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THE CAVALIER

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THE RED EMPEROR.

BY BANNISTER MERWIN,

Author of "The Girl and the Bill," "Silenced," "Her Better Self," etc.

A SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER I.

THE BLOOD-RED STONE.

MR. RALPH CALVERT leaned back comfortably and closed his eyes, while the barber worked up a creamy lather on his cheeks. This red plush and nickel chair was an oasis of rest in the noisy confusion of the Jersey City station.

Beyond the swinging doors, the bells and steam-exhausts and the voices of the train-announcers were magnified under the great vault of the train-shed; but within this inner domain of the striped pole was a region of quiet and deliberate action.

"I have just fifteen minutes," Calvert had said, handing his hat and his suit-case to the boy.

The Italian barber had implied his recognition of the need of haste by stropping his razor with a degree of useless flourish.

At three thirty-six the Chicago Express would glide out of the station, bearing Calvert westward toward the realization of his first big chance. For, the next evening, Calvert was to meet a great man.

The great man had sent for him; for what purpose, the telegram had not stated; but the bare command that Mr. R. Calvert be at the Annex, in Chicago, at seven-thirty on Thursday evening, was enough to fill the young man with pleasurable hopes.

He delayed the barber by smiling unconsciously as he recalled the hurry of the past hour. The great man's telegram had not come to his hands till his return from luncheon. A dash to his lodging, where he threw a few things into his suit-case; a cab to the bank, whence he drew his available cash reserve—one hundred dollars; then a continuance of the cab-ride to the foot of West Twenty-Third Street, and the purchase of a round-trip ticket to Chicago, and, after the ferry trip, fifteen minutes to spare, and—a shave. The great man would, at least, find him prompt.

His right cheek was now clean of both lather and beard. It was a long, lean cheek — young, but spare; and if one crossed its central plain and surmounted the cheek-bone, he might discover a thoughtful brown eye. It was the eye of one by habit more reflective than aggressive.

A customer was getting up from the next chair. Calvert, though he could not see him, had been conscious of him for several minutes.

"How much?" grunted the customer.

"Thirty-five—altogether," replied his barber, selecting a celluloid check from the pile by the mirror.

From the corner of his eye Calvert gathered the impression of a big man taking the check and turning away.

Then came the startling sound of slipping feet, and a heavy, crashing fall.

In the moment that followed Calvert felt thankful that his own barber had been temporarily busied with the lather brush. As it was, his left eye was well filled with the smarting soapy foam. He wiped it away quickly with a corner of the towel that was about his neck, and at the same time raised himself and looked around.

The big stranger lay prone on the floor. Two of the barbers were turning him over on his back, and a third was wetting a towel with bay rum and kneeling to apply it to his face.

"He falla down!" the bootblack was explaining volubly. "Foota slip in dat." He pointed to a smear of lather on the floor. "Strike hi'self on a head."

"Get a cop," said one of the kneeling barbers.

The order was unnecessary. As the bootblack dashed toward the door, a policeman entered.

"What's up?" he demanded.

While three or four answers were being given, he went to the unconscious man, laid a red hand over his heart, pressed the thumb of his other hand against the bruise on the forehead, and listened for a moment to the heavy breathing.

"Come," he said finally, "put some of them chairs side by side, an' lay him on 'em. He's only stunned, but I'll call an ambulance."

He left the stranger in charge of the barbers and went out to telephone.

Calvert watched these proceedings with interest. He made no move to help, because he saw that his help was not needed. And presently he remembered that he was still half shaven, and that his train was to start at three thirty-six. He lay back in his chair, and, looking up at the dial of the clock, read it. "Three twenty-seven."

No time to be lost. "Here!" he called. "Finish me up!"

But as his barber returned to him, he became of a sudden acutely aware that he had been looking only at the minute-hand of the clock—that the hour-hand was close to the numeral, nine—that he was looking, not at the clock itself, but at its reflection in the mirror — where things were reversed.

He leaped from the chair and stared up at the wall, to the actual clock-dial. It was thirty-three minutes past three—no, thirty-three and a half! In two and a half minutes his train would start. His left cheek was unshaven, and his collar was off.

"My train!" he exclaimed.

With one motion, he wiped from his face what lather he could; with another he put a quarter in the barber's hand. Then—he had got to his feet—he placed his collar loosely round his neck, and took the hat and suit-case which the bootblack had ready for him. A last glance showed him that the man lying on the chairs was recovering consciousness.

Hurrying through the station, Calvert thrust his ticket into the hands of the official at the gate that led to tracks seven and eight, and, when it was returned to him, dashed through without noting the instruction, "Train at the left." As he ran down the platform, there were cries of "All aboard!"

"Just in time!" he panted to himself, intent on the one fact that he had almost missed the big chance. "Just in time!"

The porter of the first car he came to was taking up his little step. The train was beginning to move. Calvert waved his ticket and, nodding as the porter showed signs of questioning him, jumped aboard and hurried through the vestibule and into the car ahead.

"Thank Heaven!" he muttered aloud, pushing through the narrow passage past the wash-room.

And then came his first surprise.

A girl—she had evidently been watching his approach from a window—turned to him and, after a momentary stare, exclaimed, "Oh!"

Was he, then, such a disconcerting sight? One cheek smooth, the other rough; his collar loose around his neck, with the tie dangling; perhaps a dab of lather on his ear—did his appearance frighten young girls?

"You don't look at all as I thought you would," she explained.

That nettled him. "If you had had to leap, half shaven, out of a barber-shop, to catch your train—" he began.

Her merry laugh interrupted him. "Never, I hope," she said, and her eyes danced.

"Of course, I don't mean that you—" He reddened.

"No, indeed." She was humorously vehement. Then she sobered to a dignity that seemed to take account of the fact that she had been surprised out of her natural reticence with strangers.

"I can make myself more presentable in a few minutes," he said. "Then, perhaps, you will permit me to explain—"

"I shall expect you to."

She would expect him to explain? He did not understand. But he began to realize that she was piquantly attractive, with her slight, graceful body and her face that was roguishly intelligent. "Sunshiny" was the word that came into his thoughts as he studied her.

"I shall expect you to," she repeated. "Just think, you might have missed the train. What should I have done then?"

Calvert groped for words.

"Now go," she said, "and—and finish your toilet."

Abruptly he turned and went to the wash-room. With his safety-razor he would complete his shave. But as he laid the suit-case on its side, and stooped to open it, the colored porter came in and said:

"Where is your seat, sir?"

"Not in this car," replied Calvert. "This is a chair-car. I belong in a sleeper, somewhere forward, I suppose." He fumbled for his ticket.

"There ain't no sleeper," said the porter.

"No sleeper? gasped Calvert.

"No, sir."

"But, look. Here's my ticket. See! Car four, lower seven."

The porter took the ticket. His thick lips puffed out more than ever. "Your ticket," he remarked, "is for the Chicago Express. This train is the Washington Flier."

"What?"

"You got aboard before I could stop you. But you acted sure."

"Then the Chicago train—"

"Track seven—left side of platform. Leaves at three-thirty-six. We leave at three-thirty-five—track eight."

Calvert slowly took his ticket back. There was nothing to say; no one could be blamed besides himself. His panicky haste had disregarded all precautions, all instructions, and his expectation of almost being too late had led him, as a matter of course, to take the train which was starting.

He saw the big chance slipping out of his reach; he saw the great man frowning in disgust; and—as a problem of immediate practical importance—he saw his slender money reserve fruitlessly depleted by the cost of one round-trip ticket to Chicago and this useless trip on the Washington Flier. But he decided to take his medicine calmly.

"What's your first stop?" he queried.

"Philadelphia."

"Can I catch the Chicago Express there?"

The conductor had entered silently. "No connection," he put in. "What's the matter?"

"This gentleman's on the wrong train," explained the porter.

"How did that happen?" demanded the conductor, peering sharply over his spectacles. "Didn't you look at his ticket?"

The porter began to justify himself, but Calvert interrupted. "My own fault," he said. "I thought I was losing the train, and didn't give him time to look. Don't you stop at Newark?"

"Only to take on through passengers. We slow down, though. You can jump off."

Calvert thought of the girl who was awaiting his "explanation." To jump off at Newark would not help him to get to Chicago.

"I'll go to Philadelphia," he said, offering a bill.

When, with the conductor's help, he had canvassed every possibility of connecting at Philadelphia with a train that might get him to Chicago the following evening; when he had reluctantly been obliged to admit that he would not be able to keep his appointment with the great man, he laughed. It seemed the natural thing to laugh. Perhaps, after

all, his mistake was not irretrievable. When he got to Philadelphia he would telegraph. The great man might give him another appointment. That was worth trying for, at least.

But the thing to do now was to make himself presentable. He removed his hat. For some reason it did not feel natural in his hand. Glancing at it, he was startled, for the band about it was not black, but green.

"The wrong hat!" he exclaimed. And indeed it was of heavier straw, and made by a hatter to whose goods Calvert considered himself too poor to aspire. "That bootblack—" he began. Then, with a chuckle, he concluded: "But I'm better off than the other fellow."

He laid the hat on a chair and, for the second time, bent to open his suit-case. Suddenly he realized that it was a much better suit-case than he had supposed. And the catch seemed to work in a way that was odd to him. But before he had framed his suspicion, he had it open.

These were not his things—these silver-mounted toilet articles! And these fine shirts and silk pajamas. "The wrong outfit!"

No doubt about it; the bootblack had given him another's hat and suit-case.

"Well," remarked Calvert, "I seem to be in for it all along the line." He wondered whether he was not losing his identity, and he glanced down at his gray suit with the fantastic notion that, perhaps, even that did not belong to him.

At one end of the suit-case was a shaving-set. Calvert could not at once return the suit-case to its owner—who, for that matter, was probably in possession of Calvert's. Therefore, there was no harm in using such things as he needed. So he shaved himself with the safety-razor and adjusted his collar. Meantime, the train slid slowly through Newark.

In his effort to suppress his disgust and disappointment over his mistake, he had become artificially cheerful. Thus he went almost smilingly to find the girl who had wished him to "explain." He looked forward to a talk with her. There was something mysterious in her greeting of him, for she did not seem at all like the kind of girl who would seek acquaintance with a stranger, but he felt that the mystery was not unflattering to himself.

She had seen, no doubt, that he was a man to be trusted. Or — and this was not so flattering—it might be that she had mistaken him for some one whom she knew, or knew of. Well, he would find out; he would discover just why she had watched his approach, why she had addressed him with so much assurance, why she had expected him to explain his tardiness.

There were few people in the car. An elderly woman in a black silk dress had one chair. She was absorbed in a magazine. Farther along was a man—a slab-faced fellow, with small eyes and strangely thin lips. He had swung his chair away from the window; and he gave Calvert a swift look, then bent his eyes again upon his newspaper, which he had folded into such small compass that only a part of one column was visible to him.

"A strange way to fold a paper," thought Calvert.

His further inspection of the people in the car was halted by the discovery of the girl he sought. She was sitting across from the man with the folded newspaper. Calvert seated himself in the chair next to her, and smiled his response to her appreciative little nod.

"Well," she said, "you look less like an escaped lunatic."

"And I feel less like one," he laughed, "although—"

She opened her eyes in mock alarm.

"You needn't be afraid," he hastened to add.

He could tell now that the simplicity of her summer traveling dress was the kind of simplicity that is achieved only by expensive tailors. It became her well. Her face, though not beautiful, was full of life, and her skin was of that clear brown which comes to those who love outdoor exercise.

"I knew you at once," she was saying, "by the band around your hat."

Then she had taken him for another.

"But, why—" he began.

She had opened her hand-bag, and he stopped his question as she reached within and took out a small parcel wrapped in blue tissue-paper.

"Please put this in your pocket," she said. "I don't like to carry it."

She dropped the parcel upon his open palm as she spoke. It was not tied, and the paper opened up, disclosing what was within. Calvert gasped.

He could only stare at the sparkling, blood-red stone. It was wider than his thumb-nail. From its deep heart shot rays that held his eyes compellingly—rays of red fire. For such a stone men might have thrust with daggers in the dark; heavy-eyed sultanas might have cozened the wardens of royal treasuries; the palace eunuchs might have lied away their souls. For such a stone might kingdoms have been risked in war by Eastern potentates. And this tailor-made American girl had dropped it carelessly into Ralph Calvert's hand and asked him to keep it in his pocket for her!

Where had she got it? Why was it unset? Was it her custom to carry it in her hand-bag and ask chance acquaintances to guard it for her? The possession plainly made her anxious. If it were artificial, she would not be so fearful of keeping it herself.

Calvert moved his hand. The ruby seemed to blaze with new vigor, like a dying sun that gathers its energy for a final outburst of splendor.

The girl leaned forward. "Look out!" she whispered. "The man across the aisle!"

And Calvert, glancing sidewise, saw that the large man with the slab face and the little eyes was gazing at the royal stone as if he would devour it. The folded newspaper in his hand crackled under the sudden pressure of the fingers that held it.

Quickly Calvert closed his fist over the ruby.

CHAPTER II.

FORCED ESCORT.

"PUT it away, quick," said the girl in a low voice. "We don't want to have to satisfy the curiosity of the police."

Calvert lowered his hand to his side, holding the gem tightly, but he made no move to put it in his pocket. He looked intently at the girl. Her brow was furrowed by an anxious frown, her eyes were troubled.

Suddenly she turned and gazed out of the window with a show of casual interest in the distant hills. Her lips moved; Calvert barely caught her words.

"That man across from us," she said. "I don't like his looks."

"Nor I," muttered Calvert.

"He may be a detective—or, worse, a friend of Franz's."

Glancing again at their neighbor, Calvert saw that he had turned his back. Apparently he was studying the landscape, but his wide shoulders had an appearance of tense consciousness. That he could hear anything was, however, improbable, so Calvert swung about and leaned forward till his face was close to the girl's.

"Don't show surprise," he said. "I want to ask a few questions."

She nodded slightly, though she did not look at him.

"You tell me that you knew me by the green band around my hat."

"Why, don't you remember?" For a moment she met his puzzled eyes. "Before we rang off, this noon, I asked you how I should know you, and you said—"

"But this hat with the green band is not mine."

"Not yours?" Her swift glance was full of apprehension. Then, instinctively, she reached out toward his clenched hand. Her thought was of the ruby.

"No, it is not mine," he went on. "It was handed to me by a mistake, in the barber-shop. I was in such a hurry that I didn't notice till a few moments ago. The suit-case isn't mine, either."

"Indeed?" She seemed to be playing for time, trying to grasp the full import of this revelation.

"I don't know whose they are," said Calvert, "but I imagine that the other fellow has mine."

Suddenly her eyes flashed angrily. "Give me the ruby," she commanded.

He hesitated.

"At once!" He would not have believed that so dainty a face could become so imperious.

Still he waited; and presently her manner of angry assurance weakened, and she exclaimed, with a catch in her voice: "You have no right to keep it!"

"Have *you?*"

He asked the significant question quite unfeelingly. This girl was attractive—well gowned—but could he accept superficial evidence of her respectability? Whatever her manner and appearance, might she not be an outlaw, waging a guerrilla warfare on society? To put it plainly, might she not be a thief? The suspicion was unpleasant; he could not, however, reject it merely because it was unpleasant.

"Have *you?*" he repeated.

Her first flush receded, leaving her cheeks pale. Her eyes showed him the cold scorn of an outraged woman. Without a word, she held out her open hand. And Calvert, the warm blood mounting to his brow, gave her the jewel.

"Now leave me, please," she said.

"Do you think you are quite just?" stammered Calvert.

"That is my own affair."

He waited a moment longer, with a dwindling hope that she would relent; then, her cold profile being immovable, he got slowly to his feet and went to a vacant chair near the back of the car.

His reflections were both bewildering and disagreeable. Either he had failed to recognize a well-bred girl's inherent right to his full confidence, or he had permitted himself to be tricked by a minx who did not deserve the consideration of an honest man. He resented his own failure to master the situation. A more experienced man, he knew, would have forced some explanation from the girl.

Her appearance and manner were convincing, but her actions had been suspicious. Why was she in the position of having to recognize a man by his hatband? She had spoken of the man who sat across the aisle as a possible detective.

Had she reason to fear detectives? The alternative was that the stranger might be "a friend of Franz's." Who was Franz? Was Franz a first or a last name? Perhaps there was some jewel importer—some Mr. Franz.

Everything she had said and done, up to that moment when he questioned her right to it, had indicated that there was at least a mystery about the ruby. For he did not doubt that it was a real ruby, and very valuable. Why, being of such great size, it must belong among the famous historic gems of the world! Yet it was unset!

He considered his duty. Perhaps he should make inquiries, to learn whether such a ruby were anywhere missing. Perhaps he should watch this girl.

No, he could not thus decide against her. That moment of her scornful anger was not to be forgotten. The most consummate actor could not have feigned that subtle display of emotion. He owed her an apology. He had insulted her with his doubt.

He looked out at the window. The train was passing through New Brunswick. He would go forward and speak to her again—would justify himself.

But he began to feel reluctant. To present himself again to her notice would be to invite further discomfiture. She evidently considered the incident closed. Should he not, therefore, let well enough alone? At least, he said to himself, he would make no move until they got as far as Trenton.

While he hesitated, the girl left her place and came back to the chair next to his. Her eyes were again dancing.

"I was not just to you," she began, seating herself. "Your suspicion made me angry; but when I had cooled off, I saw that it was quite natural for you to be doubtful."

Calvert reddened. "I was blaming myself—" he said. He checked his words, suddenly conscious that even now he was not sure.

She laughed excitedly. "Don't," she exclaimed. "It is really all very funny. I was expecting a man whom I knew all about, but had never met. As he had not come—as you were the last person to board the train—as you wore a hat with a green band around it—I assumed that you were he. I don't blame you for not enlightening me."

"You hardly gave me a chance," Calvert stammered.

"No, I didn't give you a chance. I was too eager to put the Red Emperor into your hands."

"The what?"

"The Red Emperor. That is the ruby's name."

"Oh, it has a name, then?" Calvert prided himself on the diplomacy hidden in this question.

"Yes, it has a name. Its owner and her friends call it the Red Emperor. In the newspaper stories about famous jewels it is called—something else."

Calvert was disappointed. She had given him no clue to discover the ownership of the gem.

"I am so thankful," she rattled on, "that it is not to remain in my charge much longer."

"In your charge?"

"Yes, I am taking it back to its owner to-night."

"Then it is not yours?" he blurted.

For an instant there was a glint in her eyes. Then: "No," she said quietly, "it is not mine."

They were silent. Calvert was trying to make what he could out of the information she had given. Even to his inexperience, it was obvious that she had not sought him out merely to explain what there was no seeming need to explain. She had some purpose in addressing him; she was leading up to something. Then it occurred to him that she was trusting him strangely.

"Why didn't you tell me that it was paste?" he asked.

"Because it is not paste." She looked at him candidly. "You would not have been deceived by anything I said. The Red Emperor proclaims his royalty with a splendor that is unmistakable."

Calvert smiled and shook his head. "You had another reason. Unless you suspected that I was a gem expert, you might have known that I would be easily fooled."

The faintest tinge of red spread over her cheeks. "Well, then," she said, "if you must know it, my real reason for trusting you was that I saw you were honest—and a gentleman."

"Oh!" Calvert felt that she had mercifully meant to spare him the implied rebuke.

"It belongs to a dear friend of mine," she went on. "A short time ago it got out of her possession."

"Stolen?"

"Well — yes. I have been to New York to recover it for her."

"What is it worth?"

"They say about eighty thousand dollars."

"Eighty—thousand—dollars!"

She nodded.

"And you put eighty thousand dollars into my hand!"

Again she nodded. "It would buy a yacht," she said.

"But—eighty thousand dollars!"

"Not so loud." She glanced apprehensively about.

"Of course." He lowered his voice. "But you have no business to be carrying it around with you this way, Miss—"

"Annette Dering."

"Miss Dering, it isn't safe. You should have an escort."

"I expected one," she replied calmly —"a man with a green band around his hat."

"A detective?"

"No, the brother of my friend who owns the Red Emperor."

"I see." A memory of the man who had fallen and been stunned in the barber-shop at Jersey City flashed into his consciousness. "Do you know anything about his appearance—besides the hatband?" he asked.

"I have never happened to meet him, or to see a picture of him. From what others have said casually, I suppose he is a big man."

"Yes."

"Smooth shaven."

"Yes."

"Taller and broader than you, with a—a long face, like yours."

The description fitted the man whom Calvert had seen lying unconscious on the floor. "Miss Dering," he said, "I am afraid that man is out of commission."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Such a man had an accident, in the barber-shop at Jersey City. Nothing serious, I think. He fell, and was stunned."

"Oh! What will Marguerite think?"

"I don't know what she will think," remarked Calvert, "but she needn't worry. He was coming out of it when I ran for the train."

"Marguerite is his sister," she explained.

"The girl who owns the ruby?"

"The girl—" she began in a corroborative tone, but broke off, and ended: "I can't tell you any more."

Calvert rubbed his chin with his hand.

It perplexed him, this story which Miss Annette Dering had doled out to him in fragments, for he did not understand why she had told him. Did she wish advice? He would find out.

"I think—" he began, after a pause. "Or, wait. How far do you go?"

"To Washington."

"Have you friends in Philadelphia?"

"Yes," reluctantly.

"Then leave the train at Philadelphia and go to your friends, and get into communication with New York. I imagine that the man who was to have escorted you will be able to come on after an hour or two."

Her brows were knit. "But, then I couldn't get to Washington to-night."

"N-no. You would stay with your Philadelphia friends."

"And lie awake worrying about the Red Emperor? No, if you please. I must get it into Marguerite's hands this evening. I must go right through to Washington." She watched his face expectantly.

"We-ell. I will wire ahead from Trenton, and we can have a detective to guard you from Philadelphia on."

"Oh!" she exclaimed in dismay. "I don't want any policemen or detectives. Really, Mr.—"

"Calvert!"

"Mr. Calvert, it isn't a matter for the police. The—the—notoriety—the—It would be most unpleasant for—for Marguerite. You understand?"

"I can't say that I do," replied Calvert conservatively.

She looked at him with an expression of faint despair. "But you believe what I have told you."

"I believe you have told me part of the truth. The inference is"—he smiled—"that your friend, being in temporary straits, pawned the Red Emperor, and—"

"Good gracious! She would never think of such a thing!" Only the recognition of a great incongruity could account for her amusement.

"Then, how—and why—"

"Mr. Calvert, the ruby got out of its owner's possession through her own carelessness. Her father doesn't know. He would be very angry. There — I have told you everything I can! Are you satisfied?"

"Quite." Calvert smiled. "And now, if you don't mind my asking a blunt question. Why have you tried to satisfy my curiosity at all?"

She answered without hesitation: "Because I need your help."

"Mine?"

"I want you to take charge of the Red Emperor and—and me—until I can deliver it to its owner. Here!" She took the tissue-wrapped gem from her handbag and impulsively held it out to him.

Calvert shook his head. "No, no!" he exclaimed. "Eighty thousand dollars in my pocket!"

"As soon as I saw you, Mr. Calvert, I knew you were a man who would take responsibility coolly."

"But I don't. That is, at least, I never have."

She eyed him gravely. "You can't make me think so. And that man across the aisle, there, has frightened me badly.

"He saw the ruby. And I remember now that he was standing near me on the ferry-boat coming across the river. You *will* help me, won't you, Mr. Calvert?"

Under the compulsion of her sudden smile, he took the ruby into his hand. "You don't know anything about me," he said doubtfully, "except my name."

"I trust you," she replied.

"You see," he went on, "I am on the wrong train."

"Indeed?"

"I was late, and in a hurry. I thought I was boarding the Chicago Express."

"How unfortunate—for you!"

He smiled grimly. "It surely was. I am due in Chicago to-morrow evening. Now I cannot make it."

"Important?" she asked with a shade of friendly concern.

"My first real chance," he said impressively. "I am a lawyer, with a small practise. A big man in Chicago telegraphed for me to-day."

"A big man?"

"Thomas Dugan."

"The railroad president?" she gasped.

"Yes."

"Why did he send for you?"

"I don't know. That is, I suppose his attention was attracted to me because I won a case against one of his lines a few weeks ago. It wasn't much of a case, but—"

Miss Dering had rested her chin in her hand. She seemed to be considering Calvert's predicament from different view-points, and even the recurrence of his feeling of disappointment over the loss of the big chance could not smother his interest in her most bewitching little chin and straight, sensitive nose, and—

He stopped his daring inventory of her features, for she was speaking again:

"I am awfully sorry that you have lost your chance," she said. "Perhaps it will come again."

"Perhaps." His tone was not hopeful.

"It sounds dreadfully selfish of me," she continued, "but since you can't get to Chicago on time, don't you think you might do me the favor of helping me a little? You could take the midnight from Washington back to New York, if you wish."

Calvert hesitated. He had only a little over fifty dollars left, and nearly twenty of that must go for his fare to Washington and back to New York. There were a few small fees due him, and some of them might be quickly collectable; but, altogether, there was hardly enough money in sight to pay his running expenses for the next two months. On the other hand, Miss Annette Dering was both attractive and in need of an escort.

"You would have got off at Philadelphia, I presume," she suggested.

"I planned to."

"Please put the Red Emperor in your pocket."

He obeyed.

"Now," she said decidedly, "I shall pay your fare from Philadelphia to Washington and back."

"You will do nothing of the sort!"

"I must." A red spot appeared on each cheek. "I couldn't think of letting you. It's enough that you give me your time."

He shook his head firmly.

"I can't permit you to put me under such an obligation. Really, Mr. Calvert, I insist."

"I pay my own fare," he said doggedly.

"Oh, you won't be so mean!"

He did not answer.

"Then," she broke out, with a flash of anger, "I don't want you to go to Washington at all. Do you understand?"

"I don't exactly see how you can keep me from going to Washington," he remarked. "This is not a private car."

"Give me the ruby." The fingers of her extended hand opened and shut nervously.

"I will keep the ruby for you until we get to Washington," he replied, with wonder at his temerity. "It isn't safe in your hands. You know it isn't."

Her eyes snapped. "Give it to me! Now!"

Calvert smiled weakly. After all, he had no right to the stone.

"I mean what I say." She looked him squarely in the eye.

He took the Red Emperor from his pocket and held it out to her. She seized it swiftly. Rising to return to her own chair, she said with finality: "There is no longer any reason for you to go to Washington. I trust that you understand."

"I am going to Washington," replied Calvert, "whether you like it or not."

And as she hurried away from him, he realized that his heart was pounding away at a foolish speed.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN ACROSS THE AISLE.

ON rolled the train—through Trenton and across the Delaware, and on to Philadelphia. And Calvert, sitting alone, stared moodily out of the window and wondered how much of an ass he really was.

When he turned his eyes to the interior of the car, he could see Miss Dering's veil-shrouded hat, and he had a glimpse of the red-brown coils of hair beneath it; but as for her face, not once did she show him so much as the tip of her nose.

Calvert blamed her severely. "Just like a girl!" he said. "Gets a fellow into an awkward place and then messes the whole business." She ought to have known that he couldn't let her pay his fare.

Then came another question, that made him flush. Miss Dering seemed to be a girl of means; had she, from anything

he had said or done, judged that he was moneyless? Did she think he could not afford a jaunt to Washington and back? Probably not, he decided, with some relief. No, she had simply wished to be under no money obligation to him.

He was fully determined to see the affair through. Miss Annette Dering had convinced him of her honesty; at least he discovered that he no longer questioned the truth of her story. She was worried by the fact that the Red Emperor was in her hand-bag. Besides himself, at least one person in the car—and a dubious person at that—had seen the jewel, and that meant that there was reason for her worry.

If, from a trifling feminine pique, she did not care to accept Mr. Ralph Calvert's protection, his insistence on keeping near her might ultimately prove comforting. Whether she got over her pique or not, she would paradoxically be glad he had not left the train.

The back of her head looked as though she did not know he was in the car. Was she reading? He leaned out into the aisle and peered ahead, but he could not tell whether she had a book or a magazine. He had not seen her stop the man who came through the train at intervals, his arms heaped high with reading-matter. His reason told him, indeed, that she would be too nervous for more than a pretense of occupation. She would be thinking of the Red Emperor, and of him, and of the man across the aisle.

And what of that man across the aisle? He was the only possible danger—the only stranger who had seen the ruby. Calvert looked at him, and saw that he still had his back to the girl, that he still held that folded newspaper in his hand; he was sitting, moreover, so that by a side glance it would be easy for him to keep an eye on either end of the car.

Calvert was surprised by the indefiniteness of the fellow's profile. It was a big face, take it altogether, and heavily jowled, but the nose was a mere blob, and the mouth only a slit, and the small eye like a well almost lost in a desert. Nearer to Calvert, the elderly woman was still reading, and beyond Miss Dering and "the man across the aisle" were several other woman, but no man except one aged person who looked old enough to be a superannuated Senator.

The conductor came through. Calvert stopped him and paid the fare from Philadelphia to Washington. He learned too, that he could make some arrangement for the use of his Chicago ticket on another date. It was still his plan to drop off at Philadelphia long enough to telegraph to the great Thomas Dugan at Chicago, but as he again thought it over, he decided to wait until he reached Washington. He did not like to leave the car while the big stranger was still sitting across from Miss Dering. In fact, though he longed for a pipe, he would not even go to the smoking-room.

So the train stopped in Philadelphia and went on to the southward. As they drew out of the station, Miss Dering suddenly became much interested in something on the platform. For the first time since she had left him Calvert saw her profile; then as the train passed by the object of her apparent interest, she turned until he had a three-quarters view of her face.

He understood: her curiosity had triumphed over her pride; she wished to see whether he had stuck to his determination of going on to Washington. And swiftly she threw a casual glance down the car, and turned quickly back. She had seen him; she knew that he was there, and he hoped, he believed, that the discovery was a relief to her.

Now was the time to go to her and force her to accept his company, to disregard smilingly her possible disdain. But Calvert, knowing that a masterful policy would win, nevertheless held back. Three hours remained. He would keep away from her until they were close to Washington. He foresaw that the longer he waited, the gladder she would be to hear his voice, and this little excursion into the feminine mind elated him.

Presently came the first call to dinner. Miss Dering responded at once. As she rose and went forward, the big stranger across the aisle swung his chair through a quarter circle, and boldly looked after her. A moment later he got up and stretched himself lazily, then thrust the folded newspaper into his right coat-pocket. With long, deliberate steps he followed the girl.

Calvert went after them, and reached the dining-car in time to see the big man seat himself at a table just behind Miss Dering's—a position whence he could watch every move she made. So Calvert took a place at the table behind the big man.

It was a protracted meal—and from Calvert's standpoint, an expensive one. Miss Dering evidently wished to kill as much time as possible. Dish after dish she ordered, lingering over each one, only to send it away almost untasted. And the big stranger duplicated her orders.

Calvert, picking the cheapest dishes he could find, ate methodically, and at last took to ordering cup after cup of coffee. It seemed as though he had never drunk so much coffee before.

At last the girl gave the waiter a bank-note. As soon as he brought her change, she got up and started back toward the chair-car. If she saw the man who had been sitting behind her, she made no sign, but held her eyes straight before her. By the same token she ignored Calvert. He saw, however, that she was clutching her hand-bag tightly.

The sinister stranger laid some money on his table. Evidently it was the exact change, for he departed with a sort of easy haste. His action left no doubt that he was keeping Miss Dering under observation; and Calvert, finding that his own bill was a little more than two dollars, gave three one-dollar bills to the waiter and hurried away, followed by unusually profuse thank-yous.

He entered the car next to the dining-car in time to see the girl disappear into the passage at the farther end. The big stranger, who was half-way down the car, immediately quickened his steps.

It flashed upon Calvert that the man wished to catch up with her on the vestibuled platform, whence they would not be visible from either the car ahead or the car behind. She would then be cut off from help, unless some one was passing through. Doubtless, the stranger expected to get the Red Emperor away from her; doubtless, also, he thought that Calvert would be detained in settling his account in the dining-car.

Hurrying through the passage by the wash-room, Calvert reached the vestibule just as the stranger had almost caught up with Miss Dering. It incensed Calvert to see that the man was extending one hand, as if to seize her by the shoulder. The noise of the train would have been enough to cover any outcry she might make.

On an impulse, Calvert whistled a sharp note. The sound must have penetrated to the stranger's ears, telling him that there was some one behind him; for his hand dropped to his side, and he hesitated for a moment, poised on the ball of one foot; then reached out for the brake-wheel, as if he had lost his balance. The girl, meantime, went on, oblivious of what was taking place behind her.

The stranger did not turn. As the girl entered the passage of the next car, in which her own seat was, he continued after her; and Calvert, keeping his distance, followed more slowly. She took her seat nonchalantly, her eyes to the window.

The stranger continued down the aisle, toward the smoking-room. Calvert went to his own chair, and smiled to himself as he thought how quickly she would relent toward him, if she knew the danger from which his presence had already saved her.

In that hand-bag which she clutched so tightly was the Red Emperor. And but for that moment when the tissue wrapping had unfolded in his hand no one would have suspected that she carried a small fortune with her. But the big stranger, whether thief or detective, was alive to her possession of it.

A bright idea came to Calvert. The girl was in no immediate danger; why should he not go to the smoking-room and have the pipe he craved, and get into talk with the stranger? The fellow evidently knew that Calvert had given the ruby back to her.

Perhaps he was not really dangerous at all, but merely some curious but inoffensive traveling-man — or a public official at Washington, it might be. It would be a relief to learn just who and what he was.

Nevertheless, Calvert's heart beat faster as he went into the smoking-room. After all, he did not know what might happen.

The stranger was sitting in the seat next to the window, his feet on the seat across from him. He was chewing at a

black cigar. The folded newspaper lay in his lap. He made no move to take his feet down from the desirable place by the window.

Calvert wanted that seat. He knew that he was entitled to it. But the quick, sharp look which the stranger gave him as he entered had somewhat cooled his aggressiveness; for the look was not defiant; it was assured. Blaming himself for his weakness, Calvert sat down in the corner away from the window.

The stranger gave him no word, but rolled his cigar from side to side of his mouth and stared at the paneling across the compartment. He might have been revolving his mind about some crafty scheme of finance, for his small eyes twinkled with his changing thoughts.

Calvert filled his pipe and lighted it. He was uneasy; indeed, he felt inefficient, futile. This stranger had an overpowering personality, and his absorption built a wall about him which discouraged intrusion.

The summer dusk was drawing on. The porter came in and lighted the lamp, and disappeared after the noiseless manner of porters. And the stranger still mouthed his cigar, while Calvert watched him furtively. Without, lights swept by with increasing frequency. They were passing through the suburbs of a city. Here was an excuse for a question. Calvert cleared his throat.

"Is this Baltimore?" he asked.

The small eyes were turned on him. The thin lips parted to disclose two rows of even teeth in a smile that was not particularly reassuring. But, at first, the man did not speak. He merely took the folded newspaper from his lap.

Calvert was uncomfortable. The smiling silence was portentous; yet he hesitated to repeat his question, since obviously it had been heard and understood.

Then the stranger spoke, in a curiously high-pitched voice. "It is," he said. "Do you get off here?"

The question was natural, but Calvert did not care to answer it. Yet, why not? The stranger would soon know whether he meant to get off or not.

"I go on to Washington," he said.

They whirled by a little suburban station. The stranger spoke again.

"I want that ruby."

Calvert's tongue unaccountably stuck to the roof of his mouth.

"The more I think about it," the high voice went on, "the more I believe that you've got it."

Calvert did not move.

"Do you know what's in this newspaper?" the stranger continued. "It's a pistol—a two-barreled pistol. It's pointing at you, and my finger is on the trigger. Just empty your pockets on the seat—one at a time."

To say that the ruby was not on his person would be the same as admitting that the girl had it. As for this talk of a pistol, might it not be a bluff?

"Do you always carry pistols concealed in newspapers?" Calvert managed to ask.

"Sometimes—when I think I'm specially likely to want one." He pulled at the paper, and shining metal gleamed at the end.

"You won't shoot," said Calvert huskily. "It would make too much noise."

"There is one of those new silencers on the muzzle. They don't work on revolvers, but they will on pistols. This is a pistol—see? Now, quit talking, and empty your pockets."

The fellow might or might not shoot. He talked of it in a matter-of-fact way, but his eyes were hard and uncompromising. Calvert thought it wise to obey the command.

"Be quick!" said the stranger.

Then, apparently thinking that Calvert was not convinced as to the pistol, he unfolded the paper and held the ugly weapon for a moment in plain view. As he replaced the paper round it, he stood up and went to the doorway. His bulk practically filled the entrance. "Shell out!" he ordered, and his voice was sharper.

There was nothing for it but to obey. One by one, Calvert emptied his pockets onto the seat. Handkerchief, card-case, watch, papers, pocketbook, penknife—all came to view.

"Looks as though you hadn't got it after all," commented the stranger. "Was that a real row you had with the young woman?" He grinned as Calvert set his jaw. "Keep cool," he cautioned; "and don't move or make any noise." He leaned forward, the folded news-

paper, with its hidden menace, still pointed, and ran his left hand over Calvert's body. "Nothing doing," he remarked. "Well, I'll take the watch and pocket-book." He selected them from the heap of Calvert's possessions on the seat. "*And* the loose change. Only two dimes, but they will buy a cigar." He swept it up. "You can keep that ticket to Chicago. It won't do me any good."

The train had slowed almost to a standstill in the Baltimore station. The porter came to the smoking-room door. He was carrying a bag. "This yours, sir?" he asked.

"Right-o." The stranger, standing in the doorway, reached into the pocket in which was the change he had taken from Calvert and, producing the two dimes, laid them in the porter's hand. Then, as the porter went on toward the platform, the voice addressed Calvert:

"Sorry you didn't have the stone. I wanted it." The train jarred to a stop. "Good-by," he said, and was gone.

Calvert, rousing himself—he had been mechanically returning to his pockets the things which the man had left untouched—rushed after him. He reached the car steps in time to see the fellow disappear into the station.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ARREST.

TO shout, "Stop, thief!" was Calvert's first thought — but he kept silent. The hopelessness of a pursuit through a strange city, the fact that every cent of his money had been taken, served to deter him. Why, he could not even pay a car fare! And there were no funds to draw on in his New York bank! His only way to raise the money to get him back to New York would be to send a collect telegram to one of his New York friends. Either Jack Lowe or Lyman Reynolds would wire him twenty dollars, no doubt.

The train started, and Calvert went aimlessly back to the smoking-room. The personality of the big stranger still haunted the place—perhaps, because the smell of his cigar lingered. Calvert felt as if the two barrels of that ugly pistol were still pointed at him.

And he wanted to kick himself because he had so naively placed himself at the mercy of a man he suspected. Why had he not bolted at the first threat and shut the smoking-room door after him and called the trainmen? Why hadn't he— Oh, there were so many things he might have done!

And why had the big stranger accepted so nonchalantly the fact that he could not get the ruby? He had seemed to be fairly content with fifty dollars when he might have had eighty thousand. Suppose he had shot or stunned Calvert, and then, as the train stopped, had gone to the girl and taken her hand-bag by force? There would have been no one to prevent him.

But, after a moment's thought, Calvert realized that the women in the car would have been screaming at the windows before the thief could get across the platform. The thief himself had known that; and the humiliating inference was that he knew Calvert would not pursue him.

"Did I act as dumfounded as all that?" muttered Calvert.

Here he was with his watch and all his money gone—not a thing about him that was worth pawning. In another hour he would be in a city with which he was unacquainted — where he had no friends. Of course, he might tell the conductor what had happened, and perhaps the railroad company would pass him back to New York; but there would be red tape and delay. No; it would be better to telegraph to Jack Lowe. Meantime, he would make the best of the situation. He would go to Miss Dering. She would have to recognize him.

So he squared his shoulders and stalked down the aisle and seated himself next to her. "We might as well be friends," he said. "Don't you think so?"

She looked at him severely, but he sustained her gaze; and after a moment her face slowly broke into a smile.

"I suppose I was foolish about it," she said. "And I have been so worried and lonesome! You can't imagine how desperate it has made me feel to be traveling with the Red Emperor. And that man across the aisle—"

"He got off at Baltimore," remarked Calvert.

"I know he did. It was a great relief."

"I was relieved, too," said Calvert, smiling at his unintended pun. "But we are rid of him now."

"I hope so." Her brows were knitted close, but she let them relax again. "Oh, yes," she continued, "I am sure of it. But there was something so overpowering about him! Well, I am going to ask you to take charge of the Red Emperor once more. Will you?"

He nodded.

As she put it into his hand, she gave a little sigh. "I have seemed to feel it burning a hole through the bottom of the bag," she laughed.

He slipped it into his pocket. "Don't worry any more, Miss Dering. Talk of something else."

"But, first, I really must thank you. It was generous of you to insist on coming, when I was so—so nasty. Please understand that I am very, very grateful."

"It isn't worth speaking of," replied Calvert. He could not look at her mobile face without being thankful that he was able to serve her.

What was the loss of a little money, compared with the opportunity of being thus in her company? What was the loss of the big chance? That was more serious; and yet he began to see that perhaps he had builded stronger hopes on Thomas Dugan's telegram than the outcome would have warranted.

"Are you going back to New York tonight?" Miss Dering was asking.

"I hardly think I will," he replied slowly; and in his heart he was wondering where he would pass the time till morning.

"Have you friends in Washington?"

"I don't know a soul there—except a couple of Congressmen — and Congress isn't in session."

"I wish—" She hesitated. "If the secret of the Red Emperor were mine to divulge, I would—"

"Never mind that."

"But I'm afraid that when you have taken me to the door of my friend's house, I shall have to ask you to shift for yourself. It seems ungracious."

"It's all right," said Calvert, but he felt a pang of disappointment. That he was to lose her so soon was something he had not foreseen. "Sha'n't we meet again?" he asked.

"Later, it may be."

"I have never been in Washington, Miss Dering, and I think I will stay over to-morrow and take a look at the city. May I see you to-morrow?" His own boldness elated him.

"To-morrow?" She considered. "Yes, I think I might lunch with you to-morrow—if you care to have me."

Care to have her!

"I will be at Smith's drug-store, on Fourteenth Street, at one."

The concession that she had made was apparent to him. Her manner showed him that it was not her custom to make appointments to meet men at drug-stores. But she did not wish him to come to her home. Evidently, he was to have no clue to the ownership of the Red Emperor, more than that it belonged to a girl whose name was Marguerite.

"I will be there," he said.

And he wondered whimsically whether he would have the money to pay for the luncheon. However, and this was some comfort, if worse came to worst, he could raise money on the silver-mounted articles in the suit-case. They did not belong to him, it was true; but, in the circumstances, the real owner would forgive him. He could make everything clear when the right time came.

"Let us see if there isn't any one we both know," she suggested.

They cast about among their friends and acquaintances, but with no result. He had heard of some of the people she mentioned, but they moved in circles to which he had never had access.

"No," he said at last, "it won't do. I'm just a middle-class, middle Western fellow with a few Western college friends and the beginnings of a small law practise in New York. You can infer how I stand from the fact that Mr. Dugan's telegram threw me into such a fever of excitement." He sighed. "I thought it was my big chance."

"Perhaps it still may be. Of course, you plan to telegraph him when we get to Washington."

"Of course." Mentally he added: "If I raise the wherewithal to pay for the telegram."

"You have been a godsend to me," she said simply. "Is the Red Emperor safe?"

He pressed his hand against his pocket. "All snug."

"We are nearly there," she went on. "We will take one of the hacks outside the station, and within half an hour we shall be free from this awful responsibility."

Calvert did not answer her smile. He was wondering how he was going to pay for the hack.

"It *is* awful, isn't it?" she rattled on.

"It surely is."

"And I will never, never, never try to recover other people's jewels again."

"I shouldn't, if I were you." He smiled.

"And, just think, if you hadn't been so considerate, and insisted on coming after I had told you not to, I should be frightened to death by the prospect of that hack ride, alone with the Red Emperor."

Should he confess that he had no money? The humiliation of admitting to her how easily the thief had got the better of him was not to be endured. No, he would bluff it out.

"I am glad for Marguerite," she added; "and particularly glad that her father will not know."

"Is he such a hard man?"

"Not exactly that, but—well, you see, Marguerite has been very foolish. She promised her father never to let the Red Emperor out of her possession. And then she went and did it."

"Oh, I see!"

"She lent it, and the—the person who had it did not return it."

"The person knew that your friend would not go to the police, would not tell her father?"

"There were still other considerations," she said noncommittally.

A few minutes later the train pulled into the Union Station. Calvert felt her eyes on him when he avoided the porter. She herself had tipped the man, but he could not, so he made a pretense of getting his suit-case. Did she think him stingy?

Together they walked down the platform. He was carrying her bag with his left hand, the suit-case with his right; and he kept his right arm against the pocket in which reposed the Red Emperor.

"There's a carriage that will do," said Miss Dering, nodding toward a dingy vehicle, drawn by a bony horse that looked taller than he was long. The aged negro on the box had a short, curly, white beard, and the coal-black face above it was surmounted by a battered gray stovepipe hat. As Calvert and Miss Dering approached he reached down and took the bag and suit-case, wedging them in by his feet.

Miss Dering spoke. "Drive to—" she began.

Before she could get the address out of her mouth a man stepped in front of her. At the same time a second man pushed Calvert aside.

"You are under arrest," the first man said to Miss Dering, taking her by the arm and, with his free hand, opening the carriage-door. "Get in."

"Here!" shouted Calvert, crowding forward. "What does this mean?"

The second man blocked his way. "Shut up!" he ordered. "We're officers." He turned back his coat. The rays of a near-by light were reflected from a nickeled star.

"But your warrant. Where's your warrant?"

"There ain't none. Shut up, I tell you, or you'll get hurt."

The detective was a solidly built, red-faced fellow. Though Calvert had much respect for constituted authority, he felt instinctively that something was wrong. He tried to force his way to the girl, but he was caught by the arms and held in such a fashion that it was impossible for him to get free.

Meantime, to his surprise, he saw Miss Dering quietly enter the carriage, followed by the man who had arrested her.

"Miss Dering!" he called.

He saw her lean forward to speak to him, but the hand of her captor was placed before her mouth.

"You'd better arrest me, too," exclaimed Calvert to the man who was holding him.

"Orders call only for the girl," came the reply.

"But this is unheard of. You've got to show a warrant. Let go of me!"

"I'll let go when I get ready."

"You've got my baggage on the box there."

"How do I know what's yours? Go to the station and claim it, if you want to." He spoke to the driver: "When I get into the carriage, go to headquarters, and go fast."

Calvert looked at the crowd that had gathered—colored hackmen, porters, and a few travelers. At a glance he saw that none of them would interfere. But he was cooling off, and began to realize that, however irregular the arrest seemed to be, he had better submit and follow to the station by other means. Miss Dering, no doubt, would be freed as soon as the authorities discovered the mistake that had been made.

And while he was planning just what to do, suddenly the man who held his arms released him and gave him a push. He lost his balance, and went sprawling in among the crowd, clutching desperately at a truckman.

He was quickly on his feet. The carriage was disappearing round the corner of the station.

Without stopping to consider he darted after it.

(To be continued.)

MALONEY.

BY FRANK CONDON.

A SHORT STORY.

GEORGE MURCH is a sign-painter. He does cigarette-boxes in reds and purples on dead walls, and entrancing corsets on boardings sixty feet high; and his wife is named Gertrude, which is also the name of the Murch baby. They live in a four-room flat on Seventh Avenue, near the Baptist church, and George draws down twenty-eight dollars a week when it doesn't rain.

Gertrude is somewhat large and inclined to decisiveness. George is thin and small. He has not asserted himself since the world's fair at Buffalo, and he would like to go to the Presbyterian church; but Gertrude has frowned upon the suggestion.

One of the members of the Murch family died recently, and was buried in a pasteboard shoe-box. That was Jessica, the Japanese poodle, and Gertrude sobbed at intervals for three months.

"We'll get another one. Cheer up, woman," George said after the funeral; and from that moment George began to fail in the bony structure just above his shoulders.

Later on, it occurred to people that they had heard George muttering. There were those who had observed him gesticulating, and Gertrude sometimes was awakened in the dead of night by strange sounds coming from George's open face. Everybody remembered these symptoms when it was too late. At any rate, George came home one night a few weeks after Jessica died and tramped up the three flights leading to his home. He was not alone.

"Gertrude," George said in a tone of voice totally different; "Gertrude, get ready for a surprise."

"What's the matter with you?" inquired Gertrude from the kitchen, because George was still standing in the hall and holding the door open. "Have you been drinking again?"

"I have not been drinking," replied George with dignity, "but hereafter I am going to have a hand in running this dump. You brought Jessica home, do you remember? Well, I've brought home a new pet. It's a dog, and his name is Maloney. Get ready for Maloney, Gertrude. Look out! He's coming!"

There was a noise in the hall; not much of a noise at that—just a nice, easy, comfortable noise like somebody throwing two dozen china-closets down an elevator-shaft—and Maloney entered the Murch apartment. George entered at the same moment, but without having any voice in the matter whatever. George was rolled along the side of the wall as you roll a bread-pill under your finger.

"Here is Maloney," George said in a loud voice, because Gertrude had slammed the kitchen door shut when the glacial movement begun.

Maloney was there—and he could prove it. He was a dog, because he had the well-known characteristics of that animal—four legs, a tail, a head, and so on; but it was his size that seemed to indicate a number of loose buttons in George's intellect-holder.

A Great Dane—some of the smaller varieties—can be fitted, with proper care, into an ordinary railroad box car; but Maloney was no smaller variety. He was a Great Dane, and he was the kind the Danes are proud of. He looked like a young horse, and he acted just as foolish.

To a leather collar around his neck was attached a clothes-line, and to the other end was attached George. That explains why George came into the flat when Maloney entered.

Gertrude opened the door about one inch and peered out.

"George," said Gertrude, "what is that thing?"

"This is Maloney," said George proudly. "He's a Great Dane, and we're going to have him for a pet. Don't think you can make me send him away. I'm tired of your domineering around here. Besides, Maloney wouldn't go away; I think he likes the place. Don't you, old chap?"

Maloney answered by sitting down on the hat-rack; and, of course, there wasn't any hat-rack whatever a moment thereafter—just a few scattered boards, such as the carpenter leaves when he goes away.

Gertrude came out and stood beside her husband. There was some doubt in Gertrude's mind. She didn't know whether it would be better to humor George with gentle words, or to hit him behind the ear with the ironing-board and get the policeman in before the maniac regained consciousness.

George did not look lunatic. He was standing at the end of the hall, gazing at Maloney in rapt awe.

"You know why I called him Maloney?" asked George, grinning with the pleasure of a child. "Well, it's like this, Gertrude. I was standing on the corner in front of Gus's joint, and I was thinking about you and how forlorn you've been since dear Jessica died, and the thought came: Why not get another pet? Why not do it immediately? The policeman on the beat came up that instant, and I simply asked him where I could get a good family dog for a pet. He had a friend. The friend had a dog. So I went and found the friend. Now, the policeman's name is Maloney, and, oddly enough, the name of his friend is Maloney, too. So, with such a coincidence, I thought it fine to name the dog Maloney, and that's what I did. Don't you like him?"

"George Murch, you're a raving idiot."

Gertrude said this in a different tone, too. In the old days, she would have said it loudly. But there was Maloney sitting on the wreck of the hat-rack and looking directly at her, and it is no joke to say things in a harsh tone with such an animal looking straight at you. As they soon learned, Maloney had a way of taking things personally.

"Do you intend to keep that—that dog in this apartment?" asked Gertrude coldly.

"Of course I do," responded George. "What's the use of having a household pet if you don't keep him in the house?"

"Well, all I can say," retorted Gertrude with deadly earnestness and pointing the dust-pan at George, "is that I am going back to Chicago. This is the last straw."

At that moment the last straw yawned wearily and went into the parlor—and so did George, who had forgotten to untie the clothes-line from his wrist.

II.

If you have ever lived in a four-room flat in Harlem, you will understand at once that it is no place to keep a Great Dane. Maloney, at the instant of his

friendship with the Murches, had all the generous proportions of a Shetland pony, and he was quite young. He was in that glorious, effervescing time of life when there is nothing to do but grow and romp and expand, and Maloney was proceeding to do all three heartily and with the full impulsiveness of his nature.

In appearance, Maloney was striking —most people would say original. He looked like a cross between an Uncle Tom's bloodhound and a grand piano. He carried himself with the agile grace of a steam-shovel. On the front end of his body was a large, round object with an enormous cleft at one end through which Maloney conversed and received food, and his eyes were indented at a point just above.

At the other end was Maloney's tail, a thin, discouraged object about three feet long. It had been bent at an early age, and it dropped where the bend affected it.

But it was Maloney's legs that brought the tears of utter joy to the eyes of beholders. They were wabbly legs, full of irregularities, angularities, notches, knuckles, crooks, twists, knobs, and general uncertainties.

When Maloney moved forward you received a distinct set of impressions from the phenomenon. It made you feel as though you were in the path of a rushing mob, and if you were given to taking good care of yourself, you moved hastily aside.

Maloney and George discussed the matter at some length the first night, and they reached a unanimous and peaceful conclusion.

There was no place for Maloney to sleep except in the bath-room, and there was no place in the bath-room except the bath-tub. As a bath-tub in its native, sanitary state is distinctly uncozy, it was necessary for George to run around to Meyer's grocery and get some excelsior and sawdust.

Gertrude had not gone to Chicago the next morning. She would have preferred Chicago to New York, but there were reasons for her staying. George had been acting very rationally toward early morning, and he dropped off to sleep about daylight—a tired, a very tired man.

Maloney was not exactly to blame for this, because the Murch flat was new and so was the bath-tub, and Maloney was restless and couldn't sleep. George must have been up two hundred times that first night. Maloney would first need a drink.

Then perhaps the air in the bath-room would become stale and the window would have to be opened, or Maloney would get a cramp in his back, from lying with his head on the slide-down-hill end of the bath-tub, and George would have to jump out of his warm bed and come pattering down the cold linoleum in his bare feet and relieve Maloney's distress.

It was very easy for Gertrude and George to tell when Maloney needed attention. Maloney simply trilled, first in an easy undertone and finally with some attention to detail and resonance. A bath-room has excellent acoustic features and Maloney had an excellent voice—a contralto, blending into dignified basso-profundo.

When George hesitated too long about getting out of his warm bed and coming to see what Maloney wanted, Maloney turned on the fountains of his soul and poured forth a howl. And it was some howl—triple extract, double-concentrated, four-ply, hammer-riveted, and it could tear a ragged hole through sixteen pine boards and a layer of sand.

Not the least uncertain part of the evening's entertainment was the hall-parade. About three or four in the morning, Maloney awakened from a feverish sleep and desired to limber himself up with a brief walk in the hall.

George came at once and unfastened the door. Together they pranced up and down the narrow entrance, and it took George until the first streaks of gray dawn to herd the frolicsome beast back into his dormitory.

Maloney protested to the bitter end, even going to the extent of stepping on George's bare toes. It was unfortunate, too, because George will never again walk without a limp.

Gertrude finally went to sleep from sheer exhaustion, listening to George climb in and out of bed, and when the milkman joggled the dumb-waiter, the Murch flat was bathed in silence.

Among the very first things Maloney did on the following day was to come to an understanding with George about food. Gertrude had resigned. That is, she was still on the job; but she would have nothing to do with either George or Maloney. She would not talk to George, and she would not look at Maloney. George was quite cut up about it, but Maloney seemed indifferent.

The discussion of Maloney's food made one thing plain. He would require, for ordinary sustenance, about eight times as much grub as the rest of the tenants in the entire block. He didn't go in for variety or epicureanism and the frothy didoes of a pampered and effete East—What Maloney wanted was the west side of a Jersey cow about three times a day and a couple of barrels of water.

George figured out that by teaching art three nights a week, in addition to his daylight work, Maloney could eat.

Several weeks passed. They passed outside the Murch flat as well as inside, but the time seemed more intense to George and Gertrude.

From the very first day of Maloney's coming, it was seen that Baby Murch could not stay. George might accidentally smile at Maloney, and Maloney would wag his tail; and, if Baby Murch were in the same room, there would necessarily be a small bit of white crape on the door next morning.

George learned at once not to please Maloney into any manifestation of delight. George had said: "Good old fellow," and had patted Maloney on a portion of the top of his head, and Maloney had responded with a jovial wag of his tail. He had wagged two spindle-legged chairs, a pedestal lamp, a jardinière, three vases, and a plaster statuette into a confused and dissolute omelet in the middle of the room. Thereafter, George refrained from smiling when Maloney was in the same part of the house.

Furthermore, Maloney's exercise was not a success. It is no difficult matter to snap a leather chain upon the frail neck of a nine-pound brindle pup and yank him down Seventh Avenue until the germs are blown out of his feeble lungs. But it is a different thing to exercise a Great Dane such as Maloney was. The function, simple, under ordinary conditions, became a ceremonial, a jubilee, a pæan, a parade, a fanfare of trumpets, and a call for ambulances.

George started off with Maloney the second morning, and Maloney took the lead before the barrier had snapped up. He saw an individual whose progenitors lived in Africa.

It is a well-known canine fact that Great Danes are aristocrats—the gentlemen of the dog world; and whenever a Great Dane sees an Ethiopian negro, it becomes his instant duty to go to that unfortunate and make him unconscious.

Why this unhappy fact is so has never been explained; but Maloney saw the descendant of an African king pushing a cart-load of tin pans across One Hundred and Thirty-Fifth Street, and he started at once.

George followed immediately in a horizontal line; and when the negro had climbed up to the first insulators on the trolley-poles, George had worn off most of his facial features on the cold, hard paving-stones, and Maloney was baying the litany for the dying.

III.

THERE are people who will say: "Well, for goodness' sake! If the dog was so big and such a nuisance, why in the world didn't George get rid of him? His wife was a ninny to stand it."

Let such people go home and look in their own flats and see if they haven't something that's almost as foolish as Maloney. Besides, George was showing Gertrude that he was the boss. He had ceased to love Maloney, but his pride forbade giving up the pet.

As Maloney grew in size, he also grew in ferocity; and while he effectually kept robbers and salesmen out of the Murch home, he not infrequently kept George and Gertrude out in the hall for hours at a time. This was because he failed to recognize George's voice, although Gertrude said it was pure deviltry.

But the end came. It had to.

A friend of George—man named Britt, who ran a veterinary hospital under the Elevated on Fifty-Fourth Street — had discussed Maloney with George, and assured him of one thing. The dog could stand a great many things, but there was one upon which depended the life of

George and Gertrude, and probably the lives of others in the community.

Dr. Britt had found, upon examining Maloney, that stewed tripe would certainly change him into a bloodthirsty, raving murderer, a man-hunting homicide. Safety for George and Gertrude lay in keeping stewed tripe away from Maloney—even the smell of a plate which had contained the succulent dish would drive the pet crazy.

Dr. Britt explained to the astonished George that this was a condition peculiar only to Great Danes. Stewed tripe to a Great Dane is exactly the same as warm, red blood to an African tiger. To make the situation perfectly intolerable, both George and Gertrude were intensely fond of stewed tripe.

They had been having it twice a week ever since the day of their marriage. Now it must not even be brought into their home.

The shadow of this affliction lay heavily upon George. Gertrude had gone on a visit, and the house was lonely.

George had had a slight attack of tonsilitis, and the doctor advised staying at home. Even Maloney palled after a time. George was reading the batting averages on Tuesday at five minutes after three. He can remember the time, because the clock had stopped, and after looking at his watch he arose and set the clock.

Therefore it was at five minutes after three that Mrs. Shaw, next door, knocked at the door leading to George's apartment, and George hurried down the little hallway, preceded by Maloney.

Mrs. Shaw was a motherly soul, with a flock of little ones and sympathy for every one in the world. She knew that Gertrude had gone away on a visit, and she knew that George had tonsilitis, and, furthermore, she remembered that the Murches had always been inordinately fond of stewed tripe.

What was more natural than for Mrs. Shaw to brew a steaming bowl of the dish, sprinkle it with pepper and spicy sauce, and bring it to George?

When the door was opened, what happened occurred in such a brief space of time that the details are sadly missing. The general belief is that Maloney saw Mrs. Shaw before George did.

Maloney leaped. Mrs. Shaw dropped the bowl of tripe, and George, pausing for one look at the contents of the bowl, hurried into the flat and climbed up to the top of the folding-bed.

Maloney went through that bowl of stewed tripe like a thrashing-machine through a plate of soft butter. Then he came into the flat, looking for George.

The top of an upended folding-bed is a distinctly uncomfortable resting-place, and at the end of eighteen hours George was nervous and indignant. He had howled for hours. Outside his apartment, the halls were filled with hurrying men. The police had ordered the reserves to the scene of action, and the fire department contributed forty men.

The evening papers were printing edition after edition, giving the latest news about George and Maloney; because, when Gertrude heard what happened, she telegraphed a signed statement, referring to Maloney's ferocity and the effect that stewed tripe had upon his temper.

Of course, no one dared enter the Murch home. Maloney paced back and forth, looking intently at George.

When all hope had been given up, when the police had admitted that they were baffled, and the firemen couldn't think of a way of getting George off the top of the folding-bed, a bright young newspaper writer settled the thing in a jiffy.

Why, reasoned this Park Row youngster—why, if Maloney was so crazy about stewed tripe, wouldn't he eat more stewed tripe and get still crazier.

Those working on the case saw the point instantly, and Mrs. Shaw was called upon for the second time to prepare a steaming mess. The bowl was lowered by a rope from the apartment directly above that occupied by George and Maloney, and the Great Dane broke the window at once.

As soon as Maloney leaned out through the window to get the stewed tripe, the firemen, who were waiting, lassoed him with a chain, and shortly thereafter Maloney was no more.

George was lifted off the top of the folding-bed, because he was unable to climb off on account of weakness.

There are neighbors on Seventh Avenue who still insist that Gertrude laughed harshly when she heard about it.

THE LOST CARGO

BY WADE WARREN THAYER.

A SHORT STORY

THE brief twilight of the low latitudes merged into the gloom of a moonless night, and the departing boat was lost in the shrouding darkness almost as soon as it left the yacht's side. Only the dip and creak of the oars marked its progress toward the beach.

Carlton called Sullivan, the mate, to the wheel, and went forward with his night-glass. Gillette sat in the cockpit, his eyes upon the twinkling lights of the town, his nostrils titillated by the soft smells of the tropic night. The thin, high squeaking of a Chinese fiddle came faintly from ashore; the dull roar of the surf upon the reef echoed among the tall, cloud-capped hills above the town, waking them momentarily from their drowsing. On board the yacht all was still.

Presently there was a movement forward, and Gillette heard the click of the lantern doors as the starboard and port lights were, each in turn, extinguished. Carlton came aft.

"Let her fall off slowly, Sullivan," he said. "You, Bob, give me a hand with the sheets."

As the bow swung around, the jibs were flattened down without the flapping of a leech. Slowly the yacht began to drift off shore.

"We've done it now," said Carlton softly, as they made all taut. "We're outlaws—pariahs of the sea. We have sailed away from port without lights. We have deserted our crew. We're liable to arrest and imprisonment."

"What's it all about, Jack?" Gillette whispered. "Isn't it time to tell a fellow what you're up to?"

"Patience, old man," replied Carlton. "We'll go below in a few moments, and I'll make a clean breast of it." He drew out his watch and held it close to the binnacle lamp. "Seven-thirty, and we've got to be inside Pearl Harbor and have our cargo landed at daylight. It's full ninety miles, but we'll have to do it. Hope the wind will hold."

For some time they seemed to make little headway, and Carlton fretted at the delay. But the lights of Lahaina were dropping slowly astern, and presently they drifted clear of the land and began to catch the channel breeze. By eight o'clock they had picked up the trades and were soon booming along with the lee rail awash and everything drawing.

"Give her all she'll stand, Sullivan," Carlton said to the mate. "We must make time across the channel, for we'll lose some of this wind when we get under the lee of Molokai. Mr. Gillette and I are going below. Keep a sharp eye all round, and if you see a light, call me on deck."

Down in the cabin, Carlton unlocked the big owner's stateroom, whose door had never been opened during all the voyage. By the light of the lantern Gillette saw that the whole room was filled with neatly piled bales covered with coco matting and bound with rattan withes.

"That stuff in there is worth thirty-five dollars a pound in Honolulu to-day," Carlton resumed. "It cost my friend Brown a mere pittance in Hong-Kong, and if we land it in Honolulu, and get our price for it, he stands to win close to one hundred thousand dollars, of which I get an even half."

"Whew!" gasped Gillette, and he sat down heavily on a cabin lounge and mopped his forehead.

"It's a stake worth playing for, isn't it?" said Carlton. "But it's a dangerous game. Maybe we'll pull it off—maybe we'll all land in a Kanaka jail. Much depends on my old friend, Yee Tan. He's been coming out of Pearl Harbor at daylight every morning for the past week in a rice sloop bound for Honolulu. We ought to meet him just off the old salt-works. We'll miss stays as we go about in the channel and collide with him accidentally. Two minutes quick work with those big shoulders of yours and we'll float clear, minus our cargo. Then we'll anchor off the peninsula and run up to Honolulu by train. The rest is merely vulgar counting of cash and figuring of profits."

"It sounds as easy as taking presents from a Christmas-tree," said Gillette.

"The plan is good enough, because it's a new dodge," replied Carlton. "But it may fail. Yee Tan is closely watched by the revenue officers, and he may miss us. To be sure, we have other strings to our bow, but I count chiefly on Yee Tan."

II.

FROM a long locker under one of the bunks he brought forth a slender iron rod, with a grapnel at one end. They went on deck, and Carlton leaned over the lee rail as though fishing for something. Presently he rose with the end of a light steel chain in his fingers. This he made fast at the rail, and a few feet aft he fished up another. Gillette followed him curiously, until he had brought up from somewhere under the keel of the yacht a dozen or more of the chains.

"What in the deuce are those for?" Gillette inquired at length, unable to restrain his curiosity.

"You'll see soon enough."

"Have we been trailing them all the way from the coast?"

"All the way. It's cut down our speed a bit, but it had to be done. We don't know when we'll need them."

The breeze held all night, and at a quarter to four they were off Diamond Head light. Carlton kept well out to sea, for he knew the sharp eyes of "Diamond-Head" Charlie, the lookout, who signaled inbound vessels and telephoned their coming to Honolulu. He also knew that there might be others looking for the arrival of the Sylph, and those others he had particular reasons to avoid.

A kindly rain-squall swept down from the mountains as they hauled their course off Waikiki, and though it wet them all to the skin, Carlton blessed its timely coming. The many lights of Honolulu twinkled through the driving mist as they came abreast of the channel. They could hear the solemn tolling of the bell-buoy at the anchorage, and the roar of the surf on the long bouudary reef off shore, but the town was sleeping.

"Seems to me you had your nerve," Gillette said, "when you planned to sneak right past the city like this, with enough contraband aboard to land you in jail for a couple of years."

"Sometimes the boldest plan is the safest," Carlton answered. "The customs officers keep a sharp eye for Hanaumu Bay and Kaneohe, on the other side of this island, but they seldom think about Pearl Harbor. It's a dangerous entrance at best, and very few men know it well enough to go in at night. But I haven't sailed a yacht five years in these waters for nothing. I could take this boat in there at any hour, and in any weather."

They were running before the wind now, wing and wing, and the yacht was rolling over the swells so silently that it was only by watching the lights ashore that Gillette realized they were moving at all.

Carlton called him into the cabin, and with ten minutes quick work they had all of the bales on deck and lined up along the starboard rail. Then Carlton sent Gillette below again to shift some of the sand ballast to port, for the yacht listed badly with the new disposition of the cargo.

When he came up, the opium bales were covered with tarpaulins and Carlton was at the wheel. Sullivan had gone forward to make ready to flatten down when they should begin to run into the harbor.

"All snug below?" asked Carlton. "She steers better with her ballast shifted. Daylight's coming. We've made a narrow squeak of it, but I think we're all right."

From behind the dark hills back of

Honolulu the dawn was coming. Cold and pale at first, the light swept to the zenith, extinguishing the stars so rapidly that it was almost as though a thin, gauzy curtain was drawn across the sky.

As they stood in for the harbor entrance, the shore-line changed in a moment from a dark, formless shadow to definite outlines of bushy trees, with now and then a palm looking over; behind stretched slopes of lighter green; here and there was a dark mass that meant a sugar-mill, or a cluster of little white cottages marking a laborer's camp.

They were heading straight for the beach, and, even as the day broadened, Gillette could see no opening in the low, green wall of trees ahead.

The surf was rolling and breaking all about them, and once a huge roller, coming down on them, lifted their stern high and bore them swiftly shoreward for a moment, breaking with a thunder of spray at either hand, and deluging both the men in the cockpit.

Gillette gasped and clutched the rail, but Carlton merely shifted the wheel a trifle, and in a fraction of time they were in the stiller waters inside the reef. Gillette, shaking the spray from his eyes, turned to Carlton.

"I thought it was all off for a moment, Jack," he said admiringly. "When that big fellow caught us, it looked as though we were bound for the coral beds sure."

"That's nothing! As long as she didn't broach to, there was no danger. Wait until you see the Kanakas at Waikiki. They do it every day on six-foot boards."

"Something coming out of Honolulu harbor, Mr. Carlton," interrupted Sullivan. "They're in a hurry, too, judging by the smoke they're making."

"Which way are they heading?" Carlton asked, without taking his eye from the boat.

Now was the time when a bit of carelessness in his steering might land the yacht on one of the many hidden reefs at the harbor entrance and wreck the whole enterprise.

"They are coming this way, but they're a good five miles off."

Gillette clambered up on the deckhouse and looked eastward. Sure enough, a small tug was visible; and, from the smoke which poured from her funnel, her people were indeed in a hurry. It was almost broad day now, and the steely light of a few moments ago had changed to a rosy glow that overspread all the sky and painted the cloud masses on the Waianae hills in gorgeous colors.

The men aboard the tug could scarce help seeing the Sylph, and it was small comfort that they were five miles astern.

"If Yee Tan is on time, we'll be rid of the stuff and anchored comfortably at the peninsula before they get here," Carlton said cheerfully.

III.

THEY were close to shore by this time, and the yacht heeled to the sharp gusts of wind that came over the leafy wall ahead. They had hauled everything flat for the beat up the harbor, and were feeling their way rather gingerly in. Soon a rift appeared in the screen of trees ahead. They went about suddenly, and in a moment were in the long, narrow lane of the harbor, which stretched inland like a tortuous river, its banks rock-rimmed and shaded by a dense growth of low trees.

Sullivan scanned each reach of the harbor as they wound their way around point after point, but no sloop was in sight. They passed some native fishing villages, where the men were already putting off for sea in queer outrigger canoes. The women gathered on the narrow porches of the little, high-perched houses, and discussed the yacht eagerly.

"Lucky I covered those bales with tarpaulins, Bob," ejaculated Carlton. "I didn't bargain for this. Where the dickens is that Chinaman?"

The beat up the narrow channel had taken some time, and as they rounded a point which cut them off from the mouth of the harbor, Gillette uttered a sudden exclamation and touched Carlton on the arm.

"Look," he said excitedly, "there comes trouble."

A cloud of black smoke was visible over the trees. The tug was almost upon them. Carlton swore a large oath.

"We've got to play the game alone," he said. "That Chinaman has missed connections. By the Lord Harry," he

added savagely, "if we pull it off now, I'll make him pay through the nose for this stuff. We've got one more card to play, luckily. Come aft, Sullivan," he called. "When that tug shows her bow around that last point astern, you and Gillette yank off the tarpaulins and tumble the bales overboard as fast as you can."

Bob and the mate jumped to obey. When the little black tug poked her nose around the point, a few moments later, they hustled the opium overboard, bale after bale. The yacht jarred and shook for a moment, and lost her headway so that it seemed as though she had gone aground.

"Seems to me that's a queer move," Bob said as he came aft again. "If you were going to sling the stuff into the sea, why didn't you do it before they were in sight?"

Carlton smiled at his rueful countenance. "Bobby, my boy," he said, "in another minute we'll have a hornet's nest about our ears, and the less you know the better."

The tug was whistling frantically by this time, and, as though just realizing its presence, Carlton threw the yacht up into the wind. She lay with sails flapping as the tug drew near. Gillette descried a group of men in uniform on her forward deck and a small brass howitzer looking grimly over the bulwarks in the bow.

"If it isn't Charlie Chansworth," called Carlton, as they came alongside. "Hallo, Charlie! Out early, aren't you? Where you bound for? Sharking expedition?"

"We're coming aboard, Jack," returned the tall deputy marshal soberly. "Sorry to see you mixed up in such a shady deal as this. I'm afraid you're up against it."

"Up against what?" queried Carlton. "What do you mean by a shady deal?"

"You needn't run such a bluff, Carlton," spoke up Stockton, the customs collector, in his most pompous official manner. He was a stocky man with a pasty complexion and eyes that shifted when you looked into them. "We've got you dead to rights. Saw you tumble the stuff overboard, and we'll have it on this boat, and you in jail before night."

"Well, you fellows certainly do beat the Dutch," Carlton answered. "Come aboard and have a drink and tell us what it's all about."

He edged the yacht nearer, and Chansworth and Stockton dropped aboard.

"Let me do the talking, Bob," Carlton said under his breath, as he turned to let off the main sheet a bit.

With Sullivan at the wheel, the rest went below, and Gillette busied himself with glasses and bottles.

"You might as well own up, Jack," Chansworth began, as he sipped a Scotch and soda. "You've been trying to run in some dope, and we've caught you in the act. We can dredge it up here easily in a day or so. Then we'll have to send you over to the reef for a while."

Carlton's laugh rang out so heartily and spontaneously, that Gillette would have been deceived had he not been behind the scenes.

"They think that rock ballast we just got rid of was opium, Bob," he cried merrily. "That we've come down from the coast with opium aboard to try to smuggle it in. Wouldn't that jar you? You know, Bob," he went on before his friends could say a word, "down in this little republic they've got a paternal government that says just what a man shall eat, drink, smoke, and wear. They think that opium is bad for the Chinks, and so they forbid its importation. But the heathen must have their dream-smoke, so smuggling thrives. That's what these chaps think we're up to."

"It is evident that we are only wasting time, Chansworth," cut in Stockton bruskly. "Tell Captain Olson to buoy the place where the bales were jettisoned and send a man ashore to watch the spot. Then let him drop us a line and tow us back to Honolulu. You can come down with grappling irons this afternoon and fish the stuff up.

"I may as well tell you, Carlton," he went on, as Chansworth started for deck," that we had direct information from San Francisco, by the Australia, this week that you were coming down here with a load of opium aboard. So we cannot be blamed if we take you back to Honolulu to investigate the matter.

"Very well, if you must," said Carlton shortly. "But I warn you, that you are making a great mistake."

In Honolulu Harbor, the Sylph was anchored in the stream and all hands were haled before the marshal. An hour's cross-examination by the attorney-general of the republic, hastily summoned from the capitol with two assistants, elicited nothing. They were allowed to go, pending a report from Chansworth, who had gone back to Pearl Harbor to search for the opium.

But a guard was stationed aboard the Sylph, and Carlton was notified that he and his men would be under surveillance until further notice.

The week that followed was a trying one for Gillette. No word came from the missing opium and Carlton refused to enlighten him as to its whereabouts. Then one day they were summoned again to the marshal's office, and after a homily on the sins of smuggling, were ungraciously bidden to depart in peace.

After dredging over half the bottom of Pearl Harbor, the officers had been unable to locate the incriminating evidence, hence they had no choice but to release the supposed smugglers.

IV.

THAT night on board the yacht, Carlton and Gillette dined for the first time without the unwelcome presence of the silent police officer, who had been daily at their board since their arrival. Carlton was in high spirits. When they went on deck, for their after-dinner cigars, he spun long yarns of his life in the islands until late in the night, when the many lights ashore burned dim and the busy life of the waterfront was stilled.

