soldiers. I vas soldier one time. My mudder knog him on de het mid a broom."

"I'm going to listen," said Beverly. "You stay here, Kenneth. You are too clumsy to do sleuth work."

Noiselessly she left the room and obtained an advantageous position over the kitchen on the floor below, at a trap that was reached by a ladder. This portion of the house was only one story and attic, and the space above the kitchen was used to store bacon, dried apples, and other products of the farm for winter use.

She could hear, but could not see, the meeting at the door between Greenland and the old woman. She heard Greenland's knock. The old dame shuffled across the bare floor of the kitchen, and jerked the door wide open.

"I beg your pardon, madam," said Greenland in his politest voice, and Beverly could almost see him take off his hat and bow. "I am in search of a man named Yale, who lives on a farm, or did live on a farm, along this way. It was called the Old Mill Farm, and I see an old mill along the creek. I made bold to knock at your door to ask if this is Old Mill Farm."

"Na!"

Whether the old dame was saying no in her language, or just hurling defiance at an unwelcome visitor, Beverly could not tell. She heard a footstep in the upper hall and knew that the reserves were moving to the aid of the old woman.

"But I must find my friend Yale," persisted Greenland. "I am convinced that this is his place. I will—"

"Na! Na!" said the guttural voice of Dolly's mother.

"Oh, I must insist. The law, woman, the law!"

"NA! NA! NA!" came a loud yell, and then Beverly heard a whacking sound and Greenland began to curse.

"You damned old harridan! You wretched old witch! I'll choke you to death!"

Then a heavy voice broke in:

"My mudder, her too olt for fight. Me, yes."

Then the sound of a fist against a face, and Greenland yelled.

But it was over, and Beverly heard the door slammed shut and locked.

She sped back to Yale.

"Let me see him go," she said, half stifled with suppressed laughter. "Oh, Kenneth, we could never have better guardians than these."

They saw Greenland leave the vicinity of the house and walk toward the creek. He was wiping his face with his handkerchief, which was red.

"He tried to force his way in," Beverly explained. "Dolly did nothing that was not right."

"I believe," said Yale, when Greenland was out of sight, "that he stole that silver himself. He wasn't over eager that morning, except to have the marriage take place. Remember?"

"I wonder."

They saw no more of Greenland, and by noon had recovered from the effects of his visit. They ate dinner in the attic room, with the shutters open for air and light.

"Let's go outside," suggested Beverly. "Do you feel like it? Dolly doesn't mind carrying you down."

"I don't mind being carried down. But a sudden alarm, such as we had this morning, is disastrous. Your Dolly is as gentle as he can be, but picking up a man my size necessarily jars. I think I'll take a snooze."

"All right, Mr. Owens. I'll help the old dame get supper, and we'll have a pleasant evening together. I wish we had some games to play."

"I'd rather talk to you. I couldn't see the pips on the ten of diamonds sitting across a table from your eyes."

"Good-by, Mr. Owens. A sentimental husband is a thing to be deplored."

She left him, and he threw himself on the bed. His foot hurt considerably, and shooting pains made his legs twitch. His head ached, too, and sleep came grudgingly. He had left his bed too soon.

He lay some time thinking of the wretched fix he was in, and cursed the hour he landed in Utica.

"No, that won't do," he said to himself. "In that case I would not have met Beverly. Not to have met Beverly would be the same as never having lived. So beautiful, so good, so true. How could I—dolt—how could I ever have harbored a single suspicion against her—Mrs. Owens—my lovely provisional wife."

Smiling at the odd conceit, he dropped off to sleep, and woke in an hour much refreshed. With the aid of a chair he hobbled to the window to see if Beverly was in sight. He loved to watch her unconscious grace when she was ignorant of his scrutiny. But Beverly was not so self-conscious that this made any difference.

But there was a difference now. With an armful of the last yellow flowers, her hat pushed back on her red-gold hair, and talking vividly to one who seemed an acquaintance and a friend, Miss Wayne was swinging across the field diagonally from the road.

She and her male companion were approaching the house. Kenneth stared at this couple like a man who had received a death stroke.

"My God!" he exclaimed within himself. "Is she false, after all, or have all my conjectures fallen into wreck? I am a fool, or I am betrayed by Beverly."

The man with whom Beverly was chatting gaily, who seemed to be feasting upon her marvelous beauty, was the man with short hair and the prison pallor. The two passed from Yale's sight on their way to the farmhouse door.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"WHAT IS HE AFTER?"

IT required considerable effort for Yale to compose himself sufficiently to form any plan of procedure. During the first moments of shock and renewed suspicion there seemed no possibility of any action on his part that would be of any avail.

He could not escape. His method of locomotion, hobbling along with one foot almost unable to sustain any weight, was not the gait that would take him safely away from that hiding place or enable him to find another.

The only thing he could think of was to take a leaf out of Beverly's book and play the spy. Anything was justifiable.

First he looked around for some sign of Adolphus. But while Yale slept, and Beverly roamed, Adolphus had disappeared for reasons of his own.

But, Yale reflected, the old dame was as good as any man and better than most. At least her presence would deter the intruder from offering Beverly any harm, if he had come for that purpose.

There was, however, so little sign of this in his friendly manner that Yale's wonder grew to overwhelming and compelling proportions. He would see, listen, and learn for himself what it all meant.

It was painful traveling, but he managed to leave his attic room, and descended the dark, narrow stairs to the bedroom floor.

This was in itself a revelation to him, for the rooms he peeped into as he passed the open doors were furnished far above the style he remembered in the days of his former visits. Grandfather Yale had grown to have luxurious tastes in his latter days.

He not only went down the narrow stairs from the attic to the second story, but part way also down the front stairs that led to the hall. There he ensconced himself with many a grimace of pain, and almost immediately heard Beverly's voice.

"Of course," she was saying, "neither my husband, Mr. Owens, nor myself knows what valuation the present owner, Mr. Yale, puts on either house or furniture."

"In a case of this kind," responded the visitor, speaking gently, with a voice that seemed to have no volume, "the company is very particular. Now when old Mr. Yale was alive, even though he did not live on the place, he could put what valuation he liked on anything here, and it would be accepted by the company."

"Oh," said Beverly, with the innocence of a child, "and do you mean that young Mr. Yale, the present owner, has increased the valuation?"

"On the furniture, but not on the house. Of course, suddenly to increase the valuation on an old frame house, without having built any additions, would attract attention. People, however, are always buying new furniture, and the amount of the policy changes. My position with the company is what they call appraiser, or inspector of household goods. When Mr. Yale—Mr. Kenneth Yale—increased the face of his policy five hundred dollars, naturally the company wanted to know what there was in the house to represent that value."

"Naturally the company would," Yale heard Beverly say, and her remark was followed by a quiet little laugh.

Oh, she was superb, this temporary Mrs. Owens. Yale could have kicked himself for letting even the shadow of a doubt cross his mind.

But what was the game? Yale had attended to the insurance on the house and barns, keeping the valuation at what it had been. He had made sure the taxes were paid up to date, and that no lien stood against the property.

But, so far as he knew, there was no insurance on the furniture of any kind. He had never thought of it, much less raised the amount.

He felt like creeping down to the living room in which the two were talking and attacking the liar where he was. But wise reflection showed him the absurdity of this.

In his present crippled condition he was no match for any one. It would be impossible to make it clear to the old dame that a man who had accompanied Beverly into the house as a friend was to be hammered and thrown out as an enemy, so long as he did nothing wrong.

He was doing, or planning something wrong now. But Yale could not imagine what it was, and what chance had he of telling the old woman who could not understand a word he said?

Whatever the game was, it must be played as it started, between Beverly and the stranger, until something developed.

"Mr. Owens, I presume, is not at home," the stranger now said.

There was a peculiar undertone to his speech, a lurking irony, that made Yale clench his fist and swear under his breath. He knew the fellow was well enough aware that he was talking to Beverly Wayne. He questioned whether he had not seen Yale's face at the attic window.

At any rate, with both Beverly and Yale missing from Utica, it would be natural enough for the false appraiser to conjecture that if Beverly was in Yale's house, Yale was not far away. But still he could do nothing.

"My husband is not in the house," Beverly answered with perfect composure. "He is somewhere about the farm, or at the mill. It was, in fact, the mill, that determined his choice. Mr. Owens is a machinist, and is thinking of utilizing the mill and a large portion of the land for the manufacture and trying out of war aeroplanes."

"You are not farmers, then. I thought so, from your appearance. Well now, Mrs. Owens, I trust you will pardon me for this seeming rudeness. If the furniture were yours I would accept your inventory. But as it belongs to Yale, I must make my own."

"Consider yourself free to do anything you wish," Beverly answered. "And as I can be of no assistance to you I will excuse myself. I am quite busy with my up-stairs work."

"Don't let me detain you, Mrs. Owens. I will make my visit as short as possible."

Yale crept back to the floor above. She came slowly up, nothing in her manner giving the slightest hint of agitation.

When she saw him she put her finger to her lip. Then he saw the effort she was making to remain unconcerned.

He made a turn as if to go up the narrow stairs to the attic room he had left. She touched his arm, and shook her head, and beckoned him to follow her. Without a word, or a sign of reluctance, he did so.

She led him along the upper hall to a small door that gave upon the loft over the kitchen from which vantage ground she had heard the ignominious defeat of Greenland.

Yale marveled again. This girl who, a week before, had never heard of Old Mill Farm, knew more about his grandfather's house than he knew himself. He could not remember this dark hole that smelled of bacon and dried apples and turnips and farm soil sticking to the roots of cabbages.

"He won't find you here," she whispered. "Who is he, do you suppose?"

"He is no insurance appraiser," replied Yale, also whispering. "He had something to do with your abduction. He was at Whitesboro—"

"Hush! He will be ransacking the house. I am not afraid—now. He hasn't come to do anything this time, but to look over the ground. You didn't increase the furniture insurance, did you?"

"There is none that I know anything about."

"I must go. I'll manage to keep an eye on him. There is a key in the door to this place. I'll lock the door and put the key in my pocket."

The intruder could have reached the loft from the kitchen, but Yale knew the fellow was too shrewd to give his game away by any such child's play. Beverly went out, and Yale heard the lock of the little door click.

Now he could hear nothing, do nothing, without risking a contretemps that might be dangerous. He could not hear any voices, but the shuffling of the old woman around the kitchen made an agreeable noise.

If she could not understand what was said to her, she had wonderfully sharp ears, and by listening to her pottering around Yale could keep himself assured of Beverly's safety.

But what did—what *could*—the fellow want? If he was in search of Yale he had gone about it in a clumsy fashion. If he knew that Yale was in the house, he had shown a remarkable nerve in coming there alone. It was impossible, so far as Yale could see, that the fellow should have any knowledge of his present physical condition.

He heard another step beside the old dame's, and listened intently to what went on below.

"Fine day, auntie," began the insurance appraiser. "Got a fine, clean kitchen here."

"Na!"

"Boss out around the buildings, I suppose?"

"Na!"

"Where can I find him, then?"

"Na! Na!"

"Your conversation is illuminating. I want to find Mr. Owens."

"Na!"

"Crescendo, then diminuendo. Thanks, old lady."

"Have you finished" asked Beverly.

"On this floor. Yale has some pretty fine old furniture here. I don't think I shall interfere with his valuation. It is low enough."

"I'm sure he ought to appreciate your kindness. I know my husband, Mr. Owens, would."

"I'll just take a look around up-stairs."

And he did. He went into every bedroom.

Unlike most of the farmhouses in that vicinity, this old homestead of the Yales had been brought up to date in modern comforts. A great tank had been erected near the creek, to which a windmill pumped water. This was piped to, and through, the house, and all but the attic and loft was heated by a hot water plant. A bedroom had been transformed into a tiled bathroom, with hot and cold water.

Old Grandfather Yale must have developed at seventy some Sybaritish tendencies. Or, as an investment, for renting at a good figure, he may have thought the outlay would more than repay itself.

The appraiser went into the bathroom, and opened his eyes. Here was luxury for a farmhouse. But, as Beverly had told Yale, this was no longer a farmhouse. It was a country villa.

But, if the appraiser was in search of Kenneth Yale he might as well have searched the well. That relic of old farm days still stood, for water that is tanked and piped will never taste like that which springs from the crevices of the rock forty feet below the surface of the earth.

But the curiosity of the man was well developed, at least. He peered into every closet. He went up to the attic, and after being there some time came down.

"Who sleeps in the raftered room at the top of the house?" asked the careful appraiser of the lovely Mrs. Owens.

"Adolphus, our hired man. He is the son of the cook. You saw her in the kitchen."

"She seems to be a very uncommunicative sort of person."

"She cannot understand English."

"Where is Adolphus, may I ask?"

"Gone to Utica to buy himself some Sunday clothes."

"How long have you lived here, Mrs. Owens?"

"Well, we hardly seem to be living here even now. We came, oh, about three weeks ago. We have purchased no farm-stock as yet. We buy everything we need."

"You surely have a horse and carriage."

"No, my husband has an automobile. He taught Adolphus to run it, and the man has it now."

"Ah! Well, I will bid you good day, Mrs. Owens. I thank you for your courtesy."

"Don't mention it."

She saw him depart, and hastened to release Yale from his hiding place. He was weak from suffering, and she almost fainting from suppressed excitement. They supported each other to a room.

"What can it mean? What is he after? What do you know about him?" she gasped, sinking into a chair. "Kenneth, we must leave this house."

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT'S AFOOT NOW?

"DID you never—think now, our lives may depend on it—did you never see that man before?" asked Yale.

"Never, Kenneth. I am sure of that."

"Nor heard his voice?"

"Never. I could never have heard that voice and forgotten it."

"Do you know the kind of voice it is?"

"Why—hoarse—he speaks with an evident effort."

"Yes, but a short time ago the effort was greater. That man hasn't been out of jail a month, and he has escaped at that."

"Kenneth! You know him, then!"

"No, I don't know him, but I have seen him and learned something about him I thought you knew. When you told me your experiences after you had been put in the surrey you said that at a village hotel you heard one of the women talking to a man, but you did not see the man."

"That is so, Kenneth. But it was not this man. The voice I heard was full and hearty."

"Well, there were two men there, and our appraiser was one of them."

"How did you learn this?"

"Didn't I tell you that Williams and I stopped at the hotel in Whitesboro, and I learned that you had been there?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, the man at the hotel and I agreed that this fellow was a jailbird. We saw him there—he was evidently there to spy on me, and I believe he tampered with the automobile and brought on the wreck. Now, could you not identify either of the men who seized you at the reservoir?"

"Honestly, no, Kenneth. I did not see them at all before the attack. They were not on the road. They must have rushed out of the woods in the park."

"They did, undoubtedly. Well, more will come out of this. I am eager to learn what the next move will be."

"We must leave this house, Kenneth."

"Mrs. Owens, we will stay in our own home."

"*Mr.* Owens, we shall do nothing of the kind. Do you think I want to be murdered in my bed?"

"That's as good a place to be murdered as any other. But seriously, Beverly, I do not think the gang mean to commit murder. At first they might have had it in mind. The wrecking of Williams's car would indicate it. But something has changed their plans."

"Have we unconsciously played into their hands, do you think?"

"We may be playing their game for them. But I can't see what good it would do for us to leave here now. We could easily be traced. A man with a bandaged foot, who can scarcely hobble, is not forgotten along the way."

"That's true enough."

"And you! Do you suppose that you could go ten miles without fifty people knowing how you look?"

"That's so," she said. "And if we hire a conveyance, *that* would give us away."

The tables were turned. Their former argument about leaving the Old Mill Farm had been reversed.

But they remained. As night came on the weather grew chill, the sky was clouded, and there was every promise of a night for deeds that needed darkness. The old woman shuffled about getting their evening meal, and Adolphus was still absent.

"I wonder where our friend Dolly is," said Beverly, when they sat at the table. "He has been gone a long time."

"Went to some village, I suppose. He has been very faithful. Perhaps he needed a day off."

"I hope he won't come back drunk."

By the time supper was over there was an evident change in the old woman. So far as a phlegmatic, leathery faced old crone could show nervousness, the mother of Dolly showed it.

She kept looking at the dining-room clock, and running to the kitchen door, all the time muttering something in her native tongue.

"She is anxious about Dolly," said Beverly. "I know the signs."

"But what could happen to him?" asked Yale. "To my mind Adolphus is about as safe from attack as a man could be. He has no money, and wears no jewelry, and if his slight connection with us has awakened any desire to get rid of him in the minds of the robber gang, one blow of his mighty fist would knock a dozen like our insurance appraiser silly."

"I know, but a pistol shot—or a stab in the back—"

"You are giving way to morbid fears. I don't believe that at this time there is any murder intended. Just what the game is we'll have to wait and see. And the place to wait is here. My foot is getting constantly better, and if they give me a few more days I'll be able to kick 'em with it."

But Beverly, brave and calm as she had been in the presence of the appraiser, was now suffering from the reaction. But she was game. There could be no better pal for any man in an adventure.

They sat at the table long after they had finished eating, and Yale smoked a pipe Adolphus had bought, with some tobacco, on his first trip to a village after Yale had eaten his first bowl of gruel. And it had been Beverly, not Yale, who had thought of this solace for the injured man.

"Why doesn't the old dame come and clear away the dishes?" asked Beverly. "Do you hear her?"

"I don't," replied Yale, "but now you call attention to the tomblike silence of the kitchen, I recall that about ten minutes ago I heard the kitchen door open and shut."

"But she has been doing that ever since it got dark."

"True, Mrs. Owens. But after each visit to the door I heard her shuffling footsteps. I remember now, that I did not hear that gentle step the last time, nor have I seen Dolly's maternal ancestor."

"Goodness!" cried Beverly, jumping up from her chair. "Have we been deserted at the first blush of danger?"

She hurried to the kitchen and returned with a white face, but not a frightened one. Distinctly, Mrs. Owens was angry.

"She's gone! The old ape *has* deserted us. I believe it was a put up job between them. First Dolly went, and now she's vanished. Her hat is gone and her old rabbitskin cloak."

"She is probably anxious about her child," suggested Yale, smoking contentedly away.

"Kenneth! Can it be that they are in league with the gang?"

"Hardly. Dolly doesn't look like a robber, and the old woman would be a very weak link in the chain."

"A very strong one, *I* think. She knows how to hold her tongue—who can tell if she understands English or not? Spies have pretended not to understand before now."

Yale moved uneasily.

"There is reason in what you say, Beverly. But you found them in a cottage of their own on the creek."

"Yes, but who knows if it is their own, or how long they have been there?"

"An unanswerable question at present. But wasn't it the old woman who gave you the ointment and liniment to rub on my foot, and the bandages?"

"Through Dolly she gave me the liniment and the ointment, and the herb medicine we made you drink. Dolly told me, in a cumbersome sort of way, that his mother was an herb doctor. Witch, I call her now. The bandages I made myself by tearing one of your bed sheets into strips."

"So far, the old dame looms up with conspicuous honesty ashine. And where did you get the key of this house?"

"Oh, yes, I am forgetting that. Dolly and his mother, being the nearest neigh-

bors, probably had the duty of showing the house to prospective tenants."

"It is not likely, that if they were newcomers, traveling light for a convenient getaway, they would have the key."

"Your arguments seem to dispose of my suspicions," said Beverly. "But now I feel anxious lest harm has come to Dolly."

"But tell me, my dear girl with the sunshine hair, who would want to harm Adolphus? He didn't strike me as being a man to indulge in feuds, jealous quarrels over girls, or any sort of scrap."

"But suppose some one wanted to harm *us* and so wanted to keep Dolly away? Suppose our insurance appraiser was an advance guard, or spy, and that some sort of devilment is planned for to-night—here—against us?"

Yale looked at her soberly and pulled harder on his pipe.

"You are a cool reasoner, Mrs. Owens," he said. "And perhaps you are right."

CHAPTER XXV.

DEEDS IN THE DARK.

THE mystery of the night deepened. Hours passed, and neither Adolphus nor the old dame returned. One of two things was now certain. They had deserted, probably from fear, or harm had come to them.

Beverly and Yale talked over the possibilities.

"Confound it, I'm a dashed fine hero in a situation like this," he said. "Here I sit nursing a game foot that won't let me walk a yard without cursing with pain. Confound that short-haired scoundrel—I'll wring his neck if I ever get the chance."

"It is pretty certain now that Adolphus and his mother are not coming back," said Beverly. "And we have not even a weapon. You didn't have a pistol, did you?"

"No. I never thought of it. I've never carried one of the things."

"I wish you had been a little more of a coward," she answered. "You might have thought of it."

"I'm coward enough. For Heaven's sake don't get it into your head that I'm one of the brave ones."

"I'll get anything in my head that I want there. And you are not a coward."

"Didn't I faint with pain as soon as I got out of the woods?"

"But you *got* out of the woods. A bullet, a knife, or an automobile wreck makes no distinction of persons. Either will kill a brave man as quickly as a coward. Well, we must plan for the night. Shall we sit up and wait?"

"No, I'm not much in favor of the waiting and watching game. Have you ever seen a cat crouching at a mouse-hole?"

"Many a time."

"Did you ever see the mouse come out and get caught?"

"No, now that you bring that important detail to my mind, I never have."

"Just so. When you sit up to watch and wait for somebody to do a certain thing he does something else, or nothing at all. As I said before, I do not believe murder is intended for you or me. This is a sparsely settled place and we could be picked off by a pop-gun from the trees. No, if murder had been intended that jailbird would not have come here to-day."

"But he was certainly after something."

"He either wanted to spot me, or to get the plan of the house."

"To rob it? There are no silver wedding presents here."

"I can't go so deep as to tell what they wanted of the house plan. Perhaps they didn't want it at all."

"Here's a question! Suppose that man had seen you instead of me? He would not have dared to say that about a furniture insurance policy."

"No. In that case he might have been your aunt's agent looking for you to prevent you from eloping with me."

"Nonsense! As if I *would*."

"Wouldn't you?"

"No. Positively no. Now look here, Mr. Owens. We are married people. And married people don't talk about eloping—at least with each other."

"Yes, but this kind of married life is like buckwheat cakes with the buckwheat left out."

"All fat in the pan, I suppose. Well, it will have to serve. And if we are not going to watch and wait, I'm for bed. Are you going to your attic?"

"I am not. I am going to sleep on the next floor. There are five bedrooms, if I remember."

"Four. I fancy the big bathroom was a bedroom when you were a boy."

"Which is your room? I'll take the one next to it, when I've smoked another pipe."

"It's a trick! You want me to have my good rest, and you *are* going to sit up."

"Not very long. For a wonder my foot is quite easy, and I shall enjoy the luxury of another smoke."

"Very well. Call me if anything happens."

"Don't lie awake all night thinking about it."

"Good night."

"Good night, Mrs. Owens."

After she had gone Yale refilled his pipe, lighted it, and then put out the lamp. He was not very expert at this, for never, since his youthful days, had he been without gas or electric light.

He sat in the intensely dark room smoking slowly, listening for any warning sound, and thinking of the utter strangeness of the situation. Suddenly he heard a noise.

It was not a loud noise. It could easily, in fact, have been made by a rat. But somehow Yale did not think of rats. He stiffened his muscles, and listened with a great intensity of strain.

What he wanted to hear was a human voice. But he heard nothing that sounded like speech.

Now it seemed as though some one was trying to open a window of the very room in which he sat. He peered in the direction he knew the windows were, but could distinguish nothing. The darkness was so absolute that the whitest object could not shade it lighter.

Kenneth had not told the truth when he had told Beverly that he was in any way cowardly. All his life, from his boyhood sports to his manly enterprises, he had been noted for his daring.

He had a life-saving medal, which he did not wear, earned by leaping from the deck of a friend's yacht in Long Island Sound, diving under an overturned cabin sloop and bringing back to life and the possibility of happiness a child who had been imprisoned there. The parents were rescued while Yale was out of sight.

He had been a first class man in college athletics. He had shot big game. But never in conversation did he revert to any of these things.

And now he cursed himself for a helpless lump of mud. Some one, with evil intent, was forcing an entrance to his house, and he sat with his leg on a separate chair, as fit to fight as a sick cat.

He leaned over, felt the table, and put his pipe on that. Then he slowly and carefully swung his swollen, but somewhat improved, foot to the floor.

He gripped the back of the chair and stood up. He could remember nothing in the room that would serve as a weapon except the chair itself. A chair in powerful arms is no mean weapon, provided the other fellow has no gun. But if—

It was scarcely probable that midnight visitors of this kind would go unarmed. Yale took hold of the chair-back with both hands.

The noise increased. The first attempts having aroused no commotion within, the person who wanted to enter grew more courageous, or at least used less caution.

The fastenings of the windows were old in age and fashion. A knife-blade would open any one of them.

The click of the blade against the bronze catch could be distinguished. Yale could have called out. This might have driven the intruder away. Or, on the other hand, if the entering party was composed of several, and they knew that only a girl and a nearly helpless man were there to defend the house, they might throw all secrecy to the winds and rush him.

He had no idea of waking Beverly. Time enough for that if he found himself defeated and her in danger.

The sash slid up. Almost holding his breath Yale stood with all his mental faculties alert and concentrated upon that sound and the spot from which it came.

He could now almost see with his ears, so intensified had his sense of hearing become because it was not possible to use his sight. He seemed to know when the visitor thrust in a hand to make sure the way was clear.

He could visualize the head that was moving in the open square of the window. He could tell when a leg was thrown across the sill into the room.

And yet he waited, for it was not the time to strike.

He knew that in all probability he would have but the chance of getting in one blow. For the clumsiness of his weapon, and the darkness, made it a problem what the result of that blow would be.

If in the first blow he knocked out his man, there would be left to him a chance to meet another. If his first blow failed a knife or pistol might end his fighting forever.

With tight lips he stood till he heard the breathing close to him, sensed the nearness of another human being.

He swung the chair with all his might, and it crashed against something that went down under it.

But curses, rather than blows, came from the victim. And loud curses.

"Ho, ho!" he shouted. "I'll have you for this."

He shouted so loud that Yale wondered. It was possible, of course, and circumstances made it seem probable, that the burglar, or would-be murderer, or whatever he was potentially, knew that Adolphus was away.

Yale forgot that he ever had a sore foot. He bent, swung the chair again, and more loud curses were the result.

"Blast you," he said, swinging the chair again, "I'll—"

A blinding electric torch flashed in his face, and the shock to his eyes made him recoil. There was a mocking laugh, a shout, and then all was silence and the darkness of the tomb once more.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MIDNIGHT INTRUDERS.

YALE began feeling in his pockets for a match. Suddenly he stiffened, and reached for the chair. He heard another noise, this time inside the room, and away from the window. He prepared to strike again.

"Kenneth, are you here?" came the anxious voice of Beverly. "I heard a noise that sounded like a window opening. Are you here, Kenneth?"

Her voice was soft, and low, scarcely more than a whisper, and so welcome and dear to Yale that he could have shouted.

"I am here, Beverly. Wait till I get a light."

He found his match, and soon the big lamp on the dining-room table was alight.

It was a very white face, with somewhat paler lips than usual, that he found turned toward him. She had thrown some of her clothes on, and over these had improvised a wrap of a comfortable from her bed. She had drawn on her stockings, but wore no shoes.

"What was it?" she asked. "Some one came."

"Yes, some one came in that window," he answered, pointing to the raised sash. "But he's gone, I hope, with a sore head."

"But you had nothing with which to fight! And your foot—"

"Oh, my foot went into the discard. I forgot all about my foot. I knocked him down with this chair, although in the darkness I don't suppose I got in a very terrible blow."

He turned the chair upside down and examined the legs and the edges of the seat.

"I don't see any blood. Guess it wasn't a very hard knock."

All the time she was looking at him strangely, with eyes wide and brilliant.

"But Kenneth! It couldn't have been that window I heard. My room is so situated that I doubt if I could have heard this window. I fancied the noise was on the other side of the hall, in the living room."

"I heard nothing there, Beverly," said Yale.

"And I am sure I heard nothing here. When you knocked him down didn't you make more noise than he did opening the window?"

"Why, yes, and he made more noise cursing than I did knocking him down. Did you hear that?"

"No, Kenneth. I heard no voice at all."

"This is a matter for investigation," said Yale. "I'll put this window down and take the lamp to the living room."

He pulled down the sash, picked up the lamp, and started. Beverly followed.

"You stay here," he told her. "There may be another one."

"Very well, if there is I'll be at your side. I'll hold the lamp while you do the fighting."

"Then there *might* be something doing," he said. "Come along, brave one."

"Oh, don't call *me* brave. Why, all the time I was listening to that noise my teeth were chattering."

"Mine would have chattered if I'd dared let them," answered Yale.

They crossed the hall, Yale carrying the lamp, and Beverly opened the door of the living room.

"Why, I left—"

"Ha!"

This explosion came from Yale, and was the forerunner of a greater one that did not come from him, but which he produced.

It was natural enough that by this time his nerves had become pretty tightly strung. Beverly gasped "Oh, Kenneth!"

and stared as though she was horror-stricken.

For, as they entered the living room from the hall, Yale described the form of a man going through a window. In a flash of time he had hurled the lighted lamp at the retreating figure.

It vaulted through the air an avenging comet, went through the window, and caught the unlawful visitor in the small of his back. He fell headlong, howled in terror, not knowing what had struck him that could give out that brilliant flash and then leave him flat on the ground in total darkness.

But a spark remained, the oil of the lamp leaked out, and then, with a loud report the whole thing went up in a spurt of flame. In the light of this that lasted but a moment, they saw two men racing toward the road.

Then the oil blazed up, but that was a petty illumination the unappreciative audience soon extinguished.

"Two of them, Kenneth!" whispered Beverly, bending close to him. "I wonder if there are any more."

"I fancy not," he answered. "I've been figuring on two right along. One of those fellows looked as much like our insurance appraiser as the dancing light could permit. Now we've lost a lamp."

"There are others, Kenneth. Come in."

She was standing inside the dark living room, holding an empty pail, which had contained water, and he, who had taken it from her hand and drenched a great square rug he had seized from the floor and thrown over the blazing oil, was outside.

He clambered in through the window and closed it. The night was very chill.

"Have you a match, Kenneth?"

"Yes, I guess so."

He had, and soon the lamp in the living room was doing duty in place of the one destroyed.

"What an adventure," said Beverly, sitting down and drawing the blanket close around her. "You have vanquished two miscreants to-night, Mr. Owens. Don't tell me again that you are a coward."

"Don't tell me that your teeth chatter with fright, Mrs. Owens."

She laughed merrily.

"I am not so sure—I'm not so sure——" began Yale.

"Heavens! You don't suppose there are any more!"

"No, but I was wondering. When I knocked the fellow down in the dining-room he let out a terrible bawl. Now I see that it was some sort of a call to the other chap. Well, I'll bet one has a sore head, and the other a ruined coat, as souvenirs of this night's work."

"But what did they come here *for?*" asked Beverly with emphasis.

"Search me. I have my money in my pocket. They didn't get that."

"I wonder."

"Well, it's no good sitting there like a squaw in a blanket wondering. Go back to bed. I'll have another smoke."

"Do you feel faint?"

"Faint? No. I feel bully. My foot's sort of asleep, but that's such a fine improvement on the pain that I'll let him sleep. Wish I had a bottle of beer."

"I'll tell you what! I'll make some tea."

"In that rig?"

"Oh, no. See if there is any fire in the kitchen stove, will you?"

"If there isn't I'll get one going."

And he did. Meanwhile, Beverly went to her room, from which she reappeared properly clothed. Yale had water on the fire, which was boiling gaily.

In a short time they sat at the kitchen table with their tea and some little cakes Adolphus had discovered at a store, rather stale, but clean, having spent all their days in an airtight tin.

"This married life is wearin', Mrs. Owens."

"The incidents of married life are incalculable, Mr. Owens," she beamed back at him.

"You make very good tea, Mrs. Owens."

"I couldn't have done it unless you built a very good fire, Mr. Owens."

This inconsequential clack was the reaction from the short but hard strain on their nerves. By the time they were finished it was two o'clock.

"No more excitement this morning, Mrs. Owens. Go back to bed."

"Goodness, I'm as far from sleep as the poles are apart. Let's sit up."

"No! You will go back to your room. Do you want to dim the light of those violet eyes?"

"You gump! My eyes are blue. Good night, Mr. Owens."

"Good night, Mrs. Owens."

Yale felt no need of sleep after his lunch, and setting the living room lamp on the dining-room table, he refilled his pipe, and

sat down in an arm-chair to browse on mystery. He surely had food enough for thought. The night had not been so strenuous but that he could think of Beverly and what all this meant to her.

He was in his inherited house—on his own ground. Her position was, to say the least, anomalous. Now even the shadowy protection afforded by the old dame was gone. But he would soon make that right. As his wife—"

Then the mystery of Greenland's visit, without cause or effect, came uppermost. He dismissed that as inconsequential. The two midnight marauders occupied his attention longer. But, as he grew drowsy, finally, and his pipe went out, his head sank, his chin rested on his breast, and he dreamed again of Beverly.

And the dawn found him sitting thus.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BLACK BAG.

THERE was no early rising at the Old Mill Farm that morning. True, the first sun rays that entered the dining-room windows disturbed Yale, and he left his uncomfortable position in the chair and lay down on a lounge in the living room without undressing.

Beverly, exhausted by the excitement of the night's adventures, slept profoundly far into the brilliant winter morning.

Yale was the first to be astir, and, disliking to rouse Beverly, proceeded to build the kitchen fire and make coffee. There was bread, bacon and potatoes, and the odor of camp cooking soon mounted the stairs to Beverly.

"Whatever are you doing?" she wanted to know when she appeared.

Yale stood by the stove enveloped in smoke of a none too delicate perfume,

"Making breakfast. Bacon, potatoes, coffee," he replied.

"Did you parboil the bacon?"

"No. Do you?"

"I do, or I can't eat it. You've burnt the potatoes. Hey, your coffee is boiling. Don't you know that coffee must not boil? I'll get breakfast. What time did you get up?"

"Haven't been down, really. Slept in a chair till daylight, and polished off my snooze on the living room lounge," said Yale.

"Have you seen anything of Adolphus or the old dame?"

"Nor hide nor hair."

"It's very strange."

Yale walked away with a troubled face. He left the house by the kitchen door, and made a detour around the outbuildings. When he returned the smoke had been blown out of the kitchen through open windows, and an appetizing breakfast was on the table.

"It's worse than strange," he said, as though continuing an uninterrupted conversation.

Beverly looked at him over the rim of her coffee cup. "What is?"

"The disappearance of the old woman and Adolphus. It is disastrous."

"You mean?"

"I mean that we cannot remain here without them. So long as the sop of a woman's presence was thrown to propriety, and Adolphus, her son, was also here, there was some sort of reason in it. But now we must think of other arrangements. I've been studying the question ever since I woke."

"So that's why you let the coffee boil and burned the potatoes. Well, there is much in what you say, but I don't see any solution any more than you do. We have no friends to whom we can sneak, two people suspected of robbery, and say, 'Here we are, hide us; we are wanted by the police.' "

It was the hardest puzzle Yale had ever attempted to solve. He ate slowly, trying hard to think of a way out of their trying position, when a heavy fist banged on the kitchen door.

Yale started up and Beverly turned a shade paler.

Before Kenneth could reach the door it was flung open, and the chief of police of Utica, followed by Detective Blake, came in.

"You are rather hard on your friends," said the chief, surveying the room with his calm, keen scrutiny.

"Never sent an invitation for a week-end," added Blake. "How do you do, Miss Wayne, or is it—"

"I am still Beverly Wayne," she said, rising from her chair.

"What's the news about Williams?" asked Yale, who had mastered his misgivings and was determined to face whatever was to come with his usual fortitude.

"Williams got the worst of the whole deal," answered the chief. "He is in St. Luke's Hospital, and has not spoken a lucid sentence since he was taken there."

"Who took him there?"

"A farmer, driving along the road before sunset, saw him lying under his machine. The farmer was a powerful chap, and managed to wiggle the machine a bit, got Williams out and carried him to Utica. It was a friendly act, but if he had taken him to the nearest house and called a local doctor the result might have been better."

"Well, so it might. This is the nearest house to the scene of the accident, and I came here. I have spoken several lucid sentences. I am sorry for Williams, though. I hope he is getting good care. I will pay for it."

"He will get that whether you pay for it or not. Now, Yale, of course you realize that this is no social visit. Certain bits of information have come to me and I am forced to take official action. I hope the information is wrong and that I am mistaken. Nevertheless, I am the chief of police, and both of you are suspected of being thieves."

"We know that," said Beverly. "We read it in a newspaper."

"Now," said the chief, "let me ask a few questions before we go any further. There was a big bay, bony horse in the picture. Blake and I have made an inspection of your buildings and have found no horse."

"We had no feed for a horse and sent him away."

"*Sent* him away. There must be a third party in this business. Is it the big blond fellow who looks like a Swede?"

"Dolly!" gasped Beverly, looking at Yale in astonishment.

"There was such a man," Yale replied, "but I don't know that he is a Swede. He had been here from the time I arrived until last evening—or no. Yesterday afternoon ***he*** went away. Last night his mother left."

"Where did they go?"

"We have no idea, except that they did live in a little cottage on the creek."

"Why did they go?"

"Of their reason for leaving us we have no idea, either. They left us at a deuce of a time, for we were visited by burglars in the night."

"So? Tell us about it. No. Begin at the beginning and tell us how it is that two people of your apparent standing in the world, of unimpeachable intelligence, have become so tangled up in this mess. You are living here under the name of Mr. and Mrs. Owens. A guilty thing in itself. My information from New York is to the effect that Yale was employed in a position with a good salary, which he relinquished a short time ago."

"I had other plans," explained Yale. "I inherited more than this farm from my grandfather."

"And did not need to steal," added Beverly in defiance, but this was the first time she had heard of any other legacy.

"Well, begin, Miss Wayne, you will tell your story first. Yale, perhaps you'd better go up-stairs."

"Oh, our stories don't meet until the adventures on the road were over."

"Well, stay if you like. You are not compelled to say anything to incriminate yourself."

"I don't intend to."

Beverly occupied about twenty minutes telling the story of how she was attacked at the reservoir, and made a vivid tale of her experiences.

"You see," she concluded, "your hypothesis about the Mr. and Mrs. Owens business is all wrong. That was the only thing I could do. I did not know the old woman and Dolly. I had overheard Mr. Raymond and Mr. Blake and Mr. Greenland speaking in the library in Utica and knew that Mr. Yale was suspected of the robbery. Now, here he was, unconscious, wounded and in a feverish delirium. I would have done anything—sacrificed more than I did—I would have sacrificed my life—rather than leave him alone, or give him up to the police."

"Because you love him?"

"Because I know he is innocent."

"Permit me to admire you," said the chief. "Now, Yale, yours."

Yale's adventures, like Beverly's, have been told in the foregoing pages, and repetition would be unnecessary. Both police officers listened attentively.

"Miss Wayne," said the chief, when Yale had finished, "you say you *rode* the horse here after spilling the two women and wrecking the surrey."

"Yes, that is the truth."

"Did you—either of you—see anywhere about the premises a black bag?"

"Bag? Black bag?" repeated Beverly. "There is no black bag here."

"My information points to a black bag. Now, of course, being two innocent and in-

jured parties, you cannot object to our making a search."

"Not at all. Go as far as you like," answered Yale. "Please consider yourselves my guests. Remember, this is my house,"

"Come ahead, Blake," directed the chief, and the ransacking of the house began.

"Kenneth, what is this new horror?" asked Beverly, resting her elbows on the table and leaning forward with her chin in her hands, to stare at him. "I know *you* didn't bring any black bag here."

"I don't see how you could have brought one, either. There is some big trick being played."

They waited, not with any too commendable patience, listening to the heavy tread of feet in different parts of the house, doors being opened and slammed, and furniture moved about.

Suddenly they heard an exclamation, and the footsteps joined on the stairs. In another moment the chief appeared in the kitchen doorway carrying a big black leather bag.

He sat it on the table and opened it. The contents were a massive silver candelabra, a solid silver tea-pot, milk pitcher, spoon-holder and sugar bowl.

"I'm sorry." The chief's jaws snapped together. "We have wasted time in too much talk. Kenneth Yale, and Beverly Wayne, I arrest you in the name of the law for the crime of conspiracy and robbery. Blake, take charge of Miss Wayne."

Filled with an amazement that left them speechless, Yale and Miss Wayne made no attempt to resist. They stared at the condemnatory evidence that glistened at them from the open mouth of the black bag.

They made no request to get hats or anything else. Yale's right foot was bandaged, and he wore his left shoe. In this way, not even locking the house, the two prisoners were led to an automobile.

In absolute silence they made the run to Utica, and were ushered into the police headquarters on Pearl Street. But neither of them gave a sign of weakening. Somewhat disheveled, and sadly in need of a complete change of clothing, Beverly was more beautiful than ever.

"A wild woman," said Blake to the chief.

"She would be another Joan of Arc in case of need and opportunity," was the reply. "And he's a cut off the same piece of goods. Damn! I'd like to know the truth."

"Don't you think you do?"

"No. We are farther from the truth than we were the day after the confounded robbery. I'm sorry the court is not sitting."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SUNDAY BEHIND BARS.

THE chief was not half so sorry the court was not sitting, as Beverly and Yale found themselves in an hour or two.

It was Saturday. The city magistrate had opened court at the usual time, disposed of the few unimportant cases from the cells in the basement of the police headquarters, and had adjourned hearings till Monday morning. He had then gone out of town in his automobile to forget for a time the cares of a continual battle against crime and evil.

The magnitude and importance of the case left the chief of police no option in the disposal of his prisoners. His personal belief, no matter what it might be, could not batter down the solid wall of official responsibility. He had arrested Yale and Miss Wayne under circumstances that almost proved their guilt of the Raymond robbery.

So it was impossible to admit them to bail. Could he, as chief of police, have assumed the responsibility, there was no one ready to come forward and offer bail for the two unfortunates.

Beverly was put in one cell, and Yale in another. The jaws of the laws had closed upon them, and the digestive process would begin at once.

But the police and matron did them one favor. They sent for fresh clothing for both prisoners.

They slept little. Their hours were filled with miserable forebodings. Yale thought of a lawyer, but believed that they were not necessary in a preliminary hearing before an examining magistrate.

But what a turmoil of troubled thoughts crowded his brain!

There was no getting away from the fact that the chief had discovered the bag of silverware in his house. He knew he had not taken it there. Beverly had been there before him. Had she—could it be possible—that, after all, she was in league with the robbers and this was her share of the booty?

How had the chief learned about the

black bag? How had he known about Adolphus?

Yale thought of Greenland. Greenland had come spying and had met the old woman's broomstick, and Dolly's fist. Had he given information?

But how had Greenland learned anything about the black bag?

Now, Yale's love for Beverly was of the kind that would withstand any assault. But he was of keen intelligence, and there were too many mysteries in the case for him to be blind to the possibilities.

How could he be blind when he had seen the silverware in the black bag?

Their meals were served from the Butterfield House, and Yale paid. No one visited them. The chief and Blake kept away, not because they felt any animosity toward their two important prisoners, but because, being kind hearted men both, and knowing that there was nothing they could do to alleviate the condition of the prisoners, they believed their presence might aggravate the misery of the two suspects.

But the misery of Yale and Beverly was mental, rather than physical. The cells were clean, and as up-to-date and comfortable as cells are made. A bath, hot or cold, and a shower bath, made the difference between old and new.

Their food was of the best. The change of clothing had added to their comfort. As prisoners they were not badly off. As free American citizens in love with each other they passed a long, uneventful, and dreary Sunday.

Beverly passed the day in deep thought, and she would have been less than a woman had she not shed a few tears. Not enough were shed, however, to dim the brilliance of the violet eyes that were to do heroic duty in the court-room on Monday.

So passed Sunday, and during that night Beverly got some few hours' sleep. Exhausted nature will have her demands considered, and Morpheus was merciful.

On Monday morning they met in the corridor of the police building, each in the custody of an officer.

"Good morning, Kenneth," said Beverly. "You look rather seedy for a New York gentleman."

"It is clear that you paid little attention to your mirror, this morning," replied Yale.

"Come," said the chief.

He led the way across the stone-paved courtyard, and Blake brought up the rear. There were other prisoners, but they could wait.

The grim gray wall of the City Hall frowned down upon them.

Beverly thought of Mary Queen of Scots, and Marie Antoinette, and smiled. She was ready to meet the city magistrate with the battery of her violet eyes.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE HEARING BEGINS.

NOT since he had sat as examining magistrate in the case of the murder of a young school-teacher near Utica had the city judge worn so stern and uncompromising a countenance as the one he carried into the grim old courtroom in which justice had been administered for more than half a century.

He looked at nobody, not even the chief. But perhaps he had seen the chief before that particular moment.

That he did not come unprepared to plunge at once into the inquisition was proven by the papers he carried in his hand. He took his seat, and the clerk rapped for order, made the usual announcement of the opening of court, and thundered a command for everybody in the room to be seated.

The city magistrate sat with his head bowed over the papers he had brought with him. The courtroom was filled, for from one end of the county to the other had spread the news of the arrest of Beverly and Yale.

"Two bad ones, and slick as devils," was the consensus of opinion from Boonville on the north, to Sangerfield on the south, and from Utica, on the eastern boundary, to the village of Cleveland on Oneida Lake.

Monday's papers gave columns of fact and fancy, and just cold falsehood, and thousands of lips chuckled over the swiftness of Oneida County justice.

Ugly women rejoiced that the officials of Utica were moved by a sense of righteousness, and not by an appreciation of beauty. Red-gold hair and violet eyes—Psh! A common New York thief! The judge'll find *her* out.

And so, at ten o'clock on Monday morning, all the county hung upon the news that was beginning to trickle from the City Hall.

The judge looked up, swept the crowded courtroom, and let his glance rest on the stalwart, silent chief.

"Is the prisoner Beverly Wayne in the room?"

"She is here, your honor."

"Is the prisoner Kenneth Yale in the room?"

"He is here, your honor."

"Is George Greenland in the room?"

"He is here, your honor."

This last was undoubtedly a surprise to the majority of those present. Greenland's name had not hitherto been connected with the robbery at all. There was an uneasy movement, and the clerk sharply ordered silence.

"Is Mr. Raymond in the room?"

"He is here, your honor."

Now there was a stir in the centre of the room. A big, blond man, wearing a black suit that had seen much wear, rose from his seat on a bench.

"I iss come, honorable," he announced.

A half suppressed titter surged across the room. The judge looked at this courageous interrupter of the court proceedings sternly.

"Who are you?"

"Me? I iss Adolphus. She name me dat, de lofely one."

The judge quickly twitched a page from the manuscript before him and glanced at it.

"Are you the man who attended the prisoner, Kenneth Yale, during the period of his delirium?'

"I don' know vat you say mid so much words. I do chores for de laty, carry de mans up and town, make fires, so."

"Sit down."

Adolphus plumped into his seat. For mystery and perfect self-possession, he was the man of the hour.

"Beverly Wayne," began the judge, taking up now the topmost document before him, "your story, told to the chief and Detective Blake, is that you were attacked on Old Third Street, between Roscoe Conkling Park and the reservoir, by two men, drugged or chloroformed, that your camera was smashed, and that you were taken to a surrey that was waiting at the corner of Third Street and Higby Lane."

"That was what I told the chief, and that is what happened."

"You further stated that the surrey was in charge of two women, and that they took you away *in* the surrey."

"That is true, your honor."

"Now, tell in your own words how you escaped from these women. But wait a minute. Before you do that look about the courtroom. Is there a man here whom you can identify as one of your captors?"

"It is no good looking around. I didn't see the men. I could not identify them."

"How about the women?"

Beverly surveyed the room carefully, her splendid calm unruffled by the rude gaze of the crowd.

"I do not see either of the women," she replied.

"Now go ahead and tell us how you escaped from them."

"Well, I just dumped them. You know, judge, I have been accustomed riding since I was a little girl. I have won blue ribbons for owners of fine horses."

"I can believe that," said the magistrate, favoring himself with a look at the violet eyes. "But this wasn't a fine horse. It was an old skate."

"It was a big bay horse, very bony. But he had some ginger in him, even if he lacked oats. Well, I sat with one woman on the rear seat. She had taken a whisky sour, whatever that is, in a village on the way, and was sleepy. The other was driving. I jumped into the front, snatched away the whip, lashed the horse and ran him over the roughest ground I could find. And that was some rough going, judge.

"Well, the woman who was sleeply was thrown out. Then the surrey broke down and the other one dropped and I cut loose. I mounted the horse and rode to Mr. Yale's farm.

"Why did you choose to go there?"

"For more than one reason. The place was vacant, and would serve as a hiding place for a time. And I knew that sooner or later he would come there."

"Yes, but you stated that you knew from an overheard conversation that Yale was suspected of the Raymond robbery."

"*I* didn't suspect him, and having been a recipient of your honor's clear-sighted justice, I had no fears for him."

She looked straight into the magistrate's eyes as she spoke. He never blinked nor blushed.

"Did you see a black bag in the surrey?"

"I did not."

"Did you carry a black bag into Yale's house?"

"I certainly did not."

"When did you see the black bag first?"

"When the chief of police brought it to the kitchen."

"Why did you assume the name of Mrs.

Owens, and give Yale the title of husband? Was it to defeat the ends of justice?"

"Not exactly. You see, so far as the ends of justice were concerned they were far away from me. I knew that Mr. Yale was suspected, and unable just then to protect himself, and so I did what I could to protect him.

"I had told Adolphus, or whatever his name is, that I was farm-hunting. When I went for him to help me with Mr. Yale, I knew that in order to remain there and not arouse comment, he must be known as my husband."

"You were aware, of course, that you were defying public opinion."

"Your honor, I have been nearly all over the civilized world, a good deal of the time alone. I have never done wrong, nor have I suffered wrong—until now. I have fought my way as a man fights his. I have defied public opinion, if you choose to put it that way. I have always found public opinion carrion in its taste. It will feast on its own conceived rottenness and overlook the true motive that underlies an action. I am not a slave to public opinion. I have no action in my life to recall with shame."

"And I arrested that girl," whispered the chief to Blake. "She is superb."

"She is royal," admitted Blake. "But who the devil stole the wedding presents?"

CHAPTER XXX.

WHO GOT THE REWARD.

THE judge rustled the leaves of the manuscript, which, in fact, was a résumé of the case which the chief had got into his honor's hands before midnight on Saturday, and which the judge had conscientiously studied all day Sunday.

"Yale," he said, looking sternly at the man with the bandaged foot, "why did you seek your own house as a hiding place?"

"I didn't," replied Yale. "I had no more thought of hiding than you have at this moment. I left the Whitesboro Hotel with Williams in his automobile. Somebody had evidently tampered with the machine, and we were wrecked. I lay all night in the woods unconscious.

"In the morning Williams was not to be found, and I was suffering tortures. I knew my house was the nearest. I knew I would find water and a way to heat it. I went through the woods on a path I remembered, and when in sight of the place fell unconscious. I was not fleeing from justice. I was in search of Beverly Wayne."

"Because you believed she had skipped her bond?"

"No, because I believed she had been abducted."

"Why? Had you deduced any reason for the abduction of Miss Wayne?"

"I believed that she knew, or the robbers believed she knew, something that would convict them."

"But according to Miss Wayne's testimony, in which I can find no flaw, she knows nothing about the robbery."

"I believe that now, and cannot understand why the robbers should want to steal her away."

"And they seemed to have an unreasoning hatred of the camera."

"I can't understand that, either."

"Do you know how that black bag got into your house? I am willing to admit that a man who was borne in unconscious did not carry it."

"I have absolutely no idea. George Greenland visited the place, and was roughly received by Adolphus and his mother. Why, after showing that faithfulness they deserted us at night, when we were to be visited by robbers, I can't imagine. But the man is here, and perhaps your honor can get something out of him."

"We'll come to that. Chief, from what source did you receive the information that a big blond man drove a big bay bony horse into Yale's farmyard the day after the Raymond robbery, and had in his wagon a big black bag?"

"I received the information from a man who gives his name as Edward Smith, says he lives in the village of Prospect, near Trenton Falls, and his story goes on that he was driving toward Utica and saw the big blond man drive into Yale's farmyard. He said that the contents of the bag were of soft metal, not steel or iron."

"He had a sharp ear, that Edward Smith. Where is he now?"

"I don't know, just at this moment."

The magistrate looked alarmed, and then vexed.

"But you knew, didn't you, chief, that this Smith might prove a very important witness?"

"I did know it, but I wasn't going to give it away to him. He came to me early on Saturday morning and made specific in-

quiries about the reward of fifty thousand dollars Mr. Raymond has offered for the first clue or evidence that leads to the apprehension and conviction of the thieves. Instead of holding him in custody I wrote down his information, and let him go."

"Were you not afraid that he would escape if this investigation did not turn out his way?"

"No. It has turned out his way so far except that both Miss Wayne and Yale were in the house, and he said nothing about that. Moreover, one of my best men is about twenty feet behind him no matter where he goes, and there is no danger of his escaping."

"Good. Where is that man—Adolphus, come here."

The big blond strode with heavy feet and imperturbable face to the bench.

"What is your name?"

"Vell, de laty, she call me Adolphus."

"I know, but what is your real name?"

"Karl."

"Karl what?"

"No, Karl Wenn."

"Don't dare fool with me!" thundered the judge. "Don't spring gags about what and when on this court. What is your name?"

"Yah! You mak foolishness yourselluf! I tells you my name iss Karl Wenn! Vat I care about diss court?"

"I'll——"

"Don't get mad, judge," said the chief, smothering a laugh. "I have heard the name among a certain set of foreigners near Trenton Falls. They are Bohemians or something—glass workers in the new factory."

"How do you spell it?"

"W—E—N—N."

"Oh. Now, Karl Wenn, did you drive that big bay bony horse into Mr. Yale's farmyard?"

"No."

"Did you carry a black bag in there?"

"No."

"Why did you leave the Yale house on Friday?"

"Ha! I gif dem split heads ven I catch 'em. Tamn!"

"Tell us."

"Vell, I go vor to veed dem horse ant my chickens. My mudder, she sday all de time mid dem mans ant womans. Vell, I am in de parn mit de horse, ant two mans gome in, knock me town, ant tie my hants ant legs."

"Yes, go on."

"Den dey tage me out ant trow me in de woods."

"Yes?"

"Well, my mudder gets avraid by me bein' away, ant gomes to look. She ton't find me. She sday all night in de shandy ant finds me in de mornin'."

"Go sit down."

The judge, amid a silence that was painful, studied the manuscript before him.

"From whom did you get the information that the two prisoners were in Yale's farmhouse?" the judge now asked the chief.

"From George Greenland."

"George Greenland!"

"George Greenland to the bar!" thundered the clerk.

Greenland, looking far from happy, walked before the judge.

"You visited Yale's place and tried to enter the house. What was your object?"

"Mr. Raymond's arguments had convinced me that Yale was a party to the robbery. Naturally, I believed he would go to his own place, since that was his primary object in leaving New York. I hung about until I was sure Miss Wayne was there. I did not see Yale. I did try to get inside the kitchen, and nearly had my head broken by an old hag with a broomstick, and my face almost smashed in by Karl Wenn."

"Did you know anything about the black bag?"

"I did not, sir."

"Now," said the judge, "somebody put that black bag in that house, and I am going to know who did it. There is some queer mystery in this case that seems baffling but which will be simple enough when we find the key. Mr. Raymond!"

Mr. Raymond rose and moved slowly down the aisle toward the judge. But the strong man who had controlled thousands of workers and millions of money had vanished. He had aged ten years in a week.

His face was seamed and furrowed, and he tottered. An expression of pity came upon Beverly's face, and upon Yale's.

"Mr. Raymond," began the judge kindly, "you have heard all this testimony. Produce that bag."

The chief nodded to a policeman, who brought forward a bag.

"Mr. Raymond, do you identify these articles as some of Miss Raymond's wedding presents?"

"I can easily identify the candelabra, your honor. I was partly instrumental in its purchase. A little girl whom my daughter had taken as a protégée—I need not go into details, your honor. The little girl was poor, and wanted to give Nancy something. I helped the thing along and we purchased this candelabra."

"Now," said the magistrate, with his most judicial air, which had chilled the heart of more than a few people in that courtroom during his magistracy, "we have advanced so far in this investigation: these pieces of silver are part of the booty stolen from Mr. Raymond's house. In some mysterious manner they, in this black bag, were conveyed to Yale's house on Old Mill Farm. Why, does not yet appear.

"On Friday night the house was visited by at least two burglars, one of whom was knocked down by Yale with a chair. Now, who were these burglars? How did they know the silver was in the house? How was this small portion separated from the rest, and why? Also, why are these new burglars freshly injected into the case? Were they after this silver or did they expect to find money?"

"Neither!"

The clear, ringing, bell-like tone leaped from the lips of Beverly Wayne. Her radiant face, in its wreath of unfastened hair, was turned toward the judge, and her splendid arm was outstretched and a white finger pointed.

"You may be a judge and may be able to read minds and faces," she continued. "But I am a girl who has fought. I have trampled on schemes as subtle as this, and will trample on this one now.

"Those men who broke into the house did not come to steal. This silver was put in that house to be found by the police so that Kenneth Yale and I would be arrested. An application has been made for the reward of fifty thousand dollars. With Kenneth and me convicted on this circumstantial evidence the man called Edward Smith would claim the—"

There was a commotion at the door, and and a man showing great eagerness and waving a large envelope in his hand made his way to the rail. It was Mr. Phrey, the Broad Street photographer.

"Your honor," he said, "may I interrupt the proceedings of the court?"

"Does what you have to say bear on the Raymond robbery?"

"I think it solves the mystery, sir."

"Proceed."

"Your honor, on the morning following the robbery Miss Wayne brought me her camera. She wanted a new reel of film and wished to leave the old one to be developed. She said she was not in a hurry, and I forgot all about the films. But when I heard of the arrest of Miss Wayne and Mr. Yale I bethought me of them, and this morning I began to develop them.

"There is one, which I have here, that is important. Your honor will remember that Miss Wayne testified at her former hearing that during the night of the robbery she took a flashlight picture of the wedding presents."

"I remember that statement."

"Here is the flashlight she took. Regard it with care. It is a remarkably clear flashlight picture. There is the tableful of silver. Now, if your honor looks close, you will see, crouching on all fours, under the serving table near the buffet, the figure of a man with a scared face. You will also see, peering from behind a portière, another frightened face. Those men, I believe, are the robbers, disturbed, but not deterred, by Miss Wayne's entrance to the room."

"Ha! Hand me that film!"

"I have some prints," said Mr. Phrey.

He handed one to the judge, one to the chief, one to Beverly and one to Wayne. All four studied the picture.

"Oh, oh," said Yale. "Your honor, that man under the serving table is the man I saw at Whitesboro, the man with the short hair and prison face."

"And by all that's great," cried the chief, with more excitement than he had shown in twenty years, "that fellow peeking from behind the curtain is Edward Smith, the one who gave me the information and who wants the fifty thousand dollars reward. See the game? He could afford to lose these few pieces of silver to convict Yale and Miss Wayne and get the big money."

"You are both wrong," cried Mr. Raymond, "or else you are both right and I am the victim of rascals in whom I trusted. Prison face? Bosh! Edward Smith? Bosh! Damn them! Why these are Dick Whipple, who lives on Oneida Street, and his brother, Jim Whipple, who works for him.

"In order to have my house fit for the wedding of my daughter I resolved to have the downstairs rooms redecorated. I had

seen Whipple's sign, and, as he was a near neighbor, being close to the Parkway and Boulevard, I employed him and his brother James. James *did* have short hair and a peculiar complexion. They finished work about four o'clock on the day before the robbery, and of course, saw most of the presents, knew the plan of the house, and the habits of the household."

"This Dick Whipple has not long been a resident of Utica, I suppose," said the judge.

"No," answered the chief, "and his name is not Dick Whipple at all, neither is it Edward Smith. I didn't know *him,* but I know the chap with the short hair. *His* name is Pete Mennish, and he was sentenced to ten years in Auburn prison one year ago, and escaped about a month since. He lived in Rome.

"It is all over, your honor. These men are not far away, nor the women. They worked the plan of which Mr. Raymond was a victim. They *do* decorate interiors, and having located their booty, go and take it. I'll have the four of them before to-morrow night, and all the wedding presents will be in Mr. Raymond's house by Wednesday evening."

"This accounts for the smashed camera and the attack on Miss Wayne," said the judge. "The robbers feared that Miss Wayne saw them, or that she had taken them in the picture. What they did not know was that Miss Wayne had exchanged films at Mr. Phrey's place of business. Mr. Phrey, you have the thanks of the court. Prisoners are discharged with the good will and hope of the court that the future will bring them happiness."

"My child, my child," sobbed Mr. Raymond, crushing Beverly to his bruised old breast, "can you ever forget and forgive the stupid cruelty of an old fool?"

"Sure," said Beverly, laughing with eyes full of tears. "It's all over. Let bygones be bygones and dead dogs be buried. Let's all go home and tell Nance all about it."

And Mr. Raymond, young and strong again, led Beverly, Yale, and Greenland to his automobile outside.

The reunion at Raymond's house has nothing to do with the story.

The chief made good his word. Before Tuesday had come to a close the two interior decorators and their wives had been placed behind bars. On Wednesday two long coffin shaped boxes containing the wedding presents arrived at Raymond's house.

"And now, since everything is as it should be, and Yale and Beverly have forgiven us for our foolish suspicions," said Greenland, "I am going to be married next week, and they are going to stay to the wedding."

"We have one of our own to take care of," added Yale. "We are two waifs upon the turbulent stream of life and desire a rest from whirlpools and rapids. We are going to be married, eh, Bev?"

"Why not make it double—an order for four instead of two?" suggested Greenland.

"They can't," said Nancy, "though it would be lovely and delightful. One of the contracting parties must live in the county where the licenses are issued."

"Don't worry. Beverly and I will get our license. I am a resident of the county, and my home is Old Mill Farm, on West Canada Creek. And——"

"It will be our home afterward, too," said Beverly. "I am sick of hitting the high places. A rocking chair for Sister Beverly from now on."

They all laughed and Mr. Raymond did some writing.

"This will be honored at the Oneida County Bank to-morrow," he said, handing a check for fifty thousand dollars to Beverly, who almost fainted as she protested. "Take it? Of course you will take it. It is yours. You have earned it. In every Utica paper my offer of a reward for the first reliable clue has been printed. You furnished that clue when you took the flashlight picture. Now I'm going to have one good sleep. This is a happy house once more."

It was, indeed, a happy house. Mrs. Raymond lay on a couch near her husband to soothe her exhausted nerves. Greenland and Nancy resumed the thread of an uninterrupted courtship that had been so near disaster.

Yale and Beverly had business of their own. Their short, swift courtship, was of the passionate, whirlwind order, as might be expected, and yet it was tempered by the repression natural to such self-contained natures.

They were not as sentimental as Nancy nor as sulky as Greenland. The world was theirs and they enjoyed it all.

Beverly made a deposit of her fifty thousand dollars for future investment. Then they went together to visit Williams at St.

Luke's Hospital, and found him so much improved that the doctors felt certain of his speedy recovery.

Next Yale gave an order for two automobiles.

"But why two?" asked Beverly. "It isn't like horseback riding. Can't we ride together?"

"We will, my red-headed friend. One of these is for Williams, whose other machine was smashed in our service."

"In mine, you mean."

"Well, that's mine, too."

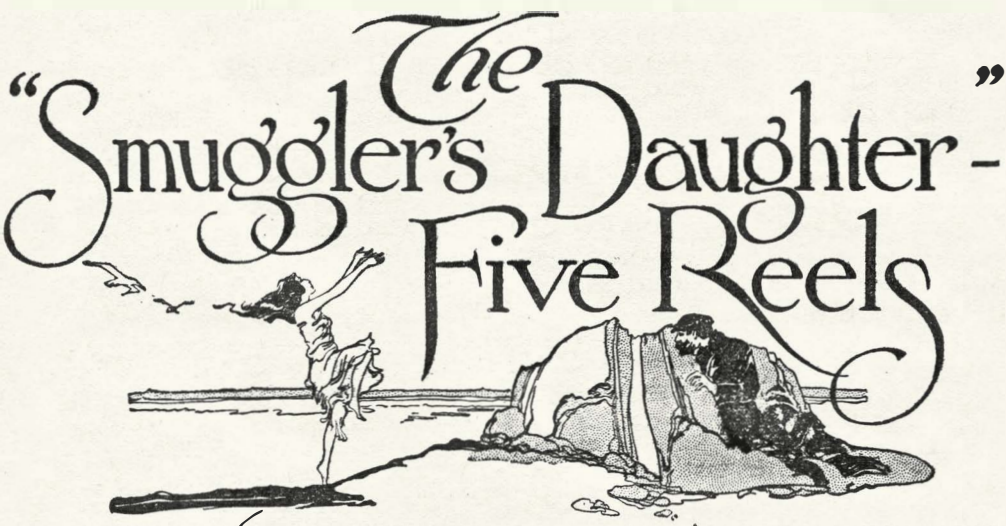
"Oh! boss! But don't you call *me* a redhead."

"I'll flatter your vanity no more. There I was worshipping your violet eyes, and you told me they were blue. I thought your hair was auburn, but now I'm sure it's red. Come along and see the color of a diamond. I'll treat you to an engagement ring at Broadbent's."

And they tramped gaily down Genesee street together.

THE END.

"The Smuggler's Daughter"—Five Reels



by Perley Poore Sheehan

"THERE are accidents in our business," said Calvin Moore, "just as there are accidents in every other business. Some of them are happy, and some of them are otherwise. I feel terribly bad about it when I've crippled a man."

If Cal wasn't so modest, he would need no introduction here, as they say at the banquet. For Cal Moore, in the world of moving pictures, is regarded as one of the best directors who ever came out of the West, where so many of the big men crop up. And, incidentally, a director is the main brace of the whole moving picture trade. He is the Czar. He is the man who keeps his hat on and chews a dry cigar while talking to the president of the corporation.

You can't blame a director if he sometimes features his own name at the expense of the author's. Human nature; that's all!

But Cal wasn't that kind. He looked like Dustin Farnum. And he could act, too. Every now and then, in a tight pinch, he would jump into the "picture" and tighten up a big scene.

Still, both his name and his face were as unfamiliar to the millions who annually laughed and wept over the productions of the Daguerre Motion Picture Corporation as the names and faces of said millions were unknown to Cal. And, at that, he was as apt as not to be one of the millions himself. In his off-hours, which weren't many, he was as much of a moving picture fan as any one.

"A lot of my own success—I'm speaking about the financial end of it—were pure accidents," Cal went on. "Any director, if he's honest, will tell you the same thing. In the first place, we are working with the

subtlest, cussedest, most contrary, most inspiring and most changeable tools in the world—the more or less human beings known as moving picture actors. Then, there are all the tricks and uncertainties of photography. Some mighty queer things happen inside of the camera. Some mighty queer spots and flashes come out when the films are developed.

