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20
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❖
FEBRUARY SEVENTH 1919
❖

COMPLETE NOVEL
IN THIS ISSUE
"LIGHTS OUT"

By

L. H. ROBBINS

and

A NEW SERIAL
"THE WAY PACK"

By

CAROLINE LOCKHARD

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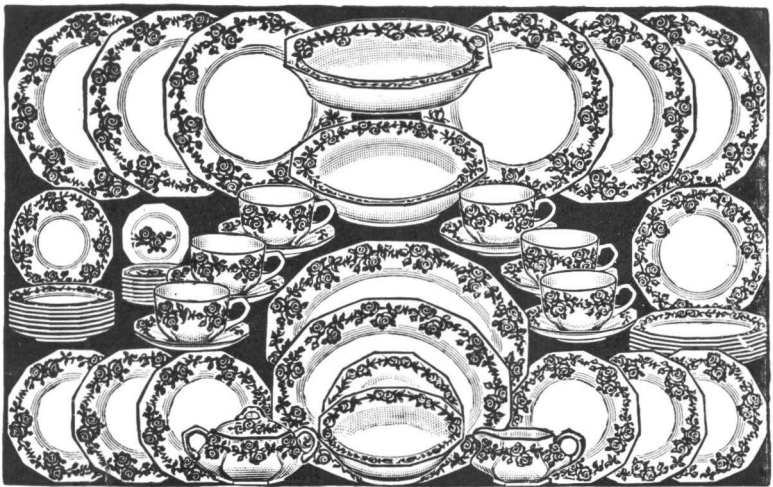
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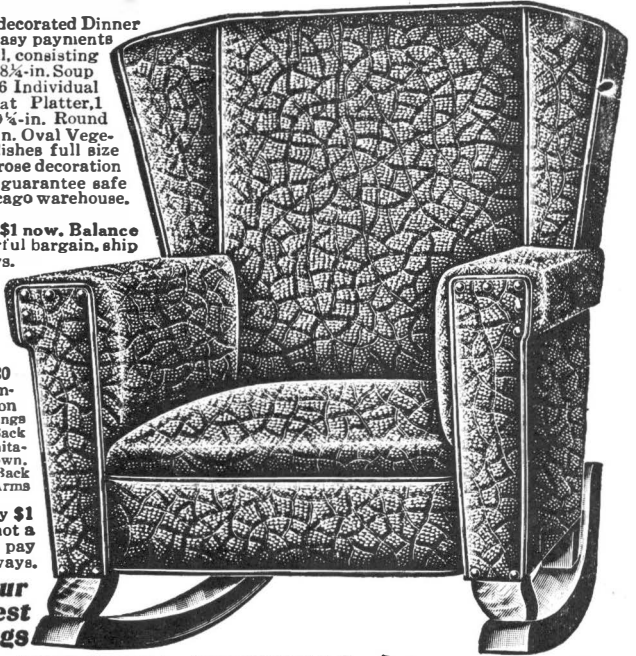
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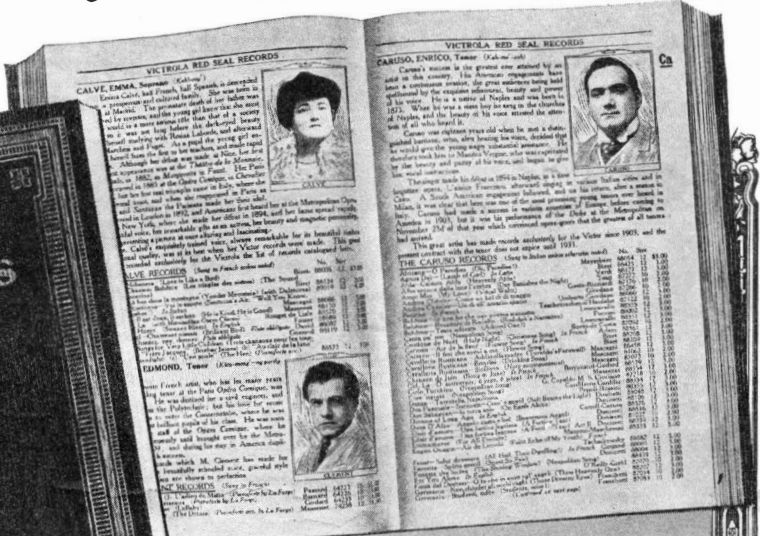
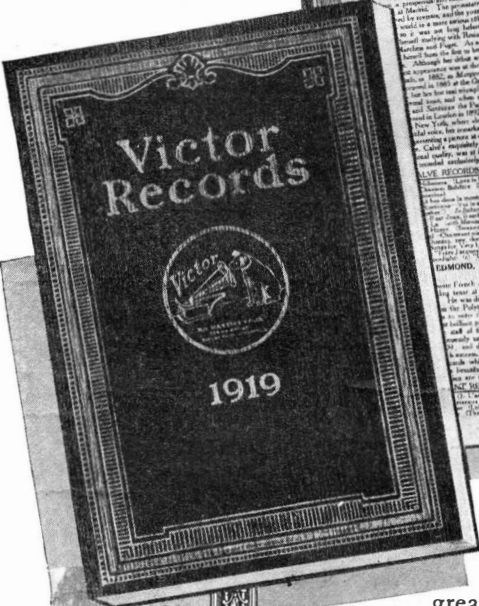
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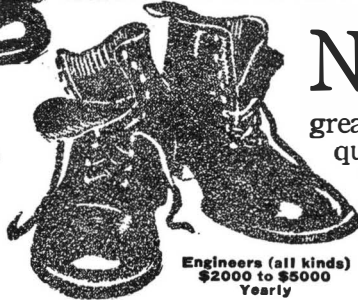
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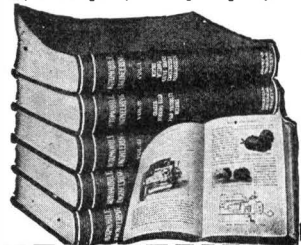
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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LI.

FEBRUARY 7, 1919.

No. 4.

Lights Out

By L. H. Robbins

Author of "The Merlin-Ames Torpedo," Etc.

At present all of us are reviewing, more or less, the work of the different Allies in the winning of the war. In doing so, we are very likely to forget a lot of important details in the smother of facts upon us. For this reason alone we can be thankful to the author of "Lights Out" for his vivid and thrilling picture of London in the first year of the conflict. It brings close home to us the burden Great Britain bore. Of course, this is all subsidiary to the main theme of the story which, we are warranted in saying, is extremely ingenious and entertaining. There is, too, a touch of enchantment about the midnight escapades of Tom Thurston, a plain American, in the hurly-burly of lightless London.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

THE RAID.

BY a no less distinguished philosopher than Mr. Herbert Wembley, the heart of the world has been located at Charing Cross, London. Geographically Mr. Wembley may be correct; sentimentally, too, so far as the English-speaking peoples of the earth are concerned. Where the Strand pours its human tides into Trafalgar Square to meet the streams from Whitehall and Pall Mall and busy Oxford Street, there most of North America and Australasia and much of modern Asia and Africa took its start; there the peace-loving civilization that has made many a far land sweet and kindly and good to live in had its beginning.

In one sense, however, Mr. Wembley is wrong. Through the tempestuous years since 1914 the heart of the world has lain not at Charing Cross, but some hundreds of miles northward from that historic spot. Since then to this day, unless the Great War shall have come to an end before these words

are printed, the vital point of the world, the heart of the British Empire, the hope and salvation of Christendom has been a gray, little, fog-wreathed, steel-netted harbor on the east coast of Scotland, where the British Grand Fleet watches the Germans.

The English-speaking world might do without any of its members but that; without brave Canada, without the loyal Anzac nation, without India or Egypt or South Africa, without the United States of America, tremendous though the service every one of them contributes to the common cause. But it cannot do, it cannot live without the fleet that saved the seas from the Hun; that held the Hun impotent in his canals and behind his mine fields until a stunned and staggering world could gear itself and gather itself to challenge the outrageous peril. There, in that landlocked bay whose name few men know, beats the heart of the world to-day.

There was no Eagle Hut in the Strand in the spring of the year 1915. There were no American bluejackets perched on the wall in

Trafalgar Square, ogling the London throngs. There were no American destroyers prowling catlike in the Channel, waiting to pounce on the kaiser's sea rats; no American regiments hiking along the lanes of Kent, hardening up for the great adventure beyond Dover Strait.

If Tom Thurston, American, had been able to look forward three years and see the Eagle Hut, the bluejackets, the destroyers and the route marchers he would have been a happier man. In his newspaper-reporter days he had guessed right many a time in advance of the event. But on this Monday night in April as he strolled hotelward from a Leicester Square revue, he despaired of ever beholding the glorious sight that has come to pass—the sight of America in arms beside her sister democracies, fighting for the freedom of mankind.

In the play that night a joke had recurred often, growing better with each repetition. Said the leading actor to his foil:

"Lend me five pun, U. S. A."

"What do you mean—U. S. A.?"

"Until Something 'Appens," the leading man replied, and waited for the audience to laugh; which the audience did, not hilariously, not derisively, but with that consciously superior air of rectitude that is so maddening to the butt of the joke. In one of the scenes the leading man impersonated an opulent Yankee and employed much American slang, and the audience laughed at that, too, even when the humorist mispronounced the honorable word "gazabo" by stressing the first syllable.

The English in those days were acutely aware that their nation had seized her opportunity to shine through all future ages as the great champion of history, while America had hung back, debating whether or not her turn had come to enter the lists. In the hotels Tom Thurston met with sly words and half-hidden smiles that told him what the British nation thought of him and his fellow countrymen. It would have done him no good, nor would it have convinced them, to tell them that thinking Americans already saw their duty clear and prayed for the day when the rest of America should come to see it.

The revue that night had included some living cartoons. There was Tenniel's "Dropping the Pilot," in which Bismarck descends from the helm of the German ship of state while the youthful kaiser lolls sneering over

the rail. There was the most famous picture *Punch* has produced in this war—Albert, King of the Belgians, looking upon his ruined and burning land, the lustful kaiser leering up at him. "You see, you have lost all," says the kaiser. "But not my soul!" says the king. And there had been a song, sung by chorus girls dressed as newsboys, ending in the shouted refrain, "Are we down-hearted? No!"—a song that would echo in the trenches of Picardy and Flanders until the end of the war.

Some of the placards which the chorus-girl newsboys wore got a laugh. "U-8 Visits Davy Jones!" "Krupp Making One-hundred-inch Guns Out of Doorknobs!" "Submarine in the Serpentine!" "Wilhelm Shaven!" "Sahara Remains Neutral!" But behind the effort at gayety and the resolve not to be downhearted there was no mirth, no light-heartedness. Tom Thurston's blood moved more quickly and a lump rose in his throat as he sensed the strain and the anxiety; for the war was his war and his people's war. If his people could only be as near to it as he was, if they could feel the world peril as he felt it in the quiver of sudden dread that shook Britain in those awakenings days—if they could go with him to the courtyard of the war office and gaze upon the staring eyes, the trembling lips around the bulletin board as the death lists were posted! There would be no jokes about "Until Something 'Appens" then.

He halted in the darkness near the Nelson monument. The base of the shaft was a billboard now. "England Expects Every Man to Do His Duty." "Your King and Your Country Call You." Skyward from the roof of the Admiralty Building shot a great shaft of light and searched the clouds a moment, then winked out. Around the square moved an endless procession of taxicabs, their lights dimmed. The brightest thing in sight in the darkened city was a little oval spot of radiance on the pavement, a spot not more than a foot wide, in the middle of which a toy rooster danced to the pulling of an invisible thread.

"Tuppence, sir, only tuppence!"

There was an anxious whine in the voice of the sidewalk vender who operated the dancing bird, as if the war had already begun to cut in on his business. Thurston glanced at the bull's-eye lantern that supplied the light for the fellow's midnight trade, and with a shudder of pity he walked

on. Crossing to Northumberland Avenue, he entered an outwardly dark office building and mounted the stairs to the second floor. In the London bureau of the *Chicago Sun* a slender chap with grave, clear eyes looked up from a desk where he wrote.

"Hello, Tom. Have a chair while I finish this cable."

Thurston sat down, picked up a file of American newspapers and glanced at the headlines. Ted Price, London man for the *Sun*, went on writing. Thurston had been in England less than a month, but Price was an old-timer on the ground; he could remember the day when Eugene Field walked in at the door by which Thurston had just entered. Soon he gathered up his cablegram and paged and read it, striking out a word here and there.

"Bad business across the Channel, Tom."

"Nothing to fight with, you mean?"

"Nothing but shrapnel. What good is shrapnel against an enemy underground? The Huns used some kind of gas to-day; they break all the rules of warfare. A Moorish division saw the cloud coming; they thought it was an evil spirit and they haven't stopped running yet. There's a gap four miles wide for the Canadians to hold till help comes, and God only knows how they'll do it. The Germans may be in Calais tomorrow night."

"I sat in the House of Commons this afternoon," said Thurston. "While the Canadians were holding the line in France, the British statesmen wrangled for three mortal hours over the question whether or not to forbid the sale of liquor in the Parliament restaurant. Gosh!"

Price smiled. "When you have been here as long as I have you will understand the British better. I met Sir Arthur Purdoy to-day. Mostly he talked motor cars. Last week at Ypres his son was blinded by a shell—blinded for life. You'll find more Spartan courage around London these days than they ever had in Sparta."

His cablegram finished, Price donned hat and overcoat, and the two men went out into the dark street, crossed the square to the telegraph office and filed the dispatch. Out in the street again, they strolled up the Strand toward the Adelphi. As they passed Charing Cross Station the sound of an explosion brought them to a standstill.

"A backfire, maybe," Thurston suggested.

"Backfire, nothing!" said Price. "It's the anti-aircraft guns. Listen."

From Westminster came the boom of a fieldpiece. Other cannon echoed from the direction of the City. On the Embankment close by a gun spoke louder than the rest. Police whistles shrilled everywhere.

"The Zeps are here again," said Price, scanning the sky. "This is the third time in a month."

Back to the square the two friends hastened for a better view of the heavens. In front of Morley's they watched the play of the searchlights on the clouds. Frightened men and women ran past them, scurrying for shelter.

"Look!"

A pencil of light, upward streaming from a near-by roof, pierced through a break in the overhanging mist and touched something crystal white, lost its object, then found it again and remained fixed upon it. Other searchlights picked it out; cannon from all directions barked and thundered, and little bursts of flame from their shells showed far beneath the white thing in the sky.

Now with a sudden jar the pavement quivered; an instant later came the roar of a heavier detonation than any before.

"She has dropped a bomb," cried Price. "There goes another. Lord help the poor devils under her."

The gunners had the range now, for the shells burst higher up toward the glassy thing in the sky, and still it floated safe out of reach. A veil of mist stole between it and the watchers; still blindly through the cloud the cannoners hurled their storm of iron, and still, from somewhere toward Paddington, came the earth shocks as the Zeppelin loosed its thunderbolts. Price clenched his fists as he watched. Thurston swore like an infidel. A man standing near them turned when Tom had finished.

"Thank you," he said.

Price lowered his eyes from the sky to glance at the man who had spoken.

"Hello!" said he. "It's Sir Arthur Purdoy. Sir Arthur, Mr. Thurston."

Tom shook hands with a bearded gentleman who wore an opera hat on his head and carried a walking stick under his arm. He had no time to size up Sir Arthur further, for a sudden silence had at that moment fallen over the city, the cause whereof was visible in the sky.

The cloud veil had passed, and the white

thing showed clearer than before in the rays of the searchlights. It was moving now toward the east and moving rapidly. But swift as it swam through the sky, a tiny white object above and behind followed faster. From far away overhead came the faint chatter of a rapid-fire gun, and all the while the Zeppelin drove toward the North Sea and the tiny white birdlike speck pursued.

"He's gaining," said Sir Arthur. "He surely is. He's on the fellow's tail."

"There goes his red light," cried Price. "Look!"