It was on toward midnight when a big sampan without lights came drifting down upon them through the darkness and lay alongside silently. A man in Chinese garb leaped lightly over the low rail of the yacht and extended a hand to Carlton.

"You got?" he asked laconically.

"Yes, I have," replied Carlton, "but no thanks to you. If you want it now you'll pay for it, and pay high."

The Chinese launched into a voluble explanation of his reasons for failing to keep his end of the bargain, but Carlton waved them aside impatiently.

"Cut that out," he said shortly. "I've got the stuff and the price is going up every minute you stand here talking. If you want it at $40 per pound, it's yours. If not I'll find another buyer. Understand that!"

"All light, I takee," said Yee Tan, shrugging his shoulders philosophically.

Carlton picked up a boat-hook from the deck and leaning far over the side, fishing under the yacht's quarter for a moment. Then he rose slowly, hauling something to the surface at the end of the boat-hook.

As the phosphorescent water rippled over its submerged bulk, Gillette recognized it. The mystery of those steel chains was solved.

Under the yacht's keel, swung by short lengths of chain, hung the missing bales of opium.

THE PATHS.

THERE'S a path that runs by the rippling stream, shady and cool and sweet,
It promises peace after weariness, and rest for our tired feet.
But the other road that climbs to the crest of the range so far away
Is riven and rough, and it leads past the peaks where the quivering lightnings play.

Which shall we follow? Brothers, think you it is worth the while
To scale the side of the storm-swept hill to the sunlight—God's own smile?
Were it better to soothe our souls with the song of the shimmering silver stream,
Or to stand on the heights of the world's desire, where the stars of heaven gleam?

Choose, then, the path, for once and all—the one that you think is best;
The high road is not the low road, though they both lead into the west.
And the ones who dwell on the hard-won heights shall sigh for the low road still,
While the river shall sing to the lowlands a song of the dawn on the highest hill.

W. Edson Smith.

KNIGHTS OF THE CARIBBEE.

A ROMANCE OF THE SPANISH MAIN.

BY STEPHEN CHALMERS,

Author of "The Vanishing Smuggler," "A Daughter of the Armada."

A SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER I.

JOHN PIGGOTT, OF YORK.

"FETCH the man hither!" cried Sir Thomas Muddeford angrily.

His excellency was irritated. To think that the time of the council, and especially of the governor and captain-general of the Island of Jamaica, should be wasted by one of those troublesome, psalm-singing Quakers, was bad enough. But, aside from that, the day was hot, as witness the glare of the sun in the plaza of St. Jago de la Vega, where the earringed negro slaves were sleepily whisking the flies from the waiting horses; as witness, also, the fact that Sir John Coape was snoring at the council board, while Henry Morgan, the honored guest, seemed mightily impatient.

It was this last which irritated the governor against the trivial matter which was delaying the adjournment of the council. Harry Morgan and he had business in hand—great business. Harry Morgan and Sir Thomas had been compelled to leave their wine and their terrific scheme to attend this tame, sweltering, talk-much, achieve-nothing council.

Harry Morgan was not a man to be trifled with. Sir Thomas Muddeford knew that, as who in the king's realms or upon the high seas did not? And now Harry Morgan's brow was clouding up like an ominous horizon; and the white, lace-fringed hand, which had sent more men to death than was consistent even with the times, was tapping an impatient tattoo upon the table.

There was some delay about fetching the malefactor before the council. Presently Sir John Coape was snoring stertorously. His excellency would have called the board to order, but the snoring seemed to amuse the honored visitor. So Sir John, who had brewed many punches before breakfast, was encouraged to snore on, while the governor leaned across the table and told a racy anecdote of how King Charles once chucked Lady Muddeford under the chin and complimented her upon the unique dimple which graced that well-turned feature.

Morgan listened with a half smile, half sneer. About him there was that commingling of ruffian and gentleman which bespeaks too much of the former and not too much of the latter. His dress was rich and elegant, even to the point of foppishness. There was something effeminate about the gauzy silk bow beneath his chin, the dainty fall of the lace at his wrists, and the mass of curls which fell about his neck and concealed his ears. Even the upward turn of his mustaches suggested the carpet-knight. But there effeminacy ended.

A glance at the face which looked from the framing of cavalier curls and silken fineries announced that here was a leader of men, a ruler of men, a man of iron—an unprincipled Cromwell. The massive forehead marked an intelligence which, cooperating with the evil of the man's nature, shone from a pair of large-orbed, widely separated eyes. The brows arched over them like the wings of a soaring albatross, and met above a slightly aquiline nose. The nostrils were as delicate as a woman's, but tightly curved

and wont to twitch with the passing thought or emotion. The mouth was the only feature of unalloyed character in the whole face. It was sensuously cruel.

There was a shuffle of feet outside. The sound caused Sir John Coape to awake with a start. The cessation of his snoring stirred Sir Thomas, who appeared relieved as the malefactor was brought in. Morgan raised his eyes and glanced at the person who had delayed his personal affairs.

The prisoner was a Quaker. This was all that was notable about him at first. He wore a broad, black hat; a wide, white collar, an ample coat of funereal shade, knee-breeches and buckled shoes. As he was brought in by a couple of breast-plated musketeers, he neglected to remove his hat.

Sir Thomas, who was a stickler for the niceties of the little court in which he, in his person, was the king's majesty, was quick to notice the omission.

"Sirrah!" he thundered. "Uncover!"

The Quaker bowed, but made no move to obey. One of the musketeers performed the required service with more roughness than grace. Morgan laughed.

"What would ye?" said he to Sir Thomas. "He will not doff his bonnet to his Maker."

Sir Thomas flushed angrily at the implied littleness of himself. Turning the fury of his tongue upon the unfortunate Quaker, he demanded his name.

"John Piggott, of York," said the Quaker calmly.

"Whence have ye brought this man, and for what reason?" asked his excellency.

One of the musketeers laid down a bundle of letters, which were from the commander of his majesty's forces at Port Royal. The papers stated that the Quaker's case was one for the highest court in the colony.

It appeared that in the year 1662, eight years previously, it had pleased his majesty to allow a certain body, calling themselves Quakers, to settle in the island, which had been evacuated but recently by the Spaniards, and was in great need of good settlers. And it had also pleased his majesty to grant the said Quakers the freedom of every Englishman in the matter of his religion, his majesty claiming, of course, the usual homage and loyalty to his royal person. Among other conditions imposed upon the said Quakers was that they should bear arms when necessary in the defense of his majesty's possessions, and that the Quakers should in every way conform to the laws of the colony.

The prisoner, John Piggott, of York, was one of many Quakers who, by their refusal to conform to the certain laws, had become a menace to the colony of Jamaica. Repeatedly the said John Piggott, of York, had been imprisoned, but such was the stubbornness of the man that it was impossible to convince him of the error of his ways, save by hanging him.

"What say you, Friend John?" asked Sir Thomas, amused at the ambiguous alternative. "Will you be hanged or no?"

The Quaker's face took on a look of mingled piety and humor. He answered quaintly:

"As thee may say. My neck is *short*, and it will not last *long*."

At this, Harry Morgan threw back his head and burst out in a roar of rough laughter, in which Sir Thomas and the rest of the council thought it prudent, or worth while, to join.

The laughter lasted for some time, but ended abruptly when Morgan suddenly sat up and stared at the Quaker. John Piggott, by the way, had been quietly eying the honored visitor for some time.

"It is charged, Friend John," said Sir Thomas, reading from the paper, "that, on the anniversary of that day on which our sovereign lord the king was crowned, you did fail to bear arms in honor of—"

Morgan's hand fell upon Muddeford's arm, though he had never removed his eyes from the Quaker's face. It was Morgan who asked the question:

"Friend John Piggott, why would ye bear no arms in honor of the king?"

The Quaker turned his gaze full upon Morgan's. In them there flashed a light which might have been of recognition. There was a momentary pause. Harry Morgan was apparently ill at ease.

"I bear the arms God gave me, *Friend Morgan*," was the reply.

The council tittered and burst out laughing again. To Sir John Coape,

who was in the state where trivial jests appear hilarious, this answer of the Quaker's was exceedingly mirthful. Sir Thomas laughed tentatively, but with an eye on Harry Morgan.

But Morgan was not laughing. He, who had been a cabin-boy, a galley-slave, a freebooter, and was now the admiral of the buccaneer fleet, and, because of England's enmity to Spain and Spain's galleons, a privileged outlaw and the associate of the King Charles and King Charles's officers, suddenly quailed before this quaint, calm Quaker. In vain he raked his past — his career of blood, crime, loot, and lawlessness — to place this somber figure who called him *"Friend Morgan."* The figure was there —somewhere in the annals of his past— but the uncertainty of it only increased his uneasiness.

A sudden silence had fallen upon the council. The champing of a caparisoned steed came from the plaza of St. Jago, and a fly buzzed heavily around Sir John Coape's bald head. Sir Thomas Muddeford coughed, and peremptorily ordered that the Quaker be taken back to the prison at Port Royal, there to lie incarcerated until he agree to bear arms other than God had given him.

The breast-plated musketeers seized John Piggott, of York, by the shoulders and led him out. But, as he turned away from the council board, across the Quaker's countenance there stole an enigmatic look, which might have been the ghost of a smile, culminating in the fantom of a wink. But, a moment later, the pale, quiet face had resumed its accustomed mask of stern piety. Morgan's face, also, had cleared, and Sir Thomas had adjourned the council.

Fifteen minutes later the members of the military governing board of that early English colony were enjoying life in the old Spanish capital of Jamaica— all except Sir John Coape, who was asleep on the piazza of the Hell-Fire Club, with a thick-lipped African whisking the flies from his bald head.

Fifteen minutes later, also, Sir Thomas Muddeford, the governor and captain-general of the colony, was back in the gubernatorial house, whispering with Morgan, the buccaneer, over the wines which the Spaniards had left.

The project, the discussion of which had been interrupted by the colony's need of council and the mulishness of John Piggott, was apparently of considerable magnitude. His excellency listened, wide-eyed and excited, while the greatest freebooter of his time calmly waved his long pipe and described the maneuvers which echo still as the most wonderful coup of the Knights of the Caribbee— the sack of Panama!

And, for the time, John Piggott, of York, was forgotten.

CHAPTER II.

JOHN PIGGOTT MEETS A LADY.

BUT John Piggott, of York, had not forgotten—Morgan! As the Quaker plodded along the hot, swamp-breathing, fly-infested road toward Port Royal, he clasped his manacled hands before him and said to his guards with sly humor:

"Friend Morgan is like unto a lion in a den of Daniels."

But the witticism fell upon stony ground and was lost. The two musketeers had troubles of their own. The steel breast-plates, which were yet to send scores of their fellows to earth in that torrid clime, were weighing more heavily upon them than trouble did upon John Piggott. Their thoughts were bent upon the half-way resting-place, the Passage Fort, where they would be sure of refreshment from their fellows-at-arms before crossing the lagoon to Port Royal.

It was a mean detail they had been given—this matter of escorting a white-gilled Quaker all the way to St. Jago and back. Colonel Vernon might as well have kept the man in the dungeon, for all the good that had come of it. The musketeers were in no mood to enter into the philosophic humor of any man, least of all of a Quaker. The swamp which stretched from St. Jago to the Passage Fort and the mangrove thicket at the lagoon's edge, were full of snakes and pestilential flies and miasmatic odors. The rough, military road, which the unwilling Arawak aborigines had carved through the jungle for their original Spanish masters, was of knee-deep mire

one minute and ankle-deep dust the next. And all this bred an overpowering thirst —on account of a white-livered, psalm-singing, mule-minded Quaker who did not know when to let well enough alone.

John Piggott, perceiving the mood of his guardians, drew back his mouth corners in an expression which was either of sad patience or humorous acquiescence to fate. He was tired himself, both physically and mentally. The road was uninteresting and uncomfortable. Like his guards, he fell into a mechanical plod, his eyes half closed in order to keep out the flies and the dust and the glare. His mind went back to Morgan and to the first time that he had encountered him, and from that to a reminiscent review of all that had befallen him since he left England.

It had been a varied experience. The friend of such great Quakers as Fox and Whitehead, he had sailed to these western islands on behalf of the Friends, eager to obtain concessions that would enable the Quakers to settle down unmolested and free from ridicule.

He had reached Barbados and, after achieving much for the Friends, set sail for more westerly isles. But the fortunes—or one should say, misfortunes—of the times and the Caribbees, left him stranded on one of the smaller islands of the Leeward Group. There he had labored awhile and had established a settlement—a thriving settlement with pigs and corn and sweet potatoes and a house of worship—when he again fell among thieves.

That was his first encounter with the Knights of the Caribbee. The particular knight who sailed his ship into the bay of that little leeward island was a certain Pharisee, named Mansvelt, a notorious buccaneer. Mansvelt was in need of provisions. His method of getting them was to smuggle John Piggott aboard. Putting a rope around the Quaker's neck, in full view of the Friends ashore, he threatened to string him up if the provisions were not forthcoming instanter.

In vain did John Piggott, of York, standing on the gunwale of the pirate ship, command his people to be strong. Either his mulishness failed, or the Friends' love for him conquered, but the pirates got what they wanted, and, by way of a joke, they put to sea, carrying John Piggott with them.

Plodding along in the dust and glare, with his hands manacled in present misfortune, the Quaker frowned as he recalled the trials of those days aboard the pirate ship. He remembered how they had coaxed him to sing psalms and preach, but he also remembered with pious pride how he had maintained silence.

But his revenge had come. A great storm had smitten the ship. It was the hand of the Lord. For days they had driven like a maimed duck, dismasted and sinking. They would have abandoned hope but for John Piggott, of York, who suddenly flashed up like the man he was. The Quaker had bent his hand to the task, given the ropes many a lusty pull, and he had shouted like a seaman and—John Piggott groaned as he recalled his sin—he had used as much wicked language as any pirate aboard.

But when the storm broke and they made the Tortugas under a rag of canvas, John Piggott triumphed. He had them gather under the poop and he lifted his voice in strong prayer. The fact that he did not make the pirates kneel further convinced them that, Quaker though he might be, Friend John was a man!

The Tortugas, it turned out, were the rendezvous of the buccaneers, of whom Mansvelt was admiral. The return of the pirate chief was hailed from the shores with a rattle of musketry. That night was given over to a barbecue. The memory of the sinfulness of that celebration made the Quaker shake his head and groan, so that his guardian musketeers thought that he was like to drop from the heat.

It was there that John Piggott first fell in with the handsome, daredevil Morgan—the young buccaneer whose iron nerve and clear head were as Mansvelt's right arm. Morgan had returned from a raid, bringing with him a rich ransom from Spanish galleons and Spanish towns. But the fairest jewel which the daredevil brought to the Tortugas was an English maid, named Katharine Vernon, said to be the daughter of a king's officer.

Katharine's capture was a matter of marvel and anger to the pirate chief, Mansvelt. Up to this time the buccaneers had waged war on no vessels, save those of Spain. Least of all had they touched the maritime commerce of Old England.

Katharine had been sailing from England on an English ship, bound for Port Royal, where her father, Colonel James Vernon, was commander of his majesty's forces. The master of the English ship, falling afoul of Harry Morgan, had rashly anticipated the trouble which would not otherwise have befallen him, and fired a shot at the buccaneer.

Daredevil Morgan retaliated with a shot which struck the vitals of the English ship. The polished rascal, whom Friend John had just greeted at the Council of St. Jago, had stood by and watched the ship go down, after he had taken from her the fair Katharine.

Ah, well! She had been in grievous peril of worse than death while she remained among the buccaneers, but the Lord had nerved John Piggott's arm and tongue, and she had been saved by a ship-of-the-line and restored to her father at Port Royal. And there was a young lieutenant of that ship-of-the-line, John remembered with a sigh, who had fallen in love—

"Who goes?" came a hoarse challenge from the parapet of the thick-walled Passage Fort.

"Friends!" cried the musketeers, raising their eyes to the shining steel of the sentry.

"And a Friend," added John Piggott, of York.

"Advance, friends," laughed the sentry, "and give the countersign."

"God save the king's majesty!"

"God be with thee, friend," said the Quaker.

Half an hour was spent while the musketeers refreshed themselves and told the news of the outside world. The Quaker sat by with his biscuit and water, while the others held forth on the latest treasure brought in by the buccaneers.

Mansvelt was dead, it was said, and Morgan had succeeded him as chief of the freebooter fleet. They had sacked Maracaibo, was stated, and forced the town to pay ransom. They had also destroyed the Spanish fleet, right under the guns of the Spanish fortresses. The soldiers slapped their thighs and voted Harry Morgan a thorough daredevil Englishman. And they had seen the redoubtable Morgan himself that day, seated at the right hand of his excellency, who seemed main proud of him, too.

Some of the soldiers had been ordered into the interior to conquer the Maroons—the slaves of the Spaniards who had taken advantage of the quarrel of their European masters to escape to mountain fastnesses. After such and such gossip and some bantering of the Quaker, the musketeers continued their journey to Port Royal with their compliant prisoner.

Warmed to fellowship by the refreshment of which they had partaken at Passage Fort, the musketeers were in better humor with the Quaker as they tramped along. They quizzed him at first, but when they found that he was equipped with a tongue fully competent to quiz them, they fell to questioning him as to his past. Before they reached the Ferry Inn, whence a boat was to take them across the narrows to Port Royal, they had voted the Quaker a main good fellow. In another half-hour they were on the other side of the narrows and treading the soil of Port Royal.

Port Royal, at this time, was granted to be "the wickedest spot in the universe." The harbor was full of ships of all sizes and kinds and degrees of honesty. The boat which the musketeers rowed from the mainland to the spit which Port Royal crowned threaded a way among pirate craft, smuggler merchantmen, slavers, and king's ships of war.

The streets of the town through which the Quaker prisoner was led presented the same motley. Before the shops of Portuguese, Jews, English merchants and miscellaneous rascals the sidewalks were littered with bales of silks, casks of wine, cases of plate, and even kegs crammed with pieces of eight, two million of which had just been brought in by the master buccaneer. And among these piles of loot sprawled and jabbered the woolly haired slaves, with their nose-rings and earrings.

Buccaneers reeled from tavern doors, where their fellows were bawling ribald

sea-songs and swaggered up and down the streets, forming a strange commingling with king's officers on horseback and richly decorated vehicles, from which jeweled women waved their greetings. Such was Port Royal in the heyday of its wealth and wickedness—twenty-two years before the earth shook and the sea swallowed it in the twinkling of an eye!

The figure of John Piggott, of York, Quaker, was surely an odd one in such a picture. But it was this very oddity which saved him from rotting in the military dungeon, for he was instantly remarked by a friendly pair of eyes.

A carriage suddenly came to a standstill right in the path of the musketeers, and a clear voice called upon the soldiers to halt. One of the musketeers sprang forward, with a curse of outraged authority; but the curse was bitten off, and all at once the musketeers stood up, stiff as wooden soldiers, at salute. At the same time the voice which had stopped their advance cried:

"Oh, Friend John—at last! It is I—Katharine!"

The mask of piety melted from the Quaker's face. In its place there came a smile of pleasure and sweetness. But almost instantly it was succeeded by a look of sadness, for as he tried to draw his hands apart he encountered the manacles. Katharine Vernon leaned out of the carriage and presented to the Quaker a face lit up with laughing gratitude.

No wonder the musketeers had sprung to the salute. Aside from the fact that she was the daughter of the commander of the king's forces at Port Royal, her beauty was such as would disarm, while it infatuated, a ruffian. The roses of England were still in her smooth cheeks. The sunlight danced in her moist, gray-blue eyes and shimmered in the waves of her russet-gold hair. She was dressed in the fashion of the time, but, for coolness in that clime, her throat was bare.

The long, smooth throat-line lent a distinctly brave poise to her patrician head.

But about her eyes and mouth was none of patrician haughtiness. It was all the sweetness which melts to compassion, lights with enthusiasm, dances with womanly wit and harmless, lovable mischief. She was the idol of Colonel Vernon, the despair of the king's officers, the awe of the buccaneers, and the delight-to-serve of the negroes. Alone, she might drive, or even walk, through the streets of that wickedest spot in the universe and none would find it in his heart to think or do her harm. The drunken buccaneer would halt and unsteadily watch her go by. The ring-eared slave would thrust the bales of loot aside that she might pass free, while the king's officers would spur their horses to curvet and, gazing after her, mutter:

"Darn Tom Lockhart!"

But for the moment Tom Lockhart, of his majesty's ship-of-the-line Scorpion, was not in Katharine's heart. It was swelling and burning with the outrage which had been thrust upon John Piggott—her Quaker—her Friend John—who had befriended her when she was in distress and peril. The tears were in her eyes and anger in her voice as she turned to the musketeers.

"Unloose his hands!" she cried.

One of the musketeers started to obey, but suddenly he stopped and looked confused. He dared not obey, much as he longed to do so. She was the colonel's daughter, but—her father was the colonel.

"At once!" she cried imperiously, the patrician head lifting and revealing the full, proud throat.

"Nay, little sister," said John Piggott, coming to the rescue of the situation. "Thee must not say so. They be true friends who do their duty. I be glad to see thee—Katharine."

"Stand beside me, Friend John," she said, stretching a rounded arm from the carriage as if to lay it on his shoulder. The soldiers compromised on retiring.

"Oh, Friend John," she said, "how comes this? Did my father know of this, he—"

"'Twas thy father put me in jail," chuckled John Piggott, his own eyes strangely soft and shiny.

"My father!" she cried, her delicate eyebrows arching and her whole face taking on an expression of almost childish amazement. "My king! Might he not have spared all Quakers for that *one*—but there! You did not come to him as I said. He does not know—it is you, Friend John—*my* Quaker. And you

have hidden from me, Friend John, who yearned to tell you again that all my life is yours and all my happiness—"

"And thee is happy—I be hearing," said the Quaker quietly.

Her lips pursed in the chirrup of a Spanish *señorita,* but the blood glowed under her drooped eyes.

"Tell me," she urged; "how comes this, Friend John?"

She spoke the "Friend John" with a softness of love and gratitude which sent a strange, worldly thrill through the Quaker's veins. But he faced her with the old sparkle of good-humor, and said:

"I be a Quaker, and my ways be not the ways of a soldier. First, they would have me swear allegiance to the king. There be no better nor loyal subject, but a Quaker may not swear, Mistress Katharine. The word of a Quaker should be as good as any man's oath."

"In sooth it is!" said Katharine indignantly.

With a great deal of spirit and spice, he told her laughingly of his misfortunes —about his hat and his arms. When he had finished, she was laughing in spite of herself.

"Sit here by me," she said, much to the dismay of the musketeers. "We'll to the prison. The marshal shall answer to me for this, and I to my father."

"Nay, nay!" protested John. This high-handed proposition was contrary to his Quaker principle, though it gratified him to mark her tender solicitude. "Thee canst say to thy father what thee pleases, but I go to the jail."

He enunciated the last words with a precision that stirred her to impatience.

"Tut! Friend John, thee is a stubborn fool!" she cried, unconsciously imitating his way of speech.

"Aye, but thee is the fool's little sister," he retorted with a chuckle.

"Then go your ways!" she said petulantly, giving his shoulder a push.

She gave a command to the slave, and the carriage rolled on, leaving John Piggott, of York, standing in the middle of the street, envied alike by buccaneer and slave and king's officer, manacled as he was.

Even the musketeers respectfully waited until it should please Katharine's favorite to go to jail.

Katharine swallowed her — what was it, anger or tears? — the moment she had left him. Her fingers, clasped in her lap, were turning and twisting as if she sought to unravel a tangled skein. The tears hung undecided on her lower lids, but her eyes were bright and full of eagerness. She must free Friend John —her dear Friend John.

But how? She knew that the marshal would have managed in some way to accomplish it. She knew that her father would have frowned, or perhaps stamped and scolded—at the marshal. It would all have been so easy if— There was the rub! The greatest obstacle in the way of the release of John Piggott, of York, was—John Piggott, of York!

Presently the tear-drops went back, or dried up, and a new light came into Katharine's eyes. It was a sparkle of mischief, and in another minute her face was all aglow with mirth and courage. She drew in her under lip, and a row of pearly teeth nipped the red of it. She had found a way, but first—the name came from her lips with a happy laugh:

"Tom!"

Thus Lieutenant Thomas Lockhart, of his majesty's ship-of-the-line Scorpion, was enlisted in the conspiracy against the king's justice.

CHAPTER III.

A QUAKER TRICK, BY HARRY!

"MANSVELT is dead," quoth Morgan. "God rest him," he added with a sneer, waving his long pipe as if to dispose of the man and his life of crime. "He was a brave man, I warrant ye, but a fool. His brains were in his hands. In the two years since I stepped into dead men's shoes I have done what he would not have dared in a century."

The buccaneer and the governor were still planning over the wine. The afternoon was wearing on, and the air was still and almost unbearably oppressive. Through the open window came the chirruping of quarrelsome lizards, the occasional whir of a humming-bird, and the lazy murmur of the capital. Across the plaza, on the veranda of the Hell-Fire Club, the thick-lipped African had

fallen asleep at Sir John Coape's side, with the fly-whisk in his black fist.

"Ye've done well, i' faith!" said the governor, slapping his fist on the table. "Strategy, sirrah! Strategy!"

"And the long chance," Morgan supplied, jealous of his reputation for nerve. "All the risk in the world is folly without strategy. All the strategy worthless without risk. Look ye. I took Porto Bello at one sweep. Porto Bello! That was two years ago — after Mansvelt." Again the contemptuous wave of the pipe. "I sailed my ships into Maracaibo a month agone, and under the teeth of their batteries gave fight to their fleet, sunk it—burned it—and demanded ransom of the town."

"And got it!" cried his excellency, leaning over the table, his face red with wine and admiration.

"Got it, by Harry!" snarled the buccaneer. "And what was that but the strategy of the long chance? Who would 'a' dreamed it—right into the hornet's nest?"

The memory of it acted like a stimulant upon the usually calm leader. He rose and strode lightly and swiftly up and down the long room. The governor's eyes followed the man with a look of hero-worship, mingled with fear.

Presently Morgan began talking, more to himself—or to the air—than to Muddeford. It was apparent that he was greatly agitated, and that his whole being was strung taut; his whole mind centered upon his subject.

"I tell 'e, Muddeford — I'll do it. I'll do it! I took Porto Bello with fifteen ships and only five hundred lads. To-day I have thirty-six ships and three thousand men. Only one thing may fail me."

"The king?" The unfortunate interruption was out of his excellency's mouth before he realized the mistake of it.

Morgan stopped short in his cat-like prowl and glared at the king's governor. Muddeford quailed at the ferocity of the buccaneer's expression. Morgan's right hand suddenly dived into his breast.

"Pah!" he spat, flinging a document on the table right under Sir Thomas's nose. "The king!"

His excellency unfolded the document as fearfully as if it might contain a viper. He saw something—something which he half expected to see — but the actual knowledge of the thing which had so often been whispered in connection with Morgan's immunity took his breath away. It was a word, a name: "CHARLES!"

The document was suddenly snatched from his hand and a voice rasped in his ear:

"Now we understand each other."

For a minute or two there was comparative stillness. The lizards cheeped and quarreled. A beetle droned through the room, and Sir John's snoring came distinctly across the plaza. Morgan continued his swift, silent stride up and down. Presently he resumed his talk.

"I fear the lads—rum! Mansvelt was fond of the rum, and his men knew it. He'd give 'em a barbecue when his grip slackened on 'em. I've taught 'em another tune. Rum at the right time, but none is best of all. I ha' taught 'em thrift — rammed thrift in their throats. If they want that will burn their vitals, they can have it fro' Harry Morgan.

"The fever o' that is'mus will kill 'em like flies," he went on, as if to nobody in particular; "if they drink. . . . No rum!"

There was another long pause, then he said reminiscently:

"Took a French ship off San Domingo—a rich prize. I boarded her wi' three hundred and fifty men to bring her to Port Royal. It was my first experience since Mansvelt. They broke in on the wines. Drunk? She caught fire and went sky-high—three hundred and fifty with her. I had seen it coming. . . . Ha!" The staccato laugh broke from the man with horrible significance.

Muddeford shook in his chair. There was something sinister in the manner of it. Morgan was gliding up and down, his wide-orbed, widely separated eyes glowing like a somnambulist's, as if reflecting that fiery holocaust of the French ship off San Domingo.

"That was the end of it — while I lived. I've had 'em on duff—plenty of it—but no rum. I'll take Panama. Then —down on the main there's an island—Santa Catarina. I'll fortify it. I'll live on it with a buccaneer fleet that will hold the seas against France, Spain — aye, *even against England, damn her!*"

"Sirrah—I beg of you—" gasped Sir Thomas Muddeford, rising, horrified at the man's treason, terrified at the man's intensity and the magnitude of his criminal ambition.

Morgan spun round on his heel. The black blood vanished from his cheekbones and he laughed. He filled the goblets with a steady hand and resumed his seat. Eying Sir Thomas over the rim of the silver cup, he said quietly:

"A mere flower of speech, Sir Thomas. Blame me not. In me there is the ignoble spark of birth which flashes out occasionally. Remember—I began life a cabin-boy. I was taken like a dog and sold. I have been chained in the galleys. My back has run with blood, and these hands"—he held them out, white, delicate, and tremorless—"were a mass of sores and blisters."

"Horrible — and an Englishman!" cried Sir Thomas, white with indignation.

"Aye—a subject of his gracious majesty—God bless him!" said Morgan coolly. "But we were speaking of the ship—the king's ship. She carries thirty-two guns?"

"It may be thirty-six," said Sir Thomas, unconsciously following the other's lead.

"And she now lies at Port Royal?"

"At Port Royal. But—"

"Have no fear, Muddeford," said Morgan, significantly tapping his breast. "And there are two hundred thousand pieces of eight—one-third of which goes to his gracious majesty, Charles—"

"Hush!" whispered Sir Thomas, pale as a dead man.

"One other thing," said Morgan, quickly taking advantage of the moment. "Sign the release of such of my men as are condemned to hang at Port Royal."

"I dare not. I—"

"Then," persisted the buccaneer adroitly, "sign the release of the man known as Dirk MacAllister. That man is to me what I was to Mansvelt."

For a moment Sir Thomas Muddeford was convinced that, upon the evidence in the case, Dirk MacAllister ought to hang at sunrise; but the overpowering influence of the iron buccaneer was upon him. In another moment the release of Dirk MacAllister was practically accomplished.

"And now?" said Sir Thomas, anxious to have an end, for he felt that things were slipping away from him.

"There is nothing more," said Morgan. "Once Dirk is free, he will gather my men, and they will be aboard my flagship of thirty-two guns—or it may be thirty-six—in the twinkling of an eye. Part of my fleet has already sailed from the rendezvous with instructions to attack and take the Spanish fortress of San Lorenzo at the mouth of the Chagres. The convoy which awaits me in the offing will sail upon Catarina, where I shall bombard the Spanish prison-fortress and obtain several convicts to guide my sloops up the Chagres and over the best route by land to the Pacific side. For the rest—"

Morgan paused. Muddeford hardly noticed the pause. He was trying to conceive why this long-headed scoundrel, this licensed cutthroat, was divulging plans, which, if successful, would send England and Spain at each other's throats, change the whole maritime situation in the Caribbees and upon the Main, and possibly give to Morgan a power second to that of no king on earth.

Muddeford's slow-moving mind was away on the island of Santa Catarina. He saw an impregnable fortress surrounded by the allied buccaneers, menacing the high seas and bidding defiance to France, Spain — "aye, even against England!"

Had Muddeford done right to countenance this thing? He had benefited by the depredations of the buccaneers before, even as his predecessors in office, even as the king was doing at that minute. Was this man, indeed, the cat's-paw of the king? Or, Heaven forgive him for the disloyal thought, was Charles the cat's-paw of this towering buccaneer?

Spain was the common enemy of England and the buccaneers. That was it, of course. It was Muddeford's duty to aid the enemies of Spain, while officially frowning upon such overt acts as—as the blowing up of a French ship, or—or the—

The slow-moving mind was being urged on by a quick-moving conscience. But both came to a standstill abruptly. He suddenly became aware that Morgan

had stopped in the middle of the outline of his plans.

It had only been a second since the buccaneer paused, yet a thousand possibilities and qualms had disturbed Sir Thomas. There was a discreet foot-shuffle by the entrance. The guard was saluting.

"A person craving audience, your excellency," said the guard.

"A person!" said the governor irritably.

"A Quaker maid, your excellency."

"A plague on those Quakers!" shouted Sir Thomas. "A murrain on their troublesome skulls!"

"Is she a fair wench?" asked Morgan, once more the debonair visitor.

"A pretty wench, your excellency," said the guard encouraged.

"Then fetch her in, by Harry!" quoth the gallant Morgan. "Fair Quaker maids are scarce!"

Sir Morgan acquiesced and the guard disappeared.

During his absence the governor uttered a tirade against all Quakers. The tirade was immediately hushed and mentally retracted when the guard ushered in a vision of loveliness, which brought knight of the order and knight of the Caribbee to their feet on the moment. It was a beautiful girl in the simple, severe garb of the Friends.

"By Harry!" exclaimed Morgan.

"Your name, fair maid?" asked Sir Thomas graciously.

"Priscilla," faltered the Quaker maid, and there was no affectation about the tremor which seized her on a sudden. At sight of Morgan, she reeled slightly and backed toward the entrance.

"Priscilla," said the governor, bowing condescendingly. "Have no fear, Priscilla. And what would Priscilla of the governor?"

The Quaker maid seemed to take courage from his excellency's manner. Still keeping near the doorway, she bowed her head in a manner which denoted modesty, or a desire to conceal her charms from Morgan's piercing eyes.

"I crave the release of my spouse," she said in a low voice. "He is held in durance vile at Port Royal."

"His name?"

"John Piggott."

"Of York?" asked Morgan, like the snap of a whip.

"Of York, may it please your excellencies," said Priscilla, and again she reeled slightly.

"That rogue!" growled the governor. "That stubborn mule of a man."

"In sooth he be stubborn, as myself hath reason to know," said Priscilla, clasping her hands before her, and seeming as if about to break into tears.

"And I too," said Morgan. "Priscilla," he suddenly cried, "is he thy spouse?"

"He is, may it please—"

"No, by Harry, it does not please, for y'are the sweetest wench, but one, I ever saw. Priscilla, I drink to thy beauty."

Morgan snatched up the cup and was about to put it to his lips. His gaze was upon the Quaker maid. As she raised her eyes to acknowledge the compliment, he paused, cup to lip. Then he set down the cup, untasted, and stared into the face of the woman whom he had last known as Katharine Vernon.

Like a flash the memory of that scene on the Tortugas passed between them—there while the governor argued the demerits of John Piggott's case. The mad infatuation of that time tore through Morgan's veins once more. *Now* he knew where he had seen the Quaker, and he thought he perceived the reason of this masquerade of Katharine Vernon. She loved the Quaker, and the Quaker had been defending his love when—

Katharine saw and lived over the scene, too. She saw, as if it were the present, the lust in Morgan's eyes as he stood before her in that rude hut on the Tortugas. Then she saw the somber figure of the Quaker loom between them and heard the quiet, even voice saying:

"God hath given this maid to my care. Thee will not dare touch her, Friend Morgan!"

But the memory of that scene, while it unnerved Morgan, nerved Katherine to her task. Flashing the buccaneer a look of defiant contempt, she turned to the governor, who had been rambling on about John Piggott's ill deeds.

"'Twould be a mercy to ye," he was saying, "did we hang him, so would ye be rid of the man and his stubbornness.

But y'are a plucky wench, Priscilla, and if ye will give this ring to Colonel Vernon, he will give ye your Piggott. And that I may not be behind in gallantry," added Sir Thomas, swelling out at the consciousness of his own generosity, "I will even drink your health. So, too, will Colonel Vernon, for I bring to mind that he hath a daughter as fair and as—"

And he, too, stopped short with the cup to his lip, dumfounded. The Quaker maid had suddenly raised her face proudly and was flashing her glance from Sir Thomas to Morgan and back.

"A trick, by Harry!" shouted Sir Thomas. "A Quaker trick! Mistress Katharine, by the Lord! Ha! ha! ha!"

He darted forward to seize her and imprint a gubernatorial salute. But it was too late. She had the ring! With a thrill of mocking laughter she darted through the doorway. Next minute they saw her, mounted on a horse and galloping across the plaza of St. Jago—a strangely reckless rider for a Quaker maid.

With Sir Thomas, as with everybody, Katharine was a prime favorite. His excellency collapsed into a chair and bellowed with mirth over the jest of the jailer's daughter tricking the governor for sake of a psalm-singing Quaker.

"The king shall hear of it!" he hiccuped, "and laugh, I swear! Tricked! A Quaker wench! Colonel's lass—"

Morgan wheeled around from the window, where he had been glaring after the escaped jewel of the Tortugas.

"Silence—*fool!*" he thundered, his voice coming like a bolt of electricity.

Sir Thomas Muddeford looked up, amazed and fear-stricken. The buccaneer's face was purple with a fury which boded no good to Katharine Vernon, and John Piggott, of York.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STUBBORNNESS OF JOHN PIGGOTT.

ON the outskirts of St. Jago de la Vega, on the old Passage Fort road, the galloping Priscilla was suddenly joined by a second rider, who urged his horse to the other's pace, while he gave a lusty "hallo!"

"What luck, Katharine?"

"I have it!" she cried gaily, as the horses kicked up the heavy dust.

"The release—sealed?" cried Lieutenant Tom Lockhart.

For answer she burst out in a peal of mischievous laughter and held up her right hand, on the forefinger of which was the governor's seal-ring.

"Oh, you wonderful woman!" cried the naval lad. "But hold fast, for the love of Heaven! Sailors are no riders, and the prize is won. This animal is a devil!"

In truth, Tom Lockhart was no rider. He was nautically incapacitated.

On the other hand, Katharine was as daring an equestrienne as ever rode aside or astride. When she had led the lieutenant an agonizing pace as far as the Passage Fort, where it was necessary to draw rein in order to give the password, Tom Lockhart uttered a thanksgiving of relief. He was blowing harder than the horses, and his spine was aching to the nape of his neck.

The evening shadows were beginning to steal out of the swamps as the pair neared the lagoon. Presently the two horses edged closer together; presently, too, the eye could hardly separate the figures of the riders; nor could the ear discern a word of the conversation. The tropic dusk was at that still interval between day-sound and night-sound.

It was his majesty's ship Scorpion to which Lieutenant Tom belonged, and it was the Scorpion which had forced Mansvelt and Morgan to give up Katharine Vernon. John Piggott, as a psalm-singing Quaker, had been left, or, rather, had elected, to make his own way to Port Royal.

It was on that pleasant voyage to Jamaica that Katharine and the young lieutenant had improved the shining hour. Tom was a kindred spirit—the masculine of the Katharine characteristics. They had youthful enthusiasm, vim, generosity, and bravery in common, and what she had in deep womanliness Tom had in manliness.

Lockhart also was of the fair-haired Saxon type. Indeed, Katharine and her favored lover might have passed for brother and sister. In them the striking similarity of natural mold, which does

not often result in mutual choice, was so striking, and their personalities so interwoven, that, as they were not brother and sister, they might have been termed the exception to the rule of lovers.

One thing is certain—they loved each other—not with any great passion, such as keeps young people awake o' nights, but with a quiet acceptance of a love which has much of fellowship in it. Sometimes—as on this evening, when the first trill of night insects was echoing on the old Passage Fort road—their fellowship waxed to tenderness. Perhaps Tom leaned over in the saddle and kissed her fair hand or her cheek. Perhaps she gave him a soft, grateful look. But for the most part their love was not graced with extravagant, oft meaningless, flowers. It was the love of a fine, manly lad for a rare type of a sensible lass.

Leaving their horses at the Old Ferry Inn, by the lagoon, they crossed the narrows to Port Royal. Ten minutes later they burst in upon Colonel James Vernon, as that veteran royalist sat poring over the documentary affairs of the colony—for in those days soldiers were administrators.

The entry was a noisy one, since Katharine had still to play the best part of her rôle of deliverer. The colonel's face lit up at sight of her. She was all he had of love in his rough life. He nodded a welcome to the lieutenant, which plainly said:

"I approve of you, if Katharine approves."

"Colonel," said Katharine, drawing back with an assumption of anger and determination, "I demand the release of a certain prisoner."

"My faith!" said the colonel, much as he would have humored a spoiled child. "What would your majesty?"

"The release of John Piggott, of York?" said Katharine, with such an air of gravity that even the colonel was deceived into thinking that she was serious for once.

"John Piggott, of York?" he echoed. "Why—b'the Lord Harry, I cannot!"

"You must!" cried Katharine, stamping her foot. "At once—this instant!"

The colonel stared at her. There was nothing in the world that he would not do for Katharine Vernon—daughter of Colonel James Vernon, sirrah!—but Katharine had ever been a sensible maid and wont to temper her requests with judgment.

Now she was asking him to do a thing which, as a soldier sworn to the king's service and justice, he could not do. He turned an appealing eye upon Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lockhart. That young man was smiling, as if he were a party to the impossible demand.

"Faith, sir, women will ever have their way," said Tom, shrugging his broad shoulders.

"By the Lord Harry!" exclaimed the colonel. "This is—this is astonishing. You, sirrah," glaring at Tom, "should be affronted by your own words. Are the affairs of this colony to be administered by petticoats?"

"Petticoats!" exclaimed Katharine indignantly. "Petticoats!"

"Tut, tut!" the colonel cried hastily, and breaking into a paternal smile. "I swear y'are the sweetest petticoat in the colony. And Tom here will swear it, too, or by the Lord Harry I will call him to account for the omission.

"But, listen, Mistress Katharine Vernon," he went on more gravely. "Would you have Colonel James Vernon commit a breach of discipline and duty, even for his own daughter? John Piggott," he concluded sternly, "cannot be released, save on the order of his excellency. I must have an order!"

"Order?" echoed Katharine incredulously, as if she could not conceive of the colonel being so stupid as to suppose she had no order. "Order!" She was close up to the colonel now, with the index-finger of her right hand crooked under his very nose and the governor's sealring within three inches of his astonished eyes. "Why, there is the order!"

For a minute the colonel stood, backed up against the wall, a picture of blank amazement, with his eyes fixed on the ring.

Lieutenant Tom was lying in a chair, vainly trying to suppress peals of highly disrespectful merriment, while Katharine stood before her astounded father, the picture of injured innocence.

Then the story was told. The colonel himself gave the signal for open mirth. The old Royalist slapped his thighs, and

voted that Katharine should have been born a soldier, and warned Tom Lockhart to beware of this gay Quaker who was enlisting fair maidens in his service. At that Katharine became grave, and suddenly whispered in her father's ear. At once the colonel's laughter ceased, and something like a tear came into his brave eyes.

"Friend John—*your Quaker*—who saved you from that doubly damned scoundrel—" he stammered. "Here!" he shouted, reaching for his plumed hat. "Release him? I would release that man if Muddeford or even the king said he should be hanged! Release him? Aye, certes—on the instant! You shall release him, Katharine. With your own hand you shall turn the lock, by Heaven! Follow me—to the prison—you, too, Tom. Release him? By the Lord Harry, and tell him he's a man!"

Katharine's little play had reached its climax, but there was a closing scene to the comedy. Five minutes later the trio were at the prison door, and the marshal had received the order to lead the way to the place where one John Piggott, of York, lay in confinement. The marshal looked uneasy as he led the way into the prison, for his eye had caught sight of the lady in the background.

As may be supposed, the prison of Port Royal at that time was no very select place. It was filled with the scum of the most ruffianly spot in the universe. Even as the prison door swung back, a lusty roar came from within. Certain buccaneers, doomed to swing in chains at sunrise, were shouting a defiant chorus:

Haul upon the bowline, haul upon your luff.
Haul upon the bowline, the bowline *haul!*

The last haul came out with a roar and a crash of hands and feet that shook the prison from end to end.

"Silence!" shouted the marshal.

"Faith, an' we'll be silent as the grave—to-morrow!" said a voice from the ill-smelling darkness.

There was a wave of laughter at this sally. The speaker was Dirk MacAllister, who had a tongue as sharp as his cutlas and as ready.

But, truth to tell on behalf of the condemned buccaneers, they were not as black as they were painted. Their sin extraordinary was merely that they had been caught.

At sight of a fair lady they hushed their ribald tongues and peered out curiously from the gratings of their cages.

Straight to the cage of John Piggott the marshal led the colonel and the lovers. John Piggott had laid him down, and was apparently as peacefully asleep amid that uproar as a child in a cradle. Katharine inserted the key in the lock and, with the assistance of the marshal, turned the ward.

"Friend John," she said, with a queer breaking in her voice, "you are free."

John Piggott stirred in his sleep, and presently sat up. His expression was that of a man who had been dreaming—and was still dreaming.

"Katharine," he said.

One of the buccaneers in an adjacent cage began to swear softly. The marshal hushed him.

"John Piggott, of York," said the colonel grandly, "I have but newly learned that you saved my Katharine's life. Step forth and give me your hand for the man you are."

"I be free?" said John Piggott.

"Pay the marshal his fees and you go forth a free man from this hour," said the colonel.

"Then I be not free," said John Piggott humorously, but decisively. "I will pay no fee for being imprisoned."

For a moment there was astonished silence. Then the memory of certain rules of the Quaker folk came to the minds of all. The ludicrous side of the situation smote Tom Lockhart fairly between the eyes, and he burst out laughing.

The buccaneers, who had been craning their necks and ears, also saw ground for merriment in the refusal of a man to be free for the matter of the marshal's fees. In a moment every one in the prison was quaking with mirth, except the colonel and the marshal and Katharine.

"Oh, Friend John, thee is so stubborn!" she cried, with tears of exasperation, while the marshal scratched his head.

"You won't pay the fees, you dolt!" the colonel roared. "Then, by the Lord Harry, *I* will!"

John Piggott shook his head.

That, too, was against his principle.

It was the principle of the fees not being paid at all that he insisted upon. He would lend no countenance to their being paid *for* him. At that the colonel completely lost patience and thundered forth:

"Sirrah, this is my prison! If you do not consent to leave it at once, I will have you thrust forth, whether you will or no."

At that John Piggott, another of whose principles was opposition to violence, consented, under protest, to be released.

"Therefore," said he, "I will even step forth. But, mark thee, I do this so that I may protect this little sister from the further attempts of a man who hath sworn to possess her."

"Name him—the villain!" shouted the colonel.

"Friend Harry Morgan, whom I saw with mine own eyes this day."

A startling change came over the colonel's face. He turned suddenly upon Lieutenant Lockhart and was about to speak, when the marshal pressed his arm and pointed to a cage but a little way removed from John Piggott's.

The death's-head face of a man was peering through the grating, and appeared by the expression of the eyes to be intently listening.

Katharine's eyes followed her father's, and all at once she shuddered. She had seen that face before.

"Dirk MacAllister!" whispered the marshal. "He is to hang at sunrise, but speak no word of Morgan in that man's hearing."

A silence had fallen upon the party. They walked along the corridor toward the door. John Piggott and Katharine came last, the Quaker having paused to bid the pirate in the neighboring cage farewell.

Katharine lingered, lest her Quaker should decide to go back into his own cage.

"Tom," whispered the colonel, his whole body laboring under terrific agitation, "is that man in Port Royal?"

Tom nodded, with a despairing look in his eyes. He had tried his utmost to keep the knowledge of Morgan's return from the fierce old Royalist. He had even lied to the colonel, saying that it was Mansvelt who had brought the doubloons. The colonel had not heard of Mansvelt's death. Vernon was no party to the freebooter's profits, and was interested only as far as hanging them.

"You hid this from me, lad?" snarled the colonel. "Why, you coward, why?"

Lockhart looked up angrily.

"I did. You would ha' challenged him—"

"I would and will, by the lord Harry!" exclaimed the colonel, with his fist shut tight.

"You will not, sir. Morgan is as sure with the pistol as with the sword. It would be murder."

"What of that? Am I a child, or a man? Have I no cause? Yes, by Heaven, I will meet him! I will face that devil who would have hurt my Katharine—my Katharine's Katharine. You hear me? Yo—"

"S-s-s-s-h — Katharine!" whispered Lockhart, as the Quaker and his deliverer appeared.

CHAPTER V.

THE DUEL ON THE PALISADOES.

THE colonel's challenge, presented to Morgan by Tom Lockhart, next morning, was a document worthy of the colonel. In a rough, misspelled letter, the old Royalist set forth his estimate of the buccaneer, his life and probable death.

He clearly stated if Morgan failed to give him a meeting when and where it should suit the challenged party—"so being the spot is near enough to be immediate"—he would shoot, or strike down, the freebooter on sight.

When Harry Morgan received this challenge, he was of a mind to cast it to one side. He merely glanced at the handsome young officer who had ridden to St. Jago with the challenge, and now stood before him with a stern but sad face. It was on the tongue of Tom Lockhart to ask that Morgan refuse to meet the fiery old soldier, but the merit of the challenge and the code of honor sealed his lips. He could only hope that Morgan would so answer that he, Tom, might turn the offense upon the buccaneer, and thus shoulder the quarrel himself.

In this he was disappointed. Instead

of ignoring the challenge, as Tom had hoped he would, the buccaneer suddenly fell into a reverie—a reverie which Tom was to understand with bitterness before another day had dawned.

Ordinarily, Morgan would have ignored the challenge. He was no stickler for honor when there was nothing to be gained. He did not fear to meet the colonel, however. The reason of his first impulse to slight the matter was that he purposed putting to sea that night, and had little time to waste on indignant fathers.

Second thought suggested to the buccaneer that there was an advantage to be gained in meeting the colonel. Again the black blood gathered around his cheek-bones as he pondered over the colonel's letter. Again his ambition towered, and he saw once more the island of Santa Catarina, fortified, impregnable, himself enthroned among his allied buccaneers—King of the Caribbees! And his queen—

He turned slowly to Lieutenant Tom Lockhart, and scrutinized the younger man's face. The freebooter, used to the wilder moods of men, saw there the danger-signal which sought personal conflict. When Morgan spoke, his tones were without a shadow of offensiveness.

"I salute the gallant Colonel Vernon," he said. "I am honored by his challenge, and shall be with my friends on the seaward side of the Palisadoes at eight o' the clock to-night."

"The weapons?" asked Lockhart, with a sinking at his heart. It was murder—murder!

Morgan paused with the letter in his lace-fringed hand. There was less danger to himself in the blade, but time was precious and a shot was quick.

"Pistols."

Silence fell between the two men. All hope seemed gone. Tom could not deliberately insult the man without provocation, much as he wished to. Morgan saw the other's thought. He made the hoped-for situation impossible by bowing in a stately manner. Five minutes later Lieutenant Tom Lockhart was riding back to the Ferry Inn, feeling as if he carried the colonel's death-warrant.

When Lockhart delivered Morgan's reply, the colonel's gray eyes lit up fiercely. The brave old man knew that it meant almost certain death, but he did not flinch. His duty was to face this insulter of women, and do or die.

"The times we live in!" he snorted, crashing his fist upon a newly opened document which lay on the table. "Fine times, when king's officers forget their manhood for a handful of blood-money; when the king himself—tut, tut! What do I say? My duty is to obey, and obey I will, though I shame for my masters."

As he was speaking, he pitched the fresh document across the table. Lockhart glanced at it. It was an order for the immediate release of one Dirk MacAllister.

"The principal must have his second," said Tom.

The day passed without event, save that there was an air of expectancy in such streets of the town as were commonly frequented by the buccaneers. Dirk MacAllister had passed the word, and, like rats scurrying back to their holes, the buccaneers had disappeared from the taverns and the water-front.

To Tom Lockhart the hours dragged like the minutes which precede a condemned man's end. Several times his eyes lingered on the colonel's gray head as it bent, unconcernedly, over the colony's business. The tears would start into his eyes as he gazed upon the man whom he had come to love for his own sake as well as Katharine's. And now he was to lose him—he knew it!

Was there nothing he could do? Desperate remedies for the situation flashed through his mind. He might waylay Morgan and shoot him down. That would be no great crime. But it savored of Morgan's own method of disposing of an enemy. Lockhart dismissed it as unworthy of a gentleman and a king's officer. He might himself challenge Morgan, but would that prevent the old Royalist meeting the buccaneer if Lockhart fell? Any way he looked at the situation, it took on a more sinister, desperate shape.

He avoided Katharine. At any other time his absence would have been remarked by her; but, fortunately, she had given over this day to her Quaker friend, a circumstance for which Lockhart and the colonel thanked Piggott and fate.

Late in the afternoon it was rumored about town that in some mysterious manner Morgan had acquired a certain thirty-six-gun king's ship, which had recently been brought to Port Royal for repairs. It was also said that the Revenge, as she was named, would sail that night on a secret errand against the Spanish *dons*. But such expeditions were of weekly occurrence, and the rumor floated past without causing more than a ripple of interest.

Shortly after seven by the clock, the colonel and Lieutenant Lockhart issued from the Vernon house. Accompanied by a certain Captain Benlass, they made for the eastern outskirts of the town of Port Royal, whence the narrow strip of sand known as the Palisadoes stretched for six miles eastward to Rocky Fort, where it joined the mainland.

They kept to the seaward side of the spit, satisfied that they could not fail to espy Morgan's party on that bare, windswept barrier. They had gone but half a mile when they sudenly came upon a figure which they had taken to be a cocopalm stump, so tall and narrow was its configuration. But it was the figure of a man.

He came forward at once and flashed upon them a lantern which he had been concealing behind him. Captain Benlass held up his lantern, and its light revealed the face and form of as strange-looking a creature as they had ever laid eyes on.

Lockhart at once recognized the death's-head face of the condemned man he had seen in the prison. It was the newly released Dirk MacAllister. What Lockhart had not noticed then was the size of the man. He was about six feet four in height, yet he could not have measured more than thirty inches around the chest. His legs appeared like stilts even in their loose breeches and flapping boots. And this was the redoubtable Dirk MacAllister, Morgan's right arm—as much of a skinny viper as he looked; and yet, men said, a witty, good-natured, farcical sort of creature in times of peace.

"Colonel Vernon?" said he with an awkward folding up of his body, by way of a bow.

"Aye, ye long-legged spider!" snapped the colonel. "Where is your cutthroat master?"

Lockhart silenced the infuriated old soldier and, as second, took the other's representative in hand. Presently they came to a clearing in the brush, where another lantern revealed Morgan and a third man. Morgan swept the ground with his plumed hat, a salute which was ostentatiously ignored by Colonel Vernon.

The preliminaries were entered into, while the principals stood apart, eying each other in the dim lantern light, the colonel glaring, Morgan smiling and confident.

The seconds measured twenty paces. The opponents took their places at each end of the measured space with a lantern at the feet of each. After some dispute, Capt. Benlass's pistols were accepted and chosen by the combatants. Then the seconds withdrew. It was agreed that Capt. Benlass should give the word.

For a few instants there was silence, save for the humming of the breakers on the seaward side and the bell-like trill of a cricket.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

"Aye!"

"Fire!"

The two shots rang out with a hair-like interval between them. Then two more as one. The reports of the pistols flashed away to leeward. There was no echo. A laugh came from the place where Morgan had been standing. With a cry Tom Lockhart rushed forward to the colonel's lantern and held it to the face of the prostrate old Royalist. The colonel had been hit.

At a glance Lockhart knew that Katharine's father was lost. Forgetting the rules of the game, he sprang to his feet with a cry of rage and drew a brace of pistols from his own belt. He rushed blindly forward to the spot where he had last seen Morgan. But the buccaneer and his two fellows had vanished.

"Lockhart—quick!" he heard Benlass cry.

Like a wounded stag, Tom staggered back to the lantern. Benlass was holding the Royalist in his arms, and the brave old man's eyes were wide open, with a strange look as of inspiration.

"Tom!" he whispered hoarsely. "Tom—come close."

With a sob of agony, Lockhart knelt beside the dying colonel and whispered: "Yes, old soldier."

"Tom—that man—take care of—Katharine."

It seemed as if there was something else he wished to say on the same subject, but all at once he appeared to change his mind and sank back into Benlass's arms with a half cry:

"God save—the king!"

Next minute Lieutenant Tom Lockhart was running frantically toward Port Royal, with the dead soldier's command ringing in his ears. In fifteen minutes he rushed into the courtyard of the Vernon house.

At once he knew that the dying man's inspiration had been right. The slaves were weeping and wailing about the place.

"The boucaniers! The boucaniers!"

Lockhart rushed through the house crying:

"Katharine! Katharine! Katharine!"

The only answer was the subdued, fear-stricken wailing of the blacks:

"The boucaniers! The boucaniers!"

The buccaneers had been there and Katharine was gone.

(To be continued.)

A MIDNIGHT BURLESQUE.

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.

A SHORT STORY.

THE north wind fought with the falling snowflakes as it charged down the black gulch between the tall apartment-houses. It gathered the feathery atoms into triangular masses on window-sills and door-steps. It stampeded them into the cross-streets, and thrust the terror-laden flakes into the creases of the clothing of Mr. "Rat" Connors and Mr. "Jigger" Malone till the two hoboes cursed the strenuous pursuer. Snow, in itself, was nothing to grumble at, but snow whipped along by a wind that was unleashed at the pole was an annoyance which tried the optimism of the roving pair.

An electric globe at the door of The Perrington threw a wedge of light resembling a white tombstone across the sidewalk, and the two halted for a moment in the illuminated patch. Light and heat were kin, and the desire to stand was unanimous. The darkness seemed to intensify the penetrating power of the wind.

"Rat" lifted his felt hat with a jerk, and banged it against the polished pillar at the entrance of the big apartment house.

"Dis ain't snow," he growled. "Dis is der mudder an' der farder o' snow. Say, can't we inject ourselves inter der hall of one o' dese palashul cribs an' get warm while yer give the floor-walker some dope about yer friends as must have shifted?"

"Jigger" Malone climbed mournfully up the steps and pressed his nose against the glass door. "Jigger's" nose was a snub affair, and one imagined that glass doors were directly responsible for its stunted condition.

"Dere's half a mile of raddyater workin' overtime in dere," he growled, "an' dere's nobody to warm, only a fat colored guy who's dreamin' 'bout watermelons in der ellyvater."

Mr. Connors joined his mate on the top step, and while they surveyed the interior of the hall, the elevator attendant came suddenly to life, and sped upward in his cage. He returned in a few minutes, and an immaculately dressed young man stepped out of the elevator and came hurriedly toward the front door.

"Try a touch," growled Connors. "Bite him 'fore he buttons his overcoat."

The young man stumbled through the door, muttering softly to himself, but he stopped suddenly when his eyes fell upon the two hoboes. He glanced quickly up and down the deserted street, then turned sharply upon the pair. "Jigger" Malone, who was on the point of expatiating on the unfinancial condition of himself and pal, checked himself suddenly as a question was fired pointblank at him.

"Do you two want a job?"

"Jigger" resented the inquiry. He had prepared a moving story for the ears of the stranger, and disgusted at the way in which the Fates had sidetracked him, he turned appealingly to "Rat."

"Do we want a job?" he croaked.

Visions of hard work at snow shifting came up before the mental eye of Mr. Connors, and he debated for a minute while the stranger fidgeted uneasily.

"It depends on der job an' der kind of quartz she crushes," said "Rat" tentatively.

"It's a three-minute job," snapped the young man. "I just want you to move a piece of furniture, and I'll pay five dollars for the work."

"Den look on us as fully enlisted," murmured Mr. Connors genially, and next moment the two hoboes were following their employer to the elevator, wondering stupidly on the providential hand of destiny which had stayed their footsteps till the well-paid job was put within their reach.

The elevator attendant regarded the pair with questioning eyes, but the young man muttered a hasty explanation, and the cage whizzed up to the sixth floor. The philanthropic person stepped out quickly.

"Come on," he ordered, and the two outcasts shambled after him down the corridor. The heat warmed them into life again. They exchanged winks and sundry facial twists to express their surprise at their good fortune, and rolled their eyes in wonder at the costly furnishings.

Their employer fumbled for a moment with the key of a door at the extreme end of the passage, then he passed into a dimly lit hall and beckoned them in. The surroundings were strange to Messrs. Malone and Connors. Magnificent oriental draperies were suspended from the walls, and the number of small art treasures that were immediately within the reach of "Jigger" caused a peculiar twitching in his fingers, and brought to his mind a similar attack in his early childhood when a good-natured aunt had taken him into a toy-shop to make a selection.

II.

He was contemplating the advisability of stowing a small bronze Buddha into his coat-pocket while the young man was busy with the lock of a door leading off the hall, but the opportunity passed before he decided. His employer overcame the fastening, hustled them both into a large bedchamber, and after locking both the doors through which they had passed, turned on the light and gave his orders rapidly.

"Now, this is the job for you fellows," he cried. "See this big wardrobe? I want it moved out from the wall. Steady now! Lift together!"

The wardrobe was a huge mahogany affair, and it took the united efforts of the three to make it budge. "Rat" panted under the unusual efforts he was putting forth, while Malone was urged to extraordinary muscular exertion by the pictures which imagination painted of the pleasure-making possibilities of a five-dollar bill.

The piece of furniture came slowly from the wall, and the young man called a halt. He tried to wedge himself in between the wardrobe and the cedar dado, but the space was not sufficient.

"Just a few more inches," he cried. "Hurry up there! Grip hold!"

He halted them again, and finding that there was now space to spare, he disappeared behind the wardrobe, leaving "Rat" and "Jigger" standing in the center of the room.

The two hoboes glanced at each other and then at the bulky piece of furniture. The one question puzzled the two brains. What was he doing? The red eyes of Connors made the inquiry of Malone, and the shifty blue eyes of Malone asked it of Connors.

For a minute they stood thus, then the two became suddenly alert. The faint tinkle of metal came from behind the wardrobe. "Rat's" head was pushed snakily forward, and the look of curiosity fled. "Jigger" changed from one foot to the other and looked at his mate. An irresistible desire to exchange impressions came over them. They leaned toward each other. Malone whispered a word into Connors's ear, and Connors whispered the same word into the ear of Malone. The word was "tank". The faint tinkle had informed them that their employer was opening one of those wall-embedded safes which the landlords of high-class apartment-houses ingeniously assure their tenants can be hidden from the eyes of a burglar by placing a piece of furniture before them!

"Jigger" took a step forward; "Rat" kept pace with him. Greed lit up their eyes; their fingers twitched nervously. Quick glances carried questions and answers. Within a yard of them was an open safe, and they were two against one. Both remembered, at that moment, that their employer was a very slender person, and they wondered as they crept forward why he was so stupid as to bring them face to face with a temptation of such magnitude.

The head of Connors was within a few inches of the end of the wardrobe when a noise in the hall through which they had entered the bedroom made him draw back suddenly and stand erect. Malone followed his example. A key had turned in the lock of the outer door, and they heard the voices of two people engaged in a loud conversation.

The sounds immediately brought their employer from his hiding-place. Tiptoeing hurriedly past the two hoboes, he pulled the chain of the electric light, and the room was plunged in darkness. "Rat" and "Jigger" were astounded. All their mental faculties had been concentrated on the one purpose, and the sudden movement of their employer left them helpless. Then a flash of realization came over them, and with parched lips they stared in horror at the situation which the action of the young man revealed. They had been engaged by a burglar!

The stranger verified their suspicions. Reaching out in the darkness he gripped an arm of each, and drew them together with a whispered caution. For one terrible moment, the three stood in the center of the room expecting the bedroom-door to fly open; then the burglar gave a little sigh of relief. The door of an adjoining room creaked on its hinges, and the voices died away in a soft buzzing noise as the speakers left the hall.

The two hoboes came to a full realization of their position by a joint snort of rage.

"Well, I'm dashed!" muttered Malone, but the hand of the burglar came quickly across his mouth and stifled any further comment.

"Shut up, you fool!" he hissed. "Sing Sing is pretty close to you if you're not careful."

Fierce hate was uppermost in the mind of the two, but the whispered words of the gentlemanly cracksman choked back their rage. They had to find a safe way out, and the nerve of the other so impressed them that they looked to him to provide it. They, of course, were innocent of any criminal intent, but the reputation of Messrs. Connors and Malone was in such a tattered condition that it could not adequately support such a plea in open court. They realized that without much mental labor. Aggrieved innocence was not a cloak that they could wear to advantage. Their only hope lay in the resourcefulness of the scoundrel who had trapped them, and, with the criminal's respect for courage and an inherited respect for the well-dressed man, they followed him cautiously to the window.

The burglar lifted the sash carefully and climbed out into the darkness. An easy retreat by means of a handy fire-escape came up before the minds of the hoboes and lessened their fears as they followed him. The night was dark, and it was snowing heavily. From far below came the hoot of a nervous steamer feeling her way down the Hudson.

"Jigger" Malone shuffled forward a few inches, and groped nervously for the railing of the fire-escape which he thought was near, but the younger man thrust him roughly back.

"You darned fool!" he growled. "Where do you think you are? This is

a stone coping about three feet wide, and there's nothing between you and eternity!"

III.

"JIGGER'S" knees weakened as he literally glued himself to the wet wall. They had come up six stories! An unprotected ledge three feet wide was between him and the horrible gulf of gloom where the air seemed to bulge and billow like waves made out of cotton batting dipped in ink! A fierce desire to tip the cause of the trouble into the chasm came over him, but he lacked the physical courage to support the hate.

The burglar stood for a moment reconnoitering. To the left the light from two different windows, the blinds of which were raised, fell across the coping, and made retreat in that direction decidedly dangerous. To the right everything was dark, and with a muttered order to Malone and Connors, the well-dressed housebreaker started to work his way carefully along the slippery ledge.

"Rat" followed with a growl of fury. "Jigger" turned for a moment to the window, and then, recognizing how hopeless it would be to escape through the hall, he crouched low and, with shoulder pressed close to the unsympathetic bricks, followed slowly.

A thousand forms of torture for the man who had betrayed himself and pal came up in his mind, while the fear of the abyss sickened him. The black depths seemed to reach up and grasp at him. His imagination painted the probable ending of the adventure, and he grasped Connors's leg in abject terror as the picture of his body hurtling through the air came up before his mental vision.

"Wot's up?" growled "Rat."

"Nothing," gasped Malone. "Say, I—I wus jest thinkin' if I—I git out of dis alive, I'll—"

"Stow dat!" muttered the other. "Leave dat part of der business till we finish dis akerybatic stunt we're doin'."

A gust of wind tore in from the river and clutched at Malone till he moaned in fear. His fingers groped madly along the wall, but the surface was murderous in its wet smoothness. The wind came between him and the bricks like a wedge that whistled contemptuously as he leaned over to resist its efforts. Imagination reveled in the ending which it saw in sight, and it furnished the eddying gusts with invisible hands which clutched at his worn garments. His boot slipped on a particle of ice, and he lowered himself hurriedly to his stomach.

For two minutes he lay flat, then the fear of being left alone urged him onward. On hands and knees he followed the other two. Once he attempted to rise, but the wind sprang at him. He pictured it waiting till an opportunity arrived to tear him from the ledge. It was alive, vicious, bloodthirsty.

The burglar and Connors had halted. They were conferring together in low tones, and Malone butted into them in his hurry to make up for the time he had lost. Recovering himself with a little yelp of terror, he clutched "Rat's" leg and drew himself erect.

"Wot's up now?" he gurgled.

"Dere's a break in der flamin' copin', an' der fire-ladder is on der udder side of it," growled Connors. "It's too big to step over, an' it's risky work doin' long jumps up dis height."

Malone's lower jaw battered the upper one pitilessly. His knees weakened, and once more he sank to a sitting position upon the wet ledge. The possibility of a jump appalled him. To leave the coping for the briefest moment would give the wind the opportunity he knew it waited for. He swooned when he contemplated such a happening. He poured out blasphemy upon the head of the burglar till his dry lips refused to obey his wishes.

The burglar laughed softly as he listened to the tirade. With his keen eyes he had noted the position of the two hoboes when he darted round the wardrobe on the occasion of the alarm; and, although he had been prepared for such a contingency, the grim humor of the thing tickled him. The precious pair of rascals, who were ready to pounce upon him, were now being called upon to suffer the same anxiety for a contemplated crime as that which he was paying for the actual theft. The terror of Malone amused him immensely, but he tried to hide his enjoyment.

Standing on his tiptoes, the burglar reached up his hands and felt along the

wet wall. It was impossible to see anything twelve inches away.

"Say," he murmured, "I think we could get onto the roof from here. One of us would have to climb up on the other's shoulders. Once on the roof, we could easily get to the fire-escape."

"Yes," growled Connors, and there was suspicion in the muttered assent.

"Oh, I don't care which one of us goes up first," laughed the burglar; "but it's our only hope of getting out of this fix. On all of these tar roofs there are wooden gratings to walk on, and if we got one down here we could use it as a ladder to get up by."

"But s'pose der are none?" questioned Connors.

"Go down the fire-escape and find a rope," answered the cracksman. "Here, you climb up on my shoulders and try it."

He turned his face to the wall and braced his legs apart. Connors cursed quietly. His nerves were not in a nice state, now that he was standing on the ledge; but the thought of climbing up the young man's back into the darkness sent a thrill up his spine. He remembered that he was a heavy man compared to the burglar, whose slimness had attracted his attention when he was engaged to shift the wardrobe. Connors turned to Malone to suggest that he act as the human ladder, but Malone gibbered fear-stricken protests.

"Look here," cried Connors, turning to the burglar, "will you do der fair thing if I let you climb up?"

The other laughed carelessly as he listened to "Jigger's" condemnation of his mate's proposal. "Of course I will," he answered. "Do you think I'd leave you two poor devils here? If there is nothing up there, I'll go down the escape and get a rope."

Connors meditated a moment. If two climbed up on the shoulders of the third, something was necessary to pull up the man left on the ledge, and the burglar's proposition seemed to be their only hope.

"Come on," he growled, and, turning his face to the wall, he leaned inward and braced his legs.

The cracksman was evidently free from nerve troubles. Using the crouching Malone as a footstool, he climbed onto Connors's shoulders and reached up into the darkness. His fingers clutched the coping, and he gave a little gurgle of relief.

"Straighten yourself easy," he called down softly, and, in obedience to the order, Connors shuffled his feet slowly forward till he stood upright. The weight of the burglar rested solidly on his shoulders for a minute; then the muscles stiffened, and the legs went up into the black void.

IV.

"RAT" stepped cautiously aside. If the climber failed to drag his body up, there was no hope for him. If he dropped back onto the coping, the inevitable stagger would precipitate him into the gulf.

Malone's teeth beat out a jig tune as he listened to the boots of the burglar scratching the wall far up above him. The suspense was agony. He hurt his shoulders by pressing them against the bricks.

"He's doin' it," muttered Connors. "He'll get there—" He stopped with an oath and clutched at the wall. A small packet clattered down from above and fell with a metallic ring on the coping. Connors stooped down and, groping forward in the snow, clutched a small steel box about nine inches square. It had fallen from the clothes of the climber when he was struggling to get his legs over the ridge of the roof. Connors gave a little gasp of joy. The vision of the safe behind the heavy wardrobe came into his mind, and he gurgled like a child. He held the jewel-case that the burglar had stolen.

"Say!" The voice came down from the roof, and the hobo noted the anxiety in the tone.

"Well?" growled Connors.

"Did you get that box?"

"Wot box?"

"The box I dropped."

"No."

There was silence on the roof for the space of a minute, then the angry voice of the burglar broke the silence.

"You liar!" he cried. "Own up that you have it, or I'll knock you off the ledge with a lump of wood."

Malone stuttered in terror. The new danger horrified him.

"I haven't got yer box!" screamed Connors. "It went into the yard."

The burglar cursed deeply. He had heard the box strike the coping, and felt certain that one of the hoboes had possessed himself of it when it fell.

Connors dropped on his knees by the side of Malone, and, catching hold of his mate's hand, guided it over the surface of the box.

"Outer der tank," he whispered. "Dere's diamonds in dis!"

"Are you going to give that up?" cried the cracksman. "Answer quick, or I'll throw a plank down on the pair of you."

"We haven't got it," growled Connors. "Go an' do wot yer promised to do."

The burglar rushed away in search of a missile to throw at the defiant hobo, and Connors lost no time in trying to get himself out of the danger zone. Connors without the jewel-box might have hesitated to jump the gap, but Connors with the jewel-box was a different person.

He grabbed Malone by the shoulder and shook him fiercely.

"Quick!" he cried. "Git up, you fool! We'll jump the hole an' dodge him down der fire-stairs. Git up!"

Malone chattered obscenely, but Connors felt his way to the edge of the gap. He knew the man on the roof was positive that he had the box, and he knew well the terms on which he would be rescued, even if the burglar's better judgment stopped him from fulfilling his threat.

He struck a match and held it out over the gulf. The gap was only six feet wide, but the snow on the ledge rendered the leap a difficult one. Connors shrank back from it, yet the jewel-case, clasped to his breast, nerved him to the effort.

He scrambled back to Malone, and cursed him so vigorously that his nerve partly returned to him. It was a case of do or die. If they didn't take the leap, the probability was that the angry burglar would throw something down upon their heads in revenge. Help from him was now out of the question, and safety lay in the leap.

Standing on the edge of the gulf, Connors walked backward four paces, took a long breath, and then, with a wild rush, sprang into the darkness.

He landed on his heels, skated madly along the wet stone, and miraculously clutched the ladder of the fire-escape when on the very edge of the narrow platform. His escape was a marvelous one.

For a moment he sat up and wiped his brow, and in that second he wondered why he had thought it cold when he pulled up in front of The Perrington. He was perspiring. Cautiously he went back over the toboggan-slide to the edge of the gap and called softly across it to his mate. Malone answered with a little whine of terror.

"Come on!" cried Connors. "If he don't murder yer he'll git yer fifteen years in the pen when he starts to throw things at yer. Say when yer comin', an' I'll be ready to grab yer."

He moved back from the edge, threw himself flat on his stomach and, with his head turned to the gulf, waited for his mate to jump.

A minute passed—two, three. Connors was annoyed. Out of the darkness above him he thought he heard sounds, and fears of his own safety came uppermost in his mind.

"I'll give yer another minute," he cried. "Look out! The tank-buster is coming!"

A shrill cry of fear came to Connors out of the black void, then Malone's boots slipped along the coping and struck him in the face as he gripped his legs to save him from falling off the ledge.

"You're right," he muttered. "H-s-h—he's speaking! Don't make a sound. Catch hold of me coat an' follow me down der ladder."

It was nearly sunrise next morning when the two hoboes halted in a little clump of trees near Spuyten Duyvil. One must travel with much circumspection in the early hours, and the precious box carried by Connors made the two extra careful not to attract attention in their flight from The Perrington.

Connors laid the box down on the grass, while he hammered at a piece of iron in an endeavor to convert it into a makeshift jimmy with which to open the treasure-case. In their wild tramp their imaginations had pictured it as the repository of great wealth.

"Diamonds for sure," muttered Connors, inserting the sharp end of the piece of iron.

"An' pearls an' things like dat," murmured Malone.

The lock groaned as the lever bit. The muscles of the two became taut, and their eyes bulged. The lid twisted, and then, with a sudden jerk, it flew wide open.

The heads of the two hoboes were thrust down to within a few inches of the plush-covered interior. They stared at it in blind astonishment, and then, to make sure that their eyes were not playing any tricks with them, they allowed their dirty fingers to grope over the emptiness of it.

Connors shook the box, knocked it on the ground, then, with a curse, flung it down the hill.

"Say," he growled, "wasn't it a pity we didn't ask der guy for der five-spot he promised us after we had lifted der heavyweight rag-box in der room?"

But "Jigger" Malone was too ill to answer the inquiry.