"I could tell you of a case that happened once out in California while I was still new to the business. Right in the middle of a big scene, when the film came out of the dark room, we found a girl's face like a vision. The girl was beautiful. None of us had ever seen her. How she got into the film was a mystery until—

"But that wasn't the accident that I was going to tell you about."

Cal also chewed on a dry cigar. Mrs. Cal came in—as pretty as a picture. She begged pardon for the interruption.

"I just wanted to tell you, dear," she said, "that I've looked over the boudoir-set for the 'Princess Incognito' feature. I think you have a find in that new technical man. The set was perfect—simple, good taste, very rich."

"Great!" exclaimed Cal; "we ought to be able to get to work on that scene early tomorrow morning. Tell Levine to notify the studio and get the people there at eight-thirty sharp."

Mrs. Cal was gone.

"One of the happiest accidents of all," said Cal with a glint of sentiment in the depths of his steel-blue eyes. "I don't know exactly where I'd be to-day if it wasn't for her—still out on the coast most likely, wearing chaps and doing Indian stuff. That's the way I got my start.

"I was unmarried when I came East. That was five years ago when the Daguerre Corporation was a struggling infant, a sort of adopted child. President Arnitz had just taken hold of it. He had come on from Chicago with good backing and plenty of ideas.

"He found the Daguerre fighting for life. The studio was an old stable up a back alley. There was one director and cameraman. They were both the same person, and his early training had been chiefly acquired by taking tintypes through the Middle West.

"But the Daguerre already had a reputation. When moving pictures were still a scientific curiosity the Daguerre was filming street-scenes and county fairs. You remember, every one else at that time was doing fairy-tales and costume-stuff.

"Arnitz began right away to dig into that financial backing. The way he spent money made a record that the trade has been trying to keep up with ever since. It was fine. It was stirring. Only, in a short time, he discovered that he wasn't getting his money back.

"The people behind him started to squeal. They began to have their doubts. They began to think that it might be better, after all, to play the game safe and sure.

"'Look here,' said Arnitz; 'we're in the biggest business in the world, and to get anywhere we've got to be big ourselves. This thing's a baby. It costs something to bring a baby up, and no baby can be expected to be a big revenue-producer before it's out of the cradle. But this baby will surprise you, if you'll only help it to live,' and a lot more just like that.

"He was making the fight of his life. It was at that time that he called me in. I had been making the fight of my life, too. I guess it was the fact that we got together at a time like that that has kept me with the Daguerre ever since.

"I had never been East. All my work up to that time had been in Santa Barbara. You can do some great stuff in California with very little money, if the luck runs your way and you are willing to work twenty hours a day.

"Out there we never had a dark studio. That's what they call a studio where artificial light is needed. Out there, all you have to do to get all the light you want is just to build your drawing-room set under the open sky. I saw a fellow in evening-dress playing the part of an English lord, in what was supposed to be the king's palace, step on a live snake, once. We cut out that part of the film and used it in a feature entitled 'The Curse of Drink.'

"Arnitz didn't know anything about me except that I was supposed to be a director, and he was going after directors like a robin after worms.

"It's always like that when a company is new—or old, for that matter. We're flooded with manuscripts, and if I came into our office and didn't find a hundred actors there crazy for a job I'd think there had been a panic or something.

"But there never has been enough directors. There never will be. The work's

too hard. You've got to know too much. And—this above all—the luck just must run in your direction; the majority of accidents have got to be with you and not against you.

"I wasn't so sure of this in those days as I am now; but the rough and tumble way of doing things out West had taught me a lot; so had the awful howls that went up every time I wanted to spend a dollar. And I was good and ready for a change, didn't have any strings tied to me. I came East feeling that I had the punch.

"I didn't keep the feeling very long.

"About the first night that I was in New York I felt as if I'd like to take one of the old property Colts out of my trunk and shoot somebody.

"I'd had a date to see President Arnitz at nine o'clock in the morning. I'd gone around to his office all spruced up. I meant to make a good impression on him. I had it all doped out to get the jump on him from the start.

" 'Where are you stopping, Mr. Moore?' he would ask.

" 'Oh, I have taken a small suite for the time being at the Pazzaza,' I'd tell him.

"And of course he would see right away that I was a top-notcher. The Pazzaza wasn't the name of the hotel, but its prices were so fancy you might have called it that. It was almost the best hotel in town.

"All dressed up, I mosied around to President Arnitz's office promptly at nine o'clock, with my smile all ready for him. Perhaps you remember.

"In those days the outer office of the Daguerre was about as big as a hall bedroom. In one corner of it there was a telephone switchboard with a small boy in charge, and this boy held people up while he telephoned back into the rest of the establishment to find out whether the visitors were welcome or not.

"I told him who I was and whom I wished to see. I was feeling pretty chesty, although I confess that the sight of that outer office had given me something of a shock. It wasn't precisely what I had expected.

"All the way from Sacramento I had been talking to myself and imagining things about that million-dollar corporation and the luxurious East and the palatial offices of President Arnitz. You know how a young fellow lets himself go when he starts out on his first rainbow trail.

"The kid telephoned to some place or other back of the board partition and told me: 'President Arnitz says that he's busy and if you'll sit down for a while.' I sat down. There was one other chair in the place besides the one that the boy occupied.

"There was a dollar alarm clock on top of the switchboard, and I watched the hands. I watched them for seven minutes, and each second of those seven minutes I was expecting President Arnitz to come out of the door in the board partition and apologize for keeping me waiting.

"Then an old woman came in. I recognized the type. She was seedy. Her nose was red and her skirt dragged, but she was an actress. The good Lord only knows where a lot of these poor old has-beens earned anything at all before the movies gave them a chance to pick up a dollar now and then.

"She waited. I gave her my chair. About a minute later an Indian chief came in. He had his long hair tucked up into an imitation Stetson, but otherwise he was dressed like a white man. He grunted something; the boy telephoned, and *Deerfoot* decided to wait.

"After that they began arriving thick and fast—women with babies, old men, young men with velour hats and too much hair, young girls and then girls who tried to look young. And all this time no sign of Mr. Arnitz.

"I was pretty sore. I had about decided to be a little offish when Arnitz finally did begin to apologize. Still, I kept my temper and went on waiting—I don't know for how long. I was hot, but I had plenty to look at.

"I had never seen so many girls in my life with curly hair. They all had curly hair, except the blondes; and they were all wearing it Mary Pickford style down their backs. There had always been plenty of girls hanging around the studios out in Santa Barbara, but here the types were different, and I was wondering if they were going to be as hard to manage.

"Finally, the crowd got so big that it was filling up the hall outside and part of the stairway. For the last half-hour I had been getting a cramp in one leg and another in my disposition. Just along about the time that I had decided to start something rough, the crowd pressed back to leave an open passage, and a gorgeous bird-of-paradise actress came sweeping in.

"She had on so much make-up that she could have gone on in almost any scene just as she was. She would have registered *Queen Elizabeth* if she hadn't been dressed for the title rôle of 'The Heiress to Millions.' The worst of it was she was only about twenty years old and had been spoiled for life.

"I didn't recognize her. To show you how ignorant I was I didn't even recognize her when some one whispered it:

" 'There goes Lollie Goodelle!'

"She swept right past everybody, as haughty as Hortense. She didn't take the trouble to have herself announced. The kid at the switchboard jumped right over and opened the inner door for her. She sailed on in without even thanking him.

"I didn't get a line on her until I began to hear other things that the crowd let drop as soon as she was out of hearing. Then I remembered. She was one of the leading lights of Broadway, all right—one of those flivver-lights that flash right up for a couple of months and then go out forever.

"Her name had come up with a rich man's son. She was just getting all the advertising in the world. But she was no actress and never would be.

"I think that it was the thing that the girl stood for, more than anything else, that just sort of crumpled me up.

"You see, I love the stage, always have loved it. And I've always stood for the dignity and honor of it. I can tell the difference between a ham and an actor a mile away. And I've always hated more than anything else what Lollie Goodelle stood for. I got it from my father.

"So I walked right out of the office of the Daguerre Corporation before the crowd could properly tighen up again. I did leave a message. I told the boy at the switchboard where I was stopping. I also told him that if Arnitz—leaving out the mister—wanted to see me he could come and look for me there, and that maybe I'd be in and maybe I wouldn't.

"The room in the Pazzaza was costing me ten dollars a day. I've often paid big money for misery and discomfort since then, but never anything quite like that.

"I sat there looking at the red wall-paper and imitation onyx for the rest of the morning and all afternoon. I didn't have much more money than enough to keep me more than a week or so at this rate. I had left California with a splurge.

"In New York I had no friends. I knew well enough that I was unknown to the trade. The thought of going around and waiting in other offices as I had waited that morning in the office of the Daguerre gave me chills and fever. If the Daguerre had kept me waiting among the misfits and the mavericks, I could well imagine the sort of welcome I was likely to get from the other companies. But I wasn't going back to California—not after the send-off I had had from my friends out there.

"About seven o'clock that evening the telephone bell rang, and some one was asking if this was Mr. Moore. It was a woman's voice. She was giving me an address over on West Forty-third street, where some one wanted to see me. Then the wires got tangled or something, and we were cut off.

"I didn't get the name, but I had the address, all right. Some one had seen my name on the register. That was the way I figured it out. I was that mean and sad and homesick that I would have welcomed the attention of a yellow dog.

"The address turned out to be that of a boarding-house. It was a theatrical boarding-house of the very cheapest, dingiest kind. You know the sort—handkerchiefs ironed on the window-panes, beer by the bucket, sausage frizzled over the gas-jet, small-time people practising their turns on every floor.

"It was the landlady who opened the door. I could tell it by her looks. They all look alike.

" 'I am Mr. Moore,' I began.

" 'Second-floor-front,' she said; and that was all I got from her, except a stare and a smell of cheap perfume.

"The tenant of the second-floor-front was a man. I confess that that was the first thing I noticed; also that he was a perfect stranger; also that he was in his shirt sleeves and appeared to be busy with a lot of papers and things.

"It was a second or two before he turned around, although he had told me to come in. He made up for his delay, though, the moment he did turn. He came striding toward me across the room with his hand out.

"He was about my age. Only he looked run-down and overworked. He had a big mop of crinkly hair that stuck up straight from the top of his high forehead. Otherwise he was sort of bald.

"I didn't know him from Adam, but—do you know—all of a sudden I was liking him and feeling sorry for him. I could see just how ambitious he was, what sort of a dreamer he must be.

" 'Hello,' I said, sort of dazed; 'I am Mr. Moore.'

" 'Hello,' he said, as he shook hands, and I could see all the little wrinkles of worry and thought and humor around his eyes.

" 'I'm sorry to have missed you,' he said; 'sorry to have kept you waiting.' He must have seen that I was puzzled, for he introduced himself. 'I'm Arnitz.'

"Talk about the punch!

" 'I can see that you are flabbergasted,' Arnitz went on, 'to find me in a dump like this; and the contrast must indeed be striking to one fresh from the Pazzaza. But, you see,' he explained, ' I've done some of the hardest work of my life and had all my biggest dreams in a place like this. There were eight of us children, and my mother kept a boarding-house for theatrical folks out in Chicago.'

"Well, I wasn't mad at Mr. Arnitz any more. I still may have been a little sore; but by the time he had finished his story I was with him heart and soul. It appears that he had been tied up all day with his financial backers, and then with Lollie Goodelle, and then with all of them together, plus Lollie's lawyer, her author and her press agent.

"Here was what he was up against.

"In the first flush days of the company, while every one was feeling as if he had all the money in the world, a gentleman named Harris—since out of the company—had signed up Lollie Goodelle as a star to appear in six five-reel features at fifteen thousand dollars a production. Just that! Lollie and Harris had been the best of playfellows at that time. They weren't any more. But the contract stood—cast-iron, unbreakable except by Lollie herself.

"The thing wouldn't have been so bad if Lollie herself had been any good, but she wasn't.

"Like a whole lot of girls who can look perfectly stunning in musical comedy when they're dressed right and don't have to move around too much or say anything, she was absolutely impossible in front of a camera. The worst of it was, she was crazy to appear on the films.

"That was about the time that Sarah Bernhardt and a lot of other great ones had taken up the silent drama, and Lollie was progressive if she wasn't anything else. She had a good press-agent, too, and the newspapers had stood for a lot of dope about what she was going to do, and the way that 'this new field of art' appealed to her, and all that sort of stuff.

"There was a time-clause in her contract, moreover, so there seemed to be no way to get rid of her by just stalling.

"Thus far, she had spoiled about ninety thousand feet of perfectly good film, which was serious enough for a company beginning to hedge on expense. Then there was the loss in time and money so far as the rest of the cast was concerned.

"The loss was even greater in the matter of directors. The Daguerre had started out with at least three decent ones. Lollie had put them all into the scrap-heap. They could drill her for a week, after a fashion, although she wasn't the sort to take orders from people she considered beneath her. Then she'd come on in a scene and plop her eyes straight into the camera.

"She just couldn't keep her eyes off the camera any more than a sparrow could keep its eyes off of a black snake.

"Arnitz was almost crying by the time he got through telling me about it. Once free of Lollie Goodelle, he said, and he could make the Daguerre Corporation the biggest thing of its kind in the world—the biggest and the most artistic.

"That was the thing that appealed to him, and to me—Art, spelled with a capital —the newest and latest and perhaps the last great art-form the world is ever to have.

"It was up to me to break Lollie or make her. That was what it amounted to. I could see that it wasn't going to be any cinch. That one look I had had at her in the morning would have been enough even if I hadn't heard a word. The only kind of man that could have handled her efficiently would be a cave-man with a good heavy club.

"Then, I had an inspiration. I thought of Jim Welcher, who had been my chief assistant out on the Coast. He was a cave-man, all right, and I knew that he'd come on the jump if I raised my finger."

Moore paused in his story and looked up. Mrs. Moore was standing at the door waiting for a chance to speak. She was as pretty as a picture, standing there. She begged pardon for the interruption.

"Jim wants to know if the carpenter is to begin work on the church-set or the opium-joint."

"Tell Jim to step in here for a moment," said Cal.

At the door through which Mrs. Cal had just gone there appeared a stout man with glasses on the end of his nose and a stubble on his chin. He was neither very well dressed nor strikingly clean. But he had the unruffled poise of a hippopotamus.

He received his instructions without a word.

"That's Jim," said Cal, when the apparition was gone.

He resumed the story where he had left off.

"Arnitz and I put our heads together, and Arnitz agreed with me. He would have agreed with anything, just then. It was a case of getting the Lollie Goodelle business straightened out or going out of business altogether.

"We telegraphed a hurry-call to Jim. He was with us inside of a week, and we got ready to take up the work where the last director had left it off.

"I had hopes at first that we could salve something of those ninety thousand feet which had already been taken with Lollie doing her Hortense right through the middle of them. I went over most of those films myself with a magnifying glass.

"I never got so sick of a girl's face in my life. Lollie simply would not register. Some faces are like that. It's a matter of the eyes, principally, and a lot of other things.

"Then I went over the 'scripts that had been written for her. There was some fool clause in her contract which even regulated that. Lollie was not to appear in a production unless she had approved the scenario. You can imagine what that meant.

"They were all alike. You know—Cinderella stuff! Girl starts out poor and sweet and innocent and winds up wearing diamonds! It was to groan! When Lollie was in calico she looked about as innocent as the Rube in a burlesque show. When she had her jewels on she looked like herself, and that was even worse.

"The best of the 'scripts—and they were all rotten—was entitled 'The Maid from Afar.' She told me so herself. This was her favorite. And do you know why? Because she liked the sound of that darnfool title when it was attached to her name: 'Lollie Goodelle in The Maid from Afar.'

"I had Jim Welcher there to help me, at any rate. I didn't mince matters with Jim. I had been stalling along with Lollie waiting for Jim to get there, and I told Jim so.

" 'Jim,' I said, 'you've got to do it. Until we've put over at least one of these productions,' I said, 'you're the director and I'm your assistant—that is,' I was careful to add, 'whenever we're working Lollie. You're a two-handed man,' I reminded him, 'and you can handle a woman like that where she'd make me look like thirty cents.'

"Personally, I had discovered during those first few days before Jim came that I could never have been able to handle the job alone. I was sensitive. Women always had frightened me. It must have been the cowboy in me.

"Fellows who have ridden around on the plains a lot with nothing but steers and their memories to look at are apt to get that way—thinking women are supernatural, a little higher than the angels, a sort of cross between your own mother and the girl on the cover of a last year's magazine.

"But Jim had never been troubled with imagination—except once. And he had had a lot of experience with women, too. I always left it to him to tell a girl that she wouldn't do, out there in Santa Barbara; when, as often as not, they had come from Denver or Kansas City to get a job.

"There was something final about Jim. No girl ever thought of crying to him, or pleading with him, or hoping he'd change his mind, any more than if he had been a thunderstorm or a chunk of beef.

"Jim had been a horse wrangler in his early days. Even yet, down there in Broadway, whenever a horse goes past those Indian eyes of his light up, and if he cared to he could tell you all about that horse—its disposition, its likes and dislikes, whether it was happy or not, and the right way to handle it.

"He doesn't look the part, but he's always been like that with women, too.

"He says it himself: 'Wrangle horses, you can wrangle women.'

"I saw that same sort of a look in his eyes the first time that I pointed Lollie out to him. She was all powdered and painted up, and she was wearing clothes and things that made all the women within a block turn and stare. Jim himself was staring at her as if she were some new sort of mustang.

"Jim hardly had anything to say. I don't blame him very much. Speech seems to be an effort to him, his voice is so heavy; and he's always hoarse.

"Well, he sort of heaved himself up.

" 'I don't know how to direct,' he said.

" 'I know you don't,' I replied, 'but you know how to take orders, and you've always been a wonder when it came to wrangling that sort of stock.'

"Jim sort of grunted. The race was on.

"I'll never forget the first time that Jim and Lollie got acquainted. I was the official introducer. I had got Jim fixed up somewhat for the occasion—a fresh shave, lots of bayrum, a red necktie, the biggest pair of patent-leather shoes in New York. I got him to keep his glasses in his pocket.

"I hauled one of the throne-chairs out of the property room and installed Jim in it in a corner of my office. I had just given him his final instructions when Lollie breezed in.

"I had been feeding her up quite a little with the kind of talk she liked—all about her temperament, and exactly why the public was crazy about her, and how jealous the other girls in the studio were every time she showed up.

"I was getting her ready for the jolt that meeting Jim was bound to give her. She got the jolt, all right.

" 'Oh, Miss Goodelle,' I said, 'this is Mr. Welcher, your new director. He's the one who discovered Pavlowa and also Mary Garden. Griffith is a pupil of his. Daniel Frohman wanted him, but when he found out that you were to be the star—'

"She was looking at Jim without any great enthusiasm, but with interest enough, as if he had been some sort of a wild animal. Jim broke in on me.

" 'What'd you say her name was?' he asked, in that deep, hoarse voice of his.

"That's the way it began. And when I went out of the office and left them together I sort of had the feeling that the affairs of the Daguerre Moving Picture Corporation were not as black as they had been before Jim came on.

"There were still enough hopeless features of the case, though, to drive any one to the verge of insanity.

"Lollie could be tamed, all right, but no power on earth could make an actress of her. No power on earth could make those shifty eyes of hers register. She looked like sin.

"We were still wasting good material. We were as far from turning 'The Maid from Afar' into a successful feature as ever. Some pretty rotten films get over in the course of the year, take it by and large, but I knew where the limit was. And, besides, I wasn't looking for that sort of a limit either.

"I was thinking of Arnitz, and I was thinking of my own future. Likewise, I was thinking of the Daguerre. If there ever was a producing corporation in need of a success it was the Daguerre just then.

"Jim did a lot of thinking and grunting; but, as usual, he had nothing to say, not even when I jumped on him. My conscience hurt me whenever I did jump on him, too; for Jim was doing his best. Not only that. He was taking all sorts of punishment from Lollie Goodelle herself.

"You never saw a lady in a temper unless you saw Lollie in one of her favorite moods. She shied a property-rock at Jim one day and came within an ace of braining him.

"Great comedy stuff, if we could only have got it; but it was just like Lollie to pull all this up in the office, or while the camera-man had his back turned, or was changing films. She was that kind.

"Jim worked several innovations in the directing profession which I have never seen tried elsewhere.

"We can use only two walls of a set in a dark studio. That's why you often see such a breeze blowing the tablecloth around in a kitchen scene or the papers blowing off of the desk when the desperate broker commits suicide. It isn't because the window is open. It's because the two walls of the room you don't see aren't there at all, their place being required for the lights and the camera.

"Jim's first innovation was to have that throne-chair installed in every set; only, it was out of the picture and for him to use. He'd sit there, silent and glum, making Lollie pose for him. It was just her vanity that made her do it at first, but I guess that by the time she wanted to cut it out she had already lost something of her independence.

"It was when Jim tried to get her to do real work that the excitement got tense.

"The first time that Lollie went through a whole scene and discovered that there hadn't been any camera there she began to pick at her spangles and twitch and hiss. It was the signal for Jim to spring his second innovation.

"This was a Chinese gong, about a yard in diameter. A couple of carpenters rolled it up to where Jim sat. He hit it a blow and it let out a roar like a lion. After that he gave all his signals with it and all his criticisms.

"One bang meant to stop the action; two to start over again, and the long roll, which sounded like election night on Broadway, meant that the business was rotten.

"It was on the second gong day that Lollie threw the rock at Jim. I think she'd have chucked the job right then, but it seems that her lawyer had warned her to stick it out.

"We had a pretty big studio by that time. Some days we were working as many as five companies at once. And it got so that we had to put up notices in all the dressing-rooms that any one stopping work or running to see what it was about when that gong sounded would be fined.

"Everybody connected with the Daguerre knew all about Jim and Lollie by now, and there wasn't one of them who Lollie hadn't insulted in some way or other. If we'd have let them, they'd have been there all day—Jim sitting there in the throne-chair tapping on the gong, while Lollie tore her hair and called him names.

"Arnitz himself was there two or three times.

" 'How do you think it's coming out?' he asked.

" 'Great,' I told him.

" 'But she can go into court,' he said, 'and show how much work she's done, and the chances are that we'll have to come across with half of that eighty thousand, if not all of it.'

"To tell the truth, I have been worried about that part of the deal myself. Several times I had broached the matter to Jim. 'I'll fix her,' he'd say, and that was all I could get out of him.

"I went it blind. I said to Arnitz: 'You leave it to Jim, he'll fix her.' Arnitz was game. Besides, Jim had become his only hope as well as mine.

"Shall I confess it? I believe that secretly I was hoping that Lollie would get sick—or something like that. No danger, though!

"I had found out a lot about her. She had a father still working somewhere in a boiler factory. His name was Snugger, or Smugger—I forget which. Her mother still took in washing over in the old home-flat on Eleventh Avenue, where Lollie had been brought up to the music of the freight trains.

"The funny part of it is that Jim never protested. He took everything that she handed him and never made a chirp. But he was like a bulldog. That was the nature of him. He never let up in a scrap. That was why I had been so sure of him.

"And something else. I could see that, in spite of all her display of cussedness and temper, he was getting some sort of a hold over Lollie. I couldn't understand it. But there are so many things that a director never understands where the women of his company are concerned that this phase of the question scarcely came into my mind until a little later on.

"At any rate, Jim was using his gong less and less.

"One day Jim came to me and proposed that we go out on location. In this picture, that meant over to the Jersey shore under the Palisades. It was a location that Jim and I had picked out the Sunday before.

"That, by the way, is a part of the director's work that the fans seldom think about. They see some 'beloved idol of the silent drama' take a tumble over a cliff. They don't stop to remember that Mr. Idol has a safe and solid stirrup of leather and piano wire around his ankle to hold him safe, and that long before he took the fall some lonely director poked around that cliff to get the location and then went through the act himself three or four times to show how it ought to be done.

"I did have hopes of this scene. The camera was to be placed well up on a shelf of the cliff which had to be reached by a rope and ladder. From there we could shoot the river bank down below with a telescopic lens.

"I had it figured out that even the unspeakable Lollie would be presentable at that distance. All that she had to do, moreover, was to 'walk through' a few times dressed in a sort of nightgown and gazing pensively up at the sea-gulls.

" 'It's a fine day,' said Jim. 'Better get this exterior filmed while it's clear. We'll take care of the interiors later on when the little lady has more confidence.'

"I looked at him with a smile. That 'little-lady' stuff where Lollie Goodelle was concerned was some joke.

"We arranged our schedule. Lollie had a limousine that somebody had given her.

It was big enough for a dressing-room, and that's what she used it for the few times that she had thus far been out with us.

"It was agreed that she and Jim should be on the river shore by eleven-thirty. At that time the sun would be just right, sprinkling ripples all over the surface of the Hudson and casting no awkward shadows. Also, it would give Connie Luft, my camera-man, and me time to go around by the top of the cliff and climb down to the shelf from which we were to shoot.

"You know what the country is like over there. There are places where you could toss a cracker to some one down on the shore, but it would take a five-mile détour to get to where the other fellow is without breaking you neck.

"Connie Luft and I were in the little runabout we use when we're out on location. Lollie and Jim were in the big limousine. We parted at the Hoboken Ferry, for they were to take the shore road and we were to go up the hill.

"I remember yet how Lollie looked, all dressed up as if she were going to a reception, sort of grinning, her wicked eyes glittering. And I was mighty glad that I didn't have Jim's place there at the side of her.

"But Jim didn't seem to mind it. He was all dressed up too. That had become a habit of his since he got promoted to a full-blown directorship with a star on his hands. He was leaning back in the upholstry with one of his chins on his bosom and his small eyes closed.

"It seems now that I must have experienced some sort of a shiver when I saw them there together, that I must have had some premonition that the day wasn't going to turn out according to schedule. I know this—that it did recall another time when I saw Jim sitting down with his eyes closed, comfortable, as if he had been asleep.

"I was only a boy then, and Jim was at the height of his horse-wrangling days. My father was on the road with a stock company, and he had sent me to the ranch where Jim worked. That's where we got acquainted.

"On the very first day I had seen a big, dark man taking a nap in the horse-corral. There was only one horse in the corral, and it was showing the whites of its eyes. I found out afterward the horse was a man-killer—just naturally went out of its way to get hold of people.

"It came sneaking up on this man, more like a wolf than a bronk. It was almost on him, when the man opened his eyes. The man never budged, but the broncho gave a snicker and began to run. The man was Jim.

" 'Good-by, Jim,' I called, as he sat there in the big auto.

"I was feeling sorry for him. Afterward I was glad that I did. That little touch of sympathy was to wipe many a sharp word from my conscience, as I went over and over our long acquaintance in the days that followed.

"But, as I said, Jim didn't seem to think there was any occasion for sympathy. I don't believe he even opened his eyes. At any rate, he didn't say anything. The big limousine was still standing there outside the ferry-house, as the runabout with Connie and me in it began to climb the hill. The road turned. The limousine was out of sight, and I was thinking of business again.

"A wild country it was, after a while—woods, wide pasture, rocks, hardly any houses.

"Jim and Lollie had had plenty of time. So had Connie and I. We were in place and had the camera sighted by eleven.

"It was a little pocket scooped right out of the face of the Palisades, and both Connie and I had almost broken our backs getting down to it. I still had both eyes so full of dust that I was half blind. But there was the camera, safe and sound, with a thousand feet of fresh film in its in'ards. The light was perfect.

"So much, and then I was getting the surprise of my life. Was I seeing things? I gouged at my eyes, but what with tears and sand, that merely made matters worse.

" 'Shoot! Shoot!' I ordered, and Connie, with his head under the hood, began to turn the crank.

"Lollie had come running into the location marks down on the shore as pretty and graceful as an escaped leopard. She was dressed for the part as I had dreamed of her being dressed—simple little frock, hair down her back, old shoes.

"That was just the impression I got. But even with my eyes more or less out of commission it was the gracefulness of her and her real acting that was making 'em dizzy.

"Connie tried to talk to me from under his black cloth. I told him that if he

stopped turning that crank or let the girl down there get out of the picture, I'd maim him for life. I think I told him something like that. Anyway, he did what I told him.

"He was winding off the stuff as if his arm was part of a clock, and I could tell by the way his big, fat muscles tightened up that he was on the job for keeps.

"I was thinking of a whole lot of things—of how Arnitz looked that first night we met in the actors' boarding-house, of how all of us had been brought to the edge of ruination by Lollie Goodelle. And I was thinking a lot of old Jim Welcher, too, who was saving all our lives, and how I had cussed poor old Jim out while I should have been buying him flowers.

"The scene was going great. It was going even greater than I could have hoped. The girl down on the shore was putting in a lot of business that we had never talked about. I was telling myself that Jim had hypnotized her. She had cast a look about her, as if to see that the coast was quite clear.

"She did a sort of dance—Greek stuff, like Isadora Duncan—her arms up and her head down. Her loose hair was fluttering in the breeze and the sunshine. Then she stood still for a while with her hands out, as if she were calling some one, and I'll be switched if a flock of gulls didn't come circling around her, closer and closer, looking for something to eat.

"I wondered where Lollie had ever learned that trick, and I was thinking of Jim again. There are some mighty queer things in human nature—none of them queerer than what some men can do with some women.

" 'Get it,' I kept telling Connie.

"Suddenly, those gulls began to squeak and back-water, and they were gone. I saw the reason for it. A big, husky man came running up.

" 'That's Jim,' I said, and I was so crazy-mad at him for dashing into the picture like that that I forgot all about the nice things I had just been telling myself about him. I was so mad that I couldn't say a word.

"I couldn't shout to him. I couldn't tell Connie to cut it. I just stood there as if I'd got a blow on the head.

"But it wasn't very long before I noticed something else. Jim also was in make-up. That's the way I figured it out—that in that silent, meditative way of his he had doped out a lot of stuff not in the scenario. Whatever it was, it was great.

"It was Connie Luft that brought me to life. He hadn't stopped turning the crank, not even when he worked his head out of the black cloth.

" 'But that ain't Lollie,' he said; 'it can't be. That ain't Lollie. This girl is pretty, and she knows how to act. We're takin' somebody else's stuff,' said Connie.

"I believe that if he hadn't been following orders in the matter of keeping the crank of his camera going around I would have carried out that threat of mine and brained him or something. He saw the way I looked, and he ducked back under the camera-cloth like a fat ostrich looking for cover.

"But from then on right to the end I could hear him sort of sobbing, every now and then: 'It ain't in the 'script! It ain't in the 'script!'

"I'm not like some directors, who never let any but their own fair eyes see the manuscript of a scenario. I had talked so much with Connie about 'The Maid from Afar,' and we had been working on it so long that Connie knew that cursed 'script as well I did myself.

"I didn't need him to tell me, though, that what was going on down there on the beach was not according to the 'script.

"Lollie had seen to that. A lot of posing, some emotional stuff with the eyes, no action—that was her ideal of a scenario. She wasn't altogether a fool. She must have known, down deep in her heart, that she couldn't act. And she must have been surer yet that she didn't care for any rough action with a big husky man to play opposite.

"But there was action enough for any one in what was going on under the cliff, and we were getting all of it.

"The big man who might have been Jim—who must be Jim—had come running forward until he was well within the location marks.

"The girl registered perfect dismay. She started to run. She thought better of it. She turned around and faced him. He halted a moment. He was on his guard—great acting, too.

"Both of them were keeping right in the centre of the location-mark. I could see that some sort of a fight was coming off. There was.

"The girl picked up a piece of rock.

That must have been suggested, I thought, by the scrap that Jim and Lollie had had in the studio. She picked up the rock. He tried to parley with her for a while—she holding him off. Then he made a sudden plunge and grabbed a piece of drift-wood.

"Bing!

"She had basted him with the rock. It must have hurt him too. I could tell the way he cringed. But it didn't stop him.

"All crouched up, like a charging rhinoceros, he was making for her. She was game. Instead of going backward, which might have taken her out of the picture, she jumped forward and made a grab for the stick. She got hold of it. Then began a fight that would have made *Carmen* jealous.

"It was like a hound and a bear, or a ferret and big fat rabbit. All this, with the sparkling river for a background. That fight went by rounds. There wasn't a thing in it that even the Ohio censors would object to, and yet it was all action, and all different sorts of action.

"Just about the time I thought that the thing was going too far, what happens but that a big steam launch, of the picturesque, old-fashioned sort, should come puffing in from the open river. There were a lot of laborers in it, bound for one of the quarries up the river, no doubt.

"While the boat was still twenty feet or so away from the shore, a young fellow jumped out of it. He made a fine splash, for he landed in water up to his waist; and the white foam was getting the sunlight.

"I could just see how it was all going to come out on the screen. So could Connie, I guess; for I could hear him heaving while he worked, not talking any more. He was an artist too.

"There was a great rescue scene. The young fellow had butted in right away, and then he was getting help from the other fellows who had followed him out of the boat—a tough-looking crew, and every one of them acting in a way that would have done credit to Ed Sothern. Oh, I knew it was too good to last.

"Suddenly, Connie came up gasping from under his camera-cloth.

" 'I got to change the film,' he said. He was almost crying.

"It was true. He had run out his full thousand feet of it. What is more, every foot of that thousand turned out perfect, too. How perfect, no one knows better than myself, for it was to become a part of the greatest money-maker that the Daguerre or any other company ever produced.

"It's running yet—Spain, Portugal, East Africa, and elsewhere. It's good for another year still, and longer. For we took the whole of that magnificent first thousand we got on the river-shore, cut it up and made it the basis of a five-reel drama.

"No; we didn't call it 'The Maid from Afar.' We called it 'The Smuggler's Daughter.' I don't know why, but the world loves a smuggler—so long as the smuggler doesn't use an ocean-liner in his trade.

"I see you've guessed that, too. You're right. It wasn't Lollie and Jim down there on the shore. As a matter of fact, I wasn't to see Jim again for another six months. That was when he came back to look for a job. Lollie, I was never to see again.

"I heard the other day that she had taken another husband—a Swedish masseur who claims to be a count—so she must have got a divorce. But she had broken her own contract. The Daguerre was free and flourishing."

At this point in Cal's narrative, President Arnitz of the Daguerre Corporation came into the room. He still looked young. His crinkly hair still stood up straight from his high forehead, and he was otherwise a little bald. But he looked anything else than run-down and overworked.

"Hello, Cal," he said, at sight of his favorite director.

"Hello, Ben," said Cal; "I was just telling the boys about Lollie Goodelle.

"And about the wonderful woman who took her place," put in President Arnitz.

He straddled a chair and slowly lit a banded cigar. He squinted reflectively through the blue smoke with an air of contentment as he listened to the end of the story.

"You see," Cal went on, "as soon as Connie told me that he had used up his film and I saw that my presence where I was could do no more good, I started down the cliff. Most of the way I was sliding on my face.

"I felt as if I had been both skinned and undressed by the time I got there. Maybe I looked it. The big man who had been fighting with the girl broke loose and ran the minute he saw me.

"That settled it so far as he was concerned. It wasn't Jim.

"As for the girl, I don't know how I ever could have taken her for Lollie, except that, when we are waiting for and expecting some one, especially some woman, every one who comes along looks like the person we want to see. But this girl was younger. The only make-up she had on was what good health and excitement had put there.

"Along about this time, a whistle blew; and the men from the steam-launch said that they had to go. I told them to go ahead, that the girl was safe. She seemed to know that she was, too, for she smiled at me, then smiled at them and thanked them for taking her part.

"She told me all about the fellow she had fought, as soon as we were alone. It was her step-father, no less, who had a habit of showing up every now and then and trying to get even with her because she had insisted that her mother get rid of him when he turned out to be a bad egg.

"She took me up to see her mother, in a little cottage around a shoulder of the cliff. 'And, madam,' I said—I could see that they were as poor as church-mice—'if you'd like to have your daughter earn good money as a moving picture actress, I think I could get her a start.'

"But first let me finish with Lollie and Jim.

"It was just six months before Jim showed up again. That was the day that he came around to the studio and asked me if I thought I'd give him his job back. Give him his job back! I could have hugged him.

"Lollie's contract was definitely broken. She had broken it herself. We didn't owe her a cent. The Daguerre was starting in on a boom that hasn't let up since.

"'Jim,' I said, 'first tell me what you did with Lollie.'

"'I found I couldn't do anything with her,' he said, in that hoarse whisper of his. 'I told you I couldn't direct.'

"'But you made her break her contract,' I reminded him, 'and that's worth a thousand. How did you manage it?'

"'It was a fine day,' Jim whispered. 'We was over in Jersey. I got a feelin' sorry for you and Mr. Arnitz. I seen that there was only one thing to do; so I—'

"'You!'

"'Yep,' said Jim; 'I married her.'

"She had run off and left him, after those six months—or less. Jim didn't seem to mind it. He wasn't looking for sympathy. We gave him none. But we gave him the thousand."

"Tell them about the little lady who had the step-father," suggested President Arnitz, contentedly.

"The strange thing about her was that she couldn't act either," said Cal. "That wasn't acting, down there on the shore. It was real. It was earnest. It was life. That's why the film made such a strong appeal to the public. You can trust the public's judgment as to genuine and counterfeit. The girl was as pretty as a picture—"

"And was to make a wonderful assistant-director," droned President Arnitz.

He paused and snatched his cigar from his mouth. Both he and Cal were looking toward the door. Mrs. Cal stood there, young, smiling, as pretty as a picture in very truth.

"We were just telling them," said Cal, "about your accidental début in photo-play."

ADORATION

MY lady's nose, pure Greek, above
Her rosebud mouth, who wearies of?
It is so wonderful—the line
Exquisite in its grace divine,
White as the breast of a young dove.

Long, long I sing the praise thereof,
And prove, though there's no need to prove,
How sweet she is; how superfine
My lady's nose.

I envy, when it dares to move
Close to that beauteous spot, her glove;
And I grow dizzy, as with wine,
Asking the question, when we dine,
I've asked so oft. . . . I do *not* love
My lady's no's!

Charles Hanson Towne.

The Heir to Three Millions

by Joseph Ivers Lawrence

A TWO-PART STORY—PART ONE.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS CUSTOMER.

TOM PENDER stalked vigorously from the ice-box of the Eighth Avenue butcher-shop where he was employed. He was carrying a side of beef on his shoulder as a man of inferior sturdiness might bear a sack of flour. He swung it around easily, in no haste to be rid of his burden, and laid it across the cutting bench.

As he attacked it with saw and cleaver, to divide it into cuts of graded quality and price, his employer left the brine vat where he was salting down the corned beef of the future, dried his hands on his apron and stood for a while regarding the craftsmanship of the younger man.

"Ever hear anything of that feller of the same name as you, that wrote to me from Massachusetts last spring?" the employer drawled, as he propped himself against a block and lighted a cigar.

"Never had a word from 'im, Mr. Joyce," answered Tom. "I never knowed much about my folks, anyhow, but I figured he might be some kind of uncle or cousin, as I told yer at the time. The people that brought me up said my father come from Massachusetts, an' that he had some swell relations up there. Huh! I should worry 'bout swell relations!"

"I gave you a good send-off to 'im, anyhow," Joyce said genially. "I don't want to lose you, Tom, but I wouldn't keep you out of a good job or anything like that. I reckoned he might have something for you. I told him you was sober and industrious, and as good a meat cutter as could be."

He chuckled as he added with kindly irony, "I left out tellin' him that you was one of the hardest fellers to lick from Eighth Avenue to the river."

"You could 'a' told him that, for all I'd care," said Tom indifferently. "I never expect to hear from him. One o' them swell guys, prob'ly, lookin' up his relations ter see if they was worth mixin' up with. Prob'ly got my name outer the city directory, and had some one look me up and find out where I was workin'. When he found out I was a butcher it was all off."

"He must 'a' known that, if he found out where you was working," argued the employer. "He wrote to me right here, and he must 'a' known there wa'n't no Wall Street brokers nor Fifth Avenue jewelers on Eighth Avenue."

Tom sawed through a shank with rather impatient vigor.

"Well, it ain't givin' me no worry—what he was after," he said. "I ain't heard no more about it, an' prob'ly never will."

A favorite customer entered and claimed the proprietor's attention—a shrewd landlady from the *"pension"* district, seeking the least costly cuts from the round of beef, which would figure plausibly in her *table d'hote* as "prime ribs, *au jus*."

It was still too early for the regular morning marketers, and Tom was mildly surprised when a trim elderly man in clothes of conspicuous neatness and fine tailoring came in.

"Well, sir?" Tom dropped his saw and stepped forward with businesslike alacrity.

The elderly man seemed slightly confused and undecided. He looked at Tom searchingly, glanced at the proprietor, then back to Tom.

"Um—ah—well, I'll take a porterhouse steak, I guess," he said at last.

"About a couple of pounds, sir?" asked Tom, seizing a knife and whirling a piece of beef into range on the bench.

"Yes, that will do," was the answer.

"By the way," said the old gentleman softly, watching the cutting process, but appearing oddly ill at ease, "you're not the young butcher I—I was reading about in the paper the other day, are you? His name was—Oh, I think his name was Robinson."

"No," answered Tom tersely; "my name is Pender."

"Ah, yes," said the old gentleman, apparently not at all disappointed in the answer. "You cut that meat, young man, as though you knew your trade pretty well. I should think, though, that a young man like you would start in at some trade that promised more of a future."

Tom looked up quickly, with an air of challenge, but decided that the customer was no more than good-humoredly inquisitive.

"There ain't much money in the retail meat business," he replied, "but a feller has got to start somewhere. One o' the biggest meat packers in Chicago started out peddlin' meat in a hand-cart."

"Oh, I dare say," agreed the customer readily. "Small beginnings often lead to great things. Of course, if a young man is honest and industrious, doesn't drink, and thinks more of his work than of his pleasures, he can carve out a good future for himself."

Tom was naturally suspicious of loquacious persons, but the old gentleman was clearly sincere and friendly.

"That's the way I figger it out," he said. "I keep away from the booze, an' I work the best I know how for the man that pays me for it. If I keep at it an' play square, I'll prob'ly be payin' men of my own some day."

"You have the right idea," remarked the old gentleman, appearing genuinely gratified. "With that philosophy, followed out without compromise, a man may become one of the leaders of his race. Read good, solid books, young man; find out what the good men of your day are doing; stick to your colors, no matter what happens, and you'll have comfort and peace of mind when you're old enough to need them above all other things."

"Yes, sir," said Tom, slightly embarrassed by his customer's intense earnestness. "Two pounds an' a quarter, sir; is that all right? That's fifty-four cents."

The customer nodded abstractedly. He plucked a dollar bill from his wallet and laid it on the bench, as he received the brown-paper parcel.

"Keep the change for your trouble, young man," he said awkwardly.

Tom stared, amazed and inclined to take umbrage. He snapped up the bill, thrust it into the till of the cash register, and pushed the correct change swiftly across the counter.

"Thanks, just the same," he said curtly, "but you got me wrong! I get paid for my work by the boss. Waiters and chauffeurs—some o' them fellers take tips as a reg'lar thing, but it ain't done in this business."

The old gentleman was abashed. He gathered in his change with a crestfallen air.

"All right, young man," he said quietly; "I meant no offense. And I'm glad to see that you have some spirit. Money is a necessary and important thing, but it shouldn't be won at the sacrifice of pride. You're quite right."

He turned toward the door with his parcel under his arm, but stopped again and stared vaguely about the shop, with the same mysterious air of indecision that he had shown at first. All at once, however, he pulled himself together with a start, mumbled a brisk "Good-morning," and

marched vigorously away, turning southward toward Twenty-Third Street.

The proprietor and the landlady of the boarding-house joined Tom in staring after the unusual customer.

"Funny old guy, wa'n't he?" remarked Tom; "but I guess he meant well enough."

"He acted like a minister, or a schoolmaster, or something like that," observed the landlady, "but I must say he looked like a perfect gen'leman!"

Tom walked slowly to the door and looked down the avenue, and was just in time to witness a puzzling incident. The old gentleman was nearly a block away from the shop, and he was furtively tucking his parcel of porterhouse steak into a garbage can that stood in front of a tenement building.

"Well, what do yer think o' that!" Tom gasped. "Some old cat, on the hunt, will think he's struck Thanksgivin' Day!"

He watched the old gentleman hurry away from the cache and pass out of sight in the distance, and then he returned to his work; but he pondered on the strangeness of the thing so long that other customers came in and claimed attention, and he neglected to tell the proprietor anything about it.

"Roasting chickens, eighteen cents, ma'am," he said, in answer to a question. "They ain't no cold storage truck, neither. We got 'em from Jersey, dry-picked and——"

He did not finish the eulogy. Something had happened that left every one in the shop silent and open-mouthed.

It was an explosion, apparently, followed instantly by a jarring, grinding, long-drawn crash which seemed to shake the air. It was something like the collapse of a great, many-storied building during the last stages of a blighting conflagration, but, if anything, it was heavier, more cataclysmic.

The two butchers and their customers ran to the sidewalk. They saw men and women and boys speeding through the cross streets toward Seventh Avenue. Tom started forward with boyish impulsiveness, then halted and drew back, mindful of his duty.

"Go'n see what 'tis, Tom!" muttered Joyce, with vague awe in his voice, and Tom went.

Through Twenty-fifth Street he ran, racing with the eager, wide-eyed crowd, and as he drew nearer to Seventh Avenue he saw clouds of thick, brown dust, hanging in the air like the smoke from a park of artillery. There was still some noise, too; confused and meaningless; shouts of people, crashes of falling lumber, and the medley of street sounds magnified tenfold.

He gained the corner, stopped abruptly, glared wildly through the dust swirls, and uttered a great shout of horror.

An entire block of Seventh Avenue had —He could hardly tell himself what had happened. The bottom had not dropped out, but the top had dropped to the bottom.

The wide, even pavement of strong planks which had roofed over the excavations for the new subway, had collapsed like a thin and fragile crust, and precipitated horses, vehicles and pedestrians into the hitherto unseen abyss of the underground city.

Tom and a score of early-arriving spectators rushed to the edge of the chasm, unmindful of danger. They saw—dust, chiefly; but through it they could make out strange, uncanny movement—maimed people beginning to grope and crawl, and horses writhing and kicking. A street-car, which had been speeding up-town with its morning load of working people, lay on its side amid splintered beams and planks, fragments of steel braces, and broken stone and concrete.

Two policemen were clambering down the ragged face of a precipice of rock and shattered woodwork. It was time for the people who had been spared to go to the relief of less fortunate mortals.

Unexpected bravery is engendered by soul-sickening ordeals. The man who normally shrinks from a cold shower bath plunges into an icy torrent when a person he never saw before is drowning.

Tom Pender stripped off his butcher's apron and sprang to the edge of the great hole. There was a sheer drop of thirty feet to the nearest ledge of crumbling rock, but while others shrieked at him to stop, he swung himself down and got a precarious foothold on a jutting fragment of timber.

His hands found a protruding end of broken conduit pipe, and again he swung down till his feet touched a mere excrescence of wreckage.

The new lodgement gave way, and he fell. Some twenty feet he dropped, clawing for holds, and fending himself from jagged splinters and broken pipes. Then

he lay in the stifling dust, surrounded by the nondescript debris of the catastrophe.

He moved and struggled to his feet. He was wrenched and bruised, but all his muscles, all his joints, moved and were free to act. He fought his way through barriers of wreckage and he came presently to the ill-fated street-car.

The passengers were screaming hideously, crawling through smashed windows and battling with each other for some intangible freedom. A man, grotesquely masquerading as a scarecrow, smeared with dirt and blood, struggled to extricate himself from a dead-fall of wood and iron.

Tom forgot his own bruises and aching joints, and sprang to the rescue of the sufferer. He caught him by the shoulders and strove to draw him out of the tangle, but the man was held down by a crushing weight of debris, and he groaned and muttered incoherently.

"Hold hard!" cried Tom encouragingly. "Be glad you're alive, old scout. We'll get this crazy-quilt off'n you in about a minute."

The task, so optimistically assumed, was one for a squad of men, rather than one; but the muscles that habitually wrestled with sides of beef and barrels of pork were not easily daunted. A heavy, a long-drawn breath, and another heave, sent a huge beam about its business.

A shoulder applied to a broken girder moved it, and turned it out of the way. Then the shoulders of the groaning man were seized again by the powerful hands, and despite his loud and powerful protests, he was pulled free.

The task was not finished, however, in the rescuer's view of things. There was no level, clear space where the injured man could be placed. Huge splinters protruded everywhere, at all angles, like a continuous *cheval-de-frise.* To have left the man then would have been like taking a drowning person from the water and dropping him in again.

All at once to Tom's bewildered senses there came a new sensation. He was turned giddy, stifled and choked. Gas was pouring into the great cavity from the broken mains, and every one there was menaced by asphyxiation.

Tom acted quickly. There were other people to be saved, but he must make one rescue complete before he went about others. Although the battered victim protested loudly and groaned in pain, he swung him to his shoulder and began a wavering, blundering course through the tangle.

Some firemen were lowering ladders into the cavity from the east side, and policemen were hauling victims from the ruins and passing them along to waiting firemen and ambulance attendants.

The space about the ladders was already becoming crowded, and as Tom realized that the gas fumes were getting a hold upon him, he abandoned all effort to cooperate with the police, and sought a means of egress for himself and his charge.

The car tracks, unbroken, but bent and sagging into the ditch like long ribbons strung from one end to the other, offered with their broad sides lying flat, a precarious Jacob's ladder, and Tom, without pausing to reflect upon the danger, took the chance.

Balancing the almost inert man as well as he could upon his shoulder, he stepped upon the swaying pathway, poised himself gingerly, and then began walking slowly, step by step, with his free arm extended to maintain his equilibrium.

Several firemen and policemen cried to him to come back, but when some of them ran forward over the wreckage to restrain him, he went faster and mounted up the perilous incline out of their reach.

Some of the more venturesome of the spectators on the street above crept forward to the ragged edge of the abyss and encouraged the valiant climber with outstretched hands and cries of applause, and Tom saw that while he might not gain the top of the ascent himself, he had a fighting chance to place his burden in the arms waiting to receive it.

The steel pathway grew steep toward the top, and the bent rail tilted gradually toward its normal perpendicular position. His foot slipped once and he tottered and swayed alarmingly until he recovered his balance.

Then, realizing that he could not go much farther up the increasingly steep and tilting rail, he made a desperate rush, gained a couple of feet, and thrust the injured man upward and outward. Arms were strained downward over the edge of the insecure planking, and a dozen hands caught the wounded man's clothing and dragged him to safety.

At the same instant Tom lost his footing. He sprang wildly and caught at the plank-

ing, but fell short and crashed down into the mass of wreckage below.

CHAPTER II.

THERE ARE TIMES—

"'THE dog it was that died,'" said a vaguely familiar voice, and added, apologetically: "I beg your pardon Mr. Pender; I fear that was a rather tactless remark, and the analogy was absurdly far-fetched. There was n o dog in this affair, unless it was the man who constructed that fatally unreliable shoring. I have 'recovered from the bite,' fortunately, but my brave rescuer is apparently far from recovery."

Tom Pender, lying in a hospital cot, opened his eyes dreamily and was fully conscious for the first time in some sixty hours. He had heard all the man said, but the quotation was strange to him, and such words as "tactless" and "analogy" were not in his vocabulary.

He felt so ill and "all in," however, that little things like puzzling speeches did not worry him. He turned his head slightly and saw the speaker standing beside the bed. It was—yes, without a doubt, it was the elderly gentleman that had so mysteriously purchased a fine steak and thrown it away.

"Hello," murmured Tom faintly, "how'd you get here? How's the feller I pulled out o' the smash?"

"That is the whole explanation of how I got here," answered the visitor, and Tom decided that he habitually talked in riddles.

"Oh, all right," said Tom; "let it go at that."

"It is evident," went on the old gentleman presently, "that you didn't recognize me when you saved me from that frightful wreck. I couldn't find a cab, after leaving your shop, so I went over to Seventh Avenue and boarded that ill-fated car. It is no wonder you didn't recognize me, for they tell me that I was pretty well disguised in my battered condition.

"I was more scared than hurt, however, and the doctors at the hospital where they took me found that the removal of blood and mud and dust was about all the surgical attention I needed. I have an ugly cut on my head, but it was more spectacular than serious. When I get over my soreness I shall be little worse for the adventure."

"Let's see!" muttered Tom, still vastly puzzled: "I sold you a steak, and then—D'you mean to say you're the feller I walked the tight-rope with?"

"The very same," laughed the visitor cheerily. "From all accounts you did one of the nerviest things the witnesses of the affair ever beheld."

"Um!" grunted Tom, evidently little interested by the man's reference to his act of heroism. "What's *your* name?"

"My name," answered the old gentleman slowly, "is Ellery Pender. The coincidence of names is easily explained: I am your great-uncle, and I live in Penderton, Massachusetts."

Tom's eyes grew round with wonder.

"What de yer think o' that, now!" he exclaimed; "I pulled my own uncle outer the smash, an' never knew it!"

"I hope," said the old man genially, "that you would have done it just as readily if you had known it.

"And now," he went on presently, in a businesslike tone, "if you are able to listen, if not to talk much, I'll tell you what I came in for this afternoon. I was going back to Boston, and then home, the day that outrageous accident happened—It couldn't have happened in Boston, mind you! but I fancy almost anything can in this city!"

"You got it wrong, there!" returned Tom, weakly, but belligerently. "I've lived here 'most all my life, but I been to other places some, and—take it from me!—New York's got every other place on the map o' the world beat out in the semi-finals. New York is—"

"Please don't agitate yourself," broke in Mr. Ellery Pender. "I see you are a typical New Yorker. I shouldn't have digressed and disturbed your peace of mind. I was going to say that I intended to return to Boston that day; in fact, it was important that I should do so; but I was unable to leave here even yesterday, and another day is almost gone.

"Now, I have to take an early evening train, so you see I must introduce myself in one breath and take leave of you in the next. I won't attempt to thank you for—well, you practically saved my life, you know, and did it very gallantly. I had already planned to make a certain small provision for you in my will, as my nephew, and I shall do so. I shall also, in a few days, send you a present of one thousand dollars."

Tom had closed his eyes and was evidently fatigued already by the interview, but he opened them at the last statement.

"Say, you know I didn't pull that stunt just to get a piece o' money out of it!" he protested. "I don't want no reward, nor nothing like that."

"Please regard it as a small gift from your uncle," said the old man suavely. "What use will you put the money to, is no affair of mine. I hope it will give you pleasure."

"A thousand would pretty near set me up in the butcher business, but I ain't lookin' for that kind of a hand-out," muttered Tom.

Ellery Pender smiled.

"You are not able to talk any more today, I see," he said softly. "I wanted to find out for myself what kind of a man my nephew was, and I shall probably call on you again some day. The doctors say that you will be out of the hospital in two or three weeks. I will say goodby for the time being, Thomas."

"Same to you, sir," responded Tom feebly. "Glad to meet you, and glad you came out o' the smash all right."

The promised thousand came to Tom at the hospital two days later, and he gave it into the keeping of his employer and friend, Mr. Joyce, the butcher. He accepted the money reluctantly, having, as he told Joyce, "no kind o' use for easy money from rich relations." He accepted it chiefly because he could think of no way of sending it back without appearing to be a "chump with a grouch."

"I s'pose the old feller would think I was sore because he didn't come across with more o' the stuff," he told Joyce, and the latter agreed that the reasoning was sound.

Tom's splintered rib, twisted shoulder and numerous contusions were restored to normal condition and he was discharged from the hospital in a little over a fortnight. In order to show himself and his friends that he was neither spendthrift nor miser, he broke into the thousand to the extent of buying new clothes and a serviceable gold watch.

Nine hundred dollars of the gift he deposited in a savings bank, and he informed Joyce that it would remain there until he saw a gilt-edged opportunity for using it to the betterment of his condition.

A short, strongly-built, bull-necked young man slouched into the butcher shop one morning and nodded to Tom Pender. He wore a new-looking suit of loud pattern, a gaily-striped "sport" shirt and a plaid cap pulled low on his forehead.

"Come on outside, Tom; I wanter speak to yer a minute," said the newcomer in a surly, guttural voice.

Tom laid down the knife he had just picked up for a delicate bit of poultry dissection, dried his hands and followed the visitor out of the shop to the sidewalk.

"Come 'round the corner and have a drink," suggested the flashily garbed young man.

"You know I don't drink," replied Tom. "There ain't no one hangin' 'round here listening; you can say what you've got to say right here."

Tod Meagher, a prominent member of a Tenth Avenue gang known as The Bull Pups, hunched his shoulders and assumed an air of patronizing intimacy.

"I heard from some o' the guys in the gang," he said, "that ye'd had a small piece o' change handed yer."

"That so?" returned Tom coldly.

"Yes, that's so!" snapped the gangster. "I heard you had a thousand slipped to yer. That ain't so much, at that; but it's enough to let a feller show whether he's a good guy or just a low-down tightwad. I said to the fellers that you was all right, as fur as I knew, but perhaps yer didn't know how to loosen up. So I said I'd drop around an' tell yer.

"The gang's goin' to have a supper an' dance down to Mulligan's Casino next week Sat'day, an' I'm one of a committee that's collectin' for it. You're got a chance, now, Tom, to come across with a little subscription of about a hundred bucks. Ye'll never miss it an' you won't lose no friends by it."

Tom Pender did not conceal a feeling of astonishment at the frankness of the other's proposal, and he voiced his disapprobation and incredulity at once in language that lacked nothing in strength of conviction.

Tod Meagher quailed slightly before the torrent of vitriolic rhetoric, but rallied quickly, with jaw set and fists clenched.

"Say! d'you think you can live on the Wes' Side an' get away with that kind o' stiffneck stuff?" he growled. "I know you ain't a member o' the gang—you couldn't be if you wanted to—but what the gang says goes! You make off you're great pals with some of the fellers, an' you swell around like a reg'lar guy.

"Huh! You'd do better runnin' a mission or a gospel tent. You ain't got no sense. They's fellers in the gang pullin' down fifty an' a hundred a week, dressin' swell an' doin' nothing; an' here you are, you poor slob, cutting chuck steak for twelve per. You never so much as cracked a crib in your life. If you want to be treated like a real sport do something to show that you are one!"

Pender controlled himself as he listened to the other's arraignment.

"Mike the Mut said I was as white a feller as they was in the district," he replied quietly. "I never joined the gang because I don't like all the things they do, but you know that I saved the Bull Pups from being cleaned out and bust up by the bulls, just because I'd always played square with every cop in the district, an' I was able to fix things up with 'em.

"But I ain't no easy mark, Tod. A thousand dollars don't come my way every week, an' I ain't blowin' it on no gang just to stand in with 'em. I tell yer straight, Tod, you come around here beefin' about my bein' a tightwad, an' I'll knock the face off yer!"

Mr. Tod Meagher made a low sound in his throat, like the growl of a quarrelsome bulldog, and his hand moved toward his hip pocket in a characteristic manner.

Like a flash the butcher's big hand shot out and closed on his wrist. With a violent twist he whirled the man around, and with his other hand whipped a small automatic from the fellow's pocket. There was an open drain under the corner curbstone where they were standing, and as he jerked the weapon into view he threw it, with the same motion, into the drain.

He followed the action with an eloquent recital of his opinion of Tod Meagher, and added a terse statement of his theories on the carrying of concealed weapons, finishing with a highly-colored general estimate of a man who would be guilty of such crass indiscretion.

This was too much for Tod's pride, and he countered with a plain, unvarnished opinion of Tom Pender and his ancestry.

Tom stepped back a pace, looked furtively up and down the avenue, and noted that the mid-morning lull in traffic had diminished the passing crowd to a straggling score of indifferent wayfarers.

"Look out for yourself!" he said, sternly.

Meagher's appreciation of the warning was shown by his quick blow, aimed at Pender's jaw. It did not land, however, for the butcher's rather famous right was the quicker of the two fists, and Meagher went down, prone in the gutter, with a painfully battered ear.

Half a dozen people saw the action and set up the usual cry, but before they could center the general attention on the butcher he was back at the block, hewing out rumps and sirloins. Some sympathetic souls picked up Tod Meagher and asked solicitous questions, but Tod was of the clan clannish.

"Never mind me," he muttered, "nor who done it. I can 'tend to me own troubles."

In the butcher shop Mr. Joyce stood by the block and looked at his man with friendly disapproval.

"I seen the whole scrap, Tom," he said, "and I'm willing to believe you couldn't help it, but it ain't right—fightin' like that, right on Eighth Avenue in the daytime—an' right in front o' the shop. 'Tain't right!"

"I know it, Mr. Joyce," agreed Tom, contritely. "Some men in your place would fire me jus' fer that. I wouldn't blame you if you did. It's all wrong, Mr. Joyce, an' I'm admittin' it; but it had to be done."

"I reckon it did, at that," said the employer reflectively, "but don't let it happen again, or I'll have to fire yer. Remember that, Tom!"

"Sure, I'll remember, Mr. Joyce," Tom replied respectfully; "and I hope you won't have to fire me. I like my job, all right. But, just the same, Mr. Joyce, I'd 'a' had to hit that guy if we'd been standin' on the station-house steps, or in front of a judge an' jury. There's times, you see, when it don't make no kind o' difference what's 'round yer; you've got to hit, or you wouldn't think no more of yourself!"

"That's right, too, I reckon," agreed the employer soberly, for he was no pacifist himself in times of actual stress.

CHAPTER III.

THOMAS WINTHROP PENDER.

TOM PENDER heard from certain friends who were members of the Bull Pup gang that Meagher was planning dire reprisals, but he took the rumors lightly and did no more than to look out for his safety in his customary manner when he walked abroad in the Tenth Avenue section.

He had been attending to his work and his daily affairs quietly for about two months since his subterranean adventure and his discharge from the hospital, when a man unknown to him, and of a type in strong contrast to that of his usual associates, visited him one afternoon at the butcher shop.

The young meat cutter was scrubbing a block with a steel brush when the elderly man in the black cutaway of scrupulous style and neatness, carrying a walking stick and small satchel, stepped into the shop and glanced about with the air of a man "seeing how the other half lives," and not being favorably impressed.

He perceived Mr. Joyce occupying a position of authority on the high stool back of the cashier's desk in the glass-enclosed office and turned his attention to him.

"I am looking for a man named Thomas W. Pender," he said coldly, "and this is the address that was given me. Is he employed here?"

"That's him," responded Joyce, thrusting out a large red thumb in the direction of the cleanser of the meat block.

"Oh!" said the visitor, the monosyllable having an inflection open to a score of interesting interpretations.

Tom straightened up and met the frigid scrutiny of the stranger with a casual nod.

"Tom Pender's my name, all right," he said lightly. "Want to see me?"

The visitor bowed, with something like painful reluctance. "I would like to see you for a few minutes—in private, if possible," he said. "A little matter of personal business."

The genial and friendly Joyce overheard the speech and flopped heavily from his stool.

"Take the gentleman right in here, Tom," he said, flinging wide the office door. "You can shut yourselves up in here and have all the privacy you want. There won't no one butt in an' disturb you."

"All right. Come in here an' sit down," said Tom bluntly, and as he closed the door of the narrow room he looked the stranger over critically. "No good!" he remarked dismally to himself. "Prob'ly a lawyer. Some o' the Bull Pup bunch been a-gettin' me in Dutch."

"You are Thomas Winthrop Pender," began the elderly man, with judicial gravity. "You were born in New York August twenty-first, eighteen-ninety-two; son of Winthrop Adams Pender and Isabella Murray Pender. Is that correct?"

Tom looked perplexed and more embarrassed than was his wont.

"Well, I ain't got no alibi," he said with a grin, "an' I guess you got me right."

The man did not return the grin; his look became more icy and disapproving.

"I will introduce myself," he said grudgingly. "I am Anthony R. Bradford; I am from Boston and an attorney at law. I had other business in New York, so I am calling on you instead of writing."

"You don't say!" exclaimed Tom, sensing the other's disdain and meeting it with a sort of amused disregard. "Pleased ter meet yer, Mr. Bradford. And now, sir, if you've got something on yer mind about me, just get it right off—shoot!"

The lawyer started involuntarily, as though the last word conveyed something of literal significance.

"I beg your pardon," he said reproachfully, in a tone of challenge.

"Sure!" said Tom affably; "my fault. I mean, if they've got anything on me in Boston—that is, if they think they have—let's have it. But I have never been in Boston in me life—that's straight!"

The lawyer wagged his head and made a wry face, frankly giving expression to certain unpleasant reflections; then he braced himself for an ordeal, fidgeted with his watch chain and spoke.

"Mr. Ellery Pender died about a week ago at the family home at Penderton," he said.

Tom instantly lost his air of flippancy.

"You don't say!" he exclaimed, in genuine consternation. "Yer mean my uncle, I s'pose. Say, he was a nice old feller, at that! Was he sick long, do you know? Do yer think that fall in the smash-up was the cause of it, now?"

"Indirectly, I believe," said the lawyer tersely. "He was not a strong man, and the shock of the accident doubtless contributed to his general break-down when he fell ill soon after his return to his home.

"Mr. Ellery Pender," he went on, hurrying his speech as he progressed, "was not your uncle, but your father's. He never married, and the only heirs at law to his valuable estate were his nephew, Samuel Ellery Pender, the latter's wife and you, Mr. Pender."

Tom betrayed a feeling of amazement and doubt.

"Heir at law!" he exclaimed. "Well, that sounds kind o' lucky, Mr. Bradford, but I don't think I get yer yet. I'm sorry that the old feller had to die, whatever happens."

"I may say," continued the lawyer, "that you—er—you are comparatively unknown to the family, and it has long been assumed that Mr. Samuel Pender would inherit the bulk of his uncle's property. Mr. Ellery Pender learned of your existence about a year ago and made an investigation. He heard that you were a young man of fair reputation, and put you down in his will for a legacy of two thousand dollars."

"You don't say!" gasped Tom. "That'll make three thousand from the old gentleman, an' I call it pretty white of him!"

The lawyer frowned impatiently and went on.

"After making that will he felt a desire to meet you and see for himself what sort of a man you were. He came to New York, and you know what happened, I believe. He was, I understand, fond of your father, before a certain estrangement, and your act of—er—your service to him in helping him from the unfortunate misadventure he experienced, tended to gain for you a considerable favor in his eyes."

"He sent me a thousand dollars," said Tom naïvely.

"I know he did," assented the lawyer vexatiously. "In his excess of sentimentality, after his return, he determined to change his will and put you down for ten thousand dollars. This brought about some ill feeling between him and Mr. Samuel Pender, who deemed the remembrance excessive, and the difference developed into a serious rupture, I believe. A few weeks ago Mr. Ellery Pender, in a moment of extreme pique——"

"Peek!" echoed Tom, with grave interest. "That was bad for the old gentleman, wasn't it? Was that what took 'im off at last?"

Mr. Bradford scowled.

"I mean," he said witheringly, "that he was in an ungovernable rage. Being intent on humiliating Mr. Samuel Pender and his family, he reversed the conditions of his will; he provided a legacy of ten thousand dollars for Mr. Samuel Pender, and bequeathed the rest of his estate, real and personal, to you."

"The devil he did!" cried Tom explosively.

The lawyer winced, but smiled uncomfortably.

"I should say that your remark accurately describes the situation," he returned. "The act was considered—by me, and some other close friends—one of supreme folly. It was hoped that he would see it that way, on sober reflection, and amend the will. He died, however, before the matter could be readjusted.