The little air plane was now almost hidden from their sight above the shapely shell of the giant dirigible; beneath its little white wings a red light gleamed. Breathless the watchers gazed and saw the Zeppelin burst into sudden, wild, leaping flame that filled half the heaven and shed a sickly glare on things below. For ten seconds angry tongues of fire lapped at the clouds, then darkness came, save where a shower of sparkling embers dropped with gathering velocity toward the earth; save, too, where the red light of the little conqueror still burned above the point of battle. Downward floated a dull gush of sound like that made when a gas jet is lighted.

"That's one sky pirate that won't wear the Iron Cross on his manly chest," Price declared. "Here's a taxi. Hop in and let's go view the remains."

"May I invite myself along?" asked Sir Arthur.

"You're already invited, sir," said Price.

Up Charing Cross Road they went in a procession of taxis on the same errand bent. They passed the theater where Thurston's American pride had suffered that night; the entrance was dark now, though no darker than when he had found his way through it at nine o'clock. Where Tottenham Court Road joins Euston a policeman waved them to the left; and at Portland Road another officer pointed to the right.

"The Huns must have fallen in the park," said Price, as their cab swung into the tree-lined way that leads to Primrose Hill. His surmise proved correct. A score of cars had stopped at the edge of a lawn not far from the Zoölogical Gardens, and policemen were shouting futile commands at the crowd of sight-seers which had already gathered. In the darkness was little for sight-seers to see except a huge tangle of metal, smoking and

evil smelling, that lay in the midst of what had lately been a field of daffodils.

"Did any of them live?" Price asked a policeman.

"Live!" snorted the bobby. "Bless your 'eart, no. Burned to a crisp they was before ever they struck ground."

It was two o'clock in the morning when Thurston bade good-by to his companions at the entrance to his hotel in the Strand and mounted the stairs to his room. Sitting down at his desk, after drawing his curtains tightly closed as directed by the card on the wall, he shivered as a man with the ague. It was not so much the April chill of the room as the nausea he had felt since the moment when the burst of flaming hydrogen filled the midnight sky.

"What a story to write!" he told himself. The expectation of witnessing just such a thing as he had seen that night had brought him across the Atlantic—that and the hope of being torpedoed by a submarine. But now, in the presence of the expected event, his mind stalled.

"I'll wait till daylight," he thought. "By then there will be more to tell." He had just put his pencil down when a sound came through the wall that he faced—the sound of a woman's sobbing.

He listened and again he heard it; he tried to catch another voice than the woman's, but all that he heard was the woman's, "Oh! oh! oh!" repeated endlessly. He stepped to the door opening into the hall, but stayed his hand at the knob. If the woman's moaning had been a call for help—but it was not that; it was the cry of secret anguish and a breaking heart.

He went to bed. As long as he remained awake he could hear the sound from the next room.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRINCESS.

Curiosity and the quest for copy had brought Tom Thurston to London. In the Zeppelin raids which Germany had begun against England and in the submarine warfare which she had but a few weeks before announced, he had seen fresh and lively material. To be bombed from the sky and to be torpedoed from the ocean depths were experiences novel to mankind then.

Scouting through the city one day in search of an American typewriter office where he might rent a machine that he un-

derstood, he came to a shop in Cornhill; in the outer room some girl stenographers waited for work and he listened to one of them talking with the manager. She was a trim, proud, anxious little figure of young womanhood.

"You shouldn't be downhearted, you know," the manager told her. "The lad is bound to get well, now he's back in England."

"If you could see him, sir," she answered; "if you could see his face with the bandages off you would almost wish, for his sake, that he didn't have to get well."

Bravely as she held up her head, her lip quivered and her eyes grew moist. She spoke again, and now her eyes flashed.

"I must find a new place, sir. Where you sent me the first of the year, they keep me working till nine or ten at night. It wasn't agreed; it isn't fair. Besides, sir, a girl can't work such long hours and keep her health. And it isn't right for a girl to be out so late in London now, with the streets so dark. My people at home talk about me and make it very hard. They don't seem to understand that I must earn the living where I can. But that isn't the main thing, sir. There is a man, and he—I shouldn't stay there, sir."

"No, indeed, you shouldn't," sympathized the manager. "But the way times are just now——" He glanced at the line of waiting girls and rubbed his knuckles helplessly.

On that same day Thurston stood in front of the Horse Guards in Whitehall, where the gorgeous cavalymen with drawn sabers startle the passers-by. A band came playing through the arches leading a company of raw recruits. One of the new soldiers, an undersized, hollow-chested wisp of a man, turned to wave his hand to a little group of people on the sidewalk near Thurston, and the little group waved back to the man in line. The party was made up of a boy of ten, a little girl of seven, and a woman thin of form, plain of face, and poorly dressed, who carried a pink-cheeked baby in her arms.

"Good-by," called the fellow in the ranks; his face was drawn and wistful, unlike the stolid young British faces around him.

"Good-by, good-by," answered the mother and the older children. The baby had nothing to say, its mouth being busy with a celluloid pacifier; but the woman clasped its chubby arm and waved the little hand.

The man turned away, unable to look any longer.

"Is that your big brother?" Thurston asked the boy.

"Naw; it's me father."

The woman's eyes swam with tears; she looked lost, helpless; still she held up her head.

"Is your daddy going away to the war?"

"Yes," the woman answered, with a break in her voice.

"Here, kids," said Tom, fatuously, "here's some pennies for you. There's a candy shop around where you live, isn't there?" He had no idea what earthly good pennies could be to the children at a time like that; still the boy and the girl took theirs without hesitation.

"What do you say?" asked the mother.

"Thanks," said the boy.

"'Ank you," said the girl.

The baby refused its penny, so the mother took the coin as trustee. Then she turned to gaze after the little column of rookies tramping away behind their noisy band.

Such were the scenes Thurston saw all about him; fathers and mothers waiting anxious-eyed at the war office for news; young fellows in civilian clothes drilling after office hours in the quadrangle of Somerset House, on the Temple lawns, in the courtyard of the Prudential buildings in Holborn; sober-faced regiments in khaki going away to decimation, stepping to the stirring music of that once hopeful tune, "God Save Our Noble Czar;" and long lists of names in the shop windows, the fore-runners of our service flags.

To many of us in America in those days the war was a sporting event, a spectacle, and Thurston had gone to view it as such. But the young woman at the typewriter office, the little family group at the Horse Guards, and, above all, the women marching beside their men in the streets, these and countless other sights that assailed him at every turning opened his eyes to the grim, bare truth that murder and outrage were loose in the world, and that a chivalrous people who spoke his own tongue were fighting for life.

In a week Thurston's frivolous mood evaporated, and the Zeppelin raid of that April night sobered him completely. When he awoke in the morning it was with the new and persistent idea in his head that he had something better to do in life than to

write graphic tales of submarine catastrophes and air attacks.

"I'll not hang fire Until Something 'Appens; darned if I will," he told his reflection in the shaving mirror. "I'm going to get into this thing somewhere and somehow now!"

With that worthy resolution uppermost in his mind he stepped out into the corridor to fortify his determination with an English breakfast. The door of the room next to his stood open and a slavey came out, bringing with her a broom, a dustpan, and an atmosphere of rare flowers and Turkish cigarettes.

"So sorry, sir," she simpered, making way for him to pass.

A glance within the room showed him a boudoir trunk, three or four pretty gowns draped carelessly over the backs of chairs, and a dresser covered with toilet things of silver and ivory. Thinking of the woman's sobbing he had heard in the night, he descended to the breakfast room.

The hour was late, and few of the tables in that stately refectory were occupied. In a window overlooking the Obelisk on the Embankment sat a portly Englishman, a copy of the *Times* propped up before his eyes, reading of the Zeppelin raid and growing purpler in the face with every new paragraph. Near Thurston a pair of youngsters in the uniform of army officers stopped an earnest conversation to glance at him, and thereafter they spoke in lowered tones. It was not the first time that Tom had been mistrusted in London. For writing down on a scrap of paper one day a quaintly worded appeal to prayer posted at St. Paul's he had been shadowed by three indignant Englishmen all the way to his hotel.

To be relieved of the suspicion plainly held by the young officers that he was an eavesdropper, he changed his seat to a table out of earshot of them, and so came in view of the only other patron of the breakfast room. This person was a girl, or, more properly, a young woman; for there is a difference. A girl would scarcely do up her bright yellow hair in the elaborate coiffure which this young woman affected. A girl would hardly appear at public breakfast in the almost regal morning robe which this young woman wore. Nor would a girl smoke a cigarette over her coffee, inhaling the fumes deeply and with evident satisfaction to her nerves, as did this young woman before Tom's eyes.

Thurston's knocking about the world had been mostly on its western side. Many a time since he had made this hotel his home he had caught himself staring at the women smokers who ornamented the halls and the lounging rooms. Young and old, the female of the European species seemed to think nothing at all of burning tobacco in public view; it appeared to be the accepted custom. Yet he noted that the women, when they smoked, made more of a business of the operation than men do. A man, when he smokes, thinks about something else than his smoking, but the women at the Salisbury smoked and thought about what they did. So with the yellow-haired young woman whom he watched this morning.

She sat facing him, three tables away; she had sunk a little too low in her chair for propriety, and her feet were crossed; her air was one of sensitive, if not sensuous, enjoyment. Once, as she held her cigarette daintily in her fingers and puffed an arrow of smoke at its glowing tip, he thought he caught her in the act of regarding him sharply through the smoke cloud. But when he looked closer to make sure, he saw that her gaze rested upon the two British officers behind him.

Suddenly she came out of her languor with a shake of her pretty shoulders and rose to her feet, crushing the remaining inch of her cigarette into her coffee cup.

"I wonder what country she's the queen of?" thought Thurston, and was justified in his speculation. From her proud young attitude and her consciously elegant carriage as she moved toward the door, she was a princess, at least.

At the door she paused to look back, and the head waiter hastened across the floor to her side. Thurston saw them exchange perhaps ten words. Then the man bowed with deference and the princess passed on out of the room. Tom had now only the head waiter to watch, and it struck him as worthy of thought that the man should have bowed so obsequiously to the princess in one moment and have turned away in the next moment with so obvious a sneer as his face now wore.

"Queer tribe, these European servants," thought Tom. "Humble as rabbits to your face, yet all the while holding their private opinion of you. I wonder what that fellow knows on the princess. Maybe she's stranded here, chased out of her own coun-

try by the Huns, and can't pay her hotel bill." With that romantic theory his curiosity was satisfied.

The head waiter approached a serving table near by and muttered something in French to the omnibus, who, replying in the same language, delved in a pocket of his jacket and drew forth a bit of paper, which he handed to his chief.

"All the English waiters," thought Tom, "are waiting on table in America, so the English have to import waiters from the Continent."

His omelet consumed, and his coffee, he sauntered back to his room for his overcoat and an American cigar. In the corridor he came upon the princess with the yellow hair, outside the door of the room next to his. He bowed and stepped aside, when, to his surprise, she spoke to him.

"Could you help me?" she asked. Her voice was soft and appealing, with the slightest trace of huskiness—the cigarette smoking, possibly. "My window—the maid left it open and it seems to be fast. I've rung for the porter, but the servants in this hotel —" She smiled to Tom out of tender eyes; blue eyes; she was very pretty in her helplessness, and Tom gallantly hastened to oblige her. The open window needed only his goodly weight to bring it down.

"Thank you so much," breathed the princess.

"Don't mention it, ma'am," said Tom, backing out.

He was in his own room before it occurred to him that this comely young woman was the person whose sobbing he had heard in the night. Instead of setting forth into London to look for a place where he might break into the war, as had been his firm intention, he went downstairs to the reading room to think about the princess with the yellow hair and to ponder the question whether she might not need some greater service from him than the closing of a reluctant window.

"The poor thing is in trouble, that's a cinch," he ruminated, over his cigar. "Women don't cry at two o'clock in the morning for the fun of the thing. Then there was the sneer on the head waiter's face after he talked with her at the breakfast-room door; and the servants won't answer her bell when she rings."

But the reading room that morning was a poor place for a man to think, for a party

of Americans around the fireplace discussed the latest Zeppelin raid noisily and damned the President of the United States and his administration for dealing so courteously with the outrageous German government. At last the abuse grew so bitter that Tom could not resist the impulse to lift up his voice.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I guess you're not Democrats."

"You're dead right we're not!" exploded a stout man with a glittering diamond in his necktie. "You're dead right we're not!"

"Well, neither am I," said Tom, "and I'm for America's getting into the war as much as you are. But the majority of people over there are against it yet, so what's the sense in jumping on the president? If Woodrow tried to drag the United States into war just now, the people would impeach him—or the Senate would, or whatever it is that impeaches presidents. Let's be fair about this thing."

Said the stout man with the diamond scarfpin, "One of these days the Germans will sink a liner with a lot of Americans on board. What then?"

"Then," Tom answered, "the American people will give the president the backing they won't give him now. You don't see this matter as clear as you might. The American people won't be bullied or coaxed or fooled into going to war, and I guess the president knows the temper of America as well as anybody. When they learn that they ought to, then they will jump in good and hard. Meanwhile, you might blame somebody besides the president, just for variety. What's the matter with blaming the mayor of Omaha?"

"You talk like a Bryanite," said the owner of the stick pin.

"He talks like an American," spoke up a man who had previously kept silent. "He knows what he's talking about, and I'm going to buy him a drink. Come along, young man."

Tom declined to drink so early in the day; which fact, declared his defender in the argument, proved his sound sense; and Thurston walked out into the Strand feeling quite as good as if he had taken a morning nip.

To the London office of the *Chicago Sun* he went seeking his friend Price; and Price, looking up from his desk phone, slammed the receiver on the hook.

"I was about to call you at the Salisbury," said the newspaper man. "Do you still feel the way you said you felt last night—about mixing up in things over here?"

"I certainly do," answered Thurston. "Show me an opening. I'll do anything but fly."

"Good," said Price. "Hop aboard a bus and run up to see Sir Arthur Purdoy. Victoria Street—Canadian High Commission. You'll see the sign. Sir Arthur has a job for you."

CHAPTER III.

THE LIGHT.

Sir Arthur Purdoy, plump, polished, polite and political, was a typical product of the English system of breeding that creates gentlemen. He was a man of honor. One knew it the moment one laid eyes on him. He knew it himself—and there is no harm in the sort of self-consciousness that holds a man true to form and tradition, true to his party and his king and true to his ideal of manliness. Sir Arthur was of the scrupulous kind that will spend four minutes in writing a letter to a man and four hours in making sure that he has called the man by his correct title.

Tom Thurston, looking into his worldly-wise and honest smile, recalled what Price had told him of Sir Arthur's son blinded for the rest of life by a German shell, and wondered that the nobleman could go on smiling. It took grit for many a London man to smile in those days of peril and confusion—and to wear a primrose in his lapel, as Sir Arthur did this morning.

"Mr. Thurston, I thank you for coming so promptly. Mr. Price tells me"—he nodded toward the telephone—"that you are still of a mind to become a Briton for the time being and help us wind up the watch on the Rhine."

"Show me where to begin," Tom replied, liking the man better with every second. In the darkness of their midnight meeting he had had little chance to form an opinion of him.

"I am rather busy, as you may know," Sir Arthur continued, "so I shall turn you over at once to a friend of mine, Mr. Herbert Wembley—"

"Not *the* Herbert Wembley?" cried Tom. "None other. The author of 'The World Awake' is waiting for you in the next room. If you will step this way—"

He opened a door, and Tom shook hands next moment with a round-headed round-bodied little man who might, from his dress and general appearance, have been almost anybody on earth except the leading scientific novelist and the most widely discussed English writer of the age. Mr. Wembley's mustache needed training, his cravat needed tightening in his soft flannel collar, his hair needed brushing. He looked as if he had played golf vigorously for twenty-four hours; but in Tom's eyes he was quite as desirable to gaze upon as King George himself.

"Talk it out between you," said Sir Arthur, and withdrew to his own office.