THE UNDENIABLE MRS. PELHAM-SMYTHE.

BY EDNA TREAT.

A SHORT STORY.

"YOU'RE Mrs. Aubrey, aren't you? I'm Mrs. Pelham-Smythe, Peabody Pelham-Smythe—hyphenated you know — second floor, just below you on the court-side. We love the court-side, it's so blessedly quiet, and quiet is absolutely essential to one of my esthetic temperament. I've been so interested in you. Every day I've intended to call. Really, we're almost related, and have an endless chain of mutual friends. How do you like New York after the West? You know, I lived in the West too, and adore it, so you may be quite frank with me, dearie."

The large, fair, plump person who had issued tempestuously from the telephone booth and accosted me as I waited for an elevator, squeezed my hand warmly and beamed at me out of a pair of bright blue eyes, one of which had the slightest—the very slightest— "cross" to it.

We entered the car together and were still exchanging amenities when my floor was reached.

"Daniel, you stupid, you've taken me too far! You see, Mrs. Aubrey, you've bewitched me. Brides always do. I'm naturally of a childlike nature and have never mastered an intense curiosity about brides. They make me feel coy—demure, quite like one myself. A blush steals to my cheek— Really, I ought not to come in. It's late. Poddy will be home soon, and he gets melancholy if I'm not there to greet him. Peabody, you know —I call him Poddy for short. I suppose you have a pet name for your hubby, too? My, what a sweet place! You certainly have started ideally on love's primrose path. I only hope the disillusions won't come to you that have to me!"

A sigh sent the plump bosom surging up so suddenly that an alarmed "Oh!" escaped me. A white, moist hand reached out and clasped mine.

"You're adorably sympathetic, dearie. I know I shall love you. I have such a sensitive, poetic soul. When I meet one attuned—one that vibrates in unison—I bind that person to me with hoops of steel. Your husband is a stock-broker, isn't he? What a fascinating way to make money! You know, I have a little bank—I call it 'rainy days'—I put all my pennies in it. One of these days, I'm going to bring it up to Mr. Aubrey—

without counting it—and let him make a fortune for me—any way he chooses—I'm not in the least particular. I always thought that wail about 'tainted money' absurd. I have the greatest confidence in your husband—don't know another soul I'd trust with 'rainy days'. I have a friend who dabbles in stocks, too. It's lovely to know you, for now you can get sure tips for me to give to her.

"You have such a beau-ti-ful apartment. I suppose you're going to entertain a great deal? No? Well, it isn't so easy to get into the social swim in New York, even if you have heaps of money. I'm a Lane, you know—belong to one of the first families. I'm a charter member of the D. A. R., and belong to the Sorosis and New England clubs, the Eclectic, and Woman's Progress. I'd be quite happy to take you under my wing. Why, during the season in Washington, I was on the reception line somewhere every afternoon, and dinners and theaters besides. Oh, I'm fond of a gay life! Poddy doesn't care for it.

"My dear, it's a tragedy—mind, I wouldn't say this to any one else in the world—you seem to draw my secret thoughts from me by your sweet sympathy—it's a tragedy to marry a man twice your age. My word, I must go! Do show me your apartment, first. We thought of taking one of these, but fifteen rooms seemed most too many, besides our six rooms on the east side of the house are more secluded and Poddy gets the morning sun. He dotes on it. It doesn't matter to me, I don't get up before noon; but I'm so self-sacrificing, when he said he liked the morning sun I gave up my own comfort at once.

"Charming, really, your rooms are charming. Heigho! Money will accomplish anything. I suppose you gave *carte blanche* to one of the ultra-smart furnishers? No? Astonishing! Most Westerners do. These chairs are dreams—so comfortable, too." And two hundred pounds and over of avoirdupois bounced up and down kittenishly while the springs creaked.

"I'll have to borrow them for my reception. Did I tell you I'm thinking of giving a reception? Don't know whether to have it down-stairs or up here. You have everything so handy, and plenty of servants. You're going to have Mme. Jansky staying with you, aren't you? Your maid told me you were. How wonderful that you should know such a famous woman. She will be a great attraction for the reception, and no doubt, if you ask her, she will sing. Just think, the famous diva at my reception! I must send out cards at once.

"It's perfectly dear of you to be so gracious, but I knew the first time I saw you that you would be. Do run down soon and have a cup of tea with me—quite informally. I'll read you some of my little sonnets—my soul-children, I call them—just my heart-thoughts for my friends.

"Oh, by the way, would you mind having your butler fetch me down five or six eggs? You're such a delicious little thing, you quite made me forget I promised Poddy a soufflé. I was just going to telephone for eggs when I met you. Poddy's a wonder with a chafing dish. If he wasn't so proud he could make a fortune as a *chef*. I insist that you come to dinner with us some night soon. Good-by, dear child. Don't know when I've met any one who has so charmed me out of myself as you have. Good-by."

II.

"Miss Rose, honey, you looks fit to drap," complained Lily, my maid, as she hurried me into my dinner-gown without the accustomed few minutes devoted to "power through repose."

"Lily," I questioned, as that factotum hooked and buttoned, "who is Mrs. Peabody Pelham-Smythe, hyphenated?"

"I don't know who Hyfonate is, Miss Rose, but Mrs. Smith's dat fat woman on the second floor, back—an' mighty poor white trash I calls her, always snoopin' round, askin' questions. She done pay nobody nor for nothin', and her poor ole husband cooks her breakfast and takes it to her in baid, and dey do say she only has one suit of underclothes to her back—he washes 'em out for her every night. Every afternoon she goes trapesin' off to some tea or music party or other, all rigged up 'zactly like a peacock. She ain't a bit like you-all, Miss Rose."

"That will do, Lily," I said sternly.

The next day I was called to the telephone.

"Oh, Mrs. Aubrey, how are you, dearie? This is Mrs. Pelham-Smythe. I wish you might have been with us last night. We had an editor to dinner—such a clever man. Said he had never read anything as extraordinary as my verses. I've decided to let a magazine publish them. Will you send your maid down with some postage-stamps—uh-um, eight, or ten, I think. You see, I'm anxious to get them mailed at once before the mood changes. I'm very temperamental, and it's cost me some heart-aches to give my soul-children to a callous world.

"Has Mme. Jansky come yet? I want to call on her the minute she arrives. Knowing you so well, I feel already as if I knew her—and loved her. The carriage is waiting for you? It's a ravishing morning, isn't it? If you could wait a minute I'd put on my hat and drive a little way with you. I love driving. Oh, well, if not this morning, another time. When I kept a carriage, I was always taking my friends about, and it gave me the greatest pleasure. Truly, nothing gives the happiness that doing for others does. It's my motto—do for others. Good-by. Enjoy your drive."

Rebuked and ashamed, I turned from the telephone. I had fully made up my mind to resist the advances of this big, cheerful, buoyant, complacent creature, and at the very outset I was made to feel petty and hateful.

The week passed without further attentions from "second floor, back," as Lily called her, and on Sunday two friends from Brooklyn were dining with us. The dessert had been served, when I was summoned to the telephone.

"Hallo, dearie. How's my little wild-rose to-night? That's my poetic idea of you, dear—a pitty, 'ittle, wilding Rose—sweet, isn't it? My dear, we have some musical friends with us and we haven't a piano. You would enjoy them immensely, and they would you. Oh, have you dined?—just dining? Funny, so are we. Wouldn't it be cozy to have our coffee and liqueur together? We will come up to you. I so want Poddy to know you. We'll be up in a jiffy."

And in a "jiffy" the enemy was upon us. Surprisingly, the enemy proved to be the reverse of disagreeable. The musical contingent really was musical. Mrs. Pelham-Smythe glowed with cheeriness and told droll stories in an inimitable way. Mr. P. S.—suggestive of a post-script—praised Aubrey's cigars and liquors, and dilated on the good old days when he was something of a blood; "angel" for an opera company; the owner of a neat filly or so and the giver of good dinners.

In Aubrey, he had an appreciative listener, and he beamed and expanded and had a beautiful time airing his past glories. Altogether the evening was a merry one.

My dear friend, Edwina Jansky, came shortly afterward. While I was still in my teens and before she had become famous as a singer on two continents, she had done me a great service. Romantic and ungovernable, there is no telling where my foolishness might have led me, but for her firm, kindly words backed by deeds; and now the days were all too short to crowd into them the confidences we had to exchange—the sorrows and sadness that had come into her life, despite her great success, and the joy that filled mine brimming over.

Aubrey had asked us to dine down-town with him Friday night, and later, we were going to the first entertainment at which Mme. Jansky was to appear. I had left word with the hall-boy that we were not at home to callers, and, cozy and comfortable in house-gowns, the tea-table spread invitingly between us, we had settled down near a window that showed the sunset sky, to rest and talk before dressing for dinner. A luminous twi-light drifted about us, through which the park lights opposite shone like pale flowers. It was the hour for confidences.

Under its spell, Mme. Jansky began to tell, what I, atingle with interest and sympathy, was eager to hear, but the story was interrupted almost as soon as begun by a telegram from Aubrey. He had been detained out of town and couldn't get back until late. Would we dine at home, and he would join us at the reception?

"Mercy!" I exclaimed, "I've let the

cook and the butler go out, and I don't believe there's a thing in the house fit to eat."

"Let's rummage!" Edwina laughingly suggested, and together we raided the kitchen.

"Boston baked beans, buttered beets, a salad. Scrumptious!" she cried, calmly appropriating the food prepared for the maids. "What do you say to dining first and dressing afterward?"

I assented.

With clever pantomime, Edwina marched into the kitchen and back into the dining-room, bearing aloft the bean-pot. Placing it on a doily on the bare table, she pushed me into a chair on one side while she sank into one on the other. Annie huddled the rest of the meager dinner around the bean-pot, and, laughing and jesting, we fell to.

I had never seen Edwina so merry and fascinating, her face flushed, hair loosened and curling about her bare shoulders, and her firm, white arms looking like alabaster through the lace of her matinée. In the midst of our feast the bell rang. Lily answered it.

"Hod-do, Lily? Here's a carnation I brought you from the Waldorf. Mrs. Aubrey's home—I heard her laughing," and before we could escape, Mrs. Pelham-Smythe sailed into the room.

"Mme. Jansky! How charming! Now, don't be fussed—really, you look a dream! Besides, you mustn't mind me, for, you know, we're almost related."

Seeing a flicker in my eyes, she hesitated a moment, then went on calmly: "Descended from one of the first families, I'm related to almost every one of importance—I've been to a reception at the Waldorf. It was heavenly! Met so many old friends—had a perfectly beautiful time! All lights and laughter and gaiety—then to come home and find it cold and dark and forlorn. My spirits went down like lead, and I said: 'I'll just run up to my wild Rose.'

"Beans! Boston baked beans! I'm crazy about 'em! So's Poddy. There, I'll bet that's Poddy now," as the telephone bell jangled. "I'll answer. Hallo, Poddy. How'd you guess I was here? Yes, I'm dining with Mrs. Aubrey and Mme. Jansky. Wish you were here, too. They have your favorite dish, Boston baked beans. What?—You'd like to come up? But the ladies aren't dressed. No, I know you wouldn't mind, you naughty, naughty man. I'll tell Mrs. Aubrey on you! Maybe, if you're very penitent, she'll send some down to you."

I glimpsed the frowns of Lily and Annie when they learned where their dinner had gone, and for a fraction of a second was on the verge of balking. Then the plump, dimpled face turned toward me and a cajoling voice murmured:

"You're just like I was when *I* had money. Always doing something to make some one happy. It's the only real joy in life."

III.

FOR a few days we were immune. Then one crisp, brilliant afternoon she came in, radiant as the day itself; blue eyes sparkling, white teeth gleaming, the soul of good humor, rattling along in her rollicking, high-pitched voice.

"Oh, dearie," she interrupted herself to say, "I've sent out seven hundred invitations for our reception the nineteenth of next month.

"Our reception, Mrs. Smith?"

"Pelham-Smythe, hyphenated," she interjected softly.

Changing my tone, I said as suavely as possible: "Mother is coming next month, and as she is not at all strong, we shall have to be unusually quiet—"

"Oh! I've decided to have the reception in my own apartment, but"—condescendingly—"you may send down your silver and the punch-bowl; and your butler and Lily might come down. They'd enjoy the excitement—and give tone, you know. I want you to put on your prettiest frock, and come early and stay late. I want to be sure to have some one stylish, from start to finish."

What else she said I didn't hear. The woman had got on my nerves. I rallied myself on a lack of humor, but the demands on time and patience and chattels overbalanced the humor of the situation for the present. I couldn't get away from the woman. She was thrust upon my attention morning, noon, and night. Lily never failed to let me know in some ingenuous way the demands on our larder and household effects.

"Dat Smith woman got de loan of our carpet-sweeper, and Sarah say she brak her haid if she ever dare ask for it again. She sent it back spillin'ful of dirt, the lazy hussy."

"Well, Lily, if that's the case, she must have needed it, and we ought to be glad to be able to aid the cause of cleanliness," I soothed.

"You're too easy-like, Miss Rose. She sent up yesterday for the paper-shears. Sarah sent her a pair of scissors, and she sent 'em back. Said she wanted the long, slender, clippin' shears on your desk. And she telephoned up for a needle and thimble and white thread. She has the telephone on a table near the couch, and it's my opinion, Miss Rose, she's so dratted lazy she just lies there and telephones up here for things."

We were away for a couple of weeks, and Mrs. Pelham-Smythe, hyphenated, had faded to an amusing reminiscence; but immediately upon our return there came a pathetic little note from her. She had sprained her ankle, so provoking, was so gloomy shut up indoors, with no one to talk to the livelong day—would Mme. Janksy and I do her the greatest favor and run down that afternoon and cheer her?

Lily and Sarah were exchanging confidences as the trunks were being unpacked, and frequent allusions to "dat Smith woman" floated in to me. My curiosity was stirred. I sauntered into the room—and—the expected happened. Lily unburdened herself of the tale.

Mrs. Smith slipped and fell, and had to be carried to her rooms and have a doctor. Sarah thought she was shamming. She hadn't been out of the house for a week, but stayed propped up on the couch, pale and ill-looking, with bottles of medicine all around. The tradespeople had been pestering her, and she had each collector come up, doling out a few dollars here and a few there, telling them she would have paid in full but for the accident.

"Poor soul," I thought, all rancor fading, "she does need cheering, truly, and I'll do my best."

Edwina felt the same, and together we went down. We found her as Lily had said, wan and listless, reclining on the couch. The shades were close drawn, and the room dimly lighted. Her voice had a piteous little quaver in it as she greeted us; but almost immediately it recovered its usual buoyant and cheerful tone.

While she lighted the spirit lamp at her elbow and brewed the tea, reciting merciless bits of club gossip meantime, I glanced about. The rooms were large, very simply and effectively furnished; the tea-table perfect in its appointments. Her dimpled, tapering hands moved about prettily and with dexterity. The bread and butter was cut and spread with English thinness, and the tea delicious with a strangely familiar flavor.

I prided myself on our happy blend of tea, and had never divulged the secret of it. Had Mrs. Smythe discovered it—or—

"Delicious tea, Mrs. Smythe." I saw her lips forming "Pelham-Smythe, hyphenated," but went on regardless. "What kind do you use?"

"Yes; hasn't it a delightful bouquet? Really, I don't know what kind it is. Poddy gets my tea for me, and he says this is unexcelled."

We had risen to go when a caller was announced. Mrs. Smythe pleaded so fervently for us to stay—just a minute—that we sat down again. All the animation left her face, her figure relaxed, and she reclined inertly among the pillows. The piteous note that had aroused our sympathy throbbed in her voice when the visitor entered. Quite frankly and unembarrassed by our presence, she explained that his bill—he was a collector—would have been paid but for her melancholy accident. If he would call to-morrow, she would give him something on account; adding briskly:

"We are giving a reception on the nineteenth, Mrs. Aubrey and I, and there'll be a good order for you. See that you attend to it properly, or you'll lose our trade altogether."

Turning to us, she said in clear, incisive tones: "Tradespeople are exceedingly grasping and ungrateful; they have to be taught their place."

"Well, Lily," I ventured, as my hair was being brushed and braided that evening, "Sarah hasn't had any calls today."

"Huh, hasn't she, though! Just tea,

and lemon, and rum, Miss Rose, sure as I live."

"Oh-oo," I laughed happily, "The secret is still inviolate!"

IV.

THE day before the reception, Mme. Jansky and I went to the country, and I returned alone several days later. Two moving-vans were backed up at the side entrance, before a litter of furniture, and two crews of men were brawling over it. One crew would lift an article into a van; the other crew would haul it out and into the second van.

I went on around the building to the front entrance, and caught a glimpse of Mrs. Smythe talking and gesticulating to a meek-looking little man with a shield in the lapel of his coat. When she saw me she left him and sailed forward full-tilt, hands extended.

"Dear Mrs. Aubrey," and she patted my cheek playfully, "how do you do? So sorry you couldn't be at my reception. Over three hundred came! We had a glorious time! Korrosso, the tenor, came! I asked him to meet Mme. Jansky, and he was furious when she wasn't there! But he came—that's all I care." And she chuckled.

"We're moving. The vulgarity of landlords these days is unspeakable. Why, you wouldn't believe the discomforts and annoyances we've had to put up with in our apartment, and they won't fix a thing for us—so we're moving. Got a jolly little nest of a place. You must come and see us, and let Poddy cook you a dinner. Poddy's a wonder! Promise me you'll come?"

Buoyant amid wrecks and ruins, Mrs. Pelham-Smythe was just as undeniable as ever. How could I help promising?

"Soon?" she insisted.

"Very soon."

She was all aglow with affability as she flung out both hands and seized mine.

"You darling!"

The man with the shield stirred impatiently.

"Beautiful day, isn't it? Lucky we have such fine weather for moving. *Au revoir*, dearie."

As the elevator darted upward, a queer little ache wandered into my heart — a faint forefeeling of loneliness to be.

THE MARKED BOOK.

YOU marked the book—the strangeness of it now—
You who long since to land of silence went;
The birds have come and vanished from the bough
For many a time, and spring its new life lent
To hide earth's furrows; yet here on this leaf
Your pencil-marks about the flash of wit,
Foreign to any thought of earth-wise grief,
Hold the bright gleam and call my sight to it.

Then, from that rose-jar we have named the Past,
Where petals keep their perfume to the last,
You come—intrusive, bold—I hear your laugh,
Your merry jest, borne over more than half
A score of years; I catch the swift hand-wave,
And yet the moonbeams bar your quiet grave!

Cora A. Matson Dolson.

THE PADDINGTON CASE.*

BY ALFRED L. DONALDSON

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

ARTHUR W. BRANBANE, a New York business man, traveling in a first-class railway compartment from Wolverhampton to London, wakes up in Paddington Station and finds his fellow passenger dead. Branbane is booked to sail by the next steamer. He must get in touch with the home office of his company; also, he is to be married a few days after his arrival. He escapes through the window of the car. On reaching back for his hand-bag, he encounters the gaze of a clerical-looking man. Branbane abandons the bag and gets away.

At the inquest the dead man is found to have been killed by a small bullet that entered the back of his head at the base of the skull. Next day Branbane sails under an assumed name. The clerical-looking man is aboard, and proves to be "The Deacon," a famous Scotland Yard detective. They are mutually astonished when Branbane avows to "The Deacon" that he left his bag in the compartment. The bag has disappeared.

CHAPTER VI.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS.

WHEN Branbane went to his room, a little later, he noticed that the deacon had left his overcoat on one of the chairs and a book on the table.

He picked up the volume, and was surprised to find it one of the latest detective stories. It struck him as a little odd at first that a real detective should find interest in the fiction of his trade, especially as this branch of writing is usually looked down upon by men who read seriously. Branbane was turning over the leaves of the book as the deacon knocked and entered.

"Ah," he said, noticing the other's occupation, "you have found out my weak spot, I see! I love a good detective story."

"I only read them occasionally," said Branbane. "But I am surprised to find that you read them at all."

"A moment's reflection," was the rejoinder, "will show you that it is a most natural thing for me to do. In the first place, it is in my line. Good detective work depends on wide experience of the possible, backed by accurate analysis of the probable. A well-written and logical detective story can only widen this range, for it must be either founded in fact, or conceived within the limits of the occurrable. The trouble is so many improbable ones, full of ridiculous machinery and abortive puppets, are written, that the whole genus is branded with discredit."

"It seems to me the *Sherlock Holmes* stories are among the best I have read," said Branbane.

"They are by far the best of recent years," assented the deacon. "They are clever and ingenious—probable in conception and satisfying in solution; and the best of it is they are carried off by real people. Do you realize that, during the last decade, the one character that has walked out of fiction to join the immortality of *Pickwick, Micawber,* and *Sam Weller*—the one character that is a familiar name to everybody on this ship, probably—is *Sherlock Holmes?*"

"I had not thought of it before," answered Branbane, showing surprised interest in the assertion; "but I believe you are quite right, deacon, and it only proves that a carefully tooled detective story can hold its own in any company."

"Of course it can!" exclaimed the deacon, with rising enthusiasm. "Look at the 'Moonstone.' What mystery story of recent years has even jostled it? The plot is a spark of pure genius. I

* This story began in THE CAVALIER for December.

have always regretted that Collins and Dickens could not have collaborated on that story. With Dickens's character drawing, and Collins's mastery of incident and event properly fused the world would have had a flawless book."

"I believe so, too," said Branbane. "The trouble is with so many modern mystery stories the happenings hang by a hawser instead of being beaded on a thread. The greatest complications in life come from the simplest causes. Look at my own case," he added suddenly, looking at the deacon with a quizzical smile. "Where could you get better copy for a good detective story? My predicament certainly evolved from the most simple premises; and, in due accordance with bookish precedent, the innocent man is accused of the crime."

This rather unexpected personal application of the discussion brought both men back from the abstract to the concrete, and led to the slight change of voice and manner that marked the Mason and Dixon line between the freedom of friendly intercourse and the constraint of professional contact.

"But you are not accused as yet, Mr. Branbane," said the deacon. "My probing is intended to establish your innocence quite as much as your guilt. All I want to do is to prove one or the other."

"The trouble is," replied Branbane, a little bitterly, and thoroughly intent now on his own affairs, "that, whatever you are trying to do, all you succeed in accomplishing is to tighten the meshes in which I am caught."

"So it appears," replied the deacon, "but I can hardly be blamed for that."

"Unless," resumed the other, with some briskness, "in your exclusive efforts to absolve or convict me, you have paid too little attention to other clues."

"For instance?"

"The clue of the stolen bag," answered Branbane. "That bag had disappeared mysteriously before you started after me."

"Very true," assented the detective. "But, as I said before, my inference was that you had managed to recover it yourself. And the inference was justified, because the bag had more value for you than it could possibly have for anybody else. Is that not so?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so," admitted Branbane, rather reluctantly. "It contained a bunch of letters that I did not wish to lose, but only toilet articles otherwise."

"No money?" asked the deacon.

"Only a little," answered Branbane. "When I landed in Southampton I put what spare American money I had into an envelope, and slipped the envelope into a side-pocket of the bag. There was not more than forty or fifty dollars."

"Could any one see this money if the bag were lying open?" asked the deacon.

"It would be impossible," was the decisive answer.

"Then you don't think it was stolen for the money in it?"

"I have no idea why it was stolen," said Branbane. "But the fact of its being taken at all argues, to my mind, the interest of some third party in the compartment, whose trail might be as advantageously followed as you have followed mine."

"Don't worry, Mr. Branbane," replied the deacon. "If there is any such trail it will be found and followed. I have left competent men behind, who will do everything that can be done while I am away, and who will report any discoveries on our arrival in New York, or possibly before. As to the disappearance of this bag, I can trace no connection between it and the unknown murderer. The most natural thing for him to do would be to leave the bag, and so throw suspicion on you. Its disappearance is a complication, not a help."

"Well," said Branbane, somewhat crestfallen, "I suppose I must accept your arguments until I get some better ones of my own," and he sat silent for a moment, wrapped in thought. Suddenly he looked up again and spoke: "By the way, deacon, you have never told me how you found out my name, which I thought you gained knowledge of from the letters in my bag?"

"If you will slip on your overcoat I will tell you," answered the deacon.

"This seems a good time to find out, once for all, why you keep harping on my overcoat," remarked Branbane, looking puzzled, and getting up and going over to the bed on which his coat lay. He picked it up, looked at it a moment,

and then started to put it on. One sleeve went on all right, but the other stuck half-way.

"Why, this isn't my coat!" he exclaimed. "It's too small. I can't get into it!" He took it off and scrutinized it more carefully. "Well," he continued, "it looks for all the world like mine, but it can't be. I suppose in my excitement I picked up the wrong coat—but that doesn't explain—"

"Try this one," interrupted the deacon. "I think it will fit you better," and he handed him the coat on the chair, which Branbane had supposed was the detective's. Branbane slipped it on.

"Yes, that is mine, all right," he said, looking down at it. "It's the same kind of cloth, and almost the same color as the other. No wonder I mistook it in my haste!" Just then he put his hand into one of the pockets and pulled out a letter with an exclamation of surprise. "Oh, I see now how you knew my name—but, no, I don't, either," he added, after a moment's hesitation. "If you did not find the bag, I don't see how you knew this coat belonged to me!"

All through this scene the detective had watched him very closely, and he still kept his eyes intently on him as he answered:

"Your coat was taken out of the train with the dead man, and supposed to be his. When I inquired for clues to his identity, I was told there was a name on several things, but none in his overcoat. This struck me as just odd enough to be worth investigating. Everything the man wore was quite new, and came from the same place—excepting the overcoat. So I examined this with special care, and it struck me at once as being too large for the slight physique of the dead man. I managed, therefore, to measure it unobserved, and found my suspicion confirmed. Then I recalled that you had carried over your arm a coat of similar color, and the possibility of what really happened suggested itself to me at once. Its confirmation, moreover, would be proof positive of your having been in the same compartment with the murdered man."

"But I have never denied being there," said Branbane.

"Quite true," smiled the deacon; "but not having the pleasure of your acquaintance at the time, I had to prepare for difficulties which you have not thrown in my way."

"And this letter?" asked Branbane, his blood heating somewhat as he looked at it again and began to recall the contents more clearly than he had done at first. "Is it part of your professional duty to read the private correspondence of a lady?"

The deacon stiffened in turn, as he replied no less haughtily than Branbane had questioned:

"The right—the necessity, indeed—of reading the letter was clearly within my prerogatives, and the circumstances placed their exercise beyond the charge of personal indelicacy which your tone implies, Mr. Branbane."

"Pardon me, deacon, but I could not bear to think that this innocent girl should be dragged into this ugly affair."

"My business with the letter concerned you, and not her," resumed the deacon quietly. "The envelope gave me your name, and the opening paragraph of the letter made reference to your date of sailing and to the location of your room. That was all the information I needed at the moment. I slipped the letter into my pocket for future use if necessary, but have had no further occasion to refer to it. To-day I put it back in the pocket of your coat."

"I did you an injustice, deacon, and I apologize. This whole business is plainly getting on my nerves," said Branbane, really mortified at having again allowed his self-control to slip the leash of reason.

As he finished speaking he started to take off the overcoat, which he had kept on during the conversation. Seeing this, the deacon motioned him to stop.

"Keep it on a moment longer," he said. "There is something in it you have forgotten, I think."

"The last words were vocally underlined and accompanied by a steady gaze of inquisitive searching.

"Something I have forgotten?" repeated Branbane wonderingly.

"Yes," came slowly from the deacon—"something in the right-hand pocket of your coat."

Branbane, who had been staring mo-

tionless and spellbound at the deacon, put his hand into the indicated pocket—and pulled out a small revolver!

CHAPTER VII.

A COMPACT.

BRANBANE laid the revolver quietly on the table, took off his overcoat, and sat down opposite the deacon, who was watching him as *Hamlet* watches the *King* in the play-scene.

He appeared only to be stunned and dazed at the unexpected find. He lost his color, and his voice vibrated with the jangle of intense inward tumult when he spoke:

"What does this mean, deacon? Surely the invisible hand of a fiend incarnate is in all this business. What else have you in store for me?" and, putting his hand to his head, he leaned back wearily, as one whose spirit is broken and who is sick at heart.

The deacon could not help but be moved by the silent suffering of the strong man before him. He had planned the climax of the revolver, and delayed its introduction so as to get the fullest possible effect of surprise and unexpectedness for this supreme test of his victim.

It had not taken him long to discover that Branbane was essentially a gentleman, whose general life and conduct were probably above reproach. But, in his wide experience, he had learned to know that even such lives hold the possibility of lapsing from their high estate. The elemental passions lie dormant in the breast of every man.

Beneath the fairest fields and richest soil of culture smolders the volcano. The unseen conditions that finally tend to occasional eruptions in nature have their counterpart in the lives of men. A moment may come, in the best of them, when the hidden fires flare suddenly from unsuspected depths, and the deed is done which ethics may condone, but which the law must punish.

The deacon thought himself facing one of these exceptional cases. He had started after his man with the intention of arresting him. But, on thinking the matter over, he had decided that the quickest and surest way of getting to the bottom of this mystery, would be to gain the confidence of Branbane, if possible, and then to search among the records of his life and home for such a clue as might lead to the explanation of a crime on its face utterly inexplicable.

The more he saw of Branbane, the more satisfied he was with the course he had decided to pursue regarding him. If the appeal of his personality, the candor of his bearing, and the apparent integrity of his character failed to impress the deacon with the conviction they would ordinarily have carried, it was because, in his position, he must oppose rather than yield to the obvious. It was his business to suspect, to assume deceit in all appearances.

Branbane, it must be remembered, was still a stranger to the detective. The circumstantial evidence was heavy against him. His attempt to escape increased its weight. His explanation was plausible, but, like everything else concerning him, it could not be corroborated until the ship reached New York.

In the meantime, it was the deacon's duty to try every conceivable ruse to catch the suspect off his guard, and compel from him some sudden physical or mental indication of a guilt which his general bearing so far had consistently repelled.

With this end constantly in view, the detective had worked up slowly to the incident of the revolver. Its outcome brought him a decided feeling of relief. He had feared an outburst of indignation. These had become so frequent that, if a final one had come at this moment, it would only have strengthened the suspicion that all of them might merely be a plausible sequence of clever acting.

But, Branbane betrayed no criminal tremor of recognition or recoil at seeing the weapon, only a slow, dull, creeping comprehension of its being the last devilish link in the evidence rising against him. As its full import loomed up before him, he gave way to those outward manifestations of mental despair which impressed the deacon in his favor more than anything else could have done. It made what remained for him to do more difficult than he had anticipated. However, he felt it im-

perative to carry out all he had planned, so, after a lapse of silence, he answered Branbane's last faltering question.

"There is one thing more," he said, pulling something from his vest-pocket, and laying it on the table beside the revolver: "This!"

Branbane, whose eyes had been closed, opened them slowly and gazed dully, with little show of interest, at the small bullet which the deacon laid on the table.

"Where did that come from?" he asked.

"From the body of the dead man," was the answer, "and it fits the barrel of this revolver, one chamber of which has been discharged."

Branbane sat still, as one who hears without comprehending, and then he passed his hands over his eyes, as if to dissipate some blur before them. Finally, he began to speak, more to himself than to his companion, it seemed, and in a voice that held but the memory of his own:

"Is it possible that in this twentieth century an innocent man can be hounded to despair—to madness—to death, perhaps, by the mere fortuitous conjunction of circumstances? Is there no relief, no appeal from this hell of hazards? My God, deacon, think of the girl I love—and help me!"

This was no acting. The appeal went straight to the deacon's heart, and its impulses now had the freer sanction of his judgment. He had risen to put the bullet on the table, and now placed his hand on Branbane's shoulder. The touch held, as all touches do, the forecast of the words to come.

"You are in an ugly dilemma, certainly, Mr. Branbane, but the situation is hardly as black as you make it. The most damaging circumstantial evidence, unsupported by anything else, will scarcely convict a man of your apparent standing."

"But it will indict me!" said Branbare, without looking up.

"Possibly," admitted the deacon.

"And what will life be worth to me after facing a jury on the charge of murder! The sting of the suspicion is what galls. The verdict matters very little after that."

"How can you say so, Mr. Branbane? You must see, as your friends will, that you are merely the temporary victim of circumstances."

Something in the word "friends" lighted up a new vista for Branbane. It brought the blood back to his face, and animation to his voice again. He looked up and faced the deacon squarely, as he said:

"My friends, deacon, will consider the whole thing an insult and an outrage to an honest man. Take that revolver and that bullet, and all the fortuitous deviltry that the law calls circumstantial evidence—take it all, I say, and lay it before any of my friends, and tell them that it incriminates Arthur Branbane of shooting an unknown man—in the back—and one and all, if they do nothing worse, will give you the laugh or the lie!"

His voice and color had risen while speaking, and he ended with some of his old fervor of indignation.

"You must remember, Mr. Branbane," said the deacon, keyed to impressiveness himself by the other's outburst, "that whatever my personal inclinations may be, I am officially estopped from believing anything you say until it is substantiated. If, however, you know what you say to be strictly true; if, further—and mark this well—you know that in the record of your life I shall find nothing to connect you, by even the remotest ramification, with this murdered man—then, Mr. Branbane, you can put your hand in mine, as into that of a friend who believes you to be the victim of the most extraordinary circumstances, and who will do his utmost to free you from them," and he held out his hand.

Branbane took it unhesitatingly, and rose as he did so, with renewed hope in face and action.

"I take it gladly on your own terms, deacon," he said, "and I thank you for it. The Lord knows I need your help, as He knows I am innocent of this crime, and that there is nothing in the known or unknown records of my life that can possibly connect me, by direct evidence, with its perpetration."

"Do you mean that circumstantial evidence may establish a connection?" asked the deacon.

"I mean that I believe now that cir-

cumstantial evidence can and may do anything. Although I suppose this murdered man to be an absolute stranger to me, he may turn out to bear a name that I have heard or seen. For all I know, if my bag is ever found, there may be letters in it belonging to this man, or some other form of evidence that can be turned against me. You see, deacon, I am now prepared for anything from the fiendishly cunning hand that seems to be conspiring against me; and I can only tell you beforehand that, whatever else it may contrive to lay at my door, is no more known to me at this moment than the existence of that revolver was."

"Then you know nothing about the revolver?" queried the deacon.

"I never owned one in my life."

"Oddly enough," said the deacon, but not in an accusing tone, "this is an American firearm, and only a twenty-two."

"What does that mean?" asked Branbane. "I don't even know the language of guns."

"That means it is of small size," answered the deacon. "Such a weapon as is more often carried by gentlemen for defense than by desperadoes for attack."

"I see," said Branbane. "And when did you discover this in my coat?"

"I will be quite frank with you, Mr. Branbane. I didn't find it there; I put it there."

"Then this episode has been a mere trick to test me?" asked Branbane eagerly.

"Not entirely, I am sorry to say," answered the deacon. "I found this revolver in a corner of the seat you had occupied in the compartment when I went there to look things over before starting on your trail. I only slipped it into your overcoat-pocket this afternoon, because I knew the effect of finding it there could only increase the emotional test of finding it at all."

"Then I am glad you made the test, deacon; for it seems to have turned the scales decidedly in my favor," said Branbane.

"The moment you looked at that revolver," the deacon responded, "I was sure you had never seen it before."

"Then, how do you think it came to be in the compartment?"

"That involves new speculations," answered the deacon, "which it is too late to reason out to-night. Let us defer them until morning. I, for my part, am tired, and ready for a good night's sleep."

"So am I," said Branbane, rising, as the deacon had already done. "And I look forward to more rest to-night than I have had since I came on board—thanks to having practically convinced you of my innocence."

The men shook hands cordially, and said good night. Branbane retired at once. But the deacon walked the deck for another fifteen minutes, turning his face to the cool night-wind, and his eyes to the vast peace of the journeying stars, while his mind sought to read one of the tiny riddles of human predicament.

CHAPTER VIII.

A THEORY.

IT was late the following morning before the two men came together again.

The deacon had the happy faculty of always going to sleep when he went to bed. He had the power of disrobing mentally as well as physically, and of shedding all preoccupation with his clothes. He had slept well, therefore, and had breakfasted before Branbane was out of bed.

The American, on the other hand, had lain awake for several hours before falling asleep from sheer exhaustion. His mind was febrile—no longer with worry on his own account, but with uncontrollable straining after some clue to the real culprit in this mystery.

Knowing that he had not committed the murder, he knew that some one else must have done so; and that he was the most likely person to discover how, because he must have been unconsciously present when it was done.

He tried, therefore, to recall all he could of the journey from Wolverhampton to London, and searched his memory for the least subconscious impression that might have been registered there during his long sleep. But it was hopeless groping, and only led him finally to another sleep in which the harlequin of dreams gave him an acumen for clues that sent him through a wild riot of pre-

posterous adventure. The needed rest of dreamless sleep only came with daylight, and lasted late into the morning.

He had his breakfast sent to his room, and dressed leisurely. He then went out on deck for some air and exercise. There he was soon joined by the deacon, and they walked up and down together, chatting of things in general. Very shortly, however, they turned into Branbane's room, and recurred at once to the topic uppermost in the minds of both.

"Tell me more about the finding of this revolver, please," asked Branbane, opening a drawer in which the weapon and the bullet had been placed.

"Before leaving Paddington that night," began the deacon, "I went to the compartment you had occupied, and searched it thoroughly. I got in and sat down in your seat—near the farther window, facing the engine, was it not?"

"Quite right," assented the other.

"I sat there for a while, looking around and speculating on various possible solutions of the shooting. It was at this time that I raised the window far enough to see it was not broken. After doing this and letting it slide down again, I sat back in the seat and struck against something hard, stuffed down between the cushions. It was that revolver. One chamber was empty and bore signs of recent discharge, and the bullet in my pocket fitted the barrel accurately."

Branbane, who had listened very attentively to this recital, sat thinking for a moment before he asked:

"Don't you think that the hand that removed the bag was the same that put the revolver where you found it?"

"It might be, of course," replied the deacon thoughtfully. "But why the person who left the revolver should take the bag, I cannot understand. It only weakens the case against you, because it removes the only evidence that could connect you with the crime. My noticing you at the station was, of course, a mere chance that no one could have foreseen. Otherwise, nothing but the finding of the bag and the letters in it could have entangled you in the affair. So why should any one who had an object in doing this remove the best means of accomplishing it? If you follow my reasoning, Mr. Branbane, you will see why I felt so sure that you yourself, through some agent, had recovered the bag."

"I see the force of your argument," admitted Branbane. "At first I hoped the disappearance of the bag would lead to something, but now I am much more inclined to think the finding of the revolver will. What do you think?"

"The unexplained removal of the bag," replied the deacon, "breaks the logical sequence of events. The revolver, it seems to me, must be treated as a separate incident, and involves a new line of deductions."

"And where do they lead you?" asked Branbane, eagerly. He spoke with the suppressed excitement of a man who has followed a line of reasoning to conclusions that appear too hopeful to prove entirely logical, and who, therefore, wishes to entice anticipatory corroboration from the opinion of another. The deacon caught his mental attitude from Branbane's voice and manner, and shaped his part of the dialogue accordingly.

"The new deductions lead to new conclusions, of course," he said, in answer to the last question.

"But what are they?" insisted Branbane.

The detective drew a pencil from his pocket, and wrote with it on a slip of paper. This he folded and handed to Branbane.

"There," he said, "put that away until I tell you to open it. It is quite evident that you have a theory of your own concerning this murder. Let me hear it. Mine is on that slip of paper. It will be interesting, and of real value, perhaps, to see whether, starting from the same premises, we deduce the same conclusions."

"I am more than willing to try the experiment," assented Branbane, taking the slip of paper. "But in order to start fair, I need to know everything that happened after I left the station the night of the murder."

The deacon rehearsed carefully and in detail all that had taken place there. The other listened attentively, and seemed specially interested in the Mickleham episode.

"I remember seeing the guard's name in the paper," he said, "and thinking he would eventually turn out to be the mur-

derer. But soon after I was so overwhelmed by the cumulative evidence against myself that, although I occasionally thought of this man, I saw no way of connecting him with the crime until the revolver was found."

"And now you do?" asked the deacon.

"Yes; now I do most decidedly," asserted Branbane. "And, by the way, now that I have reasoned this thing out, I am rather surprised that you should have honored me with so much attention, and Mickleham with so little."

"He is receiving quite as much as you are, Mr. Branbane," said the deacon. "I detailed a special man from the Yard to shadow him and arrest him if any new evidence should warrant it. At the time, you must remember, I already surmised in you the other occupant of the compartment, and, therefore, attached less weight to the appearances against Mickleham. There was, moreover, no direct evidence to implicate him."

"Then I am in a position to adduce some," said Branbane, boldly.

"Go ahead, Mr. Branbane," said the deacon, leaning back in his chair, and smiling somewhat patronizingly, as one who consents to hear an argument by which, however, he does not in the least expect to be convinced. "I am curious to hear your theory, but, of course, I shall watch for the weak spots in it."

"Nothing will suit me better," replied the other confidently.

He then proceeded to rehearse at some length the events leading up to his taking the train at Wolverhampton.

He had come to England, only two weeks before, to complete negotiations already begun between some English manufacturers and American sellers, to form a trust for their products. The largest and wealthiest of these producers were in Wolverhampton. They were powerful and influential, and proportionately stiff in their demeanor and demands. Without them, however, the undertaking could not succeed.

After working with them for three days, Branbane saw that he could only win them over by a modified proposal which he was emboldened to make as a last resort, but which, he well knew, only his personal persuasion could bring to ratification in America. The Wolverhampton people had given him just two weeks in which to get home, lay the matter before his friends, and cable a definite acceptance or refusal. They declined to wait a day longer, or to reopen the matter thereafter.

But even this concession was only brought about after a highly argumentative session that lasted from early evening till three in the morning, and had to be resumed at nine o'clock for the adjustment of final details.

"And all this, mind you," continued Branbane, "came on top of ten days of similar exertions, only broken by fatiguing travel from place to place. The result was that I was never more tired in my life than when I entered the train at Wolverhampton."

"You seem to lay considerable stress on your exhausted condition," remarked the deacon.

"I do so with a purpose," was the reply. "As soon as I was in the compartment I prepared to sleep all the way to London, if possible. I laid my ticket on one of the seats, and asked the man who was afterward shot to hand it to the collector when he came along. I then got into the corner, put my feet on the opposite seat, and was asleep before the train started. I awoke at none of the stops; not even when tickets were collected.

"I remember shifting my position once or twice, and I probably opened my eyes in so doing, for I have a sort of smoked-glass recollection of the train being always in motion, and of my companion always leaning forward and looking out of the center window on his side."

"Are you habitually a sound sleeper?" asked the deacon.

"Always," was the answer. "Indeed, it is a subject of joke among my friends."

"Then," said the deacon, smiling encouragingly, "we will consider that you were so sound asleep as to be really in a comatose condition, and abnormally dulled to outside noises. That is the point you wish to make, I suppose?"

"Precisely," answered Branbane, with evident pleasure at having succeeded so well. "But before I enlarge on it, I wish to establish certain other facts. We are both agreed, I assume, that this deed was done by a human hand; not through any supernatural agency?"

"We are quite agreed on that," assented the deacon.

"Are we also agreed," continued Branbane, checking each point on his fingers, "that no third person was, or could have been, hidden in the compartment?"

"We are," assented the deacon again. "The only place where a person might conceal himself would be under the seats, and these are blocked to prevent that very thing."

"It is also established," continued Branbane, "that the murdered man was alive at Reading, and was shot between that place and London, is it not?"

"There can be no reasonable doubt of it," was the answer.

"Now, as to how he was shot," continued Branbane, speaking slowly and with suppressed intensity: "In the compartment in question, two long seats, running the entire width of the car—or coach, as you would call it—face each other. At either end is a door. In the upper half of each door is a sliding window that lets up and down by means of a strap. At the end of each row of seats there are other windows, but these are stationary and do not open."

"Nor were any of them broken," interrupted the deacon, "for I examined them."

"Then," resumed Branbane, "as there was no opening in the roof of the compartment, the fatal shot must have been fired from my side, in order to hit the stranger in the back."

"But the window at your end was not broken," interposed the deacon, with more interest than he had hitherto shown in the discussion.

"How about the door?" suggested the other.

"Fire a shot through the door with that plaything! Impossible!" exclaimed the deacon, pointing contemptuously at the small weapon on the table.

"But the door might have been opened," insisted Branbane, with the quiet assurance of a man making an unexpected but irrefutable point.

"By whom?" asked the deacon, without betraying any surprise at the suggestion.

"By Mickleham!" said Branbane, with a sort of climactic triumph in his voice, and rising from his chair as he spoke.

The detective received the climax with exasperating imperturbability. He looked sharply at the speaker for a moment, but his face betrayed neither acquiescence nor incredulity.

"How do you arrive at that conclusion?" he asked, after a pause.

Branbane, a little disappointed and piqued at the other's passivity and protracted silence, had turned to the open port, and was watching Mr. Littlejohn who happened to be reading in a chair near by, when the deacon's question caused him to face quickly about.

"In this way," he answered: "At Reading, Mickleham discovered that the stranger carried with him, in a pocket easy of access, what he supposed to be a very large sum of money. He had noticed further that this stranger had been leaning or looking out of the window most of the way, and might reasonably be expected to do the same thing during the remainder of it. He also noticed that I was very sound asleep at the other end of the compartment when he was chatting with the stranger during the collecting of the tickets at Reading. How, after the tickets had been collected, and the train was in motion again, he decided to shoot the stranger from the back and then rob him of his money. To do this he passed along the outside foot-board that runs the length of every compartment coach, opened the door near me—which only he, having the key, could do—fired the fatal shot, relocked the door, and went away."

"Without the booty?" asked the detective.

"Certainly," was the ready reply. "My legs, resting on the opposite seat, barred the way and made any attempt to enter the carriage from that side extremely dangerous. It was both safer and easier, after the shooting, for Mickleham to go back to his brake-vehicle and await any inauspicious developments. Perhaps he had not killed his man? Perhaps I had awakened? Both of these things he could determine more safely later by passing down the other side of the train and looking into the compartment. If I were still asleep and the other

man dead, he could easily help himself to the money."

"Of course," said the deacon musingly, "it is possible for the guard to pass along the outside of a compartment coach without a corridor in the manner you suggest, but it is very unusual. Indeed, I think the law forbids it, and believe, therefore, that the act would attract attention and arouse suspicion."

"The law also forbids shooting people," suggested Branbane, "but still it is done. In this case Mickleham would naturally choose a lonely part of the road, so as not to be noticed from the outside, and, being a small man, he could easily keep his head below the level of the compartment windows which he had to pass, and so avoid notice from the inside. You see, my theory is pretty well fortified. What do you think of it?"

For answer, the deacon requested Branbane to read the slip of paper he had given him earlier. It contained these words:

"The murderer is a man with only one eye."

CHAPTER IX.

AN INTERRUPTION

ALTHOUGH, as has been hinted, Branbane entered on the exposition of his theory with some trepidation, he gained confidence in it and in himself as he proceeded. Each point, as he transferred it carefully from his thoughts to his speech, seemed to gain strength by the process and, in trying to convince the deacon, he had ended by convincing himself. His annoyance at the cool reception of his theory was proportionate to his own cumulative confidence in it.

When he read the unexpected and strange words on the slip of paper, however, his disappointment gave way to mystification and curiosity. His first thought and hope was that Mickleham might lack the usual brace of eyes. But this the deacon denied.

"Who is your one-eyed man then?" insisted Branbane.

"I don't know who he is," replied the deacon, enigmatically. "I only think that the murderer, if we ever find him, will answer my description in this particular."

"But why?" pleaded the other. "Surely you must have reasons for so strange a conjecture?"

"I have reasons, certainly," was the reply, "but how good they are remains to be seen. They are of very recent growth, and, as yet, quite immature—so much so, indeed, that I prefer not to divulge them at present. Let us first sift your own theory a little closer."

"You think then it has some merit, after all?" asked Branbane, surprised no less than pleased at this unexpected encouragement.

"Why, yes — up to a certain point," said the deacon.

"I suppose you think the report of the revolver would have awakened me?" asked Branbane, who felt that this might be a weak spot in his postulations.

"Not at all," was the unexpected reply. "The noise of so small a firearm would become merged in the clatter and din of the moving train. Even if the door was opened, the shot was probably fired from outside so as not to waken you, and there is nothing unlikely in your not hearing it. The relation of noise to the interruption of sleep admits of no scientific tabulation. I have known a sleeper to be unconscious of terrific thunderclaps, but to waken with a start when I passed through the room on tiptoe. No, no; there is nothing improbable in your not having heard the fatal shot under existing conditions."

The deacon was so emphatic in his affirmation of this point that Branbane made comment of it.

"You forget," said the deacon, smiling, "that if it is not admitted that the shot was fired without waking you, that there is only one other alternative: you must have fired it yourself!"

Branbane looked up with a start. He had entered so objectively into the hope of solving this mystery that he had forgotten his own supposed connection with it still existed. Because the deacon had acquitted him conditionally, he was becoming oblivious to the public opinion which still had to be faced and won over. So does our little world of actual contact often bias the perspective of the great outside.

"You are right, deacon," Branbane said a little sadly. "I had forgotten that. But if it is admitted that the shot need not have wakened me, where do you find the weak spot in my theory?"

"There are two," was the answer. "Why did not Mickleham take the money? He would seem to have had two opportunities. I agree with you that it would have been dangerous for him to enter the compartment from your side at the time of the shooting. But why did he not come down the other side later, as you yourself suggested? Or, why did he not take the money when he discovered—or pretended to discover—the dead man at Paddington? He was the first on the scene, and could easily have done it."

"I had thought of this point," replied Branbane, "and intended to mention it. But you received my conjectures so coolly at first that I omitted some of the details. If Mickleham did not follow up the shooting and secure the money in one of the ways which we have seen were quite possible, it must have been because something unexpected prevented him. Just what, of course, it is impossible to say. He may have found some duty needing immediate attention. He may have thought himself suspected and watched. He may have succumbed to a sudden recoil of fear after reflection on what he had done. Many causes of prevention suggest themselves, but just which one operated in this case can only be established by cross-examining the man himself."

"That can be done in due time," said the deacon. "The possibilities which you advance are plausible, but they only cover Mickleham's first opportunity. Even if we admit them, there is still the finding of the murdered man when the compartmen door was opened, and the excellent chance then offered of taking the money."

"Very true," assented Branbane, "but this opportunity offered none of hiding it. He may have feared being searched—as he actually was—and of being found redhanded with the goods."

"But how do you account for no weapon being found on him?"

Branbane smiled the quiet, confident smile of one who expects a certain question and has prepared a fully equipped answer.

"In the same way," was his reply. "The fear that stayed Mickleham's hand from taking the money caused him to dispose of his revolver by throwing it into the corner where you found it."

"But," objected the deacon, "I thought your idea was that the revolver was left when the bag was removed?"

"That was my first hasty conclusion," admitted Branbane, "but since I have tried to implicate Mickleham by a logical sequence of actions I have changed my opinion. I now believe that the revolver appeared in the manner I have suggested, and that the disappearance of the bag was—as you have claimed it to be—an incident unrelated to the others."

"It would seem more probable to me," said the deacon, tapping the table with his fingers, "that Mickleham should have disposed of his weapon before, by throwing it into some water or bushes while the train was in motion."

Branbane smiled a little at this new objection, in the consciousness of being fully prepared to meet it.

"He would have done this undoubtedly," he said, "if he had secured the money. But the same causes which prevented this might very conceivably have prevented him from disposing of his weapon till the last moment."

"You overlook two important points in your theory," replied the deacon. "I found the revolver *stuffed* down between the cushions. It could not have been merely thrown where it was; it must have been *pushed* there. Furthermore, there is a doubt as to its being there when the dead man was removed; for two men searched the compartment before me without finding it."

"You did not tell me that," said Branbane, considerably taken aback at the disclosure.

"There has been no occasion to do so before," replied the deacon. "The coroner looked for a weapon in the beginning, very naturally; and one of the railroad officials later, at my request, made a search in the compartment. It is only fair to say, however, that neither of them looked very thoroughly. The coroner did not examine your end of the compartment at all, and the railroad official, who seemed more intent on other business, only did so cursorily, I fear."

"Then, both may merely not have seen the revolver. It may have been there all the time," suggested Branbane, with new hope in his voice.

"Of course, it may have been," admitted the deacon; "but I think it improbable. For Mickleham to put it where I found it, he must have entered the compartment and gone over to your corner of it. Against the chance of his being able to do this was the limp body of a dead man in the doorway and the fact that as soon as Mickleham discovered it his ejaculations of surprise collected a crowd."

"Then, you don't think my theory will hold water?" queried Branbane, with undisguised disappointment.

"Not completely," answered the deacon. "There are some weak spots, as you must now see yourself; but it also contains much that is plausible, and I must say that, on the whole, you have reasoned the thing out much better than I expected. At all events, you may rest assured that I will not let Mickleham get away until he has been much more rigidly examined than seemed necessary at first."

"And I am willing to wager a thousand dollars," exclaimed Branbane, fired with new hope by the deacon's slight encouragement, "that in the end, despite the few discrepancies in my theory, you will find this guard to be the guilty man!"

The deacon merely smiled. He had allowed Branbane to develop, from his own angle of approach, a line of ratiocination which the detective's trained mind had already traversed and found decidedly vulnerable in spots. He saw so much merit in this maiden venture, however, that, in order to spare Branbane's feelings, he implied more faith in it than he really felt.

Branbane, on his part, believed he had originated a new lead in the mystery, and had forced the deacon, by sheer logic, to accept it as a possibility at least worthy of investigation. He yielded at the last, therefore, to the elation of conviction which, in the American temperament, italicizes itself in the offer of a wager.

"You must remember one thing," resumed the deacon in a tone of kindly admonition. "Although you have reasoned your case out very well—better than I expected—you have done so on the basis of your own intelligence, instead of from the lower level of Mickleham's decidedly mediocre mentality. This is a mistake the novice in our line often makes."

Scarcely had the deacon finished speaking when the vessel suddenly shook violently with the ragged jar of reversed propellers. The two men looked at each other with the mute interrogation of fright that accompanies the consciousness of something amiss.

The deacon jumped up and looked out on deck. People were leaving their chairs and hurrying astern with evident excitement.

"Come," he said, "let us see what is the matter!"

Both men seized their hats and rushed out, turning in the direction which all the passengers were taking, and soon hearing, in the after-part of the ship, the cry of "Man overboard!"

CHAPTER X.

REMINISCENCES.

BEFORE they reached the center of excitement the alarm had been given, and an officer on the bridge had touched the lever which, by means of an electric current, drops a life-buoy from the stern of the ship. Just as they reached a point of vantage, another officer was manning a life-boat which, a moment later, was lowered over the ship's side. It was all a marvelous bit of clockwork precision and discipline, that made a deep impression on those who saw it.

No sooner had the life-boat struck the water than it fell rapidly astern, and seemed, from the great height of the promenade-deck, a mere cockleshell manned by mechanical pygmies. The sea, moreover, had appeared quite smooth until this tiny speck upon it began heaving over knolls and swales that seemed not there before.

The drowning man and the buoy were now only discernible through glasses, but those who held them soon reported that the boat had picked him up. No sooner was the extreme tension relieved by this good news than people began to ask who it was who had been saved.

The first reports were that an Italian count, having been refused by an American heiress, had attempted suicide. The next were that an emigrant had been thrown over in a drunken brawl. Later, the deacon, managing to get near one of the officers whom he knew, managed also to get near the truth. It was one of the ship's stokers who had caused all the excitement.

Meantime the steamer was backing slowly, the life-boat was alongside again and, amid uproarious cheering, was quickly hauled on board.

After the rescued man had been carried to a place of safety and seclusion, the excitement over the incident quickly abated, and, under the pressure of a slightly belated lunch-hour, people hurried to the dining-room.

"How did the fellow fall overboard?" asked Branbane as he and the deacon took their seats at table.

"It appears that he jumped over," was the answer. "These stokers are subject to fits of dementia caused by the terrific heat they have to face. This one was probably in that condition when he decided on a dip in the cool sea. But, when the shock brought him to his senses, he was quite as anxious to get out as he had been to get in."

"A juxtaposition of desire not always confined to sea-bathing," remarked Branbane. "Did you see this fellow?"

"No," was the reply, "not near by. My interest in the affair ended as soon as he was safely landed. Those who did see him, however, say he was a pretty tough-looking customer."

This episode had interrupted the last conference that the two men thought necessary to hold in the privacy of their cabin. Their further talks took place wherever their convenience and the weather made it most pleasant to be.

Both agreed that the mystery of the murder had been as thoroughly thrashed out between them as it could be until they landed, and were in touch with the outside world again. Branbane's theory concerning the murderer, as well as his statements about himself, must be confirmed before anything further could be done.

The remainder of the voyage was passed, therefore, in a pleasant, unrestrained intercourse between the two, that ripened into friendship.

The deacon asked Branbane for such details of his life as might help in the investigation of it which the detective still felt it his duty to make.

Branbane responded by offering a full and unstinted account of all its important happenings. They were by no means sensational, and a brief summary will suffice for the purposes of this story.

He was born of well-to-do parents, and his home was in New York. His boyhood was passed at school, broken by summers of travel abroad. Later he went to college; and then, after a year in Europe, came home and entered his father's business.

This gentleman, who had recently died, belonged distinctly to the type of old New York merchants who were conspicuous in the city of thirty years ago for qualities of individual effort and success which are becoming indistinct in the larger business aggregations of to-day.

These men made not millions in a year, but goodly fortunes in a life of steady application to one thing. They left a record not only of checks always honored, but of names that had never gone to protest. They listened to a little thing called conscience, and paid no fees for establishing their code of right and wrong.

Of this sterling, old-school stock did Arthur Branbane come, and its best traditions were very sacred to him. He brought new life and methods into his father's business, to be sure; but he only fused the new with the most precious heritage of the old—the firm's unsullied name for honest dealing.

At the time we come to know him, Branbane was thirty-seven years of age. He had always been fond of women's society. He had had many girl friends, and a fair dole of innocuous flirtations. It was not until within a year, however, that any woman had entered seriously into his life. He had associated intimately with many beautiful and accomplished women, but they had always married other men. Something of the bee was in his make-up. He seemed to enjoy extracting the honey, without any desire to pick the flower, until—well, this is how it happened:

He had a college chum whose health

had broken down, and who had been banished to the Adirondacks to recover it—not to die, as the verdict used to be.

This chum kept urging Branbane to come up and pay him a visit. He had settled at a place called "The Farm," not many miles from the well-known health resort of Saranac Lake. This farm was on a hillside, facing a grand sweep of undulous mountains that culminated in the dominant dome of White Face.

This friend wrote of the beauty of the view, of the sparkling ozone of the air, of the diamond-fields of snow, and of the jolly house-party that gathered at night around the great stove in the old timbered kitchen.

Branbane considered these effusions a mere lure to attract him, for he had the old distorted conception of tuberculosis that lives on uncorrected in many intelligent minds even to-day.

He thought of Saranac Lake and its vicinity as a community of the condemned, where misery and sadness reigned, and which differed—only in degree really—from the dreaded settlement at distant Molokai. For this reason he met the urgings of his friend with every conceivable excuse. But the friend persisted, until one winter, having to go to Montreal on business, Branbane decided to take the bull by the horns. His experiences from the first inverted all his preconceptions.

He found Saranac Lake, instead of the large backwoods hamlet he had expected, a small city with all modern improvements, where the sick for the most part were indistinguishable from the well, and where the eye met nothing but healthful hustle or hopeful happiness.

He found "The Farm" a most unique and delightful spot, that caught its homelike tone and atmosphere from its owners and presiding spirits, known to their boarders and the community at large as "Aunt Sarah" and "Uncle John."

He found the dozen inmates of the place a jolly set of healthy-looking people, who had the merriest times together, and led in many ways a most ideal life, in which the only apparent obligation was to keep out of doors as much as possible. In this group was Miss Beatrice Hollins, with whom he fell in love.

She was small but shapely. Her hair was dark. Her eyes were large and black, and looked upon the world in long, level lines of gaze that told of quiet depths behind. Branbane felt at once that this was the kind of woman he had been waiting for; one fed by the eternal springs of simple womanliness rather than the surface drains of social superficialities. He asked her to become his wife.

She hesitated, not because she did not return his love, but on account of her health. It had so greatly improved in the mountains, however, that she finally consented, if it continued to improve, to marry at the end of another year, if Branbane cared to wait. She further stipulated that the wedding should be a very simple one and take place at "The Farm," and that they should make the mountains their permanent home.

To all of this Branbane was more than willing to agree. And now, the terms of probation passed, the wedding had been set for the following Monday, May 23d.

While speaking of the arrangements for his wedding, Branbane turned to the deacon in evident perplexity, and asked how his present predicament would affect that event.

"I do not see at present that it need affect it at all," was the encouraging answer. "If we land Thursday morning, that will give us two days in New York; and, if all goes well there, we can start for the mountains Friday night, and have the wedding as planned."

"We?" repeated Branbane, looking up with some surprise. "Do you intend going with me?"

"I should like to," smiled the deacon, "just to meet Miss Hollins, but without any intention of intruding myself at the wedding."

"If you come at all, it must be for the wedding," insisted Branbane cordially. There was no longer any constraint between the two men; and what Branbane would have resented as intrusion a few days ago, he now honestly hailed as being both advantageous and pleasurable. "There will be no one there," he continued, "but my mother and Mr. Shirley, who is Miss Hollins's uncle, and with whom she has lived since her parents died a few years ago."

"You are very good," said the deacon. "We'll see about that later."

"In the meantime," suggested Branbane, "suppose you tell me something about your life in return for what I have told you of mine? Somehow, I can't believe that you were originally intended for your present calling."

"I was not; I was intended for a clergyman." said the deacon, and then he went on to tell how his career had veered so far from its original course.

He was born in Edinburgh some forty-odd years ago. His father was a retired sea-captain and ship-owner, who had amassed a goodly fortune. He was a man of good family and education, and had always been fond of reading. The hobby of his later years became the collecting of books, and he had soon accumulated a library of considerable scope and value.

It was here that the deacon, in the dawn of an inherited taste, had browsed more copiously than the average boy of health and strength would have done, and had acquired that intimacy with books which more than once surprised Branbane.

Along with the love of reading, however, the deacon had fallen heir to other traits of his sturdy parent: a physique of iron and a thirst for the wind in his face. The virus of the sea was in his veins, and, as his blood grew richer with the years, it seethed hotly for a life of roving and adventure, such as the old sea-captain told about in reminiscent moods.

This worthy man, however, wished to see his son distinguished in a different calling from his own. He wanted his boy to seek preferment in the church.

But this suited the youngster not at all, and the result was many a pungent argument between father and son. A temporary compromise was soon reached, however. The lad was to take the B.A. course at the university before beginning definitely to prepare for the cloth. The father thought the dominant influences at the local seat of learning would tend in the direction he desired. Of course, just the opposite happened.

The young Wilson grew daily more convinced that the livery of the church could never be made to fit his active body and analytic mind — and he refused to wear a strait-jacket or be a hypocrite. Instead, he took the only honorable course that was open.

A few days after graduation he left home with no intention of returning. Rather than have a stormy scene with his father and a more painful one with his mother, whom he loved dearly, he merely left a letter to explain his determination.

It said that, as his conscience would not allow him to gratify his father's wish for a career, he had decided to make one for himself in his own way and on his own resources.

The rather irascible old gentleman fumed and raged for a while, and the good wife smiled inwardly and held her peace. The upshot was that within six months the stern parent wrote his son a forgiving letter, telling him to come home whenever he wanted to and to follow any career he liked, but not to break his mother's heart. It was three years, however, before the lad set foot on native soil again.

In the meantime he had nearly circled the globe in various capacities on various ships, and had acquired a very satisfying store of roving experience. He ended his sea life by landing in London and finding employment, as reporter, on one of the big dailies. Here the quick, keen work of his mind and pen soon attracted the attention of his superiors, and brought promotion.

One day, about this time, all London was aroused over another mysterious compartment-car murder. On opening a carriage-door at one of the big stations, the guard had discovered a murdered man inside. His body was mutilated, and the place covered with blood. The only clue to the assassin was the mark of a bloody hand found on the door, and supposed to have been left inadvertently by the murderer in escaping from the train before it stopped. But that was all.

It was enough, however, for young Wilson, who was detailed to the case by his paper to ferret out a most remarkable series of clues which escaped entirely the regular detectives.

Armed with these, he had an interview with the then superintendent of Scotland Yard, and soon convinced that gentleman

that he was in a position, not only to identify the missing murderer, but to apprehend him, if given the proper assistance.

The superintendent placed an officer at Wilson's disposal, and the young man immediately started for America, where he made one of the most brilliant identifications—of a man whom he had never seen—that is known in the annals of the department. It is unfortunately, however, too long a story to tell here. Suffice it to say that from the moment he reached home with his prisoner, his reputation as a detective was made, and Scotland Yard bid high for his services. He became the man of the hour, and the talk of all London. His fame as a detective was established.

The papers were full of him, and one, in speaking of his appearance, spoke of his very plain style of dress—of his dark clothes and white cravat — saying that not only his attire but his whole bearing gave the impression of a staid New England deacon, rather than of a keen, alert reporter.

The next day, when he went to his office, the managing editor, who had seen this article, greeted him smilingly, saying:

"Good morning, deacon!" And the name stuck.

He stayed with the paper another year, and then, yielding to most flattering offers from Scotland Yard, he entered the ranks of London's famous detective force.

"And so, oddly enough," he concluded, after telling the story, "I have ended, after all, by achieving ecclesiastical distinction."

"Did the coincidence please your father?" asked Branbane.

"He read the papers very little at that time, as he was very old and quite feeble, and I hardly think he knew of the nickname. Indeed, my career was a subject we rather avoided by tacit consent. The good man died soon after I joined the force, and only knew in a general way that I had achieved some success. I think he had a vague notion when he passed away that his son, who might have been a minister, had deliberately preferred to stand on a street corner in a coat that looked too long and a helmet that looked too small. His old anger had turned to pity. But, aside from this, we were on the best of terms to the very last. When he died, he left his entire fortune to my mother and myself."

"Then you don't follow your calling from necessity?" asked Branbane.

"Not now," answered the deacon; "only from pure love of it. The work fascinates me. I have my times of leisure for reading and study, and then, again, my terms of activity, for I am only called now on really complex cases —such as this one."

Just as he finished speaking, a boy handed him a wireless message. It was from one of his deputies, and read as follows:

Mickleham disappeared the night you left. Unable to discover the slightest clue.

(To be continued.)

SWALLOW SONG.

WOULD I might follow you, swallow,
Whither you wing and wing,
Far over height and hollow,
Glad in the wake of spring!

But I may not follow you, swallow,
May not follow you far;
Man by birth is kin to the earth—
You are kin to the star!

Clinton Scollard.

DEATH SWAMP.

BY H. MILECETE.

A SHORT STORY.

I HAD lost my way.

The mist was thick—rain began to fall. I could not see any landmark to guide me, could not remember which was north. The sun had gone long since.

I tramped on as hard as I could, to get out of the thick scrub and onto the track to Target Lake—but I struck the swamp. Nowhere else have I seen such a treacherous, horrible tract of country, many miles long and more wide. No one has ever crossed it; some have tried—where and how it dragged them down no man knows—but they never came back. It is the road of no return.

I grew all wet with sheer fright as I scrambled back onto a rock—just in time! The slime grabbed, held me—I had a struggle to get out of it—I sank deep. One more step and I must have floundered in, to choke and die—alone!

I was tired; the shock exhausted me.

How on earth I had wandered so far from my road puzzled, amazed me. I was miles out of my way—on the wrong side of the swamp. I tried to think, to get my bearings—this country was strange to me, and night coming on. The other side I knew well; this—not at all.

The wind howled and whipped the trees till their waving was full of menace. What took me, that I lost myself so completely? I could not tell.

I was after a man—every man in the whole district was after him, too. His name no man knew—we called him White Face. I don't know who gave him that name; it was good enough and served.

I saw him once. He was after my gold and I woke—in time—but not soon enough to kill him. He was too bad to die by a clean bullet. Every horrible, lingering death was what he deserved.

He killed my chum, Peter Dunne. I saw Peter just before he died—I saw him—God! That White Face should live and kill that way!

Peter was coming back with money to pay the lumbermen, and White Face caught him unawares. He did not kill Peter, he tortured him. After I saw that sight my mind was on fire.

No work was done, no man counted sleep righteous, while that fiend ranged the country. Track of him, news of him, we got none. He vanished into space.

I searched for days—alone—and in vain. I was on my way back to hear what the others had done, and now—well, I did not dare move lest I walk into the swamp again.

I was cold; wet, too; but, worse than all, perplexed. Who could venture successfully across the big swamp? Not I. Death Swamp, the Indians call it. It is a good name.

With the dark coming on, it was well to make camp. I scrambled up hill till I found a good big granite rock. It would make me shelter. I needed a fire to warm me. I was chilled to my heart.

The wood was wet; I went higher up the hill and found some which was dry. At last my fire burned, and I made tea and ate some biscuit. I was glad of it, for in truth I needed food. My nerves were worn out; a nameless horror hung round this place near the swamp. I wished myself well away. I feared, and knew not what I feared; it was no living thing. So long alone and brooding—brooding on Dunne's death—made me half crazy. I heard footsteps creeping out of the silence. I imagined a shout in every wind shriek.

My mind was racked with despair. I had lost my friend.

Dunne was running the lumber-camp and was killed—horribly—not quickly, mind you. Such a decent name as murder could not be applied by men to the manner of his end.

The countryside had been occasionally harried by the man known as White Face — no romantic robber, with a jest and a bullet—but a low, torturing brute. He made but few appearances in the district; in fact so infrequently did he come that men ceased to fear—he became a memory. Then — suddenly — White Face trapped Dunne. Instead of killing and robbing him—bah! I cannot tell it —but Dunne died. We heard his shouts too late. I got there first, but White Face, the evil devil, made off.

Where was his hiding-place? We did not know. Of him, his life, we knew nothing. We tried the Indians. They had never seen the man, and after all, what would they know of him? They had no gold nor dollars to draw him. But I forget—he liked taking life—nay, he loved it. I know that, for I have heard from others, and I saw Dunne when White Face finished with him.

II.

I SLEPT but little that night; it was long since I had slept well. My thoughts made me restless. Once I dreamed something touched my face. I jumped up, screaming. Always when I shut my eyes I saw the horrible countenance of White Face—leering, hideous. My mind was so full of him, in my dreams I saw no one else.

I woke to find the day well dawned, the sun bright. Up among the trees I noticed a man watching me. Had I perchance lit upon White Face? I went up, and when I got close saw the watcher was Joe Cope, an Indian. I knew him.

I asked what he did there, and he told me he was watching a girl.

"She live down there," he waved his hand.

I knew his wife had died. I supposed he was courting an Indian belle. I made no comment.

Girl and father kind to my old woman," he explained, "so we take care, make sure you good. She alone, father sick. He get no better very fast."

The affairs of Joe's lady-love and her father interested me not at all. I was more concerned to find that what I had thought north was due south. How had I been so foolish? A woodsman should not make such mistakes.

When I told Joe, he said the swamp was queer. He took but little interest, and ate in silence as good a breakfast as I could provide.

I left him to his watching, and went down to look at the swamp. To the right of it I saw a clearing and a well-built shack. To say I was surprised does not describe what I felt. Who would build a shack—here?

I stood, wondering. A girl came toward me. No Indian belle—a real white girl—a beauty. She jumped when she saw me. I understood that. The neighborhood of the Death Swamp is not a place where a girl—nor a man, either, for the matter of that—would expect to meet any one.

I explained my presence, and she offered me some coffee. I accepted it, simply to be near her; for, in truth, she was very lovely. I adored her—yes, I did—then and always. For once — during many long days—I forgot how Dunne died.

She told me Joe was taking care of her. I wondered whether he had been near me in the night. He watched to make sure no one molested her—and her father—who was very ill.

We talked. I don't know what we said; but that talk did me good—made a man of me. I was in danger of losing my wits when I met her. I asked if I might come back, and she did not say no. She knew nothing of White Face, had never even heard of him. I told her a little—I did not wish to frighten her; but it was a good thing Joe watched. I made up my mind to go and tell him so. I feared White Face—when I thought of this girl. I told her to keep a revolver ready; it was hard to warn without frightening.

A long road lay before me. She offered to show me a short cut; that I would not allow. How could any man let her risk coming back alone? Not to save fifty miles.

I went back to Joe, and he told me the girl's name; it was Archibald—Lil Archibald. She was—he was right—the best in all the world. Joe's panegyric was long and loud. The Archibalds had done everything possible for his dying wife—provided blankets, food; and Lil's father gave him a new gun and various other necessities.

I grew fonder of her every minute.

When I reached Baddeck, the others had no news of White Face. We had all failed. I thought so much of Lil Archibald I forgot about Dunne.

We decided to stop patrolling the country, and to make up a story of a big haul of gold from Waverly Mine. To talk, talk — talk of it till the whole district knew it was going to the train—taken by one man. Of course, there would not be any gold, nor would the escort be one man. We might draw White Face—if he were not too wary to be caught—unless he had found a grave in the Death Swamp, and I began to wish he had.

The idea of his roaming about made me cold with horror when I thought of Lil Archibald—there—with only an Indian and a sick man to guard her.

There was no use my waiting round Baddeck, so I went back to see her. I hurried. I was anxious.

I made camp on the hill with Joe. He spoke to me of her. I listened. It was good to me to hear talk of her.

I saw her often. She was glad to have a white man near, for her father was dying. Joe fetched a doctor while I was gone; the sick man had orders to step out on the long road.

I wondered how they came to live near the evil swamp. She said it was not evil —she loved it. They had come there every summer for as long as she could remember. Her father was interested in the Beaver Mine; in winter they went to the city.

She was a fine woodswoman. There was nothing that girl could not do. Sometimes she needed help, and I was glad to give it—so glad to be near her that I forgot I had seen Dunne die—and not in any short, quick way, either.

I sat alone outside her shack. The day was warm for June. Joe went off to get her something. I watched. Her father was worse—much worse. I saw how wretched she was; that hurt me. I would have borne everything for her willingly—more than willingly.

She came out to get water. I got it. She cried a little, and I held her. My girl!

I asked whether she thought I could get a doctor. I feared it would take a long time to bring him.

She assured me there was nothing any doctor could do. It would be easy enough to get him quickly if there were any cure.

I did not understand, and said so.

"There is a short cut — across the swamp," she jerked out.

If she had said across Hades and back, I could not have been more astounded. No one had ever gone over the swamp—though some tried. I told her so; but she said she had often, and knew the way —a safe way—her father did, too.

I shuddered. "Another man knows your short cut," I asserted.

That was how White Face escaped us.

She did not realize what I meant. And I—I hesitated, for I did not choose to frighten her. Heaven knows I was terrified for her.

There was a way across the swamp, and White Face knew it! He must be hiding there! I resolved to sleep near the shack and say nothing.

And yet—could I believe her? She, perhaps, was like those others who thought they knew the way.

"You have been across?" I asked.

She nodded: "Often. It is like a corduroy road."

I remained there, thinking; my thoughts were full of fear for her.

III.

SHE rushed out to get me to help her lift her father. He was choking. I followed her. I had never been inside the shack. She put her hand under the sick man's shoulder, as if she would help me. I pushed her aside and took him in my arms to carry him nearer the door, where he would get more air, though the day was too hot for much breeze.

He was very light; but I held him long, for he opened his eyes and fixed them on me.

The awful truth beat into my brain—he was White Face!

Again I saw Dunne dying.