"I—I suppose I should congratulate you, Mr. Pender. You are a very fortunate young man, in the eyes of the world; but I must say frankly that I feel no pleasure in seeing the Pender estates pass into the hands of a man of your training and position. I have personal doubts, even, that it is entirely a fortunate thing for a man of your class."

Tom was thinking hard, and, though bewildered, he sensed the general aspect of the situation. His air of cool disregard of the lawyer's palpable disdain, mixed with genuine regret at his great-uncle's demise, vanished, and he became coldly dignified, after his manner.

"Now, look a-here, Mr. Bradford," he said crisply, "s'pose we cut out the loose stuff, an' talk straight. I don't want no bouquets from you; I reckon my opinion o' you is as good as yours is o' me, so we start even. If there was any way that you could keep me out o' what's comin' to me, I don't reckon you'd be here now, so I figger by that, that there *is* something comin' to me. Well, how much? That's the big idea now!"

"The estate, real and personal," said the lawyer painfully, "less a few minor bequests amounting to fifteen thousand dollars approximately, is in round numbers about three million dollars."

It would have been within reason for Tom Pender to cry out, swoon, kick down the glass partition, or do any of a thousand insane things, but he did the thousand-and-first thing: he controlled himself. Up to that time he had never known the poise of perfect philosophic calm, but it came to him like an unknown friend and whispered that the sneering, supercilious man of a superior social class must not have the satisfaction of seeing him overcome by the stunning announcement.

He was silent and motionless for something like a minute. Then:

"S'pose you just put the thing in plain United States talk, Mr. Bradford," he

said, with scarcely a quaver. "I'm not up on lawyer's speech, and I'd like to know about how much cash is comin' to me right away."

"In securities and actual cash, about two million, I should say," answered Bradford blankly, obviously discomfited by the self-possession of the younger man. "The estate includes various realty holdings in and about Boston, and the homestead at Penderton, with its three hundred acres—one of the handsomest places in New England."

"All right," said Tom, striving to keep awe and positive shock out of his face and actions; "I'll take a run up to Boston an' see about it. And say! I'm a gent that don't care about this publicity stuff: If you haven't handed any o' the dope to the newspaper fellers, let it go like that. I don't want no evenin' extras with my picture in 'em, nor no Sunday supplement stuff. Get me?"

"Your good taste does you credit, Mr. Pender," observed Bradford, with a frankly mocking smirk. "For my part, I should shun any publicity in this case. I was a friend of your uncle, and I should dislike to have it known that anything irregular had happened in connection with his death. I was guarded in my answers to certain Boston newspaper men, and it has been reported there merely that the heir to the estate is a grand-nephew of the testator, a young business man of New York, and——-"

"That's all right, then," interrupted Tom loftily. "That's all true, ain't it? Let it go at that. There ain't no cause for much of a howl, anyhow, is there? I'm gettin' about two dollars a day now, and three million is three million; but it ain't all the money in the world, is it?

"I got a friend worth more'n that: Little Mark Larrimore; he used to be cap'n o' police, but he's distric' leader, now, an' he's worth five million if he's worth a cent—got a hotel and two theayters. Three million! Why, one o' them Vanderbilt or Morgan fellers would bawl me out fer a piker."

"Then you will come to Boston at once?" said the lawyer impatiently. "It won't be necessary to go into many particulars as to your identity; your uncle established that at the time of the investigation. You will probably decide to sell the estate at Penderton, and I think that would be wise, Mr. Pender. A man in your position, socially, would hardly find the surroundings there congenial, and—"

"I'll take a look at the surroundin's, an' then I'll decide what I want to do with 'em," Tom broke in sharply. "If I want any advice from you I'll let yer know; but I'll prob'ly hire a New York lawyer—I know of some of 'em that are all-right lawyers an' reg'lar fellers at the same time."

Bradford gave him his card. "I shall return to Boston to-night," he said stiffly, "and you will find me at my office any day this week. Good afternoon, Mr. Pender."

Tom bowed him out at the door, then shut it quickly, not daring to face his employer and the other helpers immediately. The tension of controlled feelings was broken, and he needed time to prepare himself to meet his fellow men.

The office was only eight feet long, but he walked up and down it in his agitation—two strides one way, a sharp turn, and two strides back. He talked to himself, softly, at intervals, in jerky, incoherent exclamations.

"Three million!" he muttered. "The gang!—Tod Meagher, what'll he say?"

He saw a scrap of paper on the desk, and he took a pencil from behind his ear and figured feverishly. Twelve went in three million, two hundred and fifty thousand times. Fifty-two weeks in a year, and fifty-two went in two hundred and fifty thousand, four thousand, eight hundred and seven times, with some over.

Three million, then, was like his present salary for four thousand, eight hundred and seven years, "handed to him all in a bunch," without doing any work for it. When the accumulation of figures danced before his eyes, he quivered with excitement and muttered sulphurous, meaningless exclamations.

He heard Joyce coming toward the door, and he hastened to open it, confused and with a flushed face.

"Mighty white o' you to give up yer office to me, Mr. Joyce," he mumbled awkwardly. "The feller wanted ter see me on something private; he was a lawyer—from Boston."

Joyce peered at him with kindly curiosity. "Hope he brought you some good news," he said. "I reckon it wa'n't nothin' bad, Tom."

Pender's flush deepened, but with a sudden rally of his senses he controlled himself again. He reflected that millionaires cannot talk at random with impunity.

"No, thank ye, Mr. Joyce," he said lamely, " 'twa'n't nothin' bad. Kind o'—well,

fam'ly business, yer might say. Worst part of it is, I got to quit me job, Mr. Joyce, an' I hate ter do that—honest, I do! I got to go to Boston, to see ter some—fam'ly business; so I got to quit work, ye see."

"That so!" exclaimed the butcher regretfully, narrowing his eyes with eager interest, but not openly inquisitive. "Well, Tom, I hate to see you go, an' that's a fact! I took kind of a liking to you from the first, me boy, an' we always got along all right. The job's always open to you, I guess, if you ever want to come back."

"Thanks, boss; I'll remember that," said the millionaire. "You've been a white man ter me, an' I don't forget such things. Yer can't tell what'll happen to a feller in this world, an' I may call you on that promise some time."

When he left the butcher shop that night, he stopped at the tobacconist's on the next corner and bought two fifteen-cent cigars.

"I guess I can blow meself a little bit, anyhow," he whispered to himself. "Three million dollars! Tom Pender! Mr. Thomas Winthrop Pender!"

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN THE PIE WAS OPENED.

THREE days after Tom Pender's arrival in Boston, he and Anthony R. Bradford, the attorney, got off the Boston & Maine train at the picturesque old village of Penderton. The new reigning Pender of Penderton had reached his ancestral village, the place where the first man of the family's American line had built his log cabin in 1655.

Tom was attired expensively, but according to his own lights. His silk shirt was a startling combination of the primary colors, and would have served excellently for a stage comedian; his tie was of a blue pleasing to the eye, taken by itself or in a happier setting; his hat was a fine pearl-gray felt of the Homburg block, with a pleated green band, and he wore it pitched backward and to one side with an air of infinite impudence. His sack suit, "ready-made," and described by the clothier as the "Varsity" model, was of good material, but the designer had dwelt too ardently on its embellishments of notched and scalloped pocket flaps, turned-back cuffs and ornate buttons.

Unpleasantly conspicuous as the whole combination was, Mr. Bradford found the most grievous offense in the boots, which were of orange-hue tan, fastened with smoked-pearl buttons. Every time the lawyer permitted himself to glance at his companion, his eyes swept in agony from the green-banded hat downward, and arrived quickly at the shrieking shoes with a fresh start of horror and anguish.

The sixty-minute train journey was a never-forgotten nightmare to Bradford, and his only consolation lay in the fact that the practise of law makes strange traveling companions. He desired earnestly to rebuke and admonish the young man with regard to the proper draping of the human frame, but certain critical suggestions from him during the two days previous had been ill received and the two men were not in a state of social harmony.

They took a station hack and drove two miles through beautiful elm-bordered avenues—beautiful even in the bleak bareness of a New England winter—and as ancient as the highway from Concord to Lexington, and they turned at last into a winding, hedge-bound drive, passing through a stately gateway of massive granite pillars, ivy covered.

"This is your estate, Mr. Pender," announced the lawyer acidly, with a strong impulse to groan.

Tom looked about him eagerly. His eye fell upon a lovely old cottage of ivy-clad stone, like the gate posts.

"That ain't the house, is it?" he asked. "You said the house was a big one."

Bradford did not smile or wince; he was becoming hardened to shocks.

"No, that is not the house," he answered; "that is the porter's lodge."

Tom did not understand, but he nodded. He leaned forward in the carriage and looked at the trim rows of ilex and mountain ash trees, the geometrically trimmed box hedges and borders, and the undulating terraces of smooth lawn. In a clearing at the right of the drive a peacock stalked solemnly about, foraging vainly on the barren, frozen ground.

"Some place!" murmured the new master. "Bronx Park ain't got much on this, I reckon. Are there any animals?"

"A flock of sheep, several horses, and some dogs, I believe," said Bradford, in the mechanical manner of a man answering the questions of a harmless lunatic.

The carriage rolled past a range of mag-

nificent green-houses, filled with tropical verdure and bright blossoms, and as Tom stared in breathless admiration, the drive turned sharply around a high hedge and brought into view the manor house—built in the early days of the nineteenth century, of English brick and Southern cypress, in the stately dignity of the Georgian style, with giant Doric columns, wrought-iron galleries and brick-paved terraces.

"Some house!" exclaimed Tom Pender, and did not attempt to conceal his awe from the enemy beside him.

As they got out of the hack the old Pender butler, an elderly man in modest, conservative black livery, opened the great door and came to meet them on the terrace.

The lawyer nodded to him.

"Mr. Pender," he said, with a new note of hostile irony sounding in his voice, "this is the butler, Griggs."

The servant was grim and austere, but there was something in his face that Pender liked, and he strode up to him and gave him the hearty grip of fellowship.

"How are yer, Mr. Griggs," he said, "I'm pleased ter make your acquaintance."

Violent, conflicting emotions flashed rapidly over the astounded Griggs. His face twitched, his eyes blinked, and he suffered many of the milder symptoms of physical shock.

He recovered his faculties quickly, however; years of training had established his official poise against the natural shocks of life, and with Mr. Bradford present he had to keep his countenance.

"Mr. Pender, sir," he murmured huskily, bowing low and withdrawing a limp hand from the hearty clasp.

At the lawyer's suggestion they entered the house, and in the wide hall the butler had assembled some twenty servants—the housekeeper, the cook and various men and women of the extensive retinue.

"Mr. Pender," said the lawyer, "these are the servants whom your uncle mentioned in his will as desirable to retain in service."

Pender was confused at finding himself so suddenly thrust into the presence of his vassals. They were all looking at him with saucerlike eyes and with mouths gaping.

For the first time he felt acutely the flagrant yellowness of his shoes, and shuffled his feet awkwardly as he stepped gingerly on the polished wood of the mosaic floor. He wanted to do the proper and fitting thing, however, and it seemed that such an occasion demanded, of all things, a speech.

"Friends and—" he began, but choked with a sudden attack of stage fright.

He cleared his throat noisily, squared his shoulders and spoke more firmly, but with painful effort.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I—I'm glad ter make yer acquaintance, an' see you all here, lookin' as fine as ye do. Seein' as this has come ter be my house I s'pose I'll be livin' here, and I guess if we all do the best we know how we'll get along together all right. Pleased ter make your acquaintance, I'm sure."

He made a clumsy little bow at the conclusion of the speech, and stepped back to the side of the lawyer, whose face he fortunately did not take pains to scrutinize.

The middle-aged housekeeper was shocked and pale with consternation. A low, scarcely audible snicker ran around the company, and some of the younger maids and men turned their backs.

The incident might have passed, however, without further demonstration, but a young footman, rather new to his calling and with an excess of high spirits, was suddenly impelled to give expression to his ecstasy of mirth.

"That's the talk, Mr. Pender!" he cried hilariously. "You're a reg'lar feller, an' no mistake! I say, three rousing cheers for the new master!"

The cheers were not given. There was a concerted glance at the horrified face of Griggs, the butler, and a tense silence ensued. Mr. Bradford shrugged and clasped his hands resignedly.

A change came over the mobile face of the new master, as he looked in perplexity from one to another of the company. He was a stranger in a very strange land—ignorant, as it were, of language and customs; but he knew by some latent instinct that something had gone amiss; his own dignity had been meddled with in some way.

He spoke again, after a moment of hard thinking, and his voice was firm.

"Mr. Bradford," he said, "I want to know who 'tends to the hiring o' this help, here."

"Mrs. Meigs, the housekeeper, assumes that responsibility, I believe," answered the lawyer.

"All right," said Pender, and turned to the woman that Bradford had indicated with a nod. "Mrs. Meigs, I don't want to

be hard on no one, first off, but I want everybody ter know that I'm the boss o' this establishment, an' the boss ain't ter be joshed by any one drawin' pay from 'im. I want yer to fire that young feller that spoke up jus' now, fer bein' too fresh for any use. Give 'im his full wages—I'll hand yer the money—an' let 'im go to-night.

"I'm no swell, an' I know it. I've worked hard fer my livin' and I ain't had no chance ter learn how swell folks behave. But now I'm the boss o' this place, an' I'm goin' to be the boss. Don't any one forget that! Any one else that wants ter leave to-night can do so, an' I'll pay 'em off right away. That's all, I guess."

He turned to Bradford and derived a certain vague satisfaction from the look of amazement in his face.

"Now, Mr. Bradford," he said, "if you care to spend the time, I guess we'll take a look over the house."

The lawyer was not impressed favorably by the new mood of his client, but he was surprised. He walked with him, silently, for the most part, through the forty odd rooms of the mansion; then they made a hurried tour of the stables and grounds, and returned to the railroad station in one of the three motor-cars from the garage.

Before leaving the house, Pender handed the money for the footman's wages to Mrs. Meigs and informed her that he would come on the following day to take up his residence there for a time.

On the train Bradford became a little more conversational, and a shade less supercilious.

"You will probably decide in a few days," he said, "what general plans you will make for the future. As I have said, Mr. Samuel Pender will doubtless contest the will on general principles, but I personally refused to take the case for him, and I gave him my opinion that all his efforts would be ridiculously futile. I venture the guess, Mr. Pender, that you will not settle in Penderton with any idea of permanency. You—er—you New Yorkers, I believe, are ardently devoted to your city, and I dare say you will decide to turn your property here into money and return to your natural environment."

Pender was mollified by the lawyer's almost deferential tone, and he considered his remarks with seriousness.

"There's something in what you say," he admitted, "and I s'pose things may work out something like that. I'll think it all over, an' I'll know better what I want to do when I have a little time to myself."

"In case you decide to dispose of the Penderton estate," Bradford went on glibly, "I think the matter can be arranged to your satisfaction. The adjacent estate, somewhat smaller in area than yours, is owned by Mr. Marshall Witherbee—a very wealthy and a very prominent man in business and society. He would be glad—he told me personally—to add the Pender estate to his own. It would make, then, one of the finest country places in all New England, and I believe he is quite ambitious about it. I would venture to say, Mr. Pender, that he would not balk at one million dollars as a price."

Tom inclined his head solemnly. One million dollars! Already he felt himself a man of large affairs and of no small importance in the world of money.

"It sounds fair to me," he replied, striving to speak in a matter-of-fact tone. "One million dollars is a pretty good price for any piece o' property in these times—'specially property in the country. I'll keep it in mind, Mr. Bradford, an' let you know."

"As a young man and a single man," pursued Bradford, "the place is—well, rather unwieldy for you, I should say. I know very little of your tastes and habits, of course, but I fancy you will live—rather quietly in a way. For any one of assured social position in New England the Penderton place is splendid and all that could be desired for entertainment, but I presume that you will stay more or less among your former associates, and you will doubtless select such a home as your fancy dictates somewhere near New York."

Pender nodded, a little vaguely.

"Something like that, I guess," he replied.

He left the lawyer when they reached the North Station in Boston, and went to his hotel to sleep and rest his unbalanced nerves. Pender of Penderton had come into his own, but the experience had not been an easy one.

Next morning he discarded the yellow shoes for all time and bought a pair of black ones, with nothing more ornate in their design than patent leather toe-caps. He laid aside also the green-banded hat and acquired a golf cap of a subdued plaid. He had seen one like it on a man in the train, and the man had looked and acted like a "swell."

At noon he removed his inconsiderable luggage from the hotel and journeyed alone to Penderton. He had a vague dread of meeting the servants again, and instead of telephoning for his motor-car to meet the train he used the station hack, as on the previous day.

At the butler's sober suggestion he lunched in the huge dining room directly after his arrival, and the meal was a grueling ordeal, endured and fought out in loneliness. The butler served the food himself, and he was acceptably deferential, but the master felt the servant's cold eyes upon him every minute, and suffered excruciating agonies with each morsel that he took.

He fumbled his knife, struggled with a fork that eluded his grasp like a thing alive and grew beet-red from neck to hair when he inadvertantly left his spoon standing in his coffee cup. He had an elementary knowledge of table manners, and knew that he had behaved creditably on the memorable occasion of a private dinner with his district leader at the Democratic Club. But this butler was by the nature of his office an inexorable critic of deportment, and the delicately cooked food was like gall and wormwood to the neophyte.

"Will you have Bordeaux, hock or whisky and soda with luncheon, sir?" inquired the butler.

"What? Say, what's bore-do?" Tom demanded naïvely.

"Mostly red wine, sir," answered the butler, without smiling. "The cellar contains an excellent La Fîte claret, sir, and Mr. Ellery Pender's favorite burgundy, Beaujolais. Hock means Rhine wine or Moselle, sir."

Tom was more puzzled than ever.

"All right," he said, "we'll cut all that out. I don't drink, anyhow. Signed the pledge once, after I saw a drunk pretty near lay a feller out cold at a chowder party. The booze gets the best of 'em sooner or later, Griggs."

A spasm of pain contorted the servant's face. It seemed to him that every moment brought fresh and more astounding evidence of his master's vulgarity and crudity.

Pender was left alone presently with his second cup of coffee and a cigar which he had chosen with affected discrimination from a silver tray of regalias, panetellas and cigarettes. He smoked furiously and contemplated the baronial room with impersonal awe.

He tried to realize that he owned it, but the mental process was too complex for him; the place was essentially apart from him and belonging to another world. He wondered if, in time—this was only his first day—the new life would grow to be something more natural; he doubted it.

Griggs parted the Gobelin tapestry hangings at the door and stepped noiselessly into his presence once more.

"Mr. Marshall Witherbee is outside, sir," he announced. "Mr. Witherbee is in his cart, sir, by the *porte-cochere*, and he inquired if you were in, sir, and you'd care to step out and speak with him for a moment."

"Let's see," mumbled Tom reflectively. "Witherbee! Oh, that's the rich guy that lives on the next place, ain't it?"

"Mr. Witherbee's estate is the next one to this; yes, sir."

"All right," said Pender, a little reluctantly, "I'll step out an' see 'im. I guess that's an all-right thing for 'im to do, Griggs—come 'round an' give me the once-over, jus' ter be neighborly. Kind o' clubby of 'im, ain't it?"

He straightened his tie—this time, an ultra-violet effect upon a shirt background of blue and yellow—and strode with a slight swagger out to the terrace.

Marshall Witherbee, master-of-foxhounds of the local hunt, and cotillon leader in Boston, when the cotillon was the thing, sat in a smart Stanhope cart, with a handsome bay hackney between the shafts. He had the ruddy, rather hectic coloring of a high-living sportsman, and his natural manner, although not offensive to his friends, was one of supercilious superiority.

Beside him in the cart sat a girl, apparently in the early twenties, distinctively beautiful in a large, robust sort of way. She was deeply tanned by outdoor life, and she had a quick, virile manner of moving, and a straightforward glance that was born of perfect poise rather than bold assurance.

Tom Pender's instant impression was that he had never seen a woman quite like her. He couldn't call her exactly pretty—she wasn't that—but she was "class," all right.

"I drove around here to see if I might find Mr. Pender about," drawled the man in the cart wearily, as Tom came near. "I told the butler to announce me."

"I'm Mr. Pender," said Tom, with something of the guilt of a damaging admission in his face.

"You!" exclaimed Witherbee incredulously, and looked Tom over with frank wonderment, from the unruly shock of brown hair on his head to the patent leather tips of his shoes. "Oh, you're Mr. Pender, are you?"

For the man's open insolence of manner Tom was strongly tempted to drag him from his seat and inflict serious damage to his countenance, but he was strangely held back and fascinated by the aristocrat's appearance. He couldn't tell why, or how, but there was something impressive and admirable in the severely plain clothes, the close-clipped mustache and the trimly gloved long, lean hands.

"I ran across Bradford, the lawyer, in my club in Boston last night," said Witherbee, "and he mentioned that you might be willing to consider an offer for your place. I dare say I'll give you as much as any one would. I don't imagine you'd find much use for such a place, would you?"

Tom fidgeted nervously and found his new shoes growing suddenly tight and uncomfortable. He had a hallucination that his tie was drawing around toward his ear, and he grasped it with a huge red hand, only to find it still in place.

This man, whom he hated already, for some unaccountable reason put him out of countenance more than all the sneering lawyers and insolent servants that haunted his dreams. He wanted to swear at him, to climb up and hit him a destroying blow, but when he spoke there was no spirit in his voice, and his manner was conciliating.

"Wouldn't you an' the lady hitch the horse an' come into the house for a while?" he said.

Witherbee laughed, and looked with arched eyebrows at the girl to see if she was enjoying the grotesque comedy.

"Thanks," he drawled, still grinning broadly, "but I don't think 'the lady' cares to 'hitch' the horse or come into the house to-day, Mr. Pender."

A cloud rushed over the sunny face of the girl, and Tom noted with surprise that she looked angry. The cloud passed, however, and she positively smiled with an entrancing graciousness.

"I must beg your pardon, Mr. Pender," she said, leaning forward, "and be informal enough to introduce myself, since my uncle has neglected to notice my presence. I am Miss Collamore, and I live with my uncle and aunt on the next estate."

She held out a brown, slender hand, ungloved, reaching across the knees of her bored but amused uncle, and Pender grasped it with a rough paw that trembled with the excitement and confusion that fell upon him.

"I should feel unkind and unneighborly," added the girl, "if I rode up to your door like this, and didn't give you some sort of a greeting. I hope you'll like Penderton and enjoy your beautiful home here."

Tom was very red, and he stammered when he spoke, having little idea what words his tongue would utter.

"I'm—I'm pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Collamore," he said. "Have—er—have you seen the peacocks here?"

Mr. Witherbee grinned convulsively and pulled his nose.

"Oh, yes, I've seen them," answered the girl. "They're wonderful, aren't they? I don't wonder you admire them."

"Have you a definite idea of selling the place?" broke in the man in the cart, stifling his mirth.

"Well, I did speak about it with Mr. Bradford," said Pender slowly, "but I ain't hardly had time to look around it myself. I might talk about it with yer, I s'pose."

"Take a turn around the drive, Patricia," said Witherbee to the girl, "and I'll hop out and talk to this man for a few minutes—about ten minutes, that's all."

Miss Collamore took the reins from him, and as he got out of the cart she smiled kindly at Pender and let the restive hackney go spinning off down the drive.

"Come right in, Mr. Witherbee," said Tom hospitably.

"No, this will do," returned the visitor curtly. "I like the air."

The host lifted up his strong voice and hailed the house, and the alert Griggs appeared at the door.

"See here, Griggs," said Tom, "find out what Mr. Witherbee will have ter drink, an' bring us out a couple o' good cigars."

Witherbee met the butler's suffering glance and grinned.

"Never mind, Griggs," he said; "I won't have anything to drink, and I don't care for a *good* cigar just now."

"Then bring one fer me, Griggs," Tom put in hastily, resenting the plainly mocking tone of the man. "I can smoke alone if I have to. Bring me one o' them twenty-five centers I had fer lunch."

"You're a vegetarian, then, Mr. Pender?" murmured Witherbee.

"No, I ain't; I'm a Democrat!" Pender shot back. He saw the man's attempted joke clearly, but he was priming himself for approaching hostilities.

"The question is easily asked and answered," said Witherbee with sudden impatient animation. "Do you want to sell out here, or don't you? You have three hundred acres. Ellery Pender refused an offer of three thousand dollars an acre, as you've probably heard, so there's no use beating you down to a bargain; but I'll repeat that offer and I don't think you can do any better. That's nine hundred thousand—the buildings don't figure in such a deal; they're too old. How about it?"

Tom was profoundly thoughtful. The man was irritating and offensive, but it could not be denied that he had a straightforward, honest sort of a way of talking business.

"I'd kind o' like to talk the thing over with a real estate man or a lawyer before I make up my mind for sure," was the answer. "I guess, now, that that's a pretty fair offer, but a man shouldn't jump at a thing too quick, y'know."

"See here, Mr. Pender," said Witherbee, with an air of condescending tolerance, "you might as well have the thing over, and I give you my word that I'm making you a very liberal offer. You don't want to stay here; you really can't stay here. You're not an educated man, you haven't associated with well bred people, but I imagine you're a man of some intelligence; so you must be able to see just about what the conditions are."

"I don't know whether I do or not," rejoined Tom, very quietly. "What are the conditions?"

"There's no use in mincing matters between men, Mr. Pender," went on Witherbee patronizingly. "You must have some sort of an idea of class distinction. I dare say you're a good fellow, Pender—no doubt as honest as I am—but, as people classify society, you're distinctly low class. It isn't your fault; it's due, I suppose, to environment and lack of opportunity.

"Your parents were of good family, but your father went wrong. You were left an orphan in some slummy sort of place, I understand. You must be able to see for yourself that you don't belong among well bred people; you can't talk like a gentleman or act like one. Socially, you're beneath your servants.

"Society in this part of the State," he continued, "is uncommonly exclusive. If you know anything about dogs, Mr. Pender, you wouldn't dream of exhibiting a mongrel yellow pup at the New York dog show, would you? Well, that would be quite as reasonable as it would for you to try to live here.

"Mr. Bradford came here to Penderton just after he called on you in New York, and he told us quite a bit about you. We had a little informal meeting at the hunt club, and the people were all upset about it. Ellery Pender, though he was eccentric, was a good sportsman and a gentleman. This estate has always been a sort of social center. If he had left it to Sam Pender, it wouldn't have been so bad; Sam is an ass, but a gentleman, and he has a clever wife. They'd have kept the place up.

"The people took it so seriously, Mr. Pender, that a movement was started to raise a fund for the purchase of this place. One man was ready to subscribe fifty thousand outright to keep you out of Penderton. Frankly, I came to the rescue and practically promised that I'd buy the old place.

"Now, you see, don't you, that it's next to impossible for you to stay here? The people wouldn't have it—it practically amounts to that. You can cut quite a dash in New York with your money—live on Riverside Drive and hold political office, I dare say; but you can't live here, really!"

Griggs had brought Pender his good cigar, and now he lighted it and sat down quietly on one of the steps of the terrace. Witherbee gazed at him with a feeling of triumph and gratification.

Bradford had told him that the young butcher was a violent fellow, hard to handle, but it was evident that his superior, straightforward diplomacy had cowed him and won the day.

"It's nothing to feel particularly sensitive about, Mr. Pender," Witherbee added graciously; "it's merely the way that things are adjusted in this world. Take your money and go where you'll be happy; then we'll all be happy."

Pender looked at him without apparent emotion—rather pleasantly than otherwise.

"I'll see you all to the devil first," he said calmly.

Witherbee gasped and grew crimson with rage.

"You low-bred lout!" he cried, stepping forward threateningly, and adding an assortment of imprecations quite up to the Tenth Avenue standard, "you can't talk to a gentleman like that! I'll—

"Say, don't even tell me what you'll do," said Tom, without rising from his seat. "Close yer trap an' beat it! I don't want to get mad. I ain't blowin' hot air, but I've took on six men me own size an' licked 'em. If I laid a hand on you, you poor, pedigree pup, I'd sure kill yer, for I ain't used to handlin' soft stuff.

"Go an' tell yer crowd that I'm stuck here like I had glue on me. Get a hundred or two of your Willie-boys an' see if you can run me out. Go an' tell 'em, too, that I'm worse'n you thought I was; I'm the toughest mutt ye ever seen; tell 'em that! Tell 'em I stand in with the Bull Pup gang o' Tenth Avenue, an' that's the truth—something you don't know.

"Five minutes ago I was about ready ter sell yer the place, but you stuck yer foot right through the pie 'fore it was cut. I ain't a guy that wants ter stay where I ain't wanted, but this is dif'rent; yer can't buy me out an' run me off with the 'gelt' yer got saved up in gran'ma's stockin'—not when I got three million o' me own. Go tell yer crowd yer almost had me sellin' out, but yer made a damn boob o' yourself the las' minute an' spilled the Boston beans.

"Tell 'em Thomas Winthrop Pender is stuck fast in Penderton. If I live ter be ninety I'll still be settin' on the steps here smokin' a twenty-five cent cigar an' yellin' at me butler ter bring more."

CHAPTER V.

AULD LANG SYNE.

WALKING up Boylston Street in Boston one morning during the first week of his residence in Massachusetts, Pender stopped at a tailor's shop where smart imported woolens were displayed conservatively in the window with a decorative assortment of sporting paraphernalia—boots, riding crops, spurs, et cetera. It was plainly an establishment that pandered to the wealthy class.

A dignified man in faultless costume greeted him rather doubtfully as he entered.

"Is this the kind of place where the real swells get their clothes made?" inquired Tom with evident embarrassment.

The tailor was neither amused nor cordial. He admitted coldly that the shop strove to limit its trade to the best society.

"All right," said Tom. "I kind of expected to get insulted, but I don't care about a guy like you: I want clothes, an' I want 'em right. If you don't like me, you may think better of my money when you see it. Here's a check fer a thousand. I want a bunch of clothes, an' when the thousand is used up, jus' yell fer more."

The tailor was mollified by the turn of events. He managed a sickly smile and ventured the observation that the gentleman had a quaint sense of humor.

"Yes, I'm a funny guy," agreed Pender. "See here, now: I want to get measured, an' then I want about six suits of the right kind o' clothes, right away. They got to be clothes that the swellest gent in Boston would be proud ter wear. Get that? Nothin' flashy, mind that! Jus' plain class! I don't care if they're all black, without any buttons or anything, so they're right."

The tailor was sure that the gentleman would be satisfied, but he thought that six hundred dollars would amply cover the cost of the foundation of the wardrobe.

"That's all right," said Tom. "I want some more things. I want you to get 'em for me, an' take out what's right fer your trouble. Get about a couple o' dozen shirts, an' have 'em right, like the clothes. Then get a big bunch of first-class neckties, an' stick a paper on each one of 'em, tellin' what shirt I'm to wear 'em with. At the same time, stick a paper on each shirt tellin' what suit I ought to wear that with. Then I want some shoes an' socks an' hats an' gloves—jus' anything you think I ought to have. I guess I'll slip yer another check fer five hundred, so's you can do it right. This is no piker's game."

The tailor was by this time in the best of humor. He vowed that the gentleman had an excellent sense as well as wit. He thought, however, with evident honesty of purpose, that the thousand would go a long way. If more was needed he would let the gentleman know promptly.

Tom, for all his perplexing problems and vexations, was as free as a bird of the air, with comparatively unlimited money and no one to dominate his daily life but himself. For a while he moved quietly and mysteriously, alternating between Penderton and New York—a few days in one place, a few in the other.

Aside from the inconspicuous official notice of the business of the probate court, his name had not appeared in the papers, and no one in New York, as far as he could tell, knew that he had inherited a large fortune.

A new member was added presently to his household staff—no less than a private secretary. He was Mr. Howard Ashburton, lately out of college, and it was reported that Pender secured his services through an advertisement in a Boston newspaper.

Ashburton was a plain, studious young man, and he had the uncommon qualification of showing positive deference to Tom Pender without apparent effort. He sat at table with his employer and talked intelligently on such topics as politics, theology, literature, and art.

Every morning at ten o'clock he repaired to the small study on the second floor and labored diligently with the amateur millionaire in the studies of English grammar, advanced reading, and simple elocution. Later on they were to take up other subjects of academic importance.

"Barring your religious arguments, Ashburton," said Pender, one evening at dinner, "why shouldn't a man o' my size and age swear an' curse when he needs to?"

"It's an admission of weakness," answered the secretary tersely. "Slang phrases and profane expressions are dragged into use to strengthen the limited vocabularies of people of inferior education. A man of ready wit and broad education can express himself more forcibly than your most blasphemous longshoreman, because he has learned how to talk on all occasions."

"All right," said Pender, "lead me to the vocab' thing—whatever it is—and we'll cut out the cuss words—*except!* when I happen to run across that feller Witherbee. When I set eyes on that poor bonehead I ain't responsible!"

"Try that last sentence over again, and get it right, if you don't mind," ordered the secretary, with the courteous authority of a teacher.

Pender laughed.

"When I see my neighbor, Mr. Witherbee, who—whom I despise," he said slowly, "I—am—not—responsible—for —my—actions. How's that, Ashburton? Got so I cut out the 'ain't' most every time."

"You are certainly progressing, Mr. Pender," answered the tutor.

"That's my business now," asserted Tom; "little old progress is my middle name."

After the first draft of clothing came from the tailor's shop, Tom delighted in attiring himself by rule and driving or motoring through the principal thoroughfares of Penderton. He and Witherbee passed each other by with equal disdain, and he had, in fact, no acquaintances among the society folk of the town.

Miss Collamore was the sole exception: she braved her uncle's wrath and bowed to Pender with pretty cordiality whenever she met him, and the occasions were bright spots in his existence.

He returned to the house one afternoon from a motor run to Boston, and stretched out luxuriously in a Canton chair to rest until dinnertime. Disliking Bradford, he had retained another attorney, and he had gone into the city to confer with him on the approaching trial of Samuel Pender's suit to set aside the will.

The disgruntled and dissatisfied heir was trying to establish the fact that Tom was a person of low character and evil report, and hoped to impress a jury with the idea that Ellery Pender could not choose such an heir while irresponsible mental condition.

Tom was not worried, and his attorney's opinion was reassuring. He regarded his well ordered domain from the window with a pride and affection which were strengthening day by day. It was a good life he was living, and after a period of study and possible growth, he intended to enter some line of business: he had no wish to be an idler.

He had so far shunned all convivial diversions, and his principal outlay of money had been for the development and maintenance of the estate.

His agreeable reverie was interrupted by the blast of a motor horn near by, and he was surprised, for his own cars were all in the garage and no visitors ever disturbed his solitary tranquillity.

As he sat up straight to look down the drive, a large touring-car swept into view. It was muddy and its varnish was dingy; it looked like one of the private cars "for hire," that he often saw in the city.

There were four men in it, and when he saw them plainly he sprang up, and violated Ashburton's ruling upon the use of short cuts to strength of expression. He went to the door himself and threw it open almost defiantly.

One of the men was a hired chauffeur, but the three others were members of the Bull Pup gang: "Phony" Mahony, Pat Cafarelli and Tony Ross—all of them, according to Tom's private books, in bad standing.

"Oh, hello!" he said quietly, in response to their loud cries of greeting, and shook hands with them one by one.

"Pretty soft!" exclaimed Mahoney, as he looked over the pleasant scene without evident pleasure.

"You're a fine piece o' cheese!" blurted Cafarelli. "Did you think you could string the gang along forever, dropping in once in a while and actin' like a plain guy, an' then sneakin' off here an' living like Andy Carnegie?"

"Cut that!" ordered Tom sharply. "I've always minded my own business, and I've got a pair o' hands that can make others keep out of it. If you fellers have come to make a call, all right, but if you butt in here and start any rough stuff, I know what to do."

Little Tony Ross—a weak brother—looked grieved.

"I ain't here to pull any rough stuff, Tom," he whined, "but I don't think you done right. 'Member what Sam Haas done, fellers, when his cousin lef' five hundred to 'im? He give a swell dance in Turn Verein Hall, an' a high-class feed, jus' fer the gang and their girls. An' when he was through, he had 'bout ten bones lef'—he was broke. That's what poor old Sam Haas done when he got money."

"It's different, when ye pull down a few million," growled Mahony. "It makes ye a tightwad right off—can't loosen up the price of a beer fer the fellers that ain't got nothing."

"Don't cry all over the place!" protested Tom. "If you want to know what's the matter, I'll tell you. I kept this business all under my hat because I knew too much about some o' you lazy grafters. Now that the film is released, so to speak, you can find out, if you want to, that good old Stripes Tinney knows all about it.

"He's done his bit up the river, but he was the only guy in the crowd I could trust. I'm not boasting, but I came across right away with something more than the price of a beer. You all been trying to find out where Meyer David got the fifteen hundred to save 'im from losing his lunch room business. Well, Stripes Tinney slipped it to him, and I gave it to Stripes to slip to him. It put Meyer on his feet, and if he hadn't got it he'd prob'ly gone and cracked a crib or something.

"Old Slick Riordan's widow is in a charity hospital, sick and broke, and I sent her five hundred by Stripes, to get her a proper place and the right kind of doctors, and she'll get more when she needs it. I've got plenty more to hand out to the proper, deserving parties, but you three guys—I wouldn't loosen up on the price of a shot of 'coke' for one of you!"

"Oh, what's the use of all this stew?" moaned Tony Ross dismally. "We come up here, all the whole way from New York, in one o' Mike Dugan's autos, jus' ter pay ye a friendly visit, Tom. Can't yer be a little hos-pit-able, now we're here?"

Pender laughed harshly.

"I'll feed you and give you beds for tonight without any kick," he said, "but you're not invited to stay here after to-morrow morning. And I don't want to hear another peep about what I've done or haven't done. Tell your chauffeur to run his car into the garage, and my chauffeur will take care of 'im for the night."

"He's a good guy!" protested Cafarelli; "can't he come in with us?"

"No, he can't," said Pender curtly; "there's proper quarters provided for servants here. Now, come in the house, you fellers, and we'll have dinner pretty soon."

While the scandalized butler was directing a footman to show the guests to their respective rooms, Pender went to the study and spoke to Ashburton, who was reading there.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I'll have your dinner sent to your room, Ashburton. There's three rough-necks come from New York to see me, and you wouldn't care to meet them."

The dinner was a new ordeal for Pender, and he flushed whenever he met his butler's eye. He allowed the guests champagne, as a concession to their strictures on his liberality, and they drank deeply until they forgot their wide-eyed wonderment at the magnificence of the room and became characteristically familiar and boisterous. During dessert they attested with ribald cheers that their host was a "good guy."

Pender marched them grimly to the billiard-room and prevailed on them to amuse themselves there for a while, but the wine-soothed Pat Cafarelli smoked his fourth large cigar with great vigor and strayed

away to stroll languidly through the lower rooms and admire the objects of art.

Pender heard a shrill feminine scream of terror, and he ran to the library, to find Pat in gales of merriment and one of the young housemaids in hysterical tears.

"He—he—tr—tried to kiss me, Mr. Pender," wailed the girl, "an' he wouldn't let me go!"

"Some little peach, Tom!" chuckled Pat jovially.

And then the host knocked his guest down.

The fallen Lothario wept tipsily when he recovered consciousness, and as the two other guests began to mumble protests at the flagrant breach of hospitality the doorbell rang.

Pender heard the voice of the second-man raised for a moment in spirited altercation, then there were heavy footfalls in the hall and four men strode into the library.

One of them was the town marshal of Penderton, two were deputy sheriffs and the fourth was one of the county's honorary deputy sheriffs, Mr. Witherbee.

"What's all this?" exclaimed Tom.

"Everybody here is under arrest!" declared the town marshal pompously. "I want one Tony Ross, to be held for extradition to New York State. He's wanted for burglary and assault with a dangerous weapon in New York city. And I want his three pals—accessories before and after the fact—Patrick Cafarelli, Phillip Mahony and Thomas Pender—all members of a band of crooks known as the Bull Pups."

"That's a lie!" cried Tom. "I ain't—and never was—a member o' the Bull Pups."

"Never mind!" snarled the marshal, "you're a pup, all right enough, and the breed don't matter much."

Mr. Witherbee, with his habitual grin, could not remain silent.

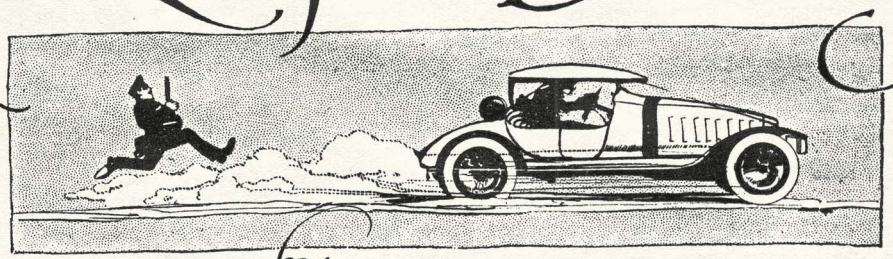
"It is plain, now, Mr. Pender," he sneered, "why you wanted to keep this estate. More carefully conducted by a cleverer crook than you are, it would have been a capital refuge and asylum for the criminals of New York."

"Whatever you're going to do, officer," said Tom harshly, "go ahead with it. If you give this feller Witherbee a chance to talk any more you'll have to take me on a murder charge, or something close to it."

"Put the bracelets on 'em all!" commanded the marshal, nodding to the two deputies.

(To Be Concluded.)

A Lady in Distress



by Rex Parson

I.

"DON'T forget your pin this time."

"Good Lord!" Barry exclaimed. "I *had* forgotten it. You certainly are a life-saver, Elsie. Thank you."

He hurried back into his room. There were moments when Barry Lathram almost wondered if he had not made a mistake in having chosen another than Elsie Simmons to be the future wife of the noted author he was most distinctly yet to become.

Only, of course, Elsie was not of the mental or social caliber of Bernice Mere-

dith. She was only the landlady's daughter. Bernice was the daughter of Professor Meredith, of Columbia, and the owner of a nice degree or two of her own.

But Elsie surely did look out for him. Bernice was always telling him he needed looking out for. There was an awful difference, and there were other differences.

Not for the world would he have let Bernice know that he had told Elsie about the lecture he had received when he failed to appear with that pearl pin the very first time he went to see his fiancée after she had given it to him for his birthday present.

Not for two or three worlds would he tell Bernice that Elsie had found the pin for him, and that he was wearing it to-day because she had reminded him of it.

It sometimes seemed to Barry that Elsie could get along a lot better at making ends meet on what he could make. It might be very sensible of Bernice to insist that he have a thousand dollars in the bank. But really he was making money. Wasn't he starting right out now, at the absurdly early hour of seven, to take Bernice driving in his own car? What did Bernice want?

The car represented two-thirds of the proceeds of the sale of his latest and best-paid contribution to American literature. Only two-thirds—there had been enough left to make several purchases and square his bill with Mrs. Simmons.

To be sure it was a second-hand car. And it was second-hand by virtue of the fact that a thing stays second-hand even when it reaches its seventh owner. And, before he could get it to run, he had taken it apart and put it together until he felt entitled to a certificate of graduation as a past-master machinist and engineer.

But it had run twice for him now, without breaking down. He was beginning to think he understood running it at least half as well as he understood its mechanism.

Not quite so well, though. He was quite sure that he could take a job in a garage any time the writing was not going well; but he was not quite sure he would not, save for manly pride, be glad if Bernice were to insist on doing the driving herself. Her own car—her third new one in six years, just now at the garage for a minor repair—was of the same brand.

However, he got the car up through Van Cortlandt Park and to Bernice's home without incident. Bernice looked it over and stepped in, remarking:

"Nineteen-eleven model. You ought to have got a Nineteen-thirteen. The Nineteen-thirteen Fords were a great improvement over previous models."

Barry mentioned meekly that eighty-five dollars had been his limit.

"The engine runs well," she decided judiciously.

"I've had enough trouble to make it," he returned.

They got off. He narrowly missed the curb in swinging to the other side of the street.

"Have you your license with you?" she asked him.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed, "I forgot it." Yesterday he had carried it in his overalls when he tried out the results of his tuning up.

"I'll get mine," Bernice promptly concluded. "Just drive me back."

"But nobody bothered me about it coming up," he protested.

"You never can tell what may happen," she stated wisely. "I wouldn't think of motoring without a license."

He drove her back, she secured her card and then established herself in the driving seat.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"Didn't I tell you?" she answered. "I have to get down to the Settlement at nine-thirty. That's why I said I'd have to make such an early start."

He had wondered why she had insisted on his being up there at the unholy hour of a quarter before eight. Now he understood. It was the Settlement, not the meeting of the Ibsen Club or some of the Post-graduate lectures she kept right on taking in spite of the summer heat.

"Looks like a breakdown," he remarked, after a pause, as they neared a heavy red runabout drawn off to the side of the road. The car's top and back curtains were close-drawn, but a woman was just emerging from it.

The woman was in a very ornamental duster, as Barry noticed a hundred yards away. At swiftly gained closer range she showed herself a noticeable woman every way, tall, a trifle stout, a shade too blond to be real, the dress under the duster almost decolleté enough for an evening gown and quite too elaborate for anything else.

If there had been the slightest question of her noticeableness she put it to rest by waving a large, fat handbag frantically at

Barry and his car. Even if she had not wished to do so, Bernice had to stop the machine to keep from running over the tall blond, who had stepped far enough out into the middle of the road to block it.

"Excuse me." She spoke in a voice which went nicely with the dress, being high-pitched and a trifle too loud. "But I'm in a really terrible fix. My husband and I spent last night at a friend's house in Yonkers. And now he's got suddenly ill and can't drive the car. He has these spells, but not very often. I—"

Bernice was eying the woman critically. It was natural for Barry to observe this before doing any thinking of his own. Bernice was ready for the situation before it was even all there.

"You want us to telephone for a doctor or someone at the next pay station?" she suggested, interrupting the other woman.

"Oh, no." The blond lady seemed almost startled at the offer. "No," she added in a tone of near-anguish, "I must get him home—immediately. Our own doctor knows exactly what to do in these cases. Oh, I must get him home."

Her way of saying it was tragic.

"I must get someone to drive the car back."

She eyed Barry too earnestly for any possible escape from the hint. But again Bernice spoke first:

"We'll send a man from the next garage," she said.

The woman looked grieved.

"Those garage fellows are so slow," she objected. "Couldn't you run us down?" she now asked, with a certain desperate directness, of Barry.

Barry squirmed uncomfortably. Bernice had made him about as useless in his own car as a fifth wheel on the ground. Also, it seemed to him, she was allowing her distaste for overdressed people to carry her into the limits of real hardness in refusing a request so obviously dictated by genuine distress.

"I'm afraid—" Bernice began again.

For once Barry determined to assert himself. Incidentally he would show his fiancée whether he could drive a car or not; though, on this point the powerful runabout caused him some tremors.

"Of course I could," he broke in. "Bernice, you can drive the car on down to the Settlement. I'll get down there and bring you home in it."

He stepped out as he spoke.

"Can you drive that car?" Bernice asked him a bit stiffly.

"I can try. Good heavens! the lady's in distress. I can't do any less than the best I can." His tone showed her how little he approved her attitude.

"Very well." Bernice's tone showed what she thought of his attitude.

Somehow it and the look with which she swept the big runabout, the big blond lady, and her own husband-to-be indicated a low estimate of the whole outfit. Barry clamped his jaw because he felt too angry to risk leaving it open.

Only the fact that Bernice stayed to see him start gave him nerve to face the outfit of controls on the big runabout's dashboard and at his hand. So weighty a matter was the undertaking that he noticed no more of the sick husband than that the man seemed to be breathing heavily in a very sound sleep.

"You turn that switch over and press that pedal to get the starter going," the blond lady explained hurriedly, as she squeezed herself between Barry and the man in a stupor.

The foot with which he pedaled grew cold as he saw the other pedals, the two levers, the huge steering-wheel, and grasped the difference between sliding and planetary transmissions as a running proposition.

Still, being of a reading turn, he knew the difference in theory. He managed to recall something about shifting the gears without putting in the clutch first, which saved the gears, no doubt. Anyhow, he found the combination that started the heavy machine.

Having done this, he discovered another combination that could be worked and sent the car on faster. Thereupon Bernice shot the little old Ford ahead.

"There is another speed or two," the blond lady mentioned, when he seemed inclined to stay with the results of his second experiment. And Barry tried a third.

It frightened him so that he instantly pulled back the throttle and spark. The blond lady watched him until he showed a little better form, having recovered slightly from the inward feeling that he had forgotten to eat his breakfast.

"Your lady-friend didn't seem to fall for me much," the blond lady suddenly intimated in a tone entirely different from that which she had used before.

There was a confidential, mutual-understanding sound to it that produced a distinct jolt in Barry's system.

"I thought she'd tag along behind us with the flivver. Of course she seen that he's soused. He was all right when we left the last roadhouse, but, when I saw him going, I just had sense enough to pull the switch and shut her off. You're getting the right idea; only don't dump us in the ditch."

Her words had given his nerves another turn that showed in his steering. The blond lady shut off her confidential talk.

After all there was but one thing for him to do. He must get the over-stimulated gentleman and his over-attired spouse to their home, regardless of considerations of their desirability. He devoted himself to the job, which was plenty of job for him.

"Better switch over to the Grand Boulevard," the woman advised, as they finally approached Fordham Road. "Or University Avenue would be the best of all. We gotta get to 778 Riverside Drive."

Oh, well, he thought, lots of well-to-do people talked so much slang they forgot how to talk any other way. Enough for him that he was getting to understand handling the car. He was needing to do so more every moment, as he got into more and more populated territory.

"We'll turn right over Washington Bridge," she spoke again after a while, "but, say—wait a minute here. I'll just go in that drug store and telephone home and have the doctor there brace him up. His heart ain't none too strong."

Barry stopped the car abruptly. He was rather proud of stopping it with any degree of immediateness on demand. The blond lady got out and entered the drug store, a triangular affair on the ground floor of a V-shaped house fitting into the point where the avenue they were on slanted across another street.

With the lady out of the way, Barry had better opportunity to give the overstimulated gentleman a little more scrutiny than the excitement of the first moments had permitted.

He certainly was pretty far gone. Barry had seen a few three-beer college drunks in his life; also he had once visited a slum street on a Saturday night and seen some big drunks.

But this man—Barry tried to think of all the words he had ever heard used on drunks. Soused, pickled, inebriated, intoxicated, spifflicated—they sounded inadequate. Paralyzed—

Yes—that nearly hit it. Something about the word hinted at a little more than real drunkenness. Something about the man suggested more than mere alcoholic inebriation.

Probably he was wrong, but it seemed to Barry that a fat man with a bloated face ought to look red when drunk. This man was fat as a Cheshire porker, and he was putty white.

The man's condition made him nervous. Somehow the shout of a newsboy hawking an extra annoyed him, as the sound of it interfered with his listening to the peculiar breathing of his passenger.

"Extra! Extra! All about the Reddington bank robbery— all about the autothieves!"

What did he care about a robbery and thieves? This man might die on his hands while his over-blond companion seemed to be taking time to telephone all over New York.

Barry prodded the man suddenly, his interest becoming acute. There was one more drunk in his memory, old Bill Lunny, the village drunkard up in his New Hampshire home village. Old Billy used to sleep off his sprees anywhere he happened to tumble. The older boys would prod him with sticks to get him into a helpless rage.

Barry prodded again. The man did not even grunt. Yet he was obviously breathing; he was almost snoring.

Barry turned to see if the blond lady was not coming back yet from her telephoning. She wasn't. Most of the drug-store's interior was very visible, with windows on both sides, so that one could see through to the other street. She was not in sight.

The telephone booth was in the visible part. Barry could see the whole of its empty inside through the open door.

He got out of the car with a bounce and hurried inside the store. Nobody was there. A clerk, after a few seconds, bobbed into view from behind the prescription room partition.

"Where did that big blond lady go?" Barry demanded fearfully.

"The one that short-cut across the store? I don't know," the clerk informed him. "She went out at that door. What did you want of her? She your wife? Is she—"

But Barry did not wait to discuss who the blond lady might be. He dashed out at

the door the clerk had indicated. The blond lady was not in sight. Half a dozen corners were at hand. Barry, the perspiration beginning to ooze unaccountably, rushed back to his car and got it started.

He made the sharp turn, got into higher gear, reached the first corner, saw no blond lady there, rushed to the second corner.

The blond lady had faded. It must have been quite an effort, considering the brilliance of her get-up, to fade so quickly. But she had done it. Barry circled a dozen blocks before he could believe it. Then he didn't believe; he knew it.

Also he knew that the soporated passenger beside him was drugged. He flushed guiltily at the thought of going through another man's pockets, but he had to satisfy himself upon the last point. It was not very hard to do.

The man's bright silk necktie had a loose thread beside a little hole in the knot from which a pin had been extracted. A flip of the tie revealed the fact that his silk shirt had no buttons. There had been studs. There are just two pockets in a vest-less suit where a man can carry a watch conveniently. Barry felt of the little pocket under the belt. He tried the outer breast pocket of the coat.

Money?

But it was just at this juncture that the big apartment house before which he had stopped for his search, showed signs of life. It was the only house between rows of vacant lots on each side of the street.

Subconsciously Barry had noted the ground-floor curtains drawn in front, the signs of vacation-spending inmates. Subconsciously he had thought of the place as being about as soundly asleep as the fat man at his side. Consciously he had not thought of it at all, in connection with what he was up to until—

"What are you doing?" a feminine voice shrilled from a window close at hand.

Barry looked up, as startled as if he had been actually picking the pockets. Before he could answer the feminine voice rose about an octave and swelled to a siren shriek.

"Stop thief! Police! Police! Murder! Help! Police!—"

Barry's first desire was to vindicate himself of the suspicion. He immediately grew a stronger desire. A dozen windows were opened in the house. Over in the rear of a house on the next street three distinct voices took up the yell. Above it, and somewhere as yet out of sight to the east and behind him, a policeman's whistle was blown.

Barry paused not to discuss with himself what he might or might not say to a policeman. He spent his thinking on the levers and pedals.

He thanked heaven for an open street with a curve in it two blocks off. He was more thankful when he saw that the curve brought him out upon a wide bridge.

He did more thinking when he felt sure he was out of the way of pursuit. Mostly he thought of how badly he wanted to be out of the whole mess. Just a little bit he thought of how to get out.

He would hurry right down to 778 Riverside Drive. He would stop at the curb. He would get out. He, too, would fade.

His passenger was still breathing strongly. The man would last until somebody else found him and took charge. Fading would not be so difficult. Nothing very remarkable about stopping an automobile and walking away from it.

Barry drove straight across to Broadway, then swung down 155th street with Trinity Church Cemetery on his left. He turned into Riverside Drive and spent a little time examining numbers above and below the graveyard.

It was then he made the mortifying discovery that the address for which he was looking was somewhere in Trinity Cemetery. And his passenger was not yet ready to be left there.

Of course, there was nothing in the world to prevent his pulling up in front of any number except the fact that a strange red car attracts about three times the attention in front of a house as does a red car that belongs to that house. Besides, a policeman was sauntering toward the spot, not half a block away.

Barry had thought some about policemen as he came down from the bridge. The more he had thought about them the less they had appealed to him as persons to whom he wished to apply for the solution of his predicament.

Somehow the story of being handed a little prize package consisting of a heavy red runabout with a fat, robbed, drugged man in it did not seem the proper sort of story to be telling to a policeman.

About ninety-nine times more likely than otherwise a policeman would not believe a

big blond lady could do it, even if Barry told him the lady was twice as big and blond as she really had been. It was a perfectly true story, but it wasn't probable a bit. Barry wouldn't have believed it himself.

Just what a policeman would believe did not make pleasant conjecture. Barry knew mighty well that no policemen would let him walk away without finding out a lot more than he could tell. Also he knew that, some four or five blocks from the far end of Washington Bridge an excited woman had just told a policeman about seeing a young man go through the pockets of a doped passenger in a big red runabout.

By now the policeman had undoubtedly turned the story into the precinct station house by telephone. By now it had probably been relayed to the precinct through which he was driving, and to every other precinct.

And, in five minutes, or whenever that particular policeman and every other policeman rang his bell to tell the sergeant he was on the job, there would be Heaven only knew how many eyes all over town looking for a big, red runabout being driven by a young man with a big, fat one beside him.

There was but one thing to do. He must get out of that car and away from it, and must do it quickly.

But how far would he have to go before he could safely drop a big, red runabout with a big, fat man in it? The question did not amuse Barry a bit, as it formed itself in his mind.

It amused him less when he picked a quiet house on a side street and slowed up to its curb, only to have a man step out and look at the car with evident curiosity. A second attempt was frustrated by the face of a still more curious little girl peering down from the first story window of the next house. A third attempt brought a uniformed flunkey hurrying from the door, and before the fourth attempt was attempted at all another policeman hove into view.

To be sure he could take the chance anywhere. Certainly, if he were arrested and held for examination he could get Bernice to come and corroborate his wild yarn.

Only he was not sure whether he wouldn't prefer to be sent to prison. Bernice had little enough apparent respect for his mentality as it was. And she had disapproved of his act at the beginning.

If it had only been Elsie Simmons—but it wasn't Elsie Simmons; it was Bernice Meredith. And he was to live with Bernice Meredith the remainder of his life.

A man doesn't need to be married to see that it would be fatal to happiness to give a wife such a concrete example of his ability to make a mess of anything he undertook.

But what was he to do with the car and the fat sleeper? He kept on. He made a dozen more attempts to stop without being observed. If, he considered, he should get out and run, he would excite more suspicion; if he got out and walked, he would give too much time. People seemed to be eying the car a lot more than they had been doing at first.

But no wonder. He suddenly perceived that the last turn had jarred the sleeper's head from its position against the brace of the top. The cap had rolled off the bald dome and this was wobbling ludicrously, perilously, startlingly, at every jolt.

For a sickening moment Barry thought the fellow had died. But a grunt reassured him, as a lurch into a hole in the asphalt shook the heavy man's frame.

He pushed the fat body toward the end of the seat again, tried to force the head into its former position.

Barry risked a backward glance through the glazed window in the curtain. His last hope faded. It seemed that three out of the last five men he had passed were rubbering back for a laugh at the too obvious "souse." Not a chance in the world of leaving the car unobserved now.

"Well, bob, darn you!" he snarled at the rolling head, as he made a less gentle and no more effectual second attempt to make it stay put. "Bob, confound you! You big, pickled fish, you've just got yourself to thank for the fix you're in. You needn't try to make it any worse for a fellow that's been boob enough to try to help you out of it. Just for that, I'm going to—"

He had given no consideration to the idea before. It had seemed too risky to leave the unconscious man in a really out-of-the-way place, where help might come too late to save life. But that infernal, attention-attracting bobbing head was too much for him.

"Yes, sir, I'm going to beat it with you to the loneliest spot I can find. And I don't care if you stay there till the crows pick your bones."

As if to help him carry out his resolu-

tion, the street he was on began to go downhill. The 155th Street bridge lay before him. He would make Bronx Park—go on, if necessary, to Pelham Bay. And, in a nice, solitary spot, he would leave that big red runabout and its big, fat, sleeping owner for any one else that wanted them.

If the man woke up before he was discovered, well and good. And Barry had ceased to care whether the waking should take place in this world or whatever next one a man deserved who let a gaudy blond lady drug and rob him.

He headed across the bridge, pushing up the spark a little. He had got used to running the car. He had been in the thing so long, he felt as if he had grown up with it.

Half way across the bridge a khaki-clad policeman stood beside a motorcycle leaning against a little green tower. He was chatting with a blue-clad policeman. He glanced up as Barry came rolling along at just about the law's limit of speed.

He called the blue-clad officer's attention to the bobbing head. Both of their faces started to broaden into a grin. Then both stopped the grin at once, looked as if they suddenly remembered something, turned their eyes down and read the number.

Like automatic signals they each put up an arm and started for the centre of the street. Barry shuddered. The end!

The shudder did something to the spark lever or the throttle. He never would know which. Neither did he know then that twelve little cylinders hummed almost silently under the big hood of that runabout. But he noticed one thing:

The car seemed to jump. It jumped so suddenly he could not take his hand from the wheel to touch the brake; and his feet were jerked from the pedals, so that he would have to find them all over before he could begin to use them. He barely managed to swerve enough to miss the quicker of the two officers of the law.

He was past them. Was he going to stop and wait for them to come up to him? Hadn't he at last developed the plan to free him from the whole wretched business? Was he going to be taken now?

The car was answering for him, gathering speed with every turn of the wheels. But he had no time to listen to the answer. There were wagons and other automobiles and, as he got to the other end of the bridge where it divides in a "Y," there were pedestrians. Somehow he had missed them all.

The upper arm of the "Y" seemed least cluttered with traffic; so he swung northward. As he reached 161st Street he dodged across the front of the cross-town-hurrying vehicles just released by the traffic-squad man's whistle.

Up Jerome Avenue! Plenty of room! Best of all, Boscobel Avenue V-ing off from it but a few blocks away, and then but two blocks to his boarding-house. There he could enter and hide in his room; there he was known; there—

Yes, there good old Elsie would identify him and assure the wretched pursuers that he could not possibly pick anyone's pockets, that he was an honest, upright, decent young man. There he would have at least a little corroboration for the time elements in his story, enough to prove that he could not have drugged a man and run all around upper New York with him since leaving the boarding-house.

Boscobel Avenue! He whirled into it, not quite sure whether he bounced over the fender of a trolley car or just bumped on the tracks. He caught the shriek of a motorcycle's horn behind him, saw the frantic traffic man wave a signal to his pursuer.

But two blocks! Barry pushed things up another notch. They were pretty long blocks. But he would make them. Surely he had learned this morning how to drive a car. One block gone—half—three-quarters of the second.

And then Fate played her last card. The big tank-wagon with its nozzles spraying the street might not look like any of the pictures of Fate; but it was Fate all right. A hundred yards of wet, a trolley car coming south on the other side of the street, a grocer's wagon at the right-hand curb.

Barry headed for the ample space there would be between the sprinkling wagon and the grocer's cart. He hoped the car would hold its straight course over that slippery patch.

And the sprinkling wagon turned aside.

Barry had got his foot back on the brake. He could jump as the car stopped, and make the last fifty yards in a run.

Only the car didn't stop. For a sickening fraction of a second that seemed eternal, its nose pointed straight toward the oncoming trolley; for the next sickening second it confronted the motorcycle still a block and a half behind; then it seemed destined to climb the curb and the stone steps of a delicatessen store; then it fin-

ished with its first complete circle and was aimed straight at the grocer wagon.

Funny how much one can notice in a time like that! All the things he had heard about using brakes on wet pavement came back to Barry with beautiful clearness. He realized perfectly now that the car was going right on in the direction in which he had been driving and not at all in the varied directions it was pointing as it spun. He calculated almost to a nicety the angle at which he was going to bump that wagon-load of groceries.

He wondered whether he would be killed outright or merely sent to the hospital for a few months while the doctors saved him to life as a hopeless cripple and a jail-bird. He saw now, with the clearness of a lime-light's showing, how foolish all this running from police had been, how much worse a case it had made against him. He hoped he would be killed, quickly, as painlessly as——

Crash!

The first thing he felt was the bulk of the fat sleeper beside him driving his ribs against the side of the car as he went down. The next thing must have been a box of groceries. It caught him on the head.

After that feelings were hazy. He got an impression that the fat man was squirming, swearing. He thought a policeman was adding to the profanity.

"Fat Charlie!" somebody shouted as if the idea pleased him immensely.

Then Elsie—good old Elsie—she was talking fast and hard and—

II.

He woke up with a frantic effort. He had just been dreaming that he was in a prison cell, and Bernice was telling him in choice language exactly how incompetent he was.

She had explained that a man with imagination enough to be an author never could be sane enough to transact the ordinary affairs of life in the real. She had insisted that he promise then and there never, never again to attempt to take things into his own hands.

"Here you are," she was saying; "isn't this lesson enough?"

And he was making the fatal promise, swearing away his life's liberty, wondering if it would make much difference since he was in prison anyhow. And—

"Oh, here you are!"

And here he was. He had got his eyes open. It wasn't a prison cell at all. And it wasn't Bernice. It was his own room—and it was—

"Good old Elsie!" he felt himself murmuring, and realized that his ears were wrapped in something that totally upset the normal sound of his voice.

"You clever, lucky boy!" Elsie laughed. "But you oughtn't to have tried to get him away from the police. You almost killed yourself doing that, and you've lost half the reward as well. If you'd only run him right down to the court-house and done with it—but—"

Oh, pshaw! He had thought he was really awake. Well, this was a better dream than the other one.

"But it was really wonderful of you to manage to get him at all. And they were just in time to catch the woman before she got off for South America. Think of it—it would have broken that little Reddington bank right up, if you hadn't—"

Good Lord! Had they doped him? He had heard that morphin dreams are pleasant. Only he would rather know the worst than dream of Elsie telling him unintelligible bits about a woman and a bank and a reward and—

"Those nasty policemen were trying to keep the bank crowd from giving you any of the reward. First I had to prove to them that you couldn't have been one of the automobile thieves. Then they rowed about your having run away from them and broken the speed laws, and I went right to the banking officials themselves and stood up like a little man. And here's the check.

"Mr. Lathram, I think you're going to be able to marry your high-browed lady-love. With a thousand dollars to start with and a little management, you'll have a chance to strike for something better in your line and—

"I'm so glad. I—"

She didn't look glad in the dream. She looked as if she were just about to cry. She was swallowing a big lump.

The long ring of an electric bell sounded below. Ah, he was learning why they sometimes called drugged people "jingled." It sounded like music.

"There, I reckon that's Miss Meredith now. Just as soon as I got the reward business straightened out, I telephoned around until I found her down at some meeting. I didn't say anything about the

reward. I just told her you'd been hurt a little in an accident. You can give her the good news.

"The doctor says you aren't really hurt enough so that you can't talk. You got grandly shaken up and an awful bump on your head; but you'll be around in a couple of days or a week. Ah—"

Bernice!

She looked at the bandaged head on the pillow and emitted a gasp. But Elsie was quick to reassure her.

"He's not at all seriously hurt, Miss Meredith. The doctor says he'll be all over it in a day or two. I'll—leave you now to congratulate him on his escape."

Elsie was gone. Bernice came toward him. She emitted a sigh of despair.

"Of course I'm glad you're not hurt worse. But I can't help feeling it will be better for you in the long run if you're hurt badly enough to make the adventure a lasting lesson. I could have told you those were not nice people, that the man was drugged or drunk, that the woman was an adventuress, an utterly unfit person for a decent young man to be seen with.

"But you must override my judgment, even without giving me time to express it. Now I hope you realize that you're too utterly impractical. If you don't, we'll simply have to cancel our engagement."

Barry eyed her wretchedly. She was a splendid creature, so competent, so knowing, so—so infernally superior.

"You wouldn't do that, Bernice," he groaned.