"Do you walk?" asked Mr. Wembley abruptly.

"I do," said Tom.

"Come," said Mr. Wembley.

They struck through Buckingham Gate to St. James Park and sat down on a bench facing the swan pond, whereupon an elderly person wearing a brass badge on his coat came up and taxed them tuppence. All the way Mr. Wembley had said nothing, though Tom's eager ears had stood wide open. Still, merely to walk through the streets side by side with Herbert Wembley was something. How the younger crowd at the Players, back home in Gramercy Park, would have stared and envied! The older Players had no great respect for Mr. Wembley's novels—yet.

For a minute they sat silent. Then—
"You are an American?" Mr. Wembley asked.

It gave Tom the chance he wanted to uncork his enthusiastic admiration for Mr. Wembley's works.

"Yes, sir," he said; "and I have read every line you have ever printed, from that first yarn about the people in the moon to your last thing, 'The World Awake.' Perhaps I seem a bit impetuous in telling you this, but I have to get it off my chest."

"What do you think of the last novel?" asked the famous author.

"Best thing ever written," said Tom. "But you'll do better. I know you will, because I declare every book you write the best book ever, and a year thereafter you make me eat my words by bringing out a better book still."

Mr. Wembley, whose face was ruddy by nature, flushed redder still with pleasure. He was almost childlike about it; simple and childlike he was in all things, which fact

may have explained his power as an interpreter of life.

"There's a point I'd like to have you clear up for me," said Thurston. "The girl who runs through 'Yarrow Hedges' and winds up so badly—wasn't she a drug fiend?"

Mr. Wembley considered for a moment. "I don't like to talk scandal about the ladies in my books or out of them," he replied. "But such a thing as you suggest has been known to happen."

"I'm glad to hear you say so," Tom declared. "It relieves my mind; because if she wasn't given to dope, there's no accounting for the things you made her do in that laboratory on the moors."

Mr. Wembley smiled, appreciating the humor in his young companion's seriousness.

"Do you happen to know a man in London named Krug?" he asked.

"Krug? I haven't the pleasure of knowing him."

"He passes as an American and seems to be wealthy," said Mr. Wembley. "Now, Mr. Thurston, you have shown so friendly an interest in my scientific fiction, let me tell you a story that may turn out to be history."

He bent forward, picked up a dead leaf from the park path and fixed his eyes upon it.

"I live, as you probably do not know, in the suburb of Kew."

"Where the Gardens are?" asked Tom.

"Where the Gardens are. That is why I live there. It is extraordinary how much of my time I spend in the Gardens when I ought to be at home in my garret at my writing. I have a standing-in with the gatekeepers. Isn't that what you Americans call it?"

"A stand-in, you mean; a drag," said Tom, glad that there was one point of knowledge upon which he could enlighten this master of literature.

"Stand-in—stand-in—I shall remember that. Thank you. I have a stand-in with the gatekeepers, as I say, and I am thereby enabled to frequent the Gardens at hours when the public is not welcomed. There's nothing irregular about it, please understand. Before I became a novelist I was a scientist, and my connection with half of the royal scientific societies of the kingdom would give me the run of the Gardens, anyway. But I like to prowl, I enjoy the

thrill that goes with mysterious and proscribed adventure, and I find this in my stolen walks among the groves of Kew Gardens after dark. It is a fine mental tonic."

"I know it is," said Tom. "I once stole a watermelon and I have felt toned up ever since. The tonic the farmer administered was common salt, applied subcutaneously, with a shotgun."

The novelist ignored the irrelevant comment. "Last night I strolled homeward across the wide lawn below the orchid house, from a ramble along the river bank. Often, returning home across that lawn in other years, I have noted the glow of light that fills the sky to the eastward above the heart of London. You know, of course, how a city will advertise itself on the sky at night."

"Yes."

"This year London has done no night advertising. On ordinary nights the sky above town has been as dark as the sky above Epping Forest."

"Because of the Zeppelins?"

"Precisely. The lights-out regulation has worked well. When it was published, I doubted that any good would come of it. The necessary lights, such as those of the thousands of taxicabs and busses in the streets, were bound, I thought, to produce enough illumination overhead to serve the Germans as a guiding mark; but in this conjecture I was happily disappointed. The city was hard at first for them to find, and most of them dropped their bombs over the hop fields of Kent and the vineyards of Essex so that on returning to their sweet land of slavery they might escape punishment for bringing back their ammunition unspent. They worked dreadful destruction among rural pigsties and chicken runs in those days."

Thurston listened intently, for there was corking copy in the little author's account of his nocturnal excursions in Kew Gardens—like Charles Dickens' midnight rambles in the London streets—and in his unique explanation of the bombing of nonbelligerent pigs and chickens.

"I speak of the ordinary nights," Mr. Wembley continued. "But there have been extraordinary nights when from the darkness of the Gardens at Kew I have seen such a radiance in the London sky as makes me think of the pillar of fire by night that went before the Israelites in the wilderness. To a person looking toward London from a

distance, especially from a glade whose woody border forms a screen against any rays of surface light, this apparition in the heavens is clearly defined and has the suggestion of being a signal light—a light fixed somehow in the sky to guide enemy air craft."

"Is it a shaft of light?" asked Tom, thinking of the searchlights he had seen playing on the clouds.

"It is not," Mr. Wembley answered. "It reminds me of certain manifestations of aurora borealis that I have observed at the North Cape and in Iceland. I should describe it as a spot of luminescence, a glare in a setting of darkness, formless as a nebula and seeming to have no connection whatever with the earth. On three of what I term the extraordinary nights I have seen the spot in the sky and have watched it for an hour at a time. Its second appearance was at the last full moon, and it was still plain to see, even in the moonlight. Always it appears at the same point in the heavens, as well as I can tell; and always on those nights the Zeppelins have raided London."

"You saw it last night, sir?"

"For a little while. It was very bright, and it was higher than the clouds which afterward shut off my view of it. I did not need to look at the newspaper this morning to know that London had been bombed again."

"What was the condition of the sky on the other nights when you saw the light?"

"Clear."

"That makes it more mysterious."

"I get your drift, Mr. Thurston. You think that if there had been no object—a fleck of cloud, for instance—for the light to shine upon there would have been nothing for me to see. You are thinking that light itself is invisible, and that all we see when we say we see light is the object upon which the light falls."

"I haven't read your books ten years for nothing," Tom laughed.

"What you have thought occurred also to me, on the first night, or, rather, the next day, when I read of the murder of women and children by the German airmen. I reasoned that there is always sufficient vapor and smoke in the London atmosphere to show a stream of light cast upward, but in that case it would be easy to trace the stream of light downward to its source,

whereas, in this case, as I have told you, there is total darkness below the spot. There is no pencil of rays, as there would have to be if a searchlight were employed."

"In one of your books—I forget which one," said Thurston, "you describe an experiment in which certain invisible rays, ultra-violet rays, are brought together in such a way as to produce on the eye the impression of white light. You cite the experiment to prove that light is not a form of energy, as is commonly supposed, but an emanation of matter; that light, in other words, is matter flying off into space. I remember, now, it was in your radium book that you told us these things."

"So it was," said Mr. Wembley. "Your mind runs ahead of my story and helps me to take a short cut to my conclusion, which is this: That the spot of illumination in the London sky on the nights of the Zeppelin raids is produced in some such way as I described in my radium book, by the crossing in air of two or more streams of invisible rays directed upward by powerful lenses and reflectors from points on the earth's surface in the London vicinity. Now let's build up our hypothesis. Let's assume that the spot of light is five miles above the earth."

"How can you assume that?" Tom demanded. "It may be three miles, or ten."

"Not according to my triangulation. If the light is a signal for the Zeppelins it will naturally be fixed as nearly as possible above the heart of London, will it not?"

"Yes."

"That is Charing Cross. Well, from Kew Gardens to Charing Cross the distance is six miles, and the spot in the sky, when viewed from Kew, appears about forty degrees above the horizon. Do you follow me?"

"I think I do," said Tom. "If the spot were six miles above Charing Cross, and Charing Cross is six miles from Kew, then the light would be half a quadrant above the horizon, or forty-five degrees."

"That's it. Let us now assume something else; let's assume that the angle at which the streams of invisible light come together is a right angle, as it would need to be in order to insure the maximum of luminosity. You can then readily calculate, can't you, that the sending points are ten miles apart?"

Before Thurston could assent to that self-evident proposition he had to take pencil and draw a diagram. "I guess you're right," he said at last.

"Then you must see," cried Mr. Wembley, triumphantly, "that if my two assumptions are correct as to the elevation of the light and the angle of the streams of rays, the sending points will be found somewhere along the circumference of a circle whose center is Charing Cross and whose radius is five miles. That circumference touches Barnes Common, Chiswick Park, Wormwood Scrubbs and Dollis Hill on the west, Golder's Green, Muswell Hill and Wanstead Flats on the north, Hackney Marsh and Greenwich on the east, and Tooting on the south—a path some thirty-five miles in length along which we have to hunt for the secret power plants from which the local friends of Germany light the Zeppelins on their way to town. It seems a hopeless undertaking, you think?"

Tom's face reflected his doubt. "If we only had a clew," said he, "something to give us a start."

"That we have," said Mr. Wembley, and threw away the dead leaf, having looked at it steadily through all their talk. "A year ago I met a man at one of my clubs—the Flyfishers, I think, or perhaps the Eccentric. He was a wealthy American of the name of Krug. On a number of occasions he went out of his way to be agreeable to me. He professed to have dabbled in science, and his knowledge of recent advances in radiology and catoptrics was indeed more than superficial, as I discerned from a little conversation with him."

"What's catoptrics?" demanded Thurston.

"The science of the reflection of light," patiently Mr. Wembley explained. "He brought up one day the subject you have mentioned this morning—the experiment set forth in my radium book, which is perhaps the most convincing experiment yet devised to demonstrate that light is matter. I now recall that he showed a rather persistent interest in the details of the apparatus used, so that I gave him a card to Professor Smythe, at Kensington Institute; but Smythe tells me the card has never been presented. Soon after the card episode I ceased to run across the man Krug, and I have not seen him since, except one night last week when I went to attend the annual dinner of the Royal Botanical Society at the Salisbury."

"The Salisbury?" Thurston exclaimed. "That's my hotel."

"So Sir Arthur tells me," said Mr. Wemb-

ley. "That is one reason why I am asking you to help me. I stopped at the hotel desk that night to inquire my way to the banquet hall, and discovered Mr. Krug beside me, waiting for the clerk to hand him his mail. Pleased to see him again, for he had been almost as complimentary, in our brief acquaintance, as you have been this morning, I greeted him. But he looked me in the eyes and denied that he knew me. 'You have made a mistake, I think,' he said; but he lied. It was Krug, beyond a doubt, for I saw that name on the uppermost of the letters the clerk gave him."

"You think he is staying at the Salisbury, then?"

"He got his mail there. His box number was 340."

"What does he look like?"

"He is a large man with a stomach; overprosperous in appearance, noisy and self-assertive in his talk, and fond of jewelry. I once admired a ring that he wore, and he assured me he had a change of rings for every day in the week. And now," said Mr. Wembley, "we come to the objective of all our rambling. I feel that Mr. Krug ought to be investigated. This morning I expressed that opinion to Sir Arthur Purdoy, and Sir Arthur laughed at me. Like all Britons of the official class, he lacks imagination. He's a grand good fellow, but he has let his vision be circumscribed by the microscopic pettiness of British party politics. A year ago I told him that the British nation would be fighting not only for the life of Belgium, but for its own life as well before the end of the summer, and he called me a wild ass. If you were an Englishman you would have read his speech in the House of Commons last April, one year ago, in which he described the advocates of a larger naval program as little better than profiteers. Well, the war has come, as I predicted, and still his eyes aren't open. Failing to interest him this morning, I declared it my intention to conduct an investigation of my own; and when I mentioned Krug as an American stopping at the Salisbury, Sir Arthur thought at once of you and of some declaration or other you made to him last night; and he sent for you, and here we are."

"I'm proud to be with you in this business," said Tom. "But you don't know a lot about me, do you?"

"I know that Sir Arthur's friend, Mr.

Price, vouches for you, and that Sir Arthur vouches for Price, so what more do I need to know?"

"Secret-service work is a little out of my line," said Thurston; "but if you think I can help you, I'm your man. You want Krug shadowed, I suppose. Is that about all?"

"That's about all. Living there in the hotel, you can easily find out what there is to learn about the man; and if there seems to be any basis for my suspicions, we can then take them to the police—a course at which I hesitate now, for, you see, I know the English police as well as I know Sir Arthur Purdoy."

"There's one question," said Tom. "If the mysterious spot in the sky has been as distinct as you say, then it must have been observed by other people than you."

"So it has been," said Mr. Wembley. "A day or two after the first manifestation occurred, a letter was printed in the *London Mail* from a person who signs himself 'H. Hatfield' and gives his address as Number 25, Hermitage Road, Finsbury. In his letter in the newspaper Mr. Hatfield describes the phenomenon that I saw. Here is the clipping for you to read at your leisure. You will note that the sky spot, as he viewed it from Finsbury, appeared in the south-southwest. This fact has helped me in locating it over Charing Cross, since Finsbury is in the northern part of London and a little to the east of the Charing Cross meridian."

"Are you and Mr. Hatfield the only persons who have seen the light?"

"We are, so far as I know," answered Mr. Wembley, rising. "It may pay you to go to see him. Now I shall leave you to your own devices. Being an American, you are resourceful. I'm sure."

"And you, sir, being an Englishman, are a jollier," Tom laughed, detecting a twinkle in Mr. Wembley's eyes and remembering the "Until Something 'Appens" joke.

"I hope," said the other, in conclusion, "that you will have interesting things to report to-morrow evening at Fabian Villa, Kew Lane, where I shall expect you to take tea with me."

CHAPTER IV.

MR. BROMPTON.

On the upper deck of a motor bus Thurston rode into the maze of North London unto the Finsbury district. This was a different London from the London of parks,

palaces and clubs, of stately bridges and historic monuments. Here the house-building speculators had done their worst, covering league after league with monotonous rows of brick dwellings for the sheltering of millions of the capital's toilers. Here almost every street was like almost any other street within a mile. But Hermitage Road, where Tom descended, had two features to distinguish it from its neighbors. Its houses were detached one from another, and before each house was a little high-walled garden, the walls built of brick and surmounted with broken bottles set in mortar.

Such a wall had Number 25, and upon the wall beside the gate was a sign of painted tin that read:

H. HATFIELD,
MANTUA MAKER.

Giving the gate bell a pull, Thurston waited until, through the lattice that formed the upper half of the gate, he saw the house door open and a tall and angular woman descend the steps.

"Well, sir?" said she, opening the gate.

"Is Mr. Hatfield at home?" Tom asked.

"There is no Mr. Hatfield," the woman answered, sharply.

"I'm sorry, ma'am," said Tom, sympathetically. "I didn't know——"

"Oh, there's no occasion for condolences," the woman interrupted. "Mr. Hatfield hasn't died. There never was a Mr. Hatfield—not in this house, anyhow. If you are looking for a person named H. Hatfield, I am that person."

"I see," said Tom. "I've thought all along that you were a man. Allow me to beg your pardon."

"Pardon's granted," said the woman. "What is your business, please?"

On the bus trip north through Camden-town Thurston had read the *Mail* clipping which Mr. Wembley had given him. It was addressed to the editors and ran as follows:

SIRS: Last night, about eleven o'clock, while I was crossing Finsbury Park, my attention was attracted to a remarkable spectacle in the heavens, which at first I took to be a display of northern lights, despite the paradoxical fact that *the auroral exhibition was in the SOUTH!!!*

In the direction of Westminster from where I stood, and high in air above darkened London, appeared what I can perhaps best describe as a rosy glow, a kind of floating veil of light, much brighter than a comet's tail, yet suggest-

ing that phenomenon, inasmuch as the stars were visible through it.