I slowly, slowly carried him—the man I loathed, despised. The man for whom lynching was too good a death—carried him in my arms to the sofa, that he might breathe easier and be more comfortable. But for her, I would have—must have—thrown him down, broken every bone of him slowly. It was less than his due.

I grew hot; perspiration dripped from me. I was tempted—horribly tempted—to tell him that I knew, and then kill him.

He made no sign of recognition; his eyes stared into mine for twenty, thirty seconds—it seemed hours—as they had done when he came for my gold.

I controlled myself, controlled the force which seized me—ordered me—to take his life. That he was sick unto death did not stop me. He was suffering, yes; but not as Dunne had suffered—and others besides.

Lil thanked me for my gentleness, and I could have shouted with laughter.

He did not speak. Did he guess from my face that I knew? Did he?

I went outside quickly.

I tore up the hill, and lay on the young bracken and thought — thought till my mind was in a whirl. What could I do? He was dying — comfortably, decently. This man, who sent other men down the long road in very different fashion.

No wonder we could not find track nor trace of him. He was away across the swamp before we began to look for him.

I loved her—my girl! Lil! I knew not what to do nor which way to turn. Memory came back to me. I was in torment.

I could send Joe. One word from me and the others would come, drag him out—perhaps let him smother slowly in the Death Swamp. It had saved him many times, and would be a good end for him—slow, horrible!

Fifty times I was on the point of sending, and did not send. I owed it to Dunne to take White Face's life. My best friend, Dunne. It ate into the bone of me that White Face should die, while Dunne and the others were unavenged. He must not die decently!

I jumped up and went for Joe. I ran. I stopped—and walked down the hill.

Days and nights of horrible temptation wrung my heart out. Was ever man asked to bear the like? To have him—mine enemy—there under my hand, and know one word from me would bring him a little of the death he merited—only a little. It would not be possible for men to kill him in the way he deserved.

And then—I would blot out joy and peace from my girl forever.

I yearned to give him up—yearned to see him tormented.

And she? She knew nothing. She tended her father, and at last—he died.

I thanked God and prayed Him to keep her from ever knowing.

She mourned for him, and so did Joe. I helped dig his grave by the side of the swamp.

THE TWENTY-FOUR-HOUR CRŒSUS.

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE.

A SHORT STORY.

"YOU'RE a bit behind your usual time, sir," ventured the waiter. "Taking a holiday, if I may make so bold as to ask?"

"No," I answered, as I laid a napkin on my knee and glanced at the menu, "I'm a millionaire!"

"Yes sir," assented the waiter, with a flattering yet wholly unenthusiastic chuckle. "Quite so. Very good, sir."

I eyed him dubiously.

"What is 'very good?'" I demanded, "the news or—"

"The—the little joke, sir," faltered the waiter, with somewhat less certainty.

"American humor, of course, sir. I'm getting to recognize it at a glance now, sir."

"Would you mind," I inquired loftily, frowning at him, "would you mind telling me what you think you are trying to say? I told you something, just now. I don't know why I told you, except because you are the first person I've seen since I got the news, and it was hard to keep in. Anyhow, I told you. And instead of congratulating me, you giggle in an asinine fashion and talk about 'American humor.'"

"I beg pardon, sir," he sputtered, doubling forward subserviently and washing his knobby-knuckled hands appealingly, in invisible soap. "Beg pardon, I'm sure. I thought of course you were spoofing me, getting at me, you know—pulling my leg, as it might be."

"If all those terms are Anglican for 'guying' you, you're mistaken, Jarvis. I told you the simple, plain, unvarnished truth. I mentioned it to you, not only because you were the first person I've met to-day, but because you've waited on me ever since I joined this club, and because—oh, hang it, that's all!"

"Yes, sir," he agreed. But he still hovered near.

"Well?" I snapped, irritated, in spite of the wondrous new elation that had held me for the past half-hour. "What is it? What are you waiting for?"

"The—the order, sir," he ventured.

I reddened. In my excitement I had forgotten to name my breakfast. Jarvis noted my annoyance. Quick to seek atonement for his lack of subtlety in grasping American humor, he went on:

"I'd 'a' fetched your reg'lar week-day rolls and coffee, sir, only I fancied maybe you'd want your special Sunday breakfast, seeing you are so late and in no hurry to-day. Shall I bring—"

"Wait!" I said, glancing again at the pink menu card. "This is an Occasion, Jarvis. An Occasion, with a capital 'O,' and I must order a repast worthy of it. I wonder now," I went on whimsically, much more to myself than to him, "I wonder what millionaires generally eat for breakfast? Goldfish *frappés* and government bonds *au gratin?* You see," I added, once more taking the old privileged club servant into my confidence, "I've only been a millionaire about forty minutes, and I'm new to their ways. Have we any millionaire members—I mean other millionaire members, Jarvis? If so, what do they eat for breakfast?"

"Well, sir," he answered, humoring what he deemed my joke, with a condescending civility that maddened me, "old General Camby he eats toast and tea, usually—buttered toast. Judge Shelp—he just has an egg with—"

"Eggs! Toast! Tea!" I snorted loftily. "Not for mine! Not for my first meal in millionairedom, at any rate. Here!"

I ran a finger rapidly down the card, selecting a glittering array of dishes as sumptuous as they were incongruous.

Jarvis took my order with something of awe. Even at such times as I had chanced to receive a rare windfall of cash, I had never "plunged" on any such votive meal as this.

I felt an explanation was due. It was not my custom to chat with waiters—even with one so privileged as Jarvis—but I felt if I did not talk to some one my happiness might find vent in plate-throwing.

"I wasn't guying you," I said, "when I told you I was a millionaire. I *am.* I've been a millionaire—man and boy—for nearly an hour."

"Y-yes-sir," he murmured, trying to achieve the perfect blend between respectful appreciation of a jest and equally respectful belief of facts.

"It's like a Sunday-school story," I proceeded, "three years ago, up in the Adirondacks, I managed to haul a half-drowned old gentleman out of Raquette Lake. He called me his 'preserver' and vowed I should 'one day bless the heroism that made me save the life of T. Anthony Clegg, of Baltimore.' He was 'Million-Dollar Clegg.' You've read of him? I never heard from him again, and all the fellows at the office have been guying me for three years about my absent-minded benefactor. This morning, as I was starting for the office, this telegram was handed me."

I held out the yellow slip of paper, already much creased and thumbed by my frequent peeps at its marvelous con-

tents. Jarvis took it gingerly—as though still fearing some new twist of "American humor"—and read in slow, painful, unaccented effort:

Baltimore, Walbrook Branch Office.
Ten-Fifty P.M. (Night Rates.)
To HARRY G. CLOUGH,
7791 West 78th St., New York City:
T. Anthony Clegg died yesterday. By terms of will you are residuary legatee estate estimated at $1,200,500. Congratulations. Please wait further news.
MARCIA CLEGG.

Jarvis handed back the telegram reverently, as though it had suddenly acquired a fabulous money value.

"I—I beg to congratulate you most hearty, Mr. Clough, sir, if I may so far venture," he smirked. "Trooly, trooth is stranger'n friction, as the poet says, sir. There'll be no trouble, of course? No contest of the will, sir?"

"No," I returned, "I've thought of all that. Mr. Clegg left no immediate family. The fact that 'Marcia Clegg,' evidently a relative, from the name—not only notifies me, but congratulates me as well, proves the relations are not angry or preparing to dispute the legacy."

When I signed my check-slip for the meal, I tossed the bewildered and wholly slavish Jarvis a five-dollar bill, by way of tip.

It was my first meal and my first tip since I became rich. If each was lavish to the point of vulgarity, circumstances surely mitigated the offense.

When I went to bed the previous night, I had been Harry Clough, head clerk in the shipping house of Knolles & Son, Canal Street, on a salary of thirty-five dollars a week. I was twenty-seven, engaged to be married and trying to economize by living in a hall-bedroom and by getting frugal meals at my fraternity club. That was yesterday.

This morning I was Henry Clough, millionaire.

I strolled out into the pleasant, sunlit street. It was with an almost guilty sense of luxury that I realized I was dawdling in the sunshine of an uptown neighborhood at 10.30 A.M., on a working-day — when for the past hour and a half I should, by rights, have been crouching over a rickety desk in the noisy, dingy front office of Knolles & Son, in far-off Canal Street.

No one but a plow horse or a New York clerk can quite realize what a genuine thrill such a sensation may give.

My hands were in my pockets. I fell to jingling my change. Idly I pulled out the silver coins. Just seventy-nine cents.

An idea struck me. At the Aaron Burr National Bank I had six hundred and thirty dollars on deposit. It had seemed a huge sum, and had represented the savings of years. I had been hoarding it up to marry on.

I could have laughed aloud to recall how great an amount that same six hundred and thirty dollars had appeared to me only yesterday. Now, the whole sum represented less than one week's interest on my fortune.

II.

My resolve was taken. Ten minutes later I was at the bank, standing last in a short line before the paying-teller's window, a still inky order-slip for five hundred dollars in my hand.

As I handed in the order, and received the little sheaf of varicolored bills that to-day represented so little to me, a stout man at my elbow observed:

"Are you up here on office business, Clough?"

There was cold reproof in the tones. I turned to confront "Son"—as we clerks disrespectfully alluded to the junior partner of "Knolles & Son"—whom we all cordially detested. He tried always to be a martinet, and succeeded in being only a fussy petty tyrant.

"No, Mr. Knolles," I rejoined calmly, and without a trace of the humble respect he loved to enforce from us; "I am here on my own business."

"In office hours?" he rasped.

"Precisely," I agreed, with a pleasant smile. "I shall drop in at the office for a few minutes later in the day, "but I am going to loaf this morning."

Had a lisping kindergarten child hurled a bomb at him, "Son" could not have shown more genuine and choleric amaze.

"Don't lose your temper," I adjured coolly. "With a thick neck like yours, temper is liable to lead to apoplexy."

"What—what does this impertinence—this—this—this absence from your duties—what does it mean? I demand to know. Are you drunk or—"

"I'm a millionaire," I retorted very quietly.

"I do not care for flippancy," he rebuked, when he could catch his breath. "You will go at once to the office. Later in the morning I shall—"

"I told you, Son," I cut in, "that I am not going to the office yet. When I do go it will be only to clean out my desk and resign. In case you still think I am drunk, perhaps this will change your mind."

I handed him the telegram. He read it in silent wonder. Then he held out his thick, fat hand and said with stiff playfulness:

"This is indeed a lightning leap from poverty to affluence. Shake hands."

"Mr. Knolles," I answered, looking down at his open paw as at some odd specimen of fauna, "last month, when you came back from your vacation, I tried to welcome you to the office by shaking hands with you. You ignored my hand. Later, I heard you tell your father I ought to know my place better than to attempt such a familiarity. I won't detain you any longer. With my new responsibilities I must choose my acquaintances with more care than formerly."

I left him gasping at me like a fish out of water, and strolled out of the bank.

I hailed a taxicab—a luxury I had allowed myself but twice before in all my life—and spun up-town. I stopped once at a florist's, and emerged with an armful of glorious American Beauty roses; again at a confectioner's, and brought out a wondrous silken hand-painted five-pound box of candy.

Then I sat back in the taxi, and tried to look like a plutocrat as we sped Harlem-ward.

My cargo and I were soon ushered into the dainty little drawing-room of a West Side apartment, and I was facing the wondering, delighted eyes of the one girl.

"Harry," she exclaimed, "what are you doing here at this unearthly hour? And—oh, what flowers! Thank you ten thousand times. But, you extravagant boy, you know we can't afford such things, now that we're saving up for—"

"Madge," I interrupted, holding her at arm's length and looking down solemnly into her flushed, lovely little face, "how long have we been engaged?"

"As if you didn't know. Two years next—"

"And why haven't we married sooner?"

"Are you crazy? Because you said you wouldn't marry any girl until you had a salary of at least fifty dollars a week. And you're only earning—"

"To-day is Tuesday. Can you get ready to marry me a week from to-day?"

"Harry, Knolles & Son haven't raised you to fifty dollars?"

"My present income," said I airily, "is—let me see—at five per cent, fifty-two weeks to the year—well, a fraction under one thousand two hundred dollars a week!"

"It—it isn't nice to make fun of our beautiful little hopes like that, Harry," she reproved softly. "If—"

"Dear," I interrupted, "this is the second time in an hour that I've been accused of practical joking. You, at least, ought to know how I hate the very sight of a practical joker. Didn't I nearly lose my job for thrashing that idiotic little Murray Shane at the office, because he got me to the telephone on a fake message from you?"

"Yes," she admitted, "you did. And he swore he'd get even with you if it took him a lifetime."

"Well, he'll have to do it somewhere else than in the office," I laughed, "for I'm leaving Knolles & Son to-day."

"Leaving!" she echoed anxiously. "You're—you're not discharged? Oh, what is the mystery? You aren't one bit like yourself."

"No," I made answer. "I am like a millionaire. Probably because I am one."

I handed her the telegram.

Why go into the raptures and plans and air-castles of the next half-hour? After all, some things are sacred.

After that blissful time we consecrated the rest of the morning to plutocratic pursuits. In a taxicab we took a really wonderful ride through the park and alongside Riverside Drive, Madge and I.

We watched with lofty, joyous scorn the greedy haste of the little "indicator"

in scoring up new and larger figures. What was an extra dime or dollar to us?

We picked out no less than fourteen ideal houses and three grand building sites as we whizzed along, mentally furnishing and improving each residence and creating on the vacant lots veritable Aladdin palaces.

Then we turned south and raided two Fifth Avenue jewelers. Here Madge forced me to temporary sanity. One brooch, one little ring and a chased gold card-case were all she would let me get her.

We lunched at Sherry's—a place we had hitherto only known by name. Again I paid a record price for the privilege of eating like a millionaire.

Oh, it was a joyous morning!

Madge had an engagement at two. So, still in my trusty taxicab, I wended my way to the office. If I had limped up to the door with mud-splashed clothes, every one I knew would have been lounging just outside. As I whirled up in a taxi, not a soul, of course, was in sight.

I wandered into the clerk's room, hat on head, cigar in mouth. Five minutes later my news was out. I was a hero.

My hand was wrung so often, so hard, so frantically, that my arm was numb to the shoulder. It well-nigh brought a lump to my throat to see how honestly glad the whole crowd seemed to be. Not one, apparently, grudged me my good luck—not one cringed or toadied.

If for no other reason, I should have rejoiced in my fortune because of the insight it gave me into my office brethren's regard for myself.

The only man in the whole place whom I did not like—Murray Shane, self-appointed humorist of the office—was out of town on a tour for the firm. His absence gave me an idea. I was quick to voice it.

I forthwith invited every clerk in the place to dine with me that night at the club, and to celebrate my departure from Knolles & Son's in a banquet so notable that, henceforth, time would be dated from that hour.

There was unanimous acceptance. I called up the club steward, gave elaborate orders, and then proceeded to clean out my desk.

As I was leaving the office I almost collided, on the threshold, with Son Knolles.

"I hear you are giving a dinner tonight," said he, with a visible effort at cordiality. "I am invited, of course?"

"I am sorry," I answered, as politely as I could, "but it is just a little dinner to my old associates here."

"So!" he sneered. "A chance to patronize former equals, eh?"

"No," I returned. "A chance to let them forget for the moment that they have the bad luck to work for you."

III.

THE little clock on my chiffonier pointed to nine when I roused myself with a start next morning. Nine o'clock! I was already due at the office! What would Son say? What would—

I was half out of bed before I remembered. Then I lay back in drowsy delight.

No more slavery to office hours! No more rush and bustle and worry to avoid the ill temper of a cranky employer! No more hoarding and skimping and living in a hall-bedroom, either!

Smilingly I recalled the events of yesterday—the happiest day of all my life. The jolly morning with Madge; the call at the office; the gay good fellowship of the banquet; the kindly things that the boys had said of me. What a day to remember!

Then, athwart my golden, lazy dreams, came a thunderous long knocking at the door.

"Who is there?" I called, wondering at so peremptory a summons.

For answer—in fact, before I had fairly spoken—the door was flung open and a man rushed unceremoniously into the room.

"Say, Clough!" cried the newcomer tremulously, "there's a deuce of a muddle! I came up right away. I only got to town an hour ago, and as soon as I reached the office—"

It was Murray Shane. I looked at him with as much amaze as if he had been the King of Barataria.

I was not on visiting terms with the fellow. Indeed, since I had thrashed him for that one caddish attempt to be funny at my expense I had never so much as spoken to him.

"As soon as I reached the office," he babbled on in evident distress, "I heard how you'd resigned, and how you'd insulted Son, and about the banquet, and your throwing away money all day like a drunken sailor. Good Heavens, man!" His voice broke. "I never meant the joke to go as far as that!"

"The joke!" I echoed. "What joke? Are you trying to be funny again?"

"Why, I told you once I'd get even with you for that licking," he went on sheepishly. "So night before last, in Baltimore, when I read of old T. Anthony Clegg's death and remembered about his promising once to reward you for saving his life, the notion came to me all of a sudden to fake that telegram. I thought you'd blow about it at the office and we'd all have a laugh at you. I never dreamed—honestly, old man, I never dreamed you'd be fool enough to—"

I was out of bed and half-way across the floor.

I don't know how I looked—not exactly pleasant, I'm afraid. For Shane bolted out of the room like a scared rabbit before I could reach him, and slammed the door in my face.

I did not follow him. I sank into the nearest chair, caught my head in my hands, and tried to think.

If, as cynics say, every happiness must be paid for in corresponding misery, I certainly paid my full debt then and there, with usurious interest.

What a fool! What a double fool and bounder I had been! I had had a golden day. In return I had lost my position, the bulk of my savings, my self-respect, and I had become a laughing-stock.

Worst of all, I had unwillingly smashed Madge's glorious hopes! The world stretched forth before me, hopeless and barren as a rainy sea.

Then I pulled myself together. I had danced—I would pay the piper! I would begin payment at once. "The longer delay, the harder to pay."

"Rolls, coffee, no extra order of cream," I said to Jarvis as I sat down at my club breakfast-table.

"Yes, sir," he said, with a new, profound respect.

"And, Jarvis," I added, as one perversely bites on a sore tooth, "I'm not a millionaire."

"No, sir?" chuckled Jarvis, certain that he had at last captured a genuine specimen of American humor. "Of course not, sir. Very good, sir. Is there anything else I can do, sir?"

"No," I groaned viciously. "If there was, you wouldn't be a waiter."

Breakfast over, my first impulse was to go straight to Madge. But—I confess it—I was too much of a coward. To speak the words that would drive that bright, happy light from her dear eyes was more than I dared attempt just then.

Butterfly crushing is not pleasant sport for a white man.

No; that could wait. First, I must go to the office, eat humble pie, and strive to get back my job. After that—

IV.

I WENT to Canal Street, jingling in my trousers-pocket two dollars and sixteen cents—all that remained of my five hundred dollars.

I walked straight into Son's private office. The junior partner lifted his fat, red face and favored me with a glower.

"What do you want?" he snarled. "I'm too busy to talk to four-flush millionaires. Shane has told us all. Get out!"

"I want my job back, sir," I said with a boldness I was far from feeling. "If my work in the past—"

"That will do!" he interposed gruffly. "Your place as head clerk is given to Shane. I've nothing else for you. Perhaps you'll find out before long that insults aren't on the free-list. Get out!"

"Son," I said, battling back my mortification, "the insults I handed you have cost me my job. They were cheap at the price. Good day."

As I walked through the main office, a dozen chairs were pushed back from desks. Every man in the place was trying to shake hands with me at once, to tell me in rough sympathy how sorry each was for my ill-fortune. Again—only more so—that lump came into my throat.

To hide my feelings, I turned away and mechanically began searching the letter-box for my mail. Two circulars, a tailor's bill, a souvenir post-card, and

a letter with a law firm's stamp and a Baltimore postmark. That was all.

I tossed the circular into the waste-basket, where, after one glance, the bill and the post-card followed them. Then, carelessly, I tore open the legal letter and read:

HENRY CLOUGH, ESQ.

DEAR SIR:

The will of the late T. Anthony Clegg, of this city, was read to the relatives to-day. Under its provisions you are a beneficiary to the extent of C. G. and X. (preferred) railroad stock to the amount of 860 shares. As this stock is now quoted at par, the bequest is estimated at $86,000. Awaiting further instructions from you, we beg to remain,

Respectfully yours,

MILLER & MULLER,
ATTORNEYS AT LAW,
Per A. L.

"Where's Shane?" I roared, after a third reading had allowed the sense of the note to sink into my brain. "If this is another joke of his, I'll—"

I caught sight of the long-distance telephone, made a bolt for it, and—in an unconscionably long time — was talking direct to Mr. Muller of Miller & Muller, in Baltimore.

"What's all this?" snapped Son, emerging from his office as I dashed out of the telephone-booth with a war-whoop that set the ink-wells to dancing. "I thought you had been told to—"

"It's eighty-six thousand dollars!" I crowed. "It's four thousand three hundred dollars a year. It isn't one million two hundred thousand dollars, but it's real! Oh, Son! There's a special Providence that looks out for—"

"Born fools!" he growled, turning away in disgust.

"And it's right on the job!" I agreed.

THE STARS.

STEADFAST sentinels—stern, but true—
Diamonding the ether's blue,
The stars keep ever in their prime,
Unwrinkled by the touch of Time.

In Asia's sky they beamed upon
Nineveh and Babylon;
And crowned in warfare and in peace
Persia, Egypt, Rome, and Greece.

One, in splendor all divine,
Once hovered over Palestine;
While all have dynasties that go
Farther back than Pharaoh.

Though the moon grow thin and pale,
Their sure beams shall never fail;
As they looked when earth was born,
Shine they now, at night and morn.

Fair Cassiope, silver bright,
Orion—militant in might—
Andromeda; and, joined with these,
The softly glowing Pleiades.

These friends—in childhood, youth, and age—
Are prophets that for us presage,
And stepping-stones to faith, whereby
Man is beckoned to the sky.

While nations rise, flourish, and pass,
And even our days are as the grass;
When all that is our hope debars,
Abiding faith lights up the stars.

Joel Benton.

MORNING STAR.*

BY H. RIDER HAGGARD,

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "She," "Mr. Meeson's Will," "Allan Quatermain," "Swallow," Etc., Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

ONE evening in Egypt, thousands of years ago, Prince Abi, Governor of Memphis, arrives at Thebes to visit his brother Pharaoh. He is ambitious to supplant Pharaoh, but is dissuaded from any attempt by violence through the counsel of Kaku, his astrologer, and by the captain of his guard. In audience with Pharaoh, his queen and court, Abi reminds them that they have no heir, and suggests his brother install himself as successor. Pharaoh tells Abi he knows of his treacherous designs, makes him swear fealty, and sends him back to Memphis.

By special favor of the god Amen, Pharaoh's queen, Ahura, bears a daughter, called Morning Star. On the death of Ahura, Morning Star is reared by Asti, the enchantress, who is the mother of Rames. Pharaoh makes Morning Star queen when years weigh heavily upon him. Princes and foreign kings seek her hand in marriage, but she loves Rames, though she dare not marry him. Knowing that Asti can summon the gods, she compels her to call Amen that she may question him. The spirit of the queen's mother appears and foretells wo, but gives the queen assurance that she shall not love in vain. Pharaoh and his councilors desire Tua should wed Amathel for political reasons. On the night appointed for Amathel to meet his destined bride, Tua sees that the man in command of a guard of Egyptian soldiers attending him is Count Rames. Tua, understanding this is done to abuse him in her eyes, makes a vow to avenge him.

Tua rejects Amathel's addresses. Amathel intercepts a glance between Tua and Rames, which enrages him, and he smites Rames in the face, intending to kill him. Rames defends himself, and after killing Amathel turns to Pharaoh and Tua for his punishment. Pharaoh has swooned during the conflict and Tua appoints herself regent. By a decree she defends Rames and sends him in command of an armed expedition to Napata. Before he starts, Tua tells Rames to press his claim to the crown of Kesh and then return to ask Egypt's queen in marriage. He promises to do so to win her.

CHAPTER VII.

TUA COMES TO MEMPHIS.

SO that day Rames departed for Takensit with what ships and men could be got together in such haste. There, at the frontier post, he waited till the rest of the soldiers joined him, bringing with them the hastily embalmed body of Prince Amathel, whom he had slain, and the royal gifts to the King of Kesh. Then, without a moment's delay, he sailed southward with his little army on the long journey, fearing lest, if he tarried, orders might come to him to return to Thebes. Also, he desired to reach Napata before the heavy news of the death of the king's son, and without warning of the approach of Egypt's embassy.

With Tua he had no more speech; although, as his galley was rowed under the walls of the palace at a window of the royal apartments, he saw a white-draped figure that watched them go by. It was standing in the shadow so that he could not recognize the face; but his heart told him that this was none other than the queen herself, who appeared there to bid him farewell.

So Rames rose from the chair in which he was seated on account of the hurt to his leg, and saluted with his sword, and ordered the crew to do likewise by lifting up their oars. Then the slender figure bowed in answer, and he went on to fulfil his destiny, leaving Neter-Tua, Morning Star of Amen, to fulfil hers.

Before he sailed, however, Mermes, his father, and Asti, his mother, visited him in a place apart.

* **This story began in THE CAVALIER for November.**

"You were born under a strange star, my son," said Mermes, "and I know not whither it will lead you, who pray that it may not be a meteor which blazes suddenly in the heavens and disappears to return no more. All the people talk of the favor the queen has shown you, who, instead of ordering you to be executed for the deed you did, which robbed her of a royal husband, has set you in command of an army—you, a mere youth—and received you in secret audience, an honor granted to very few. Fate that has passed me by gives the dice to your young hand; but how the cast will fall I know not, nor shall I live to see, or so I believe."

"Speak no such evil-omened words, my father," answered Rames tenderly, for these two loved each other. "To me it seems more likely that it is I who shall not live, for this is a strange and desperate venture upon which I go, to tell to a great king the news of the death of his only son at my own hand. Mother, you are versed in the books of wisdom and can see that which is hidden to our eyes. Have you no word of comfort for us?"

"My son," answered Asti, "I have searched the future, but with all my skill it will open little of its secrets to my sight. Yet I have learned something. Great fortunes lie before you, and I believe that you and I shall meet again. But to your beloved father bid farewell."

At these words Rames turned his head aside to hide his tears, but Mermes bade him not to grieve, saying:

"Great is the mystery of our fates, my son. Some there be who tell us that we are but bubbles born of the stream, to be swallowed up by the stream; clouds born of the sky, to be swallowed up by the sky; the offspring of chance, like the beasts and the birds; gnats that dance for an hour in the sunlight and are gone. But I believe it not, who hold that the gods clothe us with this robe of flesh for their own purpose, and that the spirit within us has been from the beginning and eternally will be.

"Therefore, I love not life and fear not death, knowing that these are but doors leading to the immortal house that is prepared for us. The royal blood you have came to you from your mother and myself; but that our lots should have been humble — while yours, mayhap, will be splendid — does not move me to envy, who perchance have been that you may be.

"You go forth to fulfil your fortunes, which I believe are great; I bide here to fulfil mine, which lead me to the tomb. I shall never see you in your power, if power comes to you, nor will your triumphant footsteps stir my sleep.

"Yet, Rames, remember that though you tread on cloth of gold and the bowed necks of enemies; though love be your companion and diadems your crown; though flatteries float about you like incense in a shrine till at length you deem yourself a god, those footsteps of yours still lead to that same dark tomb, and through it on to judgment.

"Be great, if you can; but be good as well as great. Take no man's life because you have the strength and hate him; wrong no woman because she is defenseless or can be bought. Remember that the beggar-child playing in the sand may have a destiny more high than yours when all the earthly count is reckoned. Remember that you share the air you breathe with the cattle and the worm.

"Go your road rejoicing in your beauty and your youth and the good gifts that are given you; but know, Rames, that at the end of it I, who wait in the shadow of Osiris—I, your father—shall ask an account thereof, and that beyond me stand the gods of justice to test the web that you have woven. Now, Rames, my son, my blessing and the blessing of Him who shaped us be with you, and farewell."

Then Mermes kissed him on the brow and, turning, left the room; nor did they ever meet again.

But Asti stayed a while, and, coming to him presently, looked Rames in the eyes, and said:

"Mourn not. Separations are no new thing, death is no new thing; all these sorrows have been on the earth for millions of years, and for millions of years yet shall be. Live out your life, rejoicing, if the days be good; content, if they be but ill, regretting nothing save your sins, fearing nothing, expecting nothing, since all things are appointed and cannot be changed."

"I hear," he answered humbly, "and

I will not forget. Whether I succeed or fail, you shall not be ashamed for me."

Now, his mother turned to go also, but paused and said:

"I have a gift for you, Rames, from one whose name may not be spoken."

"Give it to me," he said eagerly. "I feared that it was all but a dream."

"Oh!" replied Asti, scanning his face, "so there was a dream, was there? Did it fall upon you last night when the daughter of Amen, my foster-child, instructed you in secret?"

"The gift," said Rames, stretching out his hand.

Then, smiling in her quiet fashion, his mother drew from the bosom of her robe some object that was wrapped in linen, and, touching her forehead with the royal seal that fastened it, gave it to Rames. With trembling fingers he broke the seal, and there within the linen lay a ring which for some years, as Rames knew, Tua had worn upon the first finger of her right hand.

It was massive and of plain gold, and upon the bezel of it was cut the symbol of the sun, on either side of which knelt a man and a woman crowned with the double crown of Egypt, and holding in their right hands the looped Sign of Life, which they stretched up toward the glory of the sun.

"Do you know who wore that ring in long past days?" asked Asti of Rames, who pressed it to his lips.

He shook his head, who remembered only that Tua had worn it.

"It was your forefather and mine, Rames, the last of the royal rulers of our line, who reigned over Egypt, and also over the land of Kesh. A while ago the embalmers reclothed his divine body in the tomb, and the princess, who was present there with your father and myself, drew this ring off his dead hand and offered it to Mermes, who would not take it, seeing that it is a royal signet. So she wore it herself, and now for her own reasons she sends it to you, perhaps to give you authority in Kesh, where that mighty seal is known."

"I thank the queen," he murmured. "I shall wear it always."

"Then let it be on your breast till you have passed the frontier, lest some should ask questions that you find it hard to answer. My son," she went on quickly, "you dare to love this queen of ours?"

"In truth I do, mother. Did not you, who know everything, know that? Also, it is your fault, who brought us up together."

"Nay, my son, the fault of the gods who have so decreed. But—does she love you?"

"You are always with her, mother; ask her yourself, if you need to ask. At least, she has sent me her own ring. Oh, mother, mother, guard her night and day, for if harm comes to her, then I die! Mother, queens cannot give themselves where they will as other women can; it is policy that thrusts their husbands on them.

"Keep her unwed, mother. Though it should cost her her throne, still, I say, let her not be cast into the arms of one she hates. Protect her in her trial, if such should come; and if strength fails and the gods desert her, then hide her in the web of the magic that you have; and preserve her undefiled, for so shall I bless your name forever."

"You fly at a rare bird, Rames, and there are many stronger hawks about besides that one you slew; yes, royal eagles who may strike down the pair of you. Yet I will do my best, who have long foreseen this hour, and who pray that before my eyes shut in death they may yet behold you seated on the throne of your forefathers, crowned with power and with such love and beauty as have never yet been given to man.

"Now, hide that ring upon your heart and your secret in it, as I shall, lest you should return no more to Egypt. Moreover, follow your royal star, and no other. Whatever counsel she may have given you, follow it also, stirring not to right or left, for I say that in that maiden breast of hers there dwells the wisdom of the gods."

Then, holding up her hands over his head as though in blessing, Asti, too, turned and left him.

So, Rames went and was no more seen, and by degrees the talk as to the matter of his victory over the Prince of Kesh and as to his appointment by the whim of the maiden queen to command the splendid embassy of atonement which she

had despatched to the old king, the dead man's father, died away for lack of anything to feed on.

Tua kept her counsel well; nor was aught known of that midnight interview with the young count, her general. Moreover, Napata was far away; so far that, starting at the season when it did, the embassy could scarce return till two years had gone by, if ever it did return.

Also, few believed that, whoever came back, Rames would be one of them, since it was said openly that so soon as he was beyond the frontiers of Egypt, the soldiers had orders to kill him and take on his body as a peace-offering.

Indeed, all praised the wit and wisdom of the queen who, by this politic device, had rid herself of a troublesome business with as little scandal as possible, and avoided staining her own hands in the blood of a foster-brother.

Had she ordered his death forthwith, they said, it would have been supposed also that she had put him away because he was of a royal race—one who in the future might prove a rival, or, at least, cause some rebellion.

Meanwhile, greater questions filled the mouths of men. Would Pharaoh die and leave Neter-Tua, the young and lovely, to hold his throne, and, if so, what would happen?

It was a thousand years since a woman had reigned in Egypt, and none had reigned who were not wed. Therefore, it seemed necessary that a husband should be found for her as soon as might be.

But Pharaoh did not die. On the contrary, though very slowly, he recovered, and was stronger than he had been for years; for the fit that struck him down seemed to have cleared his blood.

For some three months he lay helpless as a child, amusing himself as a child does with little things, and talking of children whom he had known in his youth; or when some of these chanced to visit him as old men, asking them to play with him with tops or balls.

Then one day came a change, and, rising from his bed, he commanded the presence of his councilors; and, when they came, inquired of them what had happened, and why he could remember nothing since the feast?

They put him off with soft words, and soon he grew weary and dismissed them. But, after they had gone and he had eaten, he sent for Mermes, the captain of the guard of Amen and his friend, and questioned him.

"The last thing I remember," he said, "was seeing the drunken Prince of Kesh fighting with your son, that handsome, fiery-eyed Count Rames, whom some fool or enemy had set to wait upon him at table. It was a dog's trick, Mermes, for, after all, your blood is purer and more ancient than that of the present kings of Kesh. Well, the horror of the sight of my royal guest, the suitor for my daughter's hand, fighting with an officer of my own guard at my own board, struck me as a butcher strikes an ox, and after it all was blackness. What chanced, Mermes?"

"This Pharaoh: My son killed Amathel in fair fight, then those black Nubian giants in their fury attacked your guard; but, led by Rames, the Egyptians —though they were the lesser men—overcame them and slew the most of them. I am an old soldier, but never have I seen a finer fray—"

"A finer fray! A finer fray!" gasped Pharaoh. "Why, this will mean a war between Kesh and Egypt. And then? Did the council order Rames to be executed, as you must admit he deserved, although you are his father?"

"Not so, O Pharaoh; Moreover, I admit nothing, though had he played a coward's part before all the lords of Egypt, gladly would I have slain him with my own hand."

"Ah!" said Pharaoh. "There speaks the soldier and the parent. Well, I understand. He was affronted, was he not, by that bedizened black man? Were I in your place, I should say as much. But —what happened?"

"Your majesty having become unconscious," explained Mermes, "Her Majesty the Queen Neter-Tua, glorious in Ra, took command of affairs according to her oath of crowning. She has sent an embassy of atonement of two thousand picked soldiers to the King of Kesh, bearing with them the embalmed body of the divine Amathel and many royal gifts."

"That is good enough in its way," said Pharaoh. "But why two thousand men, whereof the cost will be very great,

when a score would have sufficed? It is an army, not an embassy; and when my royal brother of Kesh sees it advancing, bearing with it the ill-omened gift of his only son's body, he may take alarm."

Mermes respectfully agreed that he might do so.

"What general is in command of this embassy, as it pleases you to call it?"

"The Count Rames, my son, is in command, your majesty."

Now, weak as he was still, Pharaoh nearly leaped from his chair:

"Rames, that young cutthroat who killed the prince! Rames, who is the last of the old rightful dynasty of Kesh! Rames, a mere captain, in command of two thousand of my veterans! Oh, I must still be mad! Who gave him the command?"

"The Queen Neter-Tua, Star of Amen, she gave him the command, O Pharaoh! Immediately after the fray in the hall she uttered her decree and caused it to be recorded in the usual fashion."

"Send for the queen," said Pharaoh with a groan.

So Tua was summoned, and presently swept in, gloriously arrayed; and on seeing her father sitting up and well, ran to him and embraced him, and for a long time refused to listen to his talk of matters of state.

At length, however, he made her sit by him, still holding his hand; and asked her why, in the name of Amen, she had sent that handsome young firebrand, Rames, in command of the expedition to Kesh?

Then she answered very sweetly that she would tell him. And tell him she did, at such length that before she had finished, Pharaoh, whose strength as yet was small, had fallen into a doze.

"Now, you understand," she said as he woke up with a start. "The responsibility was thrust upon me, and I had to act as I thought best. To have slain this young Rames would have been impossible, for all hearts were with him."

"But surely, daughter, you might have got him out of the way."

"My father, that is what I have done. I have sent him to Napata, which is very much out of the way — many months' journey, I am told."

"But what will happen, Tua? Either the King of Kesh will kill him and my two thousand soldiers, or perhaps he will kill the King of Kesh as he killed his son, and seize the throne which his own forefathers held for generations. Have you thought of that?"

"Yes, my father, I thought of it; and if this last should happen through no fault of ours, would Egypt weep, think you?"

Now, Pharaoh stared at Tua, and Tua looked back at Pharaoh and smiled.

"I perceive, daughter," he said slowly, "that in you are the makings of a great queen, for within the silken scabbard of a woman's folly I see the statesman's sword of bronze. Only run not too fast, lest you should fall upon that sword and it pierce you."

Now, Tua, who had heard such words before from Asti, smiled again, but made no answer.

"You need a husband to hold you back," went on Pharaoh. "Some great man whom you can love and respect."

"Find me such a man, my father, and I will wed him gladly," answered Tua in a sweet voice. "Only," she added, "I know not where he may be sought, now that the divine Amathel is dead at the hand of the Count Rames, our general and ambassador to Kesh."

So, when he grew stronger, Pharaoh renewed his search for a husband mete to marry the Queen of Egypt. Now, as before, suitors were not lacking; indeed, his ambassadors and councilors sent in their names by twos and threes. But, always when they were submitted to her, Tua found something against every one of them, till, at last, it was said that she must be destined for a god, since no mere mortal would serve her turn.

But when this was reported to her, Tua only answered with a smile that she was destined to that royal lover of whom Amen had spoken to her mother in a dream; not to a god, but to the chosen of the god; and that when she saw him, she felt sure she would know him at once and love him much.

After some months had gone by, Pharaoh, quite weary of this play, asked the advice of his council. They suggested to him that he should journey through the great cities of Egypt, both because the change might completely reestablish his

divine health, and in the hope that on her travels the Queen Neter-Tua would meet some one of royal blood with whom she could fall in love. For by now it was evident to all of them that unless she did fall in love, she would not marry.

So that very night Pharaoh asked his daughter if she would undertake such a journey.

She answered that nothing would please her better, as she wearied of Thebes and desired to see the other great cities of the land, to make herself known to those who dwelt in them, and in each to be proclaimed as its future ruler. Also, she wished to look upon the ocean, whereof she had heard that it was so big that all the waters of the Nile flowing into it day and night made no difference to its volume.

Thus, then, began that pilgrimage which afterward Tua recorded in the history of her reign on the walls of the wonderful temples that she built.

Her own wish was that first they should sail south to the frontiers of Egypt, since there she hoped that she might hear some tidings of Rames and his expedition, whereof latterly no certain word had come. This project, however, was overruled, because in the south there were no great towns; also, the inhabitants of the bordering desert were turbulent, and might choose that moment to attack.

So, in the end, they went down and not up the Nile, tarrying for a while at every great city, and especially at Abtu, the holy place where the head of Osiris is buried, and tens of thousands of the great men of Egypt have their tombs.

Here Tua was crowned afresh in the very shrine of Osiris amidst the rejoicings of the people.

Then they sailed away to On, the City of the Sun, and thence to make offerings at the Great Pyramids which were built by some of the early kings who had ruled Egypt, to serve them as their tombs.

Neter-Tua entered the pyramids to look upon the bodies of these Pharaohs who had been dead for thousands of years, and whose deeds were all forgotten, though her father would not accompany her there because the ways were so steep that he did not dare to tread them.

Afterward, with Asti and a small guard of the Arab chiefs of the desert, she mounted a dromedary and rode round them in the moonlight, hoping that she would meet the ghosts of those kings, and that they would talk with her as the ghost of her mother had done.

But she saw no ghosts, nor would Asti try to summon them from their sleep, although Tua prayed her to do so.

"Leave them alone," said Asti, as they paused in the shadow of the greatest of the pyramids and stared at its shining face engraved from base to summit with many a mystic writing.

"Leave them alone; lest they should be angry as Amen was, and tell your majesty things which you do not wish to hear. Contemplate their mighty works, such as no monarch can build to-day, and suffer them to rest therein undisturbed by weaker folk."

"Do you call these mighty works?" asked Tua contemptuously, for she was angry because Asti would not try to raise the dead. "What are they, after all, but so many stones put together by the labor of men to satisfy their own vanity? And of those who built them what story remains? There is none at all, save some vain legends. Now, if *I* live, I will rear a greater monument, for history shall tell of me till time be dead."

"Perhaps, Neter-Tua, if you live, and the gods will it; though, for my part, I think that these old stones will survive the story of most deeds."

On the morrow of this visit to the pyramids, Pharaoh, and the queen, his daughter, made their state entry into the great white-walled city of Memphis, where they were royally received by Pharaoh's brother, the Prince Abi, who was still the ruler of all this town and district.

As it chanced, these two had not met since Abi, many years before, came to Thebes, asking a share in the government of Egypt and to be nominated as successor to the throne.

Like every other lord and ruler, he had been invited to be present at the great ceremony of the crowning of Neter-Tua; but at the last moment sent his excuses, saying that he was ill, which seemed to be true. At any rate, the spies reported that he was confined to his bed, though whether sickness or his own will took him

thither at this moment, there was nothing to show.

At the time, Pharaoh and his council wondered a little that he had made no proposal for the marriage of one of his sons, of whom he had four, to their royal cousin, Neter-Tua; but decided that he had not done so because he was sure that it would not be accepted.

For the rest, during all this period Abi had kept quiet in his own government, which he ruled well and strongly, remitting his taxes to Thebes at the proper time with a ceremonial letter of homage, and even increasing the amount of them.

So it came about that Pharaoh, who by nature was kindly and unsuspicious, had long ago put away all mistrust of his brother, whose ambitions, he was sure, had come to an end with the birth of an heiress to the throne.

Yet, when escorted only by five hundred of his guard, for this was a peaceful visit, Pharaoh rode into the mighty city and saw how impregnable were its walls and how strong its gates; saw, also, that the streets were lined with thousands of well-armed troops, doubts which he dismissed as unworthy did creep into his heart. But if he said nothing of them, Tua, who rode in the chariot with him, was not so silent.

"My father," she said in a low voice while the crowds shouted their welcome, for they were alone in the chariot, the horses of which were led, "this uncle of mine keeps a great state in Memphis."

"Yes, daughter; why should he not? He is its governor."

"A stranger who did not know the truth might think he was its king, my father; and, to be plain, if I were Pharaoh, and had chosen to enter here, it would have been with a larger force."

"We can go away when we like, Tua," said Pharaoh uneasily.

"You mean, my father, that we can go away when it pleases the prince, your brother, to open those great bronze gates that I heard clash to behind us—then, and not before."

At this moment their talk came to an end, for the chariot was stayed at the steps of the great hall, where Abi waited to receive his royal guests.

He stood at the head of the steps, a huge, coarse, vigorous man of about sixty years of age, on whose fat, swarthy face there was still, oddly enough, some resemblance to the delicate, refined-featured Pharaoh.

Tua summed him up in a single glance, and instantly hated him even more than she had hated Amathel, Prince of Kesh. Also, she who had not feared the empty-headed, drunken Amathel was penetrated with a strange terror of this man whom she felt to be strong and intelligent, and whose great, greedy eyes rested on her beauty as though they could not tear themselves away.

Now they were ascending the steps, and now Prince Abi was welcoming them to his "humble house," giving them their throne names, and saying how rejoiced he was to see them, his sovereigns, within the walls of Memphis, while, all the time, he stared at Tua.

Pharaoh, who was tired, made no reply; but the young queen, staring back at him, answered:

"We thank you for your greeting; but then, my Uncle Abi, why did you not meet us outside the gates of Memphis, where we expected to find its governor waiting to deliver up the keys of Pharaoh's city to the officers of Pharaoh?"

Now Abi, who had thought to see some shrinking child clothed in the emblems of a queen, looked astonished at this tall and royal maiden who had so sharp a tongue, and found no words to answer her.

So she swept past him, and commanded to be shown where she should lodge in Memphis.

They led her to its greatest palace, that had been prepared for Pharaoh and herself, a place surrounded by palm-groves in the midst of the city, but having studied it with her quick eyes, she said that it did not please her.

So search was made elsewhere, and in the end she chose another smaller palace that once had been a temple of Sekhet, the tiger-headed goddess of vengeance and of chastity, whereof the pylon towers fronted on the Nile, which, at its flood, washed against them. Indeed, they were now part of the wall of Memphis, for the great, unused gateway between them had been built up with huge blocks of stone.

--Surrounding this palace, and outside its courts, lay the old gardens of the temple where the priests of Sekhet used to wander, enclosed within a lofty limestone wall.

Here, saying that the air from the river would be more healthy for him, Tua persuaded Pharaoh to establish himself and his court, and to encamp the guards under the command of his friend Mermes in the outer colonnades and gardens

When it was pointed out to the queen that, owing to the lack of dwelling-rooms, none which were fitting were left for her to occupy, she replied that this mattered nothing, since in the old pylon tower were two small chambers hollowed in the thickness of its walls, which were very pleasing to her, because of the prospect of the Nile and the wide flat lands and the distant pyramids commanded from the lofty roof and window-places.

So these chambers, in which none had dwelt for generations, were hastily cleaned out and furnished, and in them Tua and Asti, her foster-mother, took up their abode.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAGIC IMAGE.

THAT night Pharaoh and Tua rested in privacy with those members of the court whom they had brought with them, but on the morrow began a round of festivals such as history scarcely told of in Egypt. Indeed, the feast with which it opened was more splendid than any Tua had seen at Thebes even at the time of her crowning, or on that day of blood and happiness when Amathel and his Nubian guards were slain and she and Rames declared their love.

At this feast Pharaoh and the young queen sat in chairs of gold, while the Prince Abi was placed on her right hand, and not on that of Pharaoh, as he should have been as host and subject.

"I am too much honored," said Tua, looking at him sideways. "Why do you not sit by Pharaoh, my uncle?"

"Who am I that I should take the seat of honor when my sovereigns come to visit me?" answered Abi, bowing his great head. "Let it be reserved for the high priest of Osiris, that Holy One whom, after Ptah, we worship here above all other deities, for he is clothed with the majesty of the god of death."

"Of death!" said Tua. "Is that why you put him by my father?"

"Indeed not," replied Abi, spreading out his hands; "though if a choice must be made, I would rather that he sat near one who is old and must soon be called the 'ever-living,' than at the side of the loveliest queen that Egypt has ever seen, to whom it is said that Amen himself has sworn a long life," and again he bowed.

"You mean that you think Pharaoh will soon die? Nay, deny it not, Prince Abi; I can read your thoughts, and they are ill-omened," said Tua sharply and, turning her head away, began to watch those about her.

Soon she noticed that behind Abi among his other officers stood a tall, grizzled man clad in the robes and cap of an astrologer, who appeared to be studying everything, and especially Pharaoh and herself, for whenever she looked round it was to find his quick, black eyes fixed upon her.

"Who is that man?" she whispered presently to Asti, who waited on her.

"The famous astrologer, Kaku, queen. I have seen him before when he visited Thebes with the prince, before your birth. I will tell you of him afterward. Watch him well."

So Tua watched and discovered several things, among them that Kaku observed everything that she and Pharaoh did, what they ate, to whom they spoke, and any words which fell from their lips, such as those that she had uttered about the god Osiris. All of these he noted down from time to time on his waxen tablets, doubtless that he might make use of them afterward in his interpretation of the omens of the future.

Now, among the ladies of the court who fanned Pharaoh and waited on him was that dancing-girl of Abi's who many years before had betrayed him at Thebes; Merytra, Lady of the Footstool, now a woman of middle age, but still beautiful, of whom, although Tua disliked her, Pharaoh was fond because she was clever and witty of speech and amused him.

For this reason, in spite of her history, he had advanced her to wealth and

honor, and kept her about his person as a companion of his lighter hours. Something in this woman's manner attracted Tua's attention, for continually she looked at the astrologer, Kaku, who suddenly awoke to her presence and smiled as though he recognized an old friend.

Then, when it was the turn of another to take her place behind Pharaoh, Merytra drew alongside of Kaku, and under shelter of her broad fan, spoke to him quickly, as though she were making some arrangement with him, and he nodded in assent, after which they separated again.

The feast wore on its weary course till, at length, the doors opened and slaves appeared bearing the mummy of a dead man, which they set upon its feet in the center of the hall, whereon a toast-master cried:

"Drink and be merry, all ye great ones of the earth, who know not how soon ye shall come to this last lowly state."

Now this bringing in of the mummy was a very ancient rite, but one that had fallen into general disuse, so that as it chanced, Tua, who had never seen it practised before, looked on it with curiosity not unmingled with disgust.

"Why is a dead king dragged from his sepulcher back into the world of life, my uncle?" she asked, pointing to the royal emblems with which the corpse was clothed.

"It is no king, your majesty," answered Abi, "but only the bones of some humble person, or perhaps a block of wood that wears the *uræus* and carries the scepter in honor of Pharaoh, our chief guest."

Now Tua frowned, and Pharaoh, who had overheard the talk, said, smiling sadly:

"A somewhat poor compliment, my brother, to one who, like myself, is old and sickly and not far from his eternal habitation. Yet why should I grumble at it who need no such reminder of that which awaits me and all of us?" and he leaned back in his chair and sighed, while Tua looked at him anxiously.

Then Abi ordered the mummy to be removed, declaring with many apologies, that it had been brought there only because such was the ancient custom of Memphis, which, unlike Thebes, did not change its fashions.

He added that this same body or figure, for he knew not which it was, having never troubled to inquire, had been looked upon by at least thirty Pharaohs, all as dead as it to-day, since it was the same that was used at the royal feasts before, long ago, the seat of government was moved to Thebes.

"If so," broke in Tua, who was angry, "it is time that it should be buried, if flesh and bone, or burned, if wood. But Pharaoh is wearied. Have we your leave to depart, my uncle?"

Without answering Abi rose, as she thought, to dismiss the company. But it was not so, for he raised a great, golden cup of wine and said:

"Before we part, my guests, let Memphis drink a welcome to the mighty lord of the Two Lands who, for the first time in his long and glorious reign, honors it with his presence here to-day. As he said to me but now, my royal brother is weak and aged with sickness, nor can we hope that once his visit is ended, he will return again to the White-walled City. But as it chances the gods have given him a boon which they denied for long, the lovely daughter who shares his throne, and who, as we believe and pray, will reign after him when it pleases him to ascend into the kingdom of Osiris. Yet, my friends, it is evil that the safe and lawful government of Egypt should hang on one frail life.

"Therefore, this is the toast to which I drink—that the Queen Neter-Tua, Morning Star of Amen, Hathor Strong in Beauty, who has rejected so many suitors, may before she departs from among us find one to her liking, some husband of royal blood, skilled in the art of rule, whose strength and knowledge may serve to support her woman's weakness and inexperience in that sad hour when she finds herself alone."

Now, the audience, who well understood the inner meaning and objects of this speech, rose and cheered furiously, as they had been schooled to do, emptying their cups to Pharaoh and to Tua and shouting:

"We know the man. Take him, glorious queen; take him, daughter of Amen, and reign forever."

"What do they mean?" muttered Pharaoh. "I do not understand. Thank them, my daughter, my voice is weak, and let us begone."

So Tua rose when at length there was silence and, looking round her with flashing eyes, said in her clear voice that reached the farthest recesses of the hall:

"The Pharaoh, my father, and I, the Queen of the Upper and the Lower Lands, return thanks to you, our people of this city, for your loyal greetings. But as for the words that the Prince Abi has spoken, we understand them not. My prayer is that Pharaoh may still reign in glory for many years, but if he departs and I remain, learn, O people, that you have naught to fear from the weakness and inexperience of your queen. Learn also that she seeks no husband, nor when she seeks will she ever find one within the walls of Memphis. Rest you well, O people, and you, my Uncle Abi, as now with your good leave we will do also."

Then, turning, she took her father by the hand and went without more words, leaving Abi staring at his guests while his guests stared back at him.

When Tua had reached the pylon tower, where she lodged, and her ladies had unrobed her and gone, she called Asti to her from the adjoining chamber and said:

"You are wise, my nurse; tell me, what did Abi mean?"

"If your majesty cannot guess, then you are duller than I thought," answered Asti, in her quick, dry fashion, adding: "However, I will try to translate. The Prince Abi, your noble uncle, means that he has trapped you here, and that you shall not leave these walls save as his wife."

Now fury took hold of Tua.

"How dare he speak such words?" she gasped, springing to her feet. "I, the wife of that old river-hog, my father's brother who might be my grandfather; that hideous, ancient lump of wickedness who boasts that he has a hundred sons and daughters; I, the Queen of Egypt, whose birth was decreed by Amen; I—how dare you?" and she ceased, choking in her wrath.

"The question is—how he dares, queen. Still, that is his plot which he will carry through if he is able. I suspected it from the first, and that is why I always opposed this visit to Memphis; but you will remember you bade me be silent, saying that you had determined to see the most ancient city in Egypt."

"You should not have been silent. You should have said what was in your mind, even if I ordered you from my presence. Neither Abi nor any of his sons proposed for my hand when the others did, therefore, *I* suspected nothing—"

"After the fashion of women who have already given their hearts, queen, and forget that they have other things to give—a kingdom for instance. The snake does not roar like the lion, yet it is more to be feared."

"Once I am out of this place it is the snake that shall have cause to fear, Asti, for I will break its back and throw it writhing to the kites. Nurse, we must leave Memphis."

"That is not easy, queen, since some ceremony is planned for each of the next eight days. If Pharaoh were to go away without attending them, he would anger all the people of the North, which he has not visited since he was crowned."

"Then let them be angered; Pharaoh can do as he wills."

"Yes, queen; at least, that is the saying. But do you think that Pharaoh wishes to bring about a civil war and risk his crown and yours? Listen: Abi is very strong, and under his command he has a greater army than Pharaoh can muster in these times of peace, for in addition to his trained troops, all the thousands of the Bedouin tribes of the desert look on him as lord, and at his word will fall on the wealth of Egypt like famished vultures on a fatted ox.

"Moreover, here you have but a guard of five hundred men, whereas Abi's regiments, summoned to do you honor, and his ships of war block the river and the southern road. How then will you leave Memphis without his good leave; how will you even send messengers to summon aid which could not reach you under fifty days?"

Now, when she saw the greatness of the danger, Tua grew quite calm and answered:

"You have done wrong, Asti; if you foresaw all these things of which I never thought, you should have warned Pharaoh and his council."

"Queen, I did warn them, and Mermes warned them also, but they would not listen, saying that they were but the idle dreams of one who strives to peep into the future and sees false pictures there. More, Pharaoh sent for me himself, and while thanking me and Mermes my husband, told me that he had inquired into the matter and found no cause to distrust Abi or those under his command. Moreover, he forbade me to speak to your majesty about it, lest, being but young and a woman, you might be frightened and your pleasure spoiled."

"Who was his counselor?" asked Tua.

"A strange one, I think, queen. You know his waiting-woman, Merytra; she of whom he is so fond, and who stood behind him with a fan this night."

"Aye, I know her," replied Tua, with emphasis. "She was ever whispering with that tall astrologer at the feast. But does Pharaoh take counsel with waiting-ladies of his private household?"

"With this waiting-lady, it seems, queen. Perhaps you have not heard all her story. In the year before your birth Merytra came up the Nile with Abi. She was then quite young and very pretty; one of Abi's women. It seems that the prince struck her for some fault, and being clever she determined to be revenged upon him. Soon she got her chance, for she heard Abi disclose to the astrologer Kaku—that same man whom you saw to-night talking with her—a plan that he had made to murder Pharaoh and declare himself king, from which Kaku dissuaded him.

"Having this secret and being bold, she fled at once from the ship of Abi, and that night told Pharaoh everything. But he forgave Abi, and sent him home again with honor, who should have slain him for his treason. Only Merytra remained in the court, and from that time forward Pharaoh, who trusted her and was caught by her wit and beauty, made it a habit to send for her when he wished to have news of Memphis, where she was born, because she seemed always to know even the most secret things that were passing in that city. Moreover, often her information proved true."

"That is not to be wondered at, nurse, seeing that doubtless it came from this Kaku, Abi's astrologer and magician."

"No, queen, it is not to be wondered at, especially as she paid back secret for secret. Well, I believe that after I had warned Pharaoh of what I knew, never mind how, he sent for Merytra, who laughed the tale to scorn, and told him that Abi his brother had long ago abandoned all ambitions, being well content with his great place and power, which one of his sons would inherit after him. She told him also that the troops were but assembled to do the greater honor to your majesties, who had no more loyal or loving subject than the Prince Abi, whom for her part she hated with good cause, as she loved Pharaoh and his house—with good cause.

"If there were any danger, she asked, would she dare to put herself within the reach of Abi, the man she had once betrayed because her heart was pure and true, and she was faithful to her king? So Pharaoh believed her, and I obeyed the orders of Pharaoh, knowing that if I did not do so he would grow angry and perhaps separate me from you, my beloved queen and fosterling, which, now that Rames has gone, would, I think, have meant my death. Yet I fear that I have erred."

"Yes, I fear also that you have erred, Asti, but everything is forgiven to those who err through love," answered Tua kindly and kissing her. "Oh, my father, Pharaoh! What god fashioned you so weak that an evil spirit in a woman's shape can play the rudder to your policy! Leave me now, Asti, for I must sleep and call on Amen to aid his daughter. The snare is strong and cunning, but, perchance, in my dreams he will show me how it may be broke."

That night when the feast was ended Merytra, Pharaoh's favored waiting-maid, did not return with the rest of the royal retinue to the temple where he lodged. As they went from the hall in state she whispered a few words into the ear of the chief butler of the household, who, knowing that she had the royal

pass to come in and out as she would, answered that the gate should be opened to her, and let her go.

So, covering her head with a dark cloak, Merytra slipped behind a certain statue in the antehall and waited till presently a tall figure, also wrapped in a dark cloak, appeared and beckoned to her.

She followed it down sundry passages and up a narrow stair that seemed almost endless, until, at length, the figure unlocked a massive door, and when they had passed it, locked it again behind them.

Now Merytra found herself in a very richly furnished room lit by hanging-lamps, that evidently was the abode of one who watched the stars and practised magic, for all about were strange-looking brazen instruments and rolls of papyrus covered with mysterious signs, and suspended above the table a splendid divining ball of crystal. Merytra sank into a chair, throwing off her dark cloak.

"Of a truth, friend Kaku," she said, so soon as she had got her breath, "you dwell very near the gods."

"Yes, dear Merytra," he answered with a dry chuckle, "I keep a kind of half-way house to heaven. Perched here in my solitude I see and make note of what goes on above," and he pointed to the skies, "and retail the information, or as much of it as I think fit, to the groundlings below."

"At a price, I suppose, Kaku?"

"Most certainly, at a price, and I may add, a good price. No one thinks much of the physician who charges low fees. Well, you have managed to get here, and after all these years I am glad to see you again, looking almost as young and pretty as ever. Tell me your secret of eternal youth, dear Merytra."

Merytra, who was vain, smiled at this artful flattery, although, in truth, it was well deserved, for at an age when many Egyptians are old, she remained fresh and fair.

"An excellent conscience," she answered, "a good appetite and the virtuous, quiet life, which is the lot of the ladies of Pharaoh's court—there you have the secret, Kaku. I fear that you keep too late hours, and that is why you grow white and withered like a mummy—not but that you look handsome enough in those long robes of yours," she added to gild the pill.

"It is my labors," he replied, making a wry face, for he too was vain. "My labors for the good of others, also indigestion and the drafts in this accursed tower where I sit staring at the stars, which give me rheumatism. I have got both of them now, and must take some medicine," and filling two goblets from a flask, he handed her one of them, saying, "drink it, you don't get wine like that in Thebes."

"It is very good," said Merytra when she had drunk, "but heavy. If I took much of that I think I should have 'rheumatism,' too. Now tell me, old friend, am I safe, in this place? No, not from Pharaoh, he trusts me and lets me go where I will upon his business—but from his royal brother. He used to have a long memory, and from the look of him I do not think that his temper has improved. You may remember a certain slap in the face and how I paid him back for it."

"He never knew it was you, Merytra. Being a mass of self-conceit, he thought that you ran away because he had banished you from his royal presence and presented you—to me."

"Oh, he thought that, did he! What a vain fool!"

"It was a very dirty trick you played me, Merytra," went on Kaku with indignation, for the rich wine coursing through his blood revived the sting of his loss. "You know how fond I always was of you, and indeed am still," he added, gazing at her admiringly.

"I felt that I was not worthy of so learned and distinguished a man," she replied, looking at him with her dark eyes. "I should only have hampered your life, dear Kaku, so I went into the household of that poor creature, Pharaoh, instead—Pharaoh's nunnery we call it. But you will not explain the facts to Abi, will you?"

"No, I think not, Merytra, if we continue to get on as well as we do at present. But now you are rested, so let us come to business, for otherwise you will have to stop here all night and Pharaoh would be angry."

"Oh, to Set with Pharaoh! Though

it be true that he is a good paymaster, and knows the value of a clever woman. Now, what is this business?"

The old astrologer's face grew hard and cunning. Going to the door, he made sure that it was locked and drew a curtain over it. Then he took a stool and sat himself down in front of Merytra, in such a position that the light fell on her face while his own remained in shadow.

"A big business, Merytra, and by the gods I do not know that I should trust you with it. You tricked me once; you have tricked Pharaoh for years. How do I know that you will not play the same game once more, and earn me an order to cut my own throat, and so lose life and soul together?"

"If you think that, Kaku, perhaps you will unlock the door and give me an escort home, for we are only wasting time."

"I don't know what to think, for you are as cunning as you are beautiful. Listen, woman," he continued in a savage whisper, and clasping her by the wrist. "If you are false, I tell you that you shall die horribly, for if the knife and poison fail, I am no charlatan, I have arts. I can make you turn loathsome to the sight and waste away; I can haunt you at nights, so that you may never sleep a wink, save in full sunshine; and I will do it all, and more. If I die, Merytra, we go together. Now, will you swear to be true—will you swear it by the oath of oaths?"

The spy looked about her. She knew Kaku's power, which was famous throughout Egypt, and that it was said to be of the most evil sort; and she feared him.

"It seems that this is a dangerous affair," she replied uneasily, "and I think that I can guess your aim. Now, if I help you, Kaku, what am *I* to get?"

"Me," he answered.

"I am flattered; but what else?"

"After Pharaoh, the greatest place and the most power in Egypt, as the wife of Pharaoh's vizier."

"The wife? Doubtless, from what I have heard of you, Kaku, there would be other wives to share these honors."

"No other wife—upon the oath, none, Merytra."

She thought a moment, looking at the wizened but powerful-faced old magician, then answered:

"I will take the oath and keep my share of it. See that you keep yours, Kaku, or it will be the worse for you, for women have their own evil power."

"I know it, Merytra, and from the beginning the wise have held that its spirit dwells, not in the breast or brain or liver, but in the female tongue. Now, stand up."

She obeyed, and from some hidden place in the wall Kaku produced a book, or rather a roll of magical writings, that was incased in iron, the metal of the evil god, Typhon.

"There is no other such book as this," he said, "for it was written by the greatest of wizards who lived before Mena, when the god-kings ruled in Egypt; and I myself took it from among his bones. A terrible task, for his Ka rose up in the grave and threatened me. He who can read in that book, as I can, has much strength, and let him beware who breaks an oath taken on that book. Now, press it to your heart, Merytra, and swear after me."

Then he repeated a very terrible oath, for should it be violated it consigned the swearer to shame, sickness, and misfortune in this world, and to everlasting torments in the next at the claws and fangs of beast-headed demons who dwell in the darkness beyond the sun, appointing, by name, those beings who should work the torments, and summoning them as witnesses to the bond.

Merytra listened, then said:

"You have left out your part of the oath, friend—namely, that you promise that I shall be the only wife of Pharaoh's vizier, and hold equal power with him."

"I forgot," said Kaku, and added the words.

Then they both swore, touching their brows with the book, and as she looked up again Merytra saw a strange, flame-like light pulse in the crystal globe that hung above her head, which became presently infiltrated with crimson flowing through it as blood might flow from a wound, till it glowed dull red, out of which redness a great eye watched her.

Then the eye vanished and the blood vanished, and in place of them Queen Neter-Tua sat in glory on her throne, while the nations worshiped her, and by her side sat a man in royal robes whose face was hidden in a cloud.

"What do you see?" asked Kaku, following her gaze to the crystal.

She told him, and he pondered a while, then answered doubtfully:

"I think it is a good omen; the royal consort sits beside her. Only, why was his face hidden?"

"I am sure I do not know," answered Merytra. "I think that strong, red wine of yours was doctored and has got into my head. But, come, we have sworn this oath, which I dare say will work in more ways than we guess, for such accursed swords have two edges to them. Now, out with the plot, and throw a cloth over that crystal, for I want to see no more pictures."

"It seems a pity, since you have such a gift of vision," replied Kaku in the same dubious voice. Yet he obeyed, tying up the shining ball in a piece of mummy wrapping which he used in his spells.

"Now," he said, "I will be brief. My fat master, Abi, means to be Pharaoh of Egypt, and it seems that the best way to do so is by climbing into his niece's throne, where most men would like to sit."

"You mean by marrying her, Kaku?"

"Of course. What else? He who marries the queen rules in right of the queen."

"Indeed. Do you know anything of Neter-Tua?"

"As much as any other man knows; but what do you mean?"

"I mean that I shall be sorry for the husband who marries her against her will, however beautiful and high-placed she may be. I tell you that woman is a flame. She has more strength in her than all the magicians in Egypt, yourself among them. They say she is a daughter of Amen, and I believe it. I believe that the god dwells in her, and wo be to him whom she may chance to hate, if he comes to her as husband."

"That is Abi's business, is it not? Our business, Merytra, is to get him there. Now, we may take it that this will not be with her consent."

"Certainly not, Kaku," she answered. "The gossip goes that she is in love with young Count Rames, who fought and killed the Prince of Kesh before her eyes, and now has gone to make amends to the king his father at the head of an army."

"That may be true, Merytra. Why not? He is her foster-brother, and of royal blood; bold, too, and handsome, they say. Well, queens have no business to be in love. That is the privilege of humbler folk like you and me, Merytra. Say, is she suspicious—about Prince Abi, I mean?"

"I do not know; but Asti, her nurse and favorite lady, the wife of Mermes and mother of Rames, is suspicious enough. She is a greater magician than you are, Kaku, and if she could have had her way Pharaoh would never have set foot in Memphis. But I got your letter, and overpersuaded him, the poor fool. You see, he thinks me faithful to his house, and that is why I am allowed to be here to-night, to collect information."

"Ah! Well, what Asti knows, the queen will know, and she is stronger than Pharaoh, and, notwithstanding all Abi's ships and soldiers, may break away from Memphis and make war upon him. So it comes to this—Pharaoh must stay here, for his daughter will not desert him."

"How will you make him stay here, Kaku? Not by—" and she glanced toward the shrouded crystal.

"Nay—no blood, if it can be helped. He must not even seem to be a prisoner; it is too dangerous. But there are other ways."

"What ways? Poison?"

"Too dangerous, again. Now, if he fell sick as he has been sick before, and could not stir, it would give us time to bring about the marriage, would it not? Oh, I know that he is well at present—for him; but, look here, Merytra, I have something to show you."

Then going to a chest, Kaku took from it a plain box of cedarwood which was shaped like a mummy-case, and, lifting off its lid, revealed within it a waxen figure of the length of a hand. This figure was beautifully fashioned to the living likeness of Pharaoh, and crowned with the double crown of Egypt.

"What is it?" asked Merytra, shrinking back. "An *ushapti* to be placed in his tomb?"

"No, woman—a magic Ka, fashioned with many a spell out of yonder ancient roll, that can bring *him* to the tomb if it be rightly used, as you shall use it."

"I!" she exclaimed. "How?"

"Thus: You, as one of Pharaoh's favorite ladies, have charge of the chamber where he sleeps. Now, you must make shift to enter there alone and lay this figure in his bed, that the breath of Pharaoh may enter into it. Then take it from the bed and say these words: 'Figure, figure, I command thee by the power within thee and in the name of the Lord of Ill, that as thy limbs waste so shall the limbs of him in whose likeness thou art fashioned waste also.' Having spoken thus, hold the legs of the image over the flame of a lamp until it be half melted, and convey the rest of it away to your own sleeping-place and hide it there.

"So it shall come about that during that night the nerves and muscles in the legs of Pharaoh will wither and grow useless, and he be paralyzed. Afterward, if needful, I will tell you more."

Now, bold though she was, Merytra grew afraid.

"I cannot do it," she said. "It is black sorcery against one who is a god, and will bring my soul to hell. Find some other instrument, or place the waxen imp in the bed of Pharaoh yourself."

The face of the magician grew fierce and cruel.

"Come with me, Merytra," he said, and, taking her by the wrist, he led her to the open window-place whence he observed the stars.

So giddy was the height at the top of this lofty tower that the houses beneath looked small and far away, and the sky quite near.

"Behold Memphis and the Nile, and the wide lands of Egypt gleaming in the moonlight, and the pyramids of the ancient kings. I wish to rule over all these, like my [illegible]—do you not, Merytra?—and if you obey me, you shall do so."

"And if I do not obey?"

"Then I will throw my spell upon you, and your senses shall leave you, and you shall fall headlong to that white line, which is a street, and before to-morrow morning the dogs will have picked your broken bones, so that none can know you, for you have heard too much to go hence alive unless it be to do my bidding. Oh, no! Think not to say 'I will,' and afterward deceive me, for that image which you take with you is my servant, and will keep watch on you, and make report to me and to the god, its master. Now, choose."

"I will obey," said Merytra faintly, and as she spoke she thought that she heard a laugh outside the window.

"Good. Now, hide the box beneath your cloak, and drop it not, for if so that which is within will call aloud after you, and they will kill you for a sorceress.

"Unless my word come to you, lay the figure in Pharaoh's bed to-morrow evening, and at the hour of moonrise hold its limbs in the flame in your own chamber, and hide it away, and afterward bring it back to me, that I may enchant it afresh, if there be any need.

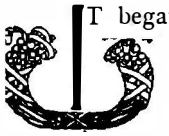
"Now, come, and I will guard you to the gates of the old temple of Sekhet, where Pharaoh dwells."

(To be continued.)

ANSWERED.

BY ANNE STORY ALLEN.

A SHORT STORY.



IT began by my taking the egg-basket down to the corner for eggs. Sometimes, if I go in the very nick of time, I am allowed to gather the eggs myself. Although I am afraid of the chickens—one of which bit me viciously the other day when I tried to take her off, neatly, by the tail, from the egg she was covering—still I am very anxious to become a real farmer person; and, besides, eggs warm from even cross chickens who peck at you are a decided novelty. Till a

year ago I purchased them under the guarantee "strictly fresh," "fresh," and just plain eggs—most of them very plain.

I took the egg-basket and, walking across the corner lot, stood at the egg-lady's side-fence and who-hooed to her. Out here they come to their window or door when you call "Who-hoo"—if they hear you.

She came.

It was just then that he came out of the house opposite.

He was very tall, very thin, and very pale. He looked up with gentle brown eyes and bowed to my neighbor, then he touched his hat with a courtly gesture that I felt must have come from some Southern forbear, a gentleman who had had time for that leisurely sweep of the hand.

The neighbor nodded, but her round, jolly face scowled as it turned back to me.

"That's Carrington Markham," she volunteered; "and he hadn't ought to be out in this March wind any more than a new-born calf."

Her remark, despite its ill-chosen comparison, seemed to have a worried kindliness. Her motherly gray eyes swept him from head to foot as he took the blanket from a woolly white horse and climbed into a shabby buckboard.

"Driving 'round here to get orders," she explained. "He's just been to get mine."

She seized the egg-basket from my hand, as, with more or less ease acquired by weeks of practise, I crept through the fence and into her farmyard. She led me to the chicken-house.

"Carrington Markham," she explained, "was born and brought up in Carolina, North or South, I forget which. His father was a Northern man, and when the mother died—this fellow's mother—old Markham came back up here again, and married a woman that had been in love with him before he went to the war. He was on the wrong side, and so they quarreled. She'd married meantime, and was a widow."

My neighbor paused, dived through a shed door, and I heard her fumbling about in some hay.

"That old Plymouth has stole a nest," she observed, reappearing, and putting an egg in the basket. She transferred a few straws from her gray sweater to the ground.

"They live over at Elm Top—over yonder, Carrington and his sister."

"Was it four pounds of oatmeal or five?" said a strange voice suddenly.

My neighbor jumped and whirled about. I reached out and took the egg-basket.

"F-four," she said. "No; might as well make it five."

It was Carrington Markham. If he had overhead us he showed no sign.

I had a good view of his pale, high-bred face—the thinning hair on his forehead as he lifted his hat to me; and I heard, as a cold, little March breeze swept across the corner lot, a hack-hacking cough.

My sister—but that was when I was a child, and I've tried to forget it. Anyway, I knew in a minute why Carrington had no business to be out in that damp March wind blowing in from the Sound—no more business than "a new-born calf."

"Getting a good many?" He eyed our basket. "My sister's chickens are laying fine."

"Quite a number," said my neighbor, and introduced us.

"Your sisters ain't made up their minds to go?" she inquired.

A swift shadow passed over the thin, white face.

"Well, it's hardly fair to ask it of them. You see, they are so attached to the old place."

There was an audible sniff from the egg-lady.

"I've heard that Carrington Lodge, that your ma left, is in a good, dry, healthy place," she observed.

She turned red, and I knew instinctively that she wished she hadn't said "healthy" or "dry."

"It's a beautiful place," said the man warmly. His voice seemed the only warm thing about him. He looked pinched with the cold. His hand, as he drew off his glove to tighten the scarf about his neck, was white and long as to finger and blue as to nail.

"It would be a nice idea for you three to be down there together," went on my neighbor.

"Oh, I couldn't really ask it of them," he repeated. "This is their home, you know. The—other isn't quite free. It would entail a sacrifice on their part. They might have to give up—"

"What if they would?"

The man's face flushed. He bit his lip.

"Five pounds of oatmeal, I believe, and a dozen bars of soap?" He looked into his order-book.

"Yes," assented his customer.

"There!" as he went down the yard to the white woolly horse again. "I've offended him, and I wouldn't for the world. But those selfish sisters of his make me mad."

"I gather that he should go South, and that he would have to go alone."

"Go alone?" Her voice came from under the low roof of a small extra chicken-house. "Get off there! Shoo! He has an idea that he's the man of the family, and must stay by those two old maids. They're only his half-sisters.

"Shoo!" A noisy hen came from the chicken-house, and I stepped aside to let her pass. Then I heard the voice continue as my neighbor emerged. "The old folks is dead, and he just makes a living up to Bidwell's. Summer and winter he's been on his job, and I guess it won't be many more, either. They could sell their old farm any day; some city folks want it, though what they see in that old cold hilltop is more than I can tell. Those two women ain't attached to it. Say what he's a mind to, it's just like 'em, selfish to the backbone. Come on in a minute, till I put them down in the egg-book."

I went in, and we sat by the sunny window that looked out on the sheds and chicken-houses, and she counted all the eggs she had collected, wrote the number in a book, and I paid for mine. But I lingered.