"Yes, I most certainly shall do it, unless you'll promise on your word of honor never to act without my direction. I couldn't think of having a husband get mixed up in an automobile wreck with a pair of bank thieves, or doing something else equally foolish and perilous every day of my life. It would turn my hair gray."

"But, Bernice—" He would tell her of the reward. She had helped him a lot to believe that the scene was real.

"No—you must promise," she interrupted him to insist.

"But, Bernice, wait a moment—let me tell you—"

"Promise first. That is the most important thing of all. It's for your own good, you know."

Oh, he was awake all right. He could feel the hurt in his head. It was mean of Bernice to come down on him when he was hurt. He had a right to be cross about it. He wouldn't have it.

"No, I won't promise. Listen, Bernice. I got—"

"Very well. I was in hopes you would have learned. Here's your ring."

"Bernice! Why, Bernice! You don't mean—"

"I certainly do mean it. Unless you want to promise me—"

"I don't! I won't! Maybe I do need some looking after. Maybe I can get into trouble rather easily. I'd rather take my chances. I can stand being helped out of trouble and steered away from it; but I'll be hanged if I'm going to have anybody telling me about it all the time."

He was frightened at his own words. He was thoroughly angry, a little more incapable of doing the right thing than ever, perfectly aware that he was doing the wrong one—and too mad to stop.

"Would you mind letting me have my pin back?" she asked him. "It's not the value of the thing, but, since we're no longer engaged, I'd rather not have it worn by—"

"Elsie will give it to you," he said with the white calm of anger too deep for violence. "Elsie!" he called in a louder voice, though one still under the control of his powerful emotion.

"Your pin?" the landlady's daughter exclaimed. "Why, it's down at police headquarters. It was found on that woman. When I was down there I looked over the stuff, since the pin was gone when you were carried in here. They wouldn't let me take it; but, no doubt, you can get it."

"Good heavens! Did she frisk me, too?" gasped Barry.

Bernice turned a pitying glance upon him. "You really need a nurse," she said.

III.

An hour later Barry had got enough of the story to fill in the gaps. The blond lady, alias Big Lizzie the Pippin, after conducting the automobile raid on the Reddington Bank, had engineered her companion into a road house and administered knockout drops.

He, feeling the on-coming influence of the drug, had insisted hurriedly on starting again for a rendezvous of his friends, hoping to beat its effects and keep her from getting away with all of their loot. He had not succeeded.

Big Lizzie had not dared risk the attempt to walk the long distance from where Barry and Bernice had found her to a car or railroad station. Wherefore she had enlisted Barry's aid, got within reach of a railroad station, then passed the whole outfit over to him.

When taken, the fat man had recovered consciousness through the shock of the smash-up. Finding himself robbed, he had promptly confessed the plan to catch the steamer for South America.

The police were so glad to get their man that they were quite ready to forgive Barry's apparent attempt to get his prisoner lodged in the county jail without letting them assist him. The motor-car had been described as suspicious a day before, for this was not the first offense on the part of the automobile raiders.

That it was probably in their midst had been brought to the attention of the officers through the description furnished by the woman who had caught Barry going through the empty pockets of his passenger in the runabout.

But this working out of the details of the immediate past had not by any means taken up all the hour's conversation between Barry and the landlady's daughter. A good half of the time had gone to certain matters regarding the future. You can't expect young, hopeful people, one of whom is hopelessly impracticable and visionary, to talk a whole hour about nothing except the past.

"Say," Barry exclaimed, "Bernice was right. If I had any sense at all I'd have known long ago that there was only one girl in the world I could be happy with. I am incompetent."

"She had no right to say you needed a nurse," Elsie voiced her still remaining loyal indignation.

"Well," he said softly, squeezing a hand that felt a thousand times softer than Bernice's voice had ever sounded to his ears—"well, thank the Lord, I've got one."

WE ARE ONE

WE are one, so said the preacher,
"One until death do thee part";
Yet I buy two railroad tickets,
And I reckon from the start
That I must
Find the dust
For two.

We are one; but there is trouble
In the camp if I suggest
That one opera seat is plenty,
Or one hat and coat and vest.
Clothes she'll buy,
And—well, I
Need a few.

We are one, and yet the waiter
Brings two orders when we dine.
What would happen if 'twere single,
And the "better half" were mine?
There would be
A mêlée,
That's true.

We are one; but who'll acknowledge
That the preacher told no lie?
Is there any one to back him?
I'll not bet on him, not I!
I will swear
We're a pair—
That's *two*.

Alice Lindsey Webb.

Fools of Sacrifice

by Richard Duffy

A THREE-PART STORY—PART TWO

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS ALREADY PRINTED.

CAST away half-naked on Big Twin Island in the Caribbean, H. A. Danforth was secretly rescued by the voodoo seeress, Mother Juliet. She, together with Overseer William Ransom and others, had been organizing the plantation blacks to rebel against the owner, Captain Neville. So far had the plot progressed that Ransom's accomplices, Jake Haas, Sailor Pete, and Black Henry, had smuggled in a boatload of arms. Neville's suspicious superintendent, Michael Sands, threw Black Henry into chains, but did not find the arms.

Henry's friends at once planned a rescue. Ransom and Mother Juliet prepared to attend a secret meeting at which they would beg the others not to act till the arrival of a mysterious stranger who might tip the scales either way. This stranger, whose advent was "prophesied" by Mother Juliet, is of course Danforth, whom she is already sheltering. By producing him in due season, the voodoo woman anticipated much credit for her powers of prophecy.

As Ransom and Mother Juliet prepared to leave the seeress's dwelling for the conclave, Danforth, sleeping heavily in a concealed chamber at the rear, was awakened out of a nightmare to find a woman, lithe and strong, lying with her smooth cheek and fine hair against his bare breast.

CHAPTER VIII

SEARCH.

STILL as the woman herself Danforth remained, groping his way out of the labyrinth of his dreams into the maze of the actual. That the woman had fainted he assured himself promptly. How she came to be here, and why she had put her hand on his face and roused him, were matters beyond his comprehending.

Gently he raised his arm and gently stroked the woman's face, murmuring to her stupid, conventional words such as:

"You are all right now, aren't you? Say you are all right."

No response from the woman—but a shuffling of hurried feet on the other side of the door.

Danforth fell silent. Mother Juliet, if it was she moving in there, would notice that the door was open; perhaps wide, at least part way.

The hurried shuffling of feet continued, interrupted suddenly by the jarring noise of a human body bumping against some piece of furniture.

Danforth's ears were preternaturally acute because his wide-awake eyes could see only darkness, and he was aware of the woman's still pressure solely by the feel of her cheek against his chest.

She stirred slightly. Danforth took advantage of her movement to glide softly from under her head and shoulders, just as a shrill voice in the adjoining room rang out, half-pleading, half-peremptory in its address to Mother Juliet.

In a tone of irritation Mother Juliet replied, but her words escaped Danforth. He was noticing that the woman who had fallen across him on the cot was slipping

to the floor—not as a dead weight, but adroitly, noiselessly.

He breathed hardly at all. Somewhat of the woman's stealth imparted itself to him. He could not understand why—especially as he expected Mother Juliet to appear in the room. She had struck herself against the door, he thought, remembering the noise he had heard, and she would wonder how it chanced to be open.

The strange woman was now on her knees beside his cot. Swiftly her arm moved upward to his chest, where her head had lain. He felt her hand clenched hard and also the cold of steel against his throat just under his chin.

No more was necessary. He held his breath and lay motionless as the woman had been before. Whoever she was, he wished her to understand that the revolver at his throat gave her mastery over him, though a few minutes before she had been helpless.

Still he counted on Mother Juliet. More shuffling steps—vanishing now—no further talk—and silence save for the distant, soothing song of the crooning sea. The barrel of the revolver was becoming warmer against his flesh.

Absolute silence in the adjoining room continued. Presently Danforth felt the revolver drawn away from his throat, only to be held with the barrel pointing at his chest.

"They've gone," the woman told him in a low musical voice, in which, however, he sensed the firmest determination and coolness.

Her voice was the only note of identification he could make about her in the darkness, except for a guess at her height.

"What kind of a man are you?" she asked after a pause.

"I? Oh, I'm an American. And you are English, unless I'm all wrong. . . . By the way, I'm very nervous—you handle your gun so steadily."

"You mean you did not think I could because I fainted and fell—"

Abruptly she left her sentence unfinished.

The revolver was lifted from his chest and he could make out her figure, very straight and still, standing beside his cot.

"No, I didn't mean that at all," he said quickly as he sat up, leaning on one hand. "Yet now you mention it, the joke does seem to be on me. I was under the impression that you were quite helpless and I was doing what I could in my awkward circumstances to aid you when suddenly the revolver—"

"There's no need of rehearsing the scene," the woman interrupted. "You were rubbing my face just as I was coming to. Then I heard a voice that I think would have brought me back to life tonight, even if I had been half-dead."

"Mother Juliet's?" he asked.

"No," she retorted promptly. "And I should like you to understand, sir, that I never fainted before in my life. I wouldn't have fainted here if you had not jumped up at my throat like an insane person from the cot where I expected to find Mother Juliet dozing."

"I'm very sorry," he said humbly, "although I don't suppose it makes any difference. But I have been ill, rather feverish and nervous, and I was dreaming that some one was trying to strangle me—that's the truth, silly as it sounds. You see, Miss—"

He paused as if waiting for her to fill out the blank.

"You know my name, don't you?"

"I'm sorry to say I do not."

"Then we sha'n't bother about it."

For a moment Danforth was nonplused by this plump declaration.

"Well," he informed her then in a tone of philosophic resignation that provoked her and at the same time piqued her curiosity about him, "as I can't see your face perhaps it doesn't matter. Yet I can't be calling you by no name at all, so I christen you Miss Shadow—for I shall always be able to recognize you."

"If you ever see me again, you mean—"

"I mean, if you'll excuse the interruption, that in case I should ever hear you speak again I'll know your voice."

"Keep still! Stay just where you are!" she whispered, moving toward the inner door of the timber shed.

Danforth divined that she had heard the sound of some one in the next room. He remained silent and motionless, but could hear nothing until her swift, gliding step brought her again to his side.

"Will you give me your name?" she asked hurriedly.

"Why, naturally," he began, and then hesitated.

He was glad of the darkness now, for he felt the blood rush to his face.

"Naturally I would," he went on, draw-

ing a deep breath; "yet why should I, when you have refused me yours?"

"It's not that I am ashamed of my name," she retorted, "and if you knew as much as you ought to know for a man in your position—"

Danforth winced under the remark and sat up tense in every nerve as he interposed with some trace of contempt in his humor:

"I am not aware that I attributed your refusal to give your name to any special motive, Miss Shadow, just as I am fully convinced that you know nothing at all about my particular position."

"But I do," the young woman reaffirmed, "and that is why I tell you that if you knew as much as you ought to know you would not need to ask me my name—or at least you could have made a very good guess at it."

"You mean if I knew as much as I'd like to know I wouldn't need to ask, don't you? However, your arguments are so agreeably feminine, Miss—"

"Don't call me that again, please," she cut in sharply. "You make a pretense of talking as though we were having tea together. If you think there are any such parties taking place on this island—well, all I can say is that you are one of those men who have tea-party brains. Now lie back there flat again. I'm going."

He saw her arm and hand vaguely as she raised the revolver. He dropped back on his cot.

"Goodby!" Danforth called out cheerily. "As I said, I shall remember only your voice—I shall not remember even that you came here to-night!"

In scornful silence the girl was passing through the doorway, when her feet stuck to the floor like lead, her breath broke into a gasp and she reached toward the jamb of the door for support.

Three rapid clanging strokes of the ship's bell on the pedestal spoke a noisy, impatient summons on the still night.

"What's the bell mean?" asked Danforth, sitting up, startled.

"It's for Mother Juliet," the young woman in the doorway answered.

Her voice was low and weak.

"What shall I do?" she moaned. "What shall I do? It can't be any of the blacks, because they are coming directly to the hut. I saw their lantern shining between the trees as the path turns in and out.

"No black, I've always been told, would dare to come right up to the door. They'd be afraid Mother Juliet would put on evil spell on them."

"A what?" cried Danforth.

"Man alive!" she groaned. "You are an imbecile after all, aren't you? Can't you understand that it would be bad for me to be seen here by a black; it would—oh, you couldn't understand what he would say if he found me here! And yet you ask one foolish question after another, while I—"

Hardly before she was aware of his spring from the cot he was standing beside her in the gloom, holding her arm in a firm grip. She felt with a returning glow in her veins that he was bigger and stronger than she, although she prided herself on her stature and strength.

"If you are afraid 'he' may see you," Danforth murmured commandingly, with obvious emphasis on the word *he,* "you must do what I say."

He poked his head into the abode of Mother Juliet and glanced toward the hearth, saying:

"Lord, that speck of fire only makes the big tomb look darker."

A tremendous, threatening roar of a man's voice now burst from the grove, demanding that Mother Juliet issue forth from her hiding-place.

"That's Michael Sands!" the woman said in a stifling tone. "He'll find us here!"

"But he won't," Danforth interrupted reassuringly, catching up his blankets and taking hold of her hand. "We're going out through the door on this side."

"The door on this side?" the woman repeated wonderingly, and suffered herself to be led as he felt his way along the side wall to the rear, past the window, whose dusty panes gritted against his finger-nails.

At length they reached the door. Danforth slapped it lightly with his palm and the hollow sound that resulted was his answer.

"Here!" he murmured, and pressed her hand unconsciously in the moment of his elation.

The woman trembled and pulled her hand free; but Danforth was busy fumbling to find the knob. When he found it he pushed the door open slowly.

"There's a path here that leads somewhere outside," he told her, "and you have Michael safe at your back if you can take

care of yourself once you get away from this grove."

At once the young woman broke into a run, and in the dim radiance of the stars Danforth followed after at the best pace he could make, watching her graceful, darting presence weaving in and out with an admiration warm yet impersonal. She was like a fabled creature of the woods and soon vanished as mysteriously as befits such a mythical being.

Left alone, Danforth plodded steadily forward along the vine-grown path, dragging more heavily at each step under the weight of his blankets. Now there was no sign nor sound ahead of him of the woman with whom he had made such strange acquaintance.

He stopped and dropped to the ground to rest and consider whether it would not make his going lighter to cast away the blankets. The cool wind in the tree-tops cautioned him to think twice before doing this.

Besides all the former ache in his bones and the faintness in his stomach, which the care of Mother Juliet had banished, were now coming back. How much farther would he be able to go?

The problem was then and there decided for him in a way that left him no choice.

Heavy, hurried footsteps—it might be two men, it might be four—were pounding the path from the direction of the timber shed.

Danforth clutched his blankets in his arms and, holding them before him as a shield, plunged into the tangled shrubbery at the side of the trail. Thorns and sharp leaves tore the flesh of his feet and arms, yet he dashed madly on into the jungle-like wood until he dropped to earth exhausted, his face and chest buried in the blankets.

CHAPTER IX.

OUTWITTED.

ALONG the path with thumping feet came Michael Sands, Captain Neville's superintendent, a man undersized, of abnormally broad shoulders and abnormally long arms, every ounce of weight in his body steel of muscle.

Two brawny negroes, handy men about the big house, ran lurchingly after him, crying out as they had breath to spare that they dared go no further because the wood was full of Mother Juliet's snakes.

At a point almost opposite the covert in which Danforth lay Sands slowed down and stopped. He mopped his face with his cap and turned round, throwing the glare of his lantern into the faces of his two assistants.

"Boys," he announced, "we'll go back."

They planted themselves in their tracks like too jaded horses ready to founder.

"Thank ye, Master Sands," said one.

"Thank ye kindly, Master Sands," echoed the other.

They both spoke with a noticeable English intonation. Alike in build and conforming in disposition so that they accomplished in admirable teamwork whatever they undertook, they were known about the big house as the Brothers, except when it was necessary to distinguish them by their names of Caleb and Joshua. Of actual kinship between them there was none.

"Mind you," Sands proceeded, "it's not at all that I take any stock in the all-in-me-eye talk about snakes that can't be kilt. The only snakes I never kilt are the ones I never shot at—or the ones I missed when I did shoot.

"The plain reason we're goin' back is that we're runnin' round this path like a squirrel in a cage. We're gettin' nowhere but around, and the foul witch and mischief-maker has given us the slip. Back we go. Face about. March!"

Returning in haste from her séance in the cottage of William Ransom, at which she had gained every point she played for, Mother Juliet still revolved in her mind the puzzling question:

Who had dared to enter the hut and pull away the wardrobe from the door of the timber shed during the interval between the moment she bade the stranger good night and the moment she reentered her dwelling?

She walked faster as she pondered, when suddenly there crashed upon her ears the clang of the ship's bell.

There followed soon the sound of a loud, angry voice. An eye of light flashed its keen rays among the trees and moved quickly inward along the path to her hut. The loud, angry voice persisted, but became less distinct as it drew away rapidly.

Mother Juliet followed it at a safe dis-

tance. She stole up very close to the door of her hut and squatted in the undergrowth by the path.

The noise of furniture being knocked about and the constant bellowing demand of Michael Sands and the quavering cries of his associates that Mother Juliet reveal herself she listened imperturbably.

But her heart sank when she heard the crash of some great weight on the floor and Michael Sands cried victoriously:

"In here, boys! She's barricaded herself in the rear shed!"

They would find the stranger—the miraculous ally whom she had promised to William Ransom for the morrow!

Mother Juliet crooned to herself voicelessly and waited, impatiently wringing her hands.

More stamping of feet, more clatter of voices, with the big bellow of Michael Sands booming above the others. Then silence.

For five minutes the seeress tested this silence before she hazarded entrance into the hut. She scrutinized every corner and poked it with her sun-umbrella. Into the timber she advanced and went through the like procedure, always finding her way about in the darkness with the natural ease of a cat.

The stranger, Michael Sands and his men were gone. The stranger's cot-bed lay upside down on the floor; she discovered no trace of his blankets.

CHAPTER X.

LOST—AN EMBEZZLER.

THE grove behind the cliff at the easterly end of Big Twin Island, instead of enshrining the sanctum of the voodoo seeress, might have served as the site of a Greek temple. Past the upland in a fertile stretch of rolling meadow the green center of the island was piebald with the white cottages of the Settlement, while the whole westerly point rose abruptly and splendidly, for all the world like an acropolis of Nature's cunning architecture.

On this acropolis was Captain Neville's dwelling-estate and his low, sturdy half-timber house of Elizabethan style, the ground-plan of which compared with a capital E save for the omission of the middle bar of the letter. Half-Moon House he called it, after the cove and bay which it faced with the setting sun. But the Settlement people never spoke of it otherwise than as the big house.

The general living-room, known as the hall, adjoined the northerly wing, in which were the apartments of Captain Neville, of Michael Sands, his first assistant, and of his chief clerk and all-around man, Oscar Molle, a Belgian.

Here the social life of the curious household had its focus. Here were the billiard-table, the reading-table, covered with magazines, reviews and papers anywhere from six weeks to a year behind in date.

Here were a piano, an organ, an odd assortment of stringed instruments and even a talking-machine. Here also were great dozy armchairs of wicker and of leather and broad couch-benches along the walls.

Tall French windows of leaded panes looked upon the sea to the west, and on the east at the rather unsuccessful attempt to make thrive in this alien clime an English court garden.

Here, in a word, were all the comforts and even the luxuries out of which the retired English sea captain, Horace Remyngton Neville, had contrived to make a manorial home on the desert island of which he had taken possession as a squatter without dispute, and where, until the present revelation, he had been monarch of all he surveyed without question.

The home had been for his wife and daughter Susan. But the wife had sickened and died after two years of residence. Whether the cause was the climate or mere heart-break amid the splendor and majesty of their lonely empire, only two persons had ever really known.

One was the captain himself; the other, his dead spouse, who slept under waving palms on the highest point of the estate in a coffin and tomb of stone that the captain had fashioned with his own hands. As the secret of the tomb, so was locked the secret of the captain's breast.

Susan, his daughter, was twelve when her mother died. Each year Captain Neville was firmly resolved to take her and the stone coffin back to England.

Each year for seven years he had resolved to do this—and the longing of the girl for the far journey increased with the mystic awakening of her mind into womanhood, while the chains of the island dominion and of the tragedy of the tomb under the palms wrapped the captain faster in their coils.

He was perhaps not unconscious of something there might be of sacrifice in his daughter's uncomplaining willingness to suffer these constant postponements until they became a habit ever harder to relinquish; and by way of compensation, it may be, he had allowed her almost as much freedom and authority in the house as would have been her mother's right, from the time Susan began to show she had a mind of her own.

Yet to-night all the tacit convention between them was set aside. Michael Sands instantly realized it on entering the hall where were Captain Neville, Susan and her companion, Miss Addison, a gray little woman of faded prettiness and the waning forties.

The captain's usual smooth, heavy voice sounded sharp and nervous. His tall, spare frame was tense, but poised.

It seemed to Sands that his white hair and pointed white beard gave him the look of a man much beyond fifty-seven, although this might only be a fancy because the captain's ruddy, firm cheeks were now so pale and drawn.

For all that, the penetrating black eyes, with whose every shade of feeling Sands was long familiar, sent forth their message of the man born to command.

This impression was snapshotted in the brain of Michael Sands, who turned to retreat from the hall almost as soon as he had set foot in it.

"See you presently, captain," he said, saluting.

"Don't go, Michael," Captain Neville called across the room. "Come here. You can hear this to benefit, I've no doubt, as well as Susan and Miss Addison."

Whatever benefit Miss Addison was receiving was perceptible only in a pathetically wry expression at the corners of her dried Cupid's-bow mouth that presaged tears.

Susan, handsomely lean and muscular, almost as tall as her father, glanced down and smoothed her blue skirt with one hand as the only mark of her embarrassment before Michael.

Then she faced her father resolutely though deferentially, with his same dark eyes and his same clear-cut patrician features. Father and daughter never resembled each other more closely.

"And I wish, Michael, that you make these new orders promptly known to everybody on the plantation. The man or woman who disobeys them will be counted as one of the Settlement crew—importers or contraband and mutineers, who are only awaiting the opportunity to rip open the throat of each man-jack of us here in the house.

"We must look out for ourselves and we must look out for our women—these two and Rebecca in the kitchen and her old mother, Jane. Yes, black as well as white must be cared for so long as they sail the course set for them."

"I take it," Michael put in, "that you have no answer yet to your note to Overseer Ransom."

"No," Captain Neville growled, "though by the Lord Harry, I've given him an hour's leeway! And I would not have done it if my most intelligent daughter here had not taken it into her head, on this of all nights, to go out round the cove with Oscar Molle in a launch—to do what, do you think?

"Why, to play at shooting phosphorus fish because the night is favorable to the sport! Sport!" he ejaculated contemptuously. "In these days!"

"Now, father—" Susan began.

But he cut her off abruptly to say:

"Miss Addison!"

The gray little lady understood his reprimand, dabbed her eyes with her handkerchief, braced her square little shoulders and gazed straight across the captain's shoulder down the vista of years, unquailing.

"You heard Michael Sands and me, did you not, Susan, planning here this afternoon that he was to go to-night and smoke that old witch Juliet out of her snakes' nest?"

"I heard, father."

"You heard, too, after Black Henry was put in irons, that I was going to send an ultimatum to Ransom and his gang?"

"If there had been anything I could do—" Susan began.

"Nevertheless you calmly went out—for sport!"

Snapping his fingers, he turned away from her to Michael Sands. "Everybody, man or woman, must give you constant record of their goings and comings. Is that plain?"

"Yes, captain," and Michael saluted.

"Half-moon House is under siege law until further orders," Captain Neville added.

"I'll get things under way as soon as I've made my report, sir."

"What is it, Michael?"

"No success to-night, sir, but a few minor discoveries—I mean, you understand, we gathered some useful information."

"Nothing immediate to be done in that quarter?"

"Nothing immediate—that is to say, we can wait but we mustn't delay, captain."

Captain Neville reflected and seemed about to dismiss Susan and Miss Addison, when he evidently changed his mind, for he said:

"The wireless has been signaling repeatedly. I dared not leave the house, as I was expecting Ransom every minute. Oscar, for whom I had search made all over, was, as you have learned, out—for sport!"

The word curled on the captain's lips.

"I sent him out to the point, as soon as I had spoken to him, to take the message."

"Captain, what do you think of this suggestion?" Michael Sands inquired. "That is, supposing I telephone out to the point? You're saying the wireless called repeatedly. Now it could happen there'd be news of service to us in dealing with the Settlement. If a ship's coming anyway near us—one might be starting out, you understand—we could deport the lot of them mischief-making fellers."

"Who'd take them? What ship's master is going to constitute himself an officer of the law to oblige me? No, Michael—"

There was a thudding of rubber soles on the west veranda, heard through the open windows—a grip on the door-knob. The door was opened and Oscar Molle entered quickly.

No wrinkle of expression was to be seen in his sallow oval face or in his speckless suit of white flannel. His eyes were large and brown, remaining always in a kind of slow stare so that they appeared to have no pupils.

Approaching the captain, his cap in hand, he held forth a sheet of yellow paper.

"A longish message, sir."

"Ah!" Captain Neville murmured. "Then it wasn't a relay."

"No, sir. It's for you," Oscar confirmed.

The captain lifted his glasses, which hung on a silk cord, and adjusted them before he unfolded the long sheet.

He considered it for several moments, then observed to Michael, who had drawn near:

"Here's news surely, but it's about of as much interest to us as if we were notified that the King of Timbuctoo has the gout. It comes from Jarvis, Secretary of the Fruit Company."

He read aloud:

"NEW ORLEANS, September 22.

"Acme Detective Agency, New York, is looking for Stephen Weir of that city. Wanted on charge of embezzlement of seventy-five thousand dollars from the Palladium Trust Company, same city.

"Believed to have sailed in steamer Cacique from Philadelphia for Honduras. Cacique blown up and burned, September 16, approximately.

"Carried merchandise principally and a small quota of passengers. Four boats with crew and passengers picked up by wireless-equipped steamer John Hancock.

"Captain of Cacique reports all passengers safely lowered in boats with water and provisions and shipment of crew in each boat. Six of crew killed in explosion. Sea foggy but smooth at time of accident.

"One Cacique boat still missing in which were all sailors and one passenger, a man. Cacique's captain describes this man so that Acme Agency is convinced he is said Stephen Weir, for whose apprehension or discovery the Palladium Trust Company offers a reward of ten thousand dollars.

"Agency figures Cacique boat may have drifted toward Big or Little Twin Island, calculating winds, currents, etc., of locality and time of wreck. Relay this message to Belize."

Captain Neville paused, glancing down over the message until he came to the statement of the longitude and latitude in a postscript.

"Why, that should be more than a hundred miles from here?" he exclaimed. "Unless the boat was picked up Stephen Weir has in all probability gone down or starved to death. The bank people will be more careful now and"—there was a halt in his breath—"if the man is dead, whatever he was, he paid the bill, I rather judge."

The spacious hall, so recently quivering with the excitement and stress of the island's turmoil, was strangely still and solemn for a moment.

Then Captain Neville proceeded to read:

"Detailed description of Stephen Weir as follows:"

He read no farther. A rapid succession of short barks, like pistol-shots, had broken out in the court garden, where was the landward entrance to the big house.

"That's Scott," said Captain Neville,

folding the wireless message and dropping it into a basket on the reading-table. "Will you let him in, Michael? Some one's coming."

CHAPTER XI.

DOUBLE-SKEINED CRAFT.

AS Michael opened the door from the entrance hall the collie, tan of body with white paws and a fluffy collarette of white, bounded into the room barking, and ran directly to the captain.

"All right, Scott," the latter told him gently as he patted the dog's head. "That'll do."

The dog ceased barking and pattered from one to the other of the little gathering until he came to Susan. He muzzled her hand and stood by her, waving his plumy tail in sheer content.

From the doorway Michael Sands had announced:

"Captain Neville, William Ransom to see you, sir."

With this Michael saluted and stepped aside, revealing Ransom, giant of frame and puny of skull, in which his eyes were sunk like small beads. His mulatto skin was orange and his whole bearing hinted a queer mixture of trepidation and temerity.

"Come in, Ransom," the captain called out, "and say what you have to say before us all. We all are interested, and we have been patient."

The captain cast a glance at the clock on the shelf over the fireplace behind him.

From this position, his back to the north wall, Captain Neville dominated the scene. Oscar Molle and Michael Sands stood at his left; Miss Addison and Susan gradually retreated a few steps, as if by concert, down the right side of the hall.

As Ransom advanced one could almost imagine the hall transformed into a court-room in which the overseer was to make his plea of guilty or not guilty. Captain Neville was erect, impassive, cold—a stern judge.

The two men and the two women were as indistinguishable as witnesses always are until they go on the stand. Really there were but two living people there—the captain and William Ransom, overseer of the Settlement.

"Captain," the overseer began in his high, monotonous voice, "I came myself and didn't send no answer back by Jolly George as you requested, because I had to keep you waiting—er—a little. It took time to make the folks down there understand just how you meant what is best for them, which I tried to do, and I succeeded."

"Glad to hear that, Ransom," Captain Neville observed emotionlessly.

"Thank you, sir."

Ransom touched his forehead with the tips of his fingers. "And we'll report, sir, on parade here at the west front to-morrow morning at nine according to your orders."

"Which means you are all prepared, I must understand," said the captain, "to take up again in the regular way your work at the cocoanuts and other things on the plantation."

"Oh, yes, sir," Ransom replied with alacrity.

"Capital, Ransom!" the captain returned. "Always obey orders and you'll be content and out of trouble. By the way, when you and the others report to-morrow morning bring the guns and ammunition you had in the boat that carried the other stores."

"Guns and ammunition!" Ransom echoed, staring in stupefaction. "No such a possibility, captain."

"Are you trying to tell me, Ransom, that you fellows went to all the trouble and risk of building a boat on the sly in order to get a few stores from the mainland? Why, you could have pilfered as much to eat and wear as was in that cargo from our stores here! You could have pilfered the stuff little by little in far less time than it took to build the boat."

"Upon my word, captain—" began Ransom.

But the captain cut him short with:

"We'll have none of your word at present, Ransom. It's not legal tender on this island until you've proved it such by a reform in your conduct and management of the Settlement—a reform extending over a certain period also, to show that it's lasting. Meanwhile we hold Black Henry as hostage. We're not ill-treating him, but he must remain with us at present."

"Oh, we'll surely show reform, captain," Ransom protested.

"Glad to hear it, Ransom. I'll remind you as you set to it of what you have to live down.

"First, the lie and deceit of making us at Half-moon House believe that Black Henry, Jake Haas and Sailor Pete were

laid up with typhoid in the Settlement while all during that period they were actually not on the island. You had all your blacks down there frightened out of their senses for fear of contracting the disease, and naturally we people here were not without our fears of what an epidemic would mean, especially as our servants believe in charms which they only imagine, but wouldn't believe in a germ even if you showed them one magnified to the size of a fly.

"It was a clever ruse, Ransom, and though I don't respect you for it I'm bound to admit your brains. But don't 'pon-my-word to me after that. Bring the guns and ammunition."

"Pardon, captain," Ransom urged, "but you are for blaming me alone. You know I didn't bring that boat in. It was Jake and Pete and Black Henry.

"They told me what they had was stores, which we calculated we needed in case of trouble and you was to shut off our supplies. I believed what they told me, but they didn't tell me nothing about guns or ammunition.

"And Michael Sands here, he is the man that caught Black Henry when he was working on the boat all alone just in the same spot we cached her. What was in that boat when Michael Sands seized it is all what was ever in it, captain—so help me!"

Ransom raised his right hand solemnly. For the instant his final words and his gesture made him the supreme person in the hall. The others might as well have thought to read a face of stone.

"You've given your oath, Ransom," Captain Neville remarked soberly.

"If you please, captain, yes, sir."

"Before Heaven and before these witnesses."

"Yes, captain."

"You understand fully the meaning of an oath?"

"Yes, captain," Ransom replied, serious yet at ease.

"We'll accept your oath, then. Report in the morning. Good night!"

Ransom returned the good night, saluted and swung on his heels, military fashion, to take his leave.

Michael Sands whispered a word to Captain Neville, whereat the captain recalled Ransom and said carelessly:

"There's a message here from the Fruit Company, Ransom, notifying us of some men put to sea in an open boat from a steamer that blew up and burned somewhere about one hundred miles from here. Among them was a bank-thief, and a reward of ten thousand dollars is offered for his capture.

"I'd bet a good part of that sum if I were a betting man that unless he's been picked up he and the sailors never live to reach any part of our coast or any other. However, merely to oblige the Fruit Company we'll keep our eyes open. If you find him, Ransom, you'll have half the reward," and the captain laughed at the incredibleness of such a possibility.

"Thank you, thank you, captain."

Ransom touched his forehead, bowing.

"Oscar, make a transcript of that message for Ransom and then put it up on the bulletin-board. There's a sermon on loyalty in it for every man," the captain added, looking at Ransom. "And, by the way, you gave Jarvis the usual reply at once, didn't you?"

"That the matter would receive your immediate attention—yes, captain," said Oscar, seating himself at the table to copy the message.

The captain turned to reach his pipe from the hearth-shelf. Susan took the diversion as an opportunity to ask:

"We may go now, father?"

Her father walked down the room and clasped Susan's hand affectionately.

"Good night, daughter," he said with more than customary warmth in his tone. "Remember the orders about not leaving the house without notice to Michael."

"Yes, father. Good night."

"Good night, Miss Addison."

The captain bowed as he spoke and the two women withdrew to their rooms in the southern wing of Half-moon House.

When they were alone in Susan's sitting-room at the extreme end of the wing, from which the bay was visible on one side, the open sea on the other, Susan impulsively wound her arm round Miss Addison's waist and led her to the largest, coziest chair.

"It's after ten," she said quickly, "but I couldn't sleep if it were after two."

She sat on the arm of the chair and stroked tenderly Miss Addison's gray hair, which had once been black and glossy as Susan's own. "I've got a million things to talk about."

There were an unwonted exhilaration and throbbing in every pulse of the "sweet

young Amazon," as Miss Addison playfully called Susan, that perturbed her companion.

"A million things, Susan?" she echoed. "That would mean you had one thing to talk about, if we lived anywhere except on this lonely island."

"No, Addie dear; there's a lot. First, I'm so sorry father rated you in such a way. Of course, you weren't to blame in the least and you might have said you had advised me to speak to him before going out with Oscar, but you didn't. You're a plucky darling—and I'm so fond of you! But I was terribly afraid you were going to break down and cry."

"Susan, child," Miss Addison explained, "your father did notice tears in my eyes, but that was because I was incensed that any man, good as he may be and as your father is, should talk to women in such a strain."

After a reflective pause she asked:

"How did you think Oscar Molle took the rating, as you call it, that your father gave him?"

"Why, really, Addie, I didn't notice him at all. I was watching father."

"My dear Susan, you're a child in many ways, but after all you're a woman. Oscar Molle swallowed all those hard words like so much honey, not because he likes hard words, but because he wants you.

"I've suspected it before, and I've acted to my best accordingly, what with you and your father absolutely blind. It's been coming on for a year, but his position here, as it were a sublimated servant, your father's iron rule in the house and Mr. Molle's craftiness all together have kept it veiled. That is, veiled until to-night, when I saw it broad as daylight."

"What nonsense you're talking, Addie!" expostulated Susan, though the mere suggestion fretted her brain as with a hot wire. "Why, Oscar is only a boy."

"He's a boy of twenty-four, and a most mature young man for his age, if you call that being a boy. Tell me the truth, now, Susan, didn't he say something to you to-night when you were shooting the phosphorus fish?"

A fear of which Miss Addison could have no conception went like a knife to the girl's heart. She was silent, gazing to this side of the room and that as if seeking escape.

Suddenly she flung herself on her knees before her companion and grasped tightly Miss Addison's thin, fine hands, confessing:

"Oh, Addie, dear, I didn't go for the fish at all!"

"Child, what have you done?" Miss Addison inquired softly, stroking with trembling fingers the proud, fallen head in her lap.

Some moments elapsed before Susan knelt up straight.

"I went down to the east end of the island to the beach by the lagoon."

Susan spoke rapidly and tossed her head to shake the tears from her eyes as she faced Miss Addison.

"You know what father and Michael had decided about Mother Juliet. But they did not say that Michael was to go there to-night. I climbed the cliff and walked round to Mother Juliet's hut to warn her and beg her to make those blacks at the Settlement behave themselves. She can do it, if she wants to. She can turn them any way. And I knew that once Black Henry was put in irons there might be, well, fighting!

"I was afraid, but most of all for father. Those Settlement people outnumber us four to one. It seemed a safe chance to try and win by using Mother Juliet and her witchcraft."

"Did you persuade her, child?"

"She was not in her hut. I thought she had been already warned and was hiding in the shed behind it, because she had a wardrobe up against the door. I pulled it away and—"

Susan stopped and laid her head again on Miss Addison's lap, breathing distressfully, yet not quite sobbing.

"Go on, my dear, you'd best tell it to Addie," Miss Addison entreated, raising the girl's head.

"I will! I will!" Susan assented. "I must, Addie! I'd tell you as I'd tell my mother."

Miss Addison bent forward and kissed the girl's forehead, holding her arms as she did so with care and yearning.

"As you'd tell your mother, dear," she prompted.

"I moved all around the shed and called to her—not loud, you know—because I knew she ought to be there at night. Then I stumbled against the bed and thought she might be there, pretending not to hear me.

"I put my hand down, and—and a man sprang up and grabbed at my throat. Oh," Susan gasped, brushing her hand across her eyes wearily and pausing, "I fainted, Addie

—the first time in my life—and when I came to he was rubbing my face and trying to get me to stand up, I fancy, because I had dropped right down on his—his—his—bed!"

Miss Addison listened aghast to Susan's further recital of the arrival of Mother Juliet and William Ransom, of her dread lest Ransom should learn she had come there and of the assistance rendered by the strange man when Michael and the Brothers descended upon the place.

"Of course, my dear," Miss Addison remarked, having considered Susan's story, "the strange man must have been brought to the island in their boat to help those miscreants at the Settlement."

"I'm afraid that's so, though he did not seem like a bad man, even if he did talk in a suspicious, rambling way.

But why should they need help at the Settlement? Haven't they enough men as it is?"

"Quite so," Miss Addison admitted. "Yet you forget that Ransom and his men had little or no money—a thing we never use here on Twin Island and which you can't move a yard without on the mainland. They brought back a heap of stores, which they couldn't get on credit. Who knows what riffraff in Honduras with a handful of dollars would not be willing to invest them on the chance of sharing in the pillage and possession of Big Twin Island?"

"That's true, Addie—and it's awful to think of, isn't it?" Susan looked away musingly toward the window that opened on the sea. "And yet if this man has come—"

"Dear Susan," Miss Addison interrupted, "we must not be mooning over all these matters of ifs and ands; we must think fast. What kind of man is he to look at?"

"I don't know."

"You said he is a white man, Susan."

"Oh, I'm sure of that. His talk, his manner proved it to me. But I never had a glimpse of his face, nor he of mine. It was black as pitch in the timber shed and once outside I ran ahead of him so fast I soon lost him. He said he would remember my voice—wasn't that funny, Addie?

"Now that I am safe here and can look back, it seems to me he said several things that were funny, though they didn't seem so then."

"We'll leave this man you've never seen," Miss Addison told her, "to your father and Michael Sands. They will see to Mother Juliet and any other disreputables that she may be hiding in her serpents' nest for the Settlement mutineers. What I want to know is whether Oscar Molle knows that—"

"Oh, he only knows that I went to see Mother Juliet. He had to mind the launch, you understand. When I told him I hadn't been able to see her and he asked why I had been so long, I explained that I waited and looked about, expecting she would appear. He hasn't the least idea about the strange man."

"Nor cares to have, because he has an idea about you as I've told you—and don't you see what you've done, dear girl?"

Susan nodded mournfully. This was the dread that went to her heart like a knife.

"If what you say is true, Addie," Susan admitted, "of course I ought never to have trusted him so far. But I've always held him rather like a confidential servant, you know. And he's been most respectful and willing."

"He's waited on your every whim for a year or more. He's served you like a slave—no man does that as a servant. Almost, it seemed to me, there was joy in his unreadable, horrid eyes to-night when your father manhandled him with words that ought to have made his blood boil."

"I tell you what we'll do. You sleep with me to-night so I can't think of things," Susan was saying, when a knock sounded on the door.

"Come," Susan called out, and looked round, as did Miss Addison also.

There appeared Rebecca, the mistress of the kitchen, where she bossed the Brothers as cooks and two other blacks as scullery boys. These boys also did the housework in the men's wing of Half-Moon House, while Rebecca performed the same service for Susan and Miss Addison.

"The room's all ready, Rebecca," said Susan. "Did you wish to see me about anything?"

"I beg your pardon, miss," the large, statuesque negress answered, smoothing the tiny white apron at her waist with one hand.

"I brought your coat. Mr. Molle gave it to me down-stairs. He said you left it by mistake in the launch, and I'd better fetch it to you."

"Lay it on the bed, please," Susan told the girl sharply. "Good night, Rebecca."

Rebecca bowed, murmured her good

night to both of them most obsequiously and pulled the door shut after her.

As soon as she had gone Susan swept round to the end of the bed, caught up the sailor jacket with its bright brass buttons and flung it viciously into the farthest corner of the room by the clothes-closet.

"He ought to be flogged!" she muttered, stamping her foot.

"Did you really leave the jacket in the launch?" asked Miss Addison.

"I suppose I did—I don't know. I was so upset, you see. Rebecca and some of the men were waiting on the wharf when we came in, saying father wished to see us most urgently. Oscar simply made the boat fast and said he would return later with one of the men and fix her shipshape for the night. But why couldn't he have left the coat in the entrance-hall on the rack, where I leave it most of the time?"

"Because, my dear," said Miss Addison, "he is clever enough to use a very unsuspicious means of making you feel he is thinking about you."

Susan studied Miss Addison's serious expression, then burst into hearty, girlish laughter and said:

"Bless my soul, Addie, how you rave! Oscar Molle thinking of me! Why, that prim little fish wouldn't dare!"

Miss Addison went over to the closet to pick the sailor jacket from the floor.

"Don't touch it!" Susan exclaimed, slipping in front of her. "That coat goes to one of the Settlement women first thing in the morning. I'll never wear it after this—and I'll give it to Rebecca to dispose of, so she'll be able to tell him if he asks her."

Nevertheless Susan did not send the jacket to the Settlement. In the morning when she was going through the pockets to be sure she had left nothing in them she found a note pinned in an inside one. Tearing the paper lose, she let the jacket fall to the floor.

She read the letters of foreign flourish blankly and the words rattled in her brain like peas in a box, as she tried to comprehend all they might mean.

> Why have you for so long persistently pretended not to know how much you mean to me? I have been always, as it were, bound by chains to you, to go where you wish, to do what you wish done. I have even gone so far as to obey you when you are dealing with your father's bitter and dangerous enemies, at least one of them.
>
> I do this because I cannot help myself, it is true, and my reward is your pretense that you do not know, and the insults of your father that no man would endure except me—and for your sake. I have long been patient. How long I can continue to be patient even I do not know. Have pity on me and believe me,
>
> Your all-devoted, O. M.

CHAPTER XII.

TRAITOR! WHO?

ALL that night Overseer William Ransom slept peacefully on his false oath and dreamed of the ten thousand dollars reward for the man who had been put to sea in an open boat some hundred miles off Twin Island.

This was chiefly due to the fact that he had an exceptionally retentive memory. Having read two or three times the transcript of the wireless with which Oscar Molle had provided him, the words of it followed one another again and again in his mind precisely as they were written, and yet with no particular purpose or intention on his part.

At nine the next morning the overseer, Jake Haas and Sailor Pete marched at the head of the Settlement brigade—between twenty-five and thirty men in all—to the little plaza in front of the big house. They were received by Captain Neville and all his household pleasantly and with dignity.

William Ransom stepped forward about twenty paces from the ranks, saluted the captain and said:

"If you please, Captain Neville, sir, here we are from the Settlement, according to your orders, which we mean to obey all of them like this one."

"Thank you, William Ransom and men of the Settlement," the captain responded, a slight huskiness in his voice. "It does every drop of blood in my heart good to see you come here like upstanding men—and it's one of the great joys in a seaman's life, let me explain, to have his crew before him facing front, fearless and loyal.

"After all, the island is much like a ship. It needs men, and one man to manage those men and the ship. I don't think you can fairly call me a hard master. You came here of your own free will; you earn enough for you and those of you who have wives to live on and something over. You can't spend that surplus here, but you have the record of it kept in your own account-books by William Ransom, and you can draw it

at any time and leave the island and my employ, providing only I receive two months' notice.

"And I must do the like by you if it seems better to me to dispense with the services of any of you. It's all fair and square in your contracts.

"There's been some skulking, some underhand work done. That was wrong, and also it was a mistake. Put it behind us and make a fresh start.

"Only stores were brought to the island contraband, and no guns or ammunition, William Ransom has sworn to me on his oath, in the presence of witnesses. He has told me also that you would like to get a little more profit out of your work. At the same time he said he understood that this was hardly just the moment to propose.

"I tell you all now I am considering whether I can do better by you. It depends on two things—on your loyalty and on the market in New Orleans.

"There's my boss, New Orleans, as here I am your boss. Let's work together. Good morning, men!"

Captain Neville doffed his gold-braided cap and saluted them solemnly.

"Handsome as a picture, my dear, in his white suit and gold buttons," Miss Addison murmured close to Susan's face, in order to banish if she might the cloud of weariness and misgiving that shadowed it.

"Three cheers for Captain Neville!" hailed Overseer Ransom, turning toward his men.

They were given with a will. Then the men marched rapidly away. The half-wit, Jolly George, pranced and skipped at the rear of the brigade, wrenching every bit of sound out of his mandolin and singing over and over his own song about sailing far away to the Bay of Biscay. Along the curving round the men marched with his wild dancing figure behind them, singing as if he were the very spirit of music.

Soon the men took up the song, and the queer, plaintive legend swelled in volume, its fantasy floating out to sea on the mild morning breeze.

Yet not all the men sang. Jake Haas chewed a huge mouthful of tobacco, and when not chewing or spitting was smiling as if at some uproarious jest. Sailor Pete gazed before him stupid-eyed, occasionally giving utterance to a grunt of supreme satisfaction. The face of William Ransom was a yellow mask.

Half-moon House was now far behind them. Here Captain Neville on his way to his office, where Oscar Molle was waiting to assist him with his correspondence, came upon Michael Sands in a large square room, known as the armory.

Michael had dragged three small brass cannon out into the middle of the floor and laid about a dozen guns of various kinds, as well as seven or eight revolvers, also of various pattern, on the heavy timber tables round the room.

His coat was off and he was rolling up his shirtsleeves when the captain caught sight of him and stepped inside the doorway.

"In the name of sense, Michael," he asked, "what are you up to?"

"Now, my dear Captain Neville," Sands answered, saluting, "you must take no offense, if you please, but let me folly me own idea—that is, as it were, act foolish-like. All these playthings, never used for anything except hunting or firing salutes, is likely to be full of dirt and rust.

"Divil a bit o' hunting we've done on Little Twin Island since the last big storm—a year it'll be the fifth of next month—when you and me ourselves was hunted by the fiend's own wild beast."

"Nor shall we hunt now for a while," the captain said. "And why you're taking these things out when you ought to be off looking for Mother Juliet is beyond me."

"Captain," Mike retorted loudly, bracing his five feet four of tremendous muscle and standing at attention, "every one of them—"

"Please don't roar so, Michael."

The captain slapped the door shut with a back-swing of his arm.

Michael's voice sank to a whisper, which was like steam from an exhaust valve:

"Captain, every one of them implements is an oath. None of your 'so help me' about them, but help yourself is their way of putting it. And they're dependable oaths—you understand me; they stick when they land."

"You believe, then, that Ransom lied?"

"I don't believe he lied, captain. And I don't believe he told the truth.

"Seeing is believing with me in this matter; and wouldn't I hate to see him and Jake Haas and Sailor Pete coming up on us one mornin' at the dinin'-room window—and me at me third cup of coffee—with three spick-and-span rifles and me saying to Rebecca: 'Keep the coffee hot, Rebecca

gurl, and give me a feather duster. I'm going up to the armory to get ready to meet these gentlemen.'

"Why, bless me soul, I'd lose that coffee! So if you'll let me folly, as I said, my own thick red head, captain—"

"Go on, Michael. No harm done as long as you don't shoot yourself with some forgotten cartridge. But when do you expect to fetch Mother Juliet up here?"

"Never, sir," Michael replied, breaking a gun he was working on. "She got the wise wink from some one and skedaddled."

The captain and Michael looked into each other's eyes, thinking the same question. Was there a traitor under the roof of Half-moon House?

Michael laid down the gun and enumerated on his stubby finger-tips:

"There was yourself that knew, the two leddies, Oscar Molle and myself. That's all unless we were spied on and you'll recall how careful we were to look out for that beforehand, though we had no special reason to suspect anybody being near the hall. Sure 'twas broad day all round us."

Captain Neville knew as well as Michael that before the conference about Mother Juliet Michael had seen to it that none of the servants was anywhere near the hall. If the seeress really had been warned the word or signal could only have come from—

The captain sat on the edge of a table, repeating in his mind the list of those in the secret of the Mother Juliet plan—himself, Michael, Oscar, Susan, Miss Addison.

Then he eliminated from the list himself and Michael. He considered with knit brows. Apparently, however, he was doing no more than idly observe Michael at work. Presently the captain eliminated Miss Addison and Susan.

There remained Oscar Molle.

"Michael," Captain Neville began abruptly, emerging from his reflections, "lay the guns down a while. I want to talk with you."

CHAPTER XIII.

QUITS!

DURING the first ten minutes that Oscar Molle sat in the office awaiting Captain Neville he drummed absently on his desk with the rubber tip of a pencil and gazed at the waves of the bay frolicking in the sunlight.

Out there beyond the point, where were the towering skeletons of the wireless masts, he had seen a steamer at anchor now and again, though infrequently enough.

It would be glorious to sail away in one of them one day—and not alone!

From this dream Oscar sprang to his feet, startled by the entrance of Susan. The door fell shut of itself as it swung from her hand. She was looking round asking:

"Isn't father here?"

How Oscar managed to sidle so swiftly to the door and put his hand on the knob Susan did not try to understand.

She could think only how repulsive was this man, with whom for so long a time she had gone about not thinking of at all, except that he was an employe not disagreeable and wholly diligent in her behalf and her father's.

"I've been waiting for him," Oscar replied, not failing to note the new authority of a woman in the girl's demeanor. He liked it. It was challenging.

"He should be here any instant."

Susan looked at the knob of the door held in Oscar's hand, and at him.

"I sha'n't wait—there's nothing special."

It was as if she had ordered him to open the door. But he ignored the implied command.

"Of course, you have received my note," Oscar was saying.

The hot temper of the father disclosed itself in Susan as she snapped:

"Open that door!"

A curious glitter came into Oscar's limpid, meaningless brown eyes.

"You're pretending to be angry," he told her with a smile, "just as you pretend everything with me."

"Will you open the door?" Susan's eyes fairly darted fire.

She might as well not have spoken at all. Oscar went on placidly to all appearance, yet with a sullen inner determination.

"You've known all along, haven't you? I'm willing to fight to win, but you must play the game fair, Susan."

It was not alone that he addressed her as Susan, without the prefixed "Miss," but also the expression of his face as he spoke the name, that galled her deep.

A scornful smile curved her fresh young mouth. She contemplated him with a meaning glance from head to foot, which counted every inch of his scrupulously neat person as vile and despicable in her sight.

This look shook even Oscar Molle's fine poise. Before he had recovered it she unexpectedly brought her hand over his down on the knob and was turning it.

Oscar's free hand went to her shoulder caressingly and so high upon it that she fancied it was really touching her throat.

"Ah, Susan!" he pleaded. "Hear me."

Suddenly she stepped back, and the next instant flung the full weight of her body against him. The flat of her hands caught him in the chest. He staggered away from her, striking the wall with his head and back and leaning against it with outstretched arms for support.

"You must be crazy," Susan said most deliberately as she calmly opened the door, went out and pulled it shut behind her.

Shaking with rage and shock, Oscar remained braced against the wall, staring before him dully as he tried to realize just how much her action and whole attitude signified of contempt and hate for him. When at length he walked unsteadily to the chair at his desk he was thinking:

"She could not have treated me worse if I were a black servant."

The word "servant" dinned in his ears. This was why she despised him so!

His mind traveled back two years to the day when he had landed on the island from a fruit-steamer. He had grown up as a cabin-boy of the line and at odd moments had gathered a working knowledge of the wireless from the operators of the various ships. But he was outgrowing his job and saw no future for himself on shipboard.

When the ship's captain found an opening for him on Big Twin Island Oscar Molle jumped at the chance. Beginning as the personal attendant of Captain Neville he had gradually bettered his position.

The installation of the wireless apparatus especially had increased his importance in the household; and when he had instructed the captain in the use of it, Oscar had been promoted to be Neville's confidential clerk.

Nevertheless the captain had always kept Molle aloof, as indeed he held them all at a distance, irrespective of their standing. Susan, less honest, less considerate, had used him as a toy and esteemed him as a servant. So he read her repulse, and the insult of it made his blood boil.

Naturally she would speak to her father, he thought, looking toward the bay. A steamer would appear there at the anchorage, and Oscar would sail away—alone!

Yet she should pay somehow, he resolved. She should pay somehow!

Captain Neville entered the office. Oscar rose as was his custom. The captain did not walk to his desk, but stood with his back to the door, scrutinizing his clerk's face with no trace of feeling in the bushy-browed black eyes that were as sharp as knives.

Oscar divined the reason. Susan had told her story.

"Molle," said Captain Neville, "I'm going to ask you a question or two. Give me only straight, simple answers—yes or no."

The letters Oscar held rattled in his hand as he laid them back in the basket. He turned again to face the captain.

"I am ready, sir," he replied firmly.

Yet Oscar's eyes opened wider and his mouth twitched slightly—scarcely signs of readiness—when the captain asked:

"Did you warn Mother Juliet or tell any one who would warn her of what we planned to do last night?"

Oscar drew a deep breath and answered: "No, sir."

Captain Neville did not wholly trust Molle's prompt recovery of ease in manner.

"And you know of no one who might have warned Mother Juliet, or who did warn her?" he pressed.

Oscar started; glanced timidly at Captain Neville; then turned half way, leaning heavily on his desk.

No words could have been plainer to the captain, who studied Molle for a moment and smiled. Then he hinted:

"I'm waiting, Oscar."

With his face averted the young man replied:

"If you please, captain, I can't answer that question, sir."

"What!" cried Captain Neville. "You can't answer? Do you expect me to listen to any such nonsense? Who warned Mother Juliet? I can see you know."

"Please don't force me, sir," Oscar entreated, looking steadily into the captain's face.

The captain laughed unpleasantly and remarked: "Force you? Oh, not at all, lad. I merely ask you tell me what you know."

"But I can't tell you that, please, captain."

"Then, Molle, you can be put in irons and keep company with Black Henry." Captain Neville grasped the bell-cord hanging beside the door.

"Don't! Don't! Not that!" Oscar cried, running across the room and dropping on his knees before the captain.

"Stand up like a man, you shrimp," the latter said harshly, and seizing Oscar by the arm jerked him to his feet. "Now tell me and be done with it!"

For a few seconds Oscar stood trembling, as if in debate with himself.

"Miss Susan warned Mother Juliet last night when we went out in the launch," he announced then in a low, shaky voice.

"Miss Susan!" Captain Neville cried aghast. "Are you telling me that my own daughter—"

He fell silent, staring before him with set eyes and seeing nothing.

"It's the truth, sir," Oscar affirmed. "When we went out to shoot the phosphorus fish down by the lagoon she ordered me to run the launch close up to the beach and she jumped ashore.

"I was afraid. She told me not to be—that she was going to climb the cliff. She wanted to see Mother Juliet. I tried to stop her, but could not. It was long before she returned, sir."

The captain's ruddy face was the color of death. His feet dragged heavily across the floor as he found his way to his desk.

"So you lied to me last night, Oscar," he observed lifelessly and sank into his chair.

"I did it to protect Miss Susan, sir, and because—"

"She lied to me," Captain Neville commented under his breath. Raising his voice, he added: "That will do. I sha'n't need you again this morning, I think. Remain in the hall, however, in case I should."

"Yes, Captain Neville," and Oscar saluted as he retired.

The captain's chin was sunk on his chest. Was it really because the years were telling suddenly against him that his one-time iron nerve was failing him?

He fancied that he had met the present crisis as intrepidly as any that had confronted him in his long, strenuous career. Yet apprehension, dread even, of hidden, unguessable mischance or misfortune had harried his brain these several days.

It was an indefinable, haunting feeling that obsessed him. It had begun when Michael Sands ran down Black Henry, who was working in the contraband boat, which had been dragged ashore in a densely grown ravine near the Settlement.

From the start Captain Neville had fought against what he named to himself his "absurd premonitions." He had fought so strongly against them, he now told himself, that he had become incautious.

A proof of this was his conviction of Michael's prudence in furbishing the contents of the armory, even if, as Michael had put it, " 'twas only for the joy of seein' your face shine in the bar'ls."

Another proof was—but what foresight could a man have against the treachery of his daughter in the circumstances?

The captain seemed to have grown five years older in five minutes. He got up, went to the door and pulled the bell-cord beside it.

Here he stood, leaning heavily against the wall, until one of the black servants appeared in answer to the summons.

"Tell Miss Susan to come to me," the captain murmured, not able to move from his position until some moments after the man had left on the errand.

When Susan came he was seated in his chair. He looked up at her and as quickly fixed his gaze on the desk in front of him.

"What's wrong, father?" she asked, hurrying across the room. "You look ill."

"Stand where you are, Susan," he instructed her without raising his head. Nor did he raise it, nor glance at her again.

The tone of his voice was dry and brittle.

"You went down to Mother Juliet's hut last night, Susan?"

The girl shivered and held her arms close to her sides, clenching her fingers in her palms. She answered almost in a whisper:

"Yes, father."

"You went to warn Mother Juliet of what you had heard in a conference of your own household in the hall yesterday afternoon?"

"That was not why I went, father. I went because—"

Captain Neville sneered:

"Of course not! You went to have your fortune told from the entrails of a pigeon, I've no doubt—and no evening was so suitable for such dignified employment of my daughter's time as—"

"You must not say that, father, please," Susan interrupted. "You must let me tell you why—"

With deadly coldness the captain interposed:

"You lied to me last night. That is sufficient. You have been contemptibly and perilously disloyal to your own home and friends. What is more, you involved Oscar

Molle, a trusted employee of mine, in your duplicity, for which he might have been put in irons.

"You admit you went to see Mother Juliet. You do not need to tell me anything further. You and Miss Addison will confine yourselves to your living wing of the house. Rebecca will be notified to serve your meals there. She will communicate to me any necessary message you may wish to send me. That is all."

Quivering in every nerve, her lips parted, her eyes dry and burning, Susan gazed longingly at the spare, bent figure before the desk—at the finely carved, wan profile of the face that would not turn toward her.

She knew her father's mettle too well not to realize that there was nothing for her to do but to go away from him—to go disgraced, unloved.

Susan passed out, drawing the door slowly closed after her.

In the hall she saw Oscar Molle, trim and comfortable in an armchair by an open window. He was smoking a cigarette and apparently intent on a magazine.

Not until she had gone did he lift his eyes from the printed page. But he had noted the swiftness of her light tread.

Oscar smiled as he studied absently the door at the far end of the hall, which had closed between him and Susan Neville for quits. He had his revenge.

CHAPTER XIV.

COUNTER PLOTS.

ALL that day the blacks of the Settlement toiled blithely. The great uprising which was to make them masters of Big Twin Island was not abandoned, but only postponed. The magic and counsel of Mother Juliet had prevailed with them to delay action until the coming of the wonderful stranger, who was approaching over vast seas to assure them of victory.

Perforce Jake Haas and Sailor Pete took the course of the majority. They took it ungraciously, but they took it, as their appearance with the others on the plaza of Half-Moon House amply indicated.

They had no jot of credence, nevertheless, in all these mysterious presages about the coming of a stranger to the island. But they did see the tactical value of putting Captain Neville and his household off guard in order the better to fall upon them.

The white men worked together in the warehouses, doing a crude kind of clerical work in overseeing the packing of the cocoanuts for shipment and in taking charge of the stores for the Settlement. It was an easy matter for them to confer between themselves, because Overseer Ransom spent most of his time out among the blacks who picked and sorted the fruit.

It was the hour of siesta after luncheon. Heat and indolence bound the island in a spell. The men who worked in and about the warehouses were lying asleep in the first comfortable corner they could find.

Jake and Pete sat on the stringpiece of the wharf that ran from the warehouse to the water's edge. Here whatever cargoes came to the island or left it were lightered.

Pete was smoking his blackened brier pipe and Jake chewing his habitual gross mouthful of tobacco. Both were clad in very much soiled white undershirts, khaki trousers and heavy buckled shoes. Neither wore socks. Both had on huge Panama hats, whose drooping brims almost spanned their shoulders.

Lifting his hat, Jake brushed the cool of his palm across his flat, bald head, remarking:

"The devil's heat's in that sun, Pete, and if it ain't for the breeze it should burn a fellow up all right."

"You like the breeze, Jake?" the sailor said, and grunted a short laugh. "You must wait about ten days or maybe more. Next month you get all the breeze you want, and extra, too, what you don't want."

"The big winds you're thinking about already. Ah, shut up about them. They killed me almost last year, Pete, and I swore I'm never here again in October. And here I am yet already."

"We got a week, anyway, before the first," Pete noted.

"Yes," Jake agreed promptly. "And Mr. William Ransom has got to do something in that week. I ain't goin' to take no chances with them winds and me floating around this island together. I stay in the cellar all the time when they is a wind going. Y'understand?"

"Say, Jake, here's a joke," Sailor Pete observed a few minutes later. First, however, he glanced behind him to make sure no one was by. He emitted his queer guttural laugh and went on:

"I was thinkin' would it be a funny deal

if we had Black Henry with us—he could handle them blacks pretty nearly as good as William—and we could run our business all by ourselves. Ain't that funny to think of —yuss like this?"

Jake Haas spat far and decisively before he replied:

"It ain't so awful funny, Pete. It's a fack. You don't think Black Henry is not expectin' William to get him out, don't you? If William don't, when Black Henry is let out won't he be ready to go with us and run our own business like you said.

"Besides, ain't we got nothin' to say? You and me, masters of our trade, ship's carpenters, and without us no boat would never have been builded yet.

"No, Pete; that's not such a funny joke of yours about Black Henry and you and me. It's a good idea—let's stick to it. Let's go ahead with it."

Having spread the word among his men that he would spend the evening at the cottage of Jake Haas and Sailor Pete playing cards, Overseer Ransom carefully put out all his own lights and shut his door as soon as the negress who served him as cook and housekeeper had taken herself off to her own home.

He did not wish any of the men to come seeking him here; and also he wished to impress on them that he would be out for an evening's entertainment and was not to be disturbed. Down into his cellar he slipped then, where Mother Juliet was in hiding.

Boldly she had chosen this cottage because she believed the people of the big house would never suspect her of so venturesome a piece of finesse. They would suspect her of having fled to Little Twin Island, or of concealment in the ravine-woods adjacent to the Settlement.

Moreover she had need to be near William Ransom at once, for the promised stranger and ally, H. A. Danforth, was with her.

Mother Juliet had rediscovered him the previous night after she had made sure that Michael Sands and the Brothers were gone for good. Danforth, wrapped in his blankets, was staggering along the path behind the timber shed.

From the folds of her ample yellow satin skirts she produced the complete outfit of clothes she had stolen from William Ransom. He put them on while she waited for him in her hut.

When they arrived at Ransom's house the overseer never guessed that the stranger was with her. He was willing enough to have her take refuge in his cellar so long as he was to know nothing about it.

Mother Juliet agreed readily to his condition of admittance. Ransom returned to his bed. The seeress, recovering Danforth from the hedge in which she had secreted him, led the way into the cellar.

It was a livable room of stone walls, with dwarfed windows on four sides. Its purpose was not so much for storing things as for security and shelter in times of storm.

There were an abandoned mattress on the floor and a few chairs, one of them a rocker —all the cast-off furniture of the prosperous overseer.

Mother Juliet pointed to the mattress for Danforth, and with signs of a return of her normal tranquillity planted herself in the rocker.

The lantern was their only light. Its lowered flame showed them to each other as mere black bulks in the semi-darkness.

Despite Danforth's protests Mother Juliet contrived to hold him that night and all the next day in the cellar, nourishing him richly and plentifully and waiting on him constantly, as well as watching over him.

The man who was to show him the way out of his difficult position could come only at night because of spies who might be slinking about the Settlement. This was all that Danforth perceived in full clearness, but from Mother Juliet's ramblings of the day he had absorbed a hazy notion of something like internecine warfare between the people of the big house and the people of the Settlement.

The windows were neatly screened with dark cloths. Three lamps illuminated the cellar for the reception of this man.

Danforth judged it must be somewhere between seven and eight o'clock when a trap-door in the roof of the cellar was opened and he saw a giant figure descend the ladder rapidly.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MEETING.

WILLIAM RANSOM had abiding faith in the supernatural gifts of the seeress. Whether he ever really believed her prophecies about a stranger arriving on this island, where it was impossible to land

without a pilot acquainted with the waters, only William could say. But he had been willing to make use of these prophecies in order to stay the impatience of Jake, Pete and the blacks of the Settlement.

Nevertheless he was wholly unprepared to see the stranger seated at ease in his own cellar. Hither Mother Juliet caused him to come, she had said, because of important news she had for him, and for no other reason that Ransom could anticipate.

The overseer clung for his life to the ladder, not daring to look again at the tall, muscular visitor with his auburn hair and stubby beard.

"Mother Juliet! Mother Juliet!" he called in a frightened voice. "Is that him or be you ajess putting a dream or something on me?"

The seeress bent her head to consider more closely her hands folded in her lap and mumbled:

"The stars has said it and the secret message of the pigeon's blood. Mother Juliet has brought the stranger for to help the poor misery folk of the Settlement."

"I won't believe it, Mother Juliet! I can't believe it!" William piped, his shrill tones quavering with fear. "It's a spell you are working and I won't stay."

William began to climb the ladder in precipitate retreat.

Danforth could sit still no longer. Springing to his feet, he walked over to the huge mulatto, whose teeth were audibly chattering, and exclaimed with brisk naturalness:

"Good Lord, man! Can't you see I'm real? What's a big fellow like you afraid of? Here—shake hands!"

He caught up Ransom's hand as if he were taking that of a terror-stricken child.

"Nothing dreamy about my grip, is there? I'm Danforth—H. A. Danforth. And you are William Ransom, I've been told by Mother Juliet. Let's get down to business, for I'm rather sick of being led around, not knowing what I'm about or where I'm going."

As Danforth spoke, easily and affably, he continued to coax Ransom into the middle of the floor by pretending to be unconcious of the fact that he still gripped the overseer's hand fast. Here the lights revealed both men at all points.