It could not have been the reflection of earth lights on a passing cloud, for the cloud did not pass, and, besides, the night was quite clear.

To-day, as I read in the *Mail* of the visit of the Prussian aviators, I incline to suspect that the resourceful enemy has found a way to set at naught our vaunted lights-out regulation. I beg to suggest that, if this is the case, it demonstrates the utter helplessness of a government conducted by mere men. Let the women of England have a voice in public affairs and see if the Germans will prevail over us in our very midst as they now so impudently do. The female of the species is more deadly than the male.

Yours,

H. HATFIELD.

25 Hermitage Road, Finsbury.

Challenged by Miss Hatfield, Thurston stated his errand briefly. He had come to inquire whether the writer of the letter in the newspaper could give him further information regarding the apparition in the sky. Miss Hatfield could not. She was interested much less in sky glows for Germans than in votes for women. It was rather as a suffragist than as an Englishwoman that she had written the letter. Was Mr. Thurston a suffragist?

"In the United States, where I come from," Tom replied, "many of the women vote."

Then Miss H. Hatfield softened. Bidding the stranger enter, she sat down with him on the house steps and talked to him of the rights of women until a half hour had passed.

"But about the light in the sky," she said, at last, "I can tell you no more than I wrote in the *Mail*. I was returning home from a business meeting of our Finsbury Suffrage executive committee when I saw the queer sight. I watched it for ten minutes or more, then I came on home."

"Do you know of any one else who saw the light?"

"There were two men who stood near the in the park," she answered. "I remember hearing them laugh together, and I thought at first they were laughing at me. Perhaps that is why I didn't watch longer."

"You don't know who they are, do you?"

"Indeed I do. They live at Number 20, just opposite. But I shouldn't go there if I were you."

"Why not?"

"It is not for me to slander my neighbors and go to prison," Miss Hatfield replied. "But there are stories. There's bound to be talk when people keep themselves behind

locked doors and refuse to speak to the other people in the street when they meet them. And when people have explosions in their house in the dead of night and fill the air with dreadful smells when honest folk are asleep, I'm sure it's only human nature for tongues to wag."

"I'm sure of that, too," Tom agreed. "Tell me the name of the family at Number 20."

"The old gentleman's name is Brompton. I call him a gentleman because he does seem, indeed, to be a very nice old creature. The names of the other people I don't know."

"Was Mr. Brompton one of the men who watched the light with you in the park?"

"Yes, he and a younger man."

"In spite of your friendly warning," said Tom, "I think I'll go across the street and pay a call at Number 20."

"Please yourself, of course," said Miss Hatfield. "But don't tell them you came from me."

Like all the other residences in Hermitage Road, Number 20 had a lattice gate. Through the gate Thurston could see the house. It was of red brick, three stories in height, well kept and respectable in look. The grass along the path that led to the door was neatly clipped, and an apple tree in bloom canopied the yard and dropped its pink-and-white petals upon a trim young woman who sat on a rustic bench. Her hand held a pencil, her lap supported a notebook, and her eyes rested upon an elderly man in a rustic chair before her.

Thurston, with his hand on the bell pull at the side of the gate, stared through the lattice and stared again, for the girl before his eyes was certainly the stenographer whom he had seen and heard in the typewriter office in Cornhill. He recalled her words to the manager on that occasion: "If you could see him, sir; if you could see his face with the bandages off, you would almost wish, for his sake, that he didn't have to get well." He remembered, too, the fear in her voice when she told of something wrong, something degrading in the place where she was employed. "There is a man, and he—I shouldn't stay there, sir." Not much of an accusation, but enough for a person of Tom's imagination.

More than once since that day in Cornhill he had thought of the girl and her brave battle for bread. He remembered how

proud yet helpless she looked as she said, "It isn't right for a girl to be out so late in London now, with the streets so dark. My people at home talk about me and make it very hard." Now he found her under a blossoming apple tree, serving a respectable-looking, benevolent-looking elderly gentleman as a secretary.

As he looked at her, the girl raised her eyes and, seeing the stranger at the gate, spoke a word to the elderly gentleman, who rose and came toward Tom, limping somewhat and aiding his movements with a heavy cane. The man was tall in stature and spare of limb, his face was smooth-shaven and scholarly, and a shaggy mane of iron-gray hair enhanced the distinction of his appearance. Tom felt sure that this was the "very nice old creature" described to him by Miss Hatfield.

"Well, sir?" asked the old gentleman through the lattice.

"Are you Mr. Brompton?"

"I am."

"My name is Thurston. I understand that you witnessed a strange light in the sky one night about a month ago, and I have called to see whether you will talk to me about it."

Mr. Brompton squinted through the lattice and studied Tom's face shrewdly.

"How do you happen to know, young man, that I saw the light in the sky?"

"One of your neighbors saw you looking at it."

"In that case, I suppose I shall have to plead guilty," said the old gentleman good-naturedly. He opened the gate with a heavy key. "Won't you step inside?"

Tom followed him to the apple tree. The stenographer rose and stood awaiting instructions from her employer.

"You may go into the house and work on our last chapter, my dear," Mr. Brompton told her. Tom's eyes remained upon her until the house door shut her from his sight. She was the prettiest girl he had seen in England, not excepting the princess of the Salisbury breakfast room. When he saw her first at the typewriter agency in Cornhill he thought her the prettiest, and the interval of two weeks had verified his opinion. Most of the girls in the streets of London did not dress attractively, and they wore oversize shoes. This girl had eyes and cheeks, and an air and a way of carrying herself; and there was the neatness of a

new pin about her, from the tight coil of dark hair at the back of her head to the shining tips of her properly small boots.

Noting the young man's undisguised interest, Mr. Brompton explained.

"That is my secretary, Miss Ashby. She is almost a daughter to me. If you care to know, I am a retired bookseller, and I am spending a year on the downhill side of my life in the pleasant occupation of writing my autobiography. I shall call it 'The Memoirs of a Bookman.' Very few persons will care to read it, I know; but it gives me a mild sort of happiness to talk my life over again to Miss Ashby for an hour or two a day, since I thus renew the friendships I have enjoyed with some of the great people of the earth. In these April days we do our work out here; it is warmer than indoors."

"How long," Thurston asked, "have you and Miss Ashby been at work on your memoirs?"

"How long? Let me see. This is April. We began on New Year's Day."

So this was the employer of whom the girl had spoken the words that had sunk into Tom's heart. "There is a man, and he—I shouldn't stay there, sir." Tom began to dislike Mr. Brompton exceedingly, but the object of his growing animosity chattered on about himself with so agreeable a flow of talk and such an air of bookish cultivation that Tom's mistrust soon went to sleep.

"Perhaps you know my bookstall in High Holborn, sir? I still own it, though I seldom go near the place any more." He tapped his left foot gently with his cane.

"Rheumatism?"

"Gout. Plain, old-fashioned gout, such as all the earls used to have in the novels, before our literature became so confoundedly full of golf and hockey and motoring. Gout, sir. It keeps me close at home. You are an American, aren't you? I thought so. In my day I had many Americans among my customers; the Galts, the Drexmores, the Perquins—I've supplied libraries to all of them."

"Do you happen to know a wealthy American named Krug?"

"Krug? The name seems familiar. I believe I once knew such a man. Is he a shy little chap with poor eyesight?"

"Not the same," said Tom, and changed the subject. "You know most of the English writers, no doubt?"

"Know them all, sir, know them all, but

the old-timers best. Meredith, Huxley, Darwin, Tennyson, all were friends of mine. Robert Louis Stevenson used to drop in at my shop."

"You knew R. L. S.?"

"Indeed I did. In the years when he and his father weren't on speaking terms I gave him shelter many a cold day. He showed me his 'Suicide Club' in manuscript, poor chap, and I advised him where to place it."

"Do you know Mr. Herbert Wembley?"

"The scientific novelist? Only by sight," Mr. Brompton replied. "Mr. Wembley is too modern for a man in my trade. Much too modern. In fact, he is so far ahead of the times that I wonder he interests anybody. No one ever calls for his books at my shop. But you did not come here to talk of books and authors, did you?"

"No," said Tom; "I came to talk about lights in the sky. The reason I mention Mr. Wembley is that he has seen the lights and has asked me to help him investigate them."

"Mr. Wembley has seen them?"

"On three occasions."

"Well, well! Now he will have some new insanity to write about, won't he? May I ask what Mr. Wembley thinks of the lights?"

"He thinks they are signals for the Zeppelin raiders."

Mr. Brompton leaned back in his rustic chair and laughed.

"The theory is not so ludicrous," said Tom, nettled at Mr. Brompton's scorn of the noted English author, "when you stop to think that on each of the three nights when the light has appeared in the sky, London has been bombed. How do you explain that?"

"Coincidence, purely," said Mr. Brompton. "Hot-heads in England like Mr. Wembley are too quick in accepting the German notion that the Germans are supermen. The Germans are nothing of the sort; they are common human folk like the rest of us. To produce a signal light in the sky for the Zeppelins—I mean by that, such a peculiar light as I saw—would be a supernatural act. It can't be done by them or by anybody else."

"What was there peculiar about the light that you saw?"

The old gentleman shot a quick scowl at

his questioner. Perhaps his gouty foot had given him a twinge of pain.

"Well," said he, "there was no visible connection between the light and the earth. I suppose that's what I mean. It was merely a glow up there, like a nebula. But don't ask me to talk science," he added, turning his scowl into a smile. "I'm only a book lover and a sentimentalist, you know."

"You think such a light can't be produced by human power," said Thurston. "But it can."

"I wish you would tell me how."

"You would know how if you had followed Mr. Wembley's stories," said Tom. "Some years ago, before the war crowded radium out of the newspapers and the magazines, Mr. Wembley published a novel in which he described a laboratory experiment in the ultra-violet rays of the spectrum. He tells me that the experiment, if engineered on a large scale, could produce the sky illumination that you and he have seen."

"This is interesting, indeed," said Mr. Brompton. "You don't suppose that Mr. Wembley himself may be throwing those lights on the sky, do you?"

"Certainly not; but I can tell you this, that he was sought out, a year ago, by a certain wealthy foreigner, a dabbler in science, and questioned about the experiment, the necessary apparatus, and so on; more than that, the man is still in London, and he now behaves unaccountably toward Mr. Wembley and pretends not to know him. So, you see, Mr. Wembley's theory may not be so ridiculous, after all."

"Apparently not," responded Mr. Brompton, opening his eyes wide. "May I ask you the foreigner's name?"

"His name is not important," Tom replied. "I have told you this much merely to convince you that you ought to have Mr. Wembley on your bookshelves."

Mr. Brompton admitted cheerfully that his education might have been neglected, and promised to order Mr. Wembley's rarium book at once.

"Suppose I should see the light again," said he, as Tom rose to go. "Where can I get in touch with you?"

Thurston opened his pocketbook, found one of his cards and scribbled, "Hotel Salisbury, Strand," under the name.

A pleasant fellow, after all, was Mr. Brompton, although Tom would have liked to interview the pretty secretary before ac-

cepting that estimate of the man as final. Through the lattice gate he looked back at the house, scanning every window from basement up to eaves; but the only face he saw was the forbidding visage of a slatternly woman, possibly a servant, on the second floor.

Thinking of the pretty stenographer, Tom boarded the wrong bus in Green Lanes and discovered the fact an hour later.

"Where the deuce does this jitney run to?" he asked the conductor.

"This wot? Padd'n'ton Station. Where do you want to go? Charing Cross, is it? 'Op hoff when I tells you and take a Number 'Leven."

He was a friendly conductor, so Tom was emboldened to remark to him upon the large number of crippled soldiers in the streets.

"Yes, the poor blighters!" said the fare man. "They picked the hinfantry, they did. Me for the hartillery. 'Cos why? 'Cos when you get it you get it quick, and hall hover but a letter 'ome saying wot a fine chap you were. I'll be a 'listed man to-morrer night, sir."

"Good for you," said Tom.

"Bad for me, you mean. But wot helse you goin' to do when they tells you there'll be a lady in your job to-morrer?"

At the proper point Tom hopped off and found himself in front of a nice old church in Marylebone. A little crowd of people hung about the church and another crowd loitered beside the park wall opposite. A policeman in the street had his hands full in keeping the crowd off the church steps.

"What's going on inside?" Thurston asked. "A wedding?"

"A wedding!" There are no words in the English language to express the policeman's honest scorn. "'E arskis is it a wedding!"

"Well, then, what? Spill it to me so I can enjoy the fun along with the rest of the audience."

"It's the bloody Zeppelen pirates, them that came to town last night," the officer explained, perceiving that the stranger was in earnest. "They're a-givin' of 'em a decent Christian funeral service. Hi suppose the blessed little choir boys is a-singin' the German 'ymn of 'ate hover their blarsted remains now, hout o' politeness. My Gord!"

The bluecoat was too full of righteous disgust for further utterance. Respect for the dead, in his not very humble opinion,

could be carried entirely too far. Chuck the bloody 'Uns in a sewer, that's wot 'e'd 'a' done with 'em.

Thurston mingled with the onlookers and watched the proceedings. From the interior of the church came the music of an organ and the sound of a voice singing. It was not the German hymn of hate that was sung; it was Barnby's sweetest, saddest anthem, "For all the Saints Who From Their Labors Rest." Through the eight plaintive, beautiful stanzas, with their "Alleluia" refrain, Thurston listened spellbound.

"The golden evening brightens in the west;
Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their
rest;
Sweet is the calm of Paradise the blest.
Alleluia! Alleluia!"

If there was unconscious humor in the singing of that song on such an occasion, Tom was in no mood to perceive it. His mind was filled with awe of a nation that could show such solemn and sincere respect to the charred bodies of its murderous enemies.

The music ceased. The crowd around the steps stirred a little, and out from the portal came a procession of black coffins carefully borne on the shoulders of pallbearers. In silence the crowd watched the hearses drive away.

But Tom had no eyes for hearses or crowd just then. His eyes were fixed upon a richly dressed young woman with yellow hair who had followed the caskets out of the church. It was the princess of the Salisbury, and she wore below her throat a cluster of bright blue cornflowers.

She passed him without seeing him. Indeed, she walked as if seeing nothing—as if she had been asleep.

Long after her taxicab had disappeared, Tom stood staring.

CHAPTER V.

MR. KRUG.

To enter the Hotel Salisbury the visitor passes from the Strand through an archway into a quiet courtyard, at the farther end of which are the hotel offices. On Thurston's return from Finsbury he discovered that the courtyard wore a sunnier look than when he had left in the morning, the cause of this new effect being tall spikes of bright yellow flowers in a score of window boxes which a florist had installed in his absence.

"The flowers in the window boxes outside," he said to the clerk at the desk; "can you tell me what they are?"

The clerk could not, but he would find out for the gentleman. He tapped a bell, spoke in French to a messenger, the messenger went in search of the manager, and word came back that the yellow blooms in the courtyard were *genesta*.

"*Planta genesta—Plantagenet*," thought Tom. "Wasn't that the national flower of England once upon a time? You'd think an English hotel clerk would know it." He turned to the man behind the desk. "Speaking of flowers, do you happen to know the national flower of Germany?"

"Cornflower," instantly replied the clerk.

He reminded Thurston of some one—the head waiter in the breakfast room, perhaps. Both men were stout, swarthy of complexion, unctuous of skin and manner, and both had the kind of eyes that can see everything or nothing, at their owner's convenience.

The clerk hung obsequiously near; his manner invited further requests for information, though his eyes were mildly impudent. Perhaps the inquisitive American would like to know something about the botany of the Fiji Islands.

"Is there a guest here named Krug?"

"Krug? Let me see." The clerk turned to his roster and ran a fat forefinger down the list. "Krug? Yes, sir." He put his hand into pigeonhole 340 in the key rack. "Mr. Krug is about the place now. Would you like him paged?"

"Don't bother," Tom answered. "What does he look like?"