"You don't think he's really got—that is, have the doctors called it—"

"No," almost snapped the egg-lady; "but it don't need anybody to call it, when you hear that cough for month after month. It ain't come yet, but it's hanging over him like a great, white, ugly hand. Seems as if those two just shut their eyes and wouldn't see."

She turned and glanced out of another side window, where, perched on a hill, we could see the roofs of Elm Top.

"You see," she spoke more gently, "I had a young brother once—"

I rose hastily. She looked around at me.

"I had a sister," I said, and her hand reached out for mine.

"It seems so easy now—to stop it," she faltered. "I read and read about it. Seems as if I get sort of crazy, wishing they'd known about how to sleep outdoors, and dry air and those things. When Thad wa taken— But, there!"

And I echoed "but, there!" and loosened my grasp on her hand. I took up the egg-basket and left the sunny window. At the door we spoke of the prospects of rain, the drop in the price of eggs; and then I crawled through the fence again—homeward.

II.

It was not my actual intention to call at Elm Top. But I was not sorry when a long, delightful ramble over hill and down dale led me out into the very dooryard of the old farmhouse, whose roofs I could see from my own and the egg-lady's window.

There in the doorway, shading her eyes with her hand, was a woman. Dressed in flimsy black, and with a brown shawl drawn about her shoulders, she was regarding me intently as I approached.

I found myself of a sudden walking more swiftly toward her, and with a different greeting than the apology I had already framed. For the sisters of Carrington Markham, Smalley by name, had called upon me formally. Driven by an antiquated farmhand, they had approached my humble dwelling a few weeks before. Just after luncheon it had been, and as I was slipping into my most comfortable wrapper, a long morning ride had made me sleepy, and I peered inhospitably from behind my curtains at my approaching visitors. They did not appeal to me.

Then I took to my heels, and the maid, who told them I was not in, spoke quite truthfully; for, wrapper and all, I had retreated to an enclosed porch, where I knew no one would look for me. Afterward I found on my dressing-table two printed cards: Miss Smalley; Miss Eva Smalley.

I had chuckled wickedly, peeped out

at the retreating carriage, and cuddled down before my fire, my conscience dull and quite as sleepy as I.

But now I remembered it. And in a flash I felt sure that if the two sisters had in the least degree resembled their Markham brother, or had I at the time even known that they possessed the Markham brother, I should not have been guilty of being literally "out" when they called.

"You came a roundabout way," was her greeting.

I grasped at it. I was returning her call. It was so in her mind. It should be so in fact.

"I love to walk," I panted, still a little breathless from my exercise and the surprise of events.

"I'll go open the front door," she said, starting back into the house.

But I held out an entreating hand.

"Oh, can't we sit out here?" I begged. "On this sunny door-step; or perhaps you are not wrapped—"

Her small black eyes bored through me disapprovingly.

"I hardly ever sit out before July," she said; "and sister Eva can't bear the least chill. She has neuralgia."

I apologized. My apology was humble and far reaching enough to include the chill, the neuralgia, sister Eva, and the idea of ever sitting out when one had a best room to open up for callers.

It was accepted.

I waited on the front door-step, till, with a turning of key and a rattle of bolt, the door swung open, and I was ushered into the dimly lighted front room.

Two of the shutters were hastily opened for my benefit, and the window as hastily closed for the benefit of sister Eva and Miss Smalley herself, who didn't sit out till July. The room was moderately warm. Gilded heaters sent out their hot-water radiations amid incongruous surroundings.

Sister Eva had fluttered in, evidently fresh from a nap, for one side of her face was red and her hair stood up in a frightened effect from her left temple.

She inquired if I walked up the hill, and I said I had. She seemed to know it already, and merely to ask for the purpose of conversation.

They inquired as to where I attended church, and who supplied me with milk. They said they had heard I was thinking of buying the Putney place, and that my cook had left me. I bore my part of the conversation as gallantly as possible. They received graciously my genuine admiration of a beautiful old mirror, and on the strength of it took me into their low-ceiled, many-windowed dining-room, where they showed me twelve gilt-edged, flowered cups marked "Made in Germany" on the bottom. These had been sent them by a cousin in Boston. May she be forgiven! I had to stand while each cup was unhung from its hook. Then I must take it in my hand, gaze upon its decorations, return it, and wait for it to be rehung. We went through the whole dozen of them; and after I had done this, I felt that I had atoned for the time I ran to the porch and hid from Miss Smalley and Miss Eva Smalley.

There was, too, in the dining-room an old pitcher that made my mouth water, and I hung over it speechless. Something in my gaze must have penetrated sister Eva's brain, for she lifted it up and let me look more closely at it.

"'Twas great-grandmother Marcus," she said.

Of rare old blue, with quaint flowers upon it and an oddly-shaped handle. If I could only have asked "How much?" But they set it on its shelf, and I had to turn and follow them back to the front room.

It was while I was standing, making my rather lengthy adieu—lengthy, because of numerous belated questions and comments on the part of my hostesses—that Carrington Markham came toiling up the path that led to the side door.

"There's Carrington," said Miss Eva, and made as if to call him.

Miss Smalley restrained her.

"'Twouldn't be hardly worth while," she remarked.

I took it by this that it was safe, not to say desirable, to hasten my departure, and my final good-bys came trippingly from my tongue.

But Carrington had spied me, and, quickening his tired steps, he came across the corner grass-plot and held out a welcoming hand.

I heard his affectionate half-sister remark to Miss Eva:

"I knew likely's not his feet would be all muddy, and I swep' these steps this morning."

It was said in a low tone; but I was glad it reached me, for I knew now that Miss Smalley had been unenthusiastic, not so much over my delaying, as his appearing.

So I cordially invited Mr. Markham to his own porch, where I said I'd sit a moment and talk with him; and I rejoiced fervently when I saw that, in spite of his care, several large chunks of caked mud had fallen on the freshly swept steps.

III.

I SAT down there in the late afternoon sunshine; and after the petty meanness of my rejoicing had fallen from me, I looked over the wonderful valley and hills beyond and straight out to the beautiful blue of the Sound. It seemed to sparkle even at that distance.

Quite suddenly all the peace and loveliness of the scene swept over and through me. Those two poor women who had vanished in the house, both the one who never sat out till July and the other who suffered from neuralgia, became unaccountably persons to be pitied, to be sympathized with, to be excused; yes—even to be loved, if only for a few moments at a time, when one was in an especially exalted state.

I turned to the man at my side, but he was not looking at me. His eyes, soft brown gentle eyes, were fixed on the farthest blue of the distant horizon. The tired lines in his face were melting away into a firmer curve of cheek and chin. There was patience and strength about the slightly womanish mouth. I kept my eyes on him, but only for a moment, then turned away quickly.

At last I broke the silence by saying:

"How you must love it."

"It's very beautiful," he said quietly. "I hope you will come up here often—if you care for it."

"And your sisters? They must love it, too!"

The lines began to tighten in his face on the instant. His smile was pleasant and frank, but—his moment had gone. So had mine, my wonderful moment, when from the beauty around us I had drank and quenched the selfish little fires that had been burning in my selfish little soul.

Then I spoke again: "Your sisters are not looking well." I heard myself saying it and wondered what was to follow.

"Not—" He paused, bereft of speech. No doubt he had deemed me tolerably well-bred till then.

"No," I said firmly. "Your sister Eva suffers from neuralgia, she tells me. Now, I don't believe at all in being pessimistic; but if that should go further and become neuritis, and that in turn—oh, of course it won't, but there's nothing like taking things in time."

I had to pause. I wondered more and more what I was going to blurt out next.

"Eva hasn't been very well this winter," he conceded; "but I never heard that neuralgia developed—"

"Maybe not—but you can't tell." I added this darkly. "I am certain she would be better, much better off, in a dry climate. If she could get to one of those dry, high places, South or North—"

There was a sudden jerk of the long, thin hand that had lain on the porch-rail in my view.

"Of course, they're apt to be expensive; but a simple out-of-door life would put new blood into her. And your elder sister! Well, of course, Mr. Markham, I am a newcomer here, and I must seem very rude; but perhaps, because I am a newcomer, I can see more plainly than some who have lived among you longer. Then, too, perhaps others wouldn't like to intrude. But I must say this, I consider it most desirable for your sisters to get away from this place, lovely as it is. If they were my sisters—"

I had to stop. A sudden wild desire to laugh, to scream at the idea of the Misses Smalley ever being even in the slightest degree related to me, almost overcame me. Then the thought, never far from me, of my sister, my darling Daphne; Daphne in a dry, piney land; in time—in time!

I glanced up at the man beside me. Surely, surely there was time for him. And I said, with neither desire for

laughter nor tears, but just hoping, praying my foolish words would be let do some good:

"You see, I had a sister once—"

"Did she have—"

His eyes were on me, curious, searching. It was as though his very soul was reaching for the truth my lips were clothing in such masquerading speech.

I interrupted.

"Not neuralgia — nor rheumatism, but a combination of troubles that—that we know now the dry, soft air of some of those Southern, or even Northern, places would have cured. That's why I said that so—so bluntly—about your sisters."

"Do you believe it?"

The strange voice surely didn't belong to Carrington Markham; but there was no one else near. Yes, those hoarse words had come from him. Now I faltered.

"Believe what?"

"That I should go? That I should make my sisters go?"

"I should go. I should make my sisters go. They will be much better for it."

My words sounded weak to my ears, but they evidently seemed all right to him.

His face worked. He tried to control his voice. "You have spoken right into the questions that have haunted me for weeks. I have asked"—his mouth quivered—"asked my heavenly Father for an answer. I believe it has come."

Then, indeed, I was afraid. It could not be that I, weak, selfish, critical, boldly daring, had answered the question he had asked in anguish of soul. It could not be! Such an answer must come from wise lips, from a God-chosen messenger of comfort, of wisdom.

But he was speaking:

"You said my sisters—but it—it means me. You were thinking of them, talking of them; but I thought—and then I knew it was my answer."

He straightened himself, threw out his pitifully narrow chest, and swept his long arm out in a graceful, powerful gesture.

"I have a right to my life, to a man's life, and to prolong that life as long as God gives me knowledge to do it. I will not throw it away. I will not! I shall go, and my sisters shall go with me."

He smiled down upon me.

"Of course, you don't know in the least what I'm talking about," he laughed softly. "I must sound to you like a maniac. But"—he grasped my hands in his and held them with an unconscious strength that sent the rings into my fingers—"I can only say that I thank you. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you."

He let my hands fall, and the blood crept back into my fingers, making them ache. I saw his sisters peering at us from one of the windows. I knew they were wondering what this strange scene meant.

I was glad to be put in mind of them. "Sisters" had been my cue, and I remembered it.

"I am sure, if you can manage it, it will do them loads of good," I insisted. "Don't think you acted like a maniac, for it doesn't in the least matter whether I understand it all or not; I do awfully queer things myself sometimes. I'd take them soon, if I were you."

He escorted me to the main road, and I trudged home in the afterglow, feeling all mixed up. Fragments of what I'd said and what he'd said floated incoherently through my mind, and over it all rang a clear, high note, "In time, in time." It sounded like a promise.

IV.

At last I reached my little white gate. My handmaiden was on the watch for me. She met me at the gate.

"You have been crying," she said. She is privileged.

"The wind has made my nose red," I replied.

The faithful one sniffed disbelievingly and led me to my room.

"Get into this, and I'll bring you your tea." She held up the very wrapper I had slipped into on the day the Smalley sisters had called. How little did I know that day that I should be an answer to their brother's heaven-flung cry for wisdom.

Truly, no matter how weak and silly or selfish we are, God sometimes has need of us.

I sat down to brood over it; but the maid interrupted me.

"Here's your tea," she said; "and it's a wonder the little cakes aren't stone cold. I expected you an hour ago. The egg-woman has just telephoned that the man that brings her orders from Bidwell's has just run down the hill to tell her that he and his sisters have suddenly decided to leave at once for somewhere—I didn't catch the name of the town they intend to locate at."

"All right."

"I don't see what concern that is of ours; but since she got her new telephone, she's using it every fifteen minutes, and I s'pose she had to say something."

"I suppose so."

"She said you'd understand."

"All right."

"Well," she eyed me doubtfully, "do you?" She edged to the door.

"I'm not sure that I do; but never mind."

"I sha'n't telephone her back, shall I? She said there wasn't any answer."

"Oh, yes," I cried. "There's always an answer."

But she had closed the door.

THE CRESCENT SCAR.

BY MORRISON GRAY.

A SHORT STORY.

LANGDON closed the door very quietly behind him, and stood still. He hardly knew what he had expected to find in his rooms; only it seemed that, after what had happened, there ought to have been something to remind him of it. Yet there was nothing. The air of luxury and refinement that was dainty, without ceasing to be masculine, was present everywhere in the suite.

Langdon was a strong man; and, here in his apartment, his tastes had been gratified to the full. His eyes went about the walls, with their hangings of oriental tapestry, which were striking without being gorgeous; over the few good pictures, well placed; over the athletic trophies, standing where they attracted attention without seeming to bid for it; over the heavy and simple furniture, the low bookcases, the rich rugs on the gleaming floor.

All was as he had left it. The surroundings greeted him as an old friend; yet Langdon had been prepared for an aspect of hostility, for some nameless alteration in the expression of these inanimate things—a silent accusation which, as he opened the door, should swiftly meet him like a blow in the face. He came into exactly the place that, six hours ago, he had left.

He returned an outcast, a criminal, if the thing should be brought home to him. He did not believe, however, that it could be traced. The few moments of panic-terror that directly followed the deed had passed, and he was perfectly calm, with his wits about him, every contingency provided for—his alibi, should one be necessary, established. There was not a flaw anywhere, and the friendly atmosphere of his rooms surrounded him protectingly with an assurance of safety that seemed absolute.

Going to a low cabinet, Langdon filled a glass with liqueur, and held it up. His hand was steady as a rock. He stepped to the mirror over the mantel, and looked at the reflection that it offered him.

He saw a thoughtful face, with broad, intellectual forehead; a straight, rather long nose; a firm, expressive mouth, and a manly chin. The eyes were handsome, of the dark brown that so often accompanies faces of this type, but they were neither soft nor deep. One could not fathom them; the glance slipped over their surface without penetrating. Langdon was satisfied with what he saw.

He turned from the mirror, selected a pipe from his rack, and sat down for the comfort of a smoke. An hour afterward he went to bed, and fell directly asleep.

He did not know how long he had slept, but he found himself sitting upright in bed, looking before him into pitch darkness. He was calm as ever; only a thought had entered his brain as he lay unconscious which had not been there while he was awake. It was an important point.

He believed that the tracing of the crime to him was impossible; yet, in order to make the thing absolutely safe, suspicion should be directed to some other person. No one would suppose that Morgan had killed himself by a blow on the temple.

What a peculiar shape the wound was —that crescent! Langdon recalled it vividly. It was the niblick which had done that. He had often thought that a golf-club would make a terrible weapon; but how terrible he had never realized until he had swung the pliant shaft with its heavy head at arm's length, with hate behind the blow. By this time, perhaps, they had found the body, in the thicket near the sixth tee. Some one must be fixed upon as guilty. How could it be done? Reflecting quietly on this, Langdon once more fell asleep, and wakened only when his man brought in the hot water in the morning.

It was ten o'clock before the extras appeared with the announcement of the mysterious murder of Hamilton Morgan. Langdon unfolded his paper as he walked leisurely down the street, faultlessly dressed, and scanned the columns for a hint or item tending to throw suspicion on some one as the possible criminal; but there was nothing to arouse even so much as a conjecture.

Langdon had certainly been clever. The article stated the bare facts contained in the medical examiner's report, and concluded a brief sketch of the murdered man's career with these words: "Miss Beatrice Morgan, the deceased's sister, is understood to be engaged to Henry Drysdale, the well-known landscape artist of this city."

So this was his rival, then—Drysdale. Drysdale, the dreamer, the nervous, the sentimental—the ladies' man! Great as an artist, undeniably so; but, for Beatrice Morgan, he was as far as possible from being a suitable mate. Langdon had suspected some other in the background, when, yesterday, Morgan had warned him not to press his attentions on his sister, along with that threat, at last, of exposure, the threat which had angered him to the fatal blow. Morgan could not expose him now.

Drysdale the favored one! That was too much. Langdon walked deliberately down the street, speaking pleasantly to a friend here and there, stopping to exchange comments of surprise and horror over the tragedy, meanwhile revolving in his mind the possibility of implicating Drysdale in the crime, with the double object of diverting suspicion from himself, and revenging himself for his disappointment.

An exhibition of old paintings in a shop-window attracted his attention, and, with the interest of a connoisseur, he stopped to look at them. One in particular caught his eye. The canvas was almost black with age, the grouping was crude, but one of the figures showed a hand and arm of singularly graceful drawing. As he tried to conjecture what the subject might be, two men coming up behind him began to discuss the picture.

"Two angels and a monk, evidently," said one. "But what is the point of it?"

"St. Francis receiving the stigmata," replied the other. "You know the story? The holy man spent his entire time in meditation upon the wounds of Christ and the endeavor to realize His sufferings, until at last, through the concentration of his mind upon that one thing, he received upon his hands and feet, and in his side veritable physical scars, as of the wounds of nails and spear."

"Grotesque enough," laughed the other. "One of those medieval fables that nobody, of course, believes."

"On the contrary," replied his friend seriously, "cases have been known. Medical men will tell you of them. Plenty of instances there are where a mother's terror or mental worry over a particular thing has produced in her child physical characteristics to correspond. It is the influence, not yet thoroughly understood, of mind over matter, a perfectly simple affair. Why should we not accept the

possibility of one's mind producing similar effects upon his own body? Given a delicate, sensitive organization—the artistic, imaginative temperament—with intense mental concentration, voluntary or involuntary, and there is no reason why it could not easily happen."

II.

THE speakers passed on. Langdon had been listening at first with mild interest, then with fixed attention. Dimly, there sketched itself on the background of his brains a plan. He left the window and walked on a block or two to where the studio buildings could be seen across the avenue. He would have liked more time to think; but whatever he did, he must, for his own sake, do quickly.

He entered the building where Drysdale's apartments were located, and the elevator took him up swiftly. He hardly expected to find the artist in; and, as he waited several moments after ringing, there seized him again that terror which he felt as Morgan went down under the savage blow of the niblick. It surged up and overwhelmed him, his knees knocked together; but the moment passed. When, to his relief, Drysdale's door opened and the servant said he was at home, Langdon was once more his imperturbable self.

The artist, however, was in a state of great excitement. He was a tall, dark man, whose hands were in constant motion, and who paced about the room with a restlessness that irritated Langdon as he lounged in a low chair with his hat and stick across his knees.

"I can't endure this, Langdon; it's fearful. Hamilton Morgan found clubbed to death, and thrown into the bushes like a dog! It is certain that they will discover who did it. It's the work of a fiend."

Langdon regarded the excited man with a look of cold dislike, which the other did not notice as he raved up and down the studio.

"The worst of it is, my name is dragged into it. It's not fair to me; it's not fair to Miss Morgan. There never was anything between us; she refused me. It's made out of whole cloth." Drysdale became speechless with emotion.

Langdon put his hat and stick on the floor, and sat erect. Verily, the Fates were helping him in this thing. His last scruple vanished. There had been up to this time, in the dim recesses of his utterly selfish and cruel nature, a faint shadow of regret for Beatrice Morgan in her relation to his plan; but, since Drysdale was nothing to her, even that shadow disappeared.

Hamilton Morgan's objection to him, then, had been on his own account, not because he preferred Drysdale for his sister's suitor. His anger against the dead man rose again; he was glad he had killed him; and, since he had done it, and suspicion might possibly be directed toward him, he would follow up now, determinedly and relentlessly, the plan that had suggested itself to him as he looked at the old picture of St. Francis and listened to the conversation of the two strangers.

In a distracted and aimless way, Drysdale was moving about the studio, picking up sketches and throwing them down again, his gaze abstracted and unseeing, his mind filled with that aspect of the tragedy which involved his own name in the baseless newspaper paragraph. Langdon watched him, revolving the details of what he was about to do.

It was without doubt a horrible thing; but it was so tragically and artistically perfect that he had no doubt of its success. "Given a delicate, sensitive organization—an artistic, imaginative temperament—with intense mental concentration, *voluntary or involuntary*, and there is no reason why it could not happen." He remembered the words perfectly. Well, here was the temperament, here was the organization, in Henry Drysdale, already possessed by the thought of the crime, a veritable instrument to be played on by one who understood it. He, Langdon, understood how to play on it.

The artist began again his distracted lamentation. "I tell you, Langdon, it is horrible, to happen like that, to Hamilton Morgan, who had no enemies in all the world. And to happen in that place, of all places — such a beautiful spot! Surroundings of a tragedy ought to correspond; but, in that smiling, lovely place—" He turned suddenly to a canvas standing on an easel.

"Look at it. I had chosen that very landscape for my next salon picture. I had put my best work into it; but I can't go on with it now. I should find myself wanting to put into it—*that,* lying there with that strange, crescent-shaped wound on the temple. I saw it this morning early when they brought it down; I can't forget it." Drysdale rubbed his brow violently. "I was on the links studying the light yesterday afternoon; I wasn't feeling well, and I turned back by the hill bunker. There were two men in the distance, but they were too far away for recognition; one of them might have been Morgan."

Drysdale stopped as though he had been shot. He stared at Langdon with a strange expression. "Langdon, I never gave it a thought until this minute. One of those men *must* have been Morgan; and the other was the murderer, following, looking for his chance, until, up there by the sixth tee, he found it."

The artist sank into a chair, pale as a sheet. Instinctively, Langdon hastened for a glass of water. "Never mind," gasped the other man; "I'll be all right in a minute; I often have these attacks. This one isn't a circumstance to what they are sometimes. I'll go about the studio for minutes without having an idea of what I'm doing; and, when I do come to myself, I can't remember in the least anything that's happened. I had one of these turns yesterday while I was on the links. It was after I had started back from the hill where I had seen those two men in the distance. I was out of myself for a long time, perhaps an hour. I remember looking at my watch before I started back, and it was a few minutes after four; the next thing I knew, I was running for the trolley, which leaves the corner at a quarter of five."

Langdon had been studying the artist with unfathomable eyes. "Drysdale," he said slowly and impressively, "listen to me. You must not breathe a word to another living soul of what you have just said to me. You do not realize how serious it is for you—for all of us." Drysdale stared in bewilderment.

"I speak as a friend, remember," continued Langdon. "I want to do my best to keep you out of a tight place. Think of what you have just been saying. You were on the links yesterday at just the time when Morgan must have been killed; you had one of those peculiar attacks, involving complete loss of memory, which lasted, according to your computation, for something like an hour. What could you have been doing meanwhile?" The speaker's voice was very grave and troubled.

"I want you to think, and to think hard. Recall everything you can about the afternoon, and try to piece it all together, so that we can account for every minute. It's terribly important; it's a matter of life and death."

The other man still stared in amazement. His face was a study as he struggled with his thoughts, trying to arrange them in orderly sequence. Finally, Langdon's meaning dawned on him, and he sprang to his feet with a cry of horror.

"Steady, steady," said the other's calm voice. "All right, old man; I only want to help you get the thing straight, so that we'll be sure. I'm sorry you saw Morgan; it's frayed your nerves into fiddle-strings." He glanced covertly at the other's convulsed face. "That strange, crescent-shaped wound—it was awful!"

Drysdale looked at him suddenly. "Why," he exclaimed, "did you see it?"

Langdon pulled himself together; he had had a narrow escape. "No, no," he answered quickly; "it was in the papers; I only read of it. But *you* saw it; it must have been a horrible sight." The artist sank back in his seat and covered his face.

Langdon was fairly well satisfied with his morning's work. He took his hat and stick, and turned toward the door. "Remember, Drysdale," he warned, with his hand on the knob, "this is between you and me; we'll keep your secret."

III.

He descended in the elevator to the street, and went to his club, where he lunched with a serene mind. He had decidedly been clever, and he had been much more than clever; for he felt that, with a touch, he could set in motion the machinery which should direct suspicion against Drysdale, who had so unexpectedly cooperated with him toward his own downfall.

Morgan's funeral followed two days

after, the coroner's inquest having resulted in a verdict of murder at the hands of a person or persons unknown. Langdon, from his seat at one side of the church, saw Drysdale among the congregation; and as the casket was borne in from the porch and down the aisle, the artist fixed his gaze on it in unmistakable horror. He gripped the pew in front of him with trembling hands, and stared at the noncommittal broadcloth, then looked furtively about him, his face relaxing as he saw all eyes directed elsewhere. He lifted his head with an expression of courage; and, as he did so, he caught Langdon's level gaze. For a long moment it held him spellbound, motionless; then, as the memory of the interview in the studio came back to him, he bowed his forehead on the rail before him. The other's eyes never left him. They seemed to beat on him with a weight that forced him lower and lower, until he fairly groveled beneath it. Langdon's doubts disappeared. He had *believed* before that he could do it; now he *knew;* and, with an appropriate air of reverence and sorrow, he turned his attention to the service.

The next day, Langdon prepared to follow up the initial steps of the plan that he had so relentlessly conceived. He felt that his own safety was not yet assured, perfect though he considered his defense to be; and he had no intention of taking chances. He called at Drysdale's rooms, and found the artist in a pitiable state. Haggard and unkempt, he stood, palette in hand, and stared at his visitor. A cold panic of inward terror seized Langdon, as it had twice before. Had he trusted too much to his own strength of will to overpower this delicate organization? Might not its very delicacy thwart him, as the slightest touch will derange the perfect adjustment of a scientific instrument? He summoned all his strong personality, and fixed his eyes compellingly on the artist's, as he took his feverish hand. He must not bungle now. Drysdale shuddered at his touch, and broke at once into complaints and lamentations. As he listened, Langdon was reassured, realizing how far the ravages of apprehension had gone in the imaginative nature. Drysdale was evidently in extreme terror.

He was trying to recall what had happened during that period of unconsciousness on the links the day of Morgan's death; yet he dreaded to remember, lest he should find himself a criminal. Sooner or later, he would remember; and Langdon was determined that the character of that recollection should be what he chose. He would stamp in that blank space in the record an image to suit himself; then he would superadd, as a stroke of genius, the physical evidence that should make the whole thing hellishly complete.

"I noticed you at the funeral," he remarked as he took his seat. "You're not looking well, Drysdale," he added abruptly.

The artist gave a start, and made an evident and pitiful effort for self-control.

"Never mind," continued Langdon pitilessly; "I don't wonder at it. Any man would be the same in your situation. I don't see how you stand it as well as you do. It's made me feel terribly, myself. But we must manage to stick it out somehow. Now, Drysdale, listen to me." Langdon leaned impressively forward, his gaze fixed on the other's pallid face. "Are you trying—trying hard—to remember what you did that afternoon you were on the links, the day that Morgan was killed?" He shuddered cleverly as he spoke.

"I hope you realize how very much depends on it. You see, you are known to have been there that day. The trolley men would recall you hurrying down to catch the car at a quarter of five. It would look pretty black for you if the thing ever came into court, the strongest kind of circumstantial evidence. A man is found dead near the sixth tee. The greenskeeper saw him start over the course at half past three. Under ordinary circumstances, it takes a pair about an hour to get that far; a single player would require somewhat less time, say three-quarters of an hour.

"That brings it to four o'clock, or a quarter past, when Morgan must have reached that point. Between that time and five o'clock, you were somewhere on the course, coming down in a great hurry, and probably acting strangely, just in time to catch the car. You would testify that you had no recollection of what you

were doing that hour. How convincing do you think that statement would be to a jury? Why, it wouldn't hold water for one moment. Even your friends wouldn't believe it, if the whole case were stated just as I have stated it to you. Drysdale," said Langdon slowly, as he watched the dawning horror on the other man's face and turned the knife in the wound, "do you think even *I* could believe it? I would give anything in the world to do it; but I shouldn't be able."

Langdon stopped suddenly. The die was cast now, and he must go on as he had begun; but as he spoke the words that contained such a hideous, veiled accusation against a man whom he knew to be innocent, he felt seizing him once more that inward icy terror which he knew, and which seemed to him this time the token of the extreme hazard of the plan to which he had irrevocably committed himself. His powerful will, however, controlled the rising panic; and he went on, the artist standing rigidly before him with stony horror in his eyes.

"You must see how important it is for you to remember—for your own sake, I mean. You can't go on all your life not knowing; you would go crazy over it. You can't go on suspecting that perhaps you killed that man who was your friend. You'd have before your eyes, day and night, that horrible crescent-shaped wound which, perhaps, you made as you struck him down."

Langdon shuddered again, genuinely this time; for, as he spoke, he saw before his own eyes that wound—not as it appeared afterward, but as it looked when it sprang out on Morgan's temple under the heavy niblick.

"For your own sake, you must remember. This thing is not coming before the public, you know; it's going to be one of those unexplained mysteries of which criminal records are full; but, for your own peace of mind and, as I said, perhaps for your own sanity even, you must remember."

The struggle in Drysdale's face was awful to watch. The tortured mind was trying to retrace the steps that it had taken, and found itself hopelessly blocked by the failure of memory to register during that one fateful hour. Langdon's heart leaped as he watched; for he was sure from what he saw that the effort to recollect truly would be in vain, and that his own will would compel imagination, in the garb of memory, to fill the blank. Thus far, he was successful; to-morrow, he would take the next step; and, with a light heart, he left the studio.

IV.

At his favorite table in the bay window of the club, with his evening paper before him, and sipping his cocktail, Langdon became conscious of something strange. There was absolutely no reason for apprehension; yet that icy chill laid hold once more on his vitals; and a dull headache, a thing to which, with his perfect physical condition, Langdon was a stranger, accompanied it. Irritably, he passed his hand over his forehead.

"For Heaven's sake," he said to himself, "am I borrowing nerves from Drysdale?" He remembered that he had breakfasted very lightly. "Pshaw, it's only hunger!"

The waiter brought his soup, poured his claret, switched on the electric light, and noiselessly withdrew. How cozy it was here at the little table! Langdon scoffed at his misgivings, and turned the wine-glass delicately in his strong, white fingers, admiring the color and the reflection from it on the snowy table-cloth. It was like a crimson crescent. His eyes fixed themselves on it with a fascinated stare. How horribly it resembled the wound on Hamilton Morgan's temple, made by the savage blow!

It more than resembled it; it was the exact reproduction of it. A cold sweat poured over Langdon. He interposed his newspaper hastily between the wine-glass and the light. The crimson crescent remained. With an oath, he seized the glass and gulped down its contents. The crescent was before him still, on the white linen. He covered his eyes with his hands; and on a background of inky darkness he still saw the fatal sign. Desperately he turned toward the window and looked out on the busy street, forcing his mind to notice every trivial detail in the effort to banish the hallucination. At last, his iron will regained its ascendency, and he was himself again.

The incident warned him, however, that he must hold himself firmly in hand

while he forced the matter with Drysdale to an early conclusion. It would not do to wait too long. A vague apprehension hovered in the background of his mind. What were these forces with which he was dabbling? Did he understand their nature well enough to be sure that the course on which he had embarked would prove successful?

The great unmapped region of psychological possibilities, lying close at hand, behind the curtain interposed by human ignorance and inexperience — dared he venture into it? He held one corner of that curtain already lifted in his hand; he could not retreat; he must lift it still farther and pass in.

There he was to find safety; and, as for Drysdale, he cared not how many furies seized him. He smiled to himself as, later, he turned up the cool avenue toward home. His business on the morrow should be the vigorous pushing of the plan to its end. Reaching his rooms, he undressed and was soon asleep.

The sun was already high when Langdon awoke. He had tossed and turned without waking, indeed, but with a dim sense of oppression that left him unrefreshed. He sat on the edge of the bed and tried to remember what he was going to do. His head ached with a determined throbbing that wearied him. It was only with an effort that he pulled himself together and went mechanically through the process of dressing.

He recalled now the purpose to which he had intended to devote the day; but his spirit seemed unequal to the task. He was more than depressed. For the first time in his life, Langdon was thoroughly afraid. He had had momentary fits of cold panic, which had passed as quickly as they came; but this was different. This was a collapse of the entire system, which made the man cower and feel shrunken. He stepped into his sitting-room, and the aspect of the room seemed changed.

He recalled how he had entered it the afternoon of Morgan's death, expecting to find it altered; and with what surprise he found it friendly, comforting, safe. Now he looked around it for comfort, and it was denied him. Not a thing was out of place; yet the atmosphere was alien, accusing, hostile.

Langdon shook like a man with a mortal chill in his bones. His headache, also, persisted; and it was with a grim look on his face that he took his way to Drysdale's rooms and rang for admittance.

The artist was already at work, standing before the great canvas on his easel, the landscape near the sixth tee. He turned as Langdon entered, and nodded without speaking; then resumed his work, like a man absorbed in thought.

Langdon was puzzled. He had looked for the old fever of nervous excitement which had possessed Drysdale at previous times. His own mind had prepared itself to deal with that condition; and for a moment he was at a loss how to proceed. The connection seemed broken between his personality and that of the artist, which had receded with unsuspected independence into regions of its own. Drysdale no longer feared him—he could see that.

The reason for the fact he could not guess; namely, that Drysdale had resolved to surrender himself to the authorities as the murderer of Hamilton Morgan, and that an officer was already on the way to the studio in response to his message.

Seated on the divan, he was conscious of a return of that apprehension which he had felt at the club the previous afternoon—the dread lest he be dealing with forces too great for him—their workings unknown; their power, perhaps, destined to turn suddenly and rend him, who had thought to control it. Something else he felt, as well; it was in the room—intangible, invisible, impossible to locate—like the impression which his own apartments had made upon him that morning. He tried in vain to define it. He seemed to be drained of his self-confidence through some secret channel. The dull, throbbing pain in his head prevented mental concentration.

On a sudden he became aware that Drysdale had turned from his easel and was looking curiously at him. Langdon roused himself to a sense of danger. The artist faced him with a frowning brow and a head resolutely raised. He did not speak; but his gaze searched his visitor's —penetratingly, ruthlessly—as though it would drag his inmost thoughts from him.

Langdon hardened his heart and sum-

moned all the energies of his soul to the defense against this strange scrutiny, until, at last, Drysdale turned away with an ejaculation of impatient anger. He threw down his brushes and stood looking from the studio-window, deep in thought.

Neither man spoke. Langdon did not dare. He felt abject; and his marrow seemed shriveled within him, like the kernel of an old nut. What if his plan should fail? He put the thought resolutely from him; it should not fail. He would storm the thing through. This sentimental artist, this weakling, should not balk him now. His anger rose, and with it his courage. He stood up and addressed Drysdale in a firm, commanding tone.

V.

"I WANT you to be a man, Drysdale," said he. "We have fussed and fiddled with this thing long enough. It's essential that we put an end to it. It's wearing on me, this secret of yours. I can't promise to keep it on indefinitely in this way. Not that I'll say anything," he added sharply, to stop the protest which seemed to rise to Drysdale's lips; "only after this I must depend on you to fight your own battle." He summoned all his will-power and gazed steadily into the eyes which the other man fixed upon him.

"Try to remember where you were and what you did that afternoon when Morgan was found dead on the links by the sixth tee. You *must* remember. For your own sake, Drysdale—*think.*"

The artist was erect now, with parted lips, standing like a statue. Silence endured for what appeared an eternity; then it was broken as he said softly: "I *shall* remember—I *am* remembering. It's coming back to me. Wait!" He raised a warning, compelling hand.

"The hill-bunker — the sixth tee — that's where the view is for my picture. I didn't go over there; I only looked in that direction."

He was like a man in a dream; his voice the passionless voice of the somnambulist.

"Players on the links—I saw them in the distance." He was following the thread of memory, going back a little way in order to make sure.

"The ill feeling that came over me—I turned away, meaning to take a short cut through the brush."

The words were dragging painfully now, and the speaker's face was drawn.

"I sat down on a log in the bushes to rest, a little way in from the path. I must have lost consciousness, for I came to in a sort of waking dream; and saw things through a haze. A man came creeping through the thicket; he didn't see me. I watched him idly. He had some kind of stick in his hand. It was a golf club." Drysdale's face lighted up. His eyes were far away.

His voice suddenly swelled triumphant. "I remember," he cried, as he turned radiantly upon his visitor. Langdon was watching him with a deathly face. "Why, Langdon! Langdon!" His jaw dropped, and his tone sank to a whisper of horror. "Langdon—it was *you!*"

Langdon cast a dull glance unseeingly about the room. Ruin had come, then. He was a lost man. And yet for the moment he was conscious of no fear, but only a huge disgust with himself. He had made a colossal bungle of the thing. His iron will, riveted with all the intensity of his powerful nature upon its object, had proved, after all, weaker than that of Drysdale, whom he had despised.

The momentary feeling passed, however, and the true Langdon asserted himself — alert, vigorous, collected — bent, above all, upon his own personal comfort and safety. He smiled contemptuously upon Drysdale, whose expression of amazed horror and incredulity had given way to one of hate—qualities for which he had never given the artist credit.

As he turned toward the door, the other sprang to the telephone, but paused. The click of the elevator was heard, checked at the landing. Brisk footfalls resounded along the corridor. The door of the studio was pulled from Langdon's grasp, and he confronted a sturdy individual in plain clothes with the cold, gray eyes of a master of men. These eyes went like a flash of light over the two occupants of the studio.

Langdon felt his moral fabric crumble away like rotten wood; but his dash to escape was not quicker than the iron grip which pinned him helpless, and, like magic, the handcuffs were on his wrists.

MISS JACK OF TIBET.*

BY CHARLES WILLING BEALE,

Author of "The Onyx Ear," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

THE Ganders, a London club of globe-trotters, commission Peter O. Gallomeade to go in search of his friend and fellow member, Gwynne Roedler, who has disappeared while on an expedition to Assam. Peter is summoned by a queer old German to a remote part of London, where he discovers that the German is no other than Roedler in disguise. Roedler is going into Tibet to rescue from a Buddhist monastery two American girls, Misses Jacqueminot and Jill Varney, daughters of missionaries, deceased. Roedler is in love with Jacqueminot, but is actuated also by gratitude because, through the aid of the girls, he made his escape from the monastery. Roedler empowers Peter to lay a bet of a thousand pounds at the club that Roedler will reappear the next club-day, October 15.

He proposes to reach the lamasery of Tad-sa-fuh in his air-ship, following the course of the mysterious lost river, Tsanpo. He describes the region as a world of enchantment and a labyrinth of horrors, where he has discovered something that impels him to return there.

Toko, a worthless servant, steals their yaks and abandons them without guide or means of transportation. Gwynne leaves Gallomeade alone on the road for a time, where he is suddenly accosted by a snake-charmer, who, after several occult performances and the appearance of the Ya-ti ghost, gives Gallomeade a parchment with a symbol inscribed upon it.

Gwynne returns, and they push on with a vague hope of being on the right trail. Days pass without sight of a human abode. Just as they are going into camp one night, Roedler, with a wild cry, calls Gallomeade's attention to one of the heights on which they see a monastery. They are entertained here by the lamas and monks, and discover two Englishmen—Fenchurch and Chumley—who have arrived before them. The Englishmen also are bound for Tad-sa-fuh in quest of the Varney girls.

Roedler and Gallomeade steal away in the air-ship and, after considerable travel, alight in a plain, where they find a herd of yaks dead, but in a state of perfect preservation. They discover that they have been voyaging in a circle, and alight near a cave, where Gallomeade overhears Fenchurch and Chumley plot to divide the spoils when they have secured the Varney girls. Gallomeade and Roedler finally approach the lamasery in the air-ship.

CHAPTER XXI.

WITCHCRAFT AND GUILE.

"IT'S a good sign that we've lived to get here!"

"It'll be a better one if we live to get away," returned Gwynne, beaming down upon the glade-like opening—low brush and stunted timber on one hand, titanic rocks on the other.

I glanced up at the unscalable heights, which I knew we must conquer to reach the lamasery. Dismal—to one who hoped to see the world again. Stranded in the most forbidding corner of the earth, in an enemy's country—well—we had thought the girls worth coming for, and should not growl now.

By the time we had made fast and unloaded the sun was up. The next move was to get breakfast, and although there was plenty of dry wood, Gwynne thought it best to use the spirit-lamp again, lest the rising smoke be seen. There were matters to be considered before announcing our arrival.

On finishing our morning pipe, Gwynne said:

"I've got the clothes for the sorcerer in that pack there. Luckily these fellows don't have to talk much; and, more lucky still, the lamas are as gullible as pea-

*This story began in THE CAVALIER for September.

cocks. We must look wise, and full of mystery. I know enough of the lingo to make myself understood, and you needn't speak at all, except to me, of course. They'll find our foreign talk deeply impressive. You won't have to do a thing. Leave all to me."

I asked if he had a suitable garb for the neophyte.

"Everything is arranged. I thought it all out before leaving London. We won't move on them till after the midday meal. It'll be better every way."

We drew the luggage back as far as possible under the rocks. There was good shelter for everything. Even the air-ship was out of sight.

Presently Gwynne said:

"I'm going to leave you for a while. I've got to study out our parts."

He picked up a large pack and left. It was an hour before he came back.

"Don't faint when you clap your eyes on me. I'm coming, but I'll guarantee you'd never guess who it was."

I recognized the voice, but should never have known the man. A Tibetan devil is quite different from the orthodox one, and a Tibetan sorcerer is a breed more wonderful still. I wasn't frightened, because I knew who it was, but such a transformation was never achieved by mortal man before. A wig of plaited hair fell to his shoulders, and covered his forehead. A decoration of goatskin and yak-tail, among which beads of varying size and brilliancy were curiously intertwined, was set squarely upon the top of his head like a crown.

From his shoulders hung a robe of skins dyed in many colors, resplendent with more beads, besprinkled with bones, feathers, and other insignia. The color of his skin was changed to swarthy brown, and picked out in red and yellow, with half-moons and other heathenish tokens of the trade, while his eyes were completely changed in their appearance by their low-hanging brows, dark smudges and pencilings. Huge earrings of brass, cabalistic carvings in bone and metal, completed the make-up.

"If you are a tenth part of the devil you look like, I should kill you on the spot," I observed. "Let us hope the lamas of Tad-sa-fuh won't be moved with similar impulse."

"Never fear, dear boy; they'll respect me the more for my strange tongue and splendid apparel. But, mark you, don't stare if you hear me speak in broken English. These fellows are quick. They must not recognize my voice. The disguise must be complete."

I was satisfied that I should never have known him, and was sure the lamas would not. The character had been studied out in every detail. It was perfect, unless some slip of the Bod-skad should betray him. Gwynne assured me that this was impossible. He would speak but little—the less the better—while his foreign words with me would strengthen the situation.

It was now my turn to be decked out in the garb of ge-tsul or cheda—student in the black art—and I was relieved to find that my costume was far less magnificent. Indeed, it was little different from that of an ordinary priest. Although I must speak but little, there were certain words it would be necessary for me to know, and in these Gwynne coached me. I must make occasional allusions to the *Padma tangyid*, a well-known collection of legends about *Padma Sambhava*. This would enhance their respect and allay any possible suspicion of our identity. By the time Gwynne was through with me I felt like a Tibetan, and when we were ready to move upon the lamasery we were strangers to each other.

An hour must still pass before beginning our perilous climb to the footwalls of the monastery, and I improved it by gaining all the information possible. I had never quite understood how it happened that both men and women lived in the strange retreat we were approaching, having always supposed that the lamaseries were occupied by men solely.

Roedler explained that there were several of these establishments where recluses of both sexes were admitted. One of the most famous of these was the Samding Lamasery, in the Yam-dok, where both monks and nuns are to be found, and which is presided over by a woman. There are others, of which Tad-sa-fuh is among the largest. It stands upon a barren rock, presenting a sheer fall of two hundred and fifty feet upon one of its sides.

When all was ready, we set out to find the path that led to the summit. It was a full hour before we discovered it. Gwynne struggled on ahead, while I followed close behind him. By the middle of the afternoon we were skirting the great *mani* walls that marked the approach to the lamasery. Here and there were slabs bearing the inscription, "*Om mani Padme Hum*," and at intervals were odd paintings of devils and supernatural beings.

Gwynne went up to the portal, and pounded upon the iron panel with a club he had brought for the purpose. The summons was answered by half a dozen dirty priests, who regarded us with disfavor until Gwynne raised his hands and said something, when the look gave way to one of fear.

We were admitted with some ceremony, and found ourselves in a vast hall, something like the one at Gimra, only larger, more mysterious and forbidding in its aspect. We went at once to the *k'ang* in the center and warmed ourselves, for the chill of the evening was already keen. A couple of steps led to the top of the furnace, which we mounted, throwing ourselves upon a woolly rug we found there.

In a few minutes we were surrounded by a horde of the most unsavory creatures, and their numbers were constantly increasing. Had it not been for our own extraordinary appearance and Gwynne's rôle of sorcerer, the situation would have been even more uncomfortable than it was.

Presently, Roedler got up and made some impressive gestures, rattling the beads and bones upon his breast as he did so. From time to time he uttered strange words—groaned, and significantly shook the charms that dangled from his neck and shoulders. He said little, but that little was effective, as evidenced by the faces around us. Then, stopping, he turned to me and said in a strained voice and broken English:

"I've told them we were sent here by the Tashi Lama, the next highest dignitary of faith to the Dalai Lama, and that our mission is to reveal the powers of the *Unknown*. That we shall probably remain for a week, more or less, and that our stay must be blessed with every good of the lamasery, and that any failure to do this will be visited upon the inmates. I haven't spoken of the girls yet—that will come later, after we have more fully established ourselves and our authority. Don't be nervous. I can strike these fellows dumb with terror at a minute's notice. Leave everything to me, look wise, and, where a fitting opportunity occurs, make some vague allusion to the *Padma tangyid*—but don't force it. Say anything to me you choose—not a word will be understood."

I thanked him, and drew the mantle of authority more closely about me. I could see that the foreign speech between us was not without its effect, and that Gwynne's lofty and disdainful manner, his mission and supernatural calling, were impressive.

When tea was served, we drew ourselves aloof and partook of it alone. Gwynne bestowed an occasional minatory glance upon those who stood round us. Even this simple act of hospitality was not allowed to pass without the imprint of superiority. Everywhere in Tibet the tea is wretchedly poor, though it is drunk universally. It is churned with butter and served with tsamba—barley flour—similar to the suttoo of India. The butter is invariably rancid, as it is not esteemed so highly if fresh.

The ceremony of tea being over, we were conducted to our sleeping-chamber, which we found fairly comfortable for a country which is ignorant of the European meaning of the word comfort.

The monk who conducted us to this apartment was old and savage. He wore the usual charms — talismans — human bones and other gruesome objects common to his tribe, and regarded us with disfavor. The man's face and head were thickly covered with hair, while his eyes were bloodshot and lowering.

The heavy door, which looked as if it might have dated back to the Middle Ages, swung on its massive hinges, and we were alone.

Gwynne looked at me. I looked at Gwynne. Four hands clasped each other.

"We've done it!" I gasped with emotion.

"We've got here—yes, there's no doubt about that," Gwynne returned. "We haven't got away yet!"

"No; but it surely can't be as hard as coming."

Gwynne wasn't so sure about it. He said he hoped not, and trusted we should find the girls, though the fact that we had reached Tad-sa-fuh did not give him perfect assurance even of this.

"There's a lot to do," he said—"a lot to be thought out, before we can get away with them."

He went on to explain that it would doubtless be difficult for a sorcerer to obtain an interview with the girls. That in these lamaseries, where both monks and nuns were admitted, the strictest espionage was maintained over the women, and that travelers were never allowed to see them.

"But of course it can and must be managed," he added, "as I don't propose to go back without the Varney girls."

"How did you manage it before?" I asked.

"By stratagem!"

"Why won't stratagem work again?"

"It will, of course; but we must vary it."

The lamas stand in great dread of witchcraft. Scarcely one but would obey or give up his most precious belonging on demand of a veritable man of magic. Their good-will is sought—their prayers regarded as peculiarly efficacious—while their maledictions strike terror to the soul of the most saintly abbot. Gwynne knew this from his previous visit, and had prepared himself for the part. Always an adept at mechanical and sleight-of-hand tricks, he had perfect confidence in his ability to deceive the lamas.

His only doubt was whether he could induce them to give up such a valued possession as the Varney girls.

"I shall give an entertainment tonight, and shall call for the American girls. If they refuse to bring them out, I shall show them a few things more."

"Where's your stratagem?" I asked.

"In the etheric current. I can make it interesting for them—if not, there'll be war in the lamasery!"

When we had bathed and changed our clothing — the outer covering was, of course, the same—we went again to the grand hall, which was warmer and more comfortable.

Here the lamas again gathered around us, but a gesture from Gwynne held them at proper distance. We lighted our pipes, which in shape and size were quite foreign to our hosts, who looked upon us with growing wonder. Gwynne's manner—the way he had of blowing blue and yellow smoke through his nostrils by means of tinted talc — was astonishing to all present, and begot universal respect.

The lamas were clamorous for further exhibition of his power, but Gwynne waved them aside with a look of scorn that brought them to their senses. Once he stood up and knocked down with the flat of his hand a young cheda who was too insistent. There was a momentary hush as he did this, and a friend of the young man came forward to resent it, but a second blow induced this pugilist to reconsider the situation, and order was established.

When we were done smoking, Gwynne got up—by this time the hall was crowded—and lifted his hands aloft. His long hair, strangely painted face, and marvelous trappings made a wonderful picture, and for a moment I could hardly persuade myself that I knew him.

Little by little he let himself out, as it were, in lieu of speech or formal program. There was much to interest, amaze, and bewilder these simple-minded people, and to call forth exclamations of wonder from every side. Demands for greater marvels met with rebuffs, as it seemed to me, and promises to astound them before long. Tricks of chemistry—tricks of mechanism—tricks of illusion—to say nothing of legerdemain — followed one another in rapid succession, till the jaws of the lamas dropped and their eyes bulged with wonder.

In the cool of the evening came the butter-lamps, the greater fire, and an increasing congregation of as savage brutes as ever bore the name of human. The situation was not agreeable, but I looked unto Gwynne. Suddenly he began to dance in a slow, measured movement, motioning all to give him room.

Moving his hands gently above his head, the dry bones rattled, the beads gave forth a strange metallic resonance, while his long hair waved in rhythmic harmony with the swaying of the head.

The lights, the fire, the faces, made a

wild, barbaric, fantastic scene. Then, without further warning, he began to sing—beating time with feet and hands. But what was it? What was the fellow saying? It was my turn to stare and listen. I could scarcely believe my ears.

O dear, what can the matter be?
O dear, what can the matter be?
O dear, what can the matter be?
Johnny has gone to the fair!
He promised to bring me a bunch of blue ribbon,
He promised to bring me a bunch of blue ribbon,
He promised to bring me a bunch of blue ribbon,
To tie up my bonny brown hair.

Up and down the great hall between the huge stone pillars, pushing aside those who encroached upon him, gesticulating wildly with arms, head, legs, and body—shouting louder and louder as he proceeded—beating himself upon the chest and face, tearing at his neck, hair, and forehead until they seemed to be covered with a bloody gore, it was garish, grotesque, gruesome. My eyes became fixed in a kind of hypnotic stare upon the man.

Then came a series of tricks, wonderful enough for a prestidigitator, and doubtless regarded as manifestations of supernatural power by the audience. Gwynne thrust the blade of a knife through his jaws. He called upon me to hammer a spike into the top of his head with a mallet—to cut off his fingers, one at a time, which he swallowed with evident relish. Most of the tricks I had seen before; some had been recently brought upon the Strand. One by one the fingers assumed their normal position upon the bloody stump, and the nail was extracted from the skull without serious result. The knife was drawn from the jaw and the wound healed without plaster. But the most wonderful part was the credulity of the monks. They were positively frightened.

Then Gwynne began uttering a few very marked and staccato words in the Bod-skad, which I couldn't understand. I was about to lose interest when I distinctly heard the word Varney. Every head was lifted—no one but showed his interest. I watched for the result. There was a general shaking of heads. They had not understood. He said something more—he was becoming vehement. Still there was a general shaking of the heads—a want of knowledge.

Gwynne grew violent. He stamped upon the rugged pavement. He shouted. The wondering lamas drew closer about him, but he waved them off. They retreated—pressed forward again—were again rebuffed. Here and there were threatening brows that made me shudder. Should the power of the magician fail there would be no telling what might happen.

It was clear that they resented allusion to the Varneys and I saw that any attempt to kidnap the girls would be attended with danger. But Gwynne was persistent. He not only repeated their name again, but I could see that he was demanding their presence in the hall.

Then half a dozen of the vilest-looking creatures came pressing toward him from the rear. In their hands were long-bladed knives which they failed to hide, and I called to Gwynne to be careful, telling him what I saw. He looked quickly around, and pointed at the treacherous brutes. It was effective and the murderous hounds slunk into the crowd and escaped.

Again Roedler demanded that the Varney girls be brought to him, and again the spirit of the lama was in evidence. I cautioned him, and then came the master-stroke of the evening.

Little puffs of smoke were seen to escape from the sorcerer's mouth and clothing. These increased in frequency and volume, yet through some strange power of attraction clung closely to his person. The smoke grew denser, forming a column—an impenetrable shield about the body through which none might look. It spread and hung about the hall in a cloud which made men sneeze and rub their eyes. When the atmosphere had cleared again, the sorcerer was gone.

CHAPTER XXII.

A WEIRD ADVENTURE.

THE truth was that Gwynne had put on the life-preserver and risen above their heads unobserved. Fortunately, the vapor which he had allowed

to escape from the apparatus was not deadly. It was more in the nature of a fog, impervious to the vision, though easily breathed. The result was fetching; so much so that on the following morning, when he again appeared among the lamas, many prostrated themselves before him.

Gwynne decided to drop the question of the girls for the moment while pursuing more crafty methods for their discovery. The buildings were enormous, containing hundreds of inmates, and there were constant arrivals and departures. There were ge-tsuls, chedas and members of the fraternity unknown to others. There were priests whom other priests had never seen, owing to the strict system of circulation maintained throughout the hierarchy. Some of the larger lamaseries have a population of several thousands, while the scum is forever rising, falling with the current that is set against it.

Doubtless the older members of both houses knew the girls, but those who knew them best were most unwilling to let them go. As Gwynne had frequently told me, they were regarded as mascots for the institution, owing to the peculiar circumstances of their adoption. They were foreign—they were unique in the history of the church.

Gwynne announced to the abbot that the Tashi-Lama had ordered his sojourn at the lamasery for a week, or until the powers of heaven could be satisfied. The old fellow expressed his approval of anything the Tashi commanded and promised to make things agreeable for us. From his previous acquaintance Gwynne knew him to be one of the grandest scoundrels alive. It was through his order that he had been imprisoned and sentenced to death.

It was astonishing how the tide of supremacy had turned against him—still more astonishing how averse he was to produce the girls under the circumstances. Gwynne had thought it unwise to represent himself as the bearer of a direct message from the Tashi for the transfer of the women. There were complications. Words must be spoken, not written, but thus far the spoken word had failed of the desired result, so far as the Varneys were concerned. Even as matters stood, there were serious problems to be considered.

"What if the fellow has already despatched a messenger to the Tashi?" Gwynne said to me. "What if he return without confirmation of what I've already said? It behooves us to strike while the iron is hot, and while we can, or the chains may be welded against us.

I saw that he was anxious, and so was I; for if such a messenger had been actually sent to the Grand Lama, or the Tashi either, and got back before we had captured the girls, we should doubtless be imprisoned—possibly executed.

"The curiosity of these young chedas ought to be turned to account," Gwynne mused one day when we were alone. "I'm sorry I knocked that little fellow over."

"You had to do it to preserve the peace."

"True, but they might be useful to us. Boys of that age are more venturesome. Besides, they're not bound so hard and fast to the institution."

"What do you propose?" I asked him.

"Nothing. At least I haven't thought it out. I was wondering if we could win them over—get them to help us to ferret out the girls. When I was their age nothing stirred me like the prospect of adventure. Like as not they have some grievance, been imposed on by their elders. Peter, I was a fool to do it."

"Maybe a little present in the way of bakshish."

"Rot! There's no use for money in such a place as this. We must study it out. The more I think of it the more certain I am that they can help us. Boys are not so liable to suspicion in prowling around the women's quarters; besides, they're sure to know a thing or two. Did you notice the look of astonishment in their faces while I was singing?"

"Doubtless the foreign lingo surprised them."

"That's it. They're more curious—more quick to notice. Probably neither of them had ever heard a foreign word before. Peter, we must win those boys over at any cost."

It seemed a good idea to me, but how to go about it? Gwynne had insulted them both. Would they ever get over it? From time to time we saw the boys dur-

ing the days that followed—sometimes at meals; sometimes about the great halls or in the grounds around the buildings.

They were always interested when they saw Gwynne coming, and more than once I was quite sure that one of them wished to speak to him, but something in his bizarre and grotesque appearance frighthim, or seemed to. Gwynne made various advances, but the memory of what he had done in the miracle line was too profound to be set lightly aside.

One day he softened their shyness by a little act of kindness.

Za-look, the elder, had fallen upon the stones of the courtyard while bearing a message for one of the priests. He lay for a moment as if stunned. Gwynne, who in the full glory of the sorcerer's make-up happened to be passing at that minute, helped the little fellow to his feet. Although for a moment he seemed frightened by the proximity of the magician, there was a look of gratitude as he walked away.

"We must use every opportunity," Gwynne said, "to make friends of them. When they're no longer afraid of us they'll help us."

It seemed reasonable enough, and I did all I could to encourage the scheme. Of course, we dared not drop our disguise, but Gwynne and I smiled the ghastliest smiles upon the ge-tsuls whenever opportunity offered. We afterward concluded that this method was a serious hindrance to our success, and we resolved to let our ill-favored countenances work out their unaided salvation.

One day I found Gwynne in quiet converse with the boys. Had he really overcome their fear of him? Long they talked while I watched from afar. Indeed, I dared not intrude lest I dissipate the confidence that seemed to have sprung up between them. At last they separated, and Gwynne and I drew near to one another.

"I alluded to the fact that I was a magician," Gwynne said, "and that I could get them anything they wanted, and that I would do it, too, if they'd tell me where to find the Varney girls; and what do you think they said?"

"That they would help you, of course."

"On the contrary, they declared there were no such people in the lamasery."

I stared. Gwynne added:

"But I've no doubt they knew more than they would tell. Indeed, I'm sure of it, and as we gain their confidence they'll come over to our side and help us find them. Kuh, the smaller of the boys, laughed a little as Za-look denied all knowledge of the girls. Indeed, I'm by no means discouraged.

"But if the abbot's messenger to the Tashi should return?"

"It's a mere supposition that he's sent one."

"True, but—"

"There's no use going to sea till we get to the breakers. Let's wait till something happens."

Despite his advice I could see that he was worried. Indeed, there was every reason for it. Our airship was stranded; and until we could get a fresh supply of the motive power, which in some way it seems the Varney girls had access to, it would be impossible for us to get away.

From time to time Gwynne gave exhibitions of magic, to hold down the populace. Fortunately he was not obliged to repeat himself, luckily having laid in a goodly supply of tricks before leaving London. The lamas were always delighted, astounded, and the fame of the sorcerer grew. Yet at the end of the week, the Varney girls remained undiscovered. The greater the power of the magician, the more loath were the lamas to place their greatest treasure in his hands. Even threats from the self-styled vice-regent of the Tashi proved unavailing, and things were looking squally. One day he came to me with considerable agitation and said:

"Be on hand to-night. I'm going to show you something. Join me about eleven o'clock at the lower end of the *mani* wall. We mustn't go together; we'd be seen.

I asked him to explain, but he wouldn't.

"You won't be noticed in the dark," he added after a minute, "but I shall be on the lookout for you. Keep your head down and your eyes open. I'll tell you what to do when we get there."

That was all he would say. An hour later he came to me again.

"I thought perhaps it would be just as well for you to change your clothes.

You'll find a complete lama's outfit in the sleeping-room. Put it on, and if anyone speaks to you, say *Ta-di-ta-di*, as if vexed, and hurry forward."

At eleven o'clock sharp, I was standing at the lower end of the wall, waiting for Gwynne. I didn't have to wait long as the glint and click of the magician's uncanny hangings were soon observed in the distance. In another minute Roedler was beside me.

"Stand in the shadow of the wall," he said. "In twenty minutes, more or less, a dozen or fifteen gray-headed pundits will pass this way—don't let them see you. These fellows are supposed to possess all the wisdom in Tibet, and it is highly important that you are unobserved by them. They will carry small butter lamps and go in single file—when the last one has passed, follow the procession."

"But what are you going to do?" I inquired.

"Leave you here alone—trust you won't miss me, and above all that you'll keep a grip on your nerve. Peter—"

"Well!"

"You must mind what I say. You must follow the crowd—go where the lamas go—and—above all, no matter what you see, don't get panicky. When you hear me whistle—you know the tune—it'll all be right."

I promised to do the best I could, and Gwynne left me alone.

It had all been so sudden, I couldn't think of the things I wanted to ask until after he was gone. As usual it was cold at that hour, so I pulled up the sheepskin collar of my jacket and waited for the pundits. Gwynne was a mystery. What was he driving at and why had he left me? I hadn't the dimmest idea. But there was nothing to be done now but wait, watch and listen.

Then came the tramp of feet, the weird chant of voices, and I shrank into smaller compass. Through the great arch and down the rugged foot-way came the pundits. The sound was ominous. These men so foreign, so vaguely human, what was their view of life and its purpose? Yet they carried lamps and walked—but whither?

When the last flickering flame had passed, I followed. There was no danger of being heard, for my feet were swathed in sheepskin, and, with ordinary caution, I could not be discovered in the darkness.

Down the rough and winding way they led, until I saw by the reflected lights of the lamps and the narrowing strip of sky that we were threading a tortuous cleft in the rocks with downward trend. Deeper, steeper, crookeder. then one by one the lamps went out I stumbled on in amazement to a sharp angle in the passage, when again I saw them—twisting—turning—creeping slowly on, past huge projections, but always downward.

Then there rose upon the air the rushing sound which we had heard before, and I stopped to listen. It was nearer now and clearer — a humming, boiling rumbling that swept up from the depths. I dared not wait, for the faint illumination ahead was all there was to guide my feet. The glint on the rock—the shifting shadows below.

And now the stars were no longer visible. The mountain had closed above and we were following the narrow alley of a cave, but downward still. Then the roof came closer, the walls nearer together. I dared not linger, for the turnings and twistings of the passage were frequent and unexpected. Meanwhile, the roaring continued to grow louder as I advanced. But there was no time to speculate upon its cause. It was all I could do to keep the lights in sight.

Suddenly this tortuous gut came to an end, and I seemed to be in a vast cavern whose walls and roof were mythical. Down the center streamed the torch-lit procession like some illuminated serpent wriggling its way through the night. On and ever downward crept this beaded monster into the depths, while the thunder roared and echoed with deafening detonation from the rocks above, below, and about us. It was impossible to see whence it came, but I was sure it was some gigantic subterranean waterfall.

A cold wind swept past my face. I seemed to be nearing something awful, terrible. The darkness was growing round me, for I could not keep up with the procession, and in the vastness of the cavern the lamps no longer guided my steps.

The side walls being farther off, there

were no great natural mirrors to reflect the lantern's glow—no friendly rocks to hide me—and I dared not venture near.

Then a dull-red light was thrown from the cavern's roof, filling the air with a lurid glimmer. Another instant a myriad sparks were dancing, leaping, racing before my eyes, while the roar of thunder filled my ears. Bewildered by this sudden change, I stopped.

A great river flowed upon the right, while just beyond, from the bottomless pit into which it plunged, there rose a cloud of illuminated spray to the cavern's roof. Spellbound, I watched this wondrous sight. Then, as the smoking torches crept away, the sparks faded from the air, the cloud vanished, and I was alone in the dark with the roar of the cataract.

I dared not move. I had seen enough to realize the danger of doing so. I knew it was the Tsanpo, and that a false step would plunge me into its gruesome depths and through caverns which for hundreds of miles were unexplored. Indeed, for more than two hundred miles the river is lost. Many efforts have been made by exploring parties to solve the mystery of its course, but without avail. From the lamasery of Tad-sa-fuh nothing is known of the Tsanpo until it appears again as the Brahmaputra.

As I had no light, there was nothing to do but wait quietly where I was for Gwynne or the pundits' return. I felt sure that Roedler would look me up before long, so I sat down upon a rock-ledge and listened. I soon realized that it would be useless to hope to hear his whistle while the roar of the torrent filled my ears, and therefore groped my way cautiously in the opposite direction until sheltered by a projecting wall, where the reverberation was less intense. Here I sat down again. The loneliness, the darkness and rushing of the river, worked upon my nerves so that I found it difficult to heed Gwynne's injunction.

The sound of the chanting voices had died away in the distance, and no glimmer of light remained. I strained my eyes. There was nothing but thick blackness on every side, and the deafening roar of the torrent. From time to time strange voices seemed to rise out of the depths, but when I directed my attention to them the sound ceased. But always it came from the same place—from out the black caldron where the river lost itself.

Absurd, that human beings could have found their way to the bottom of such a well, and live. I concluded that it must be an echo that came up from the depths and went wandering through the galleries—the gurgling or regurgitation of the water imprisoned in some rock-cleft beneath. Yet, every time it happened I was startled, for I could not quite make it fit the theory. Once, twice, it took on the likeness of music—or I thought so.

I could not even guess the hour of night, knowing as I did that the passage of time is misleading under such conditions; but it seemed interminable. I stood up—walked about in a circle, and sat down again, trying to find comfort in Gwynne's caution to keep my nerve; but it was hard work.

It seemed as if I had been there for hours when the voices in the pit grew louder and unmistakably human. Startled, I sprang to my feet. The sound of music, spasmodic and desultory mutterings, had changed to that of panic—of human panic—frightful, terrifying, deadly. Nearer and still nearer came the shrieks, the groans, the yells of despair.

Human squeals came out of the blackness — yet more like beasts than men. They were running toward me, these unknown dwellers of the cave The tramp of many feet proclaimed it.

Then came a shimmering light, followed by the torches of the pundits. They were returning pell-mell at break-neck speed. I recognized them in an instant. What had happened?

Stepping behind the rock projection, I watched the onrush of the lamas. It was a human stampede in which human terror outstripped that of the beast. Few of the torches were alight, many having gone out in the wind. Cries of alarm, moans of despair, filled the cavern passages like the breath of a thousand madmen poured into some gigantic trumpet. On—on they sped. It was impossible to guess the cause; but I was thankful when they had passed, leaving me once more alone in the darkness.

Then out of the gloom a nebulous column of light from the same direction. Slowly it was advancing as it followed the flying forms of the pundits. I did

not wonder if this apparition had been the cause of the stampede, for an instant later I recognized the Ya-ti ghost. The same flowing robes of white, the same inscrutable face, the same majestic height and form, the identical *thing* that had brought back the yaks from the valley.

Shrinking still farther behind my screen, I watched this marvelous object as it came toward me. For the second time I felt that indescribable horror of the supernatural, and sympathized with the lamas. The very fact of their alarm filled me with greater terror and made me wish that I had joined them. But it was too late now. I must stand my ground, and survive or perish. I must take whatever came.

But the fantom moved more slowly and less directly. Swaying gently from side to side—turning, bending, stooping as if in search of some hiding lama—I had ample time to nurse my fears and realize that I should probably be discovered in another minute.

I crouched still lower to the wall, but at that instant the spirit of the Ya-ti whistled, and I knew the tune.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WEALTH BEYOND DREAMS.

GWYNNE dropped the disguise of the Ya-ti and appeared once more in the garb of the magician.

"I dared not tell you before," he said, "the Ya-ti ghost is an old myth of the Himalayas, and when a fellow undertakes to materialize it for the well-being of visitors, there must be no chance of discovery. It's worked marvels of luck so far, and will doubtless work more."

"And do you mean to say it was you who brought back the yaks?"

"Yes, I was the ghost, and I've often wondered you didn't guess it, but since you didn't, I thought it best to keep mum. I shouldn't have let you into the secret now—but—well, it's probably the last time I shall have to play the part."

My surprise was genuine—I had never guessed it. The false face, the robe, the lamp hidden beneath its folds and shining through its diaphanous texture made the deception perfect. It was a minute before I could take it in.

"And the Ya-ti ghost is—"

"A reality in the minds and traditions of the lamas. I studied it up when I was here before, and resolved to impersonate it if necessary. See!"

I saw, and gasped. Why had I never thought of it—even suspected!

"Follow me," he said, after we had rested, "I've something to show you."

By the dim light of his lantern we felt our way over the rough floor of the cavern into its further recesses. Down natural stairways into well-like openings, through low tunnels and crooked alleys—down—down—

"If the lamp should go out!"

"But it won't." He was filled with the light of enthusiasm, but my weaker nerves were troubled, and I said so.

"Bosh! Follow me and never fear. I'm going to show you the stuff that makes the mare go!"

"Money?"

"No—something better."

I was stumbling along behind him and could only hear a part of what he said.

"It's what I told you about—the basic principle of levitation. It's the lifting power in the air-ship—the gases from the combination of radium—and—Alexandrite — and—and—mechanically and chemically—treated—and—"

I tripped over a jagged rock and couldn't hear what followed. Such words as "the magic of the lamas," "radiant matter," "fraud," "deception," "control of the masses," "etheric currents," "electric impact," and "odic force" were some of those I did hear. There were others which I did not understand, still others that failed to impress me. My mind was really more filled with the thought of how we should ever escape if left there in the dark—I knew the oil in the miserable butter lamp could not hold out long.

Then, turning to the right, Gwynne led the way into a chamber which was truly remarkable. The walls were self-luminous, and there was every indication that it had been hewn out of the living rock by the hand of man. Indeed, upon every side were the marks of the crowbar and the pick. Low vaulted, yet spacious enough, semicircular in form, light.

For a moment we stopped to gaze at the shimmering walls around us. Gwynne set his lantern behind a projection, but its light was hardly missed.

"The largest deposit in the world!" he said.

I asked what he intended to do about it.

"What the pundits have been doing for hundreds of years." He was turning over some goatskin gunnies with his foot, already half filled with the product of the mine. "See! those fellows were in the midst of loading, when the dread specter of the Himalayas attacked them. Peter, the mineral embedded in these walls, properly treated, is going to revolutionize the art of flying. Like yeast, there is a germ that grows, that spreads. that takes possession of the whole. It is the life in these myriads of organisms that is to solve the problem of flight, for in their very substance is an energy that neutralizes the power of gravitation. It is a fact I discovered on my last visit."

"You've been here before, then?"

"Yes, with the Varney girls. They knew of it—wondered at the marvels they had witnessed, and asked me to explain them. I did my best to do so. I made various experiments in the dead of night, when the lamas were asleep. I discovered the strange properties of the mineral—formulated a plan of flight. but had not the apparatus or means of obtaining it. It was impossible to escape with the girls with the means at our disposal, so I carried a small sack of the material with me, resolved upon building an air-ship and coming back for them. I had not thought it all out then, but I knew I must be disguised in one way or another if I hoped to get them. I promised to return, and I have kept my word."

"You have kept your word, but they haven't kept theirs."

"They will. The lamasery is so vast, there are so many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of inmates, that they may not know of our arrival. Have patience."

I asked how it was that we had not even accidentally come across either of them. He replied that it was doubtless due to the lamas' fear that they would be stolen, for since they had discovered my effort to do so, they had undoubtedly thrown greater guards around them, forbidding them to appear in the presence of strangers. This, of course, was surmise, but it seemed reasonable.

A minute more, and we were both at work picking this living substance from the walls with the tools which our predecessors had left there. There was something uncanny in the work. The gleam was intermittent, playing, dancing, shimmering. Like the glow of phosphorus, or lightning in embryo, it spread in unformed sheets—creeping from spot to spot—from roof to floor. Fantom-like, it formed weird faces in the irregularities of the rock, lingered for a minute, went out in the blackness, and came again. Never was the wall entirely dark, never entirely light. Always crawling, growing, fading, winking, it was a sight not easily forgotten. When I remembered that this was a subterranean chamber, forever buried from the light of day, in the depths of the Himalayan mountain, I was awed.

Even here the sullen roar of the Tsanpo met our ears, though shut out from sight by impenetrable walls of bed-rock. Whether it was above or below us—to the right or left—I knew not.

Gwynne said it was not far away, and the thunder of the cataract made the ground tremble, the chamber scintillate with greater mystery.

It was not necessary to carry with us vast stores of this charmed mineral, owing to the yeasty properties Gwynne said it possessed under proper treatment. Indeed, the little stock we had brought would have been sufficient had not the laws of its reproduction been violated by the altitude, which had cut short the atmospheric and etheric equilibrium—conditions necessary to the reorganization and revitalization of the parts when exhausted.

It was hard work, the picks were heavy, and much of the best and brightest of the mineral was lodged above the level of our heads.

The pure was separated from the spurious with difficulty. Frequently we stopped to rest and examine the result of our labor. The little piles were growing, but there seemed to be no difference in the illuminated area around us. As

fast as the glinting gems were removed others of equal value appeared beneath them. It was evident that the entire chamber had been hewn from the same material.

In a couple of hours the goatskins were full, and we turned to go. Imagine our dismay when we discovered that the butter lamp was out. So luminous were the walls that we had not noticed it. Gwynne took up the lamp and shook it—the oil was entirely consumed. The dark tunnel through which we had entered glowed dimly for a certain distance, and then disappeared in blackness.

It would have been worse than folly to attempt to grope our way out, as the place was full of pitfalls and honeycombed with innumerable passages. Better die in the weird light that surrounded us than perish in some miserable hole, or be torn to pieces by the cataract. Besides, there was a possibility of rescue if we remained where we were, though, as Gwynne admitted, after the scare of the Ya-ti ghost, it was a slim one.

Naturally, our first thoughts were about food and water. With the rush of the river so near at hand, our thirst began to assert itself, and with the memory that we had brought nothing to eat, we were immediately hungry.

Overwhelmed by the situation, I threw myself upon the ground. As I did so my foot struck something metallic. It proved to be a dinner pail brought there by one of the pundits, and, on stooping to examine it, I found that there were a dozen more. Besides this, there were water-cans and a few slabs of barley-cake. It was a great find, but after all, as I reflected, could only defer the suffering ahead.

Gwynne looked at his watch and wound it.

"Twenty minutes after three," he said. "I hardly expected to be here so long."

He settled himself upon the ground beside me. We each felt that we were looking upon our tomb. There was nothing to be said—nothing to be done. From time to time we walked round our prison.

At nine o'clock we had breakfast. It was because we felt it to be a duty, not because we were hungry. We had no desire to smoke. At one we ate again, and for the same reason. Later, we exercised a little, not because we felt the necessity, but for the preservation of health. At seven, we dined from another of the dinner-cans, and at eight we lay down to sleep. All this time no word was spoken.

The next day we repeated the program, careful as to observation of the hour, and exact in the division of the food. At the end of each meal we drank a little water. The day following, and the day after that, the same system was preserved. The mental pressure was growing apace. Would it end in madness?

At the close of the fourth day, Gwynne bounded to his feet.

"There's a chance!" he cried. "It's in the radium!"

The sound of his voice startled me. In an instant I was standing beside him.

He kicked over some huge Tibetan shovels that lay upon the ground, then seized his pick.

"We'll take a shovelful each—there may be light enough in it to show us the way!"

He was tearing at the wall like a madman, and in an instant I was doing likewise.

The shovels were loaded, the goatskins secured about our bodies, and we crept into the tunnel.

Strange that we had not thought of it before; for, although the illumination was faint, it showed the wall, the floor, and the ragged projections when held against them.

On we crept, losing ourselves from time to time, barely escaping the pitfall of the Tsanpo, examining closely and carefully each step before we took it, and only emerging from the cavern at the close of the fifth day.