Mother Juliet glanced up at the two splendid specimens of manhood. Her owlish eyes blinked gleefully.

Ransom was nearly a head taller than the stranger. But Danforth might prove his match despite this. There was a crudity about Ransom's physique and head, for all that he was the most important man of the Settlement, that contrasted oddly with the robustness of frame and nimble manner of Danforth.

The stranger was as fine as any of those New Orleans gentlemen, thought the seeress. Her mind went straying toward the glorious days to come—the balcony on the shaded street and Jolly George, dressed like a prince, beside her playing his mandolin and singing.

Slowly William Ransom issued from the trance-like state of mind into which he had been thrown by the apparition of the stranger. Slowly the overseer studied Danforth from his shoes, which William recognized as the kind the Settlement men wore, to the castaway's auburn hair.

The clothes of khaki Ransom recognized as his own; and then, having cast his beady eyes quickly up and down Danforth's person as if gaging the other's height, the overseer proceeded to stare into the stranger's face as if he were trying to count the pores.

Danforth smiled at this scrutiny. Finally with a light laugh he observed:

"You'll know me, Mr. Ransom, when you see me again."

A queer wizening of his eyes and a wrinkling of his milk-and-coffee skin was the new expression in the overseer's face as he rejoined solemnly:

"By the stars and by the pigeon's blood, I know you now! Mother Juliet, I seen this gentleman you prophesied about all last night in a dream"—he was again puncturing every detail of Danforth's appearance with his beady eyes—"jess as real as I see him now. Glad to meet you, real, sir," Ransom cried cordially, taking Danforth's hand from his side.

"The pleasure's mine," Danforth returned.

"Now, you and William go on along up the ladder," interposed Mother Juliet, "and leave me alone to work my charms and rest a little, for I'm all achin' in my bones and my feet can't move; they is jess exhausted."

"You mean Mr. Danforth is to stay upstairs with me?" Ransom queried.

Plainly he was in doubt. Danforth and Mother Juliet in the cellar, with the overseer quite unaware of their presence, was a condition comparatively safe. It was a dif-

ferent matter for William to harbor the stranger of his own accord.

"Ain't it the same if he's in your house or in your cellar?" the seeress demanded. "And besides, how're you going to manage things unless you and him has a talk together?

"Out go these lamps now and—" the rest of this sentence was whispered into Ransom's ear.

"You got a extra mattress, I hope," Mother Juliet added aloud. "If you ain't, take this one."

"Oh, I can fix him up for the night all right," the overseer said promptly.

Ransom led the way up the ladder and Danforth followed him into the large, square room that served as kitchen, dining and living-room.

It was divided in almost equal parts by a heavy curtain of dried palm-leaves that hung in two sections from a pole whose ends were socketed in either wall.

"Stand right where you are till I get a light," the overseer directed, as he let the trap-door fall shut without a sound.

Danforth vouchsafed no reply, but obeyed the order.

He heard the palm-curtain rustle as Ransom passed beyond it. He heard a match struck and the tinkling of glass and wire as Ransom lighted a lantern; but he could perceive only a faint glow of light through the curtain of palm-leaves.

A husky voice broke upon the stillness of the room:

"Hello, Mr. Ransom. What's the feller you got mit you?"

It was Jake Haas's voice, Ransom realized immediately. He strode swiftly across the floor, an ugly look on his face.

"What d'you mean, stealing into my house like this?" he asked angrily.

"I didn't do it," Jake replied, unperturbed, from the couch by the window. "Sailor Pete and me we done it together. We got to see you; an' it's chilly outside on the step."

"What have you got to see me about tonight?" persisted the overseer.

" 'S about Black Henry," Jake Haas declared in an explosion of wrath. "He's got to come out by them irons and pooty quick soon also."

"Yuss, right away to-morrow," Sailor Pete specified.

"To-morrow!" the overseer echoed. "That's impossible—it's foolish! Why, the Settlement has jess been put on parole for good behaivor to-day! The captain wouldn't hear of it!"

" 'S the point," Jake retorted. "We don't want the captain to hear nothings about it."

"Don't make so much noise here!" Ransom snapped impatiently.

"You listen to me once," Jake began sullenly. "I ain't made no noise yet. Only you got to understand this, Mr. Ransom. Black Henry's done as much as us or you, Mr. Ransom, and we need him here right now to-morrow, like Pete says. We ain't goin' to fool along any more with all that crazy guff of the snake woman about a stranger comin' to help. She can't provide no stranger never and she's yuss makin' a fool outer you for them people at the big house."

"You've got a big mouth, Jake," the overseer snarled, "but it's not quite big enough, I think. Still, judge for yourself."

Ransom had stepped back unnoticed. He reached behind him and held the palm curtain open, saying:

"Mr. Danforth, will you come here, please?"

Puzzled, suspicious even, he might have been, but there was no trace of timidity or nervousness in Danforth's firm tread and the birthright poise of his head as he looked over the room and at the two men on the couch.

That the newcomer might see them better, Ransom held the lantern close to their faces.

"I want you to meet Jake Haas and Sailor Pete, friends of mine and the head clerks in the Settlement warehouse. Men, this is Mr. H. A. Danforth."

Cutthroats both of them, thought Danforth, snapshotting with a glance the flat head and vicious face of Jake Haas and the chunky, semi-idiotic expression of Sailor Pete, with its leering eyes of equal viciousness.

As he contemplated them he hazarded an inward guess that Jake Haas would do murder for a dollar and a half—unless Sailor Pete should underbid him.

"I told you your mouth wasn't big enough to swallow your own lies, Jake," the overseer sneered, "for here's Mother Juliet's stranger—in good condition and delivery made on time."

Ransom laughed softly.

The astonishment of the ship-carpenter

duo was so overpowering that they could do no more than gaze in open-mouthed silence. They had known, to be sure, that some one was in the kitchen behind the palm-curtain; but they believed it must be a man from the Settlement, or Overseer Ransom would not have allowed them to state the reason of their errand to his cottage.

Jake Haas was the first to regain his speech.

"*Die verpflüchte,* snake-woman!" he gasped. "*Himmels Name!* How did she done it yet?"

CHAPTER XVI.

RANSOM'S SECRET.

THE frantically hurried whisper of a voice from the palm-curtain suddenly electrified the four men.

"Mr. Ransom! Mr. Ransom!" it said. "They's a comin' down the road!"

It was Mother Juliet who sounded the alarm from the trap-door in the kitchen floor.

Ever since the overseer and Danforth had climbed the ladder she had been passing from window to window in the cellar constantly.

As a mark of Ransom's superior station his cottage stood apart from all the others of the Settlement on a slight rise of ground. The site was bare of trees or shrubbery except for the hedge that grew up close to the house on the side half-facing the Settlement.

It was inside this hedge that Mother Juliet had temporarily secreted Danforth the previous night during the short parley she had with Ransom.

On the remaining three sides the cellar-windows were effective as lookouts to espy any visitor from whichever way approaching.

In the luminous starlight the watchful seeress saw at a considerable distance three figures, padding steadily along the roadway that led from the big house.

As soon as he heard her whispered warning Ransom darted toward Danforth, seized his hand and murmured:

"If you please, sir. There's danger!" as he fairly pulled the man back into the kitchen.

"The cellar! Quick!" and with the uttered injunction the overseer raised the trap-door.

Nimble as a cat, Danforth pattered down the ladder and stepped back out of harm's way on landing below. It was black in darkness. He expected the others to hop down after him.

Instead he heard the trap-door close softly.

Returning to the living-room in three swift strides, Ransom encountered Jake and Pete seated round the table. The lamp on the table was lighted and the lantern, now extinguished, stood under it.

The ship's carpenters were each holding a hand of cards. Ransom's hand lay ready for him in front of his chair. Beside the cards not in play were a pencil and sheets of paper scribbled with tallies of the game.

The three men fell into their game of pinochle as naturally as if they had been playing for hours.

They had rehearsed this comedy many times in the course of a year or more. The cards were always at hand in the drawer of the table and also the score-sheets, which were renewed occasionally when they really played a game.

One hand had been played and a new one was being dealt by Sailor Pete when Ransom pushed back his chair with a slow, scraping noise to show his deliberation, and stood up to answer a heavy knock at the door.

Michael Sands and the Brothers appeared as he opened it.

The latter lingered on the threshold, but Michael advanced a few paces toward the table.

"'D evening, gentlemin," he greeted them, bobbing his flaming red poll to each in succession. "I hope I see you all winnin' at the cards. 'Tis a pleasant manner of whilin' away the dull hours, that is to say, as 'twere, the flip of the cards chases the clock."

"Oh, this is merely a friendly game, Master Sands," the overseer returned cordially. "We can't win or lose very much."

"'Tis best. 'Tis bein' on the safe side, Mr. Overseer," Michael observed with an appreciative stroke of the feathers of Ransom's office. "A little message from Captain Neville is what I'm here for, however."

The men pricked up their ears, craning their necks toward him in rapt attention.

Jake and Pete at least hoped that it had to do with the liberation of Black Henry.

"A minor matter, that is to say, as 'twere,

a nothing-at-all, yet necessary," Michael Sands commented, and then read from a sheet of paper:

September 23.

Owing to the prevalence of storms in the month of October, now seven days off, Overseer William Ransom will see to it that the crop as soon as gathered and picked be taken at once to the warehouse in order to avoid any risk of loss or damage through storms. HORACE REMINGTON NEVILLE.

"Signed by the captain himself, as you may see," Michael pointed out as he handed the written order to Ransom.

"Thank you, Master Sands," the overseer said, accepting the paper. "We'll begin first thing in the morning."

"Thank you, Mr. Overseer," Michael rejoined, bowing. "And gentlemin, with this brief interruption I'll be biddin' ye good night—and all the pleasure of the game to ye."

The good night of the others was as agreeably voiced as Michael's. When he and the Brothers had gone the game went on for fully ten minutes in apparent earnest.

Ransom, however, who had seen Michael and his companions out at the door, left his seat several times to follow with his eye the three black shapes moving leisurely along the road on the way back to the big house.

He did this by peeping through the window as he stood behind the dark-blue shade and held a spare half-inch of it to the side.

At length he informed Jake and Pete that Michael was gone for good. In case he should come back, an eventuality which was wholly improbable, Mother Juliet would see him as she had seen him this time.

"'S right what he said already about that there nothing-at-all order," Jake asserted. "We could get it in the morning yet not too late. He was yus' nosing, but he didn't nose nothings out already."

"Ya!" cried Pete, seizing the occasion with alacrity. "And we got to hit now already while the iron is red—red!"

"Nothing is surer than what each of you has said," the overseer agreed thoughtfully.

For the first time during their visit the ship's carpenters showed signs of genuine cheerfulness.

"We must not miss a good chance, and we've got a good chance," continued Ransom. "We must not miss any other good chance that comes up, either—and we've got another."

They listened more intently, as if expecting him to say more.

A second or two elapsed before they grasped the significance of the gesture of Ransom's enormous hand and forefinger, which he lowered and raised with a hammer-like motion in pointing through the door to the cellar.

Putting his grimy, gnarled fingers like a claw over his mustache, Jake Haas pushed a good portion of it into his mouth and chewed the hair as token of his disgust.

Sailor Pete grunted. His yellow head lolled back and his blunt face was more idiotic in expression than usual.

"We've been pals long enough, I hope, for you men to be a bit patient," Ransom argued. "Listen to me! I have an idea."

The overseer bent down over the table and beckoned them to do likewise. The three heads were very near one another as Ransom whispered:

"We need a man inside the big house—and this is our man! We couldn't have wished for such a stroke of luck as to find him. Now with him we've got the big house beaten inside as well as outside.

"We'll be eating in the dining-room up there within the next month. Good stuff, too—better than any we have here. And plenty of liquid refreshment for you thirsty chaps. We'll have a dance in the hall, where there's a piano that works itself when you wind it."

The sailor's head lolled slightly as he replied:

"I been waiting to see that stranger in the house first before I take a drink, Jake."

"It does seem difficult," admitted Ransom. "And yet I have a plan to manage it as easily as I lay my hand on this table. And when he's there I can keep him fast to us. I tell you I've got the power."

The overseer's fist banged the table to emphasize his statement.

"Then prove it once," Jake demanded.

"Give me time, Jake," Ransom replied, and left his seat to go to the kitchen.

They heard him at the trap-door, saying, in a loud voice:

"Come up, Mr. Danforth. There is no danger now."

The palm-curtain effectually shut the kitchen off in semi-darkness, so that they

could not see Ransom's huge figure sink on his knees as Danforth was coming up the ladder.

Nor, when his head appeared above the floor, could they see the overseer catch Danforth under one arm and whisper a few swift words into his ear.

The man on the ladder tottered. The strength oozed from his hands, which clung limp to the rung.

Ransom got a grip under Danforth's other arm and fairly dragged him up to the floor.

"I was afraid you might trip, it's so dark," Ransom said, again speaking aloud.

At the same time he practically led Danforth by the arm past the curtain to the table where Jake and Pete sat expectant.

Without being able to formulate their impression precisely both Jake and the sailor felt that a change had somehow come over Danforth since their introductory meeting.

His suave, intrepid air had vanished. He seemed very thoughtful, restless, wary, and glanced toward Ransom occasionally as if the overseer held him in some sort of subjection.

The ship's carpenters guessed. that Mother Juliet had been talking matters over with him while he was in the cellar and that he had decided to knuckle down as abjectly as formerly he had seemed ready, in their minds, to try to boss the whole Settlement.

"In the course of a few days," Ransom began, "we shall want you to do some business for us with him that can best be managed by an outsider like you. I suppose you're willing?"

Danforth looked toward the overseer as toward a superior and powerful person whom he rather dreaded.

"Why, of course," he answered. "I'll do anything that's right."

"Well, my friends," Ransom laughed, addressing Jake and Pete, "it looks to me as though we and Mr. Danforth can understand each other after that."

"It looks," Jake agreed, turning for some expression from Sailor Pete.

"I been thinkin' it looks, too," Pete observed, getting up from his chair.

"Then in about three days," said Ransom, "we'll set to work on this job."

Amid a general exchange of "Good night!" Pete led the way out of the cottage, followed by Jake Haas.

They were at a thoroughly safe remove from Ransom's before they broke into talk of their own.

Sailor Pete desired Jake to say why he had not asked the overseer how Danforth had managed to land on the island. Jake confessed that he had been itching to put this question and had refrained only because he felt sure Ransom would lie about it.

"So he yuss would," Pete grunted.

"Say," Jake wondered after a while of silence, "you know I got a kind a suspicion that feller Danforth's afraid of Ransom. Not at first yet I didn't have it, but when I seen him better by the lamp on the table so soon he comes up from the cellar the second time already. What you think?"

"I been thinkin' he's William's man all right, not our man," Sailor Pete responded. "And I been thinkin', too, I'm for bed soon's I'm home."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PEACEMAKER.

THE problem whether Danforth was Ransom's man or not was threshed out between the stranger and the overseer under the latter's roof.

"If you'd like to see your room—" Ransom proposed some ten minutes after the others had left.

"I suppose I do need sleep," Danforth admitted, "but I'll tell you frankly, Mr. Ransom, I'd rather be at the thanks of some one else than you for the hospitality of my night's lodging."

"Don't misunderstand me, please," the overseer protested with a faint trace of obsequiousness in his manner. "I had no wish to frighten you, but—"

"Frighten me! Frighten me!" Danforth laughed. "After what I've been through? 'Frighten me' is good!"

Ransom's small eyes became smaller. His thin lips clapped shut like a snap-purse on the words he was about to utter.

"Mr. Ransom," Danforth went on, "I'll admit you did take me by surprise when I came up the ladder. Yet as I have been at one time put on show, at another put under cover, like a Jack-in-the-box ever since I came to this island, I ought to be used to it.

"But you, Mr. Ransom, hurt my feelings, in fact—I may as well say it right out—you struck at me, at a moment when I couldn't strike back, with a dastard insult."

"How so? How so?" the overseer de-

manded, flustered at the unexpected stand of offense in the man whom a little while before he believed he had completely under his thumb.

"You know very well 'how so,' Mr. Ransom. Still I'll repeat it for you, so there'll be no misunderstanding.

"When I stuck my head above the floor in there"—Danforth pointed toward the kitchen—"you may recall that you leaned down and whispered to me. I've a good memory, but even if I hadn't I couldn't forget the words:

" 'I know you for Stephen Weir of New York, young man, and you play into my hand now nice and gentle, or I'll see you rotten well deported and jailed if you don't.'

"I hope you remember, Mr. Ransom?"

The overseer only snarled:

"Well, you *are* Stephen Weir; ain't you?"

"I am."

"Then why are you giving yourself out here as H. A. Danforth?"

"That's my private concern, sir."

"You have pluck, haven't you?" the overseer declared in bold and sudden flattery.

"And I don't make any bets I can't cover—that's more to the point."

"You mean about what I said? That I could see you jailed? I'll say it again if you like."

"Say it!" The words were snapped from the younger man's teeth. "And I'll tell you in answer, you rotten well—*lie!*"

The overseer's veins boiled with rage. In the glow of the lamp on the table his small yellow face took on a curious green shade. His great chest was cast forward; he breathed for a moment almost in snorts.

One—two—three steps he advanced before he spoke:

"You are wearing my clothes. You're wearing the shoes of a black laborer here in the Settlement. You've been fed and sheltered here. And when I tell you what I know for a fact you—you beach-comber—you dare call me a liar!"

The overseer made a sudden spring forward. The American dodged round the table, placing it between them.

"Beach-comber, am I?" he echoed, always keeping a steady eye on the hulking giant, who might reach across the table by merely stretching his forearm. "Well, maybe I am and—maybe I'm not. I've been sick, I know that much, and I suppose in my present state you could do for me in just about one punch, but you try to land that punch, you yellow rat, and I'll give you this lamp flat in the face!"

"Mercy! Mercy! Are you a wishin' for to wake up the whole island?" a low husky voice broke in.

Mother Juliet came panting and waddling through the palm-curtain.

She ran to the American, seized the lamp from him and laid it on the table. Then planting herself in front of William Ransom, she grasped both his big hands and held them against her breast, mumbling over them in her singsong drone.

The American was amazed at the gradual hypnotic effect Mother Juliet wielded upon the giant mulatto.

His head bent down until it almost touched hers. She crooned to him strangely and Ransom's high voice in a sibilant whisper seemed to be answering her.

They must have remained thus, not more than twenty feet away from the American, for at least a quarter of an hour. Also they conferred together in some strange jargon, of which he could gather only an occasional word that meant nothing to him.

At length Ransom turned away and, seating himself on the couch, propped his elbows with his knees and laid his face in his hands thoughtfully.

Mother Juliet bobbed about to the American, who noticed only now an astonishing change in her appearance.

The overseer had not rashly ventured the statement that Michael Sands would never be able to run down the seeress. Ransom was prepared for the transformation, although in the present circumstances he gave it no attention.

All the bulk of the dingy skirt and underskirts of yellow satin were shorn from her, and she did not seem by half so squat and round. Her new dress, a borrowed one, was of dark woolen stuff, fitting her tightly.

Over it she wore a long apron of blue-and-white-check gingham. Discarded were the barbarous necklace, earrings and other geegaws of shining metal.

Yet most of all was she an entirely different woman to look at because she had tinged her face, neck and arms a mulatto yellow and had taken off her mountainous wig of straight black hair. Now her flat head showed crinkled hair growing close to the scalp, with a diminutive coil like a cruller at the back of it.

"These has long been terrible times on

the island, Mr. Danforth," she began, "and my dear boy, William Ransom, has had to bear the worst of them. So he's all jess nachally tormented and edgy every which way. When he loses his temper, he don't know what he's adoin'.

"It's too bad to happen to you, 'cos I know he likes you and he wants you to help him when them two complainers, Jake and Pete, ain't got brains like you to help."

"I'm willing to help you, only I simply will not be bullied," growled Danforth.

"Never you fear no more, Mr. Danforth. That's done with—William! Son, come here," Mother Juliet cried, looking round toward the couch.

The giant rose quickly and obeyed her.

"Now you two men will understand each other, I'm positive. Begin right away."

"I'm sorry I lost my temper, Mr. Danforth," the overseer said with an air of cringing sheepishness. "Let bygones be bygones, will you? There's not much you'll have to do for me, but it's absolutely necessary, and you're the only man to do it. Besides, it's on the square."

"Bygones are bygones," Danforth agreed firmly and with a solemn note in his suave, even voice.

"I'll have your room ready in five minutes," Ransom said, evidently relieved at the result of Mother Juliet's intervention.

For a long time Danforth lay awake, pondering on Mother Juliet's defense of Ransom and on Ransom himself. From the gist of her talk he drew a puzzle.

She had told him of his babbling in delirium. Just what had he betrayed of himself? And how long had he been on this island in care of Mother Juliet? It seemed to him that whole days had passed of which his consciousness had no record. The puzzle remained unsolved when at last he fell asleep.

Below in the sitting-room Overseer Ransom was at the table poring over a yellow sheet of paper. It was the transcript of the wireless inquiry for Stephen Weir.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MURDER.

IT was about half an hour after dinner on a raw, misty evening. Captain Neville, Michael Sands and Oscar Molle sat in the hall, smoking and chatting in desultory fashion of the odds and ends of the day's work.

Five days had passed since the pledge of loyalty was renewed in the plaza by the men of the Settlement. The work on the plantation had progressed better than ever before; and as the coconuts were being warehoused almost as fast as they were harvested the master of Half-moon House envisaged the coming month of storms with equanimity.

"One might say we're restored to normal," he observed to Michael Sands, stretching his patent-leather pumps nearer the open log fire.

"One *might* say, as you have it, captain," Michael returned deliberately. "'Tis a proper way to state the matter, sir. It keeps us on the hither side of caution."

The captain glanced with some curiosity at Michael. He wondered what his right-hand man was driving at.

At this moment Oscar Molle sprang up from his chair. The eyes of all three men were cast instinctively toward the lower end of the hall. The bell-signal of the wireless was ringing steadily.

"I'll go at once, captain?" Oscar asked.

"Very well, Oscar." When his confidential clerk had muted the signal and left the hall Captain Neville swung round in his chair.

"What's that you were hinting at, Michael?" he asked.

"Hinting is it, sir? I hope I'm not so weak-minded as to hint to you, sir. One might say we're restored to normal, say you, sir, and I'll agree with ye, captain. That is—as 'twere—if it's normal for Black Henry to be in the barn yonder servin' out ten days or more in irons—"

"Still," argued Captain Neville, "you cannot deny that the men are working at their best, can you? Nor that whenever you and I have gone there, they seemed cheerful and contented?"

"True for you, captain, but again one might say that Mother Juliet has vanished as utterly and neat—so to speak—as if she'd never been on the island at all."

"I have my own daughter to blame for that," Captain Neville remarked bitterly.

"Due respect to you, captain," Michael broke in, "but she done nothin' at all."

"Are you trying to tell me she did not go to Mother Juliet's hut?"

"She admits that."

"And warn the witch of our intention?"

"Miss Susan had a child's idea, but 'twas an honest one, sir," Michael explained. "She was afeared for us here, and especially for you, seein' that's she fond of you—and why wouldn't she be, the only kin she has?

"Just as we all here out of our wisdom decided that Mother Juliet would have a lot of influence with the blacks in case of an uprising, so Susan figured it out. And she says to herself, says she:

" 'I'll go down to Mother Juliet and twist her round so she'll work on the blacks in favor of my father and not against him.' Didn't I say 'twas a child's idea?

"However, she never got a chance to try it out, for she never saw Mother Juliet at all. What's more, Mother Juliet never saw her."

"Has she sent you any word by Rebecca, asking you to speak with me?" the captain asked keenly.

"I was afraid you'd see through me sooner or later, captain."

Michael rose from his seat and saluted. He glanced toward the door before proceeding.

"Miss Susan knows nothin' at all about what I'm tellin' you. 'Tis Miss Addison told. Her words, sir, as I recollect them:

" 'This message is for Captain Neville's private ear and is sent by Miss Addison without the knowledge of Miss Susan. Oscar Molle secreted a love-letter to Miss Susan in the pocket of her sailor-jacket without cause from her of any faintest degree and to her great offense and distress.

" 'Imprudently in her anger Miss Susan burned the letter. When she had resented with some temper the addresses of Oscar Molle, made to her in your office that day before you arrived, he took his gentlemanly revenge by telling you of her excursion to Mother Juliet's hut in such a way that you found her guilty without fair trial of warning Mother Juliet, whom she did not see.' "

"That sounds like Miss Addison, Michael," the captain said thoughtfully, and shut his eyes wearily.

At this moment the door opened and Oscar Molle entered briskly.

He carried a long sheet of yellow paper bearing the wireless message he had received.

"If you please, captain," he began as he saluted, "it's from the Fruit Company, sir."

"Read it," murmured Captain Neville, steadfastly regarding the fire:

Oscar read:

> Referring to previous messages *in re* wrecked S. S. Cacique from Philadelphia, and passenger Stephen Weir of New York, for whom ten thousand dollars reward is offered: S. S. Napatan, New Orleans to Colon, reports finding life-boat marked "Cacique, Philadelphia," floating bottom up.
>
> Boat badly worn and battered. No trace of crew or passengers who put out in the boat found by S. S. Napatan, or reported from any service. Palladium Trust Company through Acme Detective Agency states belief that Stephen Weir has been drowned.
>
> If recovered alive original reward of ten thousand stands. If recovered dead reward is five thousand dollars, offered personally by an officer of the Trust Company, Vernon Hart Tulk, who is stepfather of said Stephen Weir. Relay this message, as previous one, to Belize. JARVIS.

The captain did not lift his head as he instructed Oscar to tack this message on the bulletin-board beside the first one. Also a transcript of it was to be made for William Ransom's use at the Settlement.

The captain's mind was on Oscar Molle, and in no sweet mood.

Of course, the servant trick of slipping a love-note into the jacket of the woman who was in a sense his employer, and then his mean revenge for her repulse, marked the limit of Oscar's usefulness on Big Twin Island.

It abated nothing, however, of Susan's underhand behavior in even attempting to see Mother Juliet.

Captain Neville had about decided to hail the first steamer that could conveniently touch at Half-moon Bay when he heard Oscar's voice again beside him.

"If you please, sir, William Ransom wishes to speak with you."

"Something that couldn't wait till tomorrow, I suppose."

"He says it's most urgent, sir, and that he must speak to you alone."

The captain stood up, inquiring for Michael's opinion.

"All I can say, sir," Michael answered, his seamed face puckered into a very cobweb of lines, "is that he must not dish up again that yarn about an outbreak of typhoid, such as he did when they sailed away to the mainland. The least he can do is to make it black measles this time."

The captain smiled wearily and agreed to receive William alone. When Oscar,

having admitted Ransom at the far end of the hall, returned to the fireplace Michael invited him in a loud voice to "come up to the card-room.

"We'll see," said he, "whether I can get myself out of the fix you left me in last night at chess."

They went up the wide, winding staircase side by side.

Captain Neville advanced to meet his overseer midway in the hall, where William stood leaning against the billiard-table.

"Captain," Ransom began with a cautious, thoughtful air, "you remember about that ten thousand dollars reward, don't you?"

"You mean for the absconder from New York?—I forget the name."

"Stephen Weir of New York, yes, captain. You rec'llect you promised me before witnesses one-half if I—"

"Perfectly, Ransom."

"Well, I have found the man Stephen Weir."

"What are you trying to tell me, Ransom?" the captain exclaimed incredulously.

Evidently the overseer was not overtrustful, which accounted for the lack of tact in his query:

"You ain't goin' back on your word, are you, captain?"

Only the sickening suspicion that five thousand dollars might be snatched out of his grasp threw the overseer off his usual guard of cringing astuteness. Only such a contemptible insinuation could have ruined him in the eyes of Captain Neville.

For a moment or two he eyed the overseer searchingly and in silence.

"You're a lost man, William Ransom," he said then, pronouncing sentence slowly and dispassionately. "It's been a gradual process I can see now, and I'm sorry for you—and shall attempt in no way to make you pay the price of your insult to me. First disloyalty, and then—this!

"Let me remind you of something, William, for after all you have brains and don't deserve to go to the gods—even for the treachery you tried to do us here. I never wished you to take in Jake Haas and Sailor Pete at the Settlement—you know that. But I let you have them because you argued they were cleverer than your blacks. They are—and a cursed sight more lazy, vicious and good-for-nothing than the blackest black man on Big Twin Island.

"Among their own kind they would have walked the plank long ago. At the Settlement they felt they could look down on the others and when they got tired of doing that they began to poison all you fellows against the big house, as you call it.

"No one but a low-down white man could have conceived the revolt idea—you need not tell me otherwise—even if they've put all their responsibility on you and fooled you into believing you held them in the hollow of your hand—that you were their leader. You—a mulatto!

"And now before you offer me an iota of proof that you are entitled to this ten-thousand-dollar reward you hint that I mean to swindle you!"

"You've said a lot, captain," Ransom returned, tumbling his words in his hurry and anger, "and most of what ain't true and some dirty mean. But I ain't got much time, 'cos I have trouble coming up to see you and I got to get back quick and what you say I'm lyin' about proving my find to you"—Ransom simply was forced to pause for breath—"is a lie out of your own face, if I do beg your pardon, and I'll just show you you can't lie to me and call me names, 'cos blowed if I endure such doings—rot me if I will!"

The overseer's two hands were flung wrathfully in the air; his shrill treble cracked like glass at his final words, and he rushed away to the door that opened on the entrance-hall.

He had not covered more than half the distance when the door was flung open from the outside and, screaming frantically, Jolly George dashed into the great hall.

His arms and face were smeared with blood that ran from his nostrils in streams upon his green shirt. Wild-eyed and terrified, he made for Captain Neville, holding aloft in one hand his mandolin, which was smashed into unrecognizable shape.

Ransom stepped to one side, mystified and alarmed, as the boy passed him.

"They've killed the guard, captain—killed them and got Black Henry out of irons—and—and—"

The boy sobbed hysterically and clutched the welcoming hand that reached out to save him from falling.

"Who, Jolly? Who's doing this?" Captain Neville asked.

For an instant Jolly George studied Overseer Ransom timorously; then, winding the captain's arm across his shoulder and snuggling close to him, the boy replied:

"It was Jake Haas and Sailor Pete and a lot of blacks—and they have rifles."

"Rifles!" The word sounded like a shot from the captain's throat.

He let the boy sink suddenly to the floor. Seeing Ransom dart away, Neville leaped after him, catching the giant when he was within three feet of the door.

"You yellow hound!" he roared, and the fury in his voice rang awesomely from the high roof of the room. "So this is the ruse behind your ten-thousand-dollar story?"

"I didn't know! I didn't know!" Ransom cried.

"You lie! You lie!" the captain yelled, dragging him back to the center of the hall.

"Rot you, I don't lie!" Ransom screamed.

Swinging round in tigerish rage, he caught Captain Neville with his mighty hand at his throat.

"I won't hit an old man like you," he went on. The enormous yellow fingers closed more tightly with each word on the captain's throat. "No; I can't do that."

The captain's head jerked convulsively and then fell back limp. A thin stream of red trickled from his white lips to his white beard. His eyes were wild and looked like polished glass.

"But this here is all right and proper."

So saying, Ransom thrust the captain against the billiard-table.

The spare, erect frame of Horace Remyngton Neville crumpled as if it were so much card-board. The white head with its blood-stained beard knocked against the green baize with a dull sound.

The legs of the human shape dangled uselessly, while the pointed toes of the patent-leather pumps, as they swung back and forth, scraped the floor once, missed once, alternately, with a clock-like movement.

The overseer's hands flew up and his little eyes popped in their sockets as he saw the captain's lids fall shut.

"I didn't mean to do it so quick—I tell you, I didn't!" Ransom muttered. "Blast you! I was jess a-squeezin' you somewhat, but not to die."

Captain Neville's right arm rose slowly. Ransom watched it, fascinated. The arm dropped like lead. The fingers were moving in weak, convulsive effort.

The captain's head rolled over on the side.

"I knew you was a-makin' game," Ransom shrilled gleefully, the lust of murder in his parched throat and itching in his trembling fingers.

His forearms rose swiftly until his hands, pendent in midair above the prostrate figure on the table, showed like the talons of a bird of prey.

Swiftly they were descending for the captain's throat as Ransom said:

"But this time it's right-o and farewell, my hearty—and may—"

A snapping, crashing noise and a queer sharp pain in his side! Ransom's quick ear and eye followed the sound.

On the curved stairway Michael Sands crouched behind a rifle.

It flashed through Ransom's brain inconsequently that there was smoke coming from the barrel of that gun—and he fell dead on the billiard-table across the right arm of Captain Neville.

His long legs unbalanced the trunk of his body. It rolled half-way over and tumbled to the floor, face down, making a noise terrible and loud.

Thus the lock snapped on the secret of Stephen Weir's presence on Big Twin Island and in the breast of the one man who held that secret.

"These dead! These dead! They is always a-followin' me!" Jolly George moaned, hugging his shattered mandolin to his breast and gazing spellbound from the body of Ransom to the inert form of Captain Neville, white and still, under the lights against the glowing green of the billiard-cloth.

"Always, always followin' me!" he repeated mournfully.

Michael Sands and Oscar Molle, both armed with rifles and revolvers, came running to the captain.

Of a sudden Jolly George burst into a series of childlike screams that echoed in the hall long after he had fled from it, leaving the door yawning wide.

Their rifles were laid on the table, the revolvers jammed in their pockets. Michael Sands lifted the captain as if he were the weight of a baby and shifted him on to the floor. He muttered a few words to Oscar, naming the items the other was to fetch from the medicine-closet.

"Quick! Quick!" Michael enjoined.

Oscar started on a run for the stairs while Michael tore off the captain's collar and opened his shirt to the waist.

He rubbed the captain's chest and back vigorously, and with his handkerchief wiped the blood from the captain's pale lips with a hand light as a woman's.

Oscar promptly returned with restoratives, which Michael at once applied, meanwhile instructing Oscar to run again "as if the Old Nick was after him" and bring into the great hall all the black servants attached to the house.

"This is actual trouble," Michael muttered, working swiftly, thoughtfully, on Captain Neville, "or I don't know the smell of pig. Out with ye now, Oscar!"

Once only he paused in his labors. As Oscar passed into the dimly lighted entrance-hall on his new errand Michael got up from his knees and dragged Ransom's huge corpse to the side of the room. With his feet he tucked it in under the broad oak seat that ran all along this wall.

He screened it decently with the long, hanging flap of the leather seat-cushion and meditated aloud, as he hastened back to the captain:

"'Tis like the boy I am—not standing the sight of ye! A foolish man y'are, sure, puttin' yourself in the line of a gun and Michael Sands himself behind it."

CHAPTER XIX.

"YOU KILLED MY FATHER!"

THE piercing screams of Jolly George as he ran, bruised and bleeding, from the barn into Half-moon House had startled every echo of the quiet night that reigned over the place.

Susan and Miss Addison hurried downstairs with Scott to find Rebecca, the cook, and her mother ready to flee upward to their rooms.

"Go back! Go back, Miss Susan," urged Rebecca. "Something terrible took place or the boy would not act so."

"Go back?" Susan repeated. "What are you afraid of? We must find out what has happened if we're to know what we had best do. Come along, Scott," she cried to the collie.

They were both running toward the door.

"Stay right where you are, all of you," Susan called back into the dining-room. "I'm doing this by myself. Do the rest of you run to the men in the north wing; I'll join you there."

She pulled the door of the dining-room shut after her. With surprise she discovered that the entrance-lamp was not lighted. It was impossible that she should know it had been extinguished by Overseer Ransom for reasons of his own just before he was admitted to the great hall.

No clamor of high-pitched, angry voices came from there now. Susan advanced cautiously nevertheless, admonished by an indefinable intuition of peril.

A shot rang out. It might almost have buried itself in the girl's breast, so sudden and overpowering was the shock of it.

For a few seconds she stood, limp in every muscle and holding her hand in fear and question against her thudding heart. Bracing herself in a deep-drawn breath and a set of her shoulders, she paced onward again, slowly and heavy-limbed, toward the door of the great hall.

"I must do it—I must!" she said to herself half-aloud to spur her courage.

"You must not—you must not!" a voice replied.

A tall, erect figure stalked out from the shadows of coats and cloaks of various sorts that hung about the rack at the rear of the entrance-hall.

"Who are you? What are you doing here?" Susan asked, the words issuing from her lips half-chokingly.

"I know your voice. Is that enough?" the man asked.

"You know my voice? What are you talking about?" Susan queried.

The man laughed gently.

"It begins to seem as if I were never to see you except in darkness, Miss Shadow," he remarked.

Susan staggered away from him at mention of the name.

"You're the man of Mother Juliet's hut?" she asked breathlessly.

"Who helped you out of rather a tight place there, unless I'm mistaken," he answered. "Who said he would always know you by your voice—and who has not forgotten what he said. Won't you go back to your friend now? If I helped you once may I not help you again?"

"You helped me, it's true," the girl returned with a trace of troubled feeling. "I'm grateful, too. But you can't help me any more, and I'm sorry, for you talk as if you were fairly decent.

"Still you're associated with Ransom and his ruffians, I believe, and your being here to-night assures me of it. They've lied

and tricked my father at every turn, although they owe him nothing but loyalty and good-will.

"This wretched business to-night is another of their dastardly tricks, and you're mixed up in it evidently. If you really do wish to help me again, you'll get right out of here at once. You will if you have a shred of decency left."

"I have, Miss Neville, a shred of decency left, as you express it. If I've been hiding here—please don't think I'm lying—it's because ever since that boy went into the hall yelling I've had a notion that I am in a good deal of danger myself. Yet that's none of your concern."

"I would rather, if you'll excuse me," the girl said, "that you go and say nothing more—if you really wish to help me, Mr.—"

"Weir—Stephen Weir of New York," the man said quickly, supplying the blank. "When you asked my name down there in the hut I didn't want to tell you a lie, so I told you nothing.

"But I'm not one of Ransom's ruffians, nor do I know much if anything exactly of what they are really up to. I'll go now, but I wish you would slip back into the dining-room. Ransom's in the other room—"

"He brought you here, did he?" she asked quickly.

"To meet Captain Neville, because he told me—"

"Why, I know who you are!" the girl interrupted with a strange, stifled cry. "You're the man that stole money from the bank; and there's a reward of ten thousand dollars offered for you!"

"What are you telling me?" he asked in a tone dull and heavy.

"Stephen Weir of New York," the girl repeated, going over her recollection of the message. "We got it all by wireless—that's how Ransom knew. Of course Ransom would bring you to father, for he is to get half the reward."

The girl's voice broke. She was aware that Weir was standing silent and seemingly self-possessed within a few paces of her. She wished she might see the expression of his face; and again she was glad of the darkness as she begged him finally:

"For your own sake at least, go—go away, Mr. Weir."

"These dead! These dead! They is always afollowin' of me!" Jolly George was crying as he came running from the great hall.

He had opened the door hardly an inch, letting a shaft of light into the entrance, before Stephen Weir had vanished as a fantom from the presence of Susan Neville.

Too terrified by the wild words of Jolly George to give further thought to Weir, she caught the boy in her arms as he ran.

"Don't hold me! Don't!" he entreated. "They will get me if you do. And the men at the barn what are fetching Black Henry out of them irons, they is ahuntin' me, too, and I ain't never done harm to no man."

He struggled savagely to be free, but Susan held his arms crossed at his back and forced him ahead of her to the dining-room door.

"Open the door, Addie," she called out.

At once the door swung open and Jolly George began to quiet a little as he realized that he was looking into the friendly faces of Susan and Miss Addison.

Rebecca and her mother left the staircase. Tottering of step and leaning heavily on the robust arm of her daughter, old Jane was impatient and eager as the other women to hear the story of Jolly George.

Susan sat the boy in a chair and stepped weakly away from him. Miss Addison noticed that the girl's face was white as chalk and that she was trembling.

"Dear Susan," she murmured and drew a chair near, "you be seated, too."

Susan sat down. The others, who had not heard what Jolly George was saying when he left the hall, were startled when Susan requested, in a voice of utter weariness:

"Tell me—quietly, you know—who is dead?"

"The two of them," Jolly George answered, so assured of the infallibility of Miss Susan's safeguarding him that he uttered his reply as if he were talking of something of not the very slightest importance.

Rebecca and her mother groaned and beat their breasts in anxious dread. Susan's lips parted as if she were about to speak, but no sound came from them. She stared at Jolly George wonderingly for a moment or two. Then she laughed abruptly and began:

"Of course you're a simpleton, and—"

Her head turned away from him. Gropingly she reached for Miss Addison's arm. As the gray little woman folded it around Susan's neck the girl burst into tears.

"For Heaven's sake, Addie," she sobbed, "ask him who is dead. Ask him—I can't."

Scott, who had placed himself beside Susan's chair, with his muzzle laid lightly against her, emitted a long, doleful howl. Rebecca and her mother groaned anew and beat their breasts, for a howl like that from a dog was to them a surer token of death than even the statement of Jolly George.

Before Miss Addison could frame her question so that the shaken wits of the boy should furnish a complete, intelligible answer, Susan sprang from her chair.

"I must not be afraid—I must not!" she cried. "Keep Scott with you, Addie," and she ran toward the door.

Miss Addison now made no effort to restrain her, for she herself was tortured with the enigmatic phrase of Jolly George that "the two of them" were dead.

The door was flung open from the outer side as Susan was about to put her hand to the knob. Oscar Molle entered hastily. He glanced coldly at Susan, who took no notice at all of him, but passed on.

She did hear him exclaim nervously something about "trouble" and "gathering the servants," but shut the door behind her as she walked, having little heed for whatever message he might be bearing.

Even though the shadow of death was in her house Susan could not see Oscar except with loathing. Nor was there aught of hate in her feeling. She looked upon him now as if she had seen him for the first time only recently and he were loathsome in her sight from the beginning.

Stephen Weir again hailed her in the entrance-hall.

"I could not leave by that door," he told her in a lower voice, "because there's a negro on guard there with a rifle."

"Doesn't he know you?"

"I hardly think so. Few of the Settlement men outside of Ransom, Jake and Pete have ever laid eyes on me. However, he didn't seem to be thinking about anything except his orders that no one was to pass him."

"Whose orders?" asked Susan.

Since she and Miss Addison had been restricted to their wing of the house Susan was not in the way of learning the various commands her father might issue from day to day. Also, Oscar had mentioned "trouble" and "gathering the servants," she recalled.

Then suddenly and overwhelmingly there beat in upon her brain again the fear that her father might be dead.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Weir, but I can do nothing—nothing. I must go."

She ran from him into the great hall. He was at her heels, saying:

"It's not myself—it's for you I'm afraid. They won't touch me, I think—or—"

At the other end of the hall Michael Sands was carefully climbing the winding staircase with the inert figure of Captain Neville slung across his mighty shoulders.

Susan broke into a leaping run to overtake him, but her knees doubled under her. She went ahead tottering a few steps farther, then fell sprawling with outstretched hands over the reading-table.

Stephen Weir, whose hands were raising her gently, heard the hoarse, faint groan of her voice.

"My father! They have killed my father!"

He steadied her on her feet. Susan made a brave effort to walk, yet would have fallen if it had not been for Weir's sustaining arm.

"Why, this is silly!" she muttered, laughing hysterically.

"Come to the door a moment," he proposed, leading her toward the veranda that fronted on the bay. "The fresh air will do you good."

"But my father! My father!" she moaned, glancing over her shoulder to the stairway.

There was frenzy still in those eyes, he knew, and with it stealthiness and suspicion.

She continued to moan:

"They have killed my father—killed my father—killed my father!"

Weir was not even hearing now what she said. He was urging her before him out upon the veranda, when the noise of hurried, heavy footsteps struck his ears. The next instant a gun-barrel barred the doorway and was thrust inward, driving Miss Neville and Weir back into the room. A hideous, grinning black face flashed on his vision. A coarse voice bawled:

"Get in there! Nobody comes out o' this house no door or window this night."

There followed an outburst of sickening profanity and the door was jammed shut from the outside. Weir swung about with Miss Neville and pondered a second.

"That's about the same greeting I got when I tried the other door," he said.

He was thinking how much she would gain for herself if she only could divert her mind, at least momentarily. But she persisted in her sobbing moan. Finally with a maniacal access of force she tore her arm loose from his hold and started away on a shambling run for the staircase.

"Wait! Wait! I'm afraid you'll fall," Weir called to her warningly.

"You killed my father—yes, you and Ransom!" she cried hysterically, only striving to run the faster at the sound of his voice.

Easily Weir was overtaking her. Susan had braced herself against the billiard-table as she went along beside it. When she was at one end of it Weir, behind her, was at the other end.

He could be up with her in a bound or two and was about to leap forward, for she staggered to one side as her hand left the table. But a short man with flaming red hair and a powerful head and face appeared unexpectedly on the curving staircase.

"Michael! Michael!" the girl shrieked. "He killed my father—he and Ransom! They came together! And he is Stephen Weir, who stole the ten thousand dollars reward!"

"Me poor child! God spare ye trouble!" said Michael, his roar of a voice shaking in sorrow. "'Tis not the same girl at all y'are."

He rushed toward her and clasped her against his arm just as she seemed about to drop.

"I'm terribly sorry," Weir explained, undergoing the search of Michael's truculent eyes. "I was trying to assist Miss Neville—"

"Assist, is it?" Michael echoed gibingly. "Assist yourself out of this house by the nearest door if you don't want a dose of first aid to the injured, you dirty thief!—Gad, I'll finish you off anyway; 'twill make one less murdering, thieving scoundrel to fight."

Michael raised his revolver in his left hand.

(*To Be Concluded.*)

The Rubber

by B. Paul Neuman

I.

EARLY in January the lines of trenches northeast of Richemout were being held by the second battalion of the Rangers.

It was a dreary, thankless job. The weather had been execrable, hard frost and pelting rain ringing the changes with blustering winds and damp, heavy mists.

The German trenches were uncomfortably close—at some points within a hundred yards, and even when the big guns kept holiday, sniping was always going on.

It was horribly cold, and deadly dull, and the smallest diversion was eagerly welcomed.

This morning there was a break in the gray clouds, and a pale sheen and glimpses of a clear frosty blue.

A tall private caked with mud turned from the periscope through which he had been looking.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed, "Old yellow-face coming out of prison at last. Looks as if they'd been bleaching 'im."

"What's doing?" asked Corporal Grays.

"Nothing," answered the tall private. "There's our own bloomin' wires, and there's the smoke from the street opposite, and there are the never-no-mores between."

"Any not-outs?"

"One poor devil waggling a bit."

"Ours or theirs?" another man asked.

"Ours, I think, but they're all so spattered and mussed up, you can hardly tell."

"If he's ours," said the corporal, "we must have a try when it gets dark, but we shall have to be nippy."

"Then we must get old Twitchem to go. He'll be out and back again before we can say 'Jack Robinson.'"

As he spoke he glanced towards another private, a big, heavy man, rather good-looking, but in a dull, bovine kind of way.

"Oh, shut up, for goodness' sake, Harker!" a fresh voice clipped in. "Why can't you let Blades alone? A joke's a joke, but you're like a nagging woman or those bloomin' pop-guns over there."

"Poor old chap," answered Harker. "I didn't know you were married, and yet I might a' guessed it too. You look as if most of the fun had been knocked out of you."

The intervener scorned to reply, and there was a long pause, broken at last by Blades's deep voice speaking with portentous deliberation as if each word demanded a special and painful effort.

"Perhaps — you'll—get—it—knocked — out—of—you."

Harker gave a dramatic start and burst into a roar of laughter.

"Oh, good Lord, Quicksilver!" he exclaimed, "you *did* give me a jolt. I haven't heard you make a speech that length since we were at old Chignett together."

II.

BLADES and Harker were old acquaintances; as Harker had claimed, they had gone to the same primary school in the days of their youth. Then, Harker had been cock of the walk, a scholarship boy, and cricket and football captain. Blades, on the other hand, had come up from the country, a shy, slow, heavy lad with a stammer and an unfortunate habit of twitching which his new schoolmaster found at once irresistible and unpardonable.

They led him a terrible life, and Harker was among the most ingenious, if not the most active, of his tormentors. Eventually, he persuaded his mother to send him to another school, but not before he had fought Harker in the playground and by a lucky blow, and to his own astonishment, had knocked him out.

Since then they had seen nothing of each other.

Harker's career had been a disappointment. Clever and self-confident, he had little ballast of principle. From the first, his friendships were ill-chosen.

To most of the temptations that lie in wait for unwary youth he held out a bold and friendly hand. His program for life was to have a good time; his ideal virtue was what he called "manly independence." The result was what might have been expected.

He changed his jobs with the regularity and almost with the frequency of the seasons, and as a family man of thirty, was earning less than when he was twenty. Nor was this the worst. Drink and fast living had lowered his physique and weakened his nerves.

To him, at any rate, the war came as opportunity. Out of work, disgusted with himself, and—it must be said—fired by the appeal to play the game, he had struck while the iron was hot, and had entered Kitchener's fold.

Blades had come to the same goal by a different path.

In spite of his stutter and his twitchings, his slowness and his awkwardness, he had always been sound in the essential qualities; straight, truthful, clean-minded. Little as he looked it, he was a very impressionable boy, and the curates under whose influence he had fallen, found him as clay for the potter.

His mother, a widow, was even less prepossessing in appearance than he, but to her he was devoted, and he had made up his mind not to marry as long as she lived. He had gone straight from school to a place

found for him by his vicar, and there he had remained.

It was a large wholesale stationery business, and at thirty he was in the counting-house earning two guineas a week, and with a nice little sum put by. He had outgrown twitching, and, by practising an almost painful deliberation in talking, he had practically overcome the tendency to stammer.

Brilliant he would never be, but he had a tenacious memory, and had worked hard at night school and the Y. M. C. A. With all his good qualities, it must be added that he was intensely self-opinionated and profoundly self-satisfied.

And—very characteristically—it was a sermon that sent him to fight for his country.

As it happened, the old schoolfellows found themselves in the same company. At first they were rather pleased. Harker was depressed, and he still had a feeling for Chignett Street. He had almost forgotten the incidents that were still as fresh in the other's recollection as if they had happened the week before.

But time had taken something of the bitterness from the victim's memories. Moreover he was feeling very strange and lonely, and it was a relief to meet with any one whom he knew, even slightly. So, for the first few days, they were quite friendly.

The friendliness, however, did not last long. As soon as the training began, the old contrast reappeared. Harker delighted the sergeant by the quickness with which he picked up the drill and the exercises. As his health improved under the more bracing conditions, his spirits rose, too, and he soon bade fair to be one of the most popular men in the company.

Blades, on the other hand, was incredibly slow and awkward over his work, and he became the target for the sergeant's crudest and most withering sarcasms.

Within a fortnight he was the butt of the company. His heavy, impassive face showed few signs of shame or resentment, but beneath the surface his heart was hot with both.

So upright, and regular, and punctual, had he been at business that there he had won the respect of all, and for years he had been free from even the mildest reproof. On the contrary, he had grown accustomed to praise.

His mother worshiped him, and at his church he was quite an important person, openly held up as a model to the young men's guild. His self-esteem had grown enormously. He knew he was slow, but he was sure, and that, he told himself, was far better. He "got there," while the quick and brilliant constantly failed.

He took especial pride in the conquest of the stammer. He had paid for lessons, and his simple faith joined to the extraordinary pertinacity with which he practiced the exercises had been rewarded by a large measure of success.

As long as he spoke with care and deliberation, he could keep the hateful enemy at a distance. For years, now, he had not disgraced himself by a really bad stammer.

The sudden reversion to the conditions of his miserable boyhood was inexpressibly humiliating and bitter. It was made even more so by the attitude which Harker now took up.

Still professing to be perfectly friendly, he seemed to be always lying in wait for the unhappy Blades, chaffing him mercilessly for each mistake, calling attention to every awkwardness, tempting him to some slow, laborious utterance, and then imitating it with such comic fidelity as to send the mess-room into fits of laughter.

He recalled, and more often invented, stories of their school-days, stories of which Blades was always the grotesque, ridiculous hero. Worst of all, he revived the horrid old nickname of Twitchem, and imitated with hideous exaggeration the facial contortions that had earned it.

For this, Blades had begun to hate him with a deliberate hatred that was half sheer terror of the old repulsive habit mastering him again.

To Harker, Blades seemed an absolutely unique specimen of side-splitting absurdity. To Blades, Harker had come to represent the incarnation of devilish malignity.

III.

TOWARDS the end of the day, when darkness fell, Corporal Grays returned to the subject of the morning conversation as if it had never been broken off.

"I wonder," he said, "if that pore blighter out there's still alive. It might be a pal of one of us. Let's see: we came in yesterday, and the Cornwalls were here before us. It may be one of them."

Immediately, there was a chorus of volunteers, but Harker in his jaunty, confident tone, said:

"I spotted him. It's my job."

Blades had been brooding all day over the thought of the wounded man. The misery of his situation touched him sharply, and he was no coward.

But there was another thought in his mind. He had a fancy that Harker was no hero. The call would come. Harker would hold back and he would go on the dangerous task.

Harker would look rather small after that. Even *he* would have to hang his head.

"He gave me best, once before, and he'll have to do it again," he said grimly to himself.

As soon as the corporal spoke, Blades had quietly begun to make his preparations. He did not attempt to say anything. Even at that moment he remembered the danger that always lay in wait for him in unwary speech.

But he began slowly to take off the heavy coat that would only embarrass him. Before he had finished, he heard the corporal say "Good luck, then, Harker!" and then Harker's voice—like the corporal's, hardly above a whisper—addressing him.

"By-bye, old Twitchem," it said, "always a day after the fair, aren't you?"

Next he saw Harker draw himself up to the parapet of the trench and crawl away on hands and knees into the darkness.

So his plan had failed. As Harker had said, he was a day after the fair. And it was Harker after all who would score, not he; Harker with his sneers and his gibes and his lying funny stories.

On the strength of this performance, he would be more insufferable than ever. His last words showed that he had noticed the rival preparations, and a clever beast, such as he undoubtedly was, would easily guess their object. And the miserable Blades writhed as he anticipated the new taunts and ribald witticisms which this incident would suggest to his tormentor.

For some time they waited in silence, listening eagerly, intently, for any sign of Harker. In the distance the big guns were booming, but the sound was too familiar to divert their attention, and, as it happened, the snipers were silent too. But it was in vain that they strained eye and ear.

Suddenly the ghastly brilliance of a star shell lit the field with a cold, blue light. Then indeed they saw only too plainly what they had been looking for.

Rather more than half way across the space between the opposite lines lay the little heap of dead or wounded to which Harker had called attention in the morning. Now, he had reached it and was in the act of stooping over one of the prostrate figures.

Instantly a regular fusillade started from the German trenches. The light died down just as he threw up one arm and rolled over.

"Got it in the neck, poor chap!" exclaimed Corporal Grays, who had been exposing his head with the same reprehensible rashness that he was always rebuking in the men.

"Here, what's up?" he went on, in a startled whisper, "Who the devil's that? Well, I'm—no, it can't be—yes, it is, it's that silly fool Twitchem suicidin' himself. Come back, do you hear, you juggins; you're not the sort to sprint under fire."

Another spurt of bullets made him duck his head into safety, but the next moment he and a dozen others were peering out again into the blackness. They could just see the dim outline of the heavy, stooping figure lurching forward at a shambling run.

The corporal dropped back with a grunt.

"That's just what *would* be the bally fool's idea of taking cover," he said. "All the same it's a sportin' thing to do, 'specially after the way he's been rotted. 'E wasn't a bad chap either—the best of the two I shouldn't wonder."

IV.

FOUR or five minutes later the Germans started firing quite heavily, and the corporal, who had been listening keenly all the time, called out: "There's some one coming our way very slowly. Look out—here he is."

Germans or no Germans, all the trench rose as Blades came crawling clumsily up to the edge on all fours, with Harker hanging across his back. They were in the trench in no time, with Corporal Grays's electric torch in use.

Harker, bareheaded, his face splashed with mud and very white where it was clean, looked pretty ghastly as he lay on his back with his head on a folded coat. He had one bullet in the shoulder and another in the knee.

Captain Prince, who was in command, came up and asked a question or two.

" 'Phone for the poultice chaps," he said,

"he can't lie there. How do you feel, my man?" he added, bending down.

Harker seemed a bit dazed at first, but he soon pulled himself together.

"I'll be all right, sir," he said, "as soon as the doctors have straightened me out."

The captain turned to Blades, who was standing straight up, staring at Harker, wi h a strange look on his face.

"I congratulate you, Private Blades," he said. "It was a very plucky thing to do. I shall see that it doesn't get overlooked. Are you all right?"

Blades saluted and nodded. It seemed as though he couldn't speak a word.

The young officer smiled and walked away.

Harker looked up at his rescuer.

"I'm glad of that, old chap," he said, "It was simply splendid of you. I swear I'll never chaff you again."

He meant to show gratitude, but he couldn't keep the note of conscious superiority out of his voice, though hardly any of the men standing by noticed it.

"It's like a blooming Sunday School book," one of them whispered to another. "I'll be blubbering in a minute."

But Blades looked like no Sunday School book hero. His face was horribly, atrociously contorted.

Twice his lips parted, but only a sort of growl came. Then he burst out, and his voice was worse than his twitching face.

"I d—d—don't think you will, you d—d—dirty c—c—c—carrion. I'd have l—l—let you r—r—r—rot out there till doomsday, only I m—m—meant you to owe your m—m—miserable l—life to me. You've p—p—played a p—pretty g—g—game with me, you b—b—brute, but I've won the r—r—r—rubber after all."

NIGHT SOUNDS

THERE clung a silence to the land,
Unbroken since the set of sun;
Then, from the garden, still and dun,
A cricket chirruped close at hand.

The moon rose great and slow and cold
Above the woodlands far away;
The shadows of her ghost of day
Were softly dark about the fold.

Then lowed the kine, as if in fear;
Slowly and mournfully they lowed,
Disconsolate. Far down the road
A shot, a cry! A man drew near.

Reeling, he labored toward the gate,
Then on the ancient door-step crashed;
Forth from the room a woman dashed,
To see the life-blood of her mate.

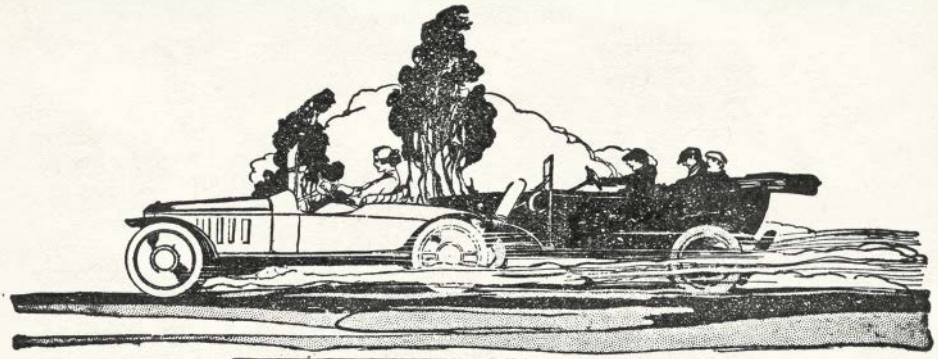
Above his silent breast she screamed.
His setter sprang against his chain,
As, shaft by shaft, beyond the grain
The battle's sudden search-lights gleamed.

Soon tumult wakened left and right,
As, to the roar of gun and shell,
The tempest of the man-made hell
Rushed flaming on the shattered night.

A moment, and the mourner lay
Dead by her dead. A little more,
And that red hurricane of war
Swept, trampling, on its human prey.

But though the loosened thunders wild
Sprang ceaseless from the battle-gloom,
A quiet breathing in the room
Told of the slumber of their child!

George Sterling.



N.Y. 1915 31754

by Lawrence Perry

A THREE-PART STORY—PART THREE.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS ALREADY PRINTED.

WHILE motoring with his friend, Arnold Nealis, a wealthy young clubman, Stewart Lansing, becomes interested in an auburn-haired young woman they meet on the road driving a swift roadster bearing the license number 31754. Later at the Army and Navy Club Lansing hears Griscom, a secret service man, speak of such a young woman as a possible spy for a foreign government. Happening to catch sight of the car again, he follows it out on Long Island to a road-house, which he finds is about to be raided by Griscom and his men.

Assuming a waiter's garb he contrives to get the girl away, and on the trip back to town learns that her name is Helen Granger. After an exciting fight with her friends, Count Apponnetti and Baron Rimini, Lansing goes to Newport to visit Nealis, whose father and mother are giving a dance to announce the engagement of their daughter Dorothy to Captain Granger of the army.

This proves to be none other than Helen's brother Jack. Helen herself is there, and Cupid is very busy, for she and Lansing become engaged. Then she tells him that she has agreed to pose for a motion-picture concern, with whom she has made a contract for $50,000, and must carry out an agreement to enact a spy at a fort in the harbor on the morrow.

Lansing pretends to believe all is right, but has reason to feel that it is not. So feigns a headache at the dance, and makes his way to a friend, Lieutenant-Commander Dart, at the military station on Goat Island, whom he enlists in his service. Meantime Helen, worried over Lansing, is told by Nealis, in a clumsy way, to help his friend out, that he is drunk, whereupon she asks her brother to take her at once back to the fort.

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO CAPTURES.

LANSING was awakened from a sound sleep shortly after eight o'clock and enjoyed a regulation breakfast, bacon, eggs and coffee, with Dart, his pretty young wife, and a boy of three.

Within half an hour the two were on their way to the submarine slips, bending their course to the X3, whose conical back and superstructure protruded from above the gray waves of the harbor. There was a mere plank for a gangway and Dart led the way over it.

On deck a seaman passed to each man a ball of cotton waste, something which never leaves a submarine officer's hand, because the steel walls of the craft, the doors and the companion ladder all sweat oil and at every touch the hands must be wiped dry.

Dart, nodding to Lansing, walked aft to

where the cover of a narrow, round hole stood open. Lansing followed the officers down a steep, break-neck iron ladder into a dark compartment lighted by electric glow lamps.

The air was sickishly heavy with the odor of oil and grease and cooking food. Lansing felt his temples pulse.

"This is the engine-room," said Dart, pausing to give the other time to reach his side.

"So I see." Lansing surveyed the place with interest. There were motors and mechanism of all sorts all about him and from the iron rafters hung several hammocks.

"I don't like your air overmuch," he remarked.

"It will prepare you for the air you get when the hatches are hermetically sealed and we submerge," was the off-hand reply.

"Ump!" was Lansing's sole reply as, bending low, he followed the officer under the network of overhead wires and among the jumble of levers toward a hole in the steel bulkhead which led to the central control station, where the chief engineer was already at his post.

"This is where we run the tub," explained Dart. "The periscope comes down there, right in front of the wheel. There'll just be room for you to squeeze in alongside of us, but you will have to keep pretty still."

After a short interchange of words with the engineer Dart escorted his guest through another hole into the torpedo-chamber, where he found the second in command, who has charge of a submarine's armament.

"So these are the things that do the business," observed Lansing, stroking the back of one of the deadly 'silver-fish,' as the Germans call their torpedoes.

"Those are the things," replied Dart.

Then they went farther forward to a place like a cupboard where the cook has just sufficient room to stand in front of his electric doll's-house galley stove. Forward of that were two little cabins, each of them about the size of a large clothes chest, cabins of the engine and deck officers, four men in all.

" Now," said Dart, " you have seen all. We'll go up and prepare to go under way." He glanced at his watch. "It's after nine o'clock already."

He went up the ladder to the deck and took his station on the bridge, Lansing at his side.

The crew of some thirty men were all at their various posts and from below, through a speaking tube, came a voice from the control station:

"Machines clear."

Lansing was alert with expectancy.

"Clear ship," snapped Dart.

"You see, Lansing," he said, following the movements of the men on deck, "I am going to run this ship myself to-day. Littleton, the commander, is on two days' leave. . . . Cast off, smartly."

The cables slapped on the landing stage, the engines beneath their feet began to purr and the X_3 backed swiftly out into the harbor.

It was a beautiful late August morning, and the sensation of traveling through the water so close to the waves, which, indeed, occasionally laved the feet of the men on the bridge, was a sensation delightfully new to Lansing.

"Better get all the ozone you can," smiled Dart, glancing to port, where the gray walls of Fort Adams appeared. "We're going to dip soon."

Lansing, in fact, had time only for a few lungfuls when Dart uttered a short, crisp command the exact terms of which his guest did not catch.

Instantly there came the notes of an electric alarm inside the steel shell and upon deck there was a scurrying of figures toward the after manhole. The forward motion of the vessel ceased and as the officer left the bridge a seaman hastily adjusted the cap.

In another minute Lansing was squeezed alongside Dart and the engineer on the control platform and Dart was pushing up the periscope. The engineer at a nod from the commander seized a lever which he pulled. Followed a gurgling sound, not so pleasant under the circumstances.

"We are letting the water into the tanks," explained Dart.

"Now we're sinking!" cried Lansing, whose emotions, as may be imagined, were at high pitch.

"Yes, we go down level," Dart said, "and then govern the upward or downward direction by our planes. You'll see."

The air was getting heavier and Lansing found it most oppressive, but was assured by the officer that he would speedily become accustomed to it.

"You see," Dart explained, "we are now living on the supply of oxygen from our tanks, and the boat is being driven by her Diesel motors instead of by gasoline."

"Yes." Lansing was marveling at the perfect efficiency of every factor in the conduct of the craft. There was a signal for everything, and upon prompt execution of the order might depend the safety of all on board.

Dart looked at the submersion gage, which indicated that a depth of twenty-five feet had been obtained, and thereupon signaled to shut off the inflow of water into the tanks. His gaze was constantly fixed upon the square of glass at the bottom of the periscope pipe, upon which the world above was portrayed just as it is when you look into the ground-glass of your camera; only, of course, every object was perfectly clear.

"Look," and Dart motioned Lansing to peer into the periscope.

The guest craned his neck sidewise and saw the harbor and its shores revealed in a perfect circle, with a clear view of the open water ahead occupying what may be termed the bull's-eye of the disk.

"I see," Lansing cried. "You get the central object right in the middle and all surrounding things are on the circumference of the circle. That is wonderful."

"Right," smiled Dart. "Now out of the way, please, unless you wish me to run you into the hull of a tug or a schooner, and carry away our periscope."

Lansing made way, and for a time there was silence.

"We are making around Whale Rock now," Dart reported at length, "and in about fifteen minutes we'll be off that point at Fort Preble where your moving picture stunt is going to be pulled off."

"If you see a girl on the premises anywhere, or a yacht in the water, that'll be the place," replied Lansing, who as a result of the novelty of this experience had well-nigh forgotten the primary object of the trip. "Can you see them yet?"

"Oh, no; we won't be up there, as I said, for fifteen minutes."

There was another long silence, broken finally by an exclamation from Dart.

"There!" he announced. "We'll float here; that is, lie dead in the water, and see what happens."

"Is there anything up there?" asked Lansing.