The clerk hesitated, and in that moment an interruption walked up to the desk in the person of a dowager who wished to complain of the gas grate in her bathroom. Abandoning the clerk to his fate, Tom sauntered through the parlors looking for a stout and prosperous American with a noisy voice and a passion for jewelry; looking also for the yellow-haired princess who had worn cornflowers at the funeral of the Zeppelin pirates.

Numbers of women were taking tea with army officers in one of the parlors, and two or three solitary women were dreaming over their cigarettes, but the princess was not among them. The reading room was deserted; there Thurston sat down near a window through which he could look out upon the muddy little Thames beyond.

2A P

A barge worked its way up the river with the tide, steered by a man with a sweep oar. Watching its leisurely progress, Tom failed to see a little pantomime in the doorway behind him. Just outside the portières stood two men. One of them was the desk clerk, and he pointed toward Tom. The other was the man who had damned the President of the United States so heartily before the fireplace in that room earlier in the day. He answered Mr. Herbert Wembley's description of Mr. Krug in every detail, except that at the moment he had throttled his obstreperous voice down to a husky whisper.

"When did he ask you about me?"

"Five minutes ago."

"Who the devil is he?"

"His name is Thurston. He arrived from America last month."

"If he asks about me again, point me out to him. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

The whispering pair withdrew from the doorway, the barge drifted upstream out of sight, and Tom still sat at the window, planning his next move in the assignment Mr. Wembley had given him. The best way to learn about Mr. Krug, the American way, was the direct way. He would scrape an acquaintance with the unsuspecting Mr. Krug at the first opportunity. It would not take ten minutes to discover whether or not Mr. Krug was what he advertised himself to be.

He rose and resumed his search. Passing the hotel desk, he heard his own name spoken.

"Mr. Thurston," said the clerk, "you were asking for Mr. Krug. He is the gentleman looking at the Blue Book at the table yonder."

Tom saw the man he sought, recognizing him at once as his opponent in the reading-room debate of the morning. Mr. Krug looked up in surprise upon being addressed.

"Sure I remember you," he growled. "You're the young devil who goes around London whitewashing the Wilson administration. If you want to borrow money, apply at the American embassy, Grosvenor Gardens."

Tom swallowed the insult with a good-natured grin. Mr. Krug grinned, himself, and his bluff manner moderated.

"What you doing in London?"

"Looking for stories."

"You find plenty of stuff, don't you?"

"Plenty. There's copy everywhere—reams of it. You're here on business, I suppose?"

"No, damn it, I'm not. I wish I was. I belong to the idle rich, and loafing don't agree with me. If I was back home in America I'd be making munitions; but Mrs. Krug and the girls won't live anywhere but here."

"It isn't a particularly safe place to keep a family, is it? There was the Zeppelin raid last night, for instance. You saw the wind-up of that, I presume?"

"I had no such luck," Mr. Krug answered. "I was home in Richmond, asleep in my bed. The first I heard of it was when I turned out early this morning to putter around my flower garden. The hired man told me about it, and I hustled into town to see what there was left to see. But the damned newspapers don't even tell where the bombs struck. Who's your banker?"

"Brown-Shipley."

"I'll look you up," Mr. Krug declared, in his abrupt though not ill-natured way. "If you're all right I'll have the girls invite you out to the house. We have to be careful about the people we take in. Lots of American crooks here, you know. Play tennis?"

Again Tom's sense of humor was equal to the strain. "Yes, I play tennis," he said.

"Good," said Mr. Krug. "You'll hear from me in a day or two."

He resumed his study of the Blue Book in his hand, but Tom was not to be dismissed without putting in one further question.

"Are you acquainted with Mr. Herbert Wembley, the author?"

The Blue Book fell face down on the table. Mr. Krug recovered it with an impatient clutch.

"To my regret, I am," he answered. "I say that because I believe the man's a lunatic. I have to cut him when I meet him."

"What's wrong with him, if I may ask?"

"Bughouse. Plain nut! Anarchist and all that. Wants to turn everything upside down and make the world over. Do you know him?"

"I've met him."

"Then watch your step."

So saying, Mr. Krug returned so pointedly to looking up society names in the book that Tom had nothing to do but to withdraw as gracefully as he could.

A forceful person Mr. Krug seemed to be, and accustomed to having his own way in the world. He lived in a house in Richmond; he had no business to keep him in London, and he disliked Mr. Herbert Wembley. Thus Tom checked up the information he had gained.

The princess remained invisible to Thurston that evening, though he looked for her at dinner and afterward. But she occupied his thoughts as he sat down in his bedroom late at night to try again to write an account of the Zeppelin raid as he had seen it.

About midnight his curiosity, which was quite as human as it was professional, was suddenly keyed up to high tension by new sounds that came through the wall. There were men in the princess' room—two of them. He could hear the bass grumble of their voices, punctuated now and then with the soprano tones of the princess. It got on his nerves at last; it increased the mystery surrounding the princess; furthermore, the princess was too frail and dainty a doll of a thing to be visited by gruff-voiced men at midnight.

Tom slipped his overcoat on, went out into the Strand and walked east as far as the Law Courts and back again to relieve his feelings. As he turned in under the archway a tall man passed him, walking vigorously away from the hotel and swinging a heavy cane. Tom whirled about and followed the man down the Strand to Charing Cross. There the man waited for a bus, and Tom drew near enough to see that his surmise in the dim light of the courtyard had been correct, for the man was Mr. Brompton of Finsbury.

"Queer," thought Tom, "how soon the old chap has gotten well from the gout. He's a regular Eddie Weston to-night."

At the hotel desk another surprise awaited him, for the night clerk hailed him as he passed.

"A letter just came for you, sir."

Tom looked at the writing on the envelope. Unfamiliar writing it was, and in a woman's hand. There was neither stamp nor postmark, and it was addressed to "Thomas T. Thurston, Esquire, Hotel Salisbury, Strand."

In his room Tom opened the letter and read:

SIR: I wish to warn you that it is quite unsafe for you to have any dealings with Mr.

Brompton. Please do not visit Hermitage Road again, and please, if you value this warning, say nothing to any one about it. SINCERE.

To Thos. T. Thurston, Esq.,
Hotel Salisbury, The Strand.

"Why the dickens," thought Tom, "should Brompton warn me against himself?"

That the retired bookseller had delivered the letter in person was as clear to Tom as daylight. Hadn't he seen the man hastily leaving the hotel? Hadn't the clerk reported that the letter had just arrived? There was a stronger bit of circumstantial evidence still. On arriving at the hotel Thurston had registered as "Thomas Thurston," neglecting to set down the initial letter of his middle name. No one in London except Mr. Brompton knew that he had a middle initial in his name, for the calling card which he had handed to Brompton in Finsbury was the only card he had taken out of his pocketbook since reaching England. This letter was addressed, both outside and inside, to "Thomas T. Thurston."

It was a clear enough case except for the fact that the handwriting of the letter was certainly not a man's. Mr. Brompton employed a girl for a secretary; but would he be likely to dictate to a secretary such a letter as this?

Tom stepped to the phone on his bedroom wall.

"This is Thurston—Room 83. You handed me a letter a minute ago. What sort of a person brought it in?"

"A small boy brought it, sir," the clerk replied.

Long after the last taxicabs had ceased their "pip-pipping" in the streets outside, Thurston's mind was busy trying to fit together the pieces of this picture puzzle in real life that had been thrust into his hands that day; Mr. Wembley's account of the lights in the sky; Mr. Brompton, under the apple tree, dictating his memoirs to the pretty stenographer who was afraid of her employer; the glimpse he had had of the princess at Marylebone; the sounds in her room last night and this; the sight of Mr. Brompton enjoying the use of both of his feet; and, last of all, the anonymous note delivered at the hotel by the small boy.

There were no more sounds of talking in the princess' room. But it was not of the princess that Tom thought; it was of a trim young woman secretary with apple petals in her dark hair. Certainly the note of warn-

ing had been written by a woman, and by one who felt friendly toward him.

He might have gone to sleep in a flattered and contented frame of mind if he had not suddenly recollected Miss H. Hatfield, mantua maker and suffragist. Perhaps, after all, the note had come from her. It took him half an hour of painful thinking to remind himself that Miss Hatfield knew neither his middle initial nor his address.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KNIGHT.

There are always two ways of looking at an event; and the event in which Thurston and the princess figured as the chief characters on the following morning must be considered from two points of view in order to be understood.

Considered from Tom's point of view, it happened thus. Having risen, he dressed and shaved with unusual care, for he was to take tea that day with Mr. Herbert Wembley, the greatest exponent of the new school of English authorship. Descending in the elevator, he passed through the hotel parlors, treading luxuriously on the soft, rich carpets. Before a mirror on the stairs leading down to the breakfast room he paused to inspect his tie; then he continued downward. At the foot of the staircase he heard the half-repressed scream of a woman in distress, and, stepping hastily forward, he came upon a sight that caused him to grow instantly hot under the collar.

Outside the breakfast-room door stood the yellow-haired young woman he had come to call the princess. That it was she who had screamed appeared probable, for the only other woman in sight was the hat-check girl behind her counter, who did not look to be of the screaming kind; indeed, she now regarded the scene before her with a smile of scornful amusement. But the princess was not amused. She was angry and storming, and the head waiter, the object of her wrath, bowed smirking and insolent before the words that assailed him from her lips.

"You coward! You brute!" cried the princess, and clutched at the shelves of the hatstand for support. The waiter shot a question at her in French, to which she replied, "No! no! no! It's a lie. Oh, dear! I——" She put a hand over her eyes as if to shut out a hateful sight. At the same moment her other hand loosened its

grip on the hatstand and she certainly would have fallen if Thurston had not caught her in his arms. They were muscular arms and held their burden lightly as he turned upon the grinning waiter.

"What's all this?" he demanded.

"Ask mademoiselle," answered the waiter, and walked away shrugging his stout shoulders.

Tom appealed to the hat-check girl. "What's the matter?"

"I know nussing," the young woman replied. "I see nussing. Perhaps mademoiselle vill tell you." So maliciously she leered that Tom turned away from her in disgust.

"Mademoiselle," he called to the drooping creature in his arms. "Mademoiselle, come, wake up! Tell me what's wrong. Has that confounded waiter insulted you? Say the word and I'll mop him up."

Slowly the princess opened her eyes.

"Oh!" Swiftly she freed herself from his quite respectful embrace. "Oh! Thank you, sir, but—but it's all right now. I shouldn't have cried out."

"Listen, miss," said Tom. "You didn't have any dinner last night, did you? I know that, because I watched for you and you didn't show up. Honest, now, aren't you hungry?"

Slowly she bowed her head, and Tom thought she blushed.

"Come along," said he. "You don't know me, but let's have breakfast together, anyhow. I'm as lonesome here in London as a Quaker in Germany, and I'll be tickled half to death if you will let me sit across a table from you and look at you. A cup of coffee, now, and a Spanish omelet—what do you say?"

"Sir," she replied, looking him in the eyes, "I cannot refuse your offer. I believe you are a gentleman."

"Try me," said Tom. She took his arm.

For the young man the half hour that followed was a bright one. When viewed at close range across the tablecloth the princess came up to his first impression of her—even exceeded it. Her skin made him think of peaches and cream. Her eyes were soft and full of light, shyly hidden from his sight at times, banteringly bold at others. She handled her knife and fork with the skill of a society woman. All in all, Tom felt not a little proud of himself and glad to be gazed at by the other breakfasters. It is to any man's credit to take breakfast with a charm-

ing young woman. As for any sign of unrefinement in her, he might as well have looked for a flaw in Queen Mary's favorite crown jewel.

The head waiter had disappeared, for which Tom was thankful. The other servants behaved as attentively as if he and his companion had just come over from Pittsburgh. To add to his sense of satisfaction was the fact that the princess ate heartily, accepting a second helping of the omelet without demur. His guess that she had gone without food the evening before was close to the truth.

So Tom and the early bird breakfasted together innocently and happily, the observed of all the breakfasters. Among others who observed them was the stout and bejeweled Mr. Krug, who seemed to have broken his fast previously that morning, for he merely entered the room, looked around until his eyes rested upon Tom and mademoiselle, and withdrew, his place in the doorway being taken a moment thereafter by a brisk little man in a rusty mackintosh, who spotted Tom and Tom's lady friend at once and remained near the door, never removing his eyes from them.

In great contentment Tom signed the check for the breakfasts and escorted the princess out of the room, past the little man in the rusty mackintosh and up the stairs to the first parlor, where they sat down tête-à-tête in a conversation chair, with an ash tray on a stand convenient to the young woman's hand.

"Now," spoke Tom, "if I have satisfied you that I am a nice young man, let me help you further. You're in trouble, aren't you?"

"Yes," she answered, dropping a burned match in the tray and feeling at her belt for her handkerchief.

"I hoped and expected to keep this," said Tom, holding up a bit of lace and linen, "but if you need it, here it is."

"Thank you," she said, and applied the recaptured kerchief to her eyes.

"You are in trouble," he said again.

"Very deep trouble," she answered. "But how can I ask you to help me? What right have I?"

"You have the right of any woman," Tom answered. "As for your asking me to help you, it's the other way around; I'm asking you to let me help you."

"You are as gallant as a knight," she told him, smiling once more. "I shall not ask

for your help, but I shall tell you my story and ask for your advice. There can be nothing indecorous in that, can there?"

"Certainly not. Please go to it—I mean, begin."

She sat silent for a minute. At the top of the breakfast-room stairs stood the stout Mr. Krug, talking with the brisk little man in the rusty mackintosh. They both were looking into the parlor. Tom, whose back was toward them, did not see them, nor did the princess, who had begun her story.

"It will not be a complete story," said the princess, after a preliminary pull at her cigarette, which had been made in the Far East and was very fragrant. "It will be merely an outline, a sketch. I shall not have time for more, because every minute I spend with you increases your danger."

"My danger!"

"You will understand in a moment what I mean. To begin, sir, my father's name would be familiar to your ears if I should breathe it to you. But discretion requires me to speak of him at this time simply as 'the count.' For you know, sir, you are a stranger to me—yet."

"Yet!" thought Tom.

"In all Europe, sir, no man was held in greater respect than my father, the count. Trusted by his king, loved by his people, a man of probity, justice and kindness, a man whose life was devoted to the great-hearted service of our happy, hopeful little nation—such was my father until the dreadful day in August of last year when the Prussian government sought to lure us into a plot against our neighbors and, failing in that base effort, swept across our frontiers in overwhelming hordes to crush our land under the iron heel of war."

"Then you are a Belgian," said Tom, his sympathy shining from his eyes. "I've thought so, all along. But here in England you are among friends, child."

"Ah, these English! They are so good to my people. They have opened their doors to half a million of us. But, as I shall make clear to you in a moment, there are reasons of state which bar me from sharing that hospitality so generously given. You have heard, no doubt, of a certain volume of state papers which my government, in its flight to Havre, left behind at the book-binder's in Brussels. It was in that forgotten volume, if you remember, that the Germans believed, or pretended to believe, they

had discovered a conspiracy on the part of Great Britain, France and Belgium to attack Germany. With what ingenuity they twisted the meaning of those discovered documents to fool and inflame their own people you are doubtless familiar; and you know that it is only necessary to supply the omissions in the German translations in order to prove that the papers were totally academic and harmless."

"I have read something to that effect," Tom admitted.

"There existed a similar set of papers," mademoiselle continued, "involving certain projected commercial agreements between England and Belgium, and these papers were quite as susceptible of misrepresentation as the Brussels documents. My father, the count, was their appointed custodian, for they were considered too delicate to be intrusted to the archives of the Belgian government, where they would certainly have fallen under the eye of the German secret agents. The secret agents of Germany—they were everywhere in our country in those days of false peace and security, and they are here in London, here in this hotel, even now. For they know, sir"—here the princess paused to cast a cautious glance around the parlor—"they know, sir, that I have the papers in my possession. Here in this friendly hotel in a friendly land my life is in danger as long as I guard the secret treaties for whose safe-keeping my father pledged his honor."

"Why don't you put 'em in the hotel safe?" asked Tom, with American practicality.