It was a blessed sight, and a dazzling one when the fading light of day again confronted us.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ZA-LOOK AND KUH.

WE explained our absence to the lamas on the ground that the Tashi had ordered a survey of the district, and that we had been engaged upon the work. Fortunately, it was sat-

isfactory and no questions were asked, Gwynne displaying certain papers that went for maps of the valley and the greater eminences. The respect for the Tashi was enhanced, while our own position was fortified.

Gwynne was determined to make up to the chedas, and I could see that both Zalook and Kuh took kindly to his advances. He declared it was his only hope of finding the girls, a task which he admitted was more difficult than he anticipated, although he had foreseen the probability of delay on account of the vastness of the lamasery and the chances that the women would be guarded.

Thus far there had been neither discovery nor the prospect of it, and Gwynne was discouraged. It was useless to talk to the abbot. He showed his teeth whenever the subject was broached, and the boys were silent, although Gwynne believed they knew more than they would tell.

I was toiling down the rocky way that led to the air-ship when he overtook me. I could see that he was agitated.

"Peter," he began hastily, "the jig's up! The Varneys have gone off with the Englishmen and left us in the lurch."

"What Englishmen?" I was dumfounded.

"Fenchurch and Chumley. They came while we were away."

"How do you know — at least, what makes you think—"

"Know! The boys told me so."

"But they always said there were no such girls."

"Undoubtedly—but it may have paid them to say so. You must remember they're under the lash of the lamas."

"The liars!"

"Of course they're liars—all Tibetans are liars!"

"Perhaps they're lying about this, too."

"Impossible. They gave me a description with the names. They knew nothing about the men, and couldn't describe what they hadn't seen. No, it all happened a day or two ago, while we were in the cavern. They've outstripped us in the race, and we must make the best of it, which, I confess, doesn't look like much. As for our bet with The Ganders, we may as well count that lost, too."

"How the deuce—"

But I was too furious to go on. The story was incredible. That these strangers should have outwitted us—that our plans, our superior knowledge, and the air-ship should be so lightly set at naught, was more than exasperating—it was humiliating. Then how had they succeeded in finding the girls when we had failed? Had they taken the lamasery by storm, or had the monks been bribed? It was all very mysterious. In fact, so much so, that I doubted it.

"But we know that Fenchurch and Chumley were on their way."

"True, they may have come and gone while we were in the cave, but I doubt if they got the girls. They had no more power than you had, neither had they the knowledge of the people nor the necessary equipment. Depend upon it, it's another of their lies. Perhaps they think it's a good way to get rid of us."

Gwynne was thoughtful. We continued our stroll toward the air-ship.

"Is it possible to get confirmation of the story?" I asked.

"I think not. I hardly dare broach the subject. It may hinder our prospects if it should prove untrue."

The news was so astounding that I don't think either of us quite took it in or believed it. Had the journey failed at last? Had all our efforts been frustrated? Was it possible that a yak was better than an air-ship? Ignorance a more efficient equipment than knowledge?

We had left the goatskin gunnies with their contents in the flier immediately after our escape from the cavern, and were now merely going to see that all was safe. The vessel had never been discovered, secreted as it was among the rocks, and nothing in it had been disturbed. Armed with the power to renew our journey at a moment's notice, we were unable to do so from the fact that we had failed in its object.

I recalled the red light in the window, but could not locate it. The structure was too vast—our relative position to the rocks that supported it altered. At a greater distance we might still have seen it, provided it were yet burning. Suddenly a thought struck me.

"Let's rig up the ship and track back in the night. There's no moon, they will

never discover us; and if the light is still burning we can't fail to see."

Gwynne approved of my suggestion. He was enthusiastic, and wondered why it had not struck him before.

"It will settle the question," he declared. "If the light is out, the girls have gone."

So that night we made ready for a dip into the clouds again. The lamas were sleeping soundly, or were supposed to be, when we slipped quietly through the great arched portal—by the *mani* wall—and onto the rough-hewn path below. Fortunately there were no dogs at Tad-sa-fuh, and our progress was undisturbed. We groped our way by the uncertain light of the stars to the base of the promontory—Gwynne thinking it safer to show no light—thence we stumbled on over rocks, wild stubble and cobblestones, to the air-ship.

Here Gwynne lighted the ubiquitous butter lamp. A thorough examination showed that everything was in order, though time was required to get ready the power. By a little after midnight we were aboard. In ten minutes more we were rising into the air.

More buoyant than ever, we climbed the face of the precipice. Once more the great rock masses of the Himalayas were sinking around us. The joy of it, the power, all came back as if I had never known it before.

"Down with your light there! Down with your light!"

I had been holding the lamp too high, and Gwynne's voice warned me that we were in full view of the lamasery windows. Across the great gulch they were staring out upon us. One pair of sleepless eyes might arouse the brotherhood. I put out the light and stared over the rail. Nothing but the dull mass of those terrible walls and the awful heights of the Himalayas. The stars above, but no ray or glimmer of artificial illuminant. Tad-sa-fuh was asleep.

On we sailed, now farther, now nearer—higher, lower. We approached the huge pile from every point. We looked at it from every angle—somber, forbidding, uncouth—positively gruesome, it stood there. But the red light was not in evidence.

A cry from Gwynne startled me.

"There it is, by Heaven!" he shouted.

In the angle of a bastion, partly hidden by the overhanging masonry, it peeped at us from its hiding-place. It told the story of the girls—it convicted the ge-tsuls of lying. It was enough. But how to get there—how to reach the Varneys—was still an unsolved problem.

"Of course, we could sail directly over to the window; and—and—"

"Frighten them to death!" I put in.

"Of course it wouldn't do. I was only thinking."

Indeed, there was much to think out. Should we make use of our knowledge to convict the boys of lying, and confront them with the fact of the red light? Of course not. To do so would be exposing the girls to the possibility of punishment and weaken our chance of success. We must preserve a stolid front and ignorance of the discovery.

But we could now act with the assurance that we were dealing with a couple of liars. It might do to threaten them. But even this would require caution. Should the lamas once be thoroughly aroused, the consequences would without doubt be fatal to the enterprise. The rôle of firmness, friendship, knowledge upon general principles, seemed the best and surest course.

Having convinced ourselves that the Varney girls were still in the lamasery, we brought the air-ship to the ground again.

Next day Gwynne took the boys for a walk. I agreed not to go, as he said he was to make the effort of his life to win them over, and must be alone. His knowledge of the Bod-skad was not overpowering, he said, and he could think better alone. His crudity of expression and paucity of words wouldn't matter in the rôle of sorcerer; indeed, it might be impressive. He was going in the fullest glory of war-paint and feathers, with the highest decoration of countenance. He would bribe, threaten, punish—anything, but he would have his way. He would get word to the Varney girls, if he had to blow up the lamasery.

He was gone for an hour—possibly two. There was a twinkle in his eye when I caught sight of him struggling up the hill, and I had a vague sort of feeling that he had conquered. The boys

had left him at the *mani* wall. Perhaps this was to escape the notice of the lamas.

"Well, you've done something, no doubt about that," I began.

"Something—yes," he answered very slowly and deliberately; "and we've both got to do something more soon."

"What do you mean?"

"Got a fight on hand."

"With the lamas?"

"No, with the Englishmen."

"I don't understand."

"Listen, and I'll tell you, but let's go to our room first. We can talk better over a pipe."

And so we struggled up over stones and steps, through the courtyard, the great hall, and on still higher to the place we slept in.

Gwynne threw himself upon the skins. I hunched my back up against the wall. When the fumes of tobacco had sufficiently cleared our brains Roedler proceeded:

"The boys lied and told the truth, both. They lied when they told us at first that the girls were not here. They spoke true words when they said the Englishmen had come after them. Of course, there's no proving anything, but, to the best of my knowledge and belief, that's about the way of it."

"How in thunder did the Englishmen get them? And how do you account for the red light?"

"There are two ways to account for the light," he answered. "First, that the girls are still here; second, that they left the light burning behind them, with a good lot of butter in the bowl."

"But what do you believe?"

"That the Englishmen took them."

"Why?"

"Simply because there's more evidence that way than the other. The boys have been fairly frank. They've told me the whole story, giving a full description of Fenchurch and the other chap, fitted the right name to each, and have stuck to it. They admitted that they were afraid to tell before; that one of the chedas was imprisoned and severely beaten for speaking the name of Varney in the presence of a stranger; and—that—well, I don't know that I blame them. I think I should have lied myself under the circumstances."

"But where does the fight come in?"

"Here! And it is this that makes me think the ge-tsuls told the truth the second time. I showed them the air-ship, and explained its wonderful powers. No harm in doing so now, especially when I'm claiming kinship with the devil. They looked, wondered, and admired. Both Za-look and Kuh want to get away from here, but are bound for a term of years to the abbot. They are familiar with the trail which the Englishmen took, and promised to guide me if I would take them with me. We can overtake them in a day—two at most—they declare; and, Peter, if we do, we must fight."

"Of course, but surely Jack and Jill can choose for themselves. I mean, whether they'll go with us or the other fellows."

"If they have a chance, yes; but it's not so sure that they will. In the first place, if I take off the magician's robe the chedas won't know us; in the second place, if I keep it on, the girls won't."

"Do both," I suggested. "Keep on the magic outfit till we overhaul the women, then drop it so that the girls will know you."

"But it can't be done in an instant. This paint won't come off without scrubbing."

"There'll be time enough when we catch sight of them."

There were still difficulties, but Gwynne thought the idea good enough to try. In fact, there seemed nothing else to do. We were ignorant of the trail—a guide was imperative, and the boys offered their services. True, they might betray us, but that couldn't be helped. The appearances were that the offer was genuine.

Neither Gwynne nor I doubted that Fenchurch and Chumley had reached the lamasery during our absence in the cave, but that they had actually carried off the girls was the thing that puzzled us. Especially did this seem improbable, with the red light still in evidence, and the fact that we had been unable to communicate with them. But it was the next step in order. They could not have got far, and if we failed to overhaul them in a reasonable distance we could return to the lamasery. This the boys fully under-

stood, as they also realized the punishment that awaited them should they play us false.

"After all, there's nothing to prevent our coming back," said Gwynne, "or thrashing those young scoundrels soundly if they deceive us, and they fully realize it."

"They'll get a double beating if we carry them back to the lamasery," I observed.

"Yes, and they know that, too."

"What sort of bargain did you make? Where are we to leave them?"

"For the services of guide we are to take them with us all the way to Calcutta, if the air-ship will stand the strain of so many after taking on the Varney girls. If not, we are to leave them at the nearest giachug, with money enough to pursue their journey alone. Six human beings are a trifle heavier load than the vessel was built to carry, but the boys are light, and so are the girls. Of course, if we don't find them, the boys go back to the lamasery along with us. It looks square enough, but who can tell? It's the best we can do."

And so, Za-look and Kuh were taken into our confidence, as we into theirs. Preparations were made to start in pursuit of the Varney girls and their captors a little after midnight of the following day.

(To be concluded.)

A MAN IN THE FAMILY.

BY MAUDE MORRISON HUEY.

A SHORT STORY.

THE Duck's Nest was full of boats that had not yet loosened from winter quarters, though the ice had long since gone out of the river. It seemed a favorite place for boats to tie, a good, hard bank and safe from swells. There was a little green boat tied just around in the Cup, its nose pushed well up into the mud. A man stood on the deck, watching the trailing foot-path that wound up through the weeds to the switch-tracks, a common right of way for all inmates of the Duck's Nest.

The ropes that held the little boat to the brush trailed loosely, but the man did not stoop to tighten them; instead, he plunged his hands deeper into his mud-daubed trousers and spat a great yellow stain into the river. It was a dilapidated boat, tilted rakishly on one corner.

The man stood hunched slouchingly upon one hip, in a careless, slovenly manner. If Bob Mugwater had ever had any pride, he had lost it years ago, before he had ever taken to river life. A river was a poor place to harbor pride. Bob was just a common "shanty-boater."

"Pretty note," he said, shading his eyes from the setting sun. "He'd better be gone all day and done with it. I don't see any sense in his stayin' this length of time." His eyes traversed the winding path through the willows sullenly. "Got anything in the house to eat?" he called over his shoulder impatiently.

He had had but little breakfast, and not much dinner. He had counted on a good supper; but it seemed that even in this he was to be disappointed.

The woman came to the door heavily. The little boat quivered under her tread. She pushed her hair back as she came. It was coarse and heavy, and had broken its last support.

"Don't you see anything of Charlie?" She leaned over the man's shoulder, and scanned the winding foot-trail, too. "I wonder what's happened him? It's time he was moseyin' 'long home."

Her tones were fretful, but spiritless. She turned on the flock of children that tagged after her.

"Now, go right back there, you Serry Isabel! Neav' mind taggin' to me. I got all I want totin' myself. Go back there now, and take that baby outen the wash-bucket!" she commanded, as the sound of splashing water fell on her ear.

She turned to emphasize her remarks with a rousing box, that seemed to make little impression on the small Sarah's dulled consciousness, who dodged behind her mother, but did not retreat.

"If you come out here, your poppy'll pitch you in the river—won't you, poppy? Now, just look at that!" as one small sinner was multiplied by three. "They won't mind a word I say. Do you hear, you Serry Isabel? You go and git that baby outen the wash-bucket, or I'll whack y' good!"

Evidently "whackings" held no terror for Sarah Isabel. Under cover of her small body-guard, she continued to advance. What was the use? The baby always did have to be taken from something, and his dress couldn't get any wetter.

She, also, was interested in the coming of Charlie. She sat down on the toe of her father's boot and watched the path.

"Hope it'll be bacon, or taters, or pie—don't you, poppy? Taters is good." She looked up at him to assure herself of no immediate danger of being "pitched in," then settled herself securely, to figure out the probable good current with Charlie's arrival. "Once 'twas puddin'," she said reflectively—"puddin' with black things in it. Wish't 'twould be puddin' ag'in, don't you, poppy? Mebbe it'll be jest bread and bones."

She voiced the fear with solemn countenance. All the little Mugwaters looked serious.

They had ranged themselves in a row on the handbreadth of deck, despite the mother's expostulations, and began to put in their plea for a share of what was coming. Sarah Isabel drew a graphic picture of all the good things she could think of, from the "puddin' with black things in it" to a wonderful cake she had seen once, but had never tasted. They toed their little ragged shoes together calculatively, and nodded their approval. The baby, left to himself, climbed out of the forbidden wash-bucket, and came, showing his wet front to his mother.

"There! Jest look at him!" commanded the mother. "Didn't I tell you, Serry? I've a notion to whack you good." She contemplated the peaceable row, and seemed to weaken. Peace was such a rare thing among the little Mugwaters. The baby lifted two little sticky hands to her, and she took him up. His soggy, unstrung shoes dangled down over her apron.

"He's his mommy's honey," she said, spatting the place where a dragging stocking left the flesh plump and round and rosy with exposure; then she gave him a rousing smack and let him down to run and find a place for himself among the others. "I don't see what can be a keepin' him," she said, resuming the topic of interest. "I done told him to hustle hisself."

"Got anything in the house t' eat?" repeated the father stoically. Just then a small blue-overalled figure hove into sight among the weeds.

"He's comin'! There he is!" shouted the grimy row in tumultuous chorus, as they stuck out their tongues expectantly.

Charlie advanced with the slow unconcern of one who feels fully the importance of his advent. He swung the mysterious basket on his arm carelessly. No one could tell from his attitude whether it was heavy or light. The keen Sarah Isabel sought his face for signs, and her countenance fell. The dull, apathetic look did not promise much in the way of goodies. "Nothin' but bread and bones," was her final mental conclusion.

He came in, straight through their midst, ignoring all queries as to "What y' got?" and "Let me see!" He went slowly—and set the basket on the table.

Then such a scurrying. Mrs. Mugwater cuffed the little ones right and left as she undid the cover. Bob Mugwater slapped his son on the back commendingly. There was cake—they pounced upon the crumbling pieces eagerly. "Oh, mommy, see! Oh, poppy, sugar on top!" There was bread and meat and potatoes, some of all that had been left from the rich man's table.

It had long since ceased to hurt Bob Mugwater's pride to accept the "left-overs" of those more fortunate than himself. He selected a goodly portion of what the basket contained, and sat

down with a look of perfect satisfaction on his face.

"Have any kick comin'?" he questioned between mouthfuls. "This is easier'n workin' a heap, you bet — ain't it, Charlie? Give me over some o' that cake. Let me see how I'd like high livin'! All-right stuff, ain't it?" His lips smacked over the toothsome morsels. "This suits me, all right. Easier'n workin', you bet!"

When he had finished he stretched himself full length on the one bunk the boat afforded, and was soon snoring, with no thought of the morrow.

II.

It was an easy lift. Bob Mugwater saw nothing amiss with it. Its wild freedom certainly beat the restrictions of city life, its leisure was much more to be chosen than the hardships and monotony of the country. Shiftlessness and lawlessness had gradually shoved him farther and farther from civilization, till the river—that restless spirit of water that knew no master, that obeyed no law—sluggish, turbulent at will, recognized his own and gathered him in. He drifted along with it idly, pillaging his fill, as did the river itself, from the helpless banks at his disposal. To-day he shifted aimlessly along in the mud, picking up mussels; to-morrow he drifted. Both were pleasant.

No man could ask him for rent. Any place was his where he chose to tie his boat. The river brought wood to his door already split; he had only to gather it in. Were not his children as fat and happy as those who were reared by the sweat of their father's brows? They needed but few clothes. Along the river there were no regulations regarding dress.

Now, this last—good, cold victuals—solved the final problem for Bob Mugwater. Now he could settle down and take things easy. Why, there was food enough went to waste to feed many families like his! Why should he not ask for it? Why, indeed?

Long ago an undefined, unrecognized answer to this fluttered somewhere in his consciousness, before drink had dulled his sensibilities and deadened his conscience; and, too, when his family had been much smaller—one, two little ones, say. It had seemed then that there was a reason why he should not—though just what, he could not remember. He had put the idea from him long since as impractical. With seven little Mugwaters the question was too stupendous to even think of solving.

Bob Mugwater found little to complain of in this mode of existence. He had tried all kinds of life. Once he had worked a year, handling steel bars in Pittsburgh. That was his boast—that he had worked a year without losing a day. It seemed a marvelous story. Very few would believe it of Bob Mugwater.

It had broken his health down. It was that that had driven him to drink. Before that he had been a powerful man, performing marvelous feats in strength. He hadn't put in a steady week since—and that was his boast, too.

Charlie was getting big enough now to take some of the responsibility. It seemed to Bob Mugwater that the ways of life grew simpler every day.

Charlie was twelve years old, and he wasn't anybody's fool. He knew how to sound a ripe melon without making much fuss. He knew how to find right roasting ears without leaving telltale husks through the corn-field. He was cute to cover his tracks.

The father was proud of his teachings. He could sit inside now of a frosty night and trust his son. His son could finger out the biggest potatoes in the hill and not leave any damaging evidence. He never forgot to skulk wide of the little green boat on his tour home, and when he was caught he knew enough to "bunch" the stuff. No one had ever caught him with stolen goods yet. Surely, the man's life had not been all wrong in rearing such a wise son.

He was an adept at the cold-food racket. He had a way of making the little "stories" ring true. He came home with full baskets; and sometimes the ladies put in a good frock or a toy for the "poor children, whose father was dead, and whose mother lay ill of a fever."

Even the mother herself ceased her mild protestations, and began to see the advantages of such living. She saw to it that the boy had a suitable outfit, an outfit to appeal to the public sympathy—a pair of ragged overalls, a shirt several

sizes too large and turned over at the wrists, an old slouch-hat that had been his father's—these were things to bring forth pity, and likewise bread and meat. She had not lived so long with Bob Mugwater for nothing.

One by one the small Mugwaters crept up beside their father and slept. When the bed was full, the rest got cast-off garments and laid down upon the floor. The mother, crowding them along, made room for herself. They were all slumbering peacefully when Charlie finished the last of the crumbs, and slung the empty basket under the bench, away from trampling feet. It had been a good meal, and he had been hungry, like the rest. He sought a corner and stretched himself out as his father had done; but sleep did not come so easily.

One, two, three stars traveled slowly across the handbreadth of window-glass, and he watched them. Then the moon came, like a great golden ball hung to the casing. She, too, was moving—slowly, slowly. He watched her. Now she was in the middle, now she was across—going — gone. The world was moving. He was moving. Without his will, he was moving—going—going. He did not know where he was going, nor why. A certain feeling of rebellion was born. It lay warm beside him through the night, and grew to strength. He did not recognize it.

Down by the floor was a hole, where dampness had rotted the walls. He could see through. Below lay the water—dark, mysterious — save where the moon had spilled its silver. It was moving—on—on—borne by some irresistible power. It seemed to call to him as it went. In its grasp were tiny things, moving, too—bits of bark, leaves, floating sticks. Now and then they scraped the "gunnels." It seemed as though he ought to take them out of the river's power—he had but to reach his hand down—but he lay there and let them be hurled from sight, one after another. One with knotty corners caught on the boat's prow and clung fast. The water tugged persistently, its froth whitened the black object; but the stick's hold did not waver. It was resisting. If it only had power enough to keep on; but it would not have. By and by—

He stopped watching the struggle. He felt sure what the end would be. What was he but a stick in the river! White clouds drifted over the pane. They crossed the moon, and a black shadow fell upon the boy. The stick must go. It could not resist the river.

III.

THE next morning he took his basket, as usual, and went out through the weeds. Birds were waking up in the cottonwood-trees. Dew glistened like jewels on blade and vine. The air quivered with waking things stirring to life; but he went with his head down, and neither saw nor heard.

The thing that had been born in the night stirred within him feebly, and made him feel uneasy. It was incrusted under all the habits of his lifetime; but it was like the spark in gray ashes. It began to glow. There had been little to nourish it; but it still lived. It set up a faint cry. He sat down on a rock and kicked into the weeds with his feet.

Where was he going? Why? What was he but the scum of the earth—the river's refuse, sullying clean banks! Shame, a new thing possessed him—disgust, mortification, and then rebellion. Behind him he could hear the river rushing, rending the banks. He could hear the little boat pounding its nose up into the mud.

He thought of the stick, clinging to its prow. He had noticed in the morning that it was gone. A stick could not resist the river. It must obey the power that was stronger than itself. There was the path his feet had worn through the weeds—his feet going— Why? What for? Where? The questions came fast. He was going because he must—must.

He stood up squarely in the path, and it seemed that something fell from him. He looked away to the hills, to the sun that was rising with a splendor it had never had before. It seemed to him to be bounding up into the heavens—buoyant, radiant. He shook himself as if he would be wholly free. A great hawk in its fearless flight called back to him as it went. His hands at his sides twitched with new strength. Somehow, this thing that he was about to do had become impossible to him—an act of weakness and of shame.

He sat down again to picture himself,

moving through the town, loathsome, a creature to be shunned — shuffling, with bowed head. No—no! He straightened his shoulders, and the thing in his veins beat the sluggish blood to white froth. He was not going! He thought of the woman who would throw her waste scraps into his basket; saw her standing on her steps in neat gown, a white collar at her throat, her hair coiled up, smooth and shining; her apron tucked back securely, lest it blow against his unclean clothes—the look of contempt in her face that overran the pity. Some savory suggestion of what she would put into the basket came to him; but he did not get up. He sat kicking his sodden boots desperately into the weeds.

But he was going. Yes, of course he was going. He fancied he could hear the wondering voices of the children as they conjectured the possible contents of his home-load. He saw his mother's fat, satisfied face as she would take the things out, heard his father's words of praise. It was easier than working. Still, he sat there, and the sun crept higher and higher. The jewels of dew vanished one by one from the weeds. His grimy hands clutched the basket-handle desperately, and he sat looking at them. He suddenly remembered that he had forgotten to wash.

It was not so strange a thing—forgetting; but the thought smarted, that he seldom remembered any more. The knuckles stood out, rough and ugly. He pulled off his hat and felt that his hair had not been combed. Combed! When had he combed his hair? He did not remember. Why should he comb his hair? The old hat covered his head effectually, and no one expected him to lift it—not even the lady in the white apron. He ran his hand over his head curiously, and felt with shame how the snarls would not let his fingers through. But why should he not? The question impelled itself. Aye, why not? The hurt look in the woman's eyes when he had faltered in his story came to him. He knew now that he could never stand before her and lie again.

A something strange and awful in its magnitude possessed him — the recognition of his own power to resist. He was stronger than a stick. Like the stick in the river, he was being borne on; but here was power to withstand. He could turn and fight this thing — he could — he would! The thing that had been born in the night seemed like a mighty flame about to consume him. He rose, and his sodden boots no longer seemed to burden his feet. He rose, and his face shone, in spite of its grime. One by one the fetters that had bound him loosened and fell away. He was free! He was free!

The birds were awake now. The cottonwoods were alive with music. In the bark at his feet his boot had touched a brown thing—an ugly, inanimate lump. It quivered. He bent to see, and suddenly the chrysalis burst before him. A lovely thing lay on the ground, fluttering newborn wings.

It was getting dark, and Bob Mugwater had been many times over the path between the green boat and the tracks, looking for Charlie. Weary with waiting, Mrs. Mugwater and the six children had come out and sat down on the stones, where they could watch the farthest end of the path. They had cooked and eaten the last bit of food in the cupboard, and it had not been a very satisfying meal. The father was getting starved out of his usual easy humor.

"Drat him! I'll sliver his skin when he does get here," he said savagely.

But when Charlie came, there was that in his face that silenced any rising expression of wrath. He placed the basket in his mother's lap. It contained whole fresh rolls and a package of meat. She looked in upon them, puzzled.

"Hey, son?" Bob Mugwater regarded his boy doubtfully. "A job, did you say? A job! You hain't workin'?"

"Totin' wood? You hain't!" The mother's tones were fearful.

"Yes, I be—I'm workin'." Charlie faced them with an air of defiance. "I'd ruther," he said.

Working! His boy! A little smoldering spark of pride in Bob Mugwater's eyes flamed up. The child seemed to grow into a man as he stood before them.

"Them's honest victuals," he said, and his voice had a triumphant ring. "I'm through with beggin' and stealin'."

Then he went to see if the butterfly had learned how to use its wings.

THE KING TO COME.*

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN.

A SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER IV—*(Continued).*

THE next impression is, that I had reached a seat somehow and that Jim was still floundering on the floor, patting my feet affectionately and maundering something about:

"How darned sudden things do happen here, anyway! How darned sudden—"

A long, low laugh broke in on him with:

"Gentlemen, you are startled! I do not blame you!"

"Hey?"

There were plenty of street lamps whizzing by now, and in the light of them I tried to catch the face of—whoever might be in the beastly hack with us.

An instant he leaned forward, smiling calmly, and the voice was verified altogether. It was indeed the king!

Jim saw it, too. With a gasp he struggled up to my side on the front seat and roared:

"Say! Is that *you?*"

"Hush!" That magnetic laugh came again. "Let us wake none of my subjects now, Mr. Wendell. To-morrow they will have much to occupy them, and they will need their rest."

"But—"

"Where did I come from?" chuckled Mr. Velasquez. "News travels rapidly here as elsewhere, gentlemen. You were hardly arrested when I was afoot to accomplish your rescue!"

"Well, it isn't an hour ago since we were arrested!" I put in dazedly.

"Scarcely forty minutes, Mr. Cook. Yet I was altogether prepared, as you see—and my little scheme went through quite as smoothly as the big scheme will to-morrow!"

There was something so calm, so assured about that tone, that it staggered one, and yet, when you came to think of it, he certainly had accomplished results in an amazingly short time. Surely, we hadn't been behind the bars for half an hour, and in that space Velasquez had sent us files and brought a carriage and sufficient assistance to spirit us away without a disturbance.

Yes, there was something convincing about the king—and he gave us little time to meditate on it, for he was saying:

"And now, on with our plans, gentlemen!"

"Say! I don't want anything more to do with them!" I sputtered.

"And I—" Jim began weakly.

"But, gentlemen!"

"Well, we're due to be shot by this government whenever we're caught!"

"The government, however, has hardly more than twelve hours of further existence," smiled Velasquez.

"Well, that's all right," said Jim. "But we were caught red-handed, and it's almighty likely we're slated for the rôle of horrible examples. I think the best thing is for us to get down to the water and aboard ship and—"

His breath gave out there. There was quite a long silence, while the rig loped ahead at a great gait. Then, very softly indeed, Velasquez spoke:

"So that the Americans are—*quitters,* as you say?"

"It isn't that!" Jim snapped. "It's—"

"Ah! Enough!" Some very high-class scorn was worked into the laugh now. "I do not comment. I hardly

*This story began in THE CAVALIER for December.

blame. It is, indeed, enough to frighten one! And yet, I had thought that I had found the two picked men I have so long sought!"

For my part, I was altogether silent. So long as that carriage delivered us at the wharf in good condition, it was enough. Velasquez could go on rubbing it in as much as he liked. But Jim rose to the surface and snorted:

"There are no quitters around here! Don't imagine that for a minute!"

"And my plans—for I have even now revised them a little—promised quicker profit and greater honor for both!" Velasquez leaned forward again with a half-contemptuous little grin. "I regret it all very much." Then he seemed to brace himself and throw over opposition, for he laughed aloud: "But enough of this! Let us go on with our work like men, gentlemen! A little reverse makes victory the better! Listen: it was my idea that *after* I had claimed the throne, after I was established, you were to have your reward."

"Yes."

"So seemed best—a little while back. Now I have determined that we—all three of us—shall go into office together!"

"To-day?" Jim gasped.

"Most certainly. A little before five, my people will proclaim me king, and of themselves crush all opposition. At that time, I shall introduce you to Bonaria!"

"There, on the grand stand? There, when you're planning to get up all of a sudden and make your appeal to the populace?" Jim cried excitedly again.

"Exactly. And it must be done in fitting manner, gentlemen. In my country here, people are impressed by what they see. Therefore, they must see much. You understand?"

"Not altogether."

"Externals must be placed foremost. That is all. My regal robes—the robes of my sainted grandfather, the martyr, are ready. For yourselves, I have planned."

"How?" said Jim bluntly.

"Simply. At five, supposedly, is the state review of the army, gentlemen. For that, new uniforms have been ordered—uniforms, decorations and all—for the secretaries of the cabinet. Yesterday they were delivered from the steamer. Now they rest, in their boxes, in the basement of the palace, while the cabinet is with Silviera at his summer home in the mountains. You see?"

"Yes."

"From the hills to-morrow come Silviera himself and his cabinet, ready to appear for the inauguration. Before that time, *you* must steal from the palace such state clothes as you need, you must don them, you must be behind me when I confront my people? It is plain!"

It was—absolutely plain. To me it sounded about as plain as the wild gibbering of a lunatic in an asylum who thinks he is King Solomon. Jim, though, let out an ecstatic gurgle, and before it turned into words Velasquez hammered on the window and the rig slowed down.

"We are at the rear of the palace!" he said tensely. "The second door at the right leads to the basement. In the palace are only seven or eight servants. Will you enter? Yes! When you have obtained the state raiment, join me at my villa if possible. If not, we meet to-day before the palace—at five!"

He opened the door and Jim jumped out in the blackness. A prod or two and I tumbled after. Something was jammed into my hand and I heard:

"Should you need money—here!"

I shoved it into my pocket and tagged along after Jim as the carriage loped gently away in the dark. Jim, as usual, was in charge, and we were headed for new lunacy!

CHAPTER V.

IN THE PALACE OF THE KING.

PERSONALLY, I thought it was about time for a five minutes' vacation.

Therefore, I sat down on a soft hummock and stared straight at a star. Jim stopped and grunted:

"What's the matter? You sick?"

"Resting!"

"What for?"

"Because I need it!" I said. "Which street leads to the ocean?"

"To the dickens with the ocean? You're not going to quit now?"

"I—I don't know."

"Well, I do! Get up there!" He gave a jerk at my shoulder and I bounced up again. "Let's get what we're after and get clear of this!"

"Jimmy!" I said weakly, "do you mean to say you're going to bust a way into that Palace of Justice, or whatever it is?"

"Certainly. We've gone too far to turn back."

"But if we're caught—"

"They can't any more than shoot us twice! We'll get that first dose anyway before we make the bay. Come on!"

I came. We walked up a long, hedged path at the rear of the palace; we made just about as little noise as two human beings could make—and at that, every step sounded like a pistol-shot and every breath like the exhaust of a freight locomotive! On and on we went, until finally the big, white walls were looming away up above us and a wide, closed door stood before us.

"That's the second!" said Jim.

"Let the first be the last!" I said. "Let's get out of this and—"

Jim stepped forward and tried the knob—and the wretched thing twisted without a sound and the door opened. Thereupon, Jim posed in the dusky shadows for half a second and whispered:

"Coming along or—is it good-by for the present?"

I went along blindly. At least we couldn't strike anything much worse than death, and we were entered on the Bonarian bookkeeping system for that already.

The door closed. The room, or whatever it was, was simply atmospheric ink—stuffy and close and with a lingering odor of Bonarian darky. Jim went the limit and struck a match. A glance, and he dug up a bit of candle and lit it and handed it to me.

There, right before us, was a pile of paste-board boxes, tremendously heavy and pasted over with the business label of some Mexico City tailor! That they held clothes went without saying, and probably new clothes. What sort of clothes was another matter, and Jim dropped on his knees and cut loose the thick twine.

A mass of tissue paper was revealed. After that came a layer of brilliant military blue, with several pounds of gold lace in sight! Jim shook it out—and the happy gurgle came up in his throat again!

"Say, it's like taking candy from a kid!" he chuckled. "You'll have to have a shorter one, Tommy. This box is smaller. Maybe—"

He jabbed the knife into the twine and ripped off the cover. Surely enough, another new uniform came into sight, a beautiful brilliant red affair, with even more gold and lace than the first one. Jim held it up for a minute in the candle-light—coat, waistcoat, trousers, sash and all—and then he tossed them over to me in a lump and chuckled:

"Those'll fit as if they were cut for you! Now, let's get back to the villa and grab some sleep and then—"

And then he stopped short!

Somewhere above us, or beside us, or possibly in front of us, some one, or something had fallen!

There was no doubt about it, it sounded more like a man coming down-stairs on his head than anything else, but there was no mortal way of classifying it correctly just then. The chief consideration seemed to be that something animate was awake and about at that ungodly hour, and that it was pointed in our direction—and Jim caught the idea as quickly as I.

"Grab the goods and beat it for the door!" he whispered.

I tried hard enough, Heaven knows! So did Jim. We both hit the door at the same time. We both grasped the knob at the same time. We both tugged at it at the same time. The knob held fast! Then I remembered a click, a minute ago and squeaked:

"Somebody's locked that thing from the outside, and—"

"Never mind. There must be some other way out or in—"

There was. We were permitted to discover it inside of ten seconds, for very suddenly, indeed, we heard the click of another door, and lights flared up to reveal a huge darky coming down a stairway just across the apartment!

He was wild-eyed with terror. The big *machete* he held trembled back and

forth in an arc about a foot wide. But he'd managed to fall down on us and to get up again and turn on the lights, and just now—

I've always admired that left hook of Jim's. It is a beautiful blow, and Jim knows just how to plant it. In the present instance, he slid across that little room and presented the colored gentleman with a sample that should have been handed down in history.

The darky dropped, senseless, chiefly because there was nothing else to do. Jim picked him up bodily, poised him for a second or two and hurled him through the window with a crash that should have aroused every corpse in Bonaria!

After that?

I don't quite know. There is a certain vague recollection of clutching the crazy red uniform tightly—of knowing that Jim had a bundle of blue and gold in one hand and my collar in the other—and we were going up-stairs!

There was a huge, dim hall, lit only by a solitary sixteen candle-power incandescent. That must have been the main corridor, because there were tremendous rooms at either side.

Also were there noises, on our level, out of sight and beneath—shoutings and Bonarian curses and screams and the like. There was a tramping of many soft feet, and we were on a second staircase and ascending.

Then, I think, came the big second floor of the nightmare, for there were bedrooms everywhere and glimpses of imported bath-rooms through open doors in the growing dawn, and Jim was saying:

"We can't stay around here, Tommy! Come on up! We can't get out now without being seen, and the darkies are—"

Then we hit the third staircase! We took it in three or four silent jumps and paused for another survey of the general landscape.

There were more bedrooms here, smaller ones and more numerous, and with fewer porcelain baths littered about, but somehow it seemed too public for our purposes just then. We stopped and stared at each other—and Jimmy promptly pushed me toward the farther end of the corridor and whispered:

"They haven't got track of us yet, Tom! They're raising the deuce, looking for us down-stairs. They seem to be all around the grounds—and there must be a ladder or something to the attic and if we can get there— Tommy!"

"What?" I gasped.

"There's the ladder, boy! Quick!"

We galloped, tiptoe, along that third-floor corridor. We took a new grip on the regalia and went up one-handed. The chancellor of the exchequer shoved up a trap—held it until I clambered to the floor—lowered it again.

And we were in probably the hottest little hole in all Bonaria, the attic of the palace!

But we were safe! That was the funniest part of it. We seemed to be absolutely safe!

No steps came after us. No one appeared to be racing through the house in search of us. No one seemed even to suspect that we were lodged up there in the top floor back!

There were darkies around the grounds and tramping the immense verandas; there were darkies poking around even in the street. They were cursing and roaring and gesticulating, as Jim reported from his corner of the solitary window. But there were no darkies steered for the attic, and I began to think I'd gone mad with the heat and the excitement, until, after a long time, Jim muttered:

"We've been here forty-five minutes now, and the sun's up and nobody's come after us! We're safe, Tom!"

CHAPTER VI.

A REMAINING DETAIL.

IF any one wants to write a few impressions of his first day in Hades, I am ready to furnish the copy. We spent that day in the attic of the palace, right under a thin shingling, with a full-blooded Bonaria summer sun on the other side. If the wicked place has anything choicer to offer, I'm prepared to die young and innocent.

There were, of course, a few little comforts.

For one thing, the huge bell in the cupola just over our heads was rung hourly from the police headquarters.

When it exploded, each time, some eighty or ninety dozen bugs were dislodged from the ceiling and rained down on us, not to mention the din of the thing itself. Then there was the genial and ever-increasing warmth. By ten it must have been a trifle over a hundred and fifty in that attic. By noon, I got to babbling over my gold watch and wondering if the case would melt.

The heat wouldn't have been so bad if there had been something to drink. Jim took to drawing pictures of water-coolers in the dirt on the floor and telling stories about how he'd prefer to absorb the ice-dripping from a champagne cooler rather than the champagne itself. Perhaps even the thirst would have been bearable if there had been something to eat! One greasy cake in twenty-four hours isn't exactly filling.

We lay flat all morning. After weeks of broiling, the morning passed and the sun began to work around from our window. The bell split our skulls with the news that three o'clock had arrived—and then, at last, four o'clock!

Whereat we began to sit up and take notice again!

"The best thing we can do is to get ready for the fun now!" Jim announced.

"Dressed?"

"Certainly!" The chancellor of the exchequer walked over to the window and looked out cautiously. "The grand stand's all ready, Tommy! All draped up in the colors of the Bonaria!"

"Yes."

"Seats there for fifty or a hundred, too. Steps leading up from behind, and a platform away in front. That's where we go."

"Ah?"

Jimmy gulped down some of the dry cotton that had formed in his mouth and rambled on:

"There's a crowd gathering, too!"

"How many?"

"Three or four thousand around the square already. There's a lot of police out!"

"Um-um? Anybody yelling for the king?"

"Not yet. That'll come pretty soon. Say!" He turned away from the window at last. "We'll have to hustle, like the dickens! Gimme those blue pants!"

"And will you please tell me how we're going to get out there through this house without being shot at?" I asked interestedly.

The chancellor of the exchequer stared contemptuously.

"Do you imagine that these uniforms wouldn't carry us anywhere in Bonaria?" he demanded.

We started dressing. It was a great job. It might have been amusing, if other things connected with it had been otherwise.

But, after all, it wasn't so bad. Jim's bright blue trousers were about three inches too short, but they made good around the waist and the coat was a dream. It had precisely fifty-two big brass buttons, first and last, and enough gold braid to sink a rowboat. There was gold braid along the seams of the trousers and gold braid on the sleeves and the front; there was a tri-color sash half a foot wide that went across the chest—and somebody had thrown in a few medals for good luck.

For my part, the red uniform was *it!* The trousers had to be turned up two or three times, and the coat was a little long in the sleeves, but the *tout ensemble* was distinctly the correct thing. There wasn't any shortage of medals, either, in my case, and I pinned them on in one straight row across the chest, and then:

"It's getting on to five!" Jim said, rather huskily. "I'll get that trap up and we'll start down!"

The trap came up without a squeak. We clambered down the ladder. All was absolutely still on the upper floor. Outside, somewhere, a band was playing and people cheering. But the main thing happened to be that nobody had jabbed a sword through us yet—and Jim brushed off the uniforms with one hand and mopped away the perspiration with the other, and we started down.

The second floor was just as quiet as the third. We listened for a little, and when we started down the grand staircase, it was with chests well out and an eagle glare that would have paralyzed any nigger on earth.

One turned up, by the way. He was in the lower hall and he seemed to be the butler of the official outfit. He stared hard at us for half a second. Then

the uniforms and the gold lace and all the rest got into his blood all of a sudden, and he kow-towed down to the floor and held open the big front door—and Jim and I gave him the merest nod and walked out into the air!

"We're in good!" muttered the chancellor of the exchequer.

The big plaza in front of the palace was roped off completely and there were little brown policemen all about. Beyond that, some two or three dozen yards, the beloved populace was lined up, cheering and waving their hats.

Apparently it was a demonstration. Was it a demonstration caused by the reinauguration of Silviera, or by the posters and the morning edition of *La Luna?* Just then, it was rather hard telling, but when Jim and I came into sight, a cheer went up—and that was slightly reassuring.

"It's ten minutes to five," said Jim. "Something's going to happen mighty quick."

"We may as well keep out of sight till it happens!" I said, getting behind a big near-marble pillar.

"Well—we can!" Jim conceded, as he dropped in beside me.

The crowd thickened quickly. Another band struck up, somewhere off to the right, and blared away furiously. The crowd cheered again—and then cheered some more, for a long line of soldiers were marching into the plaza and lining up on the other side of the square.

"That's the First Army Corps!" said Jim. "The king's troops!"

"Then they've changed their dress uniforms since yesterday," I said. "The First Army Corps wear white pants. These fellows have on blue ones. That's a detachment of the Second Army Corps!"

"The ones Velasquez said he wasn't sure of?"

"Certainly."

"Nonsense!" said Jim.

"Well, it's probably nonsense," I muttered, "but there are half a dozen of the First Army Corps, patrolling the grounds in their dress uniforms!"

And at that I came pretty near being right. Out in the square, the Second Corps, two or three hundred strong, were lined up in a hollow square, waiting the president with their arms at present! Inside the square, walking up and down and looking distinctly white of complexion, were a dozen of the troops Velasquez had claimed for his own.

Then one of them walked through the portico of the palace and came toward us, as we stood there behind the pillar—and I stopped him.

"You're part of the First Corps?"

"Yes, *señor!*" The fellow took one look at the red uniform and saluted three times.

"Are they going to be here to-day?"

"No, *señor!*"

"Why not?"

The man's eyes poped out. He saluted again, as he answered:

"The First Army Corps have been ordered away to the coast, *señor*, by our president. Only a detail is left. I am of the detail!"

Jim stepped forward in a hurry.

"Say, do you mean to tell me that that whole bunch has deserted the king?" he hissed.

"It is the duty of a soldier to obey!"

"Have they all gone?"

"The entire sixty men of the First Army Corps have gone, with the General Tanzic!" Our little friend saluted and walked off in a hurry, for a man in an all-blue uniform was staring at him.

Jim leaned up against a pillar and gasped:

"The—entire—*sixty!* My Heavens, I supposed there were four or five thousand men at the very least! And this crowd—this Second Army Corps—is admittedly in the service of the president, and—"

And just then, in Spanish, some one in the rear of the crowd—some one who had a voice capable of filing steel—shrieked:

"The King! *The King!! THE KING!!!*"

CHAPTER VII.

THE FATE OF KING-MAKERS.

I'VE always wondered who owned that voice.

He had a career before him, whoever he was, either as a clam-peddler

or a grand-opera singer, for his tones split the quivering air like a cobbler's knife going through a piece of leather. They shrilled out above the bands and the roaring populace, and there was silence.

And then?

I'm bound to admit that I was impressed, and little goose-pimples rose all over me, and a queer sort of chill of pride traveled up and down my backbone.

Through the outskirts of the crowd came the sound of galloping hoofs. Then the crowd parted very suddenly, and through the open space came galloping half a dozen cavalrymen in the light uniforms of the First Army Corps. If they were scared, they tried hard not to show it—and certainly they cleared a path for the big open barouche that was in the midst.

In that barouche sat King Juan the Second.

Straight as a ramrod, his head held up in the air and his regal gaze flitting carelessly here and there, Velasquez looked the real goods! His magnetic eye was larger and clearer than ever, and his patrician nose a little more haughty. But it was the clothes that made the impression!

On his black hair was squatted a little, glittering crown! On his back was a robe of pure white—well, silk or something of the sort, I presume—with ermine fur laid on thick around the neck and down the front, and as he stood erect in the carriage, it was plain that the rest of his raiment went with the cloak! Velasquez was in satin knee pants and snow-white silk stockings, and the hint of ruffling that protruded from the bosom of the robe hinted that he might have looted somebody's trousseau from Paris.

Jim gasped and gulped to himself.

"Tommy!" he muttered. "Tommy!"

His face was snow-white with excitement. I came closer and peeked around his side of the pillar.

"Well?"

"Did you ever see a man before that looked the king so thoroughly?"

"I never saw a king before, but if any one could show up better than Velasquez—"

"He's getting out now! Look!"

He was. The carriage had pulled up beside the grand stand and one of the cavalrymen was on one knee, holding open the little door.

Velasquez, robes and all, descended as if he was being wafted down by an invisible balloon. Some one cheered wildly. Some one else took up the cheering. Then somebody with a real loud voice took up the refrain—and incidentally I saw one of the Second Army Corps rap him over the head with the butt of a musket, and then prod the remains out of popular view.

The king, though, was beyond noticing insignificant details. A moment he paused, before ascending the steps of the palace and making for the grand stand—and Jimmy coughed loud and hard and stepped into view in his gold and blue toggery.

I don't know whether he expected the king to come forward and shake hands. At any rate, all he got was a glance that seemed to say: "Why the deuce didn't you stay in your kennel till I whistled for you?" Then Jim came back behind the pillar and coughed apologetically and turned a little red when I said:

"What were you going to do—kiss him?"

"Well, I—"

"He'll give us the tip when we want to come out," I said. "That is, if we're desirous of coming out at all!"

"Eh?"

I laid my hand on the chancellor's arm.

"Jimmy," I said sadly, "if one doctor was to prescribe for all the throats that are getting hoarse shouting at the king, it wouldn't take him over fifteen seconds!"

"But they'll wake up! They're bound to! They're a little scared now, Tom. That's all. Ah! He's going to speak!" The chancellor wagged his head till the big blue *chapeau* cocked down over one eye and hung there. "Now wait and see the demonstration!"

The king was indeed on the point of hurling a little verbal enthusiasm at his populace.

He turned and glanced at the assembled multitude for an instant, then he turned back and talked for a moment

with the boss of the guard that had accompanied him. As the latter dropped to one knee, he turned again and stepped slowly and majestically to the platform where—before we'd been drawn into the business of king-manufacturing, President Silviera was to have been sworn into office.

Very deliberately, he squared his shoulders, allowed his royal robes to flutter in the breeze for an instant—and went to work!

His voice rang out all of a sudden. The chattering hushed on the second. The Second Army Corps, which seemed hardly to notice him, stared as one man. And the king went on.

He didn't rant. Instead, he began to deal out the dandiest speech in Bonarian Spanish that I ever heard in any language. I couldn't understand more than quarter of it perfectly, but I caught the sense right along, and Jim, who is pretty well up in the Castilian dialect, kept on wagging his head and turning redder and redder and redder.

His majesty came to the first stop. He'd covered a lot of ground in five minutes. He'd wallowed around in the blood of his sainted ancestor until you could almost see it around his knees. He'd announced that the blood was shrieking right out loud for vengeance. He'd mentioned the fact that since Bonaria had been a republic, everybody, everything, had been oppressed; every right of free Bonarian subjects had been trampled down in the name of liberty; every God-given privilege of the dynasty had been knocked into a cocked hat.

And now, despite everything—despite intrigues against his life, and threats to eat alive everything connected with him—he had returned to claim his own and give Bonaria what it had been looking for without knowing it—a really high-class and up-to-date monarchy, with all the frills and none of the disadvantages of other monarchies!

Roughly, I gathered that there would be no taxes whatever; that the privy purse would be used to free the country from foreign debt and entanglements, to build a navy that could lick the United States, Germany, England, Russia, and Japan without calling out the militia force; that the army would be revised and re-edited; that everybody in sight would get, absolutely free of charge, seventeen acres of land and an income to support it; that there'd be band concerts on every street-corner on fine evenings, and ice-cream delivered at your door twice a day, at the expense of the state—and there was still some!

And I'm blest if it didn't seem to go down. About five hundred people began to cheer and yell and roar and request the Almighty to save the king!

"By thunder! He can talk as well—as well—as well as he can rule!" Jim choked.

The din subsided. The king took a new pose and went ahead. That first splurge seemed to have been a sort of try-out heat. He went on to real things now. He pointed out the prestige that would come to Bonaria with the restoration of his ancient line. He showed how foreign powers would bow down where now they scoffed at a mere banana republic. He demonstrated that Bonaria would be a blood relation to the most ancient and best families in Spain, Italy, France, Portugal, Greece, and—

And then the man—the captain of the king's guard—tapped me on the shoulder!

He tapped Jim, too, and Jim straightened up and adjusted his bonnet, and transfixed the gentleman with a steely and important glare, and asked:

"Does the king desire our presence now?"

Logically, the man should have bowed low and whined out an affirmative answer. Instead, he went on tapping Jim's shoulder and muttering:

"Into the palace, *señor!*"

"Hey!"

"Into the palace, *señor!*" He pointed toward the door and snapped his fingers. "Quick! It is the command of the king!"

It seemed kind of a joke on Jim, just then. It looked as if I was going to be left there in the red uniform to do all the honors, and I chuckled:

"Well, so long, Jimmy! I'll see you after—"

The captain of the guard let his eye run through my right lung and travel upward.

"You, too, will accompany me!"

"Huh?"

"At once!" He did more than snap his fingers now; he laid a hand on his large and unornamental revolver. "In there—both!"

That man meant business. Jim perceived it at about the same second I did. Not the darky, but another member of the guard, held open the door—and the prime-minister and the chancellor of the exchequer went through it without any undue argument.

"He's changed his plans, Tommy!" Jim whispered, with a sickly little smile.

"Yes; I guess he has!" I murmured. "He's changed—"

"Straight through the house, *señors!*" said our friend, as he and his companion fell in beside us. "You will leave by the rear door."

He was right—dead right. We walked right down that long corridor and out at the rear; and somewhere on the square a band was striking up a beautiful ballad entitled, "He Walked Right In and He Turned Around and He Walked Right Out Again."

There is a small back piazza to the palace. There is also a stepping-block, so that you can float gently into your carriage if there happens to be one at your disposal.

There was one at ours, all right enough. It was the barouche in which his exalted majesty had arrived. It was standing by the step; and our friend of the guard said:

"Step in!"

We did. I'd lost track of things, but Jim was trying to follow directions and preserve his official dignity at the same time. We sat down, and three or four troopers lined up on either side—and we shot out of the palace grounds as if some one had exploded guncotton under the horses.

It was a great ride! It was under way so quickly and over so quickly that one could hardly get track of it. We went down hill and through the best part of town; then we went through the worst part, and came in sight of the Atlantic Ocean.

Then we made a straight plunge for the water itself, and when the cavalcade came to a halt we were right out on the steamship wharf and beside the identical vessel that had been slated to take us back to little old New York.

It was surprising, but not markedly so. Nothing could be surprising in that country after what we'd seen. The real shock came when the uniformed boss of the outfit took Jim by the collar, hoisted him out, and started him up the gangplank with:

"To the hold!"

I followed. I hit the deck seven feet behind Jim, with Bonarian First Army Corps people all around me and a few steamship officers. I looked at Jim; Jim was looking at a big hatch and muttering things to himself. The army officers and the steamer officers were chatting and giggling together.

Then, out of the hatch, to the accompaniment of a big crane's whirring and crunching, came a huge rope basket. The boat's officers nodded. The army officers nodded back; and our first friend said:

"Step in! Quickly!"

"Look here, you confounded officious fool!" Jim thundered. "Do you know that we—"

Three gentlemen dropped him into the rope affair that hung over the pitchy hatchway. Without any provocation, they dropped me after. A little whistle blew shrilly — and we began to whiz downward.

Piles of bananas came dimly into sight—there were crates of oranges and great crates of lemons—there were soft-looking bales of stuffs, and all kinds of smells, and—

The basket dumped suddenly. We were part of the cargo.

You have no idea how heavy bananas can be until a really thick bunch of them lands on your head. I suppose it took me all of five minutes to get clear of the particular collection of fruit that had toppled down on me in the landing.

When I came to the surface at last, Jimmy was wrestling with a lemon-crate that had managed to get his head between the slats. He was sitting on a nice, slippery pile of sliding banana bunches, too, and falling in a different direction every ten seconds.

I sat up in the close, smelly gloom of that infernal hold and let him wrestle and curse as long as he pleased.

After all, he was the one that had got

us into it. For my part, if a strange man had come up to me in Bonaria, or anywhere else, and announced that he was king, I'd either have called a policeman and turned him over or gone my own way in peace.

The chancellor of the exchequer wrestled on, minute after minute. His pretty military hat was kicked into a pulp, and his pretty uniform wasn't improving any with the decorations put on it by exploding bananas.

It was a great fight. The crate had a strangle-hold that couldn't be broken, despite its apparent lack of weight. Jimmy took a half-Nelson and tried again, and the crate all but threw him and took the fall.

The vessel began to quiver, too. There was shouting, far above, and rattling galore. There was a long, long toot of a whistle—and the whole affair began to move. It occurred to me vaguely that we'd gone aboard on time, after all; we were bound for New York!

And just then Jimmy began to use a hammerlock grip on the crate. The thing smashed apart all of a sudden—and the chancellor of the exchequer sat up, with a lapful of lemons and a face full of scratches, and gasped:

"Thank Heaven!"

I merely stared at him. The boat kept on quivering, and it was pretty clear that we were working out into the harbor and turning around. Five minutes went by; then Jimmy gurgled:

"We're—free!"

"Yeah!"

Jim rubbed his forehead hard for a while.

"We're getting out to sea, aren't—we?" he mumbled.

"Yes."

There was another long silence; then:

"Jim!" I said suddenly.

"Well?"

"When we changed our clothes, did you put your money in the uniform pants?"

"No!" shrieked the chancellor of the exchequer. "Did—why?"

"Because I didn't, either!" I said. "I forgot all about it!"

"But you don't mean to say that we're due to land in New York in these crazy togs and without a cent?"

"If we do, it's mainly your fault!"

"But—"

Another pause.

"Never mind!" Jim said mournfully. "We got clear with our lives. I don't pretend to know why we were brought down here and shipped away, but at least we're free and safe and—there isn't any one pursuing us; and we must be well to the end of the harbor, and—"

I began to take particular notice of certain undefined yells above, and I noticed that the engines had stopped suddenly—and the vessel as well!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FATE OF THE KING.

IT was all over — all, all over but the final shouting. We had been chased —now we were caught. It was all so painfully simple that I was forced to smile.

Whatever had happened ashore; whatever had sent the king's guard against us and landed us in the hold of the vessel, pursuit had been undertaken—and now it was over.

The vessel had been held up, and we were going to get the consignment of lead that had been delayed in delivery that morning.

It was a reasonably small steamer, that one. We could hear a tug or something similar coming, bumping alongside. We could hear voices roaring and shouting meaningless things. Some one was coming aboard, and I clambered over a few hundred dollars' worth of bananas and held out a hand to Jim, with:

"Good-by, old man!"

Jim wasn't busy with farewells just then. Instead, he was pitching banana piles right and left and delving down among them. In a minute or so he'd made a burrow and dropped into it. He was busy pulling down piles on top of his head when it struck me that the notion was a good one.

I turned, too, and selected crates for a hiding-place. There were seven or eight of them toppled over and probably awaiting proper trimming. I wriggled underneath and took a long breath. For the minute—for a few precious minutes, probably—we were out of sight. When a

man has a clear vision of a firing-squad in his mind's eye a few minutes amount to something.

The shouting above went on—then it was drowned in a hoarse, distant laugh. The bumping against our side ceased, and I heard the puffing of what seemed to be a tugboat. I looked up cautiously toward the hatchway, to see if there happened to be something to be seen. Just then there was nothing.

The motion of the engines started up again, and the long cables that had dropped us began to sway back and forth. Then—

In that glaring patch of hatchway a figure appeared. An instant it poised in the air; then it gripped the cables and began to slide downward—and may I be eternally condemned if a gold crown didn't come banging down in the hold, while a figure, in white satin knee pants and heavy fluttering silk robes with ermine trimmings, didn't come sliding down those steel ropes at a mile a minute gait!

The figure landed with a soft crash and let go just as the ropes and the rope basket began to whiz upward again and a dozen grinning faces appear at the edge of the hatch!

It rolled down a pile of banana bunches and collided with a pile of orange-crates. It got up and stood on its feet and roared aloud; it ripped off the long silk robe and stood in knee pants and ruffled shirt.

The King of Bonaria then sat down on some more bananas, half a dozen feet above us, and ripped out the most perfect string of high-class English cuss-words that I ever heard.

There wasn't any Spanish accent about them. They were the real article, born and reared in the United States; and when they were out of his system, the king seemed to feel a little better.

At any rate, he settled back, brushed off a tarantula or two, and darned the ship, the cargo, and the crew in a merely perfunctory manner, as if he were thoughtful about something. Another little space, and he was quiet. I could see Jim watching him as the ship churned on.

"*And I thought I had that nailed down tight, too!*" he remarked.

He broke off a green banana, tasted it, and threw it away.

"And those two marks were all ready to play up to the limit!" he pursued.

"One of them wasn't so blasted ready," I said.

The king jumped about two feet.

"Is—that you, Cook?" he squealed.

"That's Cook!" I said.

"Did they throw Wendell down here, too?" asked the king. "I told 'em to put you both in irons."

"Wendell's here, too," said the chancellor savagely, as he wiggled out from the bananas again. Then something of his old allegiance to the crown seemed to come back to Jim, for his voice almost cringed as he croaked:

"What happened?"

The king stared over at him for a while, and even in the gloaming I could see a sour grin. The grin grew to be a smile, and the smile to a laugh—and after the laugh had gone on for a while it stopped, and the king just said:

"Oh, curses!"

That was all. Perhaps, as an explanation, it was about right.

Juan the Second leaned back comfortably for a long time. Finally he stuck one hand into the embroidered shirt and, after a good deal of fishing, brought out the big black leather wallet and laid it on his knees.

He opened it and stared at the contents. Five minutes, and he dragged out the big diamond necklace, and fairly giggled as he threw it at Jim's head.

"First week's salary, chanceller of the exchequer!" he remarked.

He dived down again and brought up the ruby and the diamond tiara—and shied both of them at me and yelled:

"Matriculation fee for the prime minister! Hang on to it. You'll have to pay it over to the chancellor."

I grabbed them and stared, and I caught Jim staring. His majesty seemed to have gone mad with his troubles, for he arose and held up the colossal diamond and shouted:

"I've got ten dollars that says I can smash that electric bulb with this!"

He did it, and very neatly. Without comment, he got the emerald into position, sighted another bulb—and finished it. Then he let off a wild whoop, caught up the rest of the crown jewels, and sent them whizzing down among the cargo.

After which he picked up the black-leather package and remarked:

"The secret archives!"

"Well, don't throw them!" Jimmy screamed. "Your maj — Velasquez — whatever you want to call yourself! Don't throw them! You can't replace them—you can't replace the archives—"

His majesty sat down and shook. When he was done shaking, he sent the black package straight at Jim's head and roared:

"You pie-eyed, dough-brained imbecile! You long-legged hunk of suggested brainstorm! That's Lord Doodleberry's standard work on court etiquette! I've been studying it for a month, and I was going to plot this afternoon's parade from it!"

"H-u-h?" said Jim.

"Yes; and you in your blue masquerade costume, and Cookey, there, in his red one, were going to have the first hack behind me—according to yesterday's plans!"

He stared at the bananas for a while. I sat down comfortably and stared at him; and finally he looked up and said in a queer little monotone:

"Gentlemen, I will confess. I'm no more hereditary king of that greasy community than you are prime minister and chancellor of the exchequer. I just got the idea I'd like to be. I saved up a couple of thousand, gleaned a few facts, went down here, and made plans. It looked good to me from the start. All I planned to do was to start a twenty-four-hour uprising, get next to the state treasury in that twenty-four hours, and then —get clear. They're an excitable people and—there's two hundred and eight thousand dollars in gold in the state vaults!" he groaned.

"But—"

"But I began to get too conspicuous at the last moment, and I tumbled over you two just as a man tumbles over a banana-peel," the king continued. "You two also looked good to me. I thought I'd make you do the dirty work, and then—as I did—have you escorted down and put on board ship. But—"

He fell silent.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Well, to tell you the truth," said the king, "Silviera popped in, right in the middle of my speech—just when some of the good ones were beginning to bite—and he had the Second Army Corps escort me down here and put me aboard. I am now," said the king—"aboard!"

"But—" Jim broke in again, and in his voice was the last lingering trace of credulity—"that speech you made was in the purest Spanish."

"Dear and beloved subject," he said, "that speech was like the rest of the game —it seemed right, but you couldn't send it to the average laundry and expect to see it come home. It was fake, Wilfred Augustus Wendell, chancellor of the exchequer. It was good Spanish, but it hailed from the cigar factory in Cincinnati where I was foreman for nine years. Similarly, the crown jewels, which were made for three dollars apiece on Ann Street, New York. Likewise the regal robes of my sainted grandfather, which hailed from a genial costumer just west of Broadway. All the samee, they cost good money," he sighed. Then he leaned far back and groaned, "Oh, what's the use?"

The ship slowed up a little. Certain sounds indicated that we were parting company with the pilot. The king kicked his feet into a little more comfortable position and murmured:

"Got any money?"

"Not a red cent."

"Me neither," he said cheerfully. "Got any clothes—other than the second-row-and-the-spear outfits you have on?"

"No."

"Me neither!" pursued the king. "Have you got anything to eat?"

"Of course not!" snapped Jim.

The king sat up and glowered.

"Have you got anything to smoke, chancellor?" he roared.

"No!"

The king lay back again.

Slowly a smile overspread his handsome countenance. Perhaps he was contemplating our landing in New York a week or ten days hence, if we happened to live that long, in our red and white and blue raiment, without a cent or a stitch of civilized clothes. Or he may have been contemplating the voyage itself. At all events, he only murmured:

"Well, *what* do you know about *that?*"

(The end.)

STRANGELY AVENGED.

BY MABEL WREN.

A SHORT STORY.

THE great Chihuahua Desert lay white and calm in the moonlight; its solitude broken only by the yelp of some prowling coyote, traveling late and alone. Suddenly there appeared in the distance a strange cavalcade. Two Mexicans, and then two more, marched with hurried steps before a cart in which a muffled bundle reposed. The procession stopped, and a hasty grave was dug. Then the silent bundle was lifted from the cart and lowered into it.

Riding down a dry arroyo, at right angles to the procession, was an American. The swing of his shoulders as he sat erect in his saddle, and the defiant way in which he held his head, told of brain and body strength. But the clinching of his teeth and the nervous twitching of his hands betokened that all was not well with him. There was something of the restlessness of a caged tiger about him.

"I hope to Heaven," he muttered fiercely, "that another time I'll have sense enough to stay within the borders of civilization. I was plumb locoed in those days—didn't have sense enough to tell right from left. Great Scott! Any man who is content to throw away his chances in life as I have ought to be shut up with the lunatics. Any man in his right mind who will spend his life among the greasers, coyotes, and horned toads is—"

Words failed to convey the ire that boiled within him. He hated himself, cursing his own impotency, and he hated them—the men who inhabited the land with him.

"What do these desert-born idiots know of the white man's cities, or his armies, his factories, his schools, his society, or—his life? What have I, what did I ever have, in common with them?"

Unconsciously his hands clenched until the nails sank deep into the flesh. Just then he noticed the procession, and dismounting, stood hidden by some low mesquit, and watched the proceedings.

It was only some man from the States who had been killed in a row with the greasers. He, Chad Leeks, had not been above such rows himself, and the whole thing was as plain as day to him. It was a common happening in the country to which he was tied. 'Twas probably over some woman. They were dangerous creatures, these Mexican women with white blood in their veins; men fight for them when they are young, and neglect them as soon as their beauty fades.

He himself had married the beauty of the valley some three years ago, and now —well, he considered himself no worse than the rest of mankind.

Chad's mind worked quickly. He silently followed one of the men home, swore at him in approved Mexican style, and sent him up to the adobe hut of Chad Leeks to inform his wife and child that he had been shot in a dance row the night before at a Mexican hacienda.

Meanwhile, the supposedly buried Chad was speeding with all haste over the border. It was a step that he had been contemplating for some time: the witnessing of the burial had merely precipitated things.

As he rode over the long stretch of desert, hatred for it and the people who belonged to it, hatred for himself and the cowardly thing which he was doing, continued to spread like murrain through all his being. Never, he solemnly vowed, as long as life lasted, would he look upon this God-forsaken land again.

Once across the line, he boarded an east-bound train and rode until he had reached his boyhood home.

His father welcomed with open arms the prodigal son who had run away from college, and asked him few unnecessary questions about his wanderings.

II.

"ELISABETH, let me present Mr. Leeks. Chad is a very dear friend of mine. His mother and I were old school chums."

Chad's figure straightened and his eyes lighted. A slim, cool hand rested on his for an instant. Mrs. Drew bustled about, and settled everybody cozily at the card-table — and then fate seemed to settle things for him.

When he left, the night was full of laughing eyes, of delicate, high-bred faces, of friendly words, of dainty hands that slipped softly into his own. He turned abruptly from the city until he felt the wet sand under his feet, then he settled down into a swinging stride that took him miles up the beach. When he returned to his room, he was so tired that he slept immediately.

The next morning he was making his way along, head down and hands in his pocket, when a merry voice greeted him:

"Walk with me a moment, please. Now listen, Elisabeth Barth is crazy to go out on the bay in a rowboat. Won't you take her out? I'm afraid to trust her with the ordinary landsman. I'd trust you anywhere; you know that. This afternoon at three, then. Thank you so much. No, I can't talk any longer. Good-by." And Mrs. Drew was gone.

At three o'clock he steadied the bobbing boat and held out his hand to Elisabeth Barth. Those slim fingers again made him draw in his breath sharply.

"Are you afraid?" he asked, when she was seated. "We're going to bob about considerably, but there's no danger if you like it." He was leaning over the oar-lock.

Then they were quiet for a long space of time. She watched the water, while he watched the bright fluffs of sunny hair that blew distractingly about her face. Finally, however, he jerked himself together sternly. What had he to do with sunny curls or high-bred mouths or laughing eyes? His face hardened into the old lines that had left it. But at the sound of her laugh, as some spray dashed into her face, the lines vanished.

When he left her at Mrs. Drew's door, she had promised to ride with him the next day. He had a horse that he wanted her to try, he said.

The days that followed were happy ones for one of the party, but the other—well, he at least was in no hurry to have them end.

But there were other times—times when he saw the shifting white sands and heard the south wind rising, gently at first and then into stinging fury as it bellowed across the great desert. He fought off the vision impatiently. It belonged to the past.

There was no need of worrying over the other woman. He had left her ample means, and she would soon find a more suitable companion. She was not of his kind, and, surely, no one could rightly blame him for leaving that God-forsaken country.

III.

THE years dragged their slow lengths around. Chad Leeks and his wife Elisabeth were samples of comfortable prosperity. But a close observer would have noticed an air of suppressed restlessness about him, and one of patient resignation about his wife. The humdrum of business life was wearing the lightness from his smile and the elasticity from his step.

He would have diagnosed the trouble otherwise—the wideness and wildness of the Chihuahua sands and a dark-eyed boy were calling him. For years he had succeeded in nearly forgetting them; but as time passed, and no heir came to bless him and Elisabeth, thought of the boy returned with increasing persistency. It would seem so good to have young life in the house, to have his boy there always, and a whole string of other boys sometimes, and be young with them all again.

During the interminably long, empty days he revolved the thing over and over in his mind until, one day, the restlessness overcame him entirely.

Telling his wife that he had been called away on some urgent business that would require his attention for a month or so, he boarded a west-bound train, and

in the course of a few days landed on the Chihuahua sands again.

Once at the station, he hired a rig and drove across the plains to his former home. Inquiring cautiously at a neighbor's as to who lived on the old Leeks place, he found that strangers owned his former home; that his wife was buried beside the mound on the desert that was supposed to be his; and that his boy, who was described as a very promising lad, was in some college in the States.

For a week he stayed, going over the once familiar scenes. But the place seemed strange to him, the men rough and the women simple. The soul had gone out of things, and, try as he might, he could not put life in them.

Again he rode swiftly down the dry arroyo, across the low mesquit to where the trail led into the mountains, and crossed the American line.

Once over, he pulled up and looked back at the forbidding black hills that shut in the dismal land which haunted him in his dreams.

IV.

It was commencement day. Chad Leeks was valedictorian. At the close of the exercises, the elder Chad went up and introduced himself to the younger man as a friend of his father.

"I'm glad you knew him," the boy replied heartily. "My mother could not die in peace until I promised to graduate at the same college that he attended. She thought it might help me to become the man that he was."

With a sigh the elder man turned away. He would rather die than allow the boy to be disillusioned.

"She--wanted—him to become—the man—his—father—was," he mused bitterly as he boarded a home-bound train.

THE WIZARD OF THE PEAK.

BY THOMAS E. GRANT.

A COMPLETE NOVEL.

CHAPTER I

A TERRIFYING SITUATION.

WHEN several of the earth's greatest coal-mines, working at about the same depth, simultaneously revealed that their veins of coal had petered out, nobody dreamed that the world was about to undergo one of the most terrible periods in the history of its civilization.

I am certain that I felt no premonitions of disaster. The fuel-supply was the farthest thing from my thoughts. For at that time I was engaged in the cattle business in an isolated part of Colorado, where the use of coal was unknown. No industrial activities had yet drifted hither across the mountain barriers to mar the solitude of the wide cattle range.

But if the closing of a few coal-mines held no significance for me, neither did it appear important to the rest of mankind. Fuel seemed abundant, and for years there had been no advance in its price.

But suddenly other mines became worthless. Within a month a long list of properties had to be abandoned. These were always the deeper mines. Thousands of smaller workings were still producing coal. But in a few months the fuel-supply had considerably diminished. Almost before any one realized it, a number of great enterprises had to stop. More than a million workmen became idle.

Then the world began to lose its apathy. Even to my isolated abode crept rumors of the growing trouble in the cities beyond the hills. Finally the various governments cooperated in appointing a congress of scientific experts to investigate the situation. One of the

gentlemen chosen to the body was my life-long friend, Alexander Marvin, from whom I learned all that followed. And almost from that time I may date my connection with the remarkable events that were to transform my secluded corner of the globe into a mighty battle-ground, bringing tragedy and profound mystery to my very door and involving me in the strangest adventures of my life.

Meanwhile, however, matters continued to grow more serious. Almost daily the newspapers mentioned other mines that had been abandoned.

For all that, people were not greatly alarmed. The situation was entailing great hardship, but this was thought to be only temporary. Nobody doubted that the fuel-supply would presently again become normal. The masses believed that the report of the government experts would lead to relief.

In due time this report was forthcoming. The governments sought to suppress it. Enterprising newspapers published it broadcast. The scientists declared that the world's fuel-supply was exhausted. Coal was found nowhere to exist below a certain depth. Most startling of all was the appended estimate of the remaining coal. It was estimated that, provided coal was used for no other purpose, the lighting-plants alone of all the world's cities could be kept in operation barely six years.

Convinced of the reasonable accuracy of its estimates, the congress urged the governments to take immediate action to conserve the remaining coal for absolute necessities.

The effect of this report defies description. The world was dumfounded. For almost twenty-four hours people seemed unable to realize the calamity. Then it suddenly dawned upon them, and frightful scenes followed.

To understand the situation, certain conditions must be reviewed.

For the last two decades the world had been undergoing the most remarkable period of industrial expansion in its history. Never had anything like it been known. The general disarmament of the nations had been brought about some years before, and an age of universal peace had set in. An effective remedy had been found for all quarrels between capital and labor. Business was stable. A long series of wonderful inventions had given birth to an era of progress undreamed of in the early years of the twentieth century.

Industries of all kinds had increased by leaps and bounds. Work was never so abundant, nor wages so high. Fortunes inconceivable a few years before were now possessed by many men; indeed, the fabled wealth of King Solomon, computed to have been about fourteen millions of dollars, would have seemed a puny sum in these days. It was an age of peace and plenty. The planet seemed to have acquired a new lease of life.

But all this prosperity depended absolutely upon a plentiful supply of coal. The United States alone required, in rough figures, one hundred and fifty-five million horse-power—approximately four and one-half times the amount being used at the close of the first decade of the twentieth century. True, mountain-streams and waterfalls had been extensively harnessed, and hydroelectric plants furnished a vast amount of power. Nevertheless, coal still produced over four-fifths of the world's power, heat, and light.

The most radical changes had come about in the method of coal consumption. Instead of hauling it from the mines to power-houses everywhere, vast electric-plants had been installed in the heart of the coal-fields; and these transmitted energy by wire to all parts of the country. Mills and factories were run by electricity coming direct from the mines, cities were lighted by it, homes were heated, all the railways had long since been electrified, and were operated by this transmitted power; the invention of a new type of storage-battery had made electricity the basis of commerce even upon the seas. Moreover, the power generated in this way was cheap. And as long as coal lasted it seemed limitless. And almost nobody doubted that the supply of coal was well-nigh inexhaustible.

Scientists had estimated that there was still sufficient coal for five thousand years. The United States alone was supposed to have contained originally about twenty-two hundred thousand million tons. West Virginia, Illinois, North Dakota, Colorado, and Wyoming were the chief coal-

producing States; and not long before the shortage came it had been estimated that each of these still contained more than two hundred thousand million tons.

For several years, it is true, a few far-seeing scientists had doubted the accuracy of these estimates. But these prophecies had appeared only in a few scientific publications of limited circulation, and had attracted no attention. So mankind had not been concerned about the future. The phenomenal era of prosperity had continued undisturbed.

Upon this condition of affairs the news of the exhaustion of coal fell like a bolt from a clear sky.

The report of the scientific congress proved to be only too well grounded. The whir of the cotton-mill and the roar of the blast-furnace, the whistle of the locomotive and the swish of the vessel sounded less and less throughout the world.

Then the governments adopted drastic legislation to conserve the remaining fuel. All industry that depended upon the power supply had to cease, and this affected every business. The value of all investments disappeared as if it had never existed. Wage-earners reached the seemingly permanent end of their income. The blight of complete industrial stagnation ensued. Panic after panic swept the world, until the bottom fell completely out of the financial structure; within a year less than a score of banks in the United States still kept their doors open.

Meanwhile, other mines became worthless. One by one the great central power-stations had to close, and the remaining ones extended their territory and lit more cities. Many unscrupulous demagogues had caught the ear of the despondent and were urging the seizure of the remaining evidences of the world's great fortunes. It was feared that crime would become rampant should darkness close upon the cities; that men, driven by want, would prey like wolves upon their neighbors. From every point of view the situation was terrifying. Civilization had already retrograded a hundred years.