"Sure," Dart replied. "There's a big sea-going power-boat, with a moving picture camera aboard, and several men, about a quarter of a mile from us. The boat is about two hundred feet off shore, anchored, and there's your girl, lurking about behind a tree, with another camera grinding out pictures of her."

"Let me see." Lansing in his eagerness seized Dart by the shoulder, pushing him to one side, whereupon, remembering the perfect discipline aboard this boat, he drew back with a quick apology.

"That's perfectly all right," said the officer cheerfully. "I don't blame you under the circumstances. Here—" he moved over toward the chief engineer, "you get under the periscope. *You're* the really interested person. Report what goes on and tell me when you want action."

With a word of gratitude Lansing stepped to the periscope and beheld the wonderful spectacle of the world again opening before him.

In the center of the disk was a stanch power-yacht, whose lines suggested she could turn up a lot of speed, and beyond her were the green hills of Fort Preble, the rear slopes, punctuated by the disappearing-gun caverns and the barracks of the men.

He could see Helen plainly. She was moving cautiously toward one of the small buildings near an embrasure, and a man, evidently directing her movements, stood alongside the camera man, who in turn was busily manipulating his crank.

What would the next few minutes bring forth? Lansing's breath was coming in gasps; for many things would shortly be made clear to him.

For a brief moment his emotions, combined with the turgid atmosphere, made him dizzy. But he fought it off, keeping his eyes glued to the periscope glass.

"Now," he reported, "Miss Granger is being coached by a man who was with the camera chap. . . . She has left him and is sneaking toward one of the buildings in the fort embankment. The camera is moving up, too. . . . Now the camera man and the other fellow, the director, are running toward the shore, and a boat has put in from the power-yacht. . . .

"Helen doesn't notice this. . . . They have set the camera up on the sea-wall and the boat is nearly in. . . . She has turned now and starts to come back toward the

camera, but the director waves her away. . . . She goes back.

"Now an officer, Captain Granger, runs out of the building and hands her a packet. . . . She starts to run toward the sea-wall. . . . The camera man and the director have climbed into the boat and are pushing off to the yacht. . . . Nobody is taking any pictures now. . . .

"Jove! A group of soldiers, movie soldiers I guess, are chasing her and shooting. She runs to the wall, places the packet in her mouth, and jumps into the water. . . . Gee! Watch her swim. . . . Dart, now is the time! Come on up! Don't let her get into that boat, for the love of Heaven!"

A signal clanged through the submarine. Dart pulled a lever and a rushing sound was heard as the water was expelled from the tanks. Up came the gray craft like a cork and in a minute her gray, conical deck protruded above the surface.

Leaving the engineer on the control station, Dart beckoned to Lansing and crept through the manhole into the engine-room and thence up the iron ladder to the deck cap, the cover of which had been removed by a seaman.

Followed by Lansing and drawing an automatic revolver from his pocket, Dart ran to the bridge, while the seaman, who had preceded the pair, rigged a machine-gun which had been sealed under a hood on the forward deck.

Through his binoculars Lansing could see a commotion on the yacht. Every face was turned toward the submarine and all of them wore a startled expression. Then the boat which had been towing astern of the yacht was hastily hauled under the counters and two men dropped into it.

Dart picked up a megaphone.

"Stop that boat, do you hear!" He raised his weapon and fired several rapid shots at the two men, who scrambled back to the deck of the yacht.

In the meantime the submarine was heading in toward the girl and the yacht, now that the men had been frightened out of their attempt to reach Helen by row-boat, was makng headway toward her. And the yacht was much nearer the young woman than was the war vessel.

"Don't let them beat us!" Lansing was dancing up and down in his excitement. "If they get to her they'll take the papers and leave her in the water."

"She's as swift as we are," declared Dart, his eyes glittering toward the graceful, clean-lined yacht. "Ryan," he added crisply, addressing the seaman, "do you think you could put that craft on the bottom with a shell or two?"

Ryan's eyes glistened.

"All right, then do it," ordered Dart.

With deft speed the seaman opened a little steel-bound chest and took out a gleaming shell which he thrust into the breach, inserting another in a slim, pocket-shaped arrangement beneath the breech.

"Let one drive across her bows," Dart commanded, "and see if that does anything."

Upon his words came a quick, sharp report, the staccato echoes reverberating against the green hills of the fort. A column of water arose about ten feet in front of the yacht, which, however, did not slacken speed, but continued to tear toward the girl whose shining hair was still bobbing up and down perhaps a hundred yards from the yacht.

Dart watched the yacht, and as the spray still curled up on either side of her bows he turned to the gunner.

"Wing her this time, Ryan. Don't miss."

"Aye, aye, sir!" The man bent over the gun, stepped back and snatched at the trigger. Again came the shattering report, but this time no column of water arose. Instead from the waterline of the vessel, fair amidships, came an answering detonation and a great black gash opened in the white hull.

In another instant the yacht was half on her side, the water running over the inclined deck and the occupants leaping into the sea, those who could swim striking out for the rowboat, others clinging to pieces of wood torn from the doomed vessel.

On swept the submarine without paying any attention to the foundering yacht; for Miss Granger was giving signs of weakness and was calling for assistance. As the war vessel neared her she had turned on her back and was floating, her strength for swimming having been exhausted.

Lansing was the first to reach her as the submarine, turning in, ranged alongside. Seizing her under the arms he drew her to the deck, where she raised herself to a half-inclined position, breathing heavily.

Presently she opened her eyes and saw Lansing looking down at her, his arms supporting her.

"You!" A faint color came into her cheeks. "Have you recovered from your headache?"

Lansing did not reply. He glanced around and saw that the submarine was making for the figures struggling in the water, the machine-gun, pointed at the row-boat, holding it to a standstill.

"I want you to go below at once, Helen," Lansing directed. "Give me those papers."

She handed them to him with a smile.

"Wasn't it realistic," she said. "But I had no idea the Navy was to participate."

"Dart," Lansing called, "will you let me take Miss Granger below now."

"Sure," Dart nodded toward the man-hole and Lansing, half-dragging the girl to her feet, tossed the packet to the officer and conducted Helen to the steep companion ladder.

"I'll hold on to your arms," he said. "Now hurry, please."

She obeyed him without a word, and once she was in the oily depths Lansing clambered down and joined her.

"Now, Stewart," the girl said, "I ought to be angry at you, and I am, but I now begin to suspect—what a queer, smelly boat—I begin to suspect there was a method in your deceit; that you had a scheme to make these pictures more successful."

Lansing tossed his head.

"Helen," he replied, "I have pulled you out of a nasty mess, but you're not out of danger by a good margin. You think this was a movie play you were in. It wasn't; it was the most villainous plot to steal important papers from the government that was ever concocted."

She started.

"Yes," he went on. "You were tricked into thinking you were in a moving picture play, but it was only a stall to get you to induce your brother to steal papers from the fort—"

"Stewart Lansing!"

"It's so. I can't tell you anything more now; but what I've said is enough. I don't know where your brother stands in all this, but I believe in you, and I'm going to clear you. I kidnaped Clarkin—"

"Mr. Clarkin of the Mammoth Film Company!" she cried.

"Clarkin of the United States Secret Service," returned Lansing. "He was watching this plot all the time, and had I not got him out of the way, you would be in his clutches now, with a slim chance of clearing yourself."

"You amaze me, Stewart," gasped the girl. "Are you certain you know what you are talking about?"

"Wait and see," Lansing replied. "Now you stay here; I'm going up on deck."

He left her leaning against one of the network of pipes and clambered up the ladder to the deck.

The submarine was now among the ship-wrecked group and seamen were pulling one after another of the men from the water. As the two occupants of the row-boat were taken in, a swift mahogany launch, filled with men, came dashing up to the scene.

"We are Secret Service men," cried a sturdy fellow, arising in the boat as it came alongside and displaying a shield.

"All right," called Dart. "Steer into the fort landing; we're all going in there."

And now the clatter of a swiftly turning motor came from the direction of Fort Adams, and Dart and Lansing saw one of the speedy naval launches tearing toward them. As it drew nearer Dart recognized an officer, with Clarkin standing at his side.

The boat swerved into the submarine and came to an abrupt halt alongside. Clarkin leaped aboard, glaring at Dart and Lansing.

"Where are those papers?" he cried.

He looked uncertainly at Lansing, puzzled to explain whether his arrest at the instance of Lansing and Dart the evening before had been due to a misunderstanding or design. Certainly the scene which he had seen enacted as he came down the harbor suggested that Lansing had only the interest of the government at heart.

"Those papers!" He stamped the deck, glowering at Dart.

"Easy there," Dart replied, flushing irritably. "Hold a civil tongue, my man, or I'll put you into the harbor."

He glanced at Lansing. "Does he get the papers?"

Lansing hesitated.

"Clarkin," he said, "I begin to believe now that you are really a Secret Service man, and not one of this crowd. Dart and I have the right to these papers and have the right, also, to wind up this whole affair. That destroys some of your credit, eh?"

"Well, you can have it all on one condition. Miss Granger entered into this thing with a complete misunderstanding of every essential detail. She thought she was in a

moving picture play, pure and simple, as you must know, if you have any brains. You get the papers and Dart the credit of assisting you in your plan to foil the spies, provided Miss Granger is not brought into the thing. Agreed?"

A light passed swiftly over Clarkin's face.

"Sure, it's agreed," he nodded. "Now those papers."

Dart reached into his pocket and tossed them into the man's hands.

"I haven't looked into them," he said, "but we'll have that opportunity when we get ashore at the fort. Now if you all are ready we'll go in."

The Secret Service men nodded and looking at them more closely, Lansing recognized Griscom.

"Hello, Griscom!" he grinned. "Some climax."

The detective nodded and smiled and then ordered his boat to the fort in the wake of the submarine. Clarkin turned and signaled to the petty officer in the navy launch to follow also, and then seating himself on the deck greedily ripped open the packet and began to study the various documents inside.

"It's all right, Griscom," he finally called to the Secret Service launch. "Everything's here. We'll read them in the commandant's office."

Griscom, who had arrived at Newport on the General at six o'clock in the morning, and was therefore willing to allow his subordinate to clean up, nodded and smiled.

"You keep hold of them, Clarkin. It was good work—fine."

The little flotilla of craft swept in toward the fort, a detail of submarine sailors guarding the captives, among whom were included, as Lansing saw, the professional appearing man, whom Miss Granger had designated as Damon Beal, the film company president. Besides there were a number of foreign looking men, at some of whom Griscom was gazing with itching fingers. It appeared to him as though a round-up of practically every person who had given his department trouble in the past six months had been consummated.

As the submarine approached the fort slips Captain Granger came running down to meet the newcomers. His face was white as chalk and he was gesticulating wildly.

"Did you get those papers?" he called.

"Yes!" Dart indicated Clarkin, who had remained in the background.

"Thank God!" The officer stopped short, breathing heavily, waiting for the submarine to make her landing.

A plank was thrown aboard the war vessel by one of several soldiers loitering about the slips, and the prisoners were led ashore, each escorted by a jackie with a revolver in hand.

"We'll go right up to Colonel Atwater's office," said Griscom, coming forward and taking charge. "Come on, Clarkin."

Clarkin, who had remained to see that the navy launch was made fast, nodded his head.

"I'll be right along," he said.

And so the little procession, brought up in the rear by Helen Granger, clad in a heavy blue sweater of the engineers, walked up the slope toward the commandant's offices.

Atwater, the colonel of the fort, was a heavy-set, grizzled warrior, approaching sixty, who viewed the entrance of the crowd into his office with an inquiring lift of his beetling brows. As the party grouped themselves about the desk, the prisoners being huddled in a corner with their sailor guards, Captain Granger stepped forward.

"Colonel Atwater, I have an explanation to make which I think should come first," he began. "I—"

Here his sister interposed.

"No, colonel, I think I should speak."

"Let the girl speak," Griscom said, nodding at the colonel, with whom he was well acquainted.

The officer signified assent by turning to the girl.

"Colonel," she began, "in order to make up some of my mother's losses through stock-market conditions I accepted a contract with a moving picture concern, the Mammoth Film Company, to appear in a play called 'The Beautiful Spy.'"

"It was well named, if you were the spy," chuckled the old officer, who had early fallen a prey to Helen's attractions.

She blushed and went on.

"The main part of the picture, that in which I was to play a principal part, related to my taking plans of some sort from an officer of this fort and leaping into the water with them. My brother was an officer here and I naturally asked him to assist me by handing me the papers. In fact, the play required that a real officer do it, so that everything should be realistic."

She paused a moment, then continued.

"Jack agreed to help me, and this morning he did help me. Immediately occurred the wildest excitement. Our moving picture yacht was sunk by a submarine—and—and I'm sure I don't know why."

"Now may I speak?" her brother asked, and then went on: "I, of course, agreed to help Helen out and this morning I placed the packet, nothing but old maps of Rhode Island, upon my desk. When the time came I ran out of my office and gave them to her. When I heard the firing and saw the submarine sink the yacht I became suspicious and ran to my safe. It seemed all right, but when I looked inside there was nothing but a dummy package there. Someone had switched the papers for the play and the papers I really gave my sister," his voice rose, "were plans of our coast defenses lying between Provincetown and New London."

"That was done, captain," interposed the quiet voice of Griscom, "because, as you know, every person but the officers are searched before being permitted to leave this reservation. That was the understanding, wasn't it, colonel?"

"And it was so carried out," puffed Colonel Atwater.

"Of course," went on Granger, "and the papers were switched so that I might be the instrument of getting them out of here without detection."

"I think I can clear any suspicion of Captain Granger," said Griscom, "and of his sister's innocence we made no doubt."

"Good!" cried Lansing. "Now I wish Colonel Atwater to know that this capture was brought about, mainly through the initiative of Lieutenant Commander Dart, acting in conjunction with the Secret Service."

"Very good," replied the colonel. "Griscom and I shall arrange so to report the matter. I'm indebted to you, Dart. Well, now for the papers. Let us see if we really have them."

"Clarkin!" Griscom looked about, but there was no response to his call. "Clarkin!"

"Where's Clarkin?" Griscom's voice rose.

"He told me," said a Secret Service man, "that he had a clue as to the fellow who had switched the papers. He went toward the barracks, saying he was after an enlisted man."

"I see. Well, we can wait."

"Do you mind, colonel," asked Helen, "if I go to the house and get on some dry clothes?"

The colonel signifying assent, the girl slipped out at the door, telling Lansing that she would return in a few minutes. As she walked down the steps she saw Clarkin bending over the swift launch at the seawall.

"Mr. Clarkin!" she called and ran down the slope to him.

He looked up, frowning. The engine was turning, the boat pulling at her mooring.

"They want you at the colonel's office, Mr. Clarkin," she said.

He straightened up without reply.

Suddenly he seized her by the throat, tumbled her into the boat, leaped in, and in another second was speeding out into the harbor like a bolt from a gun.

CHAPTER XV.

TREACHERY AND WORK.

AFTER ten minutes of waiting Colonel Atwater grew impatient and, summoning his orderly, told him to go through the barracks and find Clarkin.

"Your man may know his business, Griscom," the colonel said, "but it would appear to me that we should settle about the theft of those papers."

Griscom nodded and said that Clarkin was sometimes too enthusiastic.

"However, I thought I ought to let him have his head since he had done most of the work up here," he added. "He'll be here in a minute, no doubt, and, if I know him, he'll have the enlisted man who switched those papers on Captain Granger."

Fifteen minutes passed and Colonel Atwater was struggling to his feet when the orderly arrived with word that Clarkin had not been seen in the barracks. The orderly then hesitated and the colonel seeing it, gruffly ordered him to speak on.

"A couple of soldiers, sir, said they saw a man in civilian clothes leaving in one of the motor-boats. There was a woman lying in the bottom of the boat, sir."

"Eh!" Griscom sprang to the fellow, confronting him aggressively. "What was that you said?"

The orderly repeated his statement, adding that as the soldiers were all the time "kidding" him, he did not know what truth there was in it.

The secret service men began to sift out of the room and Atwater turned to Griscom, who had reached the door.

"This sounds queer, Griscom. Orderly, show these sailors the way to the guard-house. Tell Captain O'Loughlin to lock up the prisoners and have double guards stationed outside."

He then followed the detectives and the others down to the landing, where he beckoned to several soldiers loitering on one of the parapets.

"Are you the men who saw some one leave in a motor-boat?" he demanded. As the men saluted and replied in the affirmative, Griscom went up to them.

"Can you describe the man?"

"No, sir," replied one of the soldiers. "We were not noticing particularly. He seemed a rather, short, thin fellow, but that's all I can remember about him."

"You say there was a woman in the boat?" snapped Captain Granger.

"There was something that looked like a woman lying down, sir; at least we could see a dress."

"Was there no soldier on the landing?"

"No, sir, the sentry was at the other end of his post; he's just coming back to the landing now, sir."

The soldier pointed to a khaki clad figure with gun on shoulder walking along the edge of the sea-wall.

A sharp exclamation came from Captain Granger's lips. As every one turned to him he stood for a moment, immobile as a statue. At length his lips moved.

"Helen!" he said at length.

"Helen!" Lansing's eager voice chimed in. "Where is your house, Granger?"

At the moment a matronly woman appeared from the fort walking down the brick pathway toward the officers' club.

"My mother," Granger cried and ran toward her, gesturing and calling.

She paused surprisedly, awaiting her son. The group saw him speak to her and then turn away with a completely altered manner.

"Helen," he said, as he rejoined the men, "has not been to the house at all."

"Not been to the house!" Griscom's thin lips pursed. Then he glanced at Lansing.

"Lansing," he said, "this looks bad, very bad."

"Does it?" exclaimed Lansing angrily, while the hand of the captain went to the young man's shoulder, as though for support. "Does it, Griscom? Well, before you come to any conclusions in that regard, how about your trusted lieutenant, Clarkin? Eh—" as Griscom started. "How about your man, Clarkin?"

"My God!" Griscom started back, his face working.

"Sure," cried Lansing, keen to deliver a blow to the man who had stabbed him by breathing renewed suspicion of the girl, suspicion, which he was irritably aware was justified, and also suspicion which he was trying his best to fight out of his own mind. "Where is Clarkin of the government service?"

He turned to Colonel Atwater.

"That was not such a bad description of the man your soldiers gave. And you recall, Dart, how anxious he was to have the papers delivered into his possession at once."

Griscom's eyes were burning. His fingers were working convulsively, for, of all men in his employ, Clarkin was one of those whom he most trusted.

"Why, the other night at the Nealis dance, where he was disguised as a waiter," Lansing went on, "he came to me and warned me to keep away from that girl because she was a spy. Why did he do that? Why, because he wanted me to have nothing to do with her—a grand-stand play, so that he could carry out his own plans concerning her."

"Well," snapped Griscom, "he seems to have succeeded with the girl."

"And with the papers, which Dart and I captured for you; you with your bungling are responsible for their loss."

"What do you mean, sir!" Griscom resembled an angry snake about to strike and Lansing showed no inclination to evade his fangs. In fact he was pressing forward when Colonel Atwater placed his burly frame between the two angry men.

"Now, now, gentlemen," he growled, "this personality business has gone far enough. The important matter that concerns us is that a supposed secret service man, having obtained possession of valuable papers, has made off with them, accompanied by a beautiful girl, whom I cannot believe was a willing confederate."

"Thank you, Colonel Atwater," cried Granger.

"Griscom," said Lansing, "I am sorry if I made you angry through my heated remarks. You are right, of course, in suspect-

ing Miss Granger, but I believe we will find she is not involved with Clarkin. At all events, we know she did not have the papers, and that Clarkin did."

Despite his words Lansing was sorely stricken. The disappearance of his fiancée did not fit in with any explanation that he could conjure up, and look at it from whatever angle he might she did not appear in an enviable light.

"I believed in Clarkin," mourned Griscom. "He fooled me. I thought we had rooted out the last rat in the service, but it appears not."

Then he straightened. "But he is not out of Newport yet. Come on, men."

"He might be on his way to Fall River by motor," Lansing suggested.

"Oh, I know this country," Griscom replied. "Into the boat, men."

But investigation showed that Clarkin had taken the swift launch in which the secret service men had arrived upon the scene, leaving the Navy launch, in which Clarkin had left the Navy Yard. The petty officer who had been in charge of this craft had gone up to the barracks to see a friend and he arrived when the discovery of the missing launch was made.

"Berry," said Dart, "how did you get that man for a passenger this morning?"

"Captain Graham sent for me to come to his quarters," was the reply, "and that detective was there with him. He ordered me to take him to Fort Preble as swiftly as possible."

"I guess he impressed the commandant with a clean bill of health," chuckled Dart, who of all the men was the only one who viewed Clarkin's recent behavior with some degree of relief.

This because he would have found himself in trouble had he really been responsible for the incarceration of a secret service agent.

"Well," the colonel turned away, "I guess the situation is pretty much where it was—"

"Except," interrupted Griscom, "that you have locked up in the guard house the prettiest collection of spies that was ever taken in one haul. Keep them tight, Colonel, and I'll settle with Clarkin, and have those plans back—I stake my reputation on it."

"All right. Captain Granger, I suppose you'll be unfit for your duty until you know about your sister. Go ahead with the men."

"Thank you." Granger turned and accompanied Dart and Lansing to the submarine, while all who could piled into the Navy launch.

Two of the detectives were ordered by Griscom to remain at the fort and thus the two parties ran out past Whale Rock and thence into Newport Harbor. At the New York Yacht Club station the launch put in short and then returning to the submarine took aboard those who wished to leave it—in other words, Lansing, Griscom and Granger.

"I'm much obliged to you, Dart," Lansing called back. "You did a lot for me to-day and I won't forget it."

Dart laughed.

"Well," he said, "we had an exciting morning—and now I'm going back to sneer at Atwater. It'll teach him to hold my prisoners in jail until he can talk to me about it."

The submarine turned her gray bow towards Goat Island and the launch put in to the yacht club landing.

Griscom held a whispered conversation with several of his men and watched them until they hurried away. Then he turned to Lansing.

"Lansing," he said, "I'll admit this to you: I was never so completely stumped in my life. To find that Clarkin was one of this crowd is the worst jolt I have got in a long career filled with jolts. The fool! He was bought sure. I knew him when he first entered the service from the police department in Toledo. He was straight then. I depended upon him a lot in this case."

"I can imagine how you feel," Lansing answered, closing his eyes wearily. "You must know the position I'm in, Griscom."

"And I," Granger chimed in.

"I sympathize with you both," said Griscom. "But that isn't getting us anywhere. Now, to be frank, when I wish to think out a problem I like to be alone. There is no use running around wild.

"My men have notified every point that Clarkin and the girl could get to. Fall River will be covered by this time and Bristol and Providence, as well as the Jamestown Ferry and the Wickford Landing boat, General. I am going up to the Aquidneck and close my eyes for a while."

"And I," replied Lansing, "don't know what I'm going to do. But I do know that I'll not close my eyes until I locate Helen Granger."

This sentiment her brother eagerly seconded. Griscom nodded, and wished them luck.

"I'll leave word at the Nealis place where I can be reached if you should want me," he said, and with a wave of his hand, summoned a hack and drove away toward Thames street.

Lansing turned to glance at his companion, who shook his head gloomily.

"I don't understand it at all, Lansing," Graham said. "Helen is one of God's own creatures. I didn't dare tell mother what had happened."

"We'll get her somehow, some way," returned Lansing reassuringly. "The gods of chance have been playing for me all through this affair and they're not going to desert me now; I feel it "

Lansing called a taxi and ordered the driver to take them to the Nealis home, his first desire being to change his evening clothes and have a bath.

"My head never works well," he informed Granger, "until the shock of cold water starts me going."

Granger wanted to see Dorothy Nealis and, in fact, it was she who met them at the door as the cab rolled in under the *porte cochère.*

"John," she cried, "where have you been? And you, Stewart?"

"We've just come over from the fort," Granger replied, and then stopped short as he saw the perturbed look in her face. "What's the matter, Dorothy?"

"The matter! Then you haven't heard? Helen is in the City Hospital—"

"The hospital!" Lansing swiftly turned toward the cab which was leaving. "Here you, wait a minute! The hospital! Is she —is she hurt?"

"Oh, I don't know," the girl replied. "Not seriously, I think. The hospital people telephoned us and said Miss Granger had just been admitted; she was brought there in an ambulance and when she recovered consciousness gave our address. Arnold, who had overslept, as usual, went right down in his motor. He just telephoned he was bringing Helen here."

"Then she cannot be badly hurt," Granger flushed with relief.

"I know nothing," Dorothy replied. "I hope you are right."

"I'll go and meet him." Lansing had a foot in the cab when a gesture of the girl's made him pause.

"You had better stay right here," she advised. "You might miss Arnold, you know."

Lansing nodded and dismissed the cab.

"You're right," he said. The three paced up and down the veranda for five minutes when the sound of wheels came to them and Lansing, exclaiming eagerly, leaped over the railing and hurried down the driveway.

It was Nealis's car sure enough, but at the wheel sat a policeman in uniform. He stopped before reaching the *porte cochère* and looked down at Lansing.

"Does any one here own this car?" he inquired.

Lansing, his eyes blazing, did not stop to answer the question.

"Where did you get that automobile?" he snapped, "and where are the people who were in it? Answer me, officer; don't sit there like a gook. Where are the people who were in it?"

The policeman shook his head in a dazed way.

"Why don't you answer him, officer?" asked Captain Granger, the sight of whose uniform served to restore the man's lost faculties of speech.

"Why, sir;" he said, "our traffic man found the car standing alone at the corner of Pelham and State Streets. There was no one in it at all, and after looking to see if some one might come, the officer drove it around to the station-house. It was on the wrong side of the street. We looked up the records and found that Mr. Nealis owned it."

"Yes," Lansing cried. "Mr. Nealis was driving a young woman home from the hospital; she had been injured slightly—"

"You mean the girl that was found unconscious in a motor-boat?" asked the policeman. "One of our precinct men got her at Champion's wharf; the boat lay there with the girl in the bottom; some one had given her a belt on the jaw, and she was out for fair. I heard the report when the cop brought her around in the ambulance."

Miss Nealis began tottering and Granger caught her.

"This is a rotten mess, Lansing," he said. "Some one had a reason for getting hold of my sister. What is it? And now Nealis, too!"

Lansing, whose eyes were shooting sparks, ran into the house, where he first rang up the hospital, found that Nealis had been there and got Helen, then called up Griscom at the Aquidneck. This last de-

velopment raised him to a pitch of fighting rage.

Griscom's voice came to him over the wire. He had not taken his interrupted nap kindly and was irritable.

"Listen, and don't be more of an ass than you can help, Griscom," barked Lansing. "Miss Granger was left in the motor-boat by Clarkin, where she was picked up by a Newport policeman and taken to the City Hospital. The hospital people phoned around to the Nealis house where I am staying, as you know, and informed the family that she was there and had named the Nealis address—

"Wait a minute, will you—then you'll have it all. That is you'll have all that I know. Arnold Nealis went around in his car to get her and did get her. He was on his way back. The next we know a policeman drives around with the car; he found it empty on Pelham Street. Now what do you make of that?"

"There must be a reason why some one, besides Clarkin, wanted the girl," replied Griscom.

"Why?" shouted Lansing.

"Well, I think I can tell you that. Miss Granger, in her arrangement with these alleged moving picture people, has visited certain places here and in New York that must be stocked with certain valuable data that we should very much like to get our hands on. We have most of the crowd as prisoners over at the fort, but there are still two or three loose, especially Count Apponnetti—"

"Apponnetti!"

Lansing's voice rose. "Apponneti! I had forgotten about that slimy rascal."

"Well, he hasn't forgotten about us," replied Griscom. "And he probably has the best reasons in the world for getting hold of Miss Granger and keeping hold of her. In the light of all that has happened she knows too much about him for his own comfort; at least I imagine she's a bright enough young lady to put two and two together."

"By Jove!" Lansing's breath came in a whistle. "So you think he is at the bottom of this new phase of things?"

"I'll gamble on it," was the reply. "But in the meantime I can tell you that the news, so far as I am concerned is good. The crowd is still in Newport."

"I know, but what about the girl? Can you dig up any idea of where she is now?"

Lansing paused. "And Nealis, too. Why did they kidnap him?"

"They had to take him to get the girl," was the reply. "I suppose they imposed upon him with some cock and bull yarn, just as they did the girl." Griscom's voice was calm and even.

"What will probably happen within the next half hour," he went on, "will be that you'll hear of your friend being found behind some nice green hedge with a dent in his head, even assuming his throat has not been cut."

"Holy Caesar!" Lansing's breath caught. "And you—"

"I can say nothing now," was the reply. "But I want you to do this: I want you to stay where you are until I come for you. I want you where I can lay hands on you; for my friend, I need a fighting man such as you, in my business."

Griscom rang off before Lansing could reply. Stewart then went out to the veranda, and told Dorothy as much concerning her brother as he thought wise for her to know. Drawing Granger to one side, he related in substance the essence of his conversation with Griscom.

"He seems to know more than he will tell over the telephone," Lansing added, "and I'm going to wait here for him. I suggest you do the same. We can gain nothing by rushing around headlessly."

Granger agreed with him, and with haggard face turned to his fiancée.

Lansing had not long to ponder upon the wisdom of Griscom's remarks, for at least one of his statements was proven with a conclusiveness that was startling.

Hodge-Martin, of the British Legation, summering at Newport, appeared in his low gray car as Granger and Miss Nealis passed into the house. Beside him on the seat slouched the pallid figure of Arnold Nealis. There was blood upon his shirt and his light summer coat, and he slumped from side to side with the movements of the car, as though not under full control of his faculties.

"Hello, Lansing," cried the Englishman. "My word, I was driving around from Eastern Point when I saw this dejected figure propped up against a telegraph pole. I guess our good friend was chucked from a racing car. I can't get anything out of him, don't you know. I fancy you had better call a physician."

"I fancy so, too," Lansing replied grim-

ly, hurrying down to the car and assisting the young diplomat in his task of getting the heavy form to the veranda.

Nealis was conscious, but seemed dazed, as though suffering from aphasia.

"Stew, old boy," he muttered, "that was a nasty wallop."

He groaned, and, leaning upon his friend's shoulder, tottered toward the house, Hodge-Martin assisting him from behind.

Dorothy met the party at the door and, womanlike, rose to the emergency like the little sport she was.

"I always knew Arn would be thrown from his car some day," she declared. "Batters," she added, addressing a footman, "telephone for Dr. Abbott."

As the functionary hurried away Nealis was helped up the stairs to his room, where his man prepared him for bed.

Evidently he was feeling better as a result of a hook of brandy which Lansing had pressed to his lips, for some color returned to his usually florid face. But he seemed to have lost control of sequential powers of thought or speech.

Dr. Abbott happened to be in his office and ran around in a jiffy to prod Nealis and feel of his head. At length he looked up with a smile.

"Luckily," he asserted, "our fat speed merchant got off with a jolt under the ear, which does not appear to have fractured his skull, although we can tell better about that later. You have given him some brandy? Good. There's nothing left but to keep him quiet. If he develops any fever call me at once, Miss Nealis; otherwise there is no need to worry."

As the physician left the room Nealis suddenly raised up from the pillow, his eyes staring.

"Stew! Stew!" he cried. "My God, man! Get Helen Granger away—away from those men! They are going to murd—"

His voice failed and he sank back unconscious.

CHATER XVI.

IN THE TOILS.

HELEN GRANGER'S surprise was so great when Clarkin seized her that even were his fingers not shutting off her breath she would have been unable to cry out. The combined shock and the pressure on her throat caused her to relapse into temporary unconsciousness, seeing which the man let her lie still and gave all his attention to the boat.

When within a few minutes Helen recovered her faculties, she lay quiet, trying to decide what to do. Ahead of her she could see the fighting tops of a battleship, and as the boat drew near she suddenly sat upright and screamed.

A blow from Clarkin, quickly and savagely delivered, sent the girl to the bottom of the boat completely insensible.

After that she remembered nothing until she felt a dash of cold water on her face and saw a policeman bending over her.

"What's the matter, miss.? Is it an accident ye've had?" he asked. "Now never mind"— as she tried to answer and failed— "there'll be an ambulance here in a minute and everything will be all right. Don't try to talk."

She did not try. Effort at speech was painful and her brain was buzzing so that it was a relief to close her eyes and rest her head on the big offcer's arm. It was not long before an ambulance came clattering down to the wharf from Thames Street and the surgeon, a boyish young chap, after feeling of her jaw and the bump on the back of her head, turned to the policeman.

"It's a police case, Larkin," he announced as he and the driver lifted the girl into the vehicle. "Assault and battery, plain as day. Better come up to the hospital with me and get her name and address. I don't want to have her searched here, because she's the real thing."

The young physician glanced at the gathering crowd.

"All right." The policeman hopped on the rear and the ambulance hurried to the hospital. Here Helen was taken into the reception room, where she revived so rapidly under the ministrations of one of the house staff that she was soon able to talk freely.

The policeman, Larkin, had summoned a detective from the precinct house on the adjoining block, and it was he who first questioned the girl. She gave her name, told who she was and then related in general detail the events which had led up to her departure from Fort Preble.

"I am a close friend of the Nealises at Laurelwood," she added, "and if you will call Miss Dorothy Nealis on the telephone I am sure she will send a motor for me."

The detective turned inquiringly to the physician, who nodded, saying that the girl was in condition to leave.

"I feared a fracture at the base of the skull," he added, "but she showed none of the pathological symptoms of such injury." A nurse gave the girl a cup of hot milk and a clerk telephoned to the Nealis home, bringing back word that Arnold Nealis would leave for her in an automobile at once.

While waiting Helen sat talking with the detective, who, by the way, knew of the activities of the secret service men about Newport and was gathering information from Miss Granger with the idea of turning it over to Griscom, the latter being at all times in touch with the local police.

As the detective completed his inquiries there was a commotion in the office and the sound of a smooth, unctuous voice which Helen recognized at once. She flushed and then her eyes grew stern.

The next instant Count Apponnetti rushed into the reception-room.

"Helen, my dear girl, what are you doing here?" he cried.

"What are you doing here?" she countered. "I understood you were going on to Washington."

"I was obliged to come to Newport, and I came to the hospital to visit a friend who is ill, when I heard your name mentioned as having been injured. I am so pleased to knew that it is not serious. Now come, I'll take you away from here at once."

The girl shivered and her tone was one of scorn and anger combined.

"I don't know how long you imagine it takes a fool to wake up," she cried.

She then noticed that the physician and attendants were regarding the two curiously, so she bit her tongue and ceased talking.

Apponnetti laughed easily.

"Of course, of course," he murmured. "That is a matter to be perfectly understood by both of us. Come, I'll order a cab."

"Not for me," the girl rejoined. "I am waiting for Mr. Nealis, who is coming in his car. He will take me to his home and his sister. The advice I give to you is to employ your cab in leaving Newport at once."

"So!" Apponnetti gazed at her, still smiling. "So you will go to Mr. Nealis's home. It is very well. You will do better there. I have the honor, my girl, to bid you adieu."

He faced about with his mincing military manner and strode hastily out of the door without once glancing behind him.

"A rather interesting man," the house physician remarked, gazing curiously at Helen, wondering whether to order the fellow detained. "Do you wish him not to leave the hospital?" He moved toward a push bell.

"Oh, no!" Helen raised her hand. "By no means; let him go. It is better. He is a relative of my mother's, by marriage, but I have no regard for him."

"Do you connect him in any way with—with your accident?" inquired the doctor. "In that event perhaps it would be wise for us to make some move."

But the girl shook her head, saying that he had had nothing whatever to do with her being injured, and adding that she had given the complete details of that incident to the detective.

"My dislike," she said, "is personal."

Five minutes later Nealis arrived, his round face wreathed with excitement.

"Thank Heaven you're all right, Miss Helen," he exclaimed. "When we got word we didn't know what had happened. Were you struck by a car?"

"I'll explain it all as we go home," the girl returned. "If you don't mind, I think I shall have to lean a bit heavily upon your arm."

"Lean as heavily as you wish," boomed Nealis. "It can't come too strong for me. That's right. Now we'll be in the machine in a jiffy and Dorothy will be waiting to make you comfortable."

Helen, however, found that she was stronger than she thought and was able to make her way out of the hospital to the automobile without putting too great tax upon her escort. He placed her on the seat, jumped in beside her, adjusted the self-starter and they were off.

Turning into State Street Nealis guided the car at a fair rate of speed along the car tracks until, as he came to the bad crossing at Pelham Street he slowed down.

"This," he explained, "is the street used by most of the traffic coming down to Thames Street from Bellevue Avenue, and you have to be careful. Usually they have a colored traffic cop here. I don't know where he can be now. He is usually on the job. You ought to see him, he's the most—"

What more he would have said was interrupted by two men, who ran out from be-

hind the iron fence which bounds the church on one of the corners. In the middle distance a motor vehicle, which appeared to be a cab had halted, and one of the occupants was looking back.

One of the two men who were approaching Nealis's car was a burly ill-favored fellow, but the other was cleaner cut and suggested what he soon claimed to be, a detective.

"So, Mr. Nealis," he said, "you have been burning up the asphalt again. You were warned here early in the summer. Now you are going to take a ride around to the station-house."

Nealis flushed guiltily for a moment and sat motionless watching the speaker, who had come to the side of the car, displaying a badge. It was not until Helen nudged him and spoke that the young man's wits returned.

"You were not going fast at all, Mr. Nealis," she cried indignantly. "You were, in fact, driving with special care because, as you said, you did not wish to shake me up."

Nealis exploded angrily.

"That's right, officer; that's perfectly true. Why, I wasn't going more than twelve miles an hour at any time. You must be crazy. What's eating you, anyway?"

"Nothing's eating me," the man replied doggedly, while the ill-favored person ranged alongside the car, opposite Nealis's seat. "You're going to roll around for a little talk with the old man, that's all."

"I am, eh!" cried Nealis savagely. "I'll have you broke for this. I guess you don't know who I am. This is going just a little bit too far in the way of persecution of citizens."

"I know who you are all right," the man retorted. "You heard me call you by your right name, I think. Now—no more back talk. Climb in that rear seat, Jerry. Nealis, you get away from that wheel; I'll run this car to the station. You are not going to have a chance to put any of your tricks over on me. Come on now, get out of there."

A crowd had meantime gathered, and Helen pressed Nealis's arm.

"Let's don't have a scene, Mr. Nealis," she pleaded. "I am really not yet up to one. Let him take us to the station-house and we'll see if the captain has any more sense than this man appears to have."

"Sound words, lady," grinned the putative detective. "Now climb out of there, Nealis, and be quick, or I'll give you something to hurry you."

Nealis, quivering with rage, obeyed the command.

"You great bully," he shouted, "you have threatened me with violence! Bear witness to that, Miss Granger. I'll make it my lifework to see how long you continue to browbeat citizens driving peaceably along the public highway."

The man laughed disagreeably and motioned Nealis to hurry. As soon as the motorist had effected his transfer to the back seat the man who had been standing in the rear of the car jumped lightly to his side and the other, smiling reassuringly at the girl, told her not to worry.

"You are not the one that broke the speed law," he said. "But this fellow, we've been laying for him."

She turned away, not deigning to answer, for his manner had been offensive throughout.

The driver, meantime, had run the car up Pelham Street, and Helen noticed that as he did so the cab ahead turned, too, and retraced its course toward the corner.

"Where are you driving?" asked Nealis. "The police-station is down that way."

"So you know where the police-station is?" jibed the driver. "Well, you ought to; you have been hauled there often enough for breaking the laws."

"What I know is," Nealis replied angrily, "that you are not going to the police-station."

"Not to the one you're used to," came the reply. "There's been a traffic bureau established out on Touro Street, to which I shall be delighted to introduce you. We'll have you there in two shakes."

But the car did not go far on Touro Street. In fact it was guided down by the city reservoir, with Easton's Beach and the ocean lying beyond.

"Are you crazy?" Nealis cried, beginning to shift excitedly in his seat. "What is all this story about a new traffic station?"

"Shut up and you'll see. Don't make such an infernal racket with your mouth. Jerry, if you hear another peep out of the prisoner hand him one that will keep him quiet."

A growl and a nod from the man at Nealis's side, together with a menacing look from the gorilla face convinced the prisoner that any further words on his part would

be attended by physical consequences, and Nealis had gone all through life evading physical consequences, and he wasn't ready to alter his invariable trend of habit. He kept his mouth closed, in other words.

Helen, in the meantime, had begun to form the conviction that all was not well. She addressed the man at the wheel.

"You are a detective," she said. "May I see the badge which you displayed so proudly when you arrested us?"

"I'm running this car, lady," was the savage reply. "I've not got time to stop and show you badges, or enter into an argument. It will be better for you if you keep as still as your friend."

"I understand why you might think so," Helen returned. "But if you'll pardon me, I am going to call—"

She suddenly closed her lips tightly, realizing that perhaps she had said too much, which, as a matter of fact, proved to be the case; for the driver, with a snarl thrust his lever forward, causing the car to jump ahead at terrific speed.

Helen half arose as though to jump out, but the driver struck her lightly on the breast.

"If you make a move," he said through his clenched teeth, "I'll set you back in the car in a way you won't like."

With a cry Nealis leaned forward and struck the driver on the side of the head, the sudden assault causing him temporarily to lose control of the car, which slowed and skidded dangerously upon the hill.

"Kenebal, blast you!" cried the driver. "Didn't I tell you to watch that man? I'll have your hide for this."

The automobile was now going like the wind. Reaching the bottom of the hill, it turned into the side road that led to the bathing beach. Nealis was struggling in the grizzly bear hug of the man at his side, while Miss Granger, her eyes turned on the driver, sought for an opportunity to snatch the wheel, and guide the car into the salt meadows on either side of the road.

She would welcome a spill rather than this fellow's company; for it was now plain to her that all that had recently happened was closely associated with the events of the morning.

Looking behind, as the driver's fist flourished in her face, Helen saw the cab following them at a distance perhaps of a hundred yards, and tearing up the road to keep in this position.

She turned pale as she caught a glimpse of Apponnetti's shining eyeglasses and black whiskers. It was quite evident to her that the count did not intend to permit her to gain access to Lansing's car.

But what about Nealis? He was struggling in the grip of the Behemoth at his side, but was making an ineffectual, if game, fight. Plainly he was to be captured, too, and she could not understand why, unless her enemies had fear that Nealis knew as much as she did.

Her speculations upon this point, however, were soon set at rest. For as the car neared the beach road, with a set of abandoned bathing houses between it and that thoroughfare, the man at the wheel brought it almost to a stop.

"Now, Kenebal," he cried, "wing that guy and chuck him out."

Almost before the driver had finished speaking, Kenebal's hands dove into his pocket, withdrawing a blackjack, which flashing instantaneously above Nealis's head, descended with lethal force. The young man slumped down without a groan and the next instant he was dumped over the side of the car into the sedge like a sack of meal.

The car sprang forward a few feet, then backed into the sand and made a complete turnabout, retracing the road over which it had already come. The cab was turning, too, but had not completed the maneuver when the automobile flashed by.

Helen could see Apponnetti, and she could see, also, that the man at the wheel was not a regular cabman, but a person whom she had seen in Apponnetti's company upon the occasion of several of the supposed moving picture meetings.

Apponnetti hailed the driver of Nealis's motor as the car went by.

"Good!" he cried. "Excellent. Now take her to the place, and I'll follow."

Near the top of the hill the car turned off into a seldom used road; it was not asphalted nor macadamized, and, as a consequence, there was little chance of meeting motors or vehicles of any sort.

None the less the man in the rear leaned forward with his heavy hands upon the girl's shoulders, having been directed to do this by the fellow at the wheel.

"If she utters a peep, throttle her as you would a hen." There was a grim note to the command which left Helen no doubt that the man was in earnest.

Going over the events of the past month she could see that she had information concerning Count Apponnetti and many of his associates, which linked with other facts now in her possession, and, of course, in the possession of the secret service men, would make a very grave case indeed for the band.

She had an idea that treason, whether in time of war or not, was punishable by death, or at the very least by many years in a government prison. In either event Apponnetti's connection with this matter could be established principally through her; for she could see now that in many ways he had arranged to cover his tracks so far as the others in the plot were concerned.

An agony of dread came over her.

"Now that you have murdered Mr. Nealis," she asked at length, "would you mind telling me what you intend to do with me?"

"I don't intend to do anything with you —except take you to a certain place," was the reply. "And after I do that I'm going to leave these parts in Nealis's car and let Apponnetti have you. If you ever see Nealis—" He paused abruptly. "But you won't," he added.

"Look here, please," she pleaded. "I have never done anything to you that I know of. Nor to your friend. Let me out here, and go off where you please. I'll never tell—"

She stopped short.

"I mean," she went on, "you can't have any desire to be a party to my being injured—or anything like that. That will only make it worse for you. What can you gain by being a tool of Apponnetti's? Let me get out here. You've done a lot that's bad in your life; can't you do at least one good act?"

"I've got nothing against you, lady. But this is my job, see? I never yet laid down on a job. Even a strong-arm man has his honor. Now I'm paid to land you at a certain place, and I'm a going to do it.

"Kenebal," he called suddenly, "pull that girl's head back and blindfold her now."

As she felt her head drawn back by the man behind, her eyes flashed over the lonely road, but there was nothing in sight. She twisted her head and raised her arms to beat at the beast whose fingers were in her hair, and when she received a warning tap on her cheekbone she suddenly rent the air with a loud scream.

There came a jerking movement of the car and the driver wrestled with the wheel a second, then turned his head.

"Kenebal," he said, "what did I tell you to do if she made a sound?"

The great hairy fingers instantly pressed into her throat, the grip slowly increasing until the road swam before her and then grew black, whereat, upon a word from the man at her side, the fingers relaxed.

The next instant a handkerchief was passed over her eyes and she suffered it to be knotted tightly, if only because of her fight to gain a full breath. Soon after the direction of the car seemed to change. And in a minute or so it altered again.

Then there was a long run on a straight course, with a sharp turn followed by the stopping of the engine.

There was silence for a moment and then Helen heard the sound of approaching wheels. The hands of the man in the rear were gripping her elbows and she could not move. A whispered consultation followed and then she heard the voice of the alleged detective.

"Now, miss, if you'll get out."

She arose, weakly, and was lifted down to the street. In fact her feet did not touch the sidewalk.

She felt a sensation of being rushed through a short space, and the next instant she breathed the musty odor of a hallway and heard the door slam behind her.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONSPIRATORS FALL OUT AND IN AGAIN.

HELEN was hurried through the hall and led into an apartment whose atmosphere was redolent of cigarette smoke. There was a moment of whispering and then the handkerchief was taken from her eyes.

She saw a heavy Mission center-table, surrounded by comfortable armchairs; on the wall were framed sporting prints, all foreign subjects, while the table was littered with cigarette boxes, on all of which were crests, indicating that the owner was a titled personage.

Helen could hear dull sounds from the street, which indicated that her room was on the lower floor of the house, and through the walls from another room came the murmur of voices, the cadence of which implied an argument of some sort. She looked about the room and found that it

contained no windows, that the only opening was the door by which she had entered.

Her peril she believed to be imminent. She did not try to delude herself with false hope. As she recalled it, Apponnetti's connection with this plot had been almost entirely through her. He had taken care not to join their party at François's restaurant, and his only open activity was the night Lansing had been caught in the San Marino apartment. And even then his open declaration had been that he was protecting her from evil advances by Lansing.

There was not a single man of the whole crowd who could lay finger on the count and say definitely: "You have done thus and so." But Helen could; Apponnetti had lured her into this enterprise originally, and on the other hand had dealt with some elusive person higher up who at no time had appeared on the scene, so far as the girl was aware.

This person alone could place the definite finger of guilt upon her mother's cousin, this person and Helen herself.

Well, what now? In an agony of dread she placed her ear against the wall and tried to reduce the murmur of voices to words. But she could distinguish nothing. None the less she crouched by the partition, finding in the effort to hear some diversion from the dread thoughts that filled her mind.

Had she been gifted with the power of looking through plastered walls she would have seen a sumptuous apartment, heavily decorated with hangings and armorial bearings, great plush chairs and a shining mahogany table filled with documents of various sorts, all bearing the great seal of a foreign nation.

At the head of the table sat a distinguished looking man with a monocle, a heavy mustache, beetling brows, a broad forehead and glittering blue eyes. He was dressed in white flannels.

Opposite him sat Apponnetti, and near the door the man who had impersonated the detective when Nealis's car was held up.

"So," said the ambassador—for the man in white was none other than a diplomatic representative—"you mishandle every detail entrusted to you, Apponnetti, and then in the end you fly to me for safety not only, but drag into my house your pretty dupe and ask me to dispose of her for you. Believe me, my dear count, it will not be so easy as all that."

Deliberately lighting a cigarette he waved his hand.

"I say nothing," he went on, "as to the indelicacy of your proceeding. I speak merely from the standpoint of common sense. You bring me no results—"

"Clarkin has the papers," protested Apponnetti.

"Ah!" The ambassadorial eyebrows lifted. "Clarkin has been captured. The fool! There was not a secret service man who did not know him."

"How do you know he has been arrested?" interposed Apponnetti, plainly growing more restive, while at the same time the suavity of his voice had given place to a sharp, irritable timbre which revealed the growing desperation of the man.

The ambassador smiled.

"How do I know! How do I know anything? Let it suffice that I do know. The point I make now is that, having bungled grotesquely, you dump your baggage in upon me with the tacit demand that I relieve you of further responsibility. Well, Apponnetti, I most respectfully decline."

"I think not," Apponnetti snapped. "If I mistake not, you have a rare facility for dealing with cases of this sort—when the destiny of your country demands it, of course, and I do now affirm, your excellency, that this is a case where your country's destiny is very much at stake. I do not mean the plans—pouf! What are they in the light of your exposure?"

The Ambassador smiled.

"Threats!" he sneered. "Very well, let it be so. My word, I imagine, will be weightier than yours in certain events—especially so when, at present, it would be very much to the interest of Washington to believe me, or pretend to believe me, rather than you. So you bring your girl to me and say, deal with her, as you know how, and save me. Good! I say to you, to the devil with your girl and with you. I have had no stomach for bunglers—never!"

"You mean—?" Apponnetti arose, trembling with anger.

"I mean," the ambassador replied calmly, "that as you brought this creature into my house so now I demand that you take her out again, and at once."

Apponnetti folded his arms, glaring at the diplomat, trembling with a mingling of rage and fear.

"She is here, where she shall stay—until—" The count shrugged.

The ambassador took out his watch and then leaning forward pressed a push button at the side of the table. Three times his finger pressed the button, and then the man sat back in his chair.

"Within five minutes," he said, "you and that woman and you"—pointing at the third man—"must be out of this house. If not the police will be summoned.

"Oh, no," as Apponnetti exchanged menacing glances with the man by the door. "Oh, no; not at all. It is not I who will do the summoning. The push button has attended to all that, there being in every well regulated household, as you are aware, codes of signals which mean much to those who hear them. So I should counsel no violence."

"Violence!" Apponnetti's manner had once more become the oily, ingratiating pose which was so characteristic of him. "Your excellency, I think I can convince you that it will be very much to your interest to assist me in the very slight matter of Miss Granger."

The ambassador laughed, but bent his head forward, as though signifying his willingness to listen. As Apponnetti did not immediately speak the diplomat laughed again.

"Come, my dear count, is it necessary to think so hard? Surely your wits do not always proceed at so leisurely a pace.

Apponnetti raised his hand.

"Just one second," he said, "I seek merely to arrange my thoughts in orderly array."

He glanced at the man who throughout had remained motionless by the door.

"Slevin," he added, as though with sudden thought, "it might be well for you to take your bag and make ready to go out. Apparently we are to have no satisfaction from his excellency. So we shall do the best we can with our captive. Before that, however, you might look in your bag and see if the papers I spoke of are there."

The man took from the floor a fat Gladstone bag, opened it, peered in, and after moving his hands about in the interior for a second or so, he looked up, nodding.

Apponnetti moved toward the door.

"I think I shall go with you, Slevin—only, just a moment. I wish to say just a few more sentences to the ambassador."

As the count turned to the statesman Slevin moved forward, holding the bag, so that he was at Apponnetti's shoulder.

"Now, your excellency," Apponnetti began, "it is understood, you wash your hands of this affair and leave Miss Granger to us. Yet you admit that you would have been better disposed toward us had we succeeded in doing what you wished us to do—namely, obtain the plans of the proposed addition to the coast defenses from Provincetown, southward to New York."

Apponnetti's voice had become louder, each word distinctly pronounced, his head turned a bit sidewise toward the man at his elbow. The diplomat, who had been watching the count curiously, permitted a cunning gleam to cross his eyes. Apponnetti noticed it and went on quickly.

"You are the sort of cur who will eat flesh, but refuses to mouth the bone. You set afoot plans to obtain that which your government desires and when your misbegotten schemes fall apart of their own rottenness, you wave your hands and say, 'It is nothing. Others have failed. You—'"

"It is a lie!" The ambassador rose from his chair, quivering with rage. "My plans—"

"Your plans!" Apponnetti's voice was keen as a sword thrust.

"My plans were bungled, you maladroit! You profess to have brains. I was a fool to have dealings with you." He started forward. "You call me cur! I'll attend to that, sir."

Apponnetti turned swiftly to the man at his side as the diplomat's voice ceased reverberating through the room.

"That will do, Slevin." Slevin obediently reached his hand into the bag, and a metallic click followed. The ambassador's eyes were upon the bag, suspicion and consternation struggling for dominance.

"What do you do?" he cried. "What is this?"

"Why nothing, your excellency, but an extremely efficient, as well as highly sensitive gramaphone, recently perfected by Mr. Edison, whereby every syllable of a spoken word is recorded without the aid of a funnel or other device. Ha! Ha!"

This as the diplomat started.

"We have done very nicely," Apponnetti went on. "We have you now on record as having planned to steal United States coast defense projects—or, at least the gramaphone records that you set such a deed of emprise on foot. We shall retain this record and try to convince you meanwhile that it is to your interest to attend to our prisoner

in whatever way may be determined. As to that I make no present stipulation."

The diplomat's head had been moving slowly from side to side, like a bear at bay. Now his eyes glittered venomously.

"This then was the cause of your loud-voiced dialogue. Well," he leaned down swiftly and pressed a button, "it is one thing to bring your instrument into the house and yet another to take it out again."

He stood erect as the door opened and his secretary entered.

"Ha!" Apponnetti laughed aloud. "I fancied your minions were neither numerous, nor powerful."

Slevin had turned to look at the newcomer and this gave the ambassador his opportunity. With a snake-like dash he sprang from his chair and before either of the other two men realized it his hands were gripped on the bag. Slevin made as though to strike the assailant, but finding the bag being torn from his grasp had to relinquish his bellicose intention and fight for possession of the satchel.

The secretary, a tall, lithe, if not powerfully built man, engaged Apponetti, serving at least the purpose of preventing the count from coming to the assistance of his companion. The diplomat was strong and wiry and was quite a match for the fellow who held the bag. The two writhed and wrestled and finally both fell to the floor, kicking and tugging and cursing.

Finally Apponnetti was flung aside by the secretary, who was hastening to the assistance of his chief when the count's voice arrested him.

"All right, Slevin," he called, "release the bag to his excellency. Let him have it."

The man did as he was bid, with the result that the ambassador, who was pulling with might and main, went rolling several feet backwards before he could recover himself and gain a more dignified position.

His face was triumphant. He opened the bag, took from it the gramaphone, cast it to the floor and stamped on it. He viewed the wreckage with satisfaction, and then glared at his two opponents.

"Well! So much for your plans! It was rather well done, my friends, but you should have been better advised. Now then, whenever you are ready to go, know that you have your *congé*. In fact, I shall be extremely busy."

"Now that all connection of yours with our plot has been destroyed, at least so far as evidence is concerned, what do you propose to do?" asked Apponnetti, whose face did not reveal quite the amount of chagrin that the ambassador would have liked to see there.

"I am quite content with having destroyed the evidence. I might ask what your next move may be—that is, after you have taken your prisoner from this house, as I most strongly insist that you do."

Apponnetti smiled deprecatingly, rubbing his hand and eyeing the ambassador closely.

"As a matter of truth," he said at length, "I have no idea of removing the prisoner from your house; nor have I any intention, just at present, of leaving myself. We have yet more to discuss."

"Nonsense!" The diplomat was growing impatient. "I shall have to ask you to go at once, as I have affairs of pressing importance."

"I see." Apponnetti reached out and began drawing in something which, until the diplomat leaned forward, was invisible. What he eventually saw was a hair-line wire of the most intangible sort, and he saw, too, that it led to his waste-basket, from which, in fact, the count at the instant pulled a small hard rubber instrument which trailed across the floor until it reached Apponnetti's feet. A second later it was in his hand.

"A little instrument," Apponnetti exclaimed, "called a dictograph, the other end of which runs out to the side of your home, where, on the lawn, I might add, sat until a few seconds ago a very competent stenographer and witness."

"So you were doubly armed." The ambassador smiled faintly.

"Doubly armed, to be sure," returned the count. "You see, it is very often the case in affairs of this sort that the most important person in these espionage plots goes unscathed, while the underlying elements, the tools, go to their punishment. I have no wish to go alone. But with you it will not be so bad—I shall have distinguished company. What do you say?"

The ambassador stood for a moment in silence, biting his lips. It was perfectly clear to him that Apponnetti had bested him at every point, and in addition had induced him to commit himself in a way he had never done before.

That dictograph record would make bad reading at a trial, and aside from the con-

sequences to him in this country, he had to reckon upon the manner in which he would be dealt with at home.

He was a distinguished diplomat, with an unbroken record of devious successes, and he was not now prepared to face the wrecking of all his hopes. His face was a study of mingled emotions.

"There is," chuckled the count, "a way out, your excellency. My terms are not difficult at all. It is merely the boon of a little assistance I require, and then we shall all be as before. For you will understand that I am a man of honor as to my word."

"But your stenographer? How can I be assured that even though I become your abject servant, you will—"

The count gestured.

"Say no more," he interrupted. "You will know that if those dictograph records are placed in the possession of the authorities I suffer as well as you. Therefore if we are agreed upon the matter in question I shall have as good reason as you to see the stenographic notes destroyed."

The ambassador nodded.

"Yes," he returned, "that seems perfectly reasonable. So! What is it you now propose?"

"First," Apponnetti replied, "I crave the privilege of summoning Miss Granger into this room. When we have talked to her and heard her replies we shall know better what is in store for us. It may be that we shall have very little to do. Let us wait."

The ambassador signaled to his secretary, who, accompanied by Slevin, went to the smoking-room and escorted Helen into the library, where the ambassador and the count stood waiting.

The girl was pale, but composed and as she glanced at Apponnetti her eyes flashed with enmity. At the ambassador she gazed with frank curiosity.

"Helen," began the count.

"Sir!" she cried, staring at him.

"Miss Granger," Apponnetti smilingly corrected himself, "you will know of all that has happened."

"Yes, I do know," she said. "I know how you lied to me and deceived me, and made me think you were a kind friend instead of a rascal."

"Not a rascal," murmured the count, wincing angrily. "But a patriot. Do you suppose I have risked myself all these years for pure love of adventure! My motives have been those of a patriot, through—"

"And your actions those of a sneak-thief and a traitor," flashed the girl.

Apponnetti waved his hands. He appeared in a measure to relish her defiant attitude inasmuch as he found the need of steeling himself to the plans he had in mind.

"We are enmeshed in a difficult situation," he proceeded. "Our plans have failed utterly and many of our best men are in the toils of your government. That is all right—the fortunes of war. But, I have no desire to join them; neither has his—"

The ambassador coughed harshly and Apponnetti broke off with a smile.

"Now," he went on, "there is what remains to be said: you of all persons know that I have been directly associated with these—ah, these diplomatic researches into the plans of your government—"

"And your government as well," she reminded him.

"I am a citizen merely for purposes of my own; I recognize loyalty only to my own government." Apponnetti bowed as though reverently. "But our plans have failed. You know too much, Helen—to come to the point—to be at liberty unless I have your solemnest of words, given on the memory of your father, that nothing you know of me, or others present shall ever be breathed by you. If you give your word, which I will hold as pure as gold, you may go out of here now, never to see me again. What do you say?"

How Helen would have loved to give him the assurance he sought! Not with any idea of keeping her word, but merely to serve her purpose in leaving this house. But she could not give it.

She had been reared under a rigid code of honor descending to her through three generations of upstanding soldiers, men whose word was as inviolate as their deed. She was of a blood which knew neither chicanery nor deceit. And so it was utterly impossible now for her to speak falsely to Apponnetti, false as he had been to her.

Nor on the other hand could she give her word not to reveal the participation of Apponnetti in terms that would enable her government to fasten upon him the manacles of conviction. He was a traitor to the nation she loved and as such was to be dealt with as summarily as she would deal with a poison reptile.

Her very soul was filled with loathing for

the man, and to be in the same room with him, breathing the same air, was repulsive to her every sense of decency.

He had approached her and she in turn had drawn as far away from him as the wall would permit. The ambassador, who loathed Apponnetti, too, gazed at the girl admiringly. He had an eye for lovely woman and this girl appealed to him.

"I think you can do this, Miss Granger," he said. "Surely it is not much that he asks, merely to withhold mention of all that you know concerning him."

The girl glanced at the speaker, recognizing a gentleman, whatever his connection with Apponnetti's scheme might be. Also she detected in him a certain element of sympathy for her.

"Well, what do you say?" Apponnetti asked, after a short silence. "I can trust you if you give your word. There will be no trouble. You may go at once, back to your lover."

"And if I decline to give my word?" she replied, breathing hard.

"Ah, you must not do that," interposed the diplomat. "That would be so silly, so futile, and so—so—"

His voice vanished into meaning silence.

"You will certainly not decline," Apponnetti persisted. "That would be reckless—criminally reckless of you—suicidally reckless, I might say."

His voice had an edge to it.

"None the less," the girl declared, "I decline to make any promises whatever. I demand that you release me from this house at once. It will be your peril if you detain me. Remember this is not—not Africa, or some abandoned place. This is the United States—and here men have to answer for what they do."

"I understand your point perfectly," rejoined Apponnetti. "I can see how you feel—that in making your heroic stand you are doing so without danger to yourself. Let me warn you; your attitude, if persisted in, means much to you. It means—" Apponnetti paused and then stretched out his arm, his hand shaking at her. "It means that you will not leave this house alive. I am desperate. Now you understand."

Helen Granger started back, her hands caught at her breast, the fingers locking and unlocking. There was a silence in the room that lasted more than a minute. Then at length the girl's lips opened.

"Over in Europe," she said, speaking slowly, "men are dying for their countries in many ways. They are being torn apart by shells, suffocated by gases, stabbed with bayonets—they are living in mud trenches, enduring horrible privation. I—I am not a man, but—but I have always prayed that if the time ever came when I had to die for my country, as my grandfather did, I would die bravely and without a protest.

"I didn't think it would come so soon—or in this way. But who can direct things? Count Apponnetti, I scorn and loathe you. You ask for my word. I won't give it. I give you nothing except the promise that if I leave this house I shall expose you to the ends of the earth. You beast, there, you have your answer."

Apponnetti stood like a statue for a moment. Then he signaled to Slevin and the secretary.

"Take her away," he commanded.

When she had gone he drew his chair up to the table.

"Now, your excellency," he said, "we have but to determine *how*."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DUPE REBELS.

BEFORE Apponnetti could speak the two men, Slevin and the secretary, came back, and the count turned to them.

"I might remind you two," he remarked, "that the conversation with Miss Granger was held in your presence. You were not dismissed because you are as deep in this as we are, and your silence will be as valuable on your own behalf as upon ours. Let there be no mistake there."

The ambassador now arose with a decisive gesture.

"Whatever happens from now on," he said, "does not require my presence. I shall beg leave to withdraw from this house and to take my secretary with me. I know nothing of what you intend to do. I care nothing. It is none of my business. Come."

He motioned to his secretary. "I shall order the servants out, also. The house is yours until this time to-morrow."

"Thank you so much for your kindness," the count retorted grimly. "Go as soon as you wish. But stay." He was about to say something which he regarded as important, then changed his mind. "Au revoir, my dear friend."

"It is adieu, finally and irrevocably, you dog," growled the ambassador, and followed by his faithful assistant he strode out into the hall, and in another minute was out of the house.

As soon as they had gone Apponnetti turned to his man.

"Slevin, you have that chloroform?"

The other nodded and Apponnetti arose, taking off his coat.

"I want you to go into that room and tie Miss Granger hand and foot. If she struggles, hit her, but be sure she is firmly bound. Understand."

The big ruffian signified assent and turned his steps toward the smoking-room. Helen was seated in one of the chairs, her head upon her hands. As she heard the approaching steps she looked up and saw Slevin.

Getting to her feet she stood at bay, and watched him as he approached, taking from his pocket a stout twine which he laid upon the table.

He came close to her and she screamed. The next instant she was locked in his great arms, her own pinioned to her side. Thus she was borne to the floor, where with one knee upon her chest he reached up for the twine.

Securing this he had no difficulty in binding her hands. She screamed several times and he stopped her outcries by stuffing a handkerchief into her mouth. Then he carefully fettered her ankles and picking her up as though she were a child, carried her to a great leather covered divan, where he propped her head on a pillow.

This done he took a bottle from his pocket and pouring some of the contents upon a piece of cloth, laid it over her face. She shook her head from side to side, causing it to fall off, whereupon he replaced it, gripping the sides of her face with his hands.

She writhed and jerked, but within a short time the influences of the powerful anesthetic asserted itself and her form grew limp, her head fell back. Slevin then withdrew the cloth from her face and ran into the library. Apponnetti stood waiting, a look of inquiry upon his face.

"It's all right, sir," said the hired assassin.

"Good!" Apponnetti stepped lightly into the hall, and walked down the passageway, making sure that the servants were in the rear of the house. "All is well," he said presently, returning. "Now we will go upstairs a moment. The servants will soon be away on their holiday."

The two men made their way to the second floor and looked into various rooms until they found a small one in the middle of the house, containing very little besides a bed.

"This will do very well," whispered the count. "Now carry that girl up here and place her on this bed. I want you to make certain," he added, "that she does not die under the influence of this chloroform. After you have done that join me in the hall and we will make the necessary preparations."

Slevin went to the smoking-room and seizing the unconscious form bore it swiftly and easily to the room selected by Apponnetti. She was placed on the bed and the covers thrown over her. This done the afternoon was spent in keeping the girl half conscious.

The staff of helpers had lost little time in leaving the house, as ordered by their master, and Apponnetti and Slevin were alone. The ambassador's servants, by the way, were accustomed to many strange proceedings, and had long since learned the art of seeing yet not seeing, as Apponnetti well knew.

"You are certain," Slevin asked, "that you know where we stand in this stuff?"

"Assuredly," was the reply. "It is not so risky by half as many things you have done. And I am personally aware of several of your exploits. Not that you have always received the price I am to pay you now. However—

"You see," he went on after a brief pause, "the fact that she is here at all would make thinks look dark against her in the eyes of the secret service people—and with her out of the way I shall face them and the detectives and laugh in their faces, despite all that that beast Griscom thinks he knows."