She laughed cynically. "And play directly into the hands of the Germans? I tell you, sir, they are everywhere, those people. They are behind the desk, out there in front. They are downstairs in the dining room. They watch my every move. Twice they have searched my luggage. They know somehow that I carry the papers with me wherever I go."

Tom glanced at a gay-colored knitting bag in her lap and saw her fingers close tight upon the silken cords.

"Pardon me for putting in a side remark," said he, "but for a Continental person you speak mighty good English."

"I was educated in England," she replied, with quiet dignity.

"Oh! I beg your pardon again. But you must have friends in England, then. Can't you go to them?"

"And subject them to the same peril of life that hangs over me? Would that be honorable?"

"Tell me how these documents happen to be in your charge."

"My father, the count, was at Brussels when the blow fell. The papers were hidden at our château near Wareme. He could not forsake the king. I volunteered to go for them; it was thought that I might steal safely through the invaded district without suspicion. Alas! my father and his friends at court relied upon a thing that exists only in fantasy—they believed in German chivalry.

"At Tirlmont I was detained, my chauffeur was arrested, my motor car was taken away from me. I sought to hire the farmers to drive me the remaining miles of my journey, but every cart was busy hauling the poor fugitives and their belongings out of the country. I went forward on foot. I slept at night in a hayfield. I reached our estate. The place was deserted, the servants had fled; there was not even a horse that I might have ridden back to Brussels. That day the last fortress at Liège capitulated under the pounding of those awful German guns. The tide of invasion swept forward, and next morning I looked from my window upon a regiment of gray-clad troops marching toward the capital."

"Didn't they bother you in your château?" Tom asked.

"I hid in the wine cellar and they overlooked me," said the princess.

"Queer about that," thought Tom, but he withheld his opinion. The young woman lit a second cigarette and continued.

"Our château must have been out of the principal line of march, for there were no Germans in sight on the second morning. I made my way to the nearest hamlet, and there I found a man with a span of oxen, who was preparing to start with his family for the Dutch frontier. I gained permission to join his party. I dressed in some of the clothing of his daughter. Under tarpaulins we lay cowering in the bottom of the wagon, expecting at every mile to be dragged out of hiding to Heaven knows what dreadful fate. But the soldiers left behind to garrison the villages were of the Landsturm; they had wives and daughters of their own in Germany. Many times they stopped us, then suffered us to pass unharmed. On a rainy night we crossed into Holland, whence, after

many days, I found passage to England. Now, sir, you know my story."

Tom thought it over. It was a pretty good story, but it had loose ends.

"Is your father still with the King of the Belgians?"

"He is."

"Then what's the matter with running over to Calais and delivering the papers into his hands?"

"The matter is, for one thing, that I should certainly be murdered on the way. At least, the papers would be stolen."

"Not if I went with you," Tom declared. "But if that won't do, why not turn the papers over to the British foreign office, in Downing Street? According to what you say, the British government is an interested party in the secret treaties. That's what I should do if I were you. I'd like to see any German spy try to steal them from Sir Edward Grey."

"You do not understand, sir," said the princess. "This is a matter of personal honor. My father promised his government to be personally responsible for the papers. He has delegated the responsibility to me. How then can I let them go out of my hands? Alas! I am only a woman. Whom can I trust?"

She looked at him so appealingly that his heart jumped. He was flattered and knew it, and let himself enjoy the sensation against his better judgment. The princess was a very magnet of attractiveness this morning.

"What about the head waiter?" Tom asked. "What has he got on you—that is to say, is he one of the Germans?"

"He a German?" she laughed. "No, indeed; he is a Swiss. They all are Swiss in England."

"But does he know who you are?"

"He knows. He has told me so. It is he who has threatened me, speaking for others higher up than he. Through fear he hopes to break down my will. Yesterday he offered me promises in the name of the government at Berlin—promises of future favors to my father; for you must see, sir, these papers will enable the Germans to make out a very black case against England in the eyes of the neutral nations. To gain time I pretended to consider his proposal. This morning I told him I would not bargain with him, whereupon he became enraged and assailed me with the dire threats which you must have overheard."

"Unfortunately, I can't take French, though I can send it," said Tom. "That's what the beggar was doing, eh?—threatening you?"

Her forlorn look was answer enough. So hopeless, so despairing she seemed, he put aside his last doubts of her veracity. It wasn't manly, anyway, to mistrust the word of a woman.

"We have talked too long," she said, rising. "I have no right to jeopardize your life along with mine."

"Forget it," said Tom. "You don't think a bunch of sneaking foreigners can get my goat, do you?" He stood beside her looking at her downcast face. "Will it relieve your mind if I take care of that bag for you?"

"Would you—just for to-day? I have reason to believe that this is the day when something may happen to me. I am leaving town to seek a new refuge—a quiet place somewhere in the country. I shall be followed, watched; there may be foul play if——"

He took the silken bag from her not unwilling hand, rolled it into a tight wad and stuffed it under his coat.

"When you want it back, say the word."

"To-morrow morning," she replied. "To-morrow morning—at breakfast."

"But listen, princess. If you're going out of town to-day to look for country board, won't you need somebody along to kind of kill anybody that molests you?"

"Thank you, sir. But please don't follow me. Please trust to me and do as I bid. Good-by, Sir Knight."

She moved lightly across the soft, rich carpets. At the door she looked back, flashed him a sad little smile, and was gone.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAN IN THE MACKINTOSH.

In his room Thurston took the knitting bag from under his coat and looked at the silky thing with amusement. His good sense warned him that mademoiselle's story was about as air-tight as a last year's bargain-sale tire. That she had quarreled with the head waiter, perhaps been insulted by the man, and that she was in difficulties of some sort Tom could readily believe. But a frail young Belgian, the daughter of a count, possessing papers valuable to the British government, would scarcely want for protection in England.

Nevertheless, it had pleased the pleasing young woman to intrust the bag to his care, and he would take care of it for her to satisfy her whim. For a while he debated whether or not he would be playing the game to open the drawstrings and look inside. His chivalry advised against such a proceeding, but his American horse sense warned him that any trustee has the right to know the nature of his trust. Strange women have a way, as he knew, of turning out to be spies, diamond thieves and dangerous enemies of society generally.

He opened the bag. As the acting attorney for the fair defendant in the case he retained the privilege, in protection to himself, of learning the truth. As her attorney he could afterward keep his mouth shut concerning what the truth might be.

The bag contained a leather wallet, fastened with a strap and a buckle. He unfastened the wallet and spread it open. Within was a bulky sheaf of foolscap paper, the pages held together with brass clips. He unfolded the document. It was typewritten. At the top of the first page he read:

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF
STATE FOR WAR:

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT TO THE
CABINET

On the Progress of Training in Certain of
the Volunteer Army Camps.

Thurston stared at the paper in his hands as horrified as if it had suddenly transformed itself into a rattlesnake.

"My Lord!" he gasped.

He made his room door in one jump and the princess' door in another. With angry knuckles he rapped on the panel. There was no answer. Back in his own room, he stuck the confidential war-office report in his coat pocket, picked up a folded newspaper from his desk, stuffed it into the wallet, returned the wallet to the knitting bag, drew the strings tight, then looked around for a place to hide the beautiful bag until he should have had time to consult his friend Ted Price as to the deadly contents it had lately held. His suit case under the bed had a good lock. In the suit case he kept his passport, his letters of introduction to prominent Englishmen—which he had forborne to present after discovering how busy most prominent Englishmen were in

those days—and such manuscript as he had found time to write since his arrival in London. In the suit case he locked the bag. Then he went out into the Strand and down the hill toward Trafalgar Square and the London office of the *Chicago Sun*.

Price was not at his desk. The office girl did not expect him that day. He had talked of going to Birmingham with Mr. Lloyd George to attend a mass meeting of munitions workers. Tom drifted back to the hotel and roamed the parlors, looking for the princess; but the princess had vanished from public view, nor was she in her room when he went thither again to knock at her door.

Having nothing better to do until he could see Price or the princess, he inquired at the hotel desk for Mr. Krug. The clerk was of the opinion that Mr. Krug had not come into the hotel that morning. Yes, Mr. Krug kept a room at the hotel and received mail there, though he had a villa in the country where he spent most of his time. The information disappointed Tom, for he had meant to pump the American millionaire for the real reason why that gentleman disliked Mr. Herbert Wembley. Failing to interview Mr. Krug, Tom could employ his time profitably, however, in walking the London streets and gathering local color. In a strange town everything is copy.

He turned eastward in the Strand, waited for a break in the traffic at the head of Waterloo Bridge, and paused to look in at the quadrangle of Somerset House. A band of Scottish bagpipers went noisily past, followed by the usual squad of recruits marching away to some station whence they would be sent to the training camps. Clean-cut, good-hearted youngsters those boys were who rallied at their country's call, in the early days of the war, to make up the greatest volunteer army the world has ever seen. Thousands of them, with the making of officers in them, were to die as privates before their country should awaken to the imperative need for conscription. It was the cream of the young generation, the bravest and best, that went first to the graves in Flanders fields.

A young fellow walked just in front of Thurston as the little procession went past, and he halted so suddenly that Tom bumped against him.

"Beg your pardon," said the American.

But the young Englishman was oblivious

to the apology. He flung away his cigarette, muttered to Tom, "It's got to be done," and stepped off the sidewalk into the street, falling in at the rear of the marching line.

Out of the roar of the street into the quiet of the Temple Thurston went. Here, amid the green lawns, with the river glimmering beyond in the sunlight, there was no breath of war, although squads of law clerks would drill on the grass later in the day. Here stood the ancient buildings as they stood when Doctor Johnson made his dictionary. A postman hurried along the walk, and Tom hailed him.

"Can you tell me the entry where Charles Lamb used to live?"

The postman stopped to think. "Charles Lamb, sir? I don't recollect the party, but I'll inquire for you."

A brisk little man in a rusty mackintosh had halted beside them.

"I'll show the gentleman," he told the postman. "I know the way."

"Much obliged," said Tom to the stranger, as the postman proceeded on his route.

"Don't mention it," the stranger responded. "I'll walk with you. It's only a step."

Tom sized the man up. Said he: "You're not a native, I'll bet."

"Me? Not much. I'm an American."

"I thought so," said Tom. "You speak the English language according to Hoyle."

"These gazabos in London don't know their own tongue, that's a fact," said the stranger; at which Tom shot a second look at him, for, like the comedian at the Alhambra, the man in the rusty mackintosh had placed the accent of the honorable word "gazabo" on the first syllable.

The stranger, it seemed, bore the honest name of Gogan and lived, when at home, in Seattle. A year previously he had started on a trip around the world; he had traveled as far as India when the war broke, and he had continued westward leisurely as far as London, where he had lingered many weeks. He was a man of wide experience, a whimsical talker and a pleasant companion. Together the two Americans roamed the worn pavements of the Temple for half an hour.

They stood at last beside the grave of Oliver Goldsmith. Some one that morning had placed a yellow jonquil on the stone. "War or no war, old England goes right

along in the same old rut," Mr. Googan observed. "Yesterday I sat in the Law Courts and listened to seventeen lawyers chew the rag over a right of way granted seven hundred years ago. Have you looked in at the Law Courts?"

Tom had not, and was glad to accept the stranger's offer of guidance, the stranger insisting that he had nothing more important to do that day. Back across the Strand they went, mounted a dark flight of stairs to a gallery and listened in the respectful manner expected of them to a dispute between two bewigged and begowned barristers over a runaway horse that had jumped a hedge and landed in a greenhouse. The British constitution was mentioned a vast number of times; it seemed that the damage done to the greenhouse was as nothing to the harm that was threatened to the British constitution by one side or the other in the controversy, or perhaps by both of them.

"The man on the bench," whispered Mr. Googan in Tom's ear, "is Rufus Isaacs, Earl Reading, the Lord Chief Justice." Tom looked more closely at the urbane gentleman who was one day to become ambassador extraordinary to the United States.

Outside the gallery door a little old watchman threatened to perish of a broken heart if the strangers left the Law Courts without seeing Justice Darling.

"He is most witty at times, gentlemen; it's extraordinary the witty things the justice can think up to say. You'd better let me slip you in; there's two vacancies."

So the Americans sat in another gallery and gazed upon the witty Justice Darling. It was noon before they came out into the street.

"Have lunch with me, won't you?" asked Thurston.

Mr. Googan pleaded an engagement in Russell Square. "But listen," said he. "Have you ever done the House of Lords?"

Tom never had.

"I've got two passes for this afternoon. They're as hard to get as tickets to a leg show in little old New York. This afternoon Lord Benbold is to make his speech in defense of himself for his old-time friendship with the kaiser. Would you like to go?"

Tom would be glad. So it was arranged that they should meet at the Lords' entrance to the Houses of Parliament in Westminster that afternoon at two o'clock sharp.

At two o'clock sharp Tom loitered near the appointed place, waiting for the brisk little man in the rusty mackintosh. But no such person appeared among the many pedestrians that passed in and out. Until three o'clock he waited; still no Mr. Googan. The policeman at the door began to eye the loiterer with unveiled suspicion. Tom offered him a shilling and explained.

"I've been waiting here an hour for a little man in a mackintosh; his name is Googan. If you see him will you tell him I couldn't wait any longer? He will probably ask you if I've been here. My name is Thurston."

The policeman accepted the shilling and the commission. Tom crossed the street to the Abbey, looked a while at the names of Dickens and Thackeray and Ben Jonson in the Poets' Corner, admired the Longfellow bust as a dutiful American should, then went out into Princes Street and boarded a west-bound motor bus.

Coming to Hyde Park Corner, where, in April, the old women sit on the sidewalk selling primroses, he continued along the southern edge of the park. Amid the green lawns the tulips and hyacinths bloomed brightly; beside them walked many women in black—for England at that early stage of the war had not given up outward signs of mourning. Upon a playing field in Kensington Gardens a troop of boy scouts went manfully through military evolutions.

"Getting ready for the slaughter," thought Tom.

Toward the southwest, mile after mile, the bus rumbled along through streets lovely and unlovely, and across the Thames at Putney Bridge into a region of lanes and hedges, of parks, little and big, of neat shops and pretty suburban homes, of cricket fields and tennis courts with people in white flannels playing thereon. Here was quiet and greenery; here fruit trees in blossom overhung the walls, and small boys flew kites on the commons, and all was so peaceful and so pleasant that Tom resented the conductor's, "Richmond, sir. Far as we go."

In a shop in the Richmond high street Tom did something that he had planned to do a number of days past. He bought a cane. Not to carry a cane in London, he had discovered, was to be conspicuous. For a quarter—that is to say, a shilling—he purchased a handsome stick of bamboo with a curved handle that would hang sportily on

his arm. The shopkeeper apologized for the price. "They used to be ninepence, sir, but on account of the war, and shipping the way it is, we've had to advance the price on this lot. When these are gone, Heaven knows when we shall be able to get more."

"Forget it," said Tom. "In America that cane would cost me four dollars."

Swinging his new toy, he strolled forth to look Richmond over. It was here, he remembered, that Mr. Krug professed to be at home. At a chemist's shop he consulted a local directory, but the author of the book had overlooked anybody of the name of Krug. He questioned a policeman, who informed him by way of reply that Richmond was quite a large place if a person didn't know a person's house number.

In a half hour's ramble Thurston saw many villas that might have suited the expensive taste of Mr. Krug. After picking out several of them as the probable residence of the American millionaire, he decided at last upon a stately little mansion that boasted a park all of its own. Of red stone it was with a roof of red tiles. Outside chimneys told of cozy fireplaces within. There was a red brick garage at the rear, and near it a tennis court. Mr. Krug had mentioned that his daughters played tennis. There were neatly barbered evergreens in the yard and early flowers in profusion in a garden at the side. Mr. Krug had spoken of his flower garden. Borders of white and lacy stuff—sweet alyssum, he thought—guided the scrubbed-brick walk from the gate to the door and prevented it from straying around over the very inviting lawn.