In the meantime, every effort was being made to find some solution of the difficulty. The foremost scientists were laboring over the problem of restoring the vanished power supply.

But at the outset all thought of finding a substitute for coal was abandoned. None existed. The supply of coal-oil had long since succumbed to wastefulness and the vast demand, and was practically exhausted. Wood would not do; there was not enough of it. Only a few of the great national forests remained, and outside of these the quantity of timber was exceedingly limited.

Most of the scientists were trying to produce electricity without the medium of heat. Innumerable methods were tested. Windmills operating dynamos in connection with storage-batteries were tried, but abandoned. One inventor claimed to have harnessed the tides of Newfoundland, but nothing came of the scheme. Another claimed he could produce a current by means of the sun's rays, but failed to do so. The few remaining water-courses available were rapidly being harnessed. Hydraulic-power was being pressed to do its utmost.

One of the greatest of these hydro-electric plants, according to several unauthenticated rumors, was to be installed on the head waters of the Big Fall River, at the foot of Lang's Peak, near Piney Park, where I had my ranch. The reported magnitude of this project aroused my interest, for the Big Fall, I knew, was too small to furnish power for a plant of any considerable size. Little notice was taken in Denver of such reports —probably for the reason that, all told, the water-power schemes would afford little relief. In this instance nothing was known of the promoters of the company, and I finally concluded that the rumors were groundless.

Some time later, however, my cowpunchers told me that a new road had been opened to the foot of Lang's Peak from Allen's Park, south of my ranch, and that machinery was being hauled in. My curiosity was about to lead me to investigate these operations, when the winter snows came and prevented my doing so. No further accounts of the power developments reached me, for I was the only resident within many miles of the peak. And when spring came again I thought no more of the matter.

Still, in the outside world the experimenters worked on. Seeking results, the governments offered fabulous prizes to

scientists, and even threw open their workshops to many. But nothing came of all the labor. Men seemed as far from any relief as ever. An irritating suspense was kept alive, however, by the occasional claim that the problem had been solved. Still, there was no tangible result.

Then, as if to cap the planet's misery, there came the hardest winter in seventy-two years. To save life, the governments were obliged to permit the increased use of fuel for heating purposes. Half of the remaining national forests were also thrown open for fire-wood. It was hoped that some relief would come before the land was entirely denuded.

And yet no relief came. As a last resort, the President of the United States invited the various nations to send their ablest men to an international congress. The governments quickly responded, and agreed to adopt any propositions that might be recommended. Soon the most noted scientists of the whole world were in session in Washington.

For three months the world breathlessly awaited the result of their labors.

But there was no result. The congress had done nothing. It saw no possibility of doing anything, and it was about to say so and adjourn.

But at this juncture a most remarkable occurrence was to happen.

CHAPTER II.

THE WIZARD OF SCIENCE.

EACH tick of the clock upon the wall boomed through the stillness like a knell of life upon the planet. And with the passing of each moment the members expected to hear the President declare the conference at an end. But, as if expecting the intervention of some miracle, the executive made no move, sitting lost in thought, his head dropped dejectedly upon his breast. The scene was intensely dramatic. The fate of humanity depended upon the next few minutes.

Suddenly all eyes were lifted. There had been no sound. But the President had raised his haggard face to the assembly, and some silent force had communicated the fact. A few moments he sat still, gazing into the intent faces before him. Then he slowly rose to his feet. There was another dead pause. It was only when the silence became almost too painful for endurance that he stepped forward to speak.

At that instant an attendant entered and handed the President a card. It bore an unknown name:

DR. MARX LUXX.

The President seemed about to deny the visitor admittance; but he hesitated, and presently turned to the attendant with the direction: "Admit him."

There was another nervous pause until the door softly opened again. All eyes turned to the entrance, and suddenly every person in the room experienced a strange thrill. At that moment there had entered the most remarkable being any one present had ever seen.

The visitor was a tall, powerfully built man, with blazing eyes, heavy nose, strong chin, deeply grooved face, and the ability to master people with a look. The first glimpse of him conveyed an impression of boundless power. By contrast with this man, the ablest intellects in the room seemed insignificant. And yet there could be no doubt that he was partially insane. The intense fire smoldering in his eyes was proof of it. There was apparent a superhuman mind, still marshaling its forces, but about to totter into chaos of its own great weight.

But, apart from these easily discernible characteristics, the most striking feature of the man was something that no one could define. There was something uncanny, unreal, about him—some subtle quality lurking somewhere in his make-up—which, though no one could explain why, at once set him widely apart from all other men. He seemed to fill the room with a chill—such as one sometimes feels if unexpectedly thrust into the presence of the dead. From the moment he entered the chamber he became, by reason of this strange power, the dominating mind of the assemblage.

The visitor stepped confidently to-

ward the President's desk. As he did so, he swept the room with a commanding gaze that seemed to weave a spell over the scientists. The President had apparently succumbed to the mastery of the glance, for he stood silent and embarrassed while the stranger approached him. But the caller appeared not to notice this.

"I am Dr. Marx Luxx," he announced with a slight gesture toward his card, which the executive still held. Without waiting for a reply, he continued:

"I have come to end your trouble."

This statement was greeted with a continuance of the quiet astonishment. The visitor now noticed the effect he had produced, and he spoke again in a more persuasive tone.

"I have come to offer you relief," he said. "I have solved your problem. I can even improve the old conditions a hundredfold."

By this time the President had somewhat regained his composure. "You have solved the fuel difficulty?" he exclaimed.

"Completely."

A hundred times the congress had listened to similar claims. And a hundred times disappointment had followed. But this time the doubt, which had become habitual, was absent.

"By what means have you accomplished this?" inquired the executive.

"By the extraction of unlimited electricity from the air," answered the visitor.

"Without the medium of heat?"

"Entirely so."

For an instant the President looked incredulous. But if the stranger noticed it, he gave no sign. Quickly, however, the President mastered himself. He placed a chair beside his own at the desk, and requested the visitor to be seated.

"Will you kindly tell us something about your invention, Dr. Luxx?" he asked.

"I will first outline as briefly as possible the nature of my appliance," replied the visitor. "Then I will tell you how I propose to use it."

There was not the slightest sound in any part of the room as the scientists waited for the speaker to proceed.

"As I stated," Dr. Luxx continued, "I can extract unlimited electricity from the air we breathe. I employ no heat, nor any sort of mechanical generators. My only appliance is a motionless and indestructible accumulator of my own invention. All that I require for its installation is a high mountain. There is no limit to the energy obtainable. The plant I now have in operation is sending to waste nearly ten million horse-power. In a comparatively short time I can furnish vastly more electricity than you were utilizing when the coal famine began."

It was fortunate that Dr. Luxx paused at this point. For already the scientists were astounded. *Ten million horse-power from a single plant!* If any other man had made that statement he would have been laughed at. But the masterful man sitting there at the President's desk commanded confidence. Still, it was some moments before any one could find words. The visitor, however, seemed perfectly willing to allow his statements time to take effect.

"Did I understand you to say," the President asked finally, "that your invention discards the use of generators, or dynamos, upon which the world now depends for its electricity?"

"Just so. That change in the method of arousing electrical currents is the fundamental feature of my invention. Heretofore, all electrical energy has been produced by means of friction or agitation. It is a mystery to me why this primitive method was not discarded long ago. I have done so. Instead of agitating the electrical atoms, I simply accumulate them. For this reason I have called my appliance the Luxx Electrical Accumulator."

"By what means do you gather this electricity?"

"That," retorted Dr. Luxx emphatically, "I must beg to keep to myself. I do not intend to share my secret with the world. I shall allow you to derive the benefits from my labors. The discovery itself must forever remain known only to me."

"But is it not even patented?" exclaimed the President.

"No!" the visitor contemptuously snorted. "It is too valuable to give to the world!"

"Suppose you should die!"

"Others would carry on my work.

The secret would not be allowed to perish with me."

"Will it not be discovered in time?"

Dr. Luxx gave the President a look which made the executive quail. "It will *not* be discovered!" he retorted. "*Never!*" And he emphasized his remarks with blows of his heavy fist upon the desk. "My invention utilizes powers of which your puny science has never dreamed! I am centuries ahead of you!"

If the visitor had sought to awe the congress into a belief in his power, he had certainly succeeded. But his resentment quickly passed.

"We are wasting time," he said. "Let me outline my plan for your relief. My present plant, as I told you, has a capacity of nearly ten million horse-power. Possibly I can increase that in other plants. A high mountain is necessary to the proper installation of the accumulator, for the reason that I utilize the contact of this great mass of rock with the atmosphere. There are plenty of available mountains all over the world. If you accept my terms, within a year I can erect about ten more plants, each with nearly a ten million horse-power capacity. Every year after the first, I can open probably twenty such accumulators, until the needs of the whole world are supplied. The electrical atoms in the atmosphere can never become exhausted, so you will forever be relieved from the danger of such a situation as the coal famine has caused."

The speaker paused and looked about at the scientists.

"But you will be practically the sole producer of the world's heat, light, and power," the President pointed out. "Your authority will be unlimited!"

"I realize that," Dr. Luxx agreed. "But I have a plan for curbing that authority. I intend to retain the sole ownership and operation of the power-plants. I will be the one producer of the world's electricity, for the present hydraulic companies cannot compete with me. But I shall divest myself of most of the power this monopoly gives me. Such absolute control of the earth's resources is too great to remain in the hands of any one man. So long as I live, matters would probably run smoothly. I want no more than I am fairly entitled to by my invention. But some of my descendants might be disposed to use their power unwisely.

"To obviate such a possibility, I shall require the governments to establish special departments for the sale of electricity to individual consumers. I will turn over my entire output to these departments at a fixed price. They can resell it to whom and at whatever price they see fit. They can regulate rates and prevent discrimination. I believe every one must recognize the fairness of this arrangement."

A few minutes' thought did convince the congress of the wisdom and equity of the plan. If this man's invention were all that he claimed, there had certainly appeared in him a new savior of the human race. But could he actually do all that he promised? A little caution was now asserting itself. No one present had ever heard of Marx Luxx before. Who was he? His nationality could not be determined from either his appearance or his speech; he seemed a curious combination of several nationalities. Where and how had he acquired the supreme scientific knowledge of which he boasted? He could hardly have attained to eminence in his profession without being known somewhere. But there were present representatives from every important nation upon the globe, and each was certain that he had never heard the visitor's name mentioned in his own country. Undoubtedly, the man was more or less insane. Had he really accomplished this miracle of science? Or, had a disordered brain simply led him to believe that he had? Upon this question depended the earth's future. The President finally put the question to him:

"How can you prove your claims, Dr. Luxx?"

"I shall be pleased to conduct the members of this congress through my plant at any time, and to explain the scientific basis for my work."

"Where is the plant?"

"In Colorado. It is established at the foot of Lang's Peak, near Piney Park, about ninety-four miles north of Denver."

The executive regarded the inventor for a moment before asking his next question:

"What terms do you demand?"

The visitor drew from his pocket a small printed document, which he handed to the President. "You will find my terms and my entire scheme outlined there," he said. "That can serve as a memorandum for an agreement, if we reach one. Briefly, my terms are: a cash payment, within one hundred days after I connect my first plant with the world, of five thousand million dollars. That is simply a bonus for the utilization of my invention. The money can be raised by the nations jointly. Then the governments are to give me, outright, such mountain peaks as I shall designate. I will erect the electric plants solely at my own expense. For the electricity I will charge a uniform rate of one dollar per horse-power per year. I have already told you that during the first year I can erect about ten plants, and each year after that about twenty, and that each will be of about ten million horse-power capacity."

When the inventor ceased speaking, the scientists could say nothing for sheer amazement. They simply sat and stared at the visitor. Could he mean what he said? It seemed utterly incredible. But there he sat—calm and serious and commanding. Several were already figuring rapidly, and soon the President dropped his pencil with a gasp.

"Why, man alive!" he exclaimed. "You would own the earth! The very first year you would receive about $5,020,000,000! The tenth year your income would be $1,800,000,000. And in the whole ten years you would probably get a total of $14,020,000,000! That is a little more than twice the value of the gold in existence! You would be the financial dictator of the earth!"

Dr. Luxx replied to this broadside as calmly as if he were merely discussing the purchase of a cigar:

"That is what I intend to become. My invention entitles me to no less."

He turned and addressed the assemblage. "Am I not, after all, extremely liberal? Haven't I the greatest invention of all time? Isn't this the price of life for the human race? Was there ever before a time when light, heat and power were offered to the people at the price I offer it—one dollar a horse-power per year? I have agreed to apply my invention to the public good, and to turn my enormous power over to the governments. Is it likely I would abuse the use of mere money?"

Dr. Marx Luxx spoke earnestly. There was nothing in his manner to indicate the slightest dishonesty of purpose. But the price he had named simply staggered the scientists. Such wealth in mortal hands surpassed their wildest flights of imagination.

"Just review the situation before the exhaustion of fuel," continued the inventor. "Your cheapest power was water-generated electricity. The installation of a fifty thousand horse-power plant frequently cost twenty-five million dollars. At this rate, a series of such plants with a total capacity equal to just one of mine would cost $5,000,000,000! And what would you have for all that money?" He answered his own question with a sneer. "A lot of revolving wheels—constantly getting out of order—and requiring a vast annual expenditure to keep them turning!"

The President had not yet recovered his mental equilibrium. "But can you not see the effect upon the people of such wealth in one man's hands?" he insisted. "The masses would stand in terror of you! And then suppose some one should eventually discover your secret—"

With a snarl of impatience, Dr. Luxx rose and towered above the speaker.

"Do you realize why I am here?" he demanded. "It is *life* I am offering you—life for every person upon this earth! Your little world is going to smash! I alone can save it! Take my help or leave it!"

He glanced at the clock on the wall. It was nearly noon.

"At three o'clock," he announced, "I shall return for my answer!"

Then he turned and strode quickly out of the room.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAGICIAN'S WORKSHOP

ABOUT a week after the events I have just recorded, a procession of vehicles, containing Dr. Marx Luxx and more than twenty of the mem-

bers of the international congress, wound down the steep mountain road into Piney Park, Colorado.

When the inventor had stormed out of the conference-chamber in Washington, granting the scientists a brief time for a decision, he felt assured of what that decision would be. An investigation of his plant had been ordered. But, meantime, the matter was to be kept secret.

As the vehicles slowly descended the mountainside, a wonderful panorama opened to the astonished eyes of the party.

Nearly two thousand feet below, the undulating meadows of Piney Park, brilliant with the green of ripening spring, slept in the afternoon sunshine. Ninety square miles of grassy, pine-dotted mountain park gently rose and fell away into the distance, creased here and there by some silvery stream. Enclosing this emerald pool in the form of a horseshoe, extended the rugged, snow-clad peaks of the Continental Divide. Crag piled upon crag, toppling at intervals into seemingly bottomless cañons, snow and ice lay white upon the battlements, or clung in patches to their sides, or slid down in great glaciers to swell the lakes in the gorges. The scene presented a strange contrast—this land of coming summer and this upper world of winter without end.

Away in the background, at the southern extremity of the encircling range, rose Lang's Peak, frigid, stupendous; the monarch of these mighty Titans, its hoary head crowned by a ring of gossamer clouds, 14,255 feet above the sea.

Exclamations of wonder and delight burst from the scientists as they beheld the scene. "There is not another spot like it in the whole world!" was the opinion of several.

Many years before, an English peer had entered Piney Park. Charmed by the place, he had secured all the land within its boundaries. Later, tiring of his toy, the place had passed from hand to hand, being used as a cattle-ranch. Far from the beaten paths of travel, the park had remained little known. Four years previous to the opening of this narrative, I had purchased the property, gratifying a desire I had long felt to live the free, open-air life of the cattleman.

After winding down the mountainside for nearly an hour, the vehicles rolled out upon the broad meadow and stopped at the ranch-house, where the party alighted. Some one called to me:

"Fred Stone, old fellow! This is like old times!" And a moment later I was wringing the hand of my dearest friend, Dr. Alexander Marvin, who was one of the members of the committee.

For a couple of days I had been pleasurably anticipating this meeting. My friend's brief message, announcing his coming to the park, had been no more surprising than enjoyable. It had been nearly a year since he had visited me, and the sight of his cheerful face was like a glimpse of an approaching sail to a marooned mariner. Marvin and I had been classmates at college, and afterward many tastes in common had held us together. His steady rise to a place of great eminence in the scientific world, and the arduous labors connected with such a position, had not diminished our strong friendship. Even after my coming West had interrupted our intimacy, we had not altogether lost sight of each other. I had found little difficulty in persuading him to drop his work occasionally and visit me at the ranch. Only his active participation in the efforts to solve the world's fuel difficulty had prevented our being together lately.

Marvin had not explained why the party of scientists was coming to the park, and curiosity must have been written in every line of my face as I greeted him. But as soon as the opportunity presented itself, he acquainted me with the object of the trip, and told me most of the facts which led up to it.

Presently he introduced me to Dr. Marx Luxx. I must confess that I experienced the same uncanny feeling remarked by every one else who came into contact with him. At my invitation the party remained at the ranch-house for luncheon, and the inventor requested me to sit beside him during the meal. Our conversation, which was very brief, powerfully aroused my interest in the man. But, though I observed him closely, I was never able to glimpse beyond a strange wall of reserve that seemed to hedge him about. Afterward he invited me to go with the scientists to see his plant.

Soon after luncheon we mounted horses and set out in the direction of the doctor's workshop, which he told me was located at the farther end of Glacier Gorge, a great gash in the lower slopes of Lang's Peak. Although I had never seen Dr. Luxx in the park before, he appeared to know the country thoroughly, and found no difficulty in leading the party over the easiest route to its destination.

On the way, Alexander Marvin and myself dropped behind the others, and he began to ply me with questions concerning the doctor's operations. He was amazed when I confessed that I knew nothing whatever of them. He could not understand how the scientist had maintained such complete secrecy, even in this unsettled region, regarding the installation of a plant so gigantic as his was presumed to be.

But then I recalled the rumors I had heard the previous year of the establishment of a hydroelectric plant on the head water of the Big Fall. And I told him of the new road that had been opened to the foot of the peak by way of the wild and uninhabited Allen's Park, and of the machinery that had been hauled over it. At once his astonishment vanished, and he expressed the belief that Dr. Luxx himself had fostered the stories of a hydraulic electric plant over in that country to cloak his real movements.

The distance from the ranch-house in Piney Park to the foot of the peak was fully thirty miles, and we had ridden several hours when Dr. Luxx suddenly halted and pointed down to a deep cañon below us, that extended straight away for about three miles.

"There," he announced, "is Glacier Gorge. My accumulator station is at the other end, but you cannot see it yet. We will descend here and follow the bottom of the defile."

The gorge presented a strange appearance. Every foot of it gave evidence of the action of mighty glaciers in some past age. Its walls, which were more than a thousand feet high, were polished from top to bottom by glacial action. Since the disappearance of the ice, more or less rock had broken from the sides and lay about the floor of the cañon. A stream, issuing from the snow-banks at the upper end, danced among these boulders, and here and there a stunted pine had found lodgment in some crevice. But for the most part, the floor of the defile was barren and smooth, and easily traversed. Towering almost four thousand feet above the far end of the gorge was Lang's Peak. And there was something awe-inspiring about its tremendous bulk, seemingly ready to topple down upon us. Far on high, a cloud had settled about the summit of the mountain, shutting it from view.

Through this strange scene the party picked its way until Dr. Luxx announced:

"There is my plant."

We were almost upon it, but none had noticed it, so little and unpretentious was the affair. We had expected to see a large building. But what the inventor pointed out was a plain stone structure, scarcely more than a dozen feet high, and certainly not more than thirty feet square. No wonder I had heard so little about the power developments over there.

"Do you mean to say you generate ten million horse-power in that place?" exclaimed the President.

"Principally from there," assented Dr. Luxx. "Although, I have one other smaller station."

Already the scientists were gazing at a peculiar feature of the place. Surmounting the roof of the building were three steel towers, probably fifty feet high, and much resembling the wooden structures built over oil-wells. Metal rods, about six inches in diameter, passed up through the centers of the towers, and rose to a height of possibly a hundred feet above them. They had the appearance of huge lightning-rods. Both towers and rods were painted white.

The house was situated not more than fifty yards from the base of the peak. And issuing from the building were three heavily insulated cables, which ran away up the precipitous face of the mountain —up and up, until they seemed mere threads disappearing in the clouds about the summit. Strong rails insulated these cables from the rocky surface, giving them the appearance of electrical conductors.

Dr. Luxx observed the gentlemen's cu-

riosity. "Those towers and rods above the plant," he explained, "are my devices for making my contact with the atmosphere. I will tell you more about their use presently. And those cables coming down the mountain bring the current from my other accumulator station. All the currents come to this one for control and distribution."

When the party had dismounted, the doctor led the way at once to the building. "I will first show you what little is to be seen," he said. "And then I will explain the scientific basis for my work."

The astonishment of the scientists took a fresh turn when they entered the house. The room was almost barren. About half the interior was walled off, and apparently the only entrance to this second apartment was through a massive steel portal resembling the door of a bank-vault. Across one side of the outer room was a huge switchboard, the like of which none had ever seen. The building was perfectly quiet; there was no sound of machinery in motion. A Chinaman sat by the switchboard, watching a series of indicators, apparently oblivious of every one's presence.

"This, gentlemen," announced the inventor, "is my workshop. I am sorry there is so little to be seen. But an absence of all moving mechanism is one of the chief features of my invention. I have two of these stations, in order to make my contact with the atmosphere at two points on the mountain—here, and again on the summit. It would be useless—if not impossible just now—to visit the other plant. It is a long, hard climb to the top of the peak, and a storm appears to be gathering above us. There is not a thing to see at the other station, anyway, as it is much smaller than this. It contains no switchboard. I do not even keep an attendant up there."

Then, turning attention to the walled-off end of the room, he continued:

"In that vault is the appliance by means of which I accumulate my electricity. The air all about us contains boundless energy, but I am the only person who has ever learned how to directly extract it. That process is my secret. But, aside from that room, you may go where you like, and ask any questions you wish. The accumulator in there is absolutely indestructible. Once its power has been established, it applies that power perpetually. Ten thousand years from now it will be doing just what it is doing to-day. It is sending through the switchboard electrical energy equal to nearly ten million horse-power. At present all that energy is going to waste. I am obliged to let it flow into the earth to get rid of it."

Dr. Luxx once more pointed to the switchboard.

"You have probably been wondering at the odd construction of this board," he observed. "There was nothing in existence that could carry the immense current I generate here. The largest indicators in use to-day could not measure a fraction of it. If you will observe these meters you can form some idea of the amount of power I already have at my disposal. At present I am taking from the air better than seven million volts."

At the announcement of these figures there was a general movement toward the switchboard. The scientists had been totally unprepared for such a statement, and they now stood regarding the black needles, that hovered over long rows of figures, in complete stupefaction. *Seven million volts!* It seemed stupendous; utterly incredible!

For some moments the inventor silently watched the amazement if his guests. His face wore a smile that was half a sneer, and it made him appear almost sinister. But soon he continued:

"Of course, gentlemen, you cannot be sure that I actually produce as much electricity as the meters register. And I have no way to fully prove this. If I were able to turn my current into Denver and other cities I could quickly convince you. But, that being impossible, I will resort to a simpler test."

The doctor stepped to one side and grasped a stout lever, which extended half a dozen feet away from the switchboard. Instantly the Chinaman scurried for the door and threw himself upon the ground, his hands over his ears.

"Now," the inventor directed, "kindly step back as far as possible, and crouch near the floor."

When he saw that all had done his bidding, the doctor himself bent as near

to the floor as possible, still clutching the rod.

"Watch out!" he called.

Then he jerked down the lever.

Instantly the interior of the building was flooded with a blinding flash of lightning, and there was a crash like a terrific clap of thunder. The very walls seemed to quiver. We were all thrown flat, our nerves tingling from a heavy shock. For some moments we were too dazed to move; and then we became aware of a strange odor, and found the air harder to breathe.

Presently Dr. Luxx called to us out of what seemed like complete darkness:

"It is all right now, gentlemen. My demonstration is over."

Still too blinded to see, we staggered to our feet and leaned weakly against the wall. Then the doctor and the Chinaman led us from the building. In the open air we quickly recovered our senses, although our nerves remained considerably shaken.

"What happened?" gasped one of the party.

"Nothing very serious," the inventor assured him. "I merely opened the switch connecting my other accumulator station. The arc formed by breaking the circuit caused the flash. That was just a small sample of the electricity I have under my control."

The amazement of most of the party was profound—almost comical. He might have told them he could magnetize the moon and draw it down to the earth, and they would have believed him. He had completely conquered his audience. He realized this at once, and then he set out to allay our exaggerated opinions and convince our calmer judgment.

"I promised to explain the scientific principles underlying my invention," he began, dropping his attitude of amused contempt. Then he continued, like a teacher lecturing his class.

"As you are aware, our atmosphere is full of electricity. Your own science has demonstrated this. But, of course, this electricity is not found in a solid mass. It consists of infinitesimally small particles, or atoms, which lodge on the invisible but receptive particles of atmosphere and those in the earth. These atoms exist like the particles of butter in milk. The butter atoms are invisible. But when the milk is placed in a receptacle, and submitted to a churning process, the butter particles are separated and collected into a solid mass. In practically the same way—that is, by a churning process—the world has heretofore obtained its electricity. The dynamo simply sets up an agitation which separates the electrical atoms from the particles of atmosphere.

"Now, my method does away with this churning process. It simply establishes an attraction between these atoms, so that they form into a mass which we recognize as an electric current. If you could devise something which, dropped into a pail of milk, would attract the butter atoms into a mass without agitation, you would have done just what I have done with the electrical atoms in our air. My accumulators are nothing more nor less than contrivances of that sort. By means of the towers and rods above the buildings here and on the top of the peak I virtually drop my apparatus into the air. The appliance itself establishes the atomic attraction. How it does so is my secret."

The party had been listening with rapt attention to the scientist's words. But at this point Dr. Marvin asked:

"Should you not have military protection for your plants? Your secret is of such tremendous value as to be coveted by all men. Suppose your stations should be attacked, and your accumulator vaults blown open?"

"Such an attack is impossible," the other replied. "No power on earth could successfully oppose me."

We all wondered what means for defense this strange man relied upon. But that he was amply prepared for trouble we could not doubt, from the perfect assurance with which he spoke. But one thing impressed itself upon my mind as the inventor replied to my friend's query: Neither then nor at any time afterward did Dr. Luxx display toward Alexander Marvin that air of sneering patronage that was so much a part of his manner. Could he foresee the future?

"Well, gentlemen, what do you think of it?" the scientist asked, changing the subject.

"It is marvelous," several answered at once.

The party remained at the plant a little

longer, discussing many details connected with the utilization of the invention. Dr. Luxx agreed to connect his station with the world as soon as a transmission line could be built to Denver. And when the visitors finally began the return trip they were thoroughly elated.

At last the great problem was solved.

Only one thing cast a shadow over the general satisfaction. This was the insanity of Dr. Luxx. There could be no doubt that his mind was gradually giving way. What would happen to the world should his intellect completely collapse?

As we rode along the back trail many a man turned in his saddle and gazed long at the giant peak, its summit still wrapped in clouds. Who can say what hopes found lodgment in their brains as they reflected upon the empire that would be his who could discover the secret hidden back there in the hills? And in one of the company, at least, a great ambition had its inception.

That evening, when the other members of the party were in bed, Alexander Marvin and I talked far into the night. And the next morning, when the committee wound up the mountain road on its way back to civilization, my friend remained behind at the ranch-house.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA.

WITHIN a fortnight the nations formally accepted Dr. Luxx's terms, and then the relief was announced to the world. Throughout the length and breadth of the earth the joyous tidings sped with incredible swiftness. The revival of hope was instantaneous. People almost went mad with joy. Men were now as wildly elated as they had before been miserably despondent. The statement issued by the international congress was very meager, but nobody doubted its truth. And in cities everywhere there spontaneously burst forth great public demonstrations of thanksgiving.

Most of the restrictions upon the use of the remaining coal were removed, and soon electricity was being produced fairly abundantly again. Many businesses were able to start up. And day by day the situation improved, and the universal suffering grew less. Millions of men still remained in enforced idleness, but their condition was made bearable by the knowledge that within a reasonable time their income would be restored. Investments of all sorts began to resume value. Many people had been able to hoard away a little money when the crash came, and these now began to put it back into circulation. All this added stumulus to the returning prosperity.

Even before the formal acceptance of Dr. Luxx's terms, work had been begun with all possible speed upon a transmission line to connect the accumulator station in Piney Park with the world. In a short time this was completed, and the doctor turned on his current. If there had lingered any doubts of the success of his invention, these immediately vanished. All the towns in the Rocky Mountain region—and some of the larger cities as far east as the Mississippi River—were soon deriving all the light, heat, and power they desired from Lang's Peak.

The world then awoke to a fact of wonderful importance. The new power was more than twenty times cheaper than the old. This was quickly noted by the industries. Many new businesses, previously impossible because of the cost of developing them, suddenly prepared to spring up. Existing industries of every sort planned vast increases. The world got ready for a resumption of business upon an unprecedented scale. Men confidently looked forward to an era of prosperity that would far surpass anything ever known.

Dr. Luxx was now busy with the preparations for the installation of other accumulators. At his suggestion the international congress in Washington had taken on a new function. It was to decide where these new stations should be erected in succession, so as to adjust the relief as equitably as possible to the world's needs. In matters of this sort the inventor displayed the utmost wisdom and fairness, and the people were constantly given fresh reasons for thankfulness that their salvation rested in such hands. Under this wonderful man's stimulus the return of confidence and prosperity made great strides. The world now merely awaited the erection of more plants and the turning on of the current.

But if hope for the future was unbounded, curiosity regarding Dr. Luxx and his invention also knew no bounds. In every quarter of the globe this interest grew day by day, as additional facts concerning the tremendous value of the new contrivance became known. At last the governments were obliged to publish official accounts of the doctor's plant in the Rockies, also giving his explanation of his work. But these accounts were so meager that they only heightened the curiosity. The few newspapers and periodicals still being published hurried the best writers obtainable to Piney Park. But they might as well have sent them to the south pole, for Dr. Luxx's attitude toward them all was unvarying. No one saw him. He could not be interviewed. No one was permitted within miles of his plant. He could not be photographed.

In vain was every effort to throw light upon the personal side of the great inventor. Not the slightest clue could be unearthed as to his past life. No one seemed ever to have known him. His nationality could not even be determined. To the world at large he remained a complete enigma. The very few people who met him invariably spoke of the uncanny impression he made upon them. But it was only in the course of his business that any one ever did meet him. He studiously avoided all social intercourse with his fellow men. Aside from his work of bringing salvation to the people of the earth, the world apparently did not exist in his thoughts.

Under these circumstances, it is scarcely surprising that many strange, and even weird, impressions of the doctor got abroad. His peculiarities were magnified, and the haunting mystery about him emphasized. Presently the more ignorant of the masses began to regard the inventor with superstition. An odd structure of fancy was erected about him. There were not wanting persons who began to whisper about that he was a supernatural being, sent to the earth by a Supreme Power, as they believed Joan of Arc and Abraham Lincoln to have been sent, to guide mankind in its hour of need.

Every one was now aware of the terms the doctor had secured, and envy of his colossal fortune was universal. In innumerable cases this envy bore fruit in efforts to discover the secret of his invention. In less than a week after the publication of the government bulletins, countless persons were seeking a way to extract electricity from the air. The doctor's claim that he was centuries ahead of the world in scientific achievement was considered a mere boast, intended to discourage rivals. Nothing could shake the confidence of thousands of men in their ability to discover the great secret. And these efforts were by no means confined to visionaries. Foremost among the experimenters were the scientists who had inspected the doctor's plant. The President himself toiled as hard over the mystery as any one. If all these men had previously worked indefatigably to relieve the world's distress, they now worked doubly hard to relieve Dr. Luxx's monopoly.

But at all these experiments the wizard of the peak only sneered contemptuously. It was plain that he feared no rival. And as time wore on it became evident that no rival was likely to arise, for not a vestige of success crowned the efforts of any of his would-be imitators. After a time, many of these experimenters gave up in despair—either because their funds were exhausted or because they became convinced that the mystery would never be solved. But if Dr. Luxx felt any satisfaction over this cessation of the experiments, nobody knew it. He said nothing. He silently toiled away. He avoided the prying eyes of his fellow men, and all the while the efforts to penetrate his secret grew fewer.

CHAPTER V.

A NEW MYSTERY.

"I BELIEVE that Dr. Marx Luxx is humbugging the world."

This opinion came from Alexander Marvin, who was still with me at the ranch. It was about a month after the wizard had connected his plant with the cities beyond the mountains. Marvin had just returned from a mysterious trip, which he had insisted on taking alone, and which had occupied nearly a week.

"How so?" I asked in surprise.

"I think his electrical accumulator is purely a myth."

The statement astonished me beyond measure. But I saw that my friend was in earnest. "But look at the tremendous power he gets," I remonstrated. "Where does that come from?"

"I am unable to answer that question," the scientist replied. "It is a complete mystery to me."

"But Dr. Luxx showed us that an enormous current was coming out of the accumulator-vault and passing through the switchboard. We could not doubt the evidence of our eyes."

"Our eyes really furnished us very little evidence," rejoined my companion. "We simply saw that an enormous current was passing through the switchboard. Dr. Luxx told us it was coming from the accumulator-vault. But how do we know that it was? It might have been coming from any place else on earth. We couldn't see the origin of it. And now I have good reason to believe that it does not originate in the so-called accumulator station at all. That, I think, was established merely as a blind, to turn suspicion from the real source of his power. His secret appears to lie much deeper than the plant in Glacier Gorge."

I was silent some time. "Well," I finally remarked, "this certainly beats me."

"And me," admitted Marvin. "The whole thing is a black mystery. But it has aroused my curiosity, and I am going to solve it if there is a way to do so."

We were sitting on the porch of the ranch-house, for it was a hot June day. But long white strings of cloud were drifting across the range and banking slowly overhead, presaging rain before night. For a while neither of us spoke. Then Marvin got up and went to the front of the porch, where he stood examining the sky. After a few minutes, he turned to me.

"Would you care to take a trip with me to-night?" he asked.

"Certainly," I answered; "I am in for anything. But I think it is going to be dark and rainy."

"That is precisely what I want," Marvin rejoined. "We shall not go unless it is very dark."

I knew my companion was weighing something important in his mind; but, being familiar with his quiet ways, I said nothing. Presently he added that the trip would undoubtedly be a hard one, and that we had better devote the remainder of the day to getting some rest.

At twilight we had supper, and I brought up the horses for the trip. Marvin had spent so much time in the park that he was almost as familiar with the place as myself.

He took the lead, heading toward the mountains.

It was an intensely dark night, which seemed to please the scientist. For a couple of hours we proceeded at a slow trot; then my friend left the road and took a new course up the steep, wooded side of a mountain. After another hour of slow climbing, we dismounted and tied our horses. From the country we had traversed, I knew that we were in Bardolph Park, a little meadow along Glacier Creek, about a mile north of the entrance to Glacier Gorge.

"Where are you headed for?" I queried.

"I am going up into the gorge, if possible," he answered. "A strange accident happened there yesterday, and I want to have a look at Dr. Luxx's plant."

"But can we reach the place? The doctor has had spies out, turning back the newspaper people. No one has been able to get near his plant."

"That is true, but the scribes all left some time ago, and I don't think the spies are out to-night. However, we will have to be cautious. We will leave the horses here and strike up the stream on foot. Do not speak above a whisper the rest of the night, and try to avoid making any noise."

The next hour was spent in scrambling over rocks and fallen timber. It was a laborious and often painful task in the dark. A slight rain was now falling, which drenched and chilled us. The only sounds that broke the stillness of the night were the roar of the stream and the murmur of the pines high overhead. But we plodded on, without exchanging a word, although we frequently paused and listened intently.

Finally the scientist stopped by the side of a huge boulder and whispered in my ear: "The plant is not a hundred yards ahead. I can't see a sign of life, but it's just as well to be on the safe side. Wait here. I'm going to reconnoiter."

Then he silently melted into the gloom, and I waited. It was not long, however, before he returned.

"It's just as I thought," he whispered. "The coast is clear. Come."

Noiselessly he led the way, until something black loomed up before us. This I made out to be the little stone building containing Dr. Luxx's plant. But hardly had I noticed the place before I gripped my companion's arm in surprise.

"Why, the plant has been wrecked! It's nearly gone!" I exclaimed, so loud that Marvin had to caution me to speak lower.

"Yes; it has been wrecked," he assented. "That is why I wanted to have a look at it to-night."

The place had, indeed, met with disaster. The half of the building containing the switchboard was completely gone, leaving not the slightest trace of where it had stood. The rear portion, forming the accumulator-vault, was still standing, but there was a gapping hole as big as a hogshead in one corner, where the wall had been torn away with the rest of the building. The transmission line that had carried the electricity from the plant was missing. Also, one of the towers surmounting the roof had disappeared, and another had been knocked over and was piled beside the ruin. We were standing on the spot where the switchboard had been.

In amazement I gazed about me. "What happened?" I finally asked.

"There was a rock slide on the side of the peak last night," Marvin said. "I was not far away, and it was moonlight, and I chanced to see it. It swept this place away like paper. The slide stopped and piled up over there at the side of the gorge. The wizard's switchboard and one of his towers are buried under it somewhere."

"So this is where you have been for the past week?" I inquired.

"Not here, exactly. I didn't get down into the gorge. But I looked over this whole end of the country pretty thoroughly."

For some moments I silently regarded the ruin. Then I commented: "So the world is doomed to more darkness and suffering until the wizard can repair his plant."

"Not at all. The world knows nothing of the accident. Denver and the other cities are lighted as brightly to-night as they were a week ago."

I looked at my companion incredulously. "But how can that be — with the source of their power gone?"

"It is evident that this was not the source of the power, and had nothing to do with it. As I told you this morning, I believe Dr. Luxx's secret lies much deeper than this. Apparently, this plant was just a blind. The slide last night seems to have proved that. I was high enough on the mountain to see the lights of Longmont and Denver. I had been watching the building down here, and was getting ready to leave, when the slide tore down not far from me. It swept the transmission line and this end of the building away in a twinkling. But the lights out there in the valley never faltered."

"It is strange," I remarked presently, "that the doctor should let us catch him napping this way."

"Yes," assented Marvin. "If he had been on his guard, we would never have gotten this glimpse behind his curtain. But he thinks we know nothing of the accident. And he probably feels that his secret is perfectly safe. I don't believe he has watched this place very closely lately. But come," he added, "we are missing the chief exhibit." And he turned to the jagged hole in the accumulator-vault. With me at his heels, he crawled through the opening.

"Wait a moment," he said then. "I will make a light."

He drew out a pocket electric flashlight, and threw a tiny glow about the room supposed to contain the great mystery.

"Why, it's empty!" I exclaimed.

"Precisely," my companion rejoined. "I told you I thought the accumulator did not exist."

At once we began an examination of the room. It did not take us long to see all that it contained. Apparently, it had been used only for storage purposes. There were a couple of big tool-chests and many rolls of very heavy copper wire. The only other things in sight were several kegs of powder and a quantity of white paint, in cans.

"It looks," I said, indicating the powder, "as if the wizard had a fortress somewhere about here to protect himself against intruders."

Marvin took no notice of my remark. His face wearing a very puzzled expression, he was carefully measuring the diameter of the copper wire. When he had finished this, we made another discovery that further astonished me. The three insulated cables that came down from the peak entered at one side of the room and, passing straight across it, went out at the other side, back of where the switchboard had stood. No connections branched from them anywhere.

We also noticed that the metal rods surmounting the building appeared, from the outside, to pass through the roof to some apparatus within. But, now that the interior of the vault was revealed, we observed a very different state of affairs. The rods did penetrate the roof. But they simply ended a foot or so below it. They connected with nothing, and apparently had never done so. This seeming total lack of any reason for the existence of the towers and cables outside greatly puzzled me. But presently I was struck by a new thought.

"Possibly," I said, "Dr. Luxx has recently moved his accumulator somewhere else."

"No," replied Marvin. "It is plain that no electricity was ever generated in this room. You can see that the only wires going out of here to where the switchboard was are the three which come from higher on the mountain. They are the only connection with the whole apartment. And if you will closely examine these cables that come from the peak, you will see that no connection was ever made with them in here. Their insulation has never been disturbed. They simply brought the electricity from somewhere else, carried it straight through this room, which was supposed to contain the source of the power, and on to the switchboard."

"Then this vault was simply a hoax?" I asked, loath to be convinced.

"Yes; nothing more. Evidently it was planned with an eye to fooling the investigating committee. Those towers, which he said made his contact with the air, must have been just a part of his stage-setting. When he had visitors, the old fellow passed his electricity through this mysterious-looking vault and out to the switchboard. But when the visitors were gone, I don't think a single volt of current ever came into the place. Even the transmission line running out of the gorge is a fake. He has a more direct line from his real power-house—wherever that is—tapping the line to Denver on the other side of the mountain. I discovered it a couple of days ago.

"But what puzzles me most," my friend continued, "is the doctor's reason for perpetrating this hoax at all. He claims that his secret is invulnerable. But, if it is, why does he take such extraordinary precautions to hide it?"

"Do you think the wizard is a mere swindler?" I asked.

"Not a bit of it!" retorted Marvin. "Now, more than ever, I think he is the greatest scientist that ever lived! Galileo and Ben Franklin were children beside him! It is plain that he gets a tremendous electrical energy without the medium of heat or hydraulic power, because there is no fuel and not enough water-power in this whole region to generate a tenth of his current. And it is equally plain that he gets his electricity somewhere on this mountain. But where? And how?"

"I give it up," I replied. "And you?"

"I am going to have a look at the top of the peak!" he answered with sudden determination.

CHAPTER VI.

A NOCTURNAL ADVENTURE.

A COUPLE of days after our nocturnal visit to Glacier Gorge, Dr. Marvin and myself were again sitting on the porch of the ranch-house. The scientist was studying the summit of Lang's Peak through a field-glass. The rainy spell had passed; it was clear and bright again, and the great mountains stood out like cameos against the light blue sky. For some time my companion continued his observations in silence. Then he handed the glass to me.

"Did you ever look carefully at the top of Lang's with the glass?" he asked.

"Yes," I said; "I have often tried to see Dr. Luxx's plant up there."

"And what did you make out?"

"Very little. The summit is so far away that even the glass is of little use. I have never been able to see a building up there at all. But once or twice, when the light and the clouds were just right, I saw three towers—like the ones above the house in Glacier Gorge. The things are painted white, and, at this distance, you can seldom distinguish them from the sky — no matter what color the clouds are."

"You are right," my companion agreed. "The distance and their color makes the things very nearly invisible. The sky here never seems to get a very deep blue, and anything white against it can scarcely be seen. Notice that patch of snow on the mountain there?" He pointed to a snow-bank on top of a peak scarcely half as far away as Lang's. "With the naked eye, you cannot tell exactly where the snow ends and the sky begins. The horizon line is lost. And yet the sky this morning is bluer than usual."

I raised the glass and looked at the top of Lang's.

"Can you see those rods that run up through the towers?" Marvin asked.

I studied a while longer. "Yes," I replied, "I believe I do. There is something that looks like a tiny white thread just above each tower. I have looked for those before, but I was never quite sure that I saw them. They must be much smaller than the rods surmounting the building in Glacier Gorge. And they are painted white, too."

"See if you can make out how far they rise above the towers."

At the doctor's bidding I looked once more. After a time I answered: "No, I can't tell. I can only trace them a little higher than the towers. Either they end there, or else they become invisible against the sky. But they certainly can't go much higher, for there doesn't seem to be anything to support them."

My companion made no answer, but he took the glass and used it awhile in silence. Presently he shifted his position, and I could tell from the direction of the glass that he was studying the jagged outlines of Mount Alice, the inaccessible pinnacle to the north of Lang's. At length he turned to me with the query:

"Would you care to take another jaunt with me?"

"Most assuredly," I replied. "Where shall we go?"

"To the top of Mount Alice."

"Mount Alice?" I exclaimed. I concluded that Marvin was joking. "I thought I told you before that Mount Alice has never been climbed?"

"You did. But, nevertheless, we shall try to climb it. The success of a plan I have in mind depends upon my spending a night on top of that pinnacle."

After lunch we set out on horseback, taking the old cattle trail to Bear Lake. The afternoon was far spent when we finally reached the little grass-encircled pool, tucked away in the heart of the range. Across the lake rose the great serrated bulk of McHenry Peak, and beyond this, and higher still, the jagged summit of Mount Alice. I hobbled the horses where the grass was good, and then we struck out on a course around the base of McHenry, arriving just before dark at the lower slopes of Mount Alice. From here the peak was not visible, and the scientist stopped.

"We will wait for the moon to rise before attempting the climb," he said. "I don't want to run any risk of being seen." Then he began a careful examination of the pinnacle above us with the glass.

"Do you think we can get up?" I asked presently.

"It looks pretty bad near the top," was his reply, "but still I hope we can make it. Probably no trained mountain-climber ever tackled it, and that may account for the notion that it is inaccessible. He studied the snowy heights a little longer, and then announced: "I think we had better work to the right as we climb, and try the last part of the ascent from the west. By that time the moon will be around there."

We had not long to wait, for the moon rises early upon the mountain heights, and soon it came insidiously, almost surreptitiously, with infusions of silver in the golden afterglow. In that light it was impossible to define where tints

of day were ending and glow of moon began. But soon it was evident that the tone of things had changed, and, while the light was still a purplish-blue in the depths and brightening on the snowy heights, the great pinnacle above us caught the first silver touch of the moon. And it was night. With the appearance of the moon itself, a great shining ball above an eastern ridge, we began the climb.

The next three hours were spent in a breakneck scramble up the precipitous side of the mountain. Advancing upward on a slanting course, we finally approached the lofty precipices that for a thousand feet formed the western face of the pinnacle. The ascent so far had been extremely difficult and dangerous, but it seemed only child's play to what lay ahead. However, I had been studying the heights very carefully, and now that we stood at last below the tip of the mountain, I took courage.

"I think you were right," I told my companion. "This really seems the best side to try to ascend."

"Yes," he agreed: "There are several crevices in the cliff that I think will afford us a way to the top."

Suddenly my curiosity got the best of me, and I spoke up: "I don't like to seem inquisitive, but I would certainly like to know the object of this trip."

Marvin laughed. "I should have told you before," he said. "We are going to have a look at the source of Dr. Luxx's power."

"What! Up here?"

"Yes. I think his real power-house is on the top of Lang's Peak. This mountain is nearly as high as the peak, and their summits are not half a mile apart. We should obtain a fine view of the wizard's workshop."

"Do you expect to get a sight of his invention?"

"No, I haven't the least hope of that. But, unless I am greatly mistaken, we will be able to see a good deal deeper into the mystery than we did in Glacier Gorge."

Edging his way into one of the crevices in the precipice, the scientist began slowly to work his way upward. I followed, not far behind. I will not attempt to describe that climb, for my only distinct recollection of it is one of nerve-torturing suspense. Never, as long as I live, can I forget the terror of it. It was such perilous work that many times my companion, who was a skilled mountain-climber, came near to turning back. Frequently one or the other of us would slip back a short distance, narrowly escaping a fearful drop out of the crevice. At other times we reached places where progress seemed out of the question, and we felt almost unequal to the task of clinging to the rock with the mere tips of our fingers. But our determination kept us fighting upward, somehow, foot by foot, until the summit hung scarcely a hundred feet above our heads.

Suddenly the moon ceased to shine. We glanced upward in alarm. The sky was filled with flying clouds.

"What a fool I was!" burst from my friend's lips.

"What is it?" I asked anxiously.

"I never thought to watch the sky. And now we are going to be caught up here in one of those summer thunderstorms that sweep over the range. They're terrible. The lightning has you at its mercy."

"I know what they are," I said, with an involuntary shiver. "But we cannot hope to get down before it breaks. The best thing we can do is to go on and try to reach the top, where we can at least hang on against the wind."

"Yes," agreed Marvin, "that is the only thing we can do."

The clouds had not yet massed solidly, and the moon shone through at intervals. When it was dark we clung fast to the rocky wall, and whenever a burst of light came, we worked our way higher. At last, however, the doctor threw himself over the rocky ledge that ringed the summit, and a few moments later he helped me over. Both of us were utterly exhausted, and we lay down to rest. It was not long, though, until we were able to sit up and view our surroundings. The summit of the pinnacle was a barren, broken area, scarcely a dozen yards in extent. We felt as if we were in a balloon when we glanced below.

Then, for the first time, I noticed Lang's Peak, not far distant, its great flat top still several hundred feet above us. It was momentarily bathed in moon-

light through a rent in the flying clouds. A number of bright lights were visible on the summit. Marvin had already trained his glass upon it, and for some time he looked in silence. Then he handed it to me.

I looked. After a moment I exclaimed in astonishment: "Why, there's a stone house up there four or five times as large as the ranch-house!"

"Precisely," assented my companion. "And—do you remember?—Dr. Luxx told the congressional committee that the plant up there was even smaller than the one in Glacier Gorge."

Again I looked at the peak. "Yes," I said, "and he gave us more erroneous information. He said he kept no attendant up there. But the place is brightly lighted, and I can see people moving past the windows. There are a number of them. I can't make out what they are doing, but they appear to be very busy." I returned the glass to the scientist, asking: "How is it we cannot see that house from the park?"

"Because the peak is so high and its summit is so large," was the answer. "There is a table-land up there apparently all of four hundred by six hundred feet. The house seems to be directly in the center of it, and is quite low. Looking up at that height from the park, the edge of the plateau hides the building."

By this time the storm seemed ready to burst, and I hurriedly crawled about the top of the pinnacle in search of some spot that would afford us a better protection against the wind. By good fortune I found a cup-shaped depression in the surface, nearly two feet deep and half a dozen wide. I called Marvin, and we dropped into the hole.

"We can't blow out of this, at any rate," was his comment.

Shortly the storm broke—opening with several puffs of wind and then a deluge of rain. Quickly there followed many blinding flashes of lightning and deafening peals of thunder. In a twinkling we were immersed in the heart of the tumult, and were undergoing all the nerve-racking horrors of an electric storm in a high altitude. Bolts of lightning darted out of nowhere and seemed headed straight for us, and, after striking apparently not more than a dozen feet away, were followed by terrific crashes of thunder that almost split our eardrums. Every nerve in our bodies seemed to tingle with the close approach of the electricity, and we were about reduced to a stage of helpless terror. Still, unnerved as he plainly was, Marvin managed to continue his observations of the doctor's workshop.

Suddenly I forgot the storm and sat bolt upright.

A large door had opened in the side of the building directly toward us, and a form had appeared in it which I recognized as unquestionably that of Dr. Marx Luxx.

"Look!" exclaimed Marvin at the same instant.

Even to the naked eye the dark, towering form of the wizard of the peak was visible against the light streaming through the doorway. He appeared to be watching the sky overhead, and to be giving orders to some one inside the building. Now and then several workmen—apparently Chinamen—would run past the doorway.

Through the portal quite a bit of the interior of the building could be seen, and with the aid of the glass, which my companion presently handed me, I observed that it had the appearance of a complete electrical workshop. One end of a massive switchboard was visible, and part of some bulky machinery—resembling a drum—which revolved at intervals. And Dr. Luxx had told the investigating committee that there was not even a switchboard in this upper plant!

By this time we were able to carry on our observations with less discomfort, for the storm was passing over in the direction of the peak. The lightning no longer struck so near us, and the crashes of thunder were less deafening. Soon the electricity seemed to be playing about the inventor's workshop, and Dr. Luxx disappeared inside the building.

After one unusually bright glare of lightning, my companion sprang to his feet and gazed with increased excitement at the peak. When he had watched through several more flashes he thrust the glass into my hand and said:

"Watch for the rods above the build-

ing. Don't take your eyes off the sky there until after another flash of lightning."

I watched intently, and before long there was a brilliant flash directly behind the summit of Lang's.

"What did you notice?" Marvin asked almost immediately.

"I could see the towers and rods very plainly," I answered. "They stood out like black bars against the light. And I noticed that the rods were much taller than I supposed. I could trace them to three or four times the height of the towers."

"Did they appear to end there?"

"I couldn't tell. They were no longer in the path of the lightning, and were lost in the blackness of the sky."

"Watch again," he cautioned.

But before there came another flash my companion snatched the glass from me and cried:

"Look! Look!" he cried. "Dr. Luxx just ran to the door again. His men are scurrying about inside like mad. Something very strange seems to be going on up there."

Just as Marvin finished speaking there was a terrific clap of thunder. Almost simultaneously came the noise of a terrific explosion from the summit of the peak, accompanied by a slight burst of flame above the workshop. It seemed as if the whole plant had been blown up by dynamite.

The explosion instantly brought me to my feet, and for a few moments we both stared in speechless wonder. Then I asked:

"Has he gone crazy and blown up his plant?"

"Hardly!" Marvin reassured me. "Don't you see that the lights are burning just as before?"

It was true, although I had not noticed it until then. The building was still ablaze with light, and nothing appeared to have happened. The workmen were no longer running about. Dr. Luxx himself stood erect and impassive in the doorway.

There had come a momentary lull in the storm, and all at once my companion pricked up his ears.

"Do you hear that noise?" he inquired presently.

"Yes, I hear something," I answered. "It sounds like the rumble of machinery running."

"That is just what it is. Look!" The doctor handed me the glass.

"You are right," I replied. "I can see it as well as hear it. That great drum is revolving at a furious rate."

For nearly five minutes, during lulls in the crash of the storm, we could faintly hear the roar and pounding of some heavy machinery. Finally, however, the sound grew rapidly less.

"The drum has ceased to revolve," I announced.

"And the noise has also stopped," Marvin added.

Almost immediately Dr. Luxx stepped into the building and shut the door. After that, save for the lights that gleamed from the windows, there was no further sign of life on the peak.

When we got back to the ranch-house the next noon I found Johnny Green, my foreman, awaiting me in no little perplexity. He took me aside and unfolded a remarkable story. I called Marvin to hear it.

The previous afternoon Green had been riding for cattle farther from home than usual, and had gotten onto the lower slopes of Lang's Peak. There he found two stray steers, and when he tried to turn them down the mountain they made off through a thick clump of quaking aspens.

As he followed them on his horse, he suddenly saw the first steer fall and lay motionless. In another instant the second steer overtook the first, and it also dropped in its tracks.

He dismounted and walked toward the spot.

As he approached the steers, he was still more startled to see Dr. Luxx step from behind a rock and come forward. Together they examined the cattle and found they were dead, although there was not the slightest mark upon either to indicate the manner of their death. The wizard then remarked quietly:

"Tell Mr. Stone I regret having killed his cattle, and will pay him for them."

Turning on his heel, he walked quickly off up the mountainside.

After hearing this story, Marvin became plainly puzzled; but his only com-

ment was to caution us not to mention the affair to other persons.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ATTACK THAT FAILED.

MEANWHILE, in the outside world a great unrest was slowly but surely changing the aspect of things. Mutterings of discontent began to be heard. No one thing could be cited as the cause of this feeling; it seemed to proceed from a combination of causes.

A large part of the people were still idle and were enduring great hardship, if not actual suffering. But no one was to blame for this state of affairs. It simply had to exist until Dr. Luxx could establish more electric plants to furnish the larger industries with power. In any mass of people, however, there is always a grumbling element; and these malcontents, watching the resumption of so many of the smaller businesses, began to complain of their own idleness. As usual in such cases, there were not wanting persons to turn this state of affairs to their own advantage.

The demagogues who had stepped forth when the world was in the depths of despair had not yet relinquished their activities. Observing the discontent, they now set about fostering it. As loudly as they had before urged the people to seize the remaining evidences of the world's great fortunes, they now besought them to prevent the recurrence of the old order in the dawning era of prosperity. They openly advocated the seizure by the people of the great industries owned by combinations of wealth.

But the chief target for their abuse was no less a personage than Dr. Marx Luxx. They denounced him as the greatest criminal in history. He was pictured by innumerable sand-lot orators as an inhuman monster, entrenching himself on the great mountain-peaks of the globe and sucking up the wealth of the world. The longer these agitators preached, the more violent became their utterances. And to the more ignorant of the people, knowing nothing about the strange scientist, these tales began to assume the appearance of truth. Considerable crowds gathered about the demagogues—especially in the United States, where the people were more closely in touch with the inventor's operations.

The greatest torch that could have been applied to this feeling now came in the shape of the payment to Dr. Luxx of the five thousand million dollars called for by his agreement. The popular fancy was staggered by this sum. And the agitators promptly took advantage of this to turn the masses against the scientist. They declared that he meant to use his invention and his wealth to enslave his fellow men.

At this juncture an unforeseen event, slight in itself, threw the world into a turmoil. A prominent newspaper published a story of the "imaginative" type, the work of a noted author, depicting what might happen if Dr. Luxx took it into his head to make himself dictator of life upon the planet. He was pictured as insane and seeking to subjugate the human race for his personal gain. Thrilling word-pictures were drawn of his use of his mysterious and limitless power.

By simply withholding his current from the world he could bring mankind to its knees. No armies or powers known to man could resist him. So vivid was this newspaper yarn that it gained a mighty hold upon the popular fancy. Before long many people began to believe that such a course of events was really imminent. A state of positive terror developed in some quarters.

The governments finally became so alarmed at this wild apprehension of the masses that they took strenuous steps to allay it. Official announcements were issued making light of the scare, and attributing the highest motives to Dr. Luxx. The doctor himself was induced to make a statement, reassuring the people. After that the excitement began to subside, but the more ignorant classes still doubted the inventor's intentions.

This feeling the demagogues now utilized as their stock in trade. Having attracted a numerous and enthusiastic following, these false leaders announced their proposed remedy for all future evils. They urged the people to seize the doctor's invention and operate it themselves. Although the source of the scientist's power was a mystery, they believed that the seizure of the plant would reveal the secret, and that others could then be erected.

Foremost among the agitators was a man named George Howard Vance. Possessing brains, a genius for organization, and undoubted courage, Vance, in any other walk of life might have become a captain of industry. He quickly whipped the spirit of discontent into a definite movement. Organizing several thousand of the more violent fellows into what became known as "Vance's Army," he set out for Denver, where he recruited other followers and prepared to march on Piney Park and seize Dr. Luxx's plant.

The people of Colorado asked the Governor for military protection, and the executive offered to send the State militia to Piney Park to guard the electric station. But, to the amazement of every one, Dr. Luxx declined the protection of the troops. His refusal was almost scornful.

"Keep your soldiers," he replied. "I don't want to take care of them. Vance is harmless."

But as the days passed it became apparent to the world that Vance was not harmless. At last his "army" started for Piney Park. The people of the State became terrified; and then the Governor, acceding to the popular demand, disregarded the inventor's wishes and rushed a large force of troops north to head off Vance's men. There being a railroad within fifty miles of the park, the troops arrived ahead of the mob.

Only two wagon-roads connected Piney Park with the outside world. One of these came from the railroad to Lyons, and entered through a gap in the eastern rim of the mountains. The other came from the south, through Allen's Park, and descended across the eastern foot-hills of Lang's Peak.

Fully expecting Vance's army to take the much shorter road through Allen's Park, the troops crossed to that entrance to the park and awaited the mob's approach. But the astute Vance, by a quick march, came by way of Lyons, and was effecting an entrance into Piney when discovered. One of my cow-punchers happened to see the approach of the "army," and warned the troops. By prompt action, Vance was turned back without bloodshed.

The "army" went into camp near the park and waited. Great crowds of curious persons had followed from Denver to see the expected "war." But the conflict did not come, for Vance realized that he was outnumbered three to one. After remaining in camp about ten days, the "army's" provisions gave out, and the attack was abandoned. The mob dispersed and strayed back to Denver.

Although the troops remained, the trouble now seemed to have completely subsided, and the world looked for no further interference with Dr. Luxx's operations.

But there was one of my cow-punchers who held a very different opinion, and a couple of days later he took me into his confidence.

"This trouble has only begun," he said. "This Vance is not the chap to give up so easily. I knew him several years ago—when he didn't call himself Vance. He is a dangerous man."

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE TRAIL OF A MYSTERY.

SINCE the night of our adventure on the top of Mount Alice, I had noticed a decided change in my friend. Usually exceedingly active, Marvin had fallen into a state of listlessness. He did little but sit about the porch of the ranch-house, lost in thought or gazing at Lang's Peak through his field-glass. Sometimes, without a word to any one, he would go off alone on horseback and remain two or three days. When he returned he would say nothing of where he had been; indeed, he had become extremely self-contained. Not since the departure of Vance's army had he mentioned Dr. Luxx or the plant on the peak. He even seemed intentionally to avoid conversation on this topic. I could not account for the change in him; but I affected not to notice it, and kept my own counsel.

One day I mentioned to the scientist that I thought of taking a brief trip to Denver. He looked up in surprise, and asked if it were absolutely necessary for me to go just then. I told him it was not, whereupon he seemed relieved.

"Then, by all means, do not go," he said. "I will shortly need the assistance of a trusted friend in some experiments, and you are the only person I care to take into my confidence."

I assured him that, in that case, I would remain. "Are you still studying over Dr. Luxx's mystery?" I asked.

"Yes," he admitted. "To tell you the truth, the matter has never left my mind. I have scarcely had a good night's sleep because of it."

"I believed the matter was worrying you," I remarked. "But you never seemed to want to discuss it, so I kept still."

"That is just the reason why your companionship is so welcome to me," replied Marvin. "You are satisfied to await developments, without bothering me at every step." He looked at me and continued with a smile: "I suppose I have been rather unsociable lately. But I hope the happenings of the next few days will atone for my neglect. This mystery has held my thoughts to the exclusion of all else. Until recently I made no headway. That is why I said nothing to you about it. But now I am beginning to feel my way about in a rather startling theory, and your assistance will prove valuable. If the events of the next day or two demonstrate the truth of my suppositions, I will have made the first important step toward penetrating Dr. Luxx's mystery."

At once I became interested. "What have you learned?" I asked.

My companion was silent a moment. Then he began slowly, as if weighing his words:

"You will recall that when Dr. Luxx first connected his plant with the world, he furnished a little under ten million horse-power. So far as I could learn, this output never increased or diminished a particle. Now, go back to our climb up Mount Alice, and recall some of the things we saw that night. Above the doctor's workshop on the peak were three tapering towers, each surmounted by what you once termed a 'lightning-rod.' We were both certain there were three of them. We saw them clearly in the flashes of lightning. Then there came that terrific explosion, followed by the running of heavy machinery—although Dr. Luxx had declared that his invention was free from any moving mechanism. In a very little while, however, the machinery stopped, and we saw and heard nothing more about the place.

"But the strangest feature of all came to my attention a couple of days later. I learned that, on the day following our adventure, Dr. Luxx supplied from his plant on Lang's Peak an additional three million horse-power, or an increase of one-third of his former capacity."

Marvin paused, as if to fix certain matters in his mind. I remained silent and interested.

"A few nights later," the doctor went on, "there was another electric storm passing over the range, and I was once more on the top of Mount Alice. When the flashes of lightning were directly behind the peak, I could again see the towers and lightning-rods—but this time there were *four* of them!

"You know how our midnight visit to the wrecked plant in Glacier Gorge convinced us that the towers above the building there were simply a fake. But now I began to feel equally certain that the towers and rods on the summit of the peak were far from being a fake, and that they played some important part in the mystery. The appearance of a fourth rod simultaneous with an increase in his power convinced me of their connection with his invention. And the fact that the wizard painted them white, possibly for the purpose of rendering them largely invisible from any distance, made me feel that they were of far more importance than he cared to admit. I began to think that they formed a vital part of his secret. But *what* part? I felt that if I could answer that question I would have gone far toward solving the riddle of Dr. Luxx's power.

"As I told you, I made no headway for a time. But the other day a startling theory began to take shape in my mind. I have made only slight progress with it so far; but it is plain that if it leads in the direction I expect, Dr. Luxx was fully justified in ranking himself centuries ahead of the world's scientific development.

"But in following this train of thought certain investigations at once became necessary. The very nature of them, however, seemed to put them out of the question. I saw no way to make them. Finally a desperate plan occurred to me which may have a chance of success. Your assistance will prove indispensable in undertaking it. But I must warn you

that it is hazardous in the extreme, and you need feel under no obligation to join me."

"Of course I will join you!" I returned promptly. "I don't know what your scheme is, but I will give what help I can."

"Good!" replied Marvin. "I knew I could count on you. And now, what do you say to visiting the top of the peak itself?"

"What!" I ejaculated incredulously.

"I must confess it seems impossible," answered the scientist. "The wizard is hardly taking any chances on being surprised by visitors up there. Nevertheless, I am determined to spend ten minutes on the peak."

"Well, in any case," I announced, "you may count me in. When shall we try it?"

"The moon is full again to-night," he replied, "and I think we may as well go then."

The moon was just rising above the eastern rim of the mountains as Dr. Marvin and myself crossed the broad meadows in front of the ranch-house and turned our ponies into the road to Hallowell Park. It was nearly ten o'clock when we crossed the park and began to ascend the lower slopes of Flat-top. When we had risen about two thousand feet, to where the timber gave way to a barren, rocky plateau, we came to a halt. Below us, the whole of the Glacier Gorge country lay spread out in the shape of a mighty hand. The moon, now high in the heavens, lit the vast expanse almost as clearly as in the daytime; and from where we sat our horses in the shadow at the edge of the trees, we could plainly discern every feature of the land.

The elevation afforded a magnificent view of Lang's Peak, and my companion was closely examining the great mountain through his glass. The plant up there was in total darkness. The little building in Glacier Gorge, which had been repaired and equipped exactly as it was before the disastrous rock-slide, was also dark. Marvin seemed puzzled.

"I don't know whether that darkness is a good or a bad sign for us," he announced. "It may mean that the place is nearly deserted to-night, in which case our danger will be lessened. Or it may mean that something unusual is going on up there, making it unsafe for us to attempt the climb."

He passed the glass to me, and I looked a while in silence, until Marvin suddenly seized it from me and trained it upon a pinnacle of rock jutting from the mountainside not far distant. For some moments he looked intently, and then he returned the glass to me with the command:

"Look up there at the top of that pinnacle—quick!"

I did so, and presently turned an anxious face toward the doctor.

"What did you make out?" he asked, his voice sinking to a whisper.

"There's a man up there! I could see him as plainly as I can see you. And he's a Chinaman, too—dressed like Dr. Luxx's men!"

"Did you notice what he was doing?"

"At first he seemed to be talking into a wireless telephone. Then he dropped this, and began to study the top of Flat-top through a glass."

"Yes," agreed Marvin; "that is what I saw. It was just a glint of light on the telephone instrument as it moved that caught my eye. Now, what do you suppose that chap is doing up there to-night?"

"He must be one of Dr. Luxx's spies."

"Undoubtedly. I would stake my life on it. And just blind luck kept us from riding on where he could see us."

"Perhaps he has seen us, and is telephoning the information to headquarters."

Marvin looked again, saying nothing for a time. "No," he finally said, "I don't believe he is talking about us at all—or even knows we are here. He is watching something high on the mountain, and, whatever it is, he's excited about it. Look at him." And he handed me the glass, adding: "There is no show for us to get to the peak to-night. Something mighty unusual is happening on Flat-top, or I'm awfully mistaken. And that is why the lights are all out up there at the plant."

When I had watched a few moments I exclaimed excitedly: "He's coming down—as fast as he can go!"

"Yes," assented Marvin; "I can see him now without the glass! He's down

from the rock, and is running for the timber."

We had long been certain that whenever Dr. Luxx scented danger from prowlers, he established an effective spy system. But we had never before seen any of his men.

"I'll wager he has this whole country watched," I announced. "There is a trail over Flat-top from Grand Lake. And as sure as you're alive, somebody is up there on it to-night."

"Who can it be?" asked my companion.

"Well," I hazarded, "whoever he is, he must be coming down. And he must be dangerous, or that Chinaman wouldn't have fled from his post. We will have to watch out."

We sat still and waited, listening intently. The sighing of the pines was almost inaudible, for there was scarcely any breeze. A great silence lay over the moonlit world.

After a time I got off my horse and put my ear to the ground. A moment later I sprang to my feet.

"What is it?" Marvin asked.

"Listen!" I cautioned. "You'll hear it presently!"

We did not have long to wait. Soon there came a heavy, rumbling sound, which momentarily grew plainer. Before long we could hear a confused sound of voices, and a tramping over rocks and fallen timber as of hundreds of men. They were coming down the trail!

CHAPTER IX.

A NAMELESS DISASTER.

"VANCE'S army—I'd stake my life!" I exclaimed, as soon as I distinguished the nature of the sounds. "One of the cow-punchers, you know, told us Vance wasn't through yet!"

"Where is he coming from?" asked the doctor.

"Grand Lake. He must have secretly organized another mob. He believes Dr. Luxx's plant is in Glacier Gorge, and he means to attack it before the troops discover he is in the country. Shall we ride back and warn Colonel Wells?"

"Useless. The troops couldn't get here in time."

We listened again.

"They're coming down the trail, and they're traveling pretty fast," my friend soon announced. "We must get out of this. Come!"

Leading the way across the open place in front of us, he then set out quickly along the mountainside.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"I want to follow the course of Glacier Gorge, keeping just above it, so that we can look down on the attack," he answered.

Before long we reached another little clearing on the mountainside, from which we could look back to the spot we had just left.

"We cleared out just in time," declared Marvin. "See there!"

In the brilliant moonshine we could plainly see a great crowd of men filing across the plateau and descending into the gorge. They were a rough lot, and carried all manner of weapons. The scientist studied them through the glass a while.

"It's Vance's army, sure enough!" he announced. "And they mean business!"

Before long the advance guard of the mob began to reach the floor of the gorge. Minute by minute the stream of humanity came pouring out of the timber and halted. Vance himself was at its head.

When all the men were finally together, we could hear him issuing orders, and then the army moved forward, about fifty abreast. There appeared to be fully twelve hundred men in the crowd.

So swiftly did they travel over the level floor of the gorge that Marvin and myself, riding our horses through the rocks and fallen timber on the mountainside above, found it difficult to keep up. But for nearly an hour we scrambled along, until the mob approached the upper end of the great cañon. The moon did not shine down into this part of the gorge, and the inky shadows at the bottom swallowed the crowd from sight. I knew they must be near the accumulator-house. We were a thousand feet above it.

"I am afraid we are not going to see the attack, after all," I said. "It is as dark as pitch down there."

Hardly had the words left my lips before the black depths of the gorge were bathed in the radiance of high noon.

From the sides of the cañon a dozen great search-lights poured their brilliant rays upon the mob.

So suddenly did the lights flash forth that our horses reared madly with fright, almost hurling my companion from the ledge we were traversing. In an instant, however, we were at their heads, quieting them. Then we stood gazing below. But for all the flood of light the wizard was pouring upon the mob, neither he nor one of his men was visible.

Taken completely by surprise, the front ranks of Vance's army wavered an instant and then fell back upon those behind. But they did not go far. Vance shouted a command, and the lines quickly rallied. Guns were brought into readiness, and the mob got ready for the attack. Drawing his revolver, Vance placed himself in the lead, and was about to issue the command to charge.

But at that instant the door of the building opened, and Dr. Marx Luxx stepped forth alone. In the bright glare his dark, towering form appeared majestic. He paused a second and looked at the mob, and then walked directly toward it. A hundred guns were raised to shoot, but some mysterious force seemed to radiate from the man and stay the pulling of a trigger. As calmly as if he were approaching a group of children, he advanced until within a few feet of the leader. Then he stopped and spoke in stentorian tones that were heard by all.

"If you know what is good for you," he said, "you will retreat at once. I don't want to harm you. And ten thousand of you could avail nothing against me. But if you come on, you must take the consequences. I will leave just three of you alive, to warn others against repeating this folly!"

He stopped speaking, and stood still a moment, fixing those nearest him with a terrible look. Then he turned on his heel and strode back toward the building.

For a moment there was not a movement or a sound. The mob seemed to be under a spell. But suddenly a fierce yell burst forth, and with one accord the crowd dashed forward.

Dr. Luxx turned toward them again, and, with his arms folded, calmly awaited their approach.

On came the mob at a run, the mass of men seeming to have become a monster with but a single mind. With a frightful clamor, unmanageable, full of fury, the column dashed on. Within seventy-five feet of the wizard, then fifty, then twenty-five, it came.

And then something strange happened.

Marvin and I, watching from above, did not know what it was, but we were almost overcome with horror at the sight. We clung weakly to the ledge of rock and stared below.

Vance, a dozen feet in the lead, suddenly fell in his tracks and lay motionless. In a twinkling the first line of the compact mass came abreast of him, and, to the last man, it withered instantly into a lifeless heap.

The second line was not a dozen feet behind, and it could not stop. In a moment it also reached the invisible line and collapsed lifeless. The third row was now aware of the danger, and tried to halt, but the yelling avalanche of humanity behind pushed it on. They began to stumble over the bodies of their fallen comrades, vainly endeavoring to hold back the rush, but they were swept forward with the torrent and withered in death.

Hearing no sound of conflict, those in the rear did not know what was happening, and nearly a quarter of the mob was driven on to destruction before the rush could be checked. The bodies of the stricken ones now formed a wall almost across the gorge. Behind this barricade Dr. Luxx still stood, calm and silent, overlooking the slaughter.

Aware that some unearthly force was opposing them, but utterly mystified, the mob now stood motionless, gazing in wonder at the line of dead. They had seen nothing, heard nothing. Their comrades had simply shriveled into corpses before their eyes.

In a straight line from wall to wall of the cañon death seemed to lurk invisible, laying its hands upon all who approached. And it was as sure as it was sudden. None spoke or ever moved again when once he entered that bewitched zone.

Slowly, with increasing awe, the mob retreated a few steps and stood huddled together. An appalling sense of mystery began to creep over them. Then their eyes wandered on over the pile of bodies

to Dr. Luxx, standing there silent and implacable. And even Marvin and myself seemed to feel the shudder of terror that ran through the crowd at the sight of their destroyer.

The sight was sickening, awful. We had watched men die before; but the sight of this silent, unearthly slaughter almost prostrated us with horror. The utter mystery of it all staggered the imagination. There was something nauseating about watching those helpless, bewildered men sink down lifeless, without the slightest inkling of whence death came. I recalled visits to stock-yards, where I had seen steers slain with a single blow of the sledge, and I compared it to the present massacre, where men replaced the cattle and some unseen force the hammer. One thought raced through my brain: in this fashion, Johnny Green had told me, the two steers had been killed some time before on the slope of the peak. And I wondered if the two things could be related in some gigantic scheme of defense the doctor had erected about his workshop.

But the question was forgotten in the next moment's happenings. Another blast of the invisible destruction was breathed upon the place where the majority of the mob stood. Like a delicate flower in the grip of a heavy frost, the mass withered in instant death, without a movement, without a sound, and the ground was heaped with corpses where only a moment before living beings had stood.

The invisible scythe had now mowed down fully a thousand of those who had entered the gorge. It was some few seconds, however, before the remnant of the army realized this second disaster. Then a deep silence fell upon the living—like the stillness of a tomb. Not a whisper sounded through the great cañon. The survivors appeared to have been stricken dumb, and seemed mutely awaiting the summons of their Maker.

How long this fearful silence lasted I do not know. But presently there rose out of the depths a solitary cry—a cry that one would care to hear but once in a lifetime. It was like the wail of a damned thing toppling into the fires of hell. Some one in the mob had found his voice and was uttering his terror of the thing stalking there in front of him. The cry broke the spell, and a great outburst went up from the two hundred beings left alive in the gorge, a wail of terror and agony of men standing upon the brink of the grave and crazed by the sight of what lies beyond this life.