"But when the girl is found to have disappeared?" suggested Slevin.

"Who can connect me with her? They may suspect, but suspicion is not proof. No, doubt not; I know what I am doing."

"Suppose some one saw me with her in the automobile?"

"That is the risk you run for the money that is paid," was the calm reply. "I doubt that you were seen. In fact, no automobile passed us going either way on the road."

"But there was a crowd all right when I made the arrest," Slevin reminded him.

Apponnetti was silent.

"There was a crowd all right," Slevin repeated, turning a shade pale. "My face could be remembered by some one. Then there's that guy Nealis." Slevin suddenly sprang to his feet. "Why, say, I haven't got a Chinaman's chance of getting away with this."

Apponnetti, who had been relying upon the man's thick wits to hide from him many phases of the situation which he himself recognized, looked at him through half-closed eyelids.

"Fifteen thousand dollars instead of ten. Isn't that worth the risk?" he said.

"Worth hell!" was the reply. "That girl goes out of here free. What do you take me for? Say she's shuffled out. There comes a holler. I was seen with her. Bing! I get it. I say you put me up to it; you say I'm a liar. Every one agrees with you.

"Oh, I see the game you were putting over. You even saw where you wouldn't have to cough up the ten thousand!"

The fellow ripped out a black oath and started to the door. "Sure, I see! I was the goat. Well, not for mine. The lady goes out of here on her two feet."

"No, she doesn't," purred Apponnetti.

"Yes, she does," Slevin asserted, adding to his statement a string of oaths. "I see the whole game you rigged up. You started me going on this matter before the servants were out of the house, you yourself taking care not to be seen. You could fix it so it would appear you were never here at all. Why, one of the footmen saw me carrying the girl up stairs. Yes, he did—and you wanted him to see me. You had it arranged with him."

"I—I—" Apponnetti, every detail of his scheme accurately interpreted by Slevin, was at a loss for words.

"Yes," sneered the man," you haven't got anything to say! You thought you were slick. Well, there's other slick persons in this world; it ain't the first time I've had the double cross handed to me. But here's once where it don't get over. See?"

"Your mind works swiftly," Apponnetti said at length. "If I have not replied to you before it was because your charges are so grossly insulting—"

"Insult you!" jeered Slevin.

"If I have not spoken it was because you were so surprising in your statements that I couldn't believe my ears. Have I not had dealings with you before?"

"Yes, and you've had dealings with other people. I know you."

"All right," Apponnetti's face was tense. "You can leave now. Get out of my sight."

"Sure, out of your sight," gibed Slevin. "That's easy; you can screw up your nerve to put a doped woman out, and whether I go or stay, the thing's fastened on me! You said you were waiting in the hall to see if the servants were out of the way. Why, you scut, you waited to make sure that they were *in the way* and that they could see me with the girl."

"I have told you to go," said Apponnetti calmly. "I want you out of my sight in two minutes; you are through."

"Oh, no, I ain't through," declared Slevin. "When I go out of this house it will be after I have seen this Granger girl walk out on her own two feet with her head up. You don't catch me in any of your back action rings. The first one who goes will be you—on your head, if you don't hurry up and beat it."

"Slevin," drawled Apponnetti, "I don't know how much money you have made out of me in the past ten years, but it must be close to fifty thousand dollars. I have always paid you to the dollar, haven't I? You never saw me double cross you. You haven't a complaint.

"And now, with an insane notion springing suddenly into your head you go off the handle and charge me with everything that comes into your dull head. Now then, be reasonable. You are suspicious. Well, you have been so before. Come, we'll have a glass of wine—"

Slevin's eyes glittered.

"No, you'll do your own drinking; none for me. I'll wait till I see that girl walk out of here; then I'll do some drinking on my own account."

Apponnetti came close to him, in his hand an immense roll of bills which he brandished in the man's face.

"Twenty thousand dollars, Slevin," he said. "Twenty thousand. Isn't it worth the chance? You've taken it before."

"What good would the twenty thou do me?" answered the other, a crafty expression in his eyes. "I might buy a new suit of clothes for the electric chair. Nope. Keep your money. Now get out."

"One minute," Apponnetti cried, as Slevin advanced toward him. "I believe you have gone insane. Look you! We are to pile up inflammable material in the girl's

room and under it, then touch it off. No one is here; no alarm is given. The girl will be a crisp even before the firemen get here. Who can say she was murdered?

"Who," Apponnetti, smiling, touched the man on the shoulder, "will even know who she is? Will they not say it was a servant who died? The Ambassador will testify that he had a female servant from his own country here. What could be simpler? Come, my man, dismiss your base suspicion of me. How can this girl be identified?"

"The servants, one of them, anyway, saw me with the girl. I saw him looking through the door as I carried her up-stairs. She will be missed. Nealis will trace her to this house. . . . I am the goat I tell you. You can't stall me." Slevin raised his fist, a ponderous thing, and shook it at the count. "You're never sure about these fires, anyway. How do you know she can't be identified?"

"Twenty-five thousand," persisted Apponnetti. "You'd better take it, and then if you hold on to it, this will be your last big job."

"I've done my last big job for you, Apponnetti. Now I'm going up-stairs to shake up that girl, and when I come down you are to be out of the house—out! Do you get me?"

"No. I shan't do it," was the quiet reply. "I am not in the mood for humoring the whim of a crazy man."

"You'll humor this whim," snarled Slevin. "Now then, get out of that doorway, for I am going up-stairs."

A sudden flashing movement of Apponnetti's hand caught his eye, and he saw a bluish gleam. With an oath his hand flew to his own pocket, but before it was well settled there the room was filled with a loud report and became acrid with smoke.

A cry broke from Slevin's lips and he stood like a statue. Then suddenly his own hand shot out and the weapon it held spat forth its lance-like line of flame. This done, Slevin crumpled and fell to the floor.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT THE BEHEST OF CONSCIENCE.

MEANTIME the Nealis household was in a ferment of excitement. Griscom, as he had promised, betook himself to the bank and was closeted with Lansing.

"The only thing you can do," he advised, "is to await developments. Our men are everywhere. I do not see how anything can possibly slip through the net. Between here and Providence in every direction we have nearly a hundred men. If Miss Granger is going to be slipped out of Newport she will surely run into some of them. I might tell you that Clarkin was captured hardly a half hour ago. That only shows how closely we are pulling in the strings."

"But," protested Lansing, "it is unendurable to sit here and paw the air, thinking of all sorts of horrible things and not be able to think of anything to do to help her. I love that girl, Griscom; she is more than my life. I want her. I feel like pulling up all of Newport to get her."

"But you can't do that, you know," replied the detective, who had his own reasons for being sympathetic, reasons, of course, which he took care not to hint to the young man. "Here is your headquarters. Miss Granger, if she gets a chance, will make this the first place of communication. You want to be where you'll know the soonest about her. All my men know you are here, and have been instructed to give you the first cheering news, or any sort of news concerning the young lady that they obtain. I should counsel you to follow my suggestion; for I am experienced in these matters."

"Well," sighed Lansing, "I suppose you are right. Oh, I'd give about all I'm worth to have my hands on that Apponnetti at this minute."

"Perhaps you'll have that pleasure without paying a cent." Griscom slapped him on the back. "Come, now, my boy, a nine is never licked until the last out. Things have broken badly for you of late, but you've had your share of luck, and you may have some more coming. You hang around here and let us do the chasing."

"All right," agreed Lansing. "You know best. But, Griscom," and he placed his hand upon the secret service agent's shoulder, "for Heaven's sake get action on this, won't you?"

"I will," Griscom replied, smiling encouragingly and taking up his hat. "And I'm going to take a little jump in the automobile now to a certain place. I'll be out of touch with events here for that time. When I return I'll come straight here and let you know how things are progressing."

"You mean you hope to find her where—" Lansing's voice broke.

"It is a hope. There's a place where Apponnetti used to hang out, a deserted cottage 'way past Paradise. I'll run out there and when I come back I'll let you know."

Lansing nodded and joined Captain Granger and Dorothy Nealis in the garden.

Arnold was in no danger of his life, according to the doctor, although, even so, he feared a slight fracture of the skull. Appearance of fever would tell the tale, and even if the skull proved to have been fractured the case could be successfully handled.

A trained nurse had been engaged and the physician had stipulated absolute quiet and would not permit the secret service men to question him, much to Griscom's annoyance.

Mrs. Nealis remained in the sick room with the nurse, while the elder Nealis sat on the verandah, smoking cigar after cigar and talking incessantly. The luncheon hour arrived and no one ate anything, although all went into the dining-room and sat listlessly at table.

It was after one o'clock when Griscom returned. His quest had been unsuccessful and he announced his intention of calling up the central bureau he had established to learn if there had been any developments in the city.

He had, in fact, gone to the telephone, but before he could take down the receiver the bell rang wildly. He gave an exclamation of impatience and called sharply into the transmitter.

"Yes," Lansing and Granger heard him say, "yes, this is Griscom. What? Sure I'll talk to him. All right."

He glanced around at the two men, grimaced significantly and then turned back to the transmitter.

"Yes—oh yes, your excellency. Eh—what? Say that again. Yes, go on. . . . Yes. . . . Yes. . . . I see. . . . Thank you very much. I'll attend to it at once."

He wheeled around from the telephone, then turned to it again.

"Oh, your—who is this? Jackson! Say, Jackson, take every man you have in your office and beat it around to No. 10 Touro Place. Go right in. If the door is locked, smash it in. Get in some way. I'll be there, maybe before you."

He let the receiver drop and faced about.

"Come!" he cried.

"Did you hear—" Lansing's voice thrilled. But the detective was fast hastening out at the door, beckoning to Granger and Lansing. "Hurry you two. Get into my car." He climbed in himself and told the chauffeur the address, No. 10 Touro Place.

"What is it?" asked Granger.

"Yes, in God's name, what is it?" chimed in Lansing. "Speak, please."

"Why," replied Griscom, as the car raced down Bellevue Avenue. "That was one of the ambassadors who live here. He told me that his conscience had been troubling him so that he was almost insane with worry. It seems that Apponnetti and another man had taken Miss Granger to his summer home, and that they had compelled him to vacate under threat of exposing some state secrets which were known to Apponnetti.

"Yielding to his fear of getting into trouble with his government he had left the house, but now, fearing foul play was intended, he had decided to risk Apponnetti's vengeance and inform the secret service of the danger. Now that's all I know," concluded Griscom. "But," he added grimly, "we'll know more in a moment. We're almost there."

Lansing saw things in a blaze of red. What had happened to Helen? She had been in this house many hours. He groaned aloud in his anguish, and when the car stopped with a jerk in front of the ambassador's pretty cottage he was so weak and spent with worry that he almost tottered as he stepped out.

But only for a minute. Granger and Griscom and the chauffeur, all three with drawn revolvers, rushed against the door, crashing their shoulders upon the panels. But it was heavy and did not yield. At the side of the porch, however, was a window and Griscom leaning out from the railing kicked out the pane with his shoe.

The next instant he was crawling through, followed by his chauffeur, Granger and last of all Lansing, who had recovered and was now filled with the vigor of a raging bull.

The room was a sort of parlor and with just a glance to note that it was empty, the leaders rushed into the hall. The door opposite was closed and Lansing, pushing it open, and calling loudly for Helen found that it yielded only through vigorous pushing.

It was as though some object were block-

ing its free movement, something which moved soddenly as Lansing applied greater pressure.

With an opening effected sufficiently wide to allow Lansing to squeeze through, he slipped into the room. And as he did so his voice rose almost in a scream.

The others pushing in, saw him confronting two bodies. That of Slevin lay near the mantelpiece, sprawled upon its back. Apponnetti's was the one that had blocked the door, lying face downward. In the right hand of each dead man was clutched a revolver, one chamber only being discharged in each.

"A duel!" Griscom bent over and examined the bodies. "Slevin got it through the heart; Apponnetti through the brain. A pretty pair. Well, the girl—"

"Helen!" Lansing turned and ran calling through the hall. "Separate, everybody," he cried, "and look into every room in the house. She's here; she must be."

The house was filled with the sound of hastily moving feet, the men from Griscom's central bureau having arrived. But it was Lansing who first found her.

She was lying as Slevin had left her, bound hand and foot, slowly regaining consciousness, but weak from the anesthetic and from the shock of her ordeal. As Lansing burst into the room and came to her side with a cry she opened her eyes and smiled.

"My heart!" she muttered. "Something told me you would come."

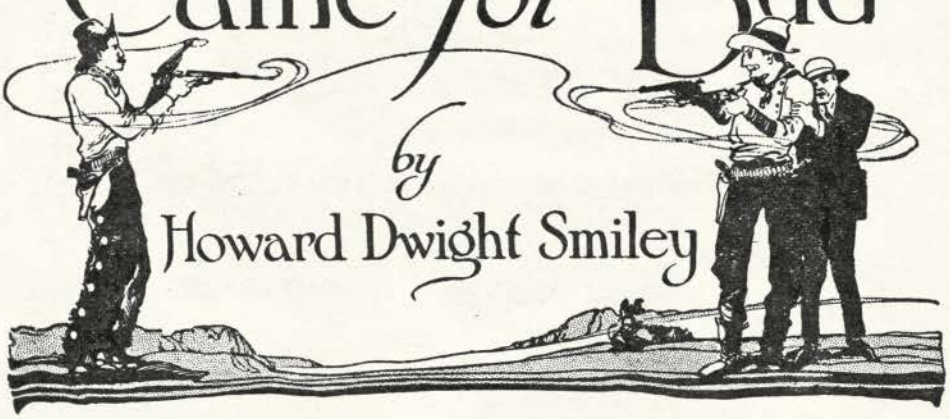
"And so I have," replied Lansing, cutting her bonds and taking her into his arms, "and something tells *me* that you don't get away from my side again as long as I live."

She smiled and closed her eyes, sighing with contentment in his embrace.

THE END.

When the Deputy Came for Bud

by Howard Dwight Smiley



I.

ZEKE JOHNSON and Bud Morris were throwing a diamond hitch on the last of our pack burros and Judge Dennison and I were about to enter the Red Front to bid the boys good-by when the sheriff cantered up.

"You boys pulling for the hills?" he inquired.

"That we are, Spud," answered Zeke. "We've had our little whirl with the inhabited world and blowed our dough and now we are once more headed into the great sizzling and soulless desert in search of more wealth, health and subsequent unhappiness."

"Which meets my entire approval and I wish I was going with you. Howsomever, I am afraid you are due for a little set-back—

it is my painful duty to advise you that Bud will have to remain behind."

"Huh!" exclaimed Bud in surprise. "What for, Spud?"

"You are wanted, on an old charge, back home."

"Who—me? Who in the hotel wants me?"

"When you four trouble-teasers started to explore the great Southwest in an automobile fire-engine a while back and got yourselves into jail and one thing another you also got your names in the papers pretty much all over the U. S. A. A deputy sheriff back in Piedmont, New York, read about you and wired me to see if you wasn't a party he was looking for.

"Seems that from divers scars, hair and eye colors and other things, that you are, and the deputy is on his way here now and is due to arrive to-morrow night on the six o'clock if he makes connections. He says he knows you well—his name is John Mallory."

"Why, he's my cousin!" cried Bud. "What do you know about that! My own cousin coming out here to pinch me for—why, great cats! it's fifteen years since I pulled off that stunt!"

"What stunt?" inquired Judge.

"Y'understand that anything you say can be used as evidence against you," warned the sheriff.

"That's right," agreed Zeke. "Keep your mouth shut, Bud. And say, Spud, I can't see how this interference with our little expedition in search of wealth—all the more reason why we should gid-dap."

"So far as you and Billy and Judge are concerned you can go cavorting away right this minute, but Bud's got to stick around."

"You wouldn't pinch an old side-kick like Bud?" asked Zeke reproachfully. "Why, you and him and us have been paling together ever since this burg was founded!"

"I ain't going to pinch him!" retorted the sheriff. "The deputy didn't wire anything about locking him up; he said just to keep Bud in sight, and that I aim to do. I'm just as good a friend of Bud's as I ever was, but I'm bound to do my duty as an officer of the law, and if he tries to make a get-away I'm a-coming after him and I'm coming a-shooting. The law's got to be upheld, friendship or no."

Well, that was pretty definite and we didn't argue. The sheriff rode away and Zeke began unpacking the burros.

"What for you doing that?" asked Bud, who was looking pretty sick. "Ain't you going to pull for the diggings?"

"Ain't you?" asked Zeke pointedly.

"Why, no, I'm going to stick around."

"So are we! Don't you need friends in time of tribulation—you old fool!"

We unpacked the burros and stored the stuff in the Red Front for future reference and then we all took a walk up the coulée where we'd be private and undisturbed.

"Now, what did you do?" began Zeke.

Bud hung his head like a dog caught killing sheep.

"I sure hate to tell," he murmured. "It was such a darn small measly little thing—it didn't amount to nothing."

"What'd you do?" insisted Zeke.

"I—I stole a horse."

"Ohhhhh—I see! You stole a horse—that doesn't amount to nothing—oh, no! They don't even send a man to prison round here for a little thing like that—they just hang him!"

"I know it. Now that you boys are wise to what they've got against me, I suppose you'll want to wash your hands of—"

"Oh, shut up!" interrupted Zeke crossly. "We're partners, and your trouble is our trouble all the way! Now, let's get at this thing—ain't there extenuating circumstances? Who'd you steal that horse of?"

"My Uncle Phineas."

"Oh, it's a family affair, then? Whyfor did you steal this horse?"

"To get away. After my folks died the judge farmed me out to Uncle Phin until I was twenty-one. I lived with him from the time I was fifteen until I had turned seventeen—two solid years—and I worked like a mule sixteen hours a day all that time and got whaled regular three times a week for not doing more."

"Seems to me I've heard or read that story before," said Zeke thoughtfully. "I venture a small guess that you got board and clothes and nothing else to speak of for all this labor."

"You win. They were darn poor board and clothes at that."

"That's the way it reads in the story-books. Whyfor did you steal the horse?"

"One day uncle whaled me with a pitchfork handle because the harness broke, and that night I hopped the horse and lit out of there for good and all. I rode the horse to Buffalo, sold it and bought a ticket West, and here I am. I never wrote back. At

first I didn't dare, and after I grew up I didn't care."

"Shouldn't think you would! You didn't steal that horse, Bud; you just collected part of your wages! Nice sort of family you've got. Your uncle holding a charge of horse stealing against you for fifteen years and your own cousin coming out here to arrest you! What we ought to do is play horse with that deputy and make a monkey out of him!"

"Why not do it then?" interjected Judge. "If we played our cards right he might change his mind about pushing this charge. What kind of a geezer is this cousin of yours, Bud? Has he ever been West or does he just entertain the average York State tenderfoot's idea?"

"As I remember Johnny, he used to be up in the hay-mow about half the time reading the life of the James boys and similar edifying literature," answered Bud. "I shouldn't be surprised if he had a highly lurid opinion of our little wild and woolly."

"If that's the case we'll make his dream come true!" exclaimed Zeke delightedly. "Bud, you're the badest man this side of the Mason fruit-can and Dixon pencil line. When that cousin policeman of yours hits town and you give him a display of your prowess as a man-eater, I wouldn't be surprised if he did change his mind. I'd change mine if all I've thought of in the last ten seconds was to be sprung on me and I believed it!"

"How about Spud? He won't stand for any horse-play," objected Bud.

"Spud! Huh, don't worry about him. Why, Bud, there are three hundred and eighty-nine different ways of yanking the hide off a coyote. Spud's so *absolutely* wrapped up in his oath of office that he can actually be made a fool of. Now, let's get back uptown and talk this thing over with every reliable man in Niggerhead and get the stage set. We ain't got any too much time."

II.

ALONG about half-past four the next afternoon Charlie Murdock, a telephone lineman, who had entered heartily into Zeke's scheme to save Bud, slipped out of town on a motorcycle and five miles away he climbed a telephone pole, attached his emergency 'phone to the wires and called up the sheriff's office.

"Hello, sheriff," said he in a disguised voice, "this is the agent at Marengo Junction. The westbound passenger train on the T. & L. line has just been held up and robbed six miles east of here. About ten men in the gang. Fifteen or twenty passengers shot and the conductor and brakeman are dead. Got away with a lot of money and are headed south toward Cactus Center—"

"That's enough! I'll head 'em off!" shouted the sheriff, and hung up the receiver.

While he was saddling his horse the deputy sheriff was shouting the news up and down the street and calling for volunteers. He got plenty of them, and every one was a stiff-necked law and order guy that hates a good joke worse than an old toper hates sweet milk.

He would have had plenty of the other kind, too, if it hadn't been that every reliable man in town had been tipped off on the play.

It is a good thirty miles to Marengo Junction, and three times that distance to Cactus Center, and we figured that the posse would make for the latter place in an effort to head off the mythical bandits. If they did they would find it a long, long way to Tipperary, as Judge remarked.

Just before the posse departed the sheriff came tearing up on his pinto and hailed Zeke thusly:

"That Eastern deputy is due to arrive on the six o'clock to-night and I ain't going to be able to meet him. I appoint you special deputy to receive him and see that he is used right and that he and Bud get together."

"I am delighted!" exclaimed Zeke earnestly. "This is a most unexpected privilege and simplifies matters wonderfully. You can rest assured that I will do my duty, Spud."

Then away they went and the population left in the town scattered like quail and got busy. There was quite a little to do in the next hour.

Inside of ten minutes the old Red Front had a new sign over the door which read "Bucket of Blood Saloon," in red letters a foot high and the boys had collected all the old gambling apparatus in the town and decorated the interior until the original old B. of B. would have looked like a Y. M. C. A. reading-room in comparison.

Zeke came out of the barber-shop with his big mustaches dyed black and the tips

pointing skyward. He had four .45 Colt revolvers in his belt and a bowie knife sticking out of each boot. He presented an appearance of fierceness that would have made a stuffed buffalo break for cover.

He wasn't lonely, either. Every mother's son in the burg was dolling up for the occasion with all the old shooting irons and other artillery they could dig up, along with old goathair chaps and broad-brimmed sombreros and other trimmings. When the six o'clock train pulled in you couldn't have told Niggerhead from Dodge City in its palmiest days.

Mr. John Mallory, deputy sheriff, stepped off and took a look at Zeke, who was extending the glad hand. His eyes traveled from the upturned black mustaches to the four guns in Zeke's belt and then down to the bowie knives in his boots, and he shuddered.

The deputy was short and fat, with a red puffy nose, flabby cheeks and a whisky breath. His eyes stuck out of his head like a hop-toad's.

"Welcome to our town, brother!" roared Zeke, seizing the other's hand and pumping hard. "Thought you never would get here, you darned old hamdinger!"

"Are you the sheriff?" asked Mallory in a faint voice.

"No. I'm Zeke Johnson, at your service. Sheriff and posse have gone out after a gang of bandits that just held up a train down the line a bit and shot seventy-five or eighty conductors and brakemen and passengers and got away with a lot of money. He deputized me to look out for you and your business. I understand you are after Bud Morris."

"I am," answered Mr. Mallory, swelling out his chest importantly. "I should like to have a private conference with Mr. Morris as soon as possible."

"You would!" exclaimed Zeke in surprise. "I thought you came here to arrest him."

"I did," averred Mr. Mallory, "and I intend to, if it is necessary."

"If it is necessary! Do you mean to say that there is a chance that he won't have to go back?"

"I don't know as that is any of your business."

"Well—Mebbe it ain't," agreed Zeke, plumb kerflumaxed by the other's attitude.

If that tenderfoot had only known it he could have saved himself considerable future trouble and discomfort just then if he had opened up right. Zeke saw that there was a card in the deck we hadn't figured on, but inasmuch as he could make but one guess and that was that the deputy was willing to be bought off, and we didn't have ten dollars between us, he decided to play his hand as he had originally intended.

"We're mighty glad to know that you are going to take Bud away. It'll be a relief to the community to have him gone and we'll all help you. However, if you are figuring on a compromise with him, I can tell you right here that it won't go. Bud never gives or asks quarters of any one."

"Is he considered a bad man?"

"Bad! Why, bad ain't no name for it! That galoot's put so many notches in his guns that he's had to have the handles extended to hold them all. He's sure the shootingest son of a gun you ever did see! Come along up-town and meet him."

Mr. Mallory looked thoughtful and acted like he'd just as soon stay where he was.

"Is—is Bud expecting me?" he asked.

"No; he's out working a little lode claim on Misery Creek, but he'll come in fast enough when he hears there's an officer here after him. Bud just loves to mix with sheriffs."

"Can't you see him first and tell him I'd like to have a little talk with him in private?" asked Mallory nervously.

"Not me! I'll point him out to you, and you can do the rest. I've got too many responsibilities to go doing anything foolish. Now, come along."

Zeke hooked his arm through that of the deputy's and started him up-town. They hadn't proceeded a block when Tink Hickman bounced out from behind a building looking like a miniature reproduction of the old wild and woolly in all its worst essentials. He shoved a pair of old cap and ball pistols into Mallory's face, jumped into the air and cracked his heels.

"WHOOPEE!" he yelled as he came down. "I got you, you hifaluting son of a hop-toad! You're the guy what cleaned me out of my pile out Misery Creek way with a pair of phony dice! There can't no man pull that kind of a job on me and live!"

He made to shoot Mallory on the spot, but Zeke worked into the argument and used up a good fifteen minutes convincing Tink he had made a mistake. Then the "bad man" apologized and the procession moved on.

When they struck the main thoroughfare it was the cue for Shorty Potts and Doc Turner to open up on each other with their guns, out in the middle of the street, and they sure did give a Fourth of July celebration while the shells lasted. Zeke hustled his man into the Red Front out of danger of stray bullets before they quit.

"Those suckers have had a grouch on for three days," he informed the deputy. "It's high time they were getting down to business and settling their differences. Have a drink, bo."

The deputy accepted the drink gratefully. He seemed to need it. As he hoisted it Judge got around behind him and let off a pot-shot at his boot-heel, taking out a nice chunk. Mr. Mallory lost half his drink and swallowed the other half the wrong way.

"Hold on, there, old timer," expostulated Zeke to Judge. "Don't go getting gay with a limb of the law. This here's the deputy sheriff what's come after Bud."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," apologized Judge. "I thought you was just an ordinary tenderfoot. I always greet 'em this way."

The deputy coughed and sputtered and finally got his breath, but before he could express an opinion Zeke broke in again.

"Had supper?"

"No. I—"

"Well, come along to the restaurant and we'll feed up."

Mr. Mallory tried to protest that he wasn't hungry, but Zeke dragged that lily white deputy to the Chinaman's joint and sat him down at a table, while the gang stampeded into the kitchen where they could watch the show unobserved.

"Here, Chow, bring me and Mr. Mallory two nice juicy heifer steaks, and see that they are thick and rare," Zeke ordered.

"Alle light," grinned Chin, and hustled out.

Things were reasonably quiet in the restaurant, and it gave the deputy a chance to get his nerve back.

"Do you know," he confided to Zeke, "I was under the impression that the West had tamed down. I had no idea that men still acted so terrible! Why, it's just as bad as it ever was, ain't it?"

"Bad?" exclaimed Zeke in surprise. "You don't call this bad, do you? Why, man alive! it's so darn monotonous around these diggings that most of the old settlers are moving out in search of excitement. You'd ought to have been around here in the eighties and nineties—there was something doing then, believe me!"

Chow came in with the steaks. He had cut them three inches thick and fried them about three seconds on each side. As he plunked them down in front of the diners Ike Walters came in at the front door and let out a yowl like a Rocky Mountain catamount complaining of the toothache.

"I'm a rip-snortin' double-back-action German torpedo with a back-kick, and I'm lookin' for trouble!" he informed the inmates of the room.

"Well, I reckon here's a man what can give it to you!" retorted Zeke, indicating the deputy. "Rise up on your hind legs, Mallory, and show this galoot what a sure enough Easterner can do when he takes a notion!"

"Bangity bang!" went Ike's guns, and Mr. Mallory's steak took a walk, while the plate scattered around the room in small bits.

The deputy disappeared under the table like a gopher down its hole, whereat Zeke jumped up and shot Ike dead through the heart with a blank cartridge. Then he yanked Mr. Mallory out and put him back in his chair.

"What's the matter with you, old-timer? Foot slip?" he inquired. "Buck up, son, and get hold of yourself, and don't be so nervous. Chow," he added, turning to the chink, "Get that carcass out of sight, and see that we ain't disturbed by any more rowdies during this meal. Bring Mr. Mallory another steak."

"Alle light," grinned Chow, and taking Ike by the collar he dragged him out into the kitchen.

You never saw a man have such a time as Zeke did making that tenderfoot eat his supper. He seemed to have got out of the notion altogether. It didn't take much of a mind-reader to see that he was wishing with all his little heart and soul that he was some place else instead of where he was.

"Now we'll go down to the Bucket of Blood and wait for Bud," announced Zeke when they had finished. "The boys have sent word that you are here and Bud ought to be along shortly. I suppose you've got handcuffs and things with you—Bud ain't likely to come along like a tame cow."

"I guess I won't try to arrest him," said the deputy faintly.

"What?" roared Zeke, looking his fierc-

est. "Getting cold feet, eh? Looky here, my friend, this Bud Morris is one bad man and we aim to get rid of him! You've come out here after him and you are either going to take him back with you or kill him—if he don't kill you first! Now, come along!"

Mr. Mallory looked awful sick. He didn't want to go to the Bucket of Blood, alias Red Front, but he went just the same, propelled by Zeke's able hand. The stage was set for him there, too.

Twenty men lined the bar, and as many more were scattered around the room in picturesque attitudes, every one of them bristling with deadly weapons from hat-crowns to boot-legs. They were a spectacle intended to inspire the casual observer with a feeling of extreme discomfort, and they succeeded admirably.

Judge and I had been talking things over on our way through the alley from the restaurant kitchen, and as soon as we were inside Judge took charge of the deputy, while I drew Zeke into a corner.

"Looky here," I whispered, "you've got that *teniente* scared so stiff that he ain't got any more bends in him than a billiard cue. Ain't he had enough? He'll never have the nerve to pinch Bud now. Take him outside and drop the halter, and he'll make just one small cloud of dust between here and New York that'll go so fast that it can't be followed by the naked eye. We'd better call off the rest of the program."

"Call off nothing!" retorted Zeke "When that maverick pulls out of here he'll bust the halter wide open! There won't be nothing able to stop him—not even the Rocky Mountains! And he'll leave here cured absolute and complete, too! There won't be any writing back to Spud, or sending another man out here after him. We'll now stage the next act!" and with that he returned to the bar.

"Now then," he began, addressing Mallory in a loud voice, "every man in this room is your friend; we're all here to see that you get fair play; we fully appreciate your perilous position and we'll do what we can in helping you arrest Bud when he arrives—if you feel that you need any help. We're going to see that he goes back with you if he kills half of us before we get him under control—we're determined on that. But you've got to do the arresting. Where's your gun?"

"I—I—I—bu-bu-bub," answered Mr. Mallory.

He seemed to have lost all power of expression. Zeke promptly felt in his rear pocket and produced a cute little .32-caliber pistol with a shell handle.

"Huh! Is that all you've got!" he exclaimed in disgust. "Great cats, man, if you should shoot Bud with that thing he'd shed tears of mortification! You can't talk to a man-sized man in this town with that kind of an argument! Here, take these!" and he shoved a couple of his own guns into the deputy's hands, tossing the pistol over the bar.

Bud was outside taking the play in through the window, and when Zeke slipped the deputy his shooting-irons, loaded with blank cartridges, in exchange for the toy pistol, it was his cue to come into the game.

He came prancing through the front door with a gun in each hand and enough more on his person to equip a Mexican revolt.

"Where's this high-standing coyote from New York State what wants me?" he yelled, striking an attitude.

"There's your man," said Zeke, taking a firm hold on the deputy's coat-collar and shoving him forward. "Go get him, officer, and remember that we are all with you."

That information must have been a heap of comfort to Mallory. If he'd had the German army behind him just then he wouldn't have been happy.

"Don't waste so much time!" Zeke admonished, shaking the deputy. "Speak up like a man and tell him to surrender!"

"Yip-yip-yipi!" yelped Bud, gyrating his six-shooters. "Who's going to pinch ME?"

"Stand up there!" ordered Zeke, as the deputy started to wilt and was jerked upright again by the hand on his coat collar. "Why don't you do something? Look out! He's going to shoot!"

"Bangity, bang, bang!" Bud blazed away with both guns. Tink Hickman answered with two booms from his double-barreled shotgun—and then we all cut loose.

You never did hear such a lot of noise rolled up in one small room. The old original Bucket of Blood saloon, which we were trying to emulate, never did, even in its most ambitious days, pull off anything that half-way equaled the roar we raised.

Inside of ten seconds the place was so full of white smoke that you couldn't see the lights, and then, naturally, everybody broke for the door and fresh air.

And that tenderfoot deputy—oh, where was he? Zeke still held the coat by the

collar, but the late occupant had vanished out of the thick smoke into the thin air absolute and complete. It is astonishing how quickly a man can remove himself from unpleasant surroundings once he takes the notion.

Zeke turned the coat over and noticed some papers sticking out of the inside pocket. He pulled them out and we all gathered around to examine them. One was a warrant for Bud's arrest on the charge of horse stealing, but the other seemed to be a sort of contract, which read as follows:

> In consideration of certain agreements made between John Mallory, party of the first part, and Robert Morris, party of the second part, the said Robert Morris hereby relinquishes, transfers and releases to said John Mallory, all interests in the estate of their late uncle, the late Phineas Morris—and so on and so on.

"These two documents don't hitch up worth a whoop!" exclaimed Zeke. "Looks like we'd overlooked a bet somewhere. Scatter around, boys, and see if you can find that deputy."

We found him after a long hunt, hiding in an empty freight car on the siding, and Zeke took him into the seclusion of the back room at the Red Front for an interview. Pretty soon he called Bud in, and after another confab they all came out, two of them smiling and the other looking sicker than ever.

"I'm going home with Cousin John, after all," Bud announced. "We leave on the midnight."

"And what do you know about it!" cried Zeke. "This pie-biter didn't have any criminal charge against Bud at all! That warrant was a fake, and Johnny is, too, so far as his being a deputy sheriff is concerned. It seems that Uncle Phineas got religion before he died, and that his one pet sob from then on was that he had so misused his nephew, Bud.

"He plumb forgave him for stealing that horse, and to partly square himself with the next world he willed Bud three-fourths of his fortune, and put it up to Johnny to see that he got it. In other words, Johnny was to get the other quarter when he located Bud and turned his share over, and if he didn't find him within a reasonable time the whole fortune was to go to a college.

"Well, Johnny locates Bud. At first he intended to do the square thing and take his little quarter of the estate, but he gathered a point or two from the telegrams that passed between him and Spud, and hatches the cute little idea that mebbe he can grab the whole works by throwing a scare into Bud. So he frames up this little horse-stealing stunt, appoints himself deputy sheriff and comes romping out here with the notion that he will get Bud to sign over his interest in the estate in consideration that he drop the horse-stealing charge. He'd have done it, too, if we hadn't pulled off our little wild and woolly and scared him out of his senses. Bud was plumb averse to going back to face that charge."

"I ain't averse to going home now," grinned Bud. "But I'm coming back, boys. I belong to the West, I do. I'm collecting a little matter of sixty thousand dollars and when I get back here I'll square accounts with all of you for helping me into it. You sure done your shootingest!"

TWILIGHT

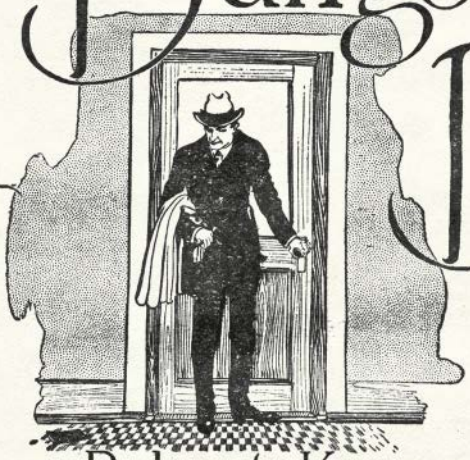
IS candle time, when lights are lit,
The happiest hour? How exquisite
The ladies look, in bright brocade—
A lovely feminine brigade—
With puff and powder, wealth and wit!

In the dim room, where shadows flit,
They drink their tea and cordials; sit
In state and splendor. Rightly made
Is candle time.

Ah! it is meet, supremely fit
That life should move like this. They quit
The garden when the cloth is laid,
Pull up their chairs, and draw the shade,
Whisper, with nodding heads; for it
Is scandal time!

Charles Hanson Towne.

The Dangerous Day



by Robert Keene

I SUPPOSE anybody else would have picked the wallet up. I would have done so myself—on any other day. It happened, however, that I was acquainted with the date.

And for that reason, when I saw that black-leather bill-fold lying in plain view in the hall on the eighteenth floor of the Mammoth Building I smiled—a superior sort of smile.

"No, you don't!" I said to myself. "I don't bite on any old gag like that!"

The person or persons to whom I mentally addressed my remarks, I imagined to be watching me through the keyhole or the crack of a partially-opened transom in some one of the neighboring offices. They'd placed the pocketbook there to see who'd pick it up. Whoever did so would find, the moment after, that he was the victim of a practical joke.

A voice would come floating out of the keyhole or over the transom, to proclaim the finder's folly in tones of mockery:

"April fool!"

The day was the first of April. It was the open season for the playing of all sorts of pranks upon the unwary—or the absent-minded, as concerned the date. But I meant to show the Merry Andrew who had placed that pocketbook there that I was not one of that kind.

Perhaps I was not the first who had seen the wallet even though it was only half past eight in the morning. Others might have come along before me and picked it up, to hear the jeers of the individual who had planted it; and, being recruited into the joke, had dropped it there again to let the next passer-by be fooled in turn as they had been.

But they weren't going to catch me. I was too wise—oh, much too wise—to be taken in by that be-whiskered japery which, next to the brick under the hat, is the most popular with those amateur joke-smiths whose busy day falls immediately after the thirty-first of March.

So, as I walked by the bill-fold, which had a fat look—from its stuffing of newspaper, probably—I allowed my toe to come in contact with it and sent it spinning across the tiled floor of the hall, giving not so much as another glance at it as I passed indifferently on to the door of my office.

I had come down early that morning, as I had been doing for the past week, because the little mail-order business I had started six months before was beginning to look up.

As a matter of fact, I had been rushed to death during the preceding six days. The firm of manufacturers who supplied me with the small and useful articles that I was to re-sell to canvassers at a profit of thirty

per cent., had sent me one of their latest novelties. It was a pocket-size kit of automobile tools, guaranteed to be capable of repairing anything that could get the matter with a Flivver car, and not make a bulge in the pocket.

From the first day when I had inserted the three-line "ad" in the classified columns I had been literally besieged by professional canvassers. My office had been filled all day long with an eager mob—where before it had remained discouragingly empty, in spite of the most tempting advertisements describing the goods I had on hand.

I had been shrewd enough at the start to wire the manufacturers to grant me certain exclusive territory for the "Little Gem," which they had done; and it looked as though I might be on the way to make a name and fortune for myself as a mail-order king, after all.

I was happy over the prospect, for no selfish reason. If I could bring my income up to a respectable figure, Molly and I could get married.

Molly Olstricher and I had known, from the moment when we had first met each other at a Welsh rarebit party, that we were going to get married some day. Just when that day was going to be was a problem.

For that reason we had kept the fact of our engagement a secret. A secret from the world at large and from one person in it in particular.

The person was Molly's uncle, with whom she lived. He was well-off; worth a hundred thousand dollars, which, safely invested at five per cent., was enough to provide himself and Molly with all the comforts they needed. And I had imagined the first question he would be likely to ask me would be, could I support his niece in the way to which she had been accustomed? I had also known the only answer I could give to that question. That, unfortunately, I was not able to do so.

It would be enough to cause him to declare our contemplated match off. He might even forbid me to see Molly again. Therefore, we had decided to keep him in ignorance as to how we felt toward each other, on the theory that what he didn't know couldn't hurt—us.

This had been up till three days before. But then, judging from the way business had been going with me lately, I had made up my mind that I could safely put the matter up to the old gentleman.

If he asked me whether I was able to support Molly I could reply that if I wasn't, I soon expected to be—and let him look over my books, in which I had recorded all my sales of the "Little Gem," to prove it.

On Sunday Molly, who knew that I was coming that night to put the fatal question to her uncle, had labored all the forenoon in the kitchen to prepare, with her own fair hands, a cake of which he was especially fond.

I had found him less grouchy than usual, when I arrived at fifteen minutes past eight. After a half-hour spent in alternately wiping the cold sweat from the palms of my hands and swallowing my Adam's apple, I had blurted out the point of my call upon him.

Whether the cake she had so diplomatically baked had been the cause of it or not, the old fellow had not leaped up from his chair to start throttling me, as I had feared he might do.

Instead, handing me a cigar in a quite unexcited manner, he had asked me how my business was getting along.

I had told him. How my office was full of agents clamoring for the "Little Gem" all day long. And that I had found it necessary, for the past few days, to get down ahead of anybody else in the building but the scrubwoman and the elevator-runners, in order to snatch the time to shake the money-orders and checks out of my mail before the rush of canvassers set in.

When I had finished Molly's uncle had sat looking thoughtfully before him for several moments, then he had told me that he would give me his answer to my request for his niece's hand in a few days. And that was how the matter had been left.

He was going to investigate the claims I had made, I supposed. Well, he could do so, and welcome. He would find that I was swamped with orders, and therefore on the road to wealth, just as I had told him. Even as I inserted my key in the door of my office I heard the telephone inside ringing.

Probably some one was calling up to put in an order for a gross or so of "Little Gems" over the wire. The phone was ringing in the deliberate, steady way that showed some one had been trying to get the number for a long time.

Throwing open the door, I hurried to take the receiver off the hook.

"Hello!" I called.

Molly's voice came to me over the wire.

"Hello! hello!" she gave back. "Is that you, Tom?"

I hitched my chair closer to the desk and beamed into the black-rubber mouthpiece.

"Hello, deary!" I answered. "This is a pleasant surprise. For a hard-working man to be greeted by his sweetheart's voice just as he sits down at his desk to begin the day! You *are* my sweetheart, aren't—"

"Oh, Tom, stop!" she cried. "Stop and listen to me—*don't* be silly now, but listen, listen!"

"I'm not silly," I informed her. "I'd only be that if I didn't love you to distraction. And—"

"Tom!" Molly earnestly broke in upon me once more. "Will you listen to me? Don't say another word, but just *listen!*"

The excitement in her tone sobered me at once.

"Has anything happened?" I asked quickly.

"Yes!" she flung back at me over the wire desperately. "Something *has* happened!"

"You don't mean—?" I began.

"Listen!" she hurried on. "Every moment counts! I've been trying for the past fifteen minutes to get you on the phone to —to tell you about last night and what I heard."

"Yes. Go on."

"Have you found it?" she blurted out.

"Found what?" I asked.

I heard her give a despairing groan.

"Quick, dear!" she continued, with a return to her former tone of breathless excitement. "Look around your office for it. A black-leather wallet—"

"Hello!" I cried out excitedly in turn. "What's that you say?"

"Pick up the black-leather pocketbook you'll find somewhere on the floor of your office!" Molly quickly repeated. "Listen, Tom. I heard uncle talking with a friend of his—a man in the optical business—last night. You remember he said he would give you his 'yes' or 'no' to our getting married in a few days? Well, it seems that he wants to test your honesty first.

"I don't know whether I ever mentioned it to you or not, but uncle has a sister who married a man who turned out to be a thief. He's serving a term in a Western penitentiary now. And then there was a cousin of his who married a man who afterward went wrong—there was something about some money missing in the firm where he worked, and soon after he disappeared and has never been heard of since. It seems that Uncle Peter is obsessed with the idea of making sure that the man who marries me, whoever he may be, is honest—Hello, are you listening?" she broke off to inquire.

"Yes, yes!" I breathlessly reassured her. "Tell me what you heard last night. Quick!"

"I heard uncle planning a test that would prove whether you were honest or not," Molly went on. "He was going down to your offce this morning at half-past seven, before you get there, and wait around till he saw one of the scrubwomen unlock your door with her pass-key to go in and clean up the place. Then he was going to step in and ask for you.

"When the woman wasn't looking he'd drop a bill-fold with a lot of money in it on the floor. He remembered what you'd said about your office being full of men all day long, and he knew you'd think, when you spied the pocketbook and picked it up, that some one of them had dropped it. If you returned it to the person whose card was inside, that would prove you were honest. But—"

"Whose card *was* in it?" I interrupted feverishly.

"One of the cards of uncle's friend, the man with the optical goods store, that I told you he was talking it over with last night," Molly answered. "You told uncle that not all the people who came into your office to buy those small sets of automobile tools were canvassers. Some of them were owners of Flivver cars themselves, who couldn't wait to find an agent who sold the repair kits, and so came straight to you to buy them. You'd suppose it was one of them who'd dropped the pocketbook.

"By putting Mr. Og's card in it he could find out if you returned the pocketbook to him, or if you didn't. But, oh, Tom, you *will* find it and take it right up to Mr. Og's store, won't you? Then uncle will be perfectly satisfied to let you marry me—"

"I'll try my best to find it!" I promised her through my clenched teeth. "And now, dearest, every moment counts. I'll have to ring off and dash back out there in the hall to see if it's still lying—"

"No, no—Tom! Wait, you don't understand!" Molly cried out to detain me. "I said uncle dropped it on the floor of your office, not in the hall—"

"Maybe he did!" I muttered to myself,

rising and clapping the receiver back on the hook—for I couldn't waste precious time sitting there arguing over the matter with her. "But out in the hall is where that pocketbook is now—or was two minutes ago. I only hope, by a miracle, that it's still there!"

I understood in a flash how the wallet had got out in the hall where I had seen it—and, like a ninny, passed it by.

Mrs. Mulligan, the scrubwoman, was nearsighted—she had confided that affliction to me one morning when I had come down even earlier than usual and found her at work in my office. Gathering the wallet up in the waste paper from my floor, without noticing what it was, she must have carried it out in the burlap bag that she used to collect her trash in, and it had fallen out in the hall without attracting her attention.

And to think that I had actually kicked it aside—the thing that represented my one chance of some day calling Molly my wife!

Why, I should be branded as a thief. There was nothing else her uncle would think. If he didn't hear, some time within the next forty-eight hours, that I had appeared at his friend's optical goods store and given him a bill-fold with the money in it intact, he would believe that I possessed such low ethics as to determine to keep what I had found, and he would never consent to let Molly marry me.

As I bolted back out of my office into the hall I swept its tiled floor from end to end—and a despairing groan escaped my lips.

The black leather bill-fold which I had disdained to pick up, in the idiotic belief that it had been put there by some one for an April-fool joke, was no longer in sight. Somebody else had got it—somebody with more sense than I possessed.

He had seen a wallet lying in the corner of the hall to which I had kicked it, and given no thought to the day's date. And now what was I to do?

The hall was empty—no, it wasn't, either.

A man in a shabby suit and out-of-style brown derby was just getting into one of the elevators. I saw him give a furtive look back over his shoulder as he did so. That, and his unprosperous appearance, instantly convicted him in my mind.

He had picked up the pocketbook, and he was getting away with it under my nose!

"Down, eighteen!" I shouted, springing toward the car as I did so.

Too late. The door clanged shut. As I charged up to it the elevator-runner glowered at me through the grill.

"Push the button," he warned me, "when you want to go down. We stop on signal only!"

And the car dropped from sight, leaving me standing there grinding my teeth in baffled rage.

I leaped for the signal-button and held my finger upon it steadily, while I waited for another car to descend—all the time aware of the fact that every moment that went by was increasing the chances against my ever setting eyes upon the man I suspected of having pocketed that bill-fold.

If he got out into the street before I could reach the main floor he would be lost to me as effectually as the smallest needle in the biggest hay-stack.

"Quick!" I blurted out to the operator of the car which finally stopped to take me on, and I thrust a bill in his hand as I spoke. "Don't make any more stops between here and the ground floor—and get down there as quick as possible!"

He accepted the tip and my instructions. And thus, when I sprang off the elevator in the lobby below, I was just in time to see the shabby coat-tails of the man I was after flickering out of sight through the entrance of the building.

But, the thought occurred to me, as I followed him up the street, I did not know positively that he had found the wallet. I had not seen him pick it up. It might have been some one else—

At that moment I saw the man in the brown derby turn into a dairy lunch-room. And my heart bounded with the hope that I wasn't shadowing him in vain, after all.

This would be the first thing the finder of a wallet full of money would be expected to do—try to pass some of it, to find out whether or not it was real.

I entered the eating-place after him and taking one of the high stools at the marble-topped counter opposite to him, I called for a glass of milk and crullers and toyed with them while I waited for him to finish the order of ham-and-eggs, coffee and toast which he had requested the waitress to bring him.

Then I watched him take his check up to the cashier's desk beside the front door. He reached into his breast pocket and I saw him bring out the black-leather wallet which I recognized immediately as the one

I had seen lying on the floor of the hall in the Mammoth Building.

He proffered a bill from it with his check through the cashier's window and received back four bills of lesser denomination and some silver in change, which he thrust into his pocket, and then passed out.

I hastened forward to the cashier's desk, threw down a coin with my check, and followed the shabbily-dressed stranger outside.

"Excuse me," I said, tapping him on the shoulder. "But that pocketbook I just saw you take out in there—you found it on the eighteenth floor of the Mammoth Building, not fifteen minutes ago, didn't you?"

He wheeled with a guilty start.

"Well, what if I did?" he asked slowly.

I held out my hand.

"I'll be obliged to you," I said, "if you'll give it to me."

"Does it belong to you?"

I hesitated whether to lie and claim the ownership of the pocketbook to which I really had no more right than he did. If I told him the truth, though, he wouldn't give it up—and there was no way he would know it if I falsely claimed the wallet to be my own.

"Yes, it does!" I answered boldly.

I looked meaningly as I did so toward the policeman who was directing the traffic in the middle of the street.

"Of course you know that 'findings is keepings' is not held to be right by the law," I went on. "I'll reward you for giving the pocketbook back to me—with ten dollars, which, added to the change of that five-dollar bill I saw you take out of it in there just now, and that I'll let you keep, too, ought to make it worth your while to do the honest thing and return your find to me. But if you'd rather have me call that officer to make you—"

Casting an apprehensive glance toward the policeman, the shabby stranger held out his hand.

"Give me the ten," said he, "and you can have your pocketbook back. When you prove that it *is* yours, that is."

"Of course, it's mine!" I insisted impatiently. "It's a black-leather bill-fold."

"You've got to identify it further than that," the man informed me, with a skeptical headshake. "Suppose the pocketbook doesn't belong to you any more than it does to me? Tell me what was inside it. How much money was in it?"

He had me there. Molly had forgotten to tell me the amount of money she had heard her uncle tell his friend he was going to put in the wallet. I couldn't make a guess at the sum, for if I guessed wrong it would at once prove that bill-fold did not really belong to me.

"I can't remember exactly how much money I had in it when I dropped it. What man can tell, at any given moment of the day, how much money he's carrying with him to the penny? I *think* I know about what the sum was," I bluffed, "but I've been spending out of it for this and that—"

"Take your time," he broke in, a cynical smile beginning to twitch at the corners of his lips as he continued to study my face. "You ought to be able to figure out exactly how much money you were carrying a half-hour ago, if you took the time to do it. Go ahead. I'm in no hurry."

If it had only been possible for me to ask the man to wait while I hurried to a telephone and called up Molly.

"Look here!" I blurted out, on the heels of a sudden idea that had popped into my head, "I can prove to you that that bill-fold is mine without telling you how much money there is in it. There's a card in it, isn't there?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll tell you the name on that card. It's Og. How would I know that if the bill-fold wasn't mine? It's not a common name that I'd have been likely to make a blind guess at, is it? If that doesn't satisfy you that the pocketbook is mine," I went on, my voice dropping back to its former threatening tone as I took a step in the direction of the bluecoat, "I'll call that officer and see if it convinces *him*—"

"Here!" Producing the wallet from his pocket, the fellow surrendered it to me. "I guess what you tell me about its being yours is straight goods, all right. Now fork over the ten-spot!"

I did so. And the man shambled away up the street.

I stood looking down at the bill-fold—scarcely able to believe that I had it in my hands at last.

Quickly, then, I opened it and counted the money. There were four tens and a five, to which I added a five-dollar bill from my own wallet to replace the one the shabbily-dressed man had taken out of it. And then I took out the card of Mr. Og, to learn the address of his optical goods shop.

It was 2 West 42d Street—a number as short, and thus easy to remember, as was his name. Boarding a car, I rode half way up-town to the store, which I entered with a request to be allowed to see Mr. Og in person, as my business was of a private nature.

"I'm the jobber for the Little Gem auto-repair kit in this city," I informed the mild, side-whiskered gentleman into whose presence I was conducted, "with an office in the Mammoth Building, down on lower Broadway."

I saw him start, and assume a guileless expression, as that introduction of myself probably fitted in with the description Molly's uncle had given him.

"Oh, yes—yes!" he stammered out—showing that he was a poor liar. "I dropped in to buy one of those—those kits from you yesterday, don't you remember?"

"Well, I see so many people in the course of a day, that I can't say I do remember your face," I answered dryly. "But you must have called on me," I went on, taking out the bill-fold as I spoke, "otherwise this pocketbook, with your name and address on the card inside, would never have been on my office floor this morning—"

"Why, I've been looking all over for that!" the optical goods merchant exclaimed, with a fair imitation of surprise and pleasure in his tone, as he took the wallet from me and began to open it. "Thank you for returning it to me, sir. Your honesty deserves to be rewarded—"

He stopped short, a look of genuine indignation wiping off the sham one on his face.

"You're not so honest as I thought!" he snapped, staring up at me from the open pocketbook with his lips pressed together.

My heart shot down into my boots. What was wrong now—?

"You imagined I wouldn't know how much money I had in this, I suppose," went on the fellow-conspirator of Molly's uncle. "So you thought you could safely take out ten dollars, and return the rest—thus establishing a reputation for honesty which you do not deserve. It happens, however, that I do know perfectly well how much money was put into—er, that I had in this, I should say. It was not fifty dollars, but sixty—"

I was on my feet, staring at him with my eyes popping from my head. What he implied was impossible—that any amount of money could have been taken out of that wallet between the time I had seen it lying on the floor of the hall, and when I had paid the shabbily-dressed man who had found it to give it up to me.

With the exception of only a very few moments, I had kept him in sight from the time he had picked it up until he had turned the bill-fold over to me. It was unnatural to suppose that, meaning to keep his find, he would have taken ten dollars from it and put it in another pocket the instant after he had picked the wallet up.

But if he hadn't taken it—and I would have sworn on a whole stack of Bibles that he had *not*—who had pilfered the bill which the optician claimed was missing?

"On my word," I earnestly assured him, "I didn't take anything out of that pocketbook. It's just as I found—"

"The money is ten dollars short, I tell you!" he cut in emphatically.

I pulled out my handkerchief and mopped my brow. A nice fix I was in now! Just as I was flattering myself that I had done a neat job by coming through the test Molly's uncle had arranged for me with flying colors—*biff! bang!* This knockout punch had to connect with my solar-plexus.

At that moment, the door was flung open. And in stalked the answer to the enigma—in the person of Mrs. Mulligan, the scrubwoman from my office building.

One of the clerks in the store followed at her heels. He seized her by the elbow and sought to drag her back out of the private office into which she had forced her way. She shook him off, walking straight up to Mr. Og's desk and laying down on the blotter before him a new ten-dollar bill.

"There you are, sor!" she panted. "I've returned ye what's yours—sind me to jail now if ye wanter! I stole that from yer pockey-book this marnin'—the pockey-book that I heard drop to the hallway behint me from the waste paper I was carryin' from the office of a young gentleman in the mailin' business, an' that I opened to find a card with yer name an' address in.

"I meant to stale the whole thing. But I hear-rd somebody comin'. 'Twould be the owner av it, I thought. Quick, I took that tin dollars out, stuffin' it in me waist an' dropped the pockey-book back on the flure. The fact that all the money wasn't in it wouldn't be knowed, I thought, till I'd got out av sight.

" 'T was stalin' to take the tin—I knowed that all along. I've a darter that's sickly,

though. It was to buy her the medicine the docter's ordered fer her that I thought I could do it. But I couldn't. Ever since what I'd done has been hauntin' me, as ye might say. At last I could stand it no longer. 'He c'n have me arrested if he likes,' I thought to mesilf, 'but I'll give the money back to him, an' before I'm an hour older. Honora Mulligan ain't no thafe.'

"I remembered the name an' the number of the door an' strate I'd seen on the card that was in the pockey-book when I opened it. Sure, 'tis easy they both are to kape in the mind after takin' only a glance at them. So, sor, there's yer tin dollars—"

"And here's one for yourself, Mrs. Mulligan!" I broke in jubilantly, stepping to her side and pressing the bill into her hand. "For your daughter, then," I urged, as she drew back, protestingly. "You've earned it by proving your honesty—and mine!"

She looked uncertainly at the optical goods merchant, who smilingly nodded in response to the unspoken question her eyes asked him.

"I think he's right," he told her. "You *have* done something for him, as I believe he'll find out before he's many days older, that was worth many times what he's offering you—so take it. And this, to add to it," he ended neatly, presenting her with the ten-dollar bill she had placed on his desk, "to prove to you that honesty is the best policy—with the assurance that neither myself nor any one else is going to send you to jail because you happened to forget it for one rash moment!"

I understood the reference he had made to something I was going to find out to my interest within a short time, but of course I did not let him see it.

Sure that he would telephone to Molly's uncle, I took my departure—to make a telephone call myself.

It was to Molly, and she told me she knew, from the tone of my voice, before I said a word, that everything was all right.

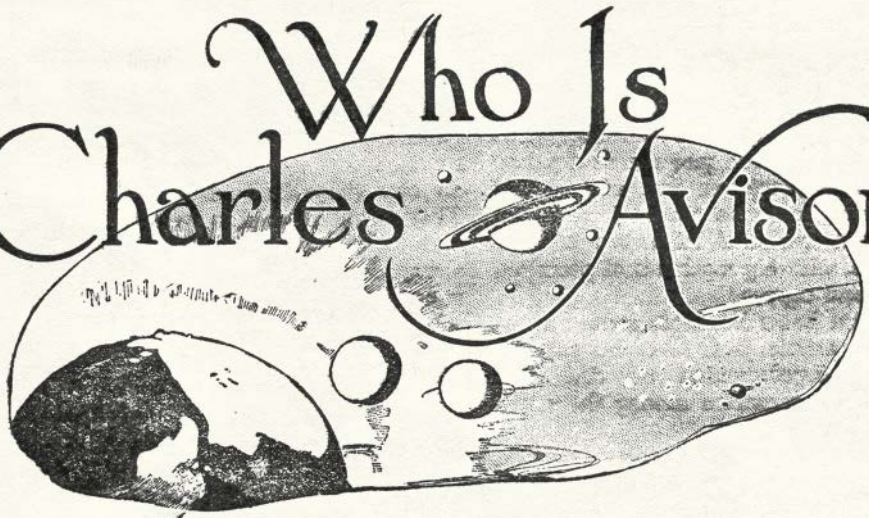
"Oh, I'm so glad, Tom, dear!" she exclaimed. "Uncle is sure to consent now."

"Yes, he won't need to worry in the future," I grimly commented, "about having a thief for a nephew-in-law. But—"

"But what?"

"Well, after all I've gone through," I answered, "he can be sure that he's going to have one with a weak heart!"

Who Is Charles Avison?



by Edison Tesla Marshall

I.

NO one knew what was going on behind the high board fence at the Avison place, which was difficult to climb. Besides, Avison's stolid neighbors were reluctant to show so much curiosity.

But a few boys lived in the neighborhood who were not troubled by such a sense of decorum. The tallest of them boosted another of the "gang" until a pair of round eyes gazed between the pickets. However, the report that the spy made to the other boys—and later to his

parents—was certainly far from enlightening.

He had seen the big house, of course, with its trim lawns and walks. And also he had seen another building that had been erected since the fence. It was built much like a garage, but didn't quite look like a garage either. Protruding out of it was the queerest thing—almost like a huge egg of blue steel, with slabs of heavy glass, and many encircling bands of iron.

It was some time after this that another boy, returning in the late dusk from his milk-delivery, had a story to tell that no one had ever quite believed. As he talked his face flushed and his eyes widened. He said that something almost spherical in shape, dark except for lighted windows, had rolled up into the air above the fence, straight up unwaveringly, and had *kept on going!*

The boy had watched it till the haze of evening shut it from his sight—until it had vanished among the early stars.

"You imagined it, my son," said his father.

But his mother noticed that her husband was perplexed.

"No, I didn't! I saw it as plain as I see you."

"Well," concluded the father, "we'll probably know what it was in the morning. "But, dear," he added, turning to his wife, "that Avison is quite a scientist. The delivery-boy wandered into the wrong door at the Avison place one day, and he told me he went into the uncanniest-looking room he was ever in. A laboratory of some kind it was, with big machines of porcelain and steel and copper."

"And you know he wrote some sort of a scientific article just when he got out of college," supplemented his wife. "It caused quite a sensation among the scientists."

"That's right. It was about gravity, wasn't it? Let's see; that was four years ago. I had almost forgotten. He's a smart young chap all right."

"But why doesn't he go into business?" the woman protested. "He's been engaged for almost a year now to that Cole girl, you know, and if something should happen to him—"

"Oh, well, he's probably pretty careful. And you're sure you didn't imagine it, son, or dream it?"

"No, sir!" replied the boy.

Nor had he dreamed or imagined it. And had Charles Avison wished he could have surprised even more the scientific world. But he wished to wait.

It was true he had been engaged to Agnes Cole for twelve months. In truth, she was mightily afraid of an accident to the young scientist. Even Avison had confessed to the danger in this latest experiment of his.

The afternoon before the Vulcan ascended Avison had spent with Agnes. They had had a long talk, in which he told her much of his plan, but little of the danger. But there was a chance, he said, that he would not be at hand to marry her on the June day selected.

She had tried to dissuade him.

"I must go," he said. "You can't imagine how much it means. But I'm sure nothing will happen. Oh, I'll come back all right! My trial flight was a wonderful success."

His great, dark eyes glowed at the thought of it.

"Good-by, dearest!"

They had kissed and she had cried.

Then from the porch of her home she had seen the strange, dark bubble of a thing float away into the skies.

II.

A FEW nights later the farmers, thirty miles from Avison's home, might have observed a few spots of light hovering in the air over the wide field of a deserted farm. They might have discerned the light-spots dart back and forth, then down, then up a way, and then descend to earth. But it is not recorded that any man was awake to see.

Charles Avison unscrewed the round door of the Vulcan and crept out. Instantly the light died from its windows. At first he could not stand, but staggered twice and fell in a heap under the curved side of the machine. He lay a little while, then flashed his light about and into the door of a great, deserted barn, in front of which his machine had alighted.

He climbed to his feet and steadied himself. After a little while he thrust his shoulder against the dark sphere and rolled it as silently as a great snowball into the high doorway. Then he glanced at his watch.

"Not far from morning," he said.

He walked unsteadily toward the road.

Avison congratulated himself on his nearness to home. A few hours before, when he had awakened from unconsciousness, he had been over water. He had risen from the bottom of the sphere, where he had fallen, with swimming head and drumming ears, and, getting his bearings, had guided the machine toward home. His light was failing when he was still thirty miles away, however, so he had thought it safer to descend.

His experiment had been a success!

Then he began to wonder what had occurred in that brief period of unconsciousness. And was it so brief? His watch had said 3.40 just before he had fainted and 4.35 just after he had awakened. But had it been one hour or twenty-five? His ears still rang; he walked drunkenly.

He sat down in a fence-corner to await daylight. He saw the stars—his companions, he called them—begin to dim as a wide ribbon of grayish blue showed above the eastern horizon. He saw this ribbon widen still more, and soon he could detect the lines of his hands. At his feet were flowers, wet with dew.

Avison lighted a cigar, but he could hardly see the smoke in the bluish dawn. But before the fire in it became too warm for his fingers it was daylight.

He arose and looked about. He knew the place—he had driven along the road many times in his automobile. He knew the great barn where he had housed the Vulcan, the long line of straggly telephone-poles, the spinelike row of poplars beside the creek.

Just thirty miles to home and Agnes! He would start to walk to the nearest railway station—some friend in a car would probably pick him up.

But somehow—Avison did not know how or what or why—something, everything did not seem natural. He could not be mistaken in the place; the trees, the farms, the houses, even the fence-posts were familiar. But that queer, haunting feeling of unfamiliarity remained; he could not shake it off. It must be that he had not yet completely recovered from his fainting.

He started along the road. He laughed when he saw a deep rut that had once broken a spring of his car. Here was the muddy spot where a tiny creek seeped across the highway. Here was the bridge, with its familiar hole where Octavius, his favorite horse, always shied.

The ringing in his ears had gone now; he walked perfectly straight. His head no longer swam. But the feeling of alienation was as marked as ever.

Avison became a little frightened, even though he knew the road perfectly. He tested his knowledge. Soon he would arrive at the crossroads, where the lane turned off toward the old Fair Grounds. Yes! He came to the place just where he thought it would be.

But why was it that everything was the same and yet different? He knew even the ruts of the road and the crack in the telephone-post where the lightning had once struck. He knew the quiet fields of grain, the pretty farm-homes, the horses in the fields. Yet he felt—he knew it now—that something was terribly different.

He saw the farmers on their way to the dairy-barns. He heard the windmills creaking, and the call of the hired men as they hitched their teams to the farming-implements. The world about him was commonplace and ordinary—just as always on a late spring morning in the country. But he could not shake off the illusive feeling.

He tried to; he tried to think of other things. He whistled and smoked again, but found it useless.

He heard an automobile behind him—the commonplace *honk!* of the horn and the *chug* of the engine! A touring-car, bearing only a driver, came up to him. The car stopped as Avison waved his arm.

"Can you give me a lift?" the scientist called.

"Sure."

Avison took a seat beside the driver, and looked at him searchingly.

"You're Johnston, aren't you?" he asked as the car started.

"Yes, but I don't remember you."

"My name is Avison—Charles Avison."

Johnston looked at him quickly.

"Are you Charles Avison?" he asked. "I have heard of you many times."

He stretched out a gauntleted hand and found his companion's thin, long-fingered one.

"We can't be far from Smithford, can we?" Avison asked.

Smithford was a little town but a few miles from his home.

"About fifteen miles," replied the driver. "And what are you doing along this road at this hour, may I ask?"

"Taking a morning walk," replied Avison.

The road was becoming more familiar. He knew many of the names that he saw on the mail-boxes; he knew the dog that barked from the gateway of a farmhouse—a dog that had always barked at him. But yet he was perplexed and bewildered by the lingering sensation of unfamiliarity.

After ten miles the automobile slowed down.

"I have to turn here," said Johnston. "Which way are you going?"

"Straight on, I guess; and thank you."