The windows of the villa gleamed brightly in the light of the declining sun, and it may have been these that suggested Mr. Krug to Tom's mind, for Krug himself, with his diamond scarfpin, was no mean gleamer. More likely, however, it was the snug little astronomical plant that capped the house. Of the color of the sky, the observatory lifted its hemispherical shape above the chimney tops and bespoke for the occupant of the house a passion for stargazing. If Mr. Krug were interested in cat—what was that unusual word Mr. Herbert Wembley had uttered so glibly? Catoptrics; that was it!—if Mr. Krug were interested in catoptrics, this villa might very well be his hang-out.

At this point in Thurston's cogitations a large brunet dog came baying around a

corner of the house and made toward him across the lawn. An Uncle Tom's Cabin kind of dog it was, and its barking brought other dogs of similar breed to clamor at the stranger over the wall. Thurston hastened away as if he had been a small boy caught looking at a neighbor's pear tree in September. Anyway, he had not come to Richmond with the intention of spying upon Mr. Krug; he had another errand, and of this errand the setting sun reminded him.

"Kew Gardens?" said a nursemaid of whom he asked the way. "Foller the tram line, mister."

Following the tram line, Tom came, after a ten-minute walk, to an open gate in a high stone wall, through which he passed into a sweet-scented and wonderful little forest; a prim, trim, demure little forest. Never had he seen so many handsome trees; never so many trees whose names he did not know. As he sauntered along the winding paths he found himself quoting from Alfred Noyes:

"Come down to Kew in lilac time,
It isn't far from London——"

and wondering what the rest of the lines were. No lilac plumes greeted his eyes, for he had arrived too early in the year; but Kew Gardens were worthy of a poem, even without the lilacs. Other persons than Tom were there that day enjoying the beauty of the place. There were girls in pairs who giggled as Tom swung past; he thought it might have been his cane, though it was only his American hat. There were young couples walking arm in arm, most of the young men in khaki. On the river were people in boats, and under the wonderful trees were picnic supper parties.

Supper! Perhaps at this very moment Mr. Wembley awaited Tom—and the tea growing stronger every second. Reluctantly Thurston left the Gardens, found Mr. Wembley's house in Kew Lane, and found Mr. Wembley on his knees before a fireplace, vigorously punching the smoldering coals with a poker.

That was a memorable evening for Thurston. With Mr. Wembley he took tea and muffins and marmalade. Afterward, in Mr. Wembley's study where the greatest novels in the world were produced, he puffed one churchwarden pipe and listened while Mr. Wembley puffed another and talked. Such talk it was as few American young men ever

hear; which is well for their peace of mind. Tom considered himself a radical, a progressive, an advanced thinker on every subject under the sun. But the little English author had him feeling fifty years out of date in ten minutes.

There were more things in the English air than were dreamed of in Tom's American philosophy. He learned, for instance, that the American republic is only a nice, respectable, benevolent oligarchy. He learned that what he called democracy was only an infant in arms alongside the lusty democratic idea of working-class England. He learned that the greatest of English revolutions was going forward peaceably under his eyes.

"We shall come to true democracy through the war, if we are not destroyed," said Mr. Wembley. "Then it will be your turn. When British labor has given its sweat and its blood to save the Citizen idea from the Slave idea—for that is all that this war is about—then this will be a new and a different England. Our toilers know what is at stake and they are willing to pay the price. But the fruits of the victory are to be theirs; don't forget that."

"Rabid," thought Tom, and remembered that Mr. Krug had called Mr. Wembley an anarchist. But before many years he was to recall Mr. Wembley's talk as inspired prophecy.

About ten o'clock they worked around to the spot in the sky. Thurston reported his interview with Mr. Krug, omitting to mention the particular words Mr. Krug had used in discussing Mr. Wembley. He related also his conversations in Finsbury with Miss Hatfield and Mr. Brompton and his glimpse of the lame bookseller in the Strand at midnight when that gentleman seemed to have been miraculously cured of his lameness; and he showed Mr. Wembley the anonymous note warning him against further traffic with Brompton.

For reasons entirely sentimental he restrained his impulse to show Mr. Wembley the war-office report which the princess had intrusted to his care. He might consult Price about it, as one attorney will consult another in a difficult matter. But he had known Mr. Wembley only two days; and, anyway, the war-office report was another story and had nothing to do with Mr. Wembley's lights in the sky.

Mr. Wembley puzzled over the note of

warning long enough for Tom to read the titles of all the books on one shelf of the Wembley bookcase.

"Are you certain it was Brompton you saw leaving the hotel?"

"Absolutely certain."

"You don't know what he was doing there, or who it was that he went to see?"

"I asked the night clerk. He couldn't remember the man I described."

"Was Mr. Krug in the hotel that night?"

"I don't know."

"Who do you suppose sent you the note?"

"There are four persons who know that I called on Brompton," Tom replied. "One of them is you. The second is Brompton himself. The third is Miss Hatfield, the suffragette; when I called at her house she advised me against going to Brompton, you remember. The fourth person who knows is Mr. Brompton's secretary."

"You haven't told me much about that secretary," said Mr. Wembley gravely. "She's a scraggly old thing, I presume?"

"Like fun she is," Tom retorted. "She's the prettiest girl in London. I ran across her once before. It was in a typewriter agency where she was trying to locate a new job."

"Why not hunt her up and find out whether it was she who wrote the note? The writing is plainly a woman's."

"I don't know where she lives," said Tom, "and I can't very well go up to Hermitage Road to ask her."

"Won't the agency have her address?"

"I hadn't thought of that. I'll go there to inquire to-morrow."

"Meanwhile," said Mr. Wembley, "we might take a walk in the dark. It is time for the Germans to light their beacon."

But a prowl across the dewy lawns of Kew Gardens revealed no light in the sky.

Back to town went Tom and made at once for his hotel, his room and his bed. Before turning out the light he looked at his suit case. The lock was fast. He sat still a minute to listen, but no sound came through the wall from the adjoining room.

CHAPTER VIII.

SCOTLAND YARD.

When Thurston passed through the hall next morning he saw a porter's truck near mademoiselle's door, which stood open. Within the room a porter was tying up the boudoir trunk with rope while the chamber-

maid stood by bossing the job, as women ever do.

Tom stopped. "What's up?" he asked the slavey. "Lady leaving town?"

"'Aven't you 'eard, sir? Mamselle has been took up by the police for a 'orrid German spy. So sorry, sir."

"Arrested, you mean?"

"Yes, sir. Last night it 'appened. So sorry, sir. She was very liberal, sir."

So the princess was an agent of the kaiser! It was no news to Tom. The yellow-haired young woman was no more the daughter of a Belgian count than he was. He thought now that he understood her purpose in pouring her tearful story into his sympathetic ears. She had known that her arrest was near. Probably she had been warned or threatened by the head waiter in the distressing scene at the breakfast-room door.

He knew another thing, too. He knew that he had willingly and cheerfully played the fool at the lady's suggestion. The knowledge made him angry. He was not to be tangled up. He had other things to do in London than to face a British judge and jury to answer for the crimes of a Prussian adventuress. Having arrived at this conviction and at the breakfast room simultaneously, he faced about and returned to his bedroom. There he locked himself in against interruption, drew the suit case from beneath the bed and unlocked it.

A tap sounded at his door.

"Who's there?"

"Open, please."

He thrust the suit case back under the bed and unlocked the door. Outside stood Mr. Googan in his rusty mackintosh.

"Oh, it's you. Good morning," said Tom.

Mr. Googan made no response but beckoned down the hall, whereupon two sturdy male persons appeared and followed Mr. Googan into the room, closing the door behind them.

"What the devil?" Tom demanded.

"We want you to answer some questions," Mr. Googan spoke. He perched himself on the edge of the writing desk and looked his briskest.

"Shoot," said Tom, seating himself on the bed. The sturdy male persons remained standing, one at the door, the other at the window.

"How long," asked Mr. Googan, "have you known the woman who occupied the next room?"

"Twenty-four hours and some minutes," Tom replied.

"You've never traveled with her in Italy, I suppose?"

"I've never been in Italy."

"Nor ever passed her off as your sister at the Astorbilt Hotel in New York?"

"I tell you I've known the lady only since breakfast yesterday."

"There is a suit case under your bed. Open it, please."

Tom obeyed the command. The silken knitting bag lay disclosed.

"That bag belongs to the woman, I think?"

"How the deuce did you know it was here? But I guess I can answer that question myself. While I was waiting like a boob at the House of Lords for you yesterday, you were playing the sneak here in my room."

Mr. Googan acknowledged the compliment with a bow and looked proud of himself. "Open the bag," said he.

Tom loosened the cords, groped in the depths of the bag and drew forth the leather wallet.

"Go ahead," Googan ordered. Tom removed the strap, opened the wallet and brought out a thumbled and ragged copy of the London *Times*, three or four days old.

"That's a queer-looking newspaper, Mr. Thurston."

"Why so?"

"Look at the writing," commanded Mr. Googan. "I'd like to know what is meant, there under your thumb, where it says, 'Aircraft gun, Temple Pier, talk to soldier with musket,' and up at the top of the page where you'll find written, 'Westminster Abbey like some other churches, full of dead ones.' Open the paper to the second page and I'll show you something else. There it is—'Beans and pork.' Now will you tell me, Mr. Thurston, why a sane person would cover a newspaper with that kind of nonsense unless he was writing cipher messages to be sent out of the country?"

"This is my newspaper and my writing," said Tom. "As I told you yesterday, I am an American looking for story material in London. These notes all represent things I've heard, incidents I've seen or opinions I have formed. 'Beans and Pork,' for example, is simply a note of the fact that English restaurants never say 'Pork and beans,' as we do in America. Over here it's always 'Beans and pork.' The Westminster Abbey

item is a scurrilous thought that came to me one day when I looked at the tombs of the kings. The reference to the anti-aircraft gun at Temple Pier is a reminder of a talk I had with a guard on duty there."

"And what," said Mr. Googan, "is your explanation of the words 'Cheddar cheese' on the next page?"

"That is a funny name they have in this country for American cheese," said Tom.

Mr. Googan laughed disdainfully. "You are a very clever dodger, Mr. Thurston, but I shall have to ask you to go with us to Scotland Yard. If you go peaceably it will save you trouble."

"Will you let me summon a friend of mine first?"

"No objection to that, is there, Mr. Hitt?" asked Googan of the sturdy male person who guarded the door. Both Mr. Hitt and his colleague at the window shook their heads. Tom stepped to the phone on the wall and called the London bureau of the *Chicago Sun*.

"Is Mr. Price there? When will he be in? This is Thomas Thurston talking. When Price comes in, ask him to hustle to Scotland Yard at once. Tell him it's urgent, please. Thank you."

In a taxicab the three British secret-service operatives and their captive bowled through Whitehall and stopped at a doorway in a blind alley, where a policeman stood guard. Tom was gently hustled out of the car, up the steps, down a dingy hall and into a gaslit room. There, pacing the floor, was Ted Price.

"Hello," sang out the newspaper man. "What have you been up to?"

"How did you get here so soon after I phoned?" Tom answered.

"I've waited here an hour for you."

"Waited for me?"

"Yes. My friend Googan took longer than he expected." Price nodded toward the little man in the mackintosh, who was engaged at the moment in a whispered conversation with an erect old gentleman at a desk in the other end of the room.

"Who is Googan, anyhow?"

"The slickest detective in Scotland Yard. You know why he has brought you here?"

"I presume I do," said Tom. "Let's sit down while I tell you about it."

Mr. Googan still being busy at the desk, Thurston and Price sat down, and Tom confessed his innocent adventure of the previ-

ous morning with the count's daughter. The newspaper man smiled with the cynical satisfaction that all men take in the foolishness of their fellows.

"I'm afraid you've let yourself in for a bad time," said Price. "The woman you call the princess has been under observation a long while, but the police have been unable to get anything on her until yesterday, when she was seen slipping that knitting bag to you. You know what was in the bag, of course?"

Thurston drew the war-office report from his pocket and flashed the heading of the first page before Price's eyes.

"This is what was in the bag originally."

"This?"

"Yes. The moment I discovered what it was, I rushed out to look for you, but you had gone to Birmingham."

"Then," said the astonished Price, "what the devil was it that Googan found in the bag?"

"Nothing but an old newspaper with some notes of mine on it."

"Notes of yours?" Then Price understood and would have howled with laughter if Googan had not happened to look their way. "Googan thinks," he whispered, "that he is on the trail of a system of communication between German spies here and headquarters in Berlin. He thinks that the newspaper was given to you by the woman, and that the writing on it was in a new code. He made copies of the writing and sat up all night trying to interpret it."

"How do you know all this?"

"I am on the inside with these chaps. They have known me for years; I help them now and then. Among your papers yesterday they found a note from me, and they came to me with it. I tried all evening to reach you by telephone at your hotel. I went there myself just before midnight and asked the fellow at the desk to have you call me when you came in. Didn't you get my message?"

"Not a word of it."

"I've done about all I can for you," said Price. "I have shown them your honorable record in 'Who's Who in America' and referred them to the American ambassador. But these people have a bull-headed way of looking at a thing, and you can't deny that you let the woman make an accomplice of you. Maybe you can convince them that you were just a romantic sucker, but I doubt

it. At any rate, you'd better turn this very interesting document over to the chief, yonder, explain to him how you got hold of it, what you intended to do with it and why you substituted the newspaper for it in the bag. Why did you do that last thing, by the way?"

"I don't know," Tom answered. "I suppose I wanted the wallet to feel fat in case the princess should ask me to return the bag before I had had a chance to talk to you. The newspaper was the first thing handy."

"Gallant youth, to wish to spare the afflicted lady's feelings! But Googan is crooking his finger. Come on."

Tom approached the desk and faced the keen eyes of the erect old gentleman, who said:

"You still insist, do you, Mr. Thurston, that you and the young woman who occupied the room next to yours at the Salisbury have known each other no longer than a day?"

"I certainly do," said Tom.

"We have information that you have traveled together on the Continent and in the States."

"Whoever says that is a liar," Tom declared. "Where did you get that dope, anyway?"

"That what, sir?"

"That dope—that information."

"In the proper time you shall know where we got that—that dope," said the old gentleman, making a wry face as he spoke the word. "Meanwhile, we shall have to detain you. The charge is that of having in your possession a newspaper covered with writings of a secret and mysterious nature, which may contain information detrimental to the welfare of the realm and valuable to the enemy."

"Chief," spoke up Ted Price; "I wish you would give Thurston a chance to explain about that newspaper. It won't take him long, and it's a beautiful story."

"This is not a court," the old gentleman replied. "Besides, we are well aware of the manner in which he gained possession of the paper in question. But if Mr. Thurston has any statement to offer, we shall be glad to listen."

"Go to it, Tom," Price advised.

"Gentlemen," said he to the men around the desk, "I want time to think this thing over before I do any talking, so I guess you may lock me up."

Price stared at him. Mr. Googan and his associates listened unmoved.

"Of course, Ted," he told Price, "if you have a stand-in with the British government and can bring any pressure to bear that will help me out of the mess, I have no objection to going free. But what I told you over there in the corner is strictly under your hat. Get me?"

"I get you, you blamed fool," said Price, and stood by while Mr. Googan led his charge away to the place where Scotland Yard keeps its living treasures. At the door Tom turned back.

"Come and see me before night, Ted," he said. "I'll have something to ask you to do for me by then."

Mystified, Price rid himself of a gentleman's oath.

"I'm sorry not to let your friend go, Mr. Price," said the old gentleman at the desk. "I would do a great deal for you, but this is no matter for sentiment. We have been too easy-going with these people and we have paid for our lenity in enormous fire losses, in the destruction of battleships and ammunition plants and in worse mischief still. The orders are for a strong hand henceforth. All aliens, including Americans, must be registered at police headquarters after this week, and the wholesale internment of enemy aliens is in sight. This case is so plain and flagrant, there is nothing for us to do but to keep your friend in confinement until the whole conspiracy is cleared up. I trust he may be able to prove his innocence."