My companion and myself were completely fascinated by the horror of it.

Wild with a sudden overmastering fear, the remnant of the mob turned and began a frantic rush down the cañon, away from the scene of death. Fired by the superhuman strength of madness, the survivors fought like demons each to be first out of the slaughter-pit. Men massed together in their flight between rocks, tore themselves loose again, and sprang like beasts upon others who impeded their progress. The strongest made their way by brute force, yelling demoniacally as they pushed weaker comrades back or trampled upon others who had fallen.

For more than a hundred yards they struggled on, and then the relentless scythe again swung across the gorge. The foremost of the fleeing throng dashed into another of those invisible belts of death, and fell forward without a word. About half of the crowd had plunged to its destruction before the flight was checked. Then, aware that escape was cut off, every vestige of reason fled, and, like rats in a sinking ship, the men flung themselves upon the walls of the gorge, or fought like devils, or dropped to their knees in incoherent prayer.

The end came barely ten minutes after the attack had begun. The noose of death closed in from both directions upon the handful of survivors. All melted into a lifeless mass. The last man was stricken as he knelt in prayer beside a rock.

But as our eyes turned in horror from the last victim, Marvin and I saw that Dr. Luxx had kept his word. A good distance away three men were racing down the gorge—the sole survivors of the nameless massacre.

And then, as suddenly as they had appeared, the lights flashed out, and the inky shadows again washed over the Valley of the Dead.

The great tragedy was over.

When the news of the destruction of Vance's army reached the world, people

were dumfounded. The tale told by the three survivors was remarkable; their imagination had wonderfully supplemented their memory. Dr. Luxx's right to protect himself was not questioned, but the unearthly means by which he had done so excited universal wonder. Here was a mystery indeed! No satisfactory explanation of the wizard's destructive force was offered. Scientists generally agreed that the mob had been electrocuted, but the means employed baffled all scientific knowledge.

The mystery deepened when the troops entered Glacier Gorge to remove the bodies for burial. Medical experts sought to discover the cause of death. Autopsies tended to support the theory of electrocution, but there was not a trace upon the bodies of their having come into contact with lives wires. No clue could be found as to how the current had been applied.

An examination of the gorge itself revealed nothing. No electrical apparatus was visible. So uncanny did the slaughter appear that the soldiers were seized with an almost uncontrollable fear while in the place, and were kept at work with the greatest difficulty.

This fear spread to the rest of mankind. The hatred of the scientist now gave way to a feeling of awe. The people dreaded his power—the more so because they could not account for it. The ignorant classes became convinced that Dr. Luxx was some supernatural being, and the belief that he had been sent into the world by a Supreme Power to lead mankind out of its terrible plight received many converts. All the strange stories that had ever been told about him were now revived with added detail.

The doctor's past still remained shrouded in complete mystery, and this was cited in support of the theory as to his supernatural origin. A feeling of uneasiness seized the people, and there was a partial revival of the fear that the inventor meant to use his nameless power to subjugate the whole world.

This served to clear the atmosphere of another danger. The tirades of the agitators ceased, and the agitators themselves, fearful of arousing such unearthly power, slunk out of the public eye. It became plain that the wizard would have to contend with no further active opposition, and the Governor of Colorado withdrew the militia from about Piney Park.

Bit by bit, however, the scare blew over and confidence returned. But a normal impression of Dr. Marx Luxx did not return. The events in Glacier Gorge had wrought a change in the popular fancy, isolating the scientist from the rest of mankind. Even those who scouted the idea of his supernatural character did not deny that he possessed an almost supernatural mastery of his particular field. The world's brightest minds stood half in awe of his amazing scientific developments.

Strange to say, the most marked change was apparent in Dr. Luxx himself. Unmoved as he had remained throughout the destruction of Vance's army, the deed seemed to have weighed heavily upon him since. He was an altered man. Marvin and I caught sight of him one day as he was leaving the park, and we were deeply impressed by the change in him. His masterful air appeared to be ground under great anguish of soul, and the evidence of his failing intellect had become more pronounced.

The world, however, was ignorant of this change in the scientist. His power now was absolute. The attempts to discover his secret had practically subsided, and it seemed wholly unlikely that any one would ever arise to dispute his power.

CHAPTER X.

A PLUNGE IN THE DARK.

THE relief which Dr. Marx Luxx had promised the world was at last becoming an accomplished fact. A few days after the destruction of Vance's army, the wizard, with a company of his Chinese workmen, left Piney Park. Within a month he had established two more electric plants in the eastern United States, and it was announced that a few days would see the opening of still another on Mount Esther in California.

At this time Alexander Marvin suddenly announced that important business would require his absence for a short time, and left the park. Ten days later

he returned, looking more thoughtful than ever.

"I have had a most interesting trip," he said, as soon as we were alone together.

"Where have you been?" I asked.

"To Mount Esther, in California."

I looked at my companion in amazement. "In Heaven's name!" I exclaimed. "Why did you go way out there?"

"To see Dr. Luxx install his latest plant."

"And did you see it?"

"Yes, from a considerable distance, but near enough to enable me to see with the glass all that I wished. The government has given the doctor all the land about the foot of the mountain, and removed the settlers, so no one can get close to him. But I hid in the brush along a stream at a point commanding a fine view of the summit, and watched the operation from there."

He paused and became absorbed in thought while I sat waiting, hoping to hear more. Presently, however, he looked up and surprised the expression of unsatisfied curiosity on my face. He smiled. "I see you are curious," he said, "I will relieve your mind.

"Doubtless you still recall what we saw on Lang's Peak the night we climbed Mount Alice—the activity of the Chinese workmen inside the building, the appearance of Dr. Luxx himself in the doorway, the terrific explosion simultaneous with the peal of thunder, the running of the machinery, and then the return of quiet about the plant. Well, all that was repeated, down to the minutest details, out on Mount Esther. Only out there the storm lasted a good while, and about half an hour after the first explosion there was a second. The next day the plant began to furnish more than six million horse-power of electricity, with the promise of ten millions shortly."

Apparently Marvin attached much importance to all that he had been telling me, but, lacking his scientific acumen or his possible possession of a clue to the mystery, I could not understand the riddle. Presently I asked: "What do you make of it all?"

He hesitated a moment. Then he suddenly looked up and asked: "Did you ever give any special study to the Newtonian theory of the attraction of gravitation?"

"No," I admitted, puzzled by the unexpected nature of the question; "none in particular. But what has that to do with Dr. Marx Luxx?"

"Oh—I was just idly wondering, that's all," the doctor replied evasively. And then he switched the conversation to another topic.

"A new problem has been worrying me lately," he remarked.

"What is that?" I inquired.

"Before Vance's army was destroyed, I told you I was determined to spend ten minutes on the top of Lang's Peak itself. I am still determined upon that. In fact, later developments made it more necessary than ever. But how is it to be done? We did not know then the danger we ran. But we know it now, and it seems insurmountable. I can't even think of a way for making the necessary experiments if we get to the top of the peak."

We were sitting on the porch. The night was pleasant, but there was no moon. Down by the bunk-house a huge bonfire crackled in the darkness, and sitting in a circle about the blaze were my cow-punchers. This was their evening pastime. Usually the same entertainment sufficed to while away a couple of hours—the age of their stories was beyond counting, the life of their songs beyond computing, and their never-failing joy in the same jokes beyond conceiving. Now, as always, they were singing those songs which, through years of association, had become dear to the hearts of all cow-men. We listened a while in silence, the darkness hiding broad smiles of enjoyment.

Jim Pope, swinging his arms lustily as he concluded each verse with a hoe-down, sang his favorite song—one that never failed to elicit applause from his comrades—about the young lady from Boston who took a trip to "Pennsyltucky an' Kalamazoo, France, an' some of them other seaport towns."

When Jim flopped back to his seat on the ground and the laughter subsided, somebody poked Tod Fulford in the ribs, as a sign it was his turn, and Tod rose to his knees, the better to employ certain necessary gestures, and be-

gan another favorite, "Old Ben Franklin's Kite."

The crowd particularly enjoyed this selection, inasmuch as certain lines afforded them opportunities for chorus effects. And Marvin and I listened with amused interest to the absurd words as they rolled forth, time after time, with slight variation:

Old Ben Franklin made a kite—
HE DID! HE DID!
He flew it way up out of sight—
HE DID! HE DID!
The lightning hit the durned old thing
And hummed along clear down the string;
It hit him on his head—KERBING!—
IT DID! YOU BET IT DID!

Suddenly Marvin dropped his feet from the railing and sat bolt upright, lost in thought. Presently he rose and without a word disappeared into the house.

The next morning he was away on horseback before I was up, leaving no word as to where he had gone.

For a whole week I saw nothing of him, and then he reappeared late one night.

"Good!" he exclaimed when he found I was still up. "I was afraid you would be in bed, and I particularly wanted to see you." After he had drawn up to the stove—for the night was cool—he went on: "I suppose you wondered what had become of me lately."

"I was rather curious," I admitted.

"Well," he confessed, "I have been on Dr. Luxx's trail again. I would have taken you with me, but it would only have increased the danger. But tomorrow night, if you care to go and if the weather is right, I will take you on what I hope will prove our last expedition of this sort—and it is likely to be the most interesting we have yet undertaken."

At once I was all attention. "Where will it be this time?" I inquired.

"To the top of the sharp spur that juts out from the east side of Lang's—Mount Meeker, it is called, isn't it?"

"Yes," I told him, "that is Mount Meeker. But we can't get over onto the peak from there, for their summits are separated by that great gash."

"It will not be necessary to cross over," he said. "If the wind is right, I can conduct my experiment very well from the top of Meeker."

"How about Dr. Luxx's spies, and his electrical dead-line—or whatever it is—about the mountain?"

"That is what I have just been investigating. I have figured out his dead-line—although I cannot wholly account for its operation. He simply electrocuted Vance's army by wirelessly conducting a heavy current across Glacier Gorge at various points. I found the knobs along the walls of the cañon from which the electricity came, but I cannot conceive how he transmitted it. He is certainly a master at wireless transmission. And his position is impregnable, for he has that dead-line all around the mountain. However, I have found that there is no current in it except in cases of emergency — such as Vance's attack."

"But how about the spies? Doesn't he maintain his lookout any longer?"

"Only about the summit of the peak itself. The world is so willing to let him alone now that he has relaxed his vigilance. He has no spies on Mount Meeker at all; I am confident of that. Its summit is only three hundred feet below his workshop, and about a thousand feet away. But it is so effectually separated from the peak, and can be so well watched from there, that he feels perfectly safe. Our greatest difficulty will be in climbing the mountain. We must go around into Allen's Park and scale the south face. It is just a series of ice-fields and lofty precipices. If I am not mistaken, it will be every bit as difficult as Mount Alice."

"Well," I said, "let's tackle it."

The following day Marvin was very little in evidence. Occasionally he hurried out of the house and studied the direction of the wind a few minutes, after which he would again shut himself in his room. In the middle of the afternoon he hunted me up.

"I think the weather is going to be excellent for our purpose," he said. "We had better start as soon as we can get something to eat."

Soon we were headed away to the south on horseback. We traveled fast, and in about two hours Lang's rose directly ahead of us in all its massive grandeur.

From this point we could see the great gash that divided the summit into two parts. The smaller of these, Mount Meeker, was a jagged, razor-backed spur, lying directly to the east of the larger peak. So deep was the gash and so precipitous its walls that it was impossible to cross from one mountain to the other. I led the way over an old cow-trail that skirted about the base of the peak.

Darkness had closed in by the time we emerged from the timber into the meadows of Allen's Park. A cold, damp wind was blowing strongly from the east, making the night seem more like January than September. Presently we tied our horses and made ready for the climb. The scientist had brought a pair of light hatchets, which he said would prove useful in crossing the ice-slides higher up. He also had strapped to his saddle a small pack; this he now unfastened and slung over his shoulder. Contrary to our usual custom when on such trips, Marvin had brought a large dog; and to this he now tied about fifteen feet of rope, securely holding the other end himself. Then we began the climb.

My curiosity was soon aroused by the way my companion always kept the dog directly in front of him at the full length of the rope, and I finally asked about this.

"That is a precaution against the wizard's electric fence," he explained. "Although I am certain the current is not turned on, there is just one chance in a thousand that it may be; and if we should encounter it, we would never know what struck us. I am sending the dog ahead to feel the way. If nothing happens to him, we are all right. But if we see him fall, we must turn back instantly."

The summit of the mountain now towered just a mile above us, but we could not see to the top in the darkness. The first couple of thousand feet of the ascent was up a gradual incline, which we mounted easily and rapidly. Then this abruptly ended, and the mountain piled up to invisible heights in a series of precipices, one above the other, between which long slides of snow and ice loomed faintly through the darkness. Nothing had happened to the dog, and Marvin now stopped and tied him to a rock.

"We are beyond the dead-line," he said, "and we may as well leave the dog until we return." Then, adjusting the pack on his back, he led the way upward.

The climbing now began in earnest. For a long way it was simply a hand-to-hand scramble from ledge to ledge, a blind groping for footholds in the dark. At length, however, we reached the treacherous ice inclines, some of which we had to cross, and the ascent became doubly perilous.

After nearly three hours of steady work we drew ourselves up to a narrow ledge about five hundred feet below the top. It was just wide enough to afford us a resting-place while we got our breath. But before we were ready to go on, we became aware of a most discouraging situation. It seemed impossible to advance a step. Above us towered a precipice which fairly seemed to overhang, and would not afford, on its barren face, footing for even a mountain sheep. On one side of us the ledge petered out. But my companion did not despair. He began a careful examination of our surroundings.

The ledge, he found, terminated at the other end in the most dangerous of the ice-slopes we had yet encountered. It appeared to extend from the summit of the mountain to a point about three hundred feet below us, where it plunged over one of the loftiest precipices on the mountain. It looked to be not more than a hundred feet wide, but was so steep that not even a bird could cling to its face without keeping its wings in motion. For some time Marvin eyed the incline dubiously.

"Well," he remarked at length, "there is no help for it. We must cross here or give up our experiment, and that I'm determined not to do."

"Suppose we descend a little and look for an easier way to the top," I suggested, for I was almost unnerved by the thought of crossing the ice.

"I don't believe we could find a better way than this without going almost to the foot again," said the doctor. "And we would waste so much time that we could hardly reach the top to-night. If we lose this chance, with the wind just right for my experiment, I don't know how long we might have to wait for another opportunity."

"Then by all means let us go on," I agreed.

With that, Marvin removed his pack. "I will go ahead and cut footholds in the ice," he said, "and you can bring the pack across afterward."

In a few minutes he was working his way out on the ice, chopping steps before him with his hatchet. It was a slow task, and, owing to the great angle at which the ice was tilted, perilous in the extreme. The slightest misstep or overbalancing would inevitably result in a sudden plunge down the slippery surface. I waited in an agony of apprehension, often not daring to look at my friend clinging there with so slight a hold between him and death.

I tried to keep myself from thinking of the awful precipice that yawned below, and now and then I shut my eyes and stood still, listening to the steady clicking of the hatchet on the ice. Once or twice my heart stopped beating for an instant when the sounds abruptly ceased, but each time I found that the scientist was only resting.

After a time I noted with great thankfulness that my friend was nearing the other side, and would soon be in safety. I shut my eyes for a moment to steady myself for the ordeal of my own passage across the slope.

A second later the clicking of the hatchet stopped, and there was a smothered cry. I opened my eyes again just in time to see Marvin topple from his perch and go plunging down the ice. Almost before I could take in the awful sight, my friend had disappeared in the darkness below.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DETECTIVE OF SCIENCE.

I DROPPED weakly upon the ledge, completely unstrung. I did not lose consciousness, but must have been very near to it. How long I laid there, unable to move, I had no means of knowing. It seemed like an hour, but it was probably ten minutes. Finally I weakly rose to a sitting position and leaned against the rock wall behind me. I was utterly bewildered, and knew not which way to turn. For a time I merely stared below in despair. By and by I pulled myself unsteadily to my feet and tried to think what had best be done.

I knew that, after that terrible plunge down the mountainside, only the mangled corpse of my friend would remain. I did not even know where to look for that, as there was no telling how far it had been thrown after going over the cliff. But I knew that I must go to the foot of the precipice, and begin to search from there.

Accordingly, I slung my friend's pack over my shoulder and began the descent from the ledge. I was still so weak from the shock that several times I made false moves, and narrowly missed plunging to my own death. But I kept slowly on, and finally approached the bottom of the ice incline.

Suddenly I heard a low whistle off to one side and just below me, and, straining my eyes, I made out a dark form creeping slowly toward me in the gloom. I paused a moment, my heart in my mouth. Again I heard the whistle, and this time it aroused me to action. As swiftly as possible, I started toward the object. In a couple of minutes I was within half a dozen feet of it, and, all at once, a wild shout of joy almost burst from my lips.

There, alive before me, was Alexander Marvin!

With a bound I was at my friend's side, and was fairly hugging him. I could utter no words, but I think my feelings were made plain in silence. Soon, however, I noticed that the doctor seemed weak and in pain, and I quickly inquired if he was hurt.

"Only scratched a bit," he assured me, although his actions belied his words. "It is nothing. I will be all right after I rest a few minutes."

I helped him to a spot among the rocks where he could lie down at full length. Soon his wonderful vitality made itself evident, and he seemed easier. Then I asked:

"How did you save yourself from going over the precipice?"

"It was really a miracle," was the reply. "My mind was steeled for the end, when I suddenly caught a glimpse of a clump of rocks jutting through the ice near the edge of the cliff. Almost before

I could think I struck them. The jar must have knocked me unconscious, for the next thing I knew I was lodged there in a safe place. I was badly bruised, though, and for a time I could not move. When I finally got up, I saw that other rocks stuck through the ice clear across the face of the incline; and after a time I managed to crawl over here."

I was unable to offer any comment, for my heart was too full of thankfulness just then. But I think the pressure of my hand on his must have told him all that I felt.

Presently Marvin sat up and rubbed himself. "Well, I guess I'm all right now," he remarked. And then he inquired: "Did you bring the pack down with you?"

"Yes," I replied; "and, whenever you think you are able, we can go on down."

"Down? Up, you mean!"

"Surely, you are not thinking of going on after this?"

"Certainly," was the prompt response, uttered with a touch of his usual determination. "I would not miss the rest of this adventure for anything."

He looked about him a moment, and then added: "I am glad you brought the pack, because we can cross the ice here in these rocks. I think the climb to the top will be much easier over there."

After resting a little while longer, Marvin led the way out to the edge of the precipice and onto the ice, picking his way from rock to rock where they protruded through the slippery incline. About midway across the slide he stopped upon a rock larger than the rest, and said to me: "This is what saved my life. Not a very soft place to land, but you can see what a narrow escape I had."

A shiver ran through me as I looked at the black outlines of the jagged rock. My friend's escape from death had, indeed, been miraculous. The stone hump was scarcely a dozen feet from the brow of the cliff. If he had descended a yard to either side, or if the force of the impact had thrown him a couple of feet higher, he would have gone on to certain death. With a shudder, I turned my eyes from the spot and hurried on, and soon we emerged safely upon the rocks beyond. Both of us gave vent to long-drawn sighs of relief when we felt the solid mountainside beneath our feet once more. Then, after resting a little, we resumed the climb.

As the scientist had surmised, we now found the way easier. We were able to avoid all the ice-beds, and there were no more especially dangerous precipices to be scaled. It was not long before we mounted the broken ridge of boulders that formed the summit of the mountain.

Here we felt the full force of the chilling wind as it moaned among the rocks, and in a few minutes we were shivering as if it were a winter night. Still, Marvin appeared greatly pleased with this wind. He seemed to have completely shaken off the effects of his thrilling slide down the ice, and was now industriously preparing for his experiment.

"The wind is blowing directly toward Lang's," he said, speaking low, "and with reasonably good luck we will soon be hot on the trail of Dr. Luxx's secret."

As he spoke, he was undoing the pack he had brought along, and I observed its contents, as best I could in the dark, with deep interest. He produced a reel of fine but strong steel wire, and next a tiny electric lamp, one wire of which he connected with the reel, and the other with the rocks at our feet. Then he brought forth a bunch of sticks that looked like pieces of the ribs of an umbrella, and some dark-colored silk; and, putting these together like the parts of a Chinese puzzle, he soon had a light but strong box-kite. In a few minutes he was ready to fly the thing.

"Now," instructed Marvin, "I want you to hold the electric globe very carefully and, when I tell you, watch to see if it lights up. Never take your eyes off it. But, most of all, you must keep it well inside your coat, so that, if it lights, it cannot possibly be seen from the peak. That is one of the most important things of all. The globe may light at any moment, and, if the wizard's assistants saw it, we would be in a terrible fix."

The doctor handed me a pair of rubber gloves with which to hold the wire, inasmuch as it was not insulated. He then put on a pair himself.

"I'll let the kite go now," he announced. And with that he released the little silken affair.

It instantly shot upward in the strong

wind, and, being of dark material, was almost immediately lost to sight. For some minutes he continued to pay out the line, occasionally stopping and jerking on it, to raise the kite to a higher elevation. Finally he brought its outward progress to a halt.

"From now on," he cautioned, "don't take your eyes off the lamp. It may light up at any moment, and I want you to tell me the instant it does."

Then he began to walk slowly backward and forward across the top of the mountain, maneuvering the kite-line as if he were fishing for something in the air. Back and forth and up and down he went, sometimes paying out more line and sometimes reeling in part of it. In silence he continued this for over an hour.

By this time I was nearly frozen from exposure to the wind, and was trying to shelter myself by crouching behind a rock. Whenever my companion came close to me I could tell that he, too, was shivering and seemed numbed; but he gave no audible sign that he noticed the cold. He still tramped about, playing with the line. Finally he whispered to me:

"Are you certain there has not been even a spark in the lamp?"

"Positive."

"Look and see if the ground-wire on the globe is still attached to the rocks."

I hunted about in silence a while. "Yes," I said presently, "it makes a perfect contact."

For some minutes the doctor was thoughtful. "Can I have been mistaken, after all?" he finally muttered.

Being in positive misery from the cold, I spoke up: "We will have to be getting down from here before long, won't we?"

"Yes; we cannot stay over an hour. But I cannot bear to give up."

Then he resumed his restless pacing up and down. Nothing more was said. Half an hour slipped by. Then three-quarters. Even Marvin was becoming thoroughly discouraged. He crossed to the extreme edge of the summit, and even climbed down a few feet.

Suddenly he uttered a suppressed cry. "The lamp!" he called excitedly. "Look at the lamp!"

At the same time I cried out: "It's lit! It lit up brightly for a second, and then went out!"

"Watch again," bade the scientist.

He fished about with the line again.

"There!" I exclaimed a moment later.

"I thought so," was the reply. "Now notice if it lights just the instant I speak."

There was silence again for a brief space. Then he suddenly called out:

"Now!"

"Yes," I answered.

"Again!"

"Yes."

"Once more!"

"Yes."

"That is all. You may disconnect the wire from the rock."

A moment later my friend came to me. He was almost dancing for joy as he reeled in the kite and put it in the pack. Not understanding the cause of his jubilation, I looked at him in astonishment.

"Will you kindly tell me," I finally asked, no longer able to restrain my curiosity, "how you managed to light that globe? Have you learned to extract electricity from the air?"

"No," answered Marvin, "not yet. But I have drawn considerably nearer that secret. I succeeded in tapping Dr. Luxx's power."

"What! Way up there in the air?"

"Three or four hundred feet above the workshop, as near as I could judge."

I was too mystified to reply at once. But, finally, I managed to stammer: "But how? I don't understand."

"Do you remember those 'lightning-rods,' as you called them, above the workshop?"

"Quite well."

"Well, I simply maneuvered the kite-line against one of those."

"But how high do those rods go, for Heaven's sake?"

"Higher than you may think," was the enigmatical reply.

"How can he keep them aloft?"

"Do you recall my asking you last night if you had ever studied the Newtonian theory of the attraction of gravitation?"

"Yes. And I could not understand why you asked the question. Had it anything to do with those rods?"

"Possibly."

I thought a moment. "Then you believe that Newton's theory is in some way connected with Dr. Luxx's invention?"

"My dear fellow, Dr. Marx Luxx has left some of Newton's theories so far behind that it is a waste of breath to mention them."

Marvin was now imparting the finishing touches to the pack, preparatory to beginning the descent of the mountain. I watched him in puzzled silence until he hitched the straps over his shoulders. Then I asked: "What do you intend to do now?"

"Stop these midnight expeditions and go to work in earnest."

"Where?"

"In a laboratory that shall construct for the purpose."

"Will you try to produce electricity yourself?"

"Most assuredly."

Two days later he took his leave of the park, and for several months I heard not a word from him.

CHAPTER XII.

SOME NEW THEORIES.

SLOWLY the winter dragged its weary length along, and at last spring came again, with infusions of green in the tawny covering of the meadows and with music in the forests. The great mounds of snow flattened out among the rocks and vanished, and the streams laughed louder with the joy of sunlit days. Behind the mountains, the enormous winds blew themselves out, and laid down to rest. A vast peace stole into the valleys, and crept about the hills, and bade every living thing rejoice.

But still I heard nothing from my friend, Alexander Marvin. Even his whereabouts remained unknown to me.

During the winter Dr. Marx Luxx paid only one brief visit to his laboratory on Lang's Peak. He had become the busiest man in the world. A dozen of his stations now poured their great electrical energy upon the earth, and others were in progress of installation. Prosperity had almost wholly returned, and the period of depression was rapidly being forgotten. The wizard's wealth had soared to unheard-of figures, and no man who had ever lived had occupied such a wonderful place in the popular fancy.

Nevertheless, in the minds of a few, a great dread was taking shape and growing with the days. Dr. Luxx's colossal intellect was giving way. Those who came much into contact with him saw the steady change in the man. The day when his powers would crumble into ruin could not be far distant. Then what would happen? Were there really others to carry on his work? He had said so in the beginning. But was there another person in the world who could tread the mazes of science where that great mind had walked? If not, the world's danger was not past.

Realizing this growing peril, here and there an experimenter, more persistent than the rest, toiled with renewed energy to discover the wizard's secret. But no one made the slightest progress. And with the news of each new plant which the doctor installed, my thoughts turned with increased interest to my absent friend and his labors. Knowing Marvin as well as I did, I was positive that he had not relinquished his efforts to solve the mystery: and I felt sure that in his own good time he would apprise me of the result of his work. As the months passed I began to await the coming of each mail with more and more interest, in the hope of receiving some word from him.

But I was to obtain my first knowledge of my friend in a far different way from any I had imagined. One day, as I sat at luncheon, some one entered the ranch-house, and I looked up to see Alexander Marvin himself standing before me! Our greeting over, his first words were:

"I have solved the mystery."

"You have discovered Dr. Luxx's secret?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, and duplicated his invention. I have not actually put my work to the test yet, for I wanted you with me when I did so. But I am as sure of the result as if I had seen it."

While he lunched we talked.

"But what on earth are you doing here?" I asked.

"I have been here all the time—at least, within a few miles of you, most of the winter. I have erected a plant on the Mummy Mountain, barely thirty miles north of the park. It is all ready now for the final trial, and I rode over

to-day to get you to come and witness that."

I was astounded. A plant on the Mummy, practically under my nose, and I had never heard of it! Certainly the wizard of the peak was not the only man who could perform marvels.

"But how under the sun did you do it?" I asked. "How did you keep your operations so quiet all this time?"

"I didn't keep them quiet. I only concealed the real nature of them." He answered me with a smile that betrayed satisfaction. "The Mummy, you know, rises out of the midst of a desolate and unsettled country. You are the nearest settler by a good many miles. The complete isolation of the mountain, and the ease with which a road could be built to its summit, caused me to select it for my operations. Through agents, I purchased from the government a tract of the timber over there, and gave it out that a sawmill was to be installed."

"Yes," I interrupted, "I heard that a large timber company was preparing to operate over in that section."

My companion smiled again. "And then," he went on, "I had my machinery made in small sections by a number of firms in widely separated parts of the country, and shipped to Chicago and other cities in the East. There I had it reboxed and shipped as sawmill machinery to Cheyenne and other tributary points along the Northern Pacific Railroad. My own trusted workmen then hauled it in to the Mummy. Fortunately, there was not a hitch in my plans, and the people who know of my invasion of that section believe implicitly in the sawmill ruse."

"But why did you never let me know of your operations?" I inquired, rather hurt for the moment.

"I must ask your forgiveness for having kept you so long in the dark," he said. "I had not completed my work, and I did not want to attempt any explanations of it until I was sure of what I was doing. But now, if you will come with me, I hope to be able to make up for the many months of suspense I have occasioned you."

A little later we mounted horses and struck out in the direction of the wild and trackless country lying in the direction of the Medicine Bow Range and the Mummy. The very nature of the section we traversed was sufficient reason why neither my cow-punchers nor myself ever ventured over in the vicinity of Dr. Marvin's operations. The country was devoid of feed, so that the cattle did not graze in that direction.

The ride consumed several hours, and it was nearly sundown when we reached the lower slopes of the great Mummy. As we approached the mountain, we obtained a striking view of its peculiar outlines, from which it had derived its name. The peak towered above its nearer fellows in a form startlingly like the Egyptian Sphinx. Perennial banks of snow on its face formed fairly perfect eyes, nose, and mouth. Two of its foothills jutting forward made the forelegs of the figure.

My companion had for some time been casting frequent glances at the western sky. Now he remarked: "By good fortune a thunderstorm is brewing, and if you care to ascend at once to the plant we will take advantage of the weather to make the final test."

There was a good road up the mountain, and it was not long before we drew up at a large, low stone building on the summit. The house, I noticed, exactly resembled Dr. Luxx's workshop on Lang's Peak. My friend at once led the way into the building. And there I was nearly dumfounded by the strange sight.

The house was open to the sky at one end, and beneath this opening—protruding about three feet above the floor—was what appeared to be a large cannon. Close beside this was a huge conical-shaped contrivance, its apex pointing upward, upon which was wound apparently several miles of steel cable about an inch in diameter. Near by was a mammoth drum, similar to the one I had caught glimpses of in the wizard's plant. Wrapped about this was an almost inconceivable amount of copper wire, probably a little more than three inches in diameter. There were a number of other odd mechanical appliances about the room, the nature of which I could not comprehend. At one end of the place was a massive switchboard, similar in construction to the one

Dr. Luxx had shown the investigating committee in his so-called "accumulator station" in Glacier Gorge.

Engaged at various tasks about the place were a dozen Chinamen. They never spoke, and to all appearances remained totally oblivious of my presence.

While I looked about the plant, Marvin remained in the doorway, studying the sky, which was rapidly becoming overcast. Presently he came in and announced: "The storm will not break before dark, I think, and we can do nothing until it does. So in the meantime, if you like, I will explain what I have been doing since I left the park."

He then led the way into a fairly spacious room at one side of the building. This had the appearance of serving as a laboratory and study. But at one end of the apartment were a bed and several pieces of comfortable furniture, indicating that my friend spent much of his time here.

"You know how I began by spying upon the doctor's plants," he said—"learning all that I could about them from distant observation. And then that rare stroke of good luck revealed to me the destruction of the 'accumulator station' in Glacier Gorge, and the fact that the current which was supposed to come from there was not interrupted. From this I could draw but one conclusion: the power really came from somewhere else. But, if so, why had the wizard deliberately deceived the scientists who had investigated his plant? What need to deceive any one if his secret was so safe?

"I began to think that possibly the mystery might not be so impenetrable as he wished the world to think. And then I set to work in earnest. First I wished to locate the actual source of his power. I had discovered the electric cables coming down the peak and secretly tapping the transmission line to Denver on the other side of the mountain, and I at once had a desire to see the top of Lang's. That led to our climbing Mount Alice, and you know as well as I what we saw.

"What I learned that night of the wizard's secret operations plunged me into a mystery so dark and deep that for a time I almost despaired of finding a solution. But about a week later, as I told you afterward, I again spent a night on Mount Alice and watched the doctor's workshop during a storm. That night the flashes of lightning seemed to illuminate the sky higher above the peak, and in their glare I could trace those 'lightning rods,' as we then called the aerial ladders, running aloft for over two thousand feet.

"Even then I could not see the end of them they rose on into the darkness. At once I faced a new problem: how were those rods held aloft? They could not be, I judged, much over three inches in diameter. Now, every one knows that a rod of that thickness and two thousand feet long will not stand on end without support—especially against the terrific winds that blow over so high a mountain. They could not be held aloft by balloons, because these winds would blow the balloons so far aside that the rods would become almost horizontal with the summit of the peak. I could see that the rods rose as straight and taut into the sky as if they were being pulled upward by some great power. What was the secret of their strange defiance of the laws of gravitation?

"All objects, I knew, weigh less the higher they are lifted above the level of the sea. I began to experiment. The altitude at the ranch-house down in Piney Park is seven thousand five hundred feet. And even there, I found, objects weigh a trifle less than at sea-level. I next made tests at greater altitudes. This mountain we are on is approximately fourteen thousand feet—not much lower than Lang's; and up here objects weigh almost a third less than they do in New York or Chicago.

"Later, I procured a small balloon, and, attaching to it an automatically registering scale, I continued my experiments in yet higher altitudes. I ascertained that at a height but a few thousand feet above Lang's Peak, anything weighs only one-third of what it does at sea-level. This being the case, it became a matter easily within calculation at what point an object would cease to have any weight at all. In other words, these experiments proved that at a height above the sea which could be reached by many human mechanisms, the downward pull

which our globe exerts upon all the atoms composing it ceases entirely.

"But here I came into direct conflict with the Newtonian theory of the attraction of gravitation. We know that every atom of matter possesses the power of attracting all the parts of its mass to a common center. Every atom in the universe has this power in itself, and does not lose it by combining with other atoms in the formation of a larger mass. The larger mass possesses within itself this same power to attract all its parts. Let us, for convenience, call this the Force of Center. The earth has this Force of Center, and all the planets have it. Now, Newton's theory extends this beyond the superficies of the planet—off into illimitable space. But I came to the conclusion that Newton was wrong; that the Force of Center does not extend beyond the superficies of the atom or the mass. It is limited within the superficies of our world—this also being the case with the other planets.

"But so far I had dealt only with an abstract problem in gravitation. There was, however, a direct connection between this and the source of Dr. Luxx's power—although I failed to see it until chance opened my eyes.

"In testing the effect of altitude upon weight, one of the objects I used happened to be a strong magnet. And it at once became plain that there was some relation between the laws of gravitation and magnetism. I noticed that at a height where other objects had only one-third of their total weight at sea-level, the magnet retained but one-sixth. And the higher I lifted the magnet, the more rapid became its loss of weight in comparison with all other objects. Plainly, a magnet would cease to be attracted by the earth at a point much lower than other things. What caused this cessation? After many experiments, I concluded that this was caused by the beginning of a pull in another direction. Further, I was convinced that, when the magnet passed beyond the zone of the earth's attraction, retention would be necessary to prevent it from flying off into space. Unquestionably something beyond the superficies of the earth was exerting a magnetic attraction outward. But what?

"When Dr. Marx Luxx was explaining his invention to the congressional committee, he said he extracted his current from the atmosphere, which was full of electricity in the form of atoms which lodged upon the particles of air. Science, of course, knew that electricity existed in our atmosphere in this form. But there was one thing it did not know, and which the doctor did not explain: *how did those atoms of electricity get into the air?* This question contained the key to the whole mystery.

"As I have told you, the actions of the magnet in a high altitude indicated that it was coming under the influence of an outward attraction. After much speculation as to the nature of this attraction, I arrived at the belief that as the magnet drew nearer the region of the ether beyond our atmosphere, it was falling within the control of its mother element—electricity. From this I evolved the theory that, beyond the earth's belt of atmosphere, the ether of interplanetary space is all electricity. This electricity of space is, I think, if not the primary form of all matter, one of the earliest forms. The earth and the other planets of our system are submerged in a vast ocean of electricity. It was the attraction of this electricity for the magnet that was causing the cessation of the earth's downward pull.

"Now, the particles of this ocean are undoubtedly moving always toward the center of the ethereal mass by a gravitation of their own like that which draws the atoms composing the earth to its center. Our whole solar system is swimming along in this ocean. There is reason to believe, however, that the planets do not travel as fast as the rest of the mass. And when the atoms of space, moving faster than our globe, encounter the earth in their progress, the pressure caused by the obstruction of the earth forces some of the atoms into our atmosphere. At times this pressure becomes so enormous in spots that a solid stream of electricity bursts through to the earth in the form of a streak of lightning. But, while this phenomenon of lightning occurs only now and then, the gradual seepage due to pressure is going on always. And it is through this constant seepage from without that our air becomes charged with

all its electricity—just as the water in an island gets into its soil by seepage from the river. And this electricity, continually forcing its way in and continually making efforts to get out again and join the main current, is ever being replaced by new atoms—as the water in an island is replaced by new atoms of water. This passage of electricity through our atmosphere is the cause of such phenomena as the direction of the compass needle, which simply acts as a reed in a flowing stream. And it is from this mass of atoms in our air that the world has heretofore derived its electrical energy—by a process of agitation, set up by dynamos."

"My dear fellow," I burst out in astonishment, "all this is wonderful—simply wonderful!"

My companion paid no attention to my interruption. He simply glanced at the sky a moment, and then went on:

"When I had reasoned my way to this much of the theory, the rest became easier. Above us was an unlimited quantity of electricity. If we could only establish some connection with it we would have boundless power. The man living upon an island can run a pipe out to the river and the water will flow to him. Now, could we not put some sort of an electrical 'pipe line' into space? Once this electricity was brought here and utilized to turn the wheels of our factories, it could be disposed of by flowing it into the ground, whence it would find its own way back to the mother mass by the continual seepage process.

"As you are probably aware, science says that the atmosphere of the earth is twenty-one miles thick at the equator, a little less than seventeen miles thick at this latitude, and about three miles thick at the poles. And I have told you that beyond that atmosphere an outward attraction begins, and steadily increases with distance until retention would be necessary to prevent an object from diving off into space. Now, I reasoned that if a magnet could be elevated to the proper height, and if a wire were attached to this magnet, the object would stay aloft, and the wire would form a conduit between the earth and the interplanetary ocean of electricity.

"And this, I became convinced, was what Dr. Marx Luxx had actually done. Those rods running aloft from his plant to an unknown height were simply his ladders into space. And they were held aloft by the magnetic attraction of interplanetary electricity for some magnetized object that was attached to their outer ends. This electricity then flowed down the rods, through the wizard's plants, and out to the world. I was even more certain of this when I had applied a little mathematics to my observations.

"Do you remember that we found a great quantity of heavy copper wire stored in the wrecked plant in Glacier Gorge? At the time, I measured this and found it to be three and one-quarter inches in diameter. And this wire, subsequent observations proved, was what the doctor used for those rods above his plant—or the aerial ladders, as I have termed them. Now, an electric conduit is like a water-pipe: the greater the pressure you force into it, the greater the power you can take from the other end. Of course, inasmuch as this limitless interplanetary electricity is forever trying to force itself into our atmosphere, we could secure just as high a pressure as the capacity of the line would permit. And this pressure could always be adjusted to the capacity of the wire by increasing or diminishing the distance that the ladder was plunged into space.

"A little mathematics presently convinced me that the doctor's copper wire, three and a quarter inches in diameter, could transmit an enormous current of over seven million volts! This, remember, was what the indicators in the house in Glacier Gorge registered that day the congressional committee visited there. How amazing these figures are you can probably realize when I tell you that, in the closing years of the first decade of this century, the highest current for commercial purposes that our brightest engineers were able to transmit by wire was one hundred and ten thousand volts, the equivalent of about fifty thousand horse-power; and that when, just before the coal famine, this had been increased to about three hundred and thirty thousand volts, or one hundred and fifty thousand horse-power, scientists declared that the extreme limit had been reached. At this rate, Dr. Luxx, with four ladders into space above the peak, was bringing to

the earth at least twenty-eight million volts! But, then, I carried my figures further, and found that a current of seven million forty thousand volts would generate approximately three million two hundred thousand horse-power — which, as near as I could ascertain, was just the amount of energy the wizard derived from each of his aerial ladders.

"So, do you wonder," Marvin summarized, as he rose and went to the window for another look at the sky, "that I once told you Dr. Mark Luxx was the most wonderful scientist that ever lived? No wonder he could laugh at the efforts of the experimenters to extract electricity from the air about us."

I had been listening to this recital with open-eyed amazement. And now I inquired: "Are you really so certain of all this that you are going to try it yourself?"

"I am. I proved it by that little kite-flying adventure on the top of Mount Meeker."

"Tell me about that," I said. "I always wanted to know what you did that night—how you managed to light that lamp, and why you were so jubilant over the result."

The doctor laughed. "I suppose I did puzzle you that night," he said. "But all that I did was very simple. I believed that the wizard brought his electricity from interplanetary space by means of those aerial ladders. So I sent up the kite and manipulated its line against one of the wires to see if there was a current in it. There was; and, of course, part of it was deflected down the kite line, lighting the lamp."

"But," I insisted, after a little thought, "how did the wizard project his magnet and wire into space? Even allowing for the great height of the mountain, he must have had to traverse fourteen or fifteen miles of the earth's atmosphere."

"Do you remember the explosion that we heard from Mount Alice?"

"Perfectly."

"And my telling you that I heard two similar ones at the plant on Mount Esther?"

"Yes."

"Well, those were simply the reports of a very large cannon. The doctor shot his magnet, with a wire attached, up into space just as a life-saving crew shoots a ball and rope over a ship. The distance he had to traverse really mattered little, for the farther he passed out of the earth's attraction the less resistance his shot encountered. He could not send up the heavy copper wire first, because of its great thickness and weight. But he could easily attach a strong steel cable to the magnet, and, once having this aloft, it would form such a powerful magnet that he could attach his copper wire and send it aloft also. The farther he let this dip into space the greater the current he could bring down, until the capacity of the wire was reached."

"Then, what has a storm to do with the installation of the plant? Dr. Luxx waited for storms in which to send up his aerial ladders. And you are doing the same."

"The noise of the thunder hides the report of the cannon, lessening the chances of discovery. That is all."

As he finished speaking there was a faint rumble of thunder in the distance. In an instant he was at the window, studying the sky.

"Ah, it's coming at last!" he said, with a sigh of relief. "And now," he added, turning to me, "if you are ready, we will begin our looting of the heavens, and become Dr. Luxx's rivals in the possession of the earth."

CHAPTER XIII.

DESPOILING THE HEAVENS.

IT was dark now, and the mountaintop was very still. There had come that period of calm which so often precedes a storm. But already in the distance we could see flashes of lightning and hear the low muttering of thunder.

"We will not have much longer to wait," said Marvin.

For a time we stood at the door of the workshop, while my companion studied the coming storm. In the light that streamed from the inside of the building I noticed three heavily insulated cables that came through the wall behind the switchboard and disappeared over the mountainside. I asked about them.

"Those are the transmission lines for my current," explained the scientist. "I

have a fake 'accumulator station' at the foot of the mountain, just as Dr. Luxx has in Glacier Gorge; and I shall pass the electricity through that, turning suspicion from the plant up here."

After that we relapsed into silence for a few minutes, and stood gazing abstractedly into the blackness below. A strong feeling of suspense was beginning to grip us as the critical moment approached. Nothing was visible of the peaks around us. We experienced almost the sensation of floating on a raft in the midst of a boundless sea.

But presently the wind began to rise, and we could see the storm playing about Hague's Peak, less than a mile distant.

"It's coming," my companion muttered thankfully. "We must go inside and get ready."

The Chinese workmen were preparing to load the cannon when we entered the building. I observed that the gun was similar to those in use on battle-ships before warfare was abolished. Beneath it there was a pit in the rock, from which the mechanism could be operated. But it was the shot, which was about to enter the gun, that attracted my attention. It was a solid steel cylinder, cut lengthwise down the center, and the gash filled with some hard non-magnetic substance. The metal had been magnetized, so that it formed a powerful horse-shoe magnet. Attached to one of its ends was the steel cable, which was wound about the cone near by.

As soon as the cannon was loaded, Marvin made a personal inspection of every particle of machinery in the place. He seemed satisfied, and turned to the switchboard. His actions were calm and unhurried, but I saw that beneath the surface he was intensely nervous.

Just then the storm swooped down upon the mountain.

"Five minutes more!" the doctor exclaimed, his voice betraying the excitement he was laboring under.

For a short time he strolled restlessly up and down in front of the marble tablet, his head drooping forward, his hands clasping and unclasping behind his back. Then he went to the door and looked out. The storm was well under way. He came back and stood before the switchboard again.

The suspense of the situation was beginning to seize me also. I grew nervous, and could not stand still. With all my heart I longed for the critical moment to arrive.

Presently Marvin turned to me with the words: "We will soon know the result." He hesitated a moment, and then added, with the first touch of doubt he had displayed. "If it shouldn't work I will be a pauper. I have put every cent I own into this venture."

But almost immediately he shook off all outward evidences of his doubtful mood and went again to the door. The storm was raging fiercely without. At times the building seemed to be completely enveloped in a sheet of flame. When he returned he took some cotton from his pocket and handed it to me.

"Stuff this into your ears," he directed. "The report of the cannon will be terrific."

We both filled our ears with the cotton. There was another pause. Then the doctor motioned to the workmen, and they crouched upon the floor about the conical-shaped apparatus, holding their ears. He motioned to me also to crouch down. Then he took his place at the switchboard, his thumb upon a button. We waited.

A minute passed. Despite the cotton in our ears we could hear the crash of the thunder.

Two minutes dragged by. The suspense was becoming terrible.

Suddenly there was a mightier crash of the heavenly artillery. In a few seconds there was another. Still, Marvin made no move.

Nearly another minute passed. Then the very clouds seemed to open, and night burst into brilliant day. An instant later a terrific peal of thunder began to tumble through the heavens. My friend pressed the button, and—

There was a fearful roar, and the building was enveloped in flame and smoke. The scientist was nearly flung from his feet by the concussion. But he quickly regained his balance, and jerked the cotton from his ears. As soon as the smoke began to clear he motioned me to his side.

"Watch the indicator!" he yelled, pointing to one of the meters on the

board. In his excitement he clutched my arm and held it tightly.

In the rear of the room the cable was paying from the great cone with frightful rapidity and a mighty roaring that was almost deafening.

After a few moments I put my mouth to my friend's ear and shouted: "Is it succeeding?"

"I can't tell yet," was the reply. "Two minutes more ought to decide it. Watch the indicator for any signs of current coming down the cable."

As in a trance, we stood gazing at the switchboard. Every few seconds the doctor's eyes wandered to the clock beside the indicator.

A minute ticked slowly off. The noise of the cable flying from the cone never diminished.

Thirty seconds more.

Then two minutes!

Still the rush of the cable continued. But the needle of the indicator did not stir.

Two minutes and a half!

Beads of cold perspiration stood out on Marvin's forehead. And I felt as if my legs could not longer bear my weight. Each second seemed like an eternity.

Ten seconds more! The scientist's face became ashen gray.

But suddenly he uttered a shout.

"Look!" he yelled. "Look!"

The needle of the indicator was beginning to move!

Marvin sprang to the rear of the room. The wire was still flying from the cone. Indeed, judging from the sound, its speed seemed to be increasing. Only about a third of it had been paid out.

He nodded to a couple of the men, and they grasped a series of levers near the cone and stood waiting, their eyes fixed upon him. Then he ran back to the switchboard, where I was still standing, fascinated by the needle.

Bit by bit the black point was creeping across the face of the indicator. Now it was a quarter of the way over the semicircle of figures. Now half-way. And every second it seemed to be moving faster and faster.

The strain upon my nerves was now so great that I could hardly endure it. But Marvin was calm again. Every trace of excitement had dropped from him, and he stolidly stood there watching the progress of the needle, thoroughly master of the situation.

In a few moments more the point reached the three-quarters mark on the indicator. Then the doctor motioned to the workmen, and they began to tug at the levers.

A series of powerful rollers and clutches closed about the cable. When other levers had been thrown over, these things gripped the wire, and at once its flight into space slackened. Gradually the pressure of the clutches was increased, and in a little while the paying-out of the cable had ceased altogether. Then the needle stopped, pointing to the last figures on the indicator.

But, with the stoppage of its flight, the wire lost none of its tension. Evidently the magnet had done what my friend had predicted, it was hanging somewhere out in space, pulling away from the earth with a force that held the line as tight as a bowstring.

At once a platform with a thick glass floor was wheeled up beside the cone, and three of the workmen, wearing clothing and gloves of rubber, mounted this and began to cut the steel cable. The others drew out the end of the copper wire that was wound about the drum. Then they proceeded to join this wire to the cable. For about twenty minutes they labored away, but at last the connection was made to Marvin's satisfaction. The glass-floored platform was removed, and the scientist returned to the switchboard. The storm had now passed, but no one seemed to have noticed this fact.

"Now watch the large indicator," Marvin told me. And with that he signaled to the workmen, who threw over the levers, letting the line pay out once more. The heavy copper wire was dragged aloft as easily as the smaller steel one had been, the men regulating its release from the drum with the brakes. Soon it was flying through the roof so swiftly that the drum fairly hummed.

The doctor now stood beside me and gave his attention to the largest of the indicators on the board. Its needle was traversing the row of figures at a slow, steady pace. In about three minutes it was half over the semicircle, and I

saw that it was registering an electric current of four and a half million volts, or the equivalent of slightly more than two million horse-power!

Soon my companion had the workmen apply the brakes and slacken the flight of the wire. The drum began to revolve more slowly. A little while longer he watched the indicator. When it registered a current of more than seven million volts—capable of generating nearly three million two hundred thousand horse-power—he had the drum stopped. Then he turned to me with the announcement:

"We will have to halt here. I have almost reached the capacity of the wire. To-morrow we will send it a little higher, painting it white as it goes up. After that we will erect the tower, to give the cable a solid anchorage, and we will be through."

He looked at me with a smile of triumph, which, nevertheless, showed the effects of the long strain he had been under.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he asked.

I regarded him a moment in silence, unable to find words. Then I suddenly grasped his hand and wrung it warmly.

"Let me be the first to congratulate you!" I exclaimed. "You can now divide the earth with Dr. Luxx!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE END OF DR. LUXX.

DR. MARX LUXX was in conference with the international congress in Washington when my friend's telegram arrived announcing his duplication of the doctor's invention.

The President read the message amid profound silence. Every one was astounded. It was noticed that the moment Alexander Marvin's name was mentioned the wizard turned deathly white and clutched the arms of his chair for support.

A few moments later he rose and left the room. His masterful air seemed to have deserted him, and as he passed through the door he was seen to totter as if about to fall.

Within an hour a cry of alarm was wrung from a startled world. Simultaneously, and without warning, all of Dr. Luxx's plants shut off their current. The scenes that followed were scarcely less harrowing than those which had previously attended the exhaustion of coal. Apparently the mad scientist meant to take a fearful revenge.

At once the leading members of the congress sought Dr. Luxx with appeals for mercy. But this proved of no avail, as the wizard could not be found. With his exit from the congressional chamber, all trace of him was lost as completely as if he had dissolved into the air. So disastrous was this relapse into former conditions that every conceivable effort was put forth to locate the missing doctor.

Meanwhile, an investigation was made of Alexander Marvin's claims, and my friend convinced the scientists of the success of his work. By that time a whole week had elapsed, and everywhere matters had gone from bad to worse. The uneasiness of the people had grown to alarming proportions. But still no trace of the inventor had been found.

Without further delay, the congress made terms with Marvin to utilize his current, and, pending the hoped-for return of Dr. Luxx, he became the sole producer of the world's electricity. Immediately his wealth began to accumulate by leaps and bounds. But in this hour of his success his first thought seemed to be of the companion who had been at his elbow in so many of his experiments. He did not rest until he prevailed upon me to become his right-hand man in his new labors, and to accept a share in his fortune that was vastly out of proportion to any slight service I may have rendered him.

With Marvin's success there came an immediate revival of the efforts to extract electricity from the air. While carefully guarding his own secret, my friend did everything possible to discourage these attempts. But he merely had his trouble for his pains. A vast amount of money was wasted, and countless high hopes blasted; but still the deluded experimenters wrestled with inevitable failure.

Two months passed. And yet nothing became known of the vanished wizard

of the peak. Many persons who had embraced the belief in the supernatural being of the inventor now began to assert that, with this discovery of his secret, the doctor's work on earth had been completed, and that he had disappeared forever from among men. But the majority of the people believed that the mad scientist was still at large, and a feeling of constant suspense — even of pronounced dread — possessed most minds. With the horrible fate of Vance's army still a fresh memory, it became feared that the doctor was planning some nameless vengeance upon the human race. This dread appeared to increase with the days.

But suddenly an event transpired which plunged the world into renewed turmoil. Some Swiss peasants reported having seen the doctor in the neighborhood of one of his plants in the Alps. While this news was being flashed to the length and breadth of the earth, a similar report came from California, announcing the doctor's appearance there at precisely the same hour.

In vain did scientists and government officials point out the impossibility of both these stories being true. Equally useless was it for them to urge the fact that none of the persons claiming to have seen the inventor had ever previously beheld him, or even a picture of him; and that their statements had been based solely upon descriptions of the wizard's personal appearance and demeanor. The masses were now thoroughly convinced of the supernatural power of the doctor, and awaited with resignation some malevolent manifestation of his wrath.

But as the days continued to slip by without Dr. Luxx—if he actually still existed in the flesh—putting in an appearance, the governments finally requested Alexander Marvin to take possession of the Luxx plants and operate them. Accordingly, without the least resistance on the part of the Chinamen in charge. Marvin assumed control of these powerhouses. And with this tremendous volume of electricity once more behind the wheels of the world's industries, prosperity returned as if by magic.

But, for some reason which he did not confide to me, my friend never ventured near the doctor's plant on Lang's Peak until the last. Here the great scientist had maintained his experimental laboratory, and Marvin had often ventured the opinion that many secrets invaluable to mankind lay hidden there. Possibly some purely sentimental reason restrained him until the last from invading the privacy of this most intimate of the wizard's haunts. Finally, however, with only myself to accompany him, he set out, one afternoon, for the peak.

The sun was just setting as we surmounted a great barren promontory which had hidden the view to the west. But now the vast panorama suddenly burst upon us, and with a feeling akin to awe we came to a halt. Directly before us the enormous sun, set in a flaming mass of clouds, hung poised above the mighty profile of the mountains.

Suddenly there was a slight noise behind us. I turned, and in an instant the blood seemed to freeze in my veins.

Not twenty feet away, Dr. Marx Luxx stood glaring at my companion!

Marvin was little given to fear upon most occasions, but he now seemed rooted to the ground. And I must confess that the sight of that man, whom I had half believed was dead, filled me with positive terror. And well it might, for never in my life have I beheld such another figure.

The doctor was plainly a violent maniac. And in the red rays of the dying sun, his great stature was magnified until he seemed enormous. He was ragged and unkempt; and, with his eyes—which had always been a source of terror to most people—burning like balls of fire, he looked like some monstrous beast gloating over its prey.

Although I knew that Marvin had never held the slightest animosity toward Dr. Luxx, I felt that the wizard could not but hate him for robbing him of his gigantic power; and in his maniacal condition, it was possible he would seek a horrible revenge. We were both without weapons of any sort to defend ourselves.

Several moments passed, and every second I expected to see the doctor leap toward my companion. But he did not move. Presently, however, Marvin recovered from the shock of the unexpected meeting. and. rousing himself, he

faced the wizard unflinchingly. From that instant their strange encounter seemed to resolve itself into a mental duel. Virtually alone there on the mountain, they stood face to face, and the silence that ensued was intensely dramatic.

The insane being who had controlled the destiny of the world sought to blast his rival with his penetrating gaze. But my companion returned his look with calm defiance. Then presently a complete change seemed to come over Marvin's silent antagonist. He appeared to be relinquishing the struggle, as if vanquished. A deep sigh escaped him, and the intense light slowly faded from his eyes. His huge form seemed to shrivel.

Then the strangest thing happened that I ever saw. You may call it hallucination, or hypnotism, or whatever you like. But I am as certain I saw it as that I am writing these words.

The doctor's form appeared to rise and slowly recede, as if it were drifting away into space. It lifted above the plateau on which we stood, and began to float off through the rose-tinted air, gradually growing dimmer and dimmer. As we watched, it continued to recede, until it seemed to have reached the summit of the peak, and to have paused in the shadow of some rocks.

Then, suddenly, a frightful thing happened. There was a terrific explosion on the summit, and the whole top of the mountain came roaring down the slopes. The force of the shock felled us senseless upon the rocks, and for a time I knew no more.

Just as the last traces of color were stealing from the evening sky I opened my eyes once more and looked about me. Then I shuddered at the awful sight that met my gaze. Everything save my immediate surroundings was hidden by dense clouds of dust. All about me were strewn immense boulders that had been torn from the heights above. Only by a miracle had we escaped death in the shower of falling rock.

Marvin, I observed, was already upon his feet, staring at the hideous scene. I soon joined him. And speechless we stood awaiting developments. Presently we noticed that the great pall of dust was settling, and it was not long before we could see above us. But as our eyes rested upon the heights, we almost cried aloud in astonishment. The whole summit of the peak had been blown away! Not even a trace of Dr. Luxx's plant was left. The four aerial ladders had vanished into space, presumably carrying with them the steel towers which had anchored them to earth. All that survived was a broken desolation of rock.

Suddenly, as we looked, Marvin grasped my arm and pointed upward.

"Look! Look!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "There in the rocks! The wizard!"

Even before he had finished speaking, I had been stricken rigid with amazement. Above us, in the side of the pinnacle, was a huge profile of the wizard of the peak! No sculptor could have carved more perfectly that granite image—that enduring likeness of him who had brought salvation to the world.

In silence we stood there for some time, staring upward through the gathering night. Finally, Marvin shook his head slowly, and said in an awed whisper:

"Strange! He looks exactly as he did the first time I ever saw him!"

(**The end.**)

AT THE END OF THE TRAIL.

We have come to the end of the trail,
We have won to the set of the sun;
And what shall it all avail
Now that the quest is done?

We have fared over far-stretched lands;
We have striven well at our task;
If love stands with outreached hands,
What more could we ask?

Sennett Stephens.

THE CAVALIER

VOLUME IV

OCTOBER, 1909,
TO
JANUARY, 1910

NEW YORK
THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, PUBLISHERS
175 FIFTH AVENUE

1910

Index for Volume IV.

SERIAL STORIES.

SHORT STORIES.

SHORT STORIES (Continued).

COMPLETE NOVELS.

POETRY.

Stop heating nightmares

Your dreams about heating may be made bliss-ful or dreadful—as you choose.

It is not the nightmare alone that comes from the work and worries of old-fashioned heating—you find your heating nightmares are realities in the morning. They are real nuisances which spoil your peace of mind by day and wreck your sleep by night. But there's a remedy.

AMERICAN RADIATORS & IDEAL BOILERS afford the only means of heating which bring repose and health. These outfits for Hot-Water and Low-Pressure Steam heating produce nothing but cleanly, soft, even temperature—*suited to a baby or an athlete.* They should be installed in every home. They save their cost by cutting down the coal bills. They do away with ash-dust, soot, and hard work. Their cleanliness saves much wear on household furnishings. They are so built in small sections that they can be easily put in any house—old or new—farm or city.

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A No. [illegible] IDEAL Boiler and 240 ft. of [illegible] in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing the owner **$115**, were used to Hot-Water heat this [illegible].

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Our interest in the heating outfit does not cease with its sale, and should any feature in the care or operation of the Boiler not be understood, we most cordially invite correspondence.

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Get out of the "bunch"—the malcontents—the "grouches"—the "never-get-theres." Thousands of others have done it through I. C. S. help—*you* can. On an average, 300 students

UP FROM

When I enrolled for the Electric Lighting and Railways Course I was motorman on the lines now owned by the I. U. T. Co., of Indiana. After finishing my Course, all but drawing, I asked for and received a letter from the schools; this I showed to the General Manager of the General Electric Co., Fort Wayne, Indiana, and got a position at once, worked eight days and got a foremanship of a department at $75 per month. Worked one month and was offered $80 to take charge of the shops for the Conneaut & Erie Traction Company, accepted and worked for them six months and got a raise to $90. (Signed) E. H. CLARK,
N. Girard, Pa.

When I enrolled I was an instrument man in the service of the St. Louis Terminal R. R. I have been in the Civil Engineering Department of the Mo. Pac. Ry. Co. for the greater portion of the past six years and am now Assistant Engineer of same. When I applied for a position with this road, I showed my I. C. S. Certificate and, after a perusal of same, the representative of the Company said to me: "I guess you will do all right. When can you report for duty?"
(Signed) W. H. MOORE,
404 14th St., Alexandria, La.

At the time I enrolled in your School of Mines, I was loading coal in a mine, but before I had more than half completed the Course, the position of Mine Electrician and Mine Boss was given me on account of my knowledge of electricity and electrical machinery that I received from the Schools. Just as I was completing the Course I was given the position of Mine Foreman.
My salary has been increased, the enjoyment of living has been doubled on account of the mental training I received from my Course, to say nothing about the facts learned about the Science of Mining. (Signed) H. W. MERRIMAN,
Dell Roy, Ohio.

At the time of my enrollment I was employed as dry goods clerk on a small salary; am now holding a position as a Licensed Stationary Engineer in the Wabash R. R. Shops at this place. I feel it is the best money I ever invested, and have spoken many good words for the I. C. S.
(Signed) CHARLES HAGERTY,
Montpelier, Ohio.

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of the "Bunch"?

every month VOLUNTARILY report promotion from the "bunch" as the *direct result* of I. C. S. training. During October the number was 303. ***YOU mark the coupon for similar success.***

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I enrolled for the Complete Steam Engineering Course while a fireman in a stationary plant. Two months after my enrolment in the Schools, I was advanced to chief fireman, and one year later accepted a position as Assistant Engineer with the Toronto Water Works. I held that for five years and made application for my present position, that of Chief Engineer for the City of Toronto, which I received after a competitive examination, there being seventy-two applicants. I received 97 per cent on same. I was the only Scranton School Student in the lot. I have been able to increase my salary 300 per cent. since my enrolment.
(Signed) JAMES BANNAN,
69 Tecumseth St., Toronto, Canada.

I have found the Complete Architectural Course of great value to me, although not having completed the Course. When I enrolled I was a carpenter earning $1.50 a day. My earning capacity has been greatly increased and my work is easier, and the best of all, *I am practically my own boss.* I am now Supervising Architect of the New Courthouse Building at Peru, Ind., and have full control of the work. The building will cost $500,000. Besides this I am doing other work in the designing and planning of buildings.
(Signed) H. P. FIKE,
30 Adams Ave., Peru, Ind.

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Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I have marked X.

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Show Card Writer	Mech. Engineer
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Illustrator	Civil Engineer
Designer & Craftsman	Building Contractor
Civil Service	Architect'l Draughtsman
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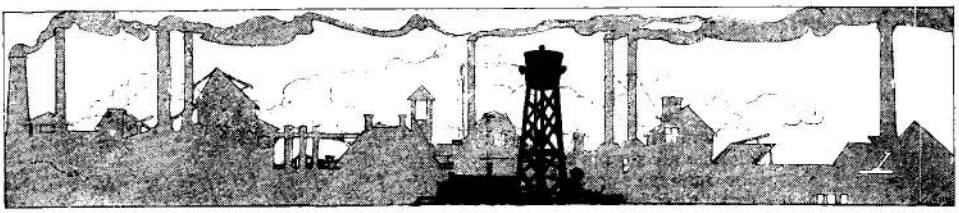

ADVERTISING is the bee that makes the hum of industry . . .

EVERY magazine reader ought to take a deep interest in the advertising pages, for advertising is the great moving force back of present-day business—the force that keeps manufactories going, puts more salesmen on the road, and gives them better goods to sell.

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A subscriber recently wrote us—

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If you read the advertising pages regularly, you will realize the great truth of this, for it is through the advertisement that the new, the useful, the worthwhile are presented to the consumer.

Every reader of this magazine is a consumer whom the manufacturer seeks to interest through advertising.

To attract your attention he employs the best of art and merchandising skill that he can command to produce his selling talk.

To make a sale to you, he advertises a price that you will find by comparison to be lower than non-advertised goods of equal quality.

To retain your patronage, he must make his goods so well that they stand every test, and fulfil every claim advanced in their behalf. He must give you a real reason for buying them.

And in meeting these three conditions, the manufacturer—the advertiser—assumes all the risk. You are always safe in answering his advertisements, for the consumer is protected by the rigid censorship which the magazine maintains over its advertising pages.

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$1,500.00 FROM 60 HENS IN TEN MONTHS ON A CITY LOT 40 FEET SQUARE.

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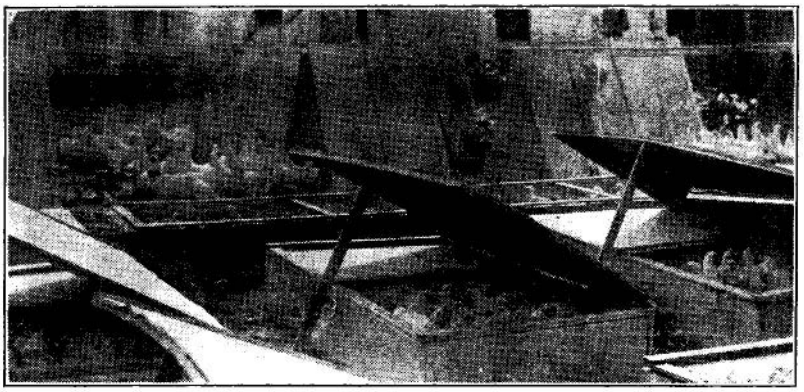

THE PHILO SYSTEM IS UNLIKE ALL OTHER WAYS OF KEEPING POULTRY,

and in many respects just the reverse, accomplishing things in poultry work that have always been considered impossible, and getting unheard-of results that are hard to believe without seeing.

THE NEW SYSTEM COVERS ALL BRANCHES OF THE WORK NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS

from selecting the breeders to marketing the product. It tells how to get eggs that will hatch, how to hatch nearly every egg and how to raise nearly all the chicks hatched. It gives complete plans in detail how to make everything necessary to run the business and at less than half the cost required to handle the poultry business in any other manner.

TWO POUND BROILERS IN EIGHT WEEKS

are raised in a space of less than a square foot to the broiler almost without any loss, and the broilers are of the very best quality, bringing here three cents per pound above the highest market price.

OUR SIX-MONTHS-OLD PULLETS ARE LAYING AT THE RATE OF 24 EGGS EACH PER MONTH

in a space of two square feet for each bird. No green cut bone of any description is fed, and the food used is inexpensive as compared with food others are using.

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DON'T LET THE CHICKS DIE IN THE SHELL.

One of our secrets of success is to save all the chickens that are fully developed at hatching time, whether they can crack the shell or not. It is a simple trick and believed to be the secret of the ancient Egyptians and Chinese which enabled them to sell the chicks at 10 cents a dozen.

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TESTIMONIALS.

Bellefontaine, Ohio, June 7, 1909.

Mr. E. R. Philo, Elmira, N. Y.

Dear Sir:—I just want to tell you of the success I have had with the Philo system. In January, 1909, I purchased one of your Philo System books and I commenced to hatch chickens. On the third day of February, 1909, I succeeded in hatching ten chicks. I put them in one of your fireless brooders and we had zero weather. We succeeded in bringing through nine; one got killed by accident. On June 1, one of the pullets laid her first egg, and the most remarkable thing is she has laid every day since up to the present time. Yours truly, R. S. LaRue.

Valley Falls, N. Y., Sept. 10, 1909.

My dear Mr. Philo:—I want to tell you how pleased I am with my use of the Philo System during the past year. The fowls laid exceptionally well in the New Economy Coop, much better in proportion than those in my old style house. The fireless brooder has solved the problem for me of raising extra early chicks. I am going into your methods more extensively this coming year. Wishing you success, I am, sincerely yours, (Rev.) E. B. Templer.

Mr. E. R. Philo, Elmira, N. Y. South Britain, Conn., April 14, 1909.

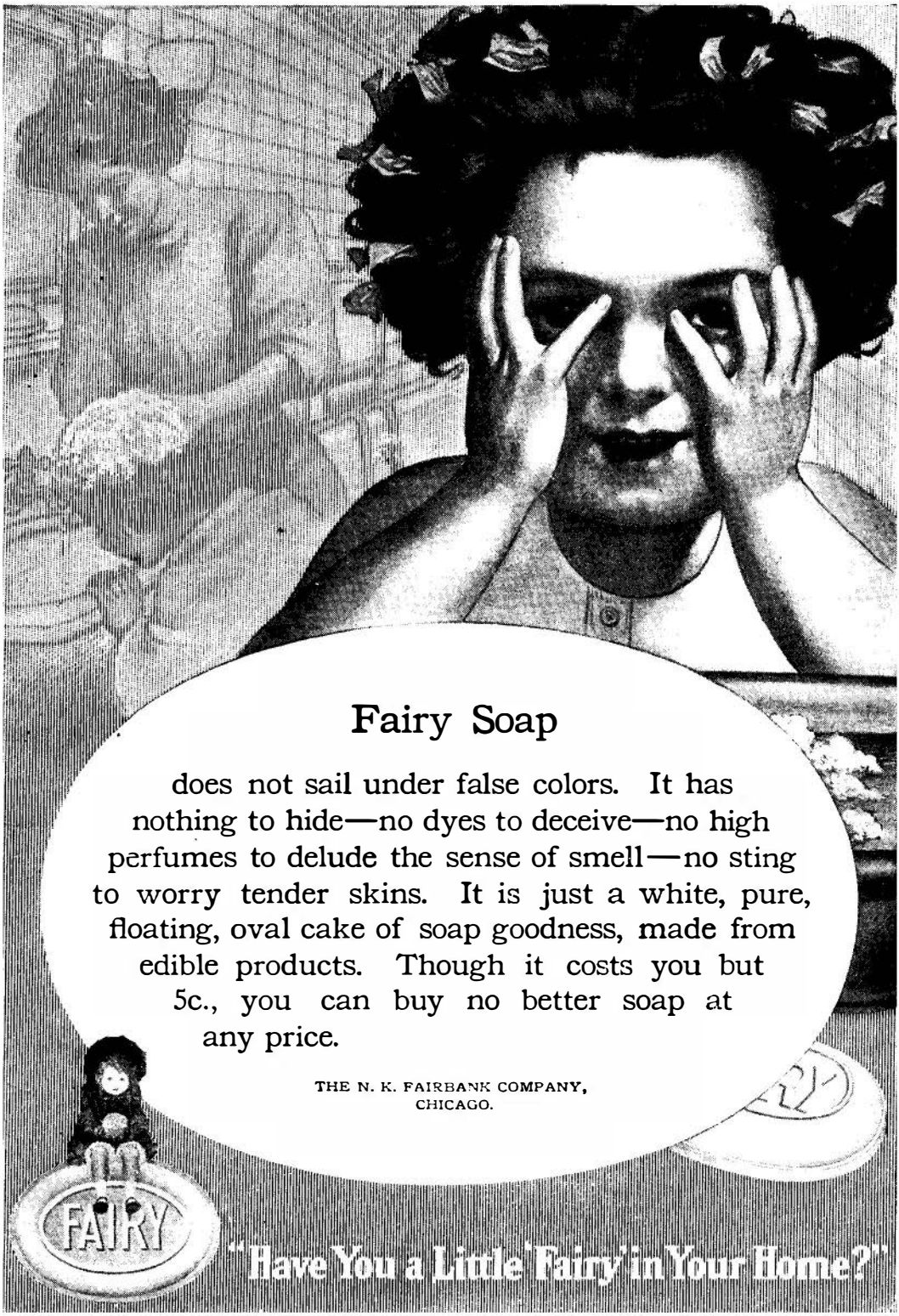
Dear Sir:—I have followed your system as close as I could; the result is a complete success. It there can be any improvement on nature, your brooder is it. The first experience I had with your System was last December. I hatched 17 chicks under two hens, put them as soon as hatched in one of your brooders out of doors and at the age of three months I sold them at 35c a pound. They then averaged 2 1-2 lbs. each, and the man I sold them to said they were the finest he ever saw, and he wants all I can spare this season. Yours truly A. E. Nelson.

Mr. E. R. Philo, Elmira, N. Y. Elmira, N. Y., Oct. 30, 1909.

Dear Sir:—No doubt you will be interested to learn of our success in keeping poultry by the Philo System. Our first year's work is now nearly completed. It has given us an income of over $500.00 from six pedigree hens and one cockerel. Had we understood the work as well as we now do after a year's experience, we could easily have made $1000.00 from the six hens. In addition to the profits from the sale of pedigree chicks, we have cleared over $960.00, running our Hatchery plant consisting of 56 Cycle Hatchers. We are pleased with the results, and expect to do better the coming year. With best wishes, we are, very truly yours, (Mrs.) C. P. Goodrich.

Send $1.00 direct to the publisher and a copy of the latest revised edition of the book will be sent you by return mail

E. R. PHILO, PUBLISHER, 343 THIRD ST., ELMIRA, N. Y.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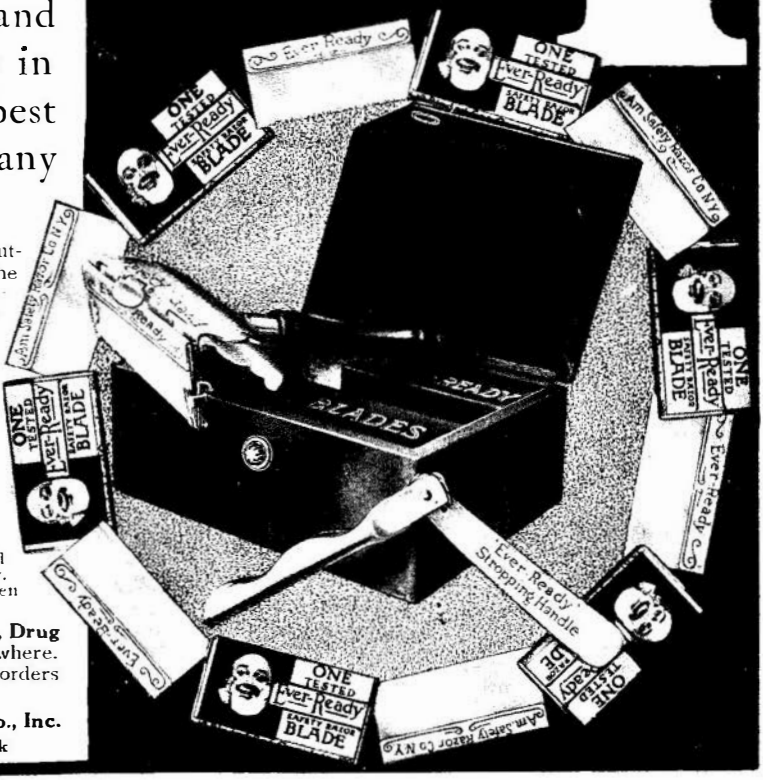

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THE MUNSEY PRESS, NEW YORK.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

FARMER'S PICNIC

Hon. George W. Koiner

Virginia's Commissioner of Agriculture, will address the farmers of Montgomery County at

Shawsville, Va., Saturday, August 20, 1910.

Gov. J. Hoge Tyler has also been invited and will attend if possible.

A stand will be erected and seats will be placed at some cool, shady spot nearby, and everything done to make it comfortable for the large crowd which is expected.

As this is intended as a day for instruction, recreation and pleasure, we will want all to bring their families, who can, and their dinners. Wives and children will enjoy this.

A BRASS BAND WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE

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