Avison hopped out of the slowly moving car, and started again down the dusty road. He began to wonder why Johnston had not recognized him; they had passed each other several times. Avison put his hands to his face. He felt several days' growth of hair.

Of course, that was the reason. He needed a shave very badly on the day of his ascent, and in the five days at least that he was in the air a black growth had covered his cheeks and chin. And his face felt thinner; the bones protruded.

Soon he passed a farmhouse—one where he had often stopped for a meal while quail-hunting. So he entered the gate; he was hungry for a warm breakfast again. He knew the dog that came to meet him, and patted its furry head. The old woman at the doorway did not recognize him.

He told her what he wanted, and she led him to the kitchen. He washed in a basin at the back and looked at himself in the glass.

No wonder the others had not known him! His face was much thinner; great, dark bags hung beneath his eyes.

Who would have thought that the days in the air could have been such a physical strain? His white, hollow cheeks and wide, black eyes, in contrast to the black hair, shocked him. No wonder he remained unknown to Johnston and the woman.

During the meal he asked but one question—and it was a peculiar one.

"What's the date?" he asked.

The old woman looked up quickly.

"Twenty-fourth," she replied.

Avison had gone up on the sixteenth. He had been two days unconscious!

And still the brooding strangeness perplexed and bewildered him.

Again he was out on the road. He picked up another ride soon, and when he came to Smithford, he took off the grease-stained clothes he had worn on the air journey. He laughed at himself in the suit he had just bought. In bad need of a hair-cut and shave, and in different clothes, he wondered if Agnes would know him.

The small town was at the end of his walk. He could take the train from there to his home. He walked about the town. Although he was well known there and many people looked at him interestedly, none came up to speak to him. He laughed to himself over the fact that even an old friend did not know him.

The train—the slow old train in which he had so often ridden—pulled in an hour later. By now it was noon; the Avison place was scarcely a half-hour's ride away. He remembered the worn-out plush on the seat of the cars, the conductor who punched his ticket. But always something was not quite the same.

"The trip has affected my mind," he said at last.

He could almost scream at the harassment of it all. He could not analyze or place his finger on the difference, but it was there; it was everywhere! The change of circumstance brooded about him and haunted him and made him grip his hands. His eyes widened at the thought of it.

Was he asleep? Or hurt?

Or dead?—*Dead!* Anything was possible to him now.

What if he *were* dead?

Then he laughed at himself for being a fool. The laugh was hysterical; the train newsie eyed him suspiciously. He pinched himself on the arm, and the hurt was real. But something had changed him—or changed the world in which he lived.

The train stopped at last at Avison's own town, at the outskirts of which stood his own house. Agnes lived here, too. Half-frightened, Avison wondered whether Agnes would know him.

"But it would be good sport if she didn't!"

So he dropped into a second-hand store and traded his trim cap for an old, battered hat. This he pulled down over his eyes, and started down the quiet street. Some boys stared at him as he passed, but no one spoke in recognition. A dog that he knew slunk away from him.

Even the town was different!

Yes! The stores and the people and the fountains and the sparrows in the streets and the signs were all the same in every

physical particular. But there had been change—and Avison swore at himself.

At a street-corner he saw a group of men talking quietly. Although they glanced at him, they did not speak to him. And yet he knew every one of them!

As he passed he heard his name mentioned. He paused a minute as if to stare across the street.

"I knew it would happen some time," old Felix Barnes was saying. "I've told him so a hundred times. But he would go on making experiments. It's a good thing his mother isn't alive. It would about kill her."

"And they say Agnes Cole is just prostrated," said another of the group.

Agnes Cole! Avison listened more attentively.

"The funeral procession ought to start soon," said another.

A ghastly feeling of sickness rose in Avison. He clenched his hands.

"How did it happen, anyway, does anybody know?" asked a youth. "I just got back to town, and this is the first I've heard of it."

From under his arm Barnes drew a folded newspaper, which he opened slowly.

"Here's the account—as much as any one knows," he explained. "Avison went up on the sixteenth for a four-day trip, according to Miss Cole. He had some scheme for beating gravity, mind you. Think of that—beating gravity!"

"Poor fellow!" murmured the youth.

"Well, they found his machine wrecked to pieces just outside of town yesterday. Every bone in his body was broken. I heard the crash myself when the machine fell."

Panic-stricken, Avison turned away. He pinched himself again. His eyes were wide, he knew. His scalp twitched. At a newsstand he bought a paper, and feverishly read of his own death.

The machine, said the account, was broken to pieces. The name-plate, on which appeared the word

VULCAN

had been found, however.

Wildly Avison grasped at every possibility that came to his mind. Coincidence, of course. But what a devilish one! Some aviator had been killed, so badly crushed that even his own family had mistaken his identity. Avison must hurry out to his home and tell his family that he lived. He must tell Agnes, too.

But *was* he alive?

He cursed himself as a fool for letting the question come to his mind—but what did he know of the region and state of death? His eyes widened even more at the thought of it.

But it couldn't be that—it couldn't! He pricked his chest with a pin. Then he pricked his hand till he brought blood.

He came in sight of the old church where he had gone to Sunday school as a boy, and where his father had gone before him—the old ivy-grown church, with its sleepy belfry and its quiet lawn. Out in front were many carriages and automobiles. The sound of singing came up to him—a funeral dirge.

Avison hung back. He was afraid to go on to that church.

What if the body in the coffin should be his?

He cursed himself again, and slowly went on. But he *must* see the dead man before the coffin was closed! He began to walk swiftly.

He climbed the steps and entered the church doors. It was filled with his own friends. The sexton looked at him, but did not recognize him. Timidly he sat down, just beside an acquaintance. The man was weeping quietly.

The service was nearing its close when Avison entered. Almost at once the white-haired old parson said that those who wished might look again at the body.

The people stood up, the young scientist with them. Agnes in black, her face tear-stained, was in front. Near her stood his sister, weeping. He dared not approach them. There was his uncle—all of his cousins. Slowly and wearily the train of people began to walk past the long coffin of black. Avison followed them.

"What if it is?" he whispered. "What if it is?"

He gripped himself and resolved to keep his control. He came slowly up.

And the pall-bearers saw a young man at the end of the line—one who looked familiar, and yet whom they thought they did not know; one who needed a shave and wore a ridiculous suit of clothes—clenched

his hands till the nails nearly tore the flesh, and go white as the flowers banked about the coffin.

Avison rushed to the open air. Then he pressed his hands to his lips to suppress a scream.

"*It is I!*" he moaned. "*It is my own body!*"

And winding away out of the town the funeral procession had started for the graveyard.

III.

CONSIDERING everything, Avison kept his self-control well. He resolved that he would not go insane—that there had been some monstrous coincidence, that the smooth face in the coffin was not his own. But this reflection was the only thing that preserved his sanity.

That day passed, and that night, and still the young man did not sleep. He had secured a room in the hotel—and he tried to forget, in the smoke of many strong cigars. That a ghost could smoke cigars! In the morning he slept a little.

That day his beard was longer than ever, and this, together with the thinness of his face, disguised him perfectly. At ten he caught a train for a near-by city. There he could think it out—away from Agnes and his mourning relatives, to whom he felt a deadly fear of identifying himself.

In the city he secured a hotel room, and again tried to think. He was baffled, bewildered, afraid. The strangeness of everything remained, but not in such a marked degree as in his home town.

"A coincidence," he kept repeating. "It *must* be! It can't be anything else!"

After a few days Avison began to think of his science again. What if he *were* taken for dead? He himself knew now that he was alive and well. He ate heartily at the hotel grill; he saw an occasional opera.

But yet he could not go back to the Avison place nor to Agnes—at least until the memory of the familiar face in the coffin had faded from the minds of those at home. He shut it out of his own mind.

Then he thought of his machine out in the great deserted barn. They had found the wreck of the dead man's machine—and machines do not have ghosts. He felt more himself every day. Finally he remembered that an observatory in connection with a great university was situated just outside the city. So one day he had his beard and mustache trimmed, put on a large pair of dark glasses, and went out to talk to the head of the astronomy department.

"I am Vunden, of Heidelberg," he told Gray, the old astronomer, "and I would like a position. The money part of it is of no importance to me."

This did not surprise Gray. He knew many men on the faculty who worked only for the love of it. He questioned the young man, whose knowledge of the stars he found amazing. So Gray procured "Vunden" a position on a low salary, and Avison went to work again at his old love. It was only for a little while, he thought—until he could straighten out things a little better in his mind. The work might make him forget; at least it would end the monotony of idleness.

But it came about that he was not long at the observatory. A few weeks after he obtained his position there came an eclipse of the sun. That noon, as Avison stared into the eye-piece of the telescope, he saw for an instant at the edge of the dark rim of the moon a new planet. The significance of it struck Avison squarely between the eyes.

He sat back, staring into space for a few seconds, then started up with raised arms. Gray, the old astronomer, found him laughing and crying hysterically.

"What's the matter, Vunden?" he demanded.

"Matter? Matter! Great Heavens!" began Avison excitedly. Then he calmed himself. "I have made the greatest discovery in the scientific world. I have made two of them, in fact! But this one is the greatest in the history of astronomy! Look through the telescope!"

"What is it?" questioned Gray as he adjusted the glass.

"Look!" Avison rasped.

Gray glanced a moment at the tiny orb. The moon hid it as he watched.

"A new planet!" The old man was staggered. "Why has it never been seen before?"

His face flamed.

"I can tell you why! It is in perpetual eclipse by the sun just opposite from us. The once or twice a year it is not eclipsed, probably on account of the elipse of the earth's course around the sun, it is too near the sun to be seen. Don't you understand? Don't you?"

"But why—"

"Oh, I will tell you everything—soon. But first tell me this: Along the twentieth of May was there a kind of meteoric disturbance—a comet?"

"How came you not to notice that? A meteor swept very near the earth. But tell me—"

"No. Let me go. I won't explain now—I can't! But I will write to you in a day or so."

Then as he hurried out:

"To think that I should find out the truth at last!"

IV.

It was only a day or so later that Vunden disappeared as if from the face of the earth. But a mimeograph copy of a strange letter came to every great scientist in the nation. And one letter—the original—came to one recipient who was not a scientist at all—Agnes Cole.

It made many a gray-haired astronomer shake his head unbelievingly. But Agnes understood. The communication read:

To Agnes, and to the Scientific Men of the World:

I do not expect you to believe what I have written here, but I only ask that you investigate and you will then learn that what I say is true. And I, Charles David Avison, of There, not of Here—but an equal in mind, ability, and genius of the Charles David Avison who died for science, Here, of whom you already know—I swear to you that it is the truth.

If you do not believe, it is no matter. For even now I feel that perhaps I am doing wrong to add to the knowledge of the world wherein I do not belong.

Understand first that there are two earth worlds. In order that you may not confuse them, I will call the one in which I now am Here. The other is There.

Both were thrown off from the sun as spiral nebula at the same instant. Here went one direction, and There the other. Both being of the same size, gravity overcame the centrifugal force at exactly the same distance in space from the sun.

The two cooled the same time, of course, their oceans formed coincidentally, and the first germs of life appeared upon There at the identical instant as that when they appeared Here.

I have already told you enough to enable you to understand what occurred. There is no fate or chance in life—everything is cause and effect, cause and effect.

So as life developed There, its exact counterpart developed Here. For every caveman there, one was Here—his exact counterpart in appearance. Everything that he did or thought or felt, the caveman Here did or thought or felt at the same time. And so it was through the ages.

When I, Charles David Avison, was born There, Charles David Avison was born Here. When he began to love, I began to love. When he made that greatest discovery of all ages—the S waves which, conducted through a certain substance, will render it immune to the attraction of gravity, I made it There. Together we built spherical machines, and at the same second christened them the Vulcan.

I will not tell here of my discovery, but will leave it for some one else to make—one who belongs on this Here of yours. Your world has had its Avison; my world still awaits the benefits accruing from the discoveries of its own Avison.

On the same day we each made trial flights, I There on that far-away counterpart world, and he Here. A few months later, on the sixteenth of May, we left our worlds. He left Here and I left There, and each of us floated away toward the stars.

Each of us had air for many days and food enough. But then for the first time something happened There that did not happen Here. For the first time the dualism was broken.

A meteor came near There when one did not come Here. My Vulcan was attracted to it by gravity, and before I could throw the S waves into the metal covering to render us immune, I was sweeping after it at a terrific pace—faster than our finite minds can conceive. I became unconscious then—why, I do not know.

But I see now what happened. The meteor carried me across that infinite expanse to a point where the gravity of this world began to grip me. I began to fall.

I remember now that when I wakened the sea was below me. I remember that I threw on the S waves just in time, and floated down to safety.

I do not how the other Charles Avison of Here fell to his death. I know that his machine was as good as mine, for the laws of cause and effect ordered it so. I can only attribute his fall to some influence of this meteor—this monstrous disturber out of space. The meteor probably never struck the earth; it might now be buried deep in the cold surface of the moon.

I have no place in this world of yours; I am a stranger here. In fact, I have no place anywhere now, for my counterpart is dead. If I stay here the old dualism will be broken still more, and our two worlds would soon become most different places. It is broken, anyway, now, for there is a man's body beneath the grass of Here, that is not There.

When you get this I will have boarded my Vulcan and will have started out into that strange, wonderful maze of worlds.

Perhaps I will go home—or perhaps to a new world. Perhaps I will not get anywhere. But I do not care. I would die out there among the stars, or perhaps on their unknown surfaces, the greatest voyager that the worlds have ever known.

Rabbits

by Fred H. Rindge, Jr.

I HAVE heard about rarebit dreams. I have even dreamed those dreams, at times, but last week was the first time I ever really *experienced* a dream. Let me assure you that the actuality is worse than the dream!

It happened in this wise: I was on a business trip. My friend, Bill Hardy, in Iowa, invited me to stop off for a day's hunting on my way home. As I had not used a gun for ten years, I accepted the invitation, and counted the days.

I believed him, unsuspecting mortal that I was, when he said a day's recreation would do me good—and now that I think of it he said something about "resting" my "tired body."

Well, the day arrived. We put on our old clothes—or rather *his* old clothes. I was so elated over the prospects that I was entirely unconscious of the clothes, meant for a man twice my size. The main objectives were "prairie chickens," but, seeing none, we tried for rabbits.

Over the hills and through every cornfield we plowed in a blinding snow. I had determined to bring back some game, and as you shall see I am a man whose determination cannot be shaken. Altogether, we walked twenty miles through the soft snow, and shot nine rabbits.

I say *we*, because, of course, I am too modest to tell how many *I* shot. The psychologists say one "learns by resting"—and as my shooting abilities had been "resting" for ten years, of course I was exceptionally good.

The first rabbit strung over my shoulder felt like a feather, but after a few hours he weighed at least ten pounds. By the time I had four on my back—well, I shall never forget the last five miles!

Somehow, in spite of the beautiful scenery, I kept picturing myself as one of the moving men who carried our sideboard up four flights in old New York. Just when I seemed to get the sideboard to a place where it would sit alone I would stumble over a cornstalk and realize where I was.

Surely the day's recreation was doing me good, as Bill had prophesied it would. As for resting my tired body—every time I think of those twenty miles I ache all over!

We got back, finally, and I helped clean those rabbits—another indelible impression. Bill insisted that I must take at least four of the creatures home to my wife in New York, as a surprise. I insisted they wouldn't "keep," but he assured me it was only necessary to "freeze 'em and keep 'em cold."

Being one of those loyal husbands who rejoices in taking home "surprises," I acquiesced. If Bill Hardy ever reads these lines may he feel all the pangs of remorse!

Well, we froze the rabbits, wrapped them in heavy brown paper, and I was happy as a lark—or shall I say a rabbit? I was so delighted I even bought a huge box of candy for Bill's kids. (Don't you forget that, either, Bill Hardy!)

With profuse thanks, I said my farewells and went to the railroad station. It was bitter weather, but remembering Bill's parting admonition to "Keep 'em cold," I remained stoically out of doors until the train came.

I presume the car naturally seemed unusually cold to me. I was sure the rabbits would be well off, so I put them to sleep in the hammock, crawled into the lower berth and was soon dreaming of my great day's "rest."

I don't know just what time of the night it was when I awoke, conscious of a peculiar smell. At first I thought I was just recalling the experience of cleaning those rabbits. Suddenly the awful realization dawned—I had not "kept 'em cold!"

I felt of the package. It was moist and soggy. Shades of Caesar, what would I do? I thought of the ice-cooler, but dared not be so inconsiderate. There was only one hope.

With much labor and many pains in the back, I opened one of the double windows, tied the package on the sill, and, exhausted, fell asleep. For the rest of the night I hunted rabbits in Greenland.

When I awoke I could not discover which was more frozen—the rabbits or my feet! At least, the rabbits were cold again, and the day was saved!

In Chicago I made the portage safely from one station to the other with my blood-stained bundle under my coat. Our train was late and the New York train had just left. Two hours to wait. I could not take another chance on those rabbits getting warm again, so walked the streets.

On the New York train, I felt more comfortable. The dining-car steward agreed to put the rabbits on ice, and I was glad to pay fifty cents for the privilege of not worrying. But alas, some time that evening in Ohio, I suddenly awakened to the fact that my car and the diner were parting company.

Unmindful of everything but the rabbits, I dashed madly after the car, secured the bundle with some difficulty and caught my own train again just in time.

When I settled again in my seat, quite out of breath, I was really worried. After all my trouble, what should I do next? Clearly, there remained but one solution—another night in the sleeper, by the open window! At least I would sleep with my clothes on.

I tried it, but there was little slumber. As I sank into oblivion I was faintly conscious of suppressed mutterings from various parts of the car, about some "fool who wanted his window open a night like this!"

In the morning, when I felt for the rabbits, I was horror-struck. The package was gone. I don't know whether I was glad or sorry. I concluded some one had stolen the bundle from outside.

It was therefore with mingled feelings that I heard the porter's gentle explanation that so many people had complained of the cold air, he had been obliged to shut the window in the night. And he had "put the bundle under the seat to dry, as it was all frozen and covered with snow!"

One look was enough—the package lay against the steam pipes, soft and red! I thanked the porter for his kind thoughtfulness, and he smiled serenely, as though he confidently expected an extra tip.

I don't know what I would have done, but at the psychological moment "First call for breakfast" was announced, and I had another happy thought. One more ice-box would save the situation.

This steward was as willing to co-operate as the other had been—at the same price, of course. A few hours later I had the satisfaction of looking at those precious rabbits and seeing them getting cold again.

The rest of the trip was uneventful. I cannot describe the glow of happiness which stole over me when I realized that I was almost home, and the rabbits were safe and "cold."

For the first time I realized their cost:

Shells for hunting	.65
Celebration candy for Bill's kids	1.50
Having package fixed	.10
Use of ice-box in diner	.50
Use of ice-box in diner No. 2	.50
Total expense	$3.25

I did not care. Three twenty-five was rather expensive for the four rabbits, but Bill had kept five and I had enjoyed resting my "tired body" for twenty miles and more.

My good wife met me at the door with her usual cheery smile of welcome. She said I looked tired, but I assured her she was absolutely mistaken, and that I had a great surprise for her. She told me she was so glad for she had one for me, too.

I knew it was a new necktie, for she always picks out such pretty ones. But she said "No, Dear. I wanted to surprise you with something entirely different this time, and I want you to see my surprise first."

I followed her to the fire-escape window with eager anticipation. There hung a beautiful pair of Washington Market rabbits!

The Log-Book

By the Editor

THERE are only thirty-six dramatic situations on which story plots may be based. At least this was the assertion of one Gozzi, an Italian, who lived, I believe, in the eighteenth century. If he had waited some hundred or two years longer to make his advent on this sphere of activities, I think he might have added at least one more to his list of ingredients out of which dramatic situations might be evolved. For, you see, he was not able to take into account the thrilling possibilities that lurk around the automobile license-plate.

These are brought out in graphic tensity of interest in the Book-Length Novel to appear complete in the May ARGOSY.

GETTING AWAY FROM THOMPSON

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN

Author of "The Chase of the Concession," "The Amiable Aroma," et cetera.

Thompson is a terror, and the effort to keep out of his way tends to make a certain automobile tour anything but a pleasure-trip. Things are bad enough before the result of juggling with the license-plates precipitates catastrophe that plunges two eminently respectable persons into a horrible dilemma.

The story is not only compelling in its interest, but is told with that rare grace of humor that has made Mr. Franklin so great a favorite with the wide circle of readers his stories command. " Getting Away From Thompson " is in his happiest vein, and everybody who has ever ridden in a motor-car will be especially delighted with it.

THE OLD WEST PER CONTRACT

BY WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

Is a new Two-Part Story, the first chapters of which will appear in the May ARGOSY. It is a new way of treating the familiar condiments of the old-time Western tale, with a thread of mystery that will keep the reader guessing the while he is entertained by the doings of the happy-go-lucky crowd that go to make up the members of Castle's '49 Camp.

But besides the opening of this two-part tale, the May ARGOSY will carry the first instalment of the best mystery story you have read in many a month. It will be run in three parts, and is called

FROM DUSK TO DARK

BY GEORGE M. A. CAIN

In the opening chapter *Morris Ballard* enters a house by the roadside to borrow a match. His companion, after waiting an unconscionable time for his return, becomes im-

patient, and seeks to ascertain what has happened to him. What she finds is mystery dark and dreadful, the unreeling of which will keep the reader on the edge of his chair to the finish. Don't forget, then, that " From Dusk to Dark " begins in May and will end in July.

Manifestly, with two new serials beginning, there will not be room in the May ARGOSY for very many short stories. But I mean to try to get in " Movie Men For a Day," by a new writer. This is a love story, well calculated to make my correspondent from the Philippines " live once again in the golden days that were."

PREFERENCES IN THE PHILIPPINES

You may remember that some months ago I inquired whether my readers did not prefer to read stories that dealt with the environment in which they themselves lived. It appears that they do. Here is a letter, of especial interest, bearing on this subject that has just come to hand, written in far-off Manila a few days before Christmas.

450 Santa Mesa,
Manila, Philippine Islands.

I have been taking (and reading) THE ARGOSY for about five years now, and so far am entirely satisfied with it. One of my chief pleasures is the perusal of the Log-Book, and really it more than amuses me to read the " kicks " of some of the readers. They pose as judges of fiction, and they certainly do register some awful kicks as to this class of literature, that class of literature, and the other class of literature. Now, while I admit that I like some authors that write for your magazine better than others, yet I also use the sense that I am supposed to enjoy, and feel like giving the other fellow a chance to read and enjoy his favorite author, therefore I do not kick.

THE ARGOSY, as an organ of fiction, is one of the best I have ever seen. When I want action, I turn to THE ARGOSY and get it; when I want phantasmagoria, I search the pages of THE ARGOSY and get that, too; when I am just aching for something with an Oriental flavor—harems, date-palms, eunuchs, intrigues, and all that kind of thing, don't you know, well, THE ARGOSY is always handy. When I want to lose myself among the palm-fringed atols of those " emerald isles set in a sapphire sea," my dear old friend THE ARGOSY supplies my want most obligingly; when I am in a romantic vein and feel like harking back to the days of my youth, and from the recesses of my mind conjure before my mental vision the days when the sun was always shining and all the birds sang love songs in the trees, the days when forty years of age seemed eons in the future, then I seek my ARGOSY, and in the glamour of one of the inimitable love stories that appear anon in its pages, live once again the golden days that were.

Now, Señor Editor, when it comes to my choice, I frankly state that my favorite stories are island tales, tropical island tales I mean, with their accompanying background of golden days, nights of silver enchantment, and the eternal verdure. And my reason for liking tales of these palm-fringed, incense-laden, sun-washed lands is because I have lived in tropical islands among all the sights that I have just described for thirty-one years out of the forty of my life.

I was born in the West Indies, have visited Borneo, Singapore, the Bermudas, Algeria, Egypt, India, China, Japan, and Korea; have campaigned in Cuba and the Philippine Islands, and am now living in the Philippines. Small wonder, then, that I like tropical stories best. But while mentioning my choice, I have nothing whatever against the stories that take one to the ultra-civilized centres of old Madre Tierra, not a word; the other chap likes them, and why should I criticise his taste?

In my modest library of some 200-odd volumes " Robinson Crusoe " and " The Thousand and One Nights " occupy honored places, and are the most well-thumbed of them all. Also, if you care to give my library a closer inspection, you will possibly not be at all surprised to see all of the *John Solomon* stories dignified by a Sunday coat of black with a dark-green gold-lettered back; also Zane Grey's " Desert Crucible," and I also foretell a like fate for " The Brides of Sana."

As a reader I am omnivorous, reading everything with avidity—history, travel, poetry—and when I get surfeited with the heavy literature, what better can I do than shake hands with *Crusoe* once more, or wander again with *Sinbad the Sailor,* or perhaps, better still, turn to the everlasting charm in the tales of the good old ARGOSY?

EDWARD D. W. S. HELAIRE.

IS STRONG FOR THE GOOD OLD U. S. A.

Below you will find fresh proof of the fact that city folk like best city tales and dwellers in the open prefer to read about deserts, whether they be in the shape of islands or plains. Note that Mr. Royhe, of Paterson, enjoyed hugely " Why There Was a Murder on Pearl Street " while having no use for a tale of Arabia that our friend in the Philippines has already decided to bind up separately for his library. Several of THE ARGOSY stories have been filmed for the screen, one that I call to mind at the moment being " His Stolen Fortune," By George M. A. Cain. His " From Dusk to Dark," beginning next month, will make a dandy movie.

Paterson, New Jersey.

Must compliment you for starting off 1916 ARGOSY with the complete novel by George Foxhall, and hope you will keep up the standard throughout the year. Have read a good many leaders in THE ARGOSY the last ten years, and often wonder why they are never converted for the screen. Some would be splendid feature-pictures. What do you think about it?

Don't give us readers any more tales such as " The Brides of Sana," and others with unpro-

nounceable names and incomprehensible themes; and cut out all *war* stuff. We get too much of it in the newspapers. Prefer U. S. American tales of mystery, love, intrigue. Always waiting for the next issue.

ROBERT ROYHE.

HOW FAR DO YOU GO FOR THE ARGOSY?

Mention in the letter below of a six-mile drive to buy THE ARGOSY suggests that it would be interesting to hear from some of my readers who have taken or are now taking even longer trips each month to obtain their favorite magazine. But in these days of motor-cars, six miles is a mere bagatelle, so be sure to mention when you write what means of transit you employed.

Midland, Ohio.

Well, I am ringing up for the first time. Don't get nervous, for I am not even going to hint at a kick. As for THE ARGOSY, it is some magazine. I have been a reader for the past five years, and I wish it was ten. Your stories are all fine; but we all have our pet writers. Mine is Fred Jackson.

I have been driving six miles to get THE ARGOSY, and would drive twice that far if necessary, but it isn't, and so I am going to let you send it to me for a year, beginning with the March number. I am a farmer, but I always find time to read THE ARGOSY.

Well, if this escapes the waste-basket I may come again. I thank you for many pleasant hours.

W. R. BROWN.

THOSE TWO RESTLESS FIGURES IN "31754"

By this time you will all probably have guessed who was responsible for the added touch of mystery in the serial, "31754," concluded in this issue. I am not sure, however, that Mr. Todd's manner of treating the matter in the letter printed below does not hint at another plot that one of my writers may work up some of these days.

Caledonia, Ontario.

I have been an interested reader of the Log-Book, though silent, for a number of years. However, you have forced me to write at last. I do not come as a knocker, but a booster, of your magazine. I have enjoyed your book for a number of years, and have yet to miss reading a single story, and seldom found one that I did not like. There have been times when I could not sit still long enough to read a story in other magazines, yet could still settle down and read any story in your book. I think it must be because I have developed the ARGOSY habit and can't break off.

I have just finished reading the February number, and your new serial has got me going like a racing-car. When it came down to guessing the rest of the story and solve the mystery, your serial "31754" has all past stories stopped. I have as yet failed to find a story that did not turn out all right, but now you have me guessing. I cannot imagine who is to blame. Is it the author, Lawrence Perry, *Lansing*, the editor, or myself who has the numbers mixed?

The story starts with the girl in the gray roadster 31754, who is last seen when *Lansing* is arrested for speeding. When next we hear of the girl her number is 31745, and we follow her under that until the end of the first instalment.

Has *Lansing* mistaken the number and fallen in love with the wrong girl, or has the author got mixed, or is the editor to blame for all the trouble in the difference in numbers, or, lastly, is it I who am mistaken? I have yet to read the finish to the story, and I am afraid I will be the party to blame. However, when you can publish a story in which a mystery develops that includes every one, from the people themselves down to the reader, you are writing some story, and this is what you have done. I suppose I am not the only one who is guessing now.

Hoping you can all prove yourselves innocent of the mistake, from the author down to the printer's devil, and blame it all on me, your friend, REGINALD TODD.

P. S.—Can you get the next book out a few days earlier? I want to get at the end of "31754." It is a good thing that New York State has adopted the hyphen number for 1916. Have they been reading your story in advance?

WHO'D WIN OUT IN A TALKING MATCH?

Here's the first side-light on the matter opened up by H. H., of Omaha, in the February Log, when he pleaded for more talk and less action in fiction. According to our friend Mr. Gilmore, Westerners are distinguished for their taciturnity. As a matter of fact, I know one Westerner whose flow of talk beats anything I ever heard proceed from human lips. How many more agree with Mr. Gilmore that city folks use up more language than people from the plains and the hills?

Kaufman, Texas.

I had no intention of "coming" again, at least so soon, but you asked for it. You inquire: "How many of you agree with H. H. in the belief that the characters in THE ARGOSY do not talk enough?"

Well, that depends on the character. If H. H. will get out of the hills of Omaha, stay off the flats of Council Bluffs, and get out to the northwest part of his State, or even in Wyoming, or take a trip through Montana, Idaho, or even come down into Texas, and keep away from the "movies," get out where there is fresh air and climate, but little else, he will learn that some of the writers for THE ARGOSY have been away from home.

When he speaks of the typical Southerner or Westerner, and expects he will be a "talking machine," it is an exhibition of the fact that he needs to come in contact with that class of men. They do "shout," but it is in action, and not "hot air." In "Men in the Raw" (November book-length) it did seem to me that the author had slipped a cog in the wind-up of the story. If he had stopped to think for a moment of the great big heart that seems to be in the breast of

every "cow-puncher," and how his soul was touched with pity for the poor girl who had been so misled, he would have said: "You pore little thing, let's go back to God's country." That would have been all.

No, *Steve Yeager* never could have been attracted by *Daisy Ellington*, for the reason that she would have talked him to death. The author *knew cowboy character*. When we have an Italian or Spaniard or some city dude character in a love scene, let them turn on the hot air, but not for the Westerner.

C. H. GILMORE.

HOW DO YOU READ THE ARGOSY?

What is your plan in reading THE ARGOSY? It's my idea that most of you start with the book-length novel, then take up the oldest of the serials, but I'm ready to be enlightened. The matter was brought to my mind by the following letter, telling one reader's method in getting next to the contents of his ARGOSY.

Eyebrow, Saskatchewan.

I start right in at the beginning and end at the end. If one has the time to do that way it is the best with your magazine. For one can be sure that from beginning to end he will find good, clean, and "full of life" stories. Of course, if one has but a few minutes he can open up his ARGOSY near the back and pick out a nice short one.

And that reminds me that one writer to the Log-Book doesn't like the short ones. Why, such a thing is almost incredible! *Too* short! I say, "Success to the man who can give us a good plot and good character painting in his short story."

J. M. CALNEK.

THEIR WONDER BOOK

I rather like that definition of THE ARGOSY, given in the letter printed below—the Wonder Book. It means, I take it, a magazine full of delightful surprises each month; at any rate, that is what I try to make it, even after I have told you some of the things I mean to give you.

Norwood, New York.

For ten years I have been a constant reader of your Wonder Book, as we call it. But since I have moved up to this small town I am not always able to get a copy, as they seem to be either just out or just expecting some. So rather than miss a number, I have decided to subscribe.

NELLICE BURROUGHS.

THE FIRST KICK OF THE MONTH

Just when I was beginning to wonder where I was to get what some of my readers term the spice for the Log-Book in the shape of kicks, because none had come to hand, the following turned up in the mail. I should like to ask Mr. Barnes if he considers "Fools of Sacrifice," now running, the kind of story he says I know they want.

Toledo, Ohio.

I hate to kick, but why did you want to spoil the February number of THE ARGOSY by having such a story as "Why There Was a Murder on Pearl Street?" Such superfluous detail, such padding, it has not been my ill-fortune to see for many a day. You know the kind of stories we want. Why do you clutter up the good ship ARGOSY with such trash?

"One-Cylinder Sam," "The Man With the 44 Chest," "The Last of the Duanes"—they are the kind we want. Our reading club of forty-three members has been more than satisfied with the magazine until we read "Why There Was a Murder on Pearl Street."

FRED BARNES.

STRONG FOR THE FEBRUARY NOVEL

What is the skipper of THE ARGOSY to do? Simply nail his colors to the mast and sail ahead according to his own lights. Note what these two passengers have to say about "Why There Was a Murder on Pearl Street."

River Falls, Wisconsin.

I have been reading THE ARGOSY for about a year, and I think it's great. "Why There Was a Murder on Pearl Street" was splendid, and so was "Comrade Island." But it's hard for me to say which is my favorite author. Robert Ames Bennet's novels are hard to beat. They are all good stories, but some are better than others. I do not wish to miss a number of THE ARGOSY.

FRANK KORDORSKY.

100 Harrison Avenue,
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Have just finished your book-length for February, "Why There Was a Murder on Pearl Street," and must say it was a corker from start to finish. I have been a reader of your very valuable magazine for the past four years, and the only objection I have ever had during that time was that it is such a long wait from one month till the next.

I never leave anything unread in THE ARGOSY. I read the Log-Book when I haven't much time to spare, so that it doesn't bother me much to leave it. Some of the kickers make me want to kick—them. I think a man certainly has nerve to kick on what he gets in THE ARGOSY for a dime. I am a great admirer of Jackson's works, but I haven't a kick for any of them. Here's hoping long life to THE ARGOSY.

E. R. BAYLER.

ANOTHER MAN ON "MEN IN THE RAW"

An additional contribution to the controversy on talk, started by H. H. in the February Log, has just come to hand. Our Boulder friend surely hits the nail square on the head in what he says about there's no accounting for tastes when it comes to picking mates in the matrimonial sweepstakes. Lucky it's so, isn't it, or there would surely be more spinsters and bachelors than there are.

Boulder, Colorado.

I read your magazine. It delivers the goods. In it we read of red-blooded men with pep and ginger. I don't know what H. H. means when he talks about ARGOSY characters not talking. He illustrated his point by taking William MacLeod

Raine's book-length novel, "Men in the Raw," as an example.

Now, I liked that story. I thought it bully good stuff. The hero knew how to stand the gaff and keep grinning. He is a man's man—strong and game and square. I'd like a friend like him. So when Mr. H. H. says he never talks, but shouts, I got down the November issue from my ARGOSY shelf to see if I had been slipping something over on myself when I liked *Steve*. Honest, I don't think I have. I've met lads like him down in the cow country—fellows that will stand the acid, and see a thing out to a fighting finish.

If he shouts instead of talking, I don't get it. The way it strikes me is that whenever he opens his mouth he *says* something. If his talk doesn't illustrate character, and help move the yarn along, I'm away off in my judgment.

Mr. H. H. complains that *Steve* falls in love with the wrong girl. Sure he does. What of it? Ain't that the way things happen in this little old world? Ain't we always wondering why So-and-So married So-and-So?

No, THE ARGOSY stories are all right on this talk business. A lot of the magazines are loaded down with talk that doesn't get anywhere. THE ARGOSY talk arrives.

Yours,
JAMES MELHISH.

P. S.—While we are registering kicks, I'll come in with mine on this "Men in the Raw" story. It strikes me as if the story kind of comes to an end after chapter fourteen. The author kind of gives it away himself. He says: "But the end was not yet."

Then he begins on the second lap. But I'm not really kicking, because I thought it a first-class story.

BEST CURE FOR LONELINESS

More than any other magazine, THE ARGOSY appears to be the joy and delight of the dweller in far-off places, shut out by the forces of nature from contact with the rest of the world for a time. Here, for instance, is a tribute from a man to whom our magazine was a companion and a bringer of cheer during a long term spent in Alaska.

Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Reading Mr. Phillips's letter in the Log-Book brought me back to two years ago when I was in Alaska. I subscribed for THE ARGOSY the last year I was there. Before that I bought it from the stands. I was there ten years. I know I am as old a reader of THE ARGOSY as there can be. I read No. 1, and have been reading it off and on ever since. I have reading spells, and when I buy a magazine, it is always THE ARGOSY. I thank you for the many hours that have been slipped by in my cabin when it was storming so outside that one dared not go out. And many others up there, I know, thank you also, but have been slower than I have in expressing it.

C. H SMITH.

A FIND ON THE MILL FLOOR

As I think I have told you once before, I am always interested in hearing how my readers came to form acquaintance with THE ARGOSY, also which stories have pleased them most. This letter from Mr. Frost was therefore more than usually welcome.

Eureka, California.

Have never seen a letter from Eureka, so wish to let you know that THE ARGOSY is as well known and popular here as in other parts of the world. Have been a constant reader for about fourteen years. The first ARGOSY I ever read was a badly mutilated and dirty copy which I found on the floor of a mill where I was working. In it was a serial, "The Land of the Central Sun," which interested me. I bought the next copy, containing a complete novel, "The Man in Red," and that settled the matter. I have bought every copy since then, and still have them all.

While I like some stories better than others, have no kick to make. Always read the Log-Book first, and keep the serials until complete. Like the short stories, and sorry to lose *Hawkins*. I like the improbable kind, outdoor stories of adventure, especially those of the north. Some of my favorite authors—William Wallace Cook, Seward W. Hopkins, Edgar Franklin, Frank Condon, and George M. A. Cain.

R. C. FROST.

LOG-BOOK JOTTINGS

B. O. Thorne, Bruneau, Idaho, likes stories of the frozen North and Western stories best, but his wife likes them all. C. C. Weber, Lakewood, Ohio, wants to know why he can't have the old yellow cover for old time's sake. L. E. Garner declares our magazine is the best he has ever read, and that he doesn't think we need to change it. Mrs. H. M. Slearer sends one dollar for a year's subscription with the explanation: "I have been reading my neighbor's ARGOSY, but must have my own." She thought "Comrade Island" great. F. V. Bennett wants more of Zane Grey's stories, and is glad we have cut out Jackson and *Hawkins*.

F. E. Lux, Rochelle, Illinois, who has taken THE ARGOSY ever since it was *The Golden Argosy*, writes that he cannot help noticing the improvement made, but is disappointed that we cut out the *Hawkins* tales. On this point he adds: "I notice your *Hawkins* knockers somehow remember these stories even after others have been forgotten. I'll wager, like myself, they always looked over the index, located the *Hawkins* story, read it first of all—and then reached for their hammers!" Aksel Stenvick, Wrangell, Alaska, thinks it his duty to register his appreciation of Casper Carson's "Castles in the Air." Calls it a tonic for poor digestion. V. N. Feldhausen, Fernwood, Idaho, in renewing his subscription takes occasion to say: "Let the howlers howl, but THE ARGOSY is the only magazine on the market for good stories. H. Bedford-Jones is some writer. Let us hear from him again soon."

Frank H. Sheridan, Beloit, Kansas, always looks first for a *Hawkins* story. Says he has never met a traveling man who was not amused by *Hawkins*. Ralph E. Hargis, U. S. S., Denver, writes that during seven years in the U. S. Navy THE ARGOSY has followed him all over the world. Andrew T. Resch, Jersey City, New Jersey, thinks "Why There Was a Murder on Pearl Street" fine and the opening instalment of "31754" a corker, and that "The Brides of Sana" wasn't so bad that it couldn't be worse.

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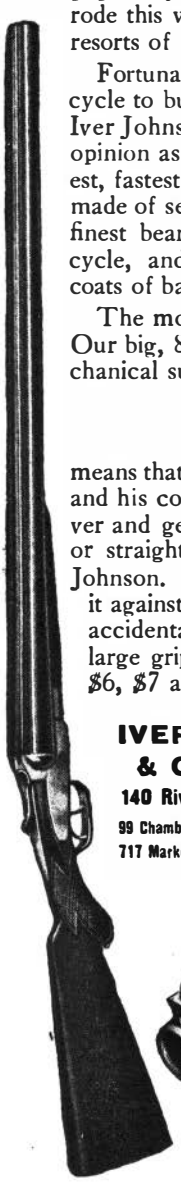

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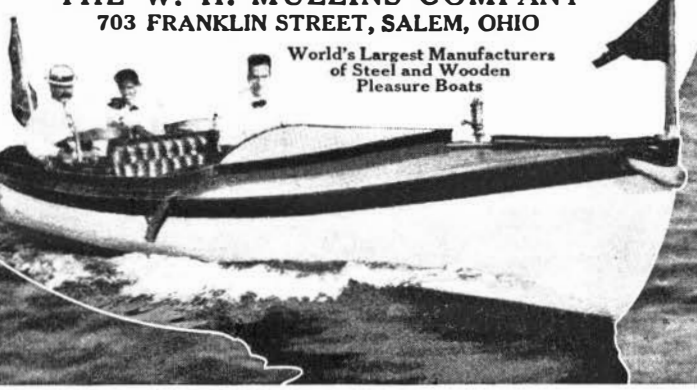

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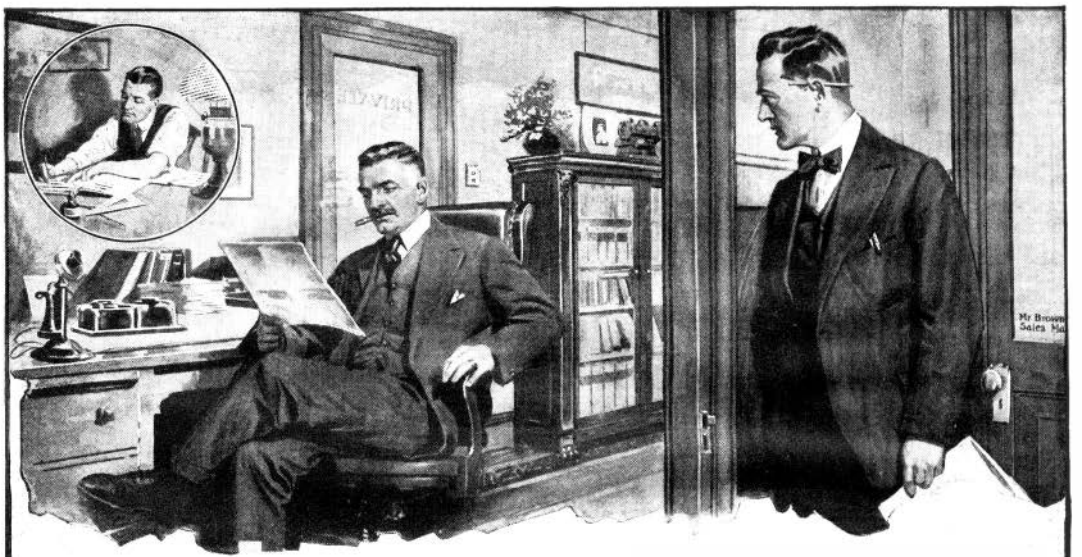

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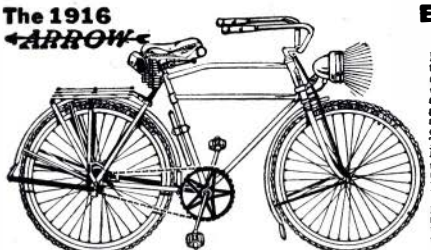

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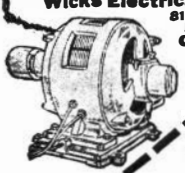

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A sample 1916 model ***"Ranger"*** bicycle, on approval and **30 DAYS TRIAL** and free riding test.

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RIDER AGENTS Wanted—Boys, make money taking orders for Bicycles, **Tires** and Sundries from our big catalog. **Do Business** *direct* with the leading bicycle house in America. **Do not buy** until you ***know*** what we can do for you. WRITE TO US.

MEAD CYCLE CO., DEPT. G-31, CHICAGO

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I make myself hear after being deaf for 25 years, with these Artificial Ear Drums. I wear them day and night. They are perfectly comfortable. No one sees them. Write me and I will tell you a true story, how I got deaf and how I make you hear. Address

Medicated Ear Drum
Pat. Nov. 3, 1908

GEO. P. WAY, Artificial Ear Drum Co. (Inc.)
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Pay as You Wish

We'll send you a genuine Lachnite for you to wear for 10 full days. If you can tell it from a real diamond send it back at our expense. Costs but 1-30th as much. If you decide to keep it pay only a few cents a month. Write for catalog.

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keep their dazzling fire forever. Set in solid gold. Cut by world renowned diamond cutters. Will stand fire and acid tests. All kinds of jewelry at astounding low prices. Easy payments. **WRITE TODAY.**

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$15.00 Draftsman's Complete Working outfit, absolutely free. They do not cost you a penny on this offer. Write today for particulars. Do it NOW.

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Carom or Pocket Billiards played at home gives boys a manly way to let loose their 40-horse energy. *It keeps them off the street!*

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Why don't you learn to be a robust boy or girl again? One Brunswick Home Table brings 33 royal games—*and each one makes grown-ups feel a year younger!*

BRUNSWICK

"Baby Grand"

"Grand," "Convertible" and "Quick Demountable"

Home Billiard Tables

This family of Brunswick Tables lead the world because they are scientifically built.

Fast, ever-level billiard beds, famous Monarch cushions—life, speed and accuracy! *Sizes and styles to fit all homes, regardless of room.*

$27 Up—Pay 10c a Day

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One adult wage-earner in every ten in the United States and Canada makes his living by working directly for a railroad in some capacity. Millions of others earn their living by working for the great commerce which the railroads create.

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Scarf Pin. Solid Gold, open circle mounting. Half Carat Tifnite Gem $2.25 Nothing down, $2.00 Per Mo.

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By Winfield Scott Hall, Ph. D. Noted Authority and Lecturer. PLAIN TRUTHS OF SEX LIFE that **young men** and **young women, young wives** and **husbands, fathers, mothers, teachers** and **nurses** should know. **Sex facts hitherto misunderstood.** Complete, 320 pages—illustrated. In plain wrapper; only $1, postage 10 cents extra.

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GLENN URQUART Plaids—Tartan Plaids, Shepherd Plaids, Fancy and Pencil Stripes, Two-tone Stripes. Your choice of any cloth, plain or fancy weaves, rough mill finish or smooth finish—tailored ***to your own measure*** at prices that will astound you.

Send the coupon for our new Style Book and read of the remarkable bargains in tailored-to-measure clothing. The newest fabrics—at prices never before equaled by any other high-grade house.

The Imported English Serge is but one of the bargains we offer. Just think of it! A genuine Imported English Serge—made to your measure for only $14.50.

Pay $4.50 first and the balance in small monthly payments. Your credit is good.

ON CREDIT!

You do not pay a cent unless you are delighted with the suit—**after it has been tailored to your own measure.** See it for yourself before you decide to buy. Note the perfect fit—note how carefully it is made in the latest style—compare it with any other suit you ever bought—then, if you are not satisfied, send it back.

If you decide to buy—you may pay the bargain price—a little each month. Your credit is good.

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Send the coupon for our Style Book and samples at once. See for yourself the astounding bargains we are making. Examine carefully the newest fabrics. See handsome illustrations of the latest New York styles. The Style Book is free—write for it today. You will be under no obligations—and your name will be recorded so that you can take advantage of these great price reductions made for introductory purposes.

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For free colored Style Book and samples of the newest fabrics for suits and overcoats. We can have your suit ready in 10 days. Send for booklet and free imported samples.

Babson Bros.
Dept. 1074
19th Street
Chicago, Ill.

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Dept. 1074 Chicago

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This Marvelous CAMERA On FREE Trial!

Only 10,000 of these marvelous, instantaneous picture-taking and making cameras to be sent out absolutely on approval without a penny in advance just to prove that it is the most wonderful invention—the camera sensation of the age. So you must send for it quick! Just think of it—the new Mandel-ette.

TAKES AND MAKES Finished Pictures Instantly

You press the button, drop card in developer and in **one minute** take out a **perfect, finished** post card photo 2 1-2 x 3 1-2 inches in size. Camera, itself, is about 4 1-2 x 5 x 7 inches. Loads in daylight, 16 to 50 post cards at one time.

No Films—No Plates—No Dark Room

Not a bit of the muss and bother of the ordinary kodak or camera. It is instantaneous photography. Universal focus lens produces sharp pictures at all distances. Pictures develop and print automatically. Can't over-develop; results simply amazing.

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No difference who you are, where you live or what your age, we will send you the complete "Mandel-ette" outfit absolutely on approval and give you ten days to test it. If not satisfactory return it. But when you see what elegant pictures it takes—so quick, so easy, with no trouble at all—if you wish to keep it you simply send us $1.00 per month until our special price of only $5.00 is paid.

Easy Payments—No References

No red tape of any kind. Monthly payments so small you'll not notice them. Lots of fun and big profits.

No Experience Required

Plain instructions and everything complete with outfit so you can begin taking pictures the moment it arrives. We guarantee that even a child can operate it. Mail coupon right now. No risk or obligation to keep camera.

The Chicago Ferrotype Co.
Desk 240, Ferrotype Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Send me at once one complete model Mandel-ette Camera outfit including supply of post cards and instructions. I agree to examine and test it thoroughly and if satisfied keep it and pay you $1 a month until your special price of $5 is paid. Otherwise I will return it at the end of 10 days.

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Camping Out in a Motor-Car

That's the sort of thing you'll read about in the May ARGOSY when you settle down to the book-length novel:

"Getting Away from Thompson"

By Edgar Franklin

It's a new field for fiction, although as a matter of fact up in the Lake George and the Adirondack regions there are quantities of these up-to-date outing parties every summer. Mr. Franklin, who is fast forging to the front as one of the popular authors of the day, spends his vacations in the territory whereof he writes. The tour starts with a rush from New York City, heads for Albany, and forthwith enters upon a series of "cut-backs" which might very well be compared to a dog's chase of his tail.

Two New Short Serials

will also start in the same issue, so it's a number of THE ARGOSY you can't afford to miss.

Ready everywhere Saturday, April 15th. Price 10 Cents

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Any Watch YOU WANT on CREDIT

I have had my watch one year to-day. It keeps fine time. Enclosed is last monthly payment of $1.00

We have thousands of letters like this in our files, but there is nothing wonderful in that, as we have tens of thousands satisfied customers on our books all of whom are pleased with our goods and treatment.

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That is the test that tells. Suppose you want a watch? Any make, any grade, any size, any case I have it for you---just the watch that you want---**the Latest Model**---NO MONEY DOWN. Express Prepaid. You can try any one of America's best known timepieces for 30 days.

Mr. Henry Smith, of New York, writes us as follows:

Safely First I saw the watch at the express office to-day. It's fine, so I made the first payment

30 Day Free Trial

After seeing the goods first and making a small first payment to the express agent, you can wear the watch or a diamond, or whatever you buy, for 30 days. Test it in any way you want, to satisfy yourself that is is the article you want. Then, at the end of 30 days, if you are not perfectly satisfied in every way, return the goods and we will refund your first payment, or better yet, return the goods C.O.D. for the amount of the first payment.

Another Customer, Mr. John Waterman, of Mass., writes:

I have carried my watch just 30 days I am satisfied, so I am sending the second payment.

I Smash the Terms!

They call me "Terms Smashing Miller" and why should they not? I devote my entire time to the jewelry business. I buy my goods by the thousands while others buy by the half dozen. Therefore, with my large capital and big buying power I should make my terms better than others and I do. It costs you nothing to see the goods so let me send you on for your inspection a really high grade watch or one of my fine diamonds that I import direct and therefore save all the profits.

James T. Wolf, of Ohio, writes us about our terms:

The best terms I can get here is $5.00 a month so send on your diamond at $2.50 a month

No References Demanded

My terms are made to suit you. You get unlimited credit with no red tape, notes or collectors---no unnecessary detail.

Costly Catalog FREE

Send This Today

For Watch & Diamond Book

Send me your name and address at once so I can mail you, Free and postpaid, the most beautiful catalog of its kind ever printed.

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Your new catalog is a gem send 3 more for my friends

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Dear Sir: Please send me, without cost or obligation, your Big FREE Book.

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The Burlington Smashes

Mail the Coupon TODAY for Free WatchBook

All Watch Competition

Look!

19 Ruby and Sapphire Jewels
Adjusted to the second—
Adjusted to temperature—
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25-year gold strata case—
Genuine Montgomery Railroad Dial—
New Ideas in Thin Cases.

Every fighting vessel in the U. S. Navy has the Burlington Watch aboard. This includes every torpedo boat — every submarine as well as the big Dreadnoughts.

Only $2.50 A Month

And all of this for $2.50 — only $2.50 per month—a great reduction in watch price—direct to you—positively the exact prices the wholesale dealer would have to pay. We do not care to quote these prices here, but write—write before you buy. Think of the high-grade, guaranteed watch we offer here at such a remarkable price. Indeed, the days of exorbitant watch prices have passed.

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You don't pay a cent to anybody until you see the watch. We won't let you buy a Burlington watch without seeing it. Look at the splendid beauty of the watch itself. Thin model, handsomely shaped—aristocratic in every line. Then look at the works! There you see the pinnacle of watch-making. You understand how this wonder timepiece is adjusted to the very second!

Free Watch Book

Get the Burlington Watch Book by sending this coupon now. You will know a lot more about watch buying when you read it. You will be able to "steer clear" of the double-priced watches which are no better. Send coupon today for the book and our offer.

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19th St. & Marshall Blvd., Dept. 1074
Chicago

FreeWatch Book Coupon

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Please send me (without obligations and prepaid) your free book on watches with full explanation of your cash or $2.50 a month offer on the Burlington Watch.

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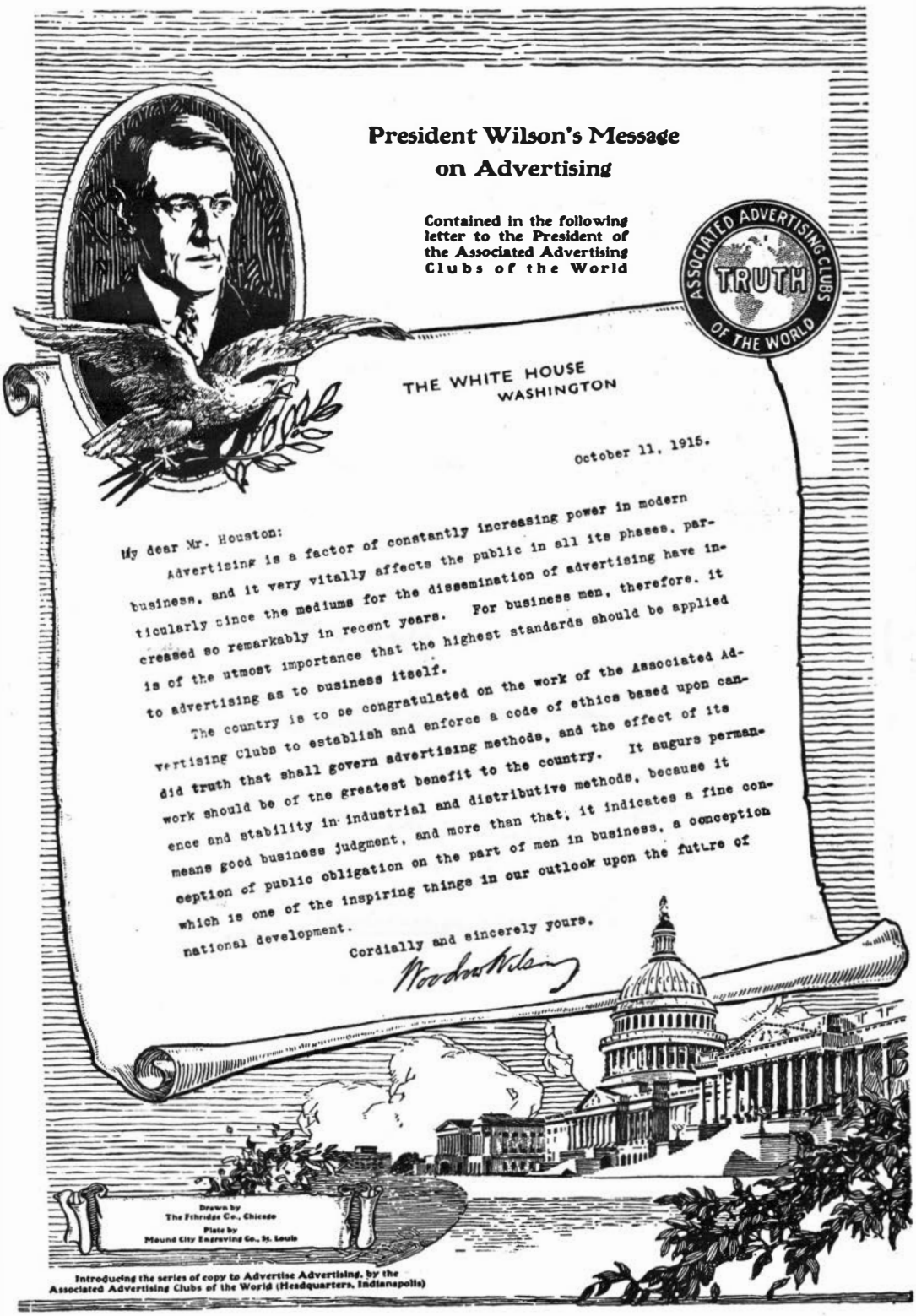

President Wilson's Message
on Advertising
Contained in the following letter to the President of the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World
ASSOCIATED ADVERTISING CLUBS OF THE WORLD
TRUTH
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
October 11, 1915.
My dear Mr. Houston:
Advertising is a factor of constantly increasing power in modern business, and it very vitally affects the public in all its phases, particularly since the mediums for the dissemination of advertising have increased so remarkably in recent years. For business men, therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the highest standards should be applied to advertising as to business itself.
The country is to be congratulated on the work of the Associated Advertising Clubs to establish and enforce a code of ethics based upon can did truth that shall govern advertising methods, and the effect of its work should be of the greatest benefit to the country. It augurs permanence and stability in industrial and distributive methods, because it means good business judgment, and more than that, it indicates a fine conception of public obligation on the part of men in business, a conception which is one of the inspiring things in our outlook upon the future of national development.
Cordially and sincerely yours,
Woodrow Wilson
Drawn by
The Fihridge Co., Chicago
Plate by
Mound City Engraving Co., St. Louis
Introducing the series of copy to Advertise Advertising, by the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World (Headquarters, Indianapolis)

The Smoke of the U. S. A.

That snappy, spirited taste of "Bull" Durham in a cigarette gives you the quick-stepping, head-up-and-chest-out feeling of the live, virile Man in Khaki. *He* smokes "Bull" Durham for the sparkle that's in it and the crisp, youthful vigor he gets out of it.

GENUINE

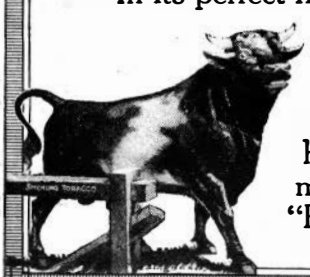
"BULL" DURHAM

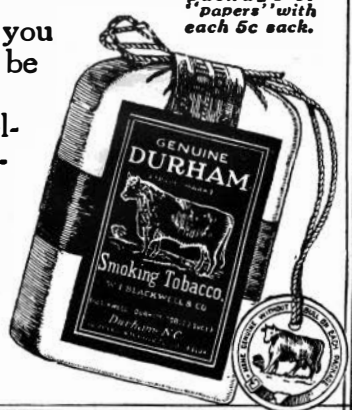
SMOKING TOBACCO

Ask for FREE package of "papers" with each 5c sack.

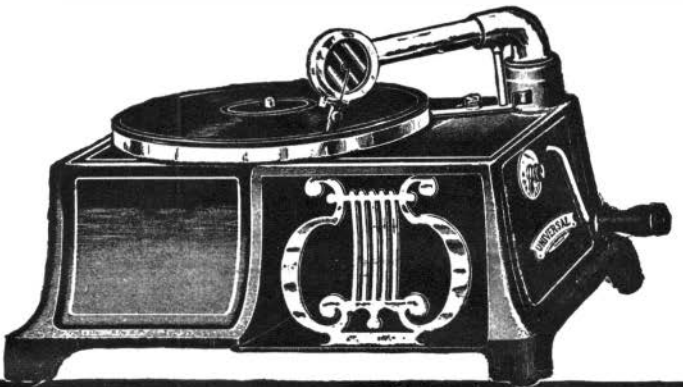
"Roll your own" with "Bull" Durham and you have a distinctive, satisfying smoke that can't be equalled by any other tobacco in the world.

In its perfect mildness, its smooth, rich mellow-sweetness and its aromatic fragrance, "Bull" Durham is unique. For the last word in wholesome, healthful smoking enjoyment "roll your own" with "Bull" Durham.





THE AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY



No Money In Advance

Sensational Phonograph Offer

We offer you the most sensational, the most astoundingly liberal offer ever made in the history of the Phonograph business. We will send to you **without one penny in advance,** without one bit of obligation on your part whatsoever, this remarkable **Universal** Phonograph—this startling new invention—this marvelous **all metal machine** which is revolutionizing the talking machine world. Just 10,000 of these wonderful Phonographs have been set aside to be sent out on this amazing advertising offer which is made in order to get a machine in each locality of the United States immediately.

Never before—and without doubt never again—will an offer so liberal be made. **Not one cent in advance—no references asked—no C. O. D.—no delay—no red tape—not even your promise to keep the machine.** The coupon below is all that is necessary. And with this remarkable machine will be sent **eight splendid selections—the regular 65c double disc Columbia records.** Play this grand **Universal** in your home with the superb selections sent with it—give the **Universal** a thorough ten days' test and then, if after a thorough test and examination you believe it to be the most remarkable, the most wonderful phonograph you ever heard, simply

Pay Only $1.00 In Ten Days

and pay balance of our Special Limited Introductory Bargain price of $16.50 in small monthly payments of $1.55 each. If for any reason you do not want to keep the phonograph and records simply return to us within ten days after receipt at our expense and you owe us nothing—without the records the Phonograph furnished for only $13.90.

Think what a remarkable Phonograph this one must be in order to stand such a critical test as this. Songs, Speeches, Instrumental Music, Band and Orchestra Selections, each voice, male or female, each instrument brought out in an actual reproduction exactly as the original, not one sound or syllable blurred or indistinct—no screeching or buzzing. Gorgeous Harp front piece and all trimming beautiful silver effect, not one particle of tin or wood in its entire construction; base 15 inches wide by 6 inches high, 11¼ inches deep; weight 17 lbs.; has exclusive automatic start and stop. Plays ALL makes and sizes of disk records.

Eight beautiful selections—the regular 65 cent double disc Columbia records—will be sent to you on this offer. A complete list of hundreds of the most famous selections will be sent along with the machine and records. You have the privilege of exchanging immediately any or all of the 8 selections sent to you for those of your own choice.

Send No Money!

Universal Phonograph Co.,
133-37 West 39th Street, Chicago, Ill.

Send at once your wonderful new **Universal** Phonograph and 8 selections of the regular 65c Double Disc Columbia Records. If satisfactory after examination, and I decide to keep them, I will send you $1 in ten days after arrival. I then agree to pay the balance of $15.50 in monthly payments of $1.55 each until paid. Otherwise I will return Phonograph and records at your expense.

Name.....

Argosy

Address.....

No Reference Asked

Remember, no reference asked. On receipt of the coupon we simply ship the phonograph and records right out to you. If you decide that you want to keep the Phonograph and records send us only $1 within ten days and pay the balance at $1.55 a month until you have paid us our Special Introductory Bargain Price of only $16.50. Otherwise return them **at our expense.** Do not delay in this matter. Send coupon today, then examine and test this beautiful, perfect, new **Universal** Phonograph in your home on this liberal **No Money In Advance** offer. This offer is limited—immediate action is necessary—mail the coupon today.

UNIVERSAL PHONOGRAPH COMPANY,
133-37 West 39th Street, Chicago, Ill.

GEM DAMASKEENE RAZOR

The Best Safety

Nothing travels faster
than the popularity of
the Gem - and the speed
increases every day

$1.00

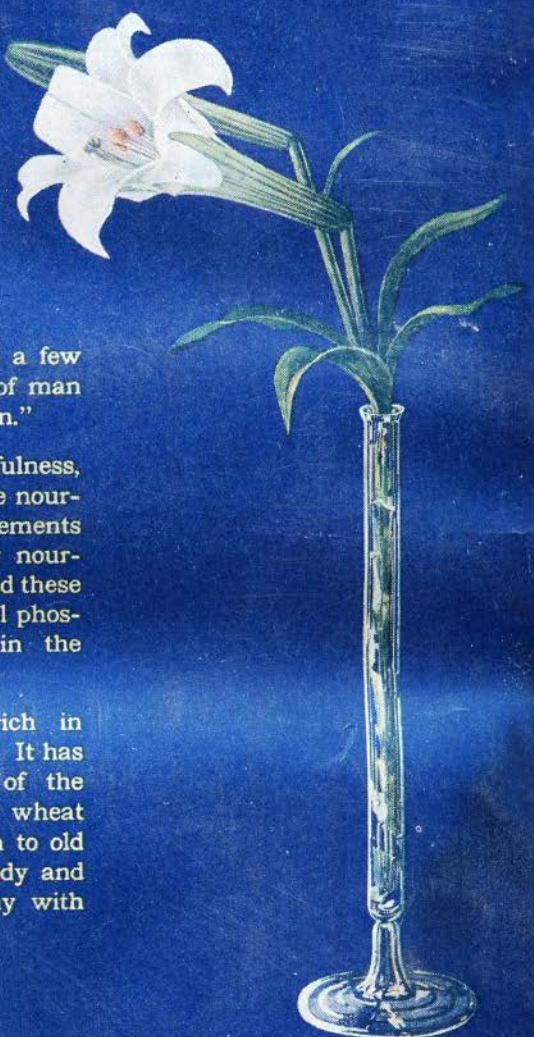
The Gem Damaskeene Razor outfit includes razor complete with 7 Gem Damaskeene Blades, shaving and stropping handles—all in handsome leather case

ALL
LEADING
DEALERS

Gem Cutlery Co. Inc. New York

Canadian Branch, 591 St. Catherine St. W. Montreal

"Consider the Lilies of the Field, How They Grow"



The life of the lily is but a few transient hours. The life of man is "three score years and ten."

But to live his life in its fulness, man—like the lily—must be nourished by those same vital elements which Nature provides for nourishing every living thing; and these include the valuable mineral phosphates so often lacking in the usual dietary.

Grape-Nuts food is rich in these wonderful elements. It has delicious taste, is made of the entire nutrition of whole wheat and barley, and from youth to old age, builds and rebuilds body and brain in beautiful harmony with Nature's perfect plan.

"There's a Reason" for Grape-Nuts