"You won't mind helping me to help him prove it, will you?"

"Assuredly not."

"Then arrange to let me see the woman in the case. Maybe I can talk something out of her."

The old gentleman smiled skeptically, but penned a note and handed it to a messenger, who disappeared through the door by which Tom had left, returning in a minute or two with a guard in uniform whose large right hand clasped the slim left arm of Tom's princess.

Her yellow hair showed the absence of boudoir facilities in the cell where she had spent the night. Her eyes were hard and sharp and furtive, and darted restlessly from Price to the old gentleman and back again to Price. Silent and defiant she stood before the desk.

"This gentleman wishes to speak with you," said the chief of the detective bureau. "While you talk, the guard and I will retire to the next room. We shall return in five minutes."

Price, when he and the princess were alone, said, "Sit down, miss." But the young woman asked, almost savagely:

"Have you a cigarette?"

He had a cigarette and he gave it to her out of his silver case. He had a match also. In half a minute her tension went from her and her eyes grew soft. With a lazy little smoke-wreathed smile to him she asked:

"Well?"

"You put up a job on a friend of mine yesterday," said Price. "You gave him your knitting bag to take care of, and he took such good care of it that he is now in jail."

"Yes?" she queried, on the defensive and admitting nothing.

"You know, perhaps, that the bag contained a copy of a document in the war office—spy stuff of the worst sort. He may hang for it."

"Why do you tell me this?" she asked. "Are you another beastly detective?"

"I am not a detective, nor yet a lawyer," he answered. "I tell you this because my friend had a chance to clear himself by repeating to the chief that wild yarn that you told him yesterday, and he refused to take it. Out of some fool notion of chivalry, I suppose, he kept his mouth shut. He thought yesterday that you were in serious trouble, and I guess he still thinks that by keeping mum he can protect you."

"You speak of a wild yarn. What wild yarn?"

"The one you spun to him about being the daughter of a Belgian count. He told it to me in confidence."

"Only to you?"

"Only to me. He knows that you lied to him, yet he sticks up for you. Now, then, isn't it up to you to play square with a man like that? You seem to be in for it, anyway, for it's evident they've got the goods on you. How does it help you any to pull a fellow down with you whose only sin is that he is sorry for you?"

"They have the goods on me? What do you mean?"

"That's American slang. It means that they have you dead to rights. They've got your number."

"I understand the slang," she retorted,

"but I don't know what you mean when you intimate that they have evidence against me. Evidence of what?"

"Evidence of spying on the British military. Don't be thick."

"Why should I be suspected of that?"

"Because you gave Thurston a copy of a secret report of the government. Here it is." He showed her the document which Thurston had left in his hands. "You know about it, don't you?"

"Is that why I have been arrested? Thank you for the news."

She sat for half a minute thinking. Price tried to guess what was in her mind, but he was unprepared for her next question.

"You mention a knitting bag. What do you know about it?"

"It was found in Thurston's suit case when the detectives searched his room yesterday. They identified it as yours, and your arrest followed."

"Silly!" she cried. "It wasn't my bag. It was one that I picked up in the hotel parlors late the evening before, intending to turn it in at the desk."

"But you gave it to Thurston with this paper in it, didn't you? Possibly the detectives had their eyes on you at the time you handed it over to him."

"There was not a soul in sight of us. I took no chances. There was only one person besides your friend who had ever seen that bag in my possession. There was just one person——"

Suddenly she turned to face him. Her eyes were wild again with the fear that Thurston had read in them.

"I am going to trust you as I trusted your friend yesterday. I am going to tell you a story, but this will be a true story. Will you listen and—and believe me?"

"I'll do my best," Price told her, and glanced at his watch. "You have two minutes."

Still facing him, sitting proud and straight, her eyes flashing, she began her narrative.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HIGHER COMMAND.

"My father's name," said the yellow-haired young woman, fixing her flashing eyes upon Price's face, "my father's name would be familiar to your ears if I should mention it to you. But discretion compels me to

“speak of him at this time merely as ‘the duke.’ For, you know, sir, you are a stranger to me—yet.”

“Yet!” thought the newspaper man, as his friend Thurston had thought on hearing the princess speak in almost the same words a day before.

“In all Europe, sir, no man was held in greater veneration than my father, the duke. Trusted by his kaiser, loved by his peasants, a man of uprightness, justice and generosity, whose life, though he belonged to the idle class, was devoted to the service of humanity, my father was a happy man up to the summer day last year when the King of Prussia issued the command that plunged our gentle land and the peaceful lands of our neighbors into the fiery furnace of war.”

“You are of South Germany, then?” Price commented.

“I am,” she answered. “My people did not desire war. They are distinguished for their serenity; they love the quiet pursuits of tilling the soil, tending their herds and their vineyards, weaving the woolens that carry the fame of our little duchy to the ends of the earth. What happiness, what benefit of any sort could war add to their contented life?”

“But think of the gold candlesticks out of the churches, and all the rest of the loot,” said Price.

“Don’t interrupt me, please,” said the young woman, tapping the floor with her foot.

“Beg pardon,” said her auditor.

“We all had foreseen the calamity toward which the powerful few at the helm of state had hurried the German empire through many reckless years. In the Reichstag our representatives had protested and pleaded without effect. They had no power; their only right was the right to talk, and they might be thankful for that empty privilege. In the Bundesrath, where you in England believe the real power of the empire reposes, my father the duke lifted his voice in solemn warning, and many a gentle-hearted provincial ruler joined with him in appeal to Potsdam to avert the needless catastrophe. But in the fateful and fatal decision my father and his colleagues were not consulted. There is a power in Germany above even the Bundesrath; there is a private council that overrules the Bundesrath as the Bundesrath overrules the Reichstag. When that council spoke the word there was nothing for

the empire to do but to obey, even to destruction, for so tightly is the political and economic fabric of my country knitted into one piece. All this you must know without my telling you, for you are a man of intelligence, as I can readily see.”

“Thank you,” said Price. “You have one minute more.”

“When, at the declaration of war, our farm boys and our weavers marched away to take their place in the human avalanche that swept across northern France, my father was not in his accustomed place at their head. He had loved soldiering and mimic warfare as a game, as a spectacle and as a means of discipline. But now shame and sorrow over the arrogant and unwarranted act of the arbitrary powers at Potsdam, coupled with his grief over the death of the duchess, my sweet mother, which had occurred only a few weeks previously, prostrated him upon his bed; so that it was my uncle, General von——”

Here she checked her words a moment. “But I must not name him. Enough to say that it was my uncle who commanded our reluctant divisions in my father’s stead, while my father lay on his couch in our summer castle on the Rhine, a broken man.

“Broken? Nay, I must not call him that. No man is broken whose love for humanity, whose faith in fairness and whose courage in speech impel him to make the sacrifices my poor father made in his valiant efforts to bring our misguided nation to its sanity. For no sooner had I nursed him back to a semblance of his former strength than he would be off to Berlin. Deep were my misgivings as I drove him to the railway station in my little Cassel twin six and saw him enter the train. As well as he I knew the bloodthirsty temper of the Prussian overlords in those days when our columns rolled resistlessly through Maubeuge and Mons and Charleroi toward Paris. I knew that my father, noble though he was in lineage as well as in heart, laid his head on the block when he sought to oppose the will of our war-mad government. Nor was I taken by surprise when, after he had been gone three days, a telegram came to me from Berlin, saying simply: ‘Copenhagen, Hotel Elsinore, immediately.’

“Surmising what had happened, I departed from our castle quietly, taking with me only such of my personal belongings as I could pack into a boudoir trunk. Without

a farewell word to my servants or to my dear friends among the neighboring peasantry, I crossed Germany, traveling as a common passenger and delayed for hours at a time by troop trains rushing toward Aachen and the Belgian border. At the Danish frontier I should have been turned back by the military authorities if I had not proclaimed myself the daughter of a German duke and asserted my divine right to do what I pleased. With apologies the officials suffered me to continue my journey; but as I was to learn afterward, their politeness was from the teeth out. Before I had been established a single hour in the hotel at Copenhagen I became aware that I was under surveillance.

"When I dined I was watched. When I walked in the park I was followed. When I returned at night I could hear the sound of a gimlet in the ceiling overhead. After a day or two I began to expect the sight of a certain man at every turning, and I was not often disappointed in my expectation. This man was somewhat past middle age, large, well fed and active. He mingled freely among the guests at the hotel, of whom there were many. He ingratiated himself with the Americans who had fled from Germany at the opening of hostilities and now waited at the Danish capital for ships to carry them home. I heard him talking loudly, in as excellent English as I myself use, to any one who would listen to him; but always when I was near, his eyes were upon me, and usually he arranged that he and I should not be far apart. I may add that he exhibited at all times a feminine fondness for wearing costly jewelry."

At this point in the story of mademoiselle the door opened and the chief of the detective bureau entered.

"Time's up," he announced.

"Give us two minutes more, please," said Price.

The duke's daughter frowned prettily. "If I am to finish in two minutes," she said, "I shall have to omit many of the most vital and convincing details."

"I know your feelings," said the newspaper man. "I don't like to be hurried in a story, myself. Perhaps the chief will make it five minutes."

The old gentleman bowed his acquiescence and again withdrew, whereupon the princess resumed her history, speaking rapidly.

"A week passed; a week of worry and loneliness, in which I heard not a word from the duke, my father. That some dreadful fate had overtaken him I feared, for I knew his temerity in plain speaking, I know how resolute he was in upholding a principle, and I knew the ruthlessness of the Prussians, even toward their own kind. At the end of a fortnight I made up my mind in desperation to return to Germany, there to seek out my father and remain at his side through whatever peril or disgrace he might have incurred from daring to obstruct the will of the war lords.

"Through this period of waiting I had read the war reports with such interest as you can well imagine. From Germany the news was all of victories in apparently endless succession. From London the Danish newspapers heard little; but early in September the British dispatches announced the defeat of the German armies at the Marne and the Ourcq and their retreat to the Aisne—a defeat and a retreat to which the carelessness or the foolhardiness of my father's brother, the general, had directly contributed."

"Then," said Price, "you are a niece of General von Kluck?"

"That, sir, is for you to judge; I say nothing on the point. I am obliged to tell you of the failure of the general in the field so that you can see that his brother, my father, was placed in a position even more precarious than before. Would not the German higher command connect the general's blunder with my father's pacifistic errand in Berlin? Would not duke and general together be accused of a treasonable conspiracy to thwart the war aims of their imperial masters, to discourage the people at home and bring about a collapse of the German offensive? In a day or two came word, again by way of London, that the general had been removed from his command; and then, indeed, I trembled for my father.

"I had made up my mind," continued the story-teller, "to return to Germany, when a visiting card was brought to my door—the card of a Miss Eliza Billings, accompanied by a request from Miss Billings for an interview. Miss Billings was an American, a school-teacher, and she had just made her way out of Germany after many vexatious delays; she would reach America a month late for her work. In the waiting room of the station at Berlin my father had singled

her out as a person whom he could trust with an oral message. He had asked her to seek me in Denmark and bid me flee to England at the first opportunity, there to place myself under the protection of his lifelong friend, Lord Benbold."

Price pricked up his ears at this, for Lord Benbold, though he had suffered partial eclipse since the previous summer by reason of his well-known intimacy with the mighty of Germany, was still one of the most brilliant and powerful political figures in Britain. His speech in defense of himself in the House of Lords the day before had been read this morning by millions of friends and enemies, and Price had cabled half a column of it to America.

"I thanked Miss Eliza Billings, whom I have not heard from since," the princess resumed, "and a week thereafter I landed at Hull, proceeded to London, drove in a taxicab to the beautiful home of Lord Benbold, in Park Lane, and mounted the steps. At the moment when I put out my hand to the bell I saw a cab roll up at the curb behind mine. From the window of the second cab a face looked out at me. It was the face of the man who had followed me in Copenhagen.

"For an instant the day turned black before my eyes. How I regained my composure I know not, but regain it I did, worn out though I was by the anxiety of my flight and the fears I felt for my unhappy father. My own taxi still waited at the curb. Descending the steps without pulling the bell, I commanded the chauffeur to take me to the Hotel Salisbury, and I drove away from the home of the man who might have been my benefactor. Through the pane I looked back and saw the second taxicab following close behind.

"In the five minutes of that ride through Piccadilly I tried to reason out what had happened to me, and my conclusions amounted to this: That Miss Eliza Billings had not come from my father, at all, but had been an emissary of the burly, boisterous and jeweled man in the cab that pursued mine, and that the man in the cab was an agent of the merciless German higher command and an enemy of my father's. You may ask why this man should have sent me to England. Do you not perceive that my flight to this country and my presence in the household of Lord Benbold could be used by the war party in Germany as further evi-

dence to prove my father a traitor? In that first moment I saw the trick as clearly as I see it now.

"Through the entire month of October I remained in my room at the hotel, ill from nervousness, daring not to appeal to Lord Benbold, my sole acquaintance in London, lest in so doing I should injure my father. Weekly I settled my bill until I had less than ten pounds left in my purse. At the hotel office I was known as Mademoiselle de Reuter of Denmark, and as 'mademoiselle' I was known to the servants who tended my room and brought in my meals. From these menials I received scant respect; from one in particular, a waiter, I had sly leers and words that verged on insolence.

"One day this waiter said to me, 'I have news from Germany that mademoiselle would like to hear.' Taken off my guard, I must have shown my eagerness to listen, for the waiter grinned in malicious glee as he went out at the door. Next day he came again. 'Mademoiselle does not ask me for the news from Germany,' he sneered. 'Speak,' I commanded him, and he obeyed. My father's estates, he told me, had been confiscated by the empire and presented to the crown prince as a reward to that honorable young gentleman for holding the line as well as he did before Verdun and serving as a hinge upon which the German front could turn safely in its retreat from the Marne. 'How do you know who I am?' I demanded. 'If mademoiselle would know,' the waiter replied, 'let me bring to her room a friend of hers who will explain all.'

"In my terror I resolved to face the worst, to know the truth of my situation at once. I gave the word the waiter desired. That day I had the first of many interviews with the German government agent who had followed me through Denmark to England. Stout and serious and deferential, always recognizing my station in life, he talked with me for an hour. His liking for jewelry, it seemed, was an affectation, a pretended weakness which he employed for psychological purposes, as also his boisterous manner in public. At heart the man is as deep as a well and as subtle as a cobra, and those who hear him blustering around the Salisbury to-day little know him as he is. I may tell you that the name he uses is Krug."

"That fellow?" cried Price. "I know him. He poses as an American, doesn't he?"

"He does." The princess smiled. "I

knew I should capture your interest before I had finished," said she. "If you know Herr Krug, you will be better able to visualize what follows. Regretfully, in our first interview, he told me the news which I had guessed yet had dreaded to hear, that my father was held a secret political prisoner in a fortress near Berlin, his life at the mercy of the insensate Prussian arbiters of German destiny. That I had come to England under instructions from my father to get in communication with a powerful British statesman had been reported to the military authorities at home. There remained one chance for me to save my father, one loophole through which he might yet escape.

"Sir," cried the yellow-haired young woman, turning her tear-filled eyes upon her now wholly sympathetic auditor, "when my father's life was at stake, could I refuse to help him, even if in so doing I became a spy?"

"Of course you couldn't," said Price. "Krug had you right where he wanted you. But I still fail to see why you and he waylaid poor Thurston. What had that boy done to you that you should have framed up this job on him?"

"That is a question I cannot answer. If I shall speak one truthful word to you in all our talk, it is this, that I know as little as you why Herr Krug desired to put your friend out of the way. I know merely this, that I obeyed his orders in the matter. I arranged with the head waiter to create a scene at the hotel, which Mr. Thurston should have to witness. Having enlisted Mr. Thurston's sympathy, I led him to offer to take charge of a set of papers which Krug had bidden me to place in the young man's possession. The nature of the papers I do not know, nor do I remember what fantastic tale I told Mr. Thurston to win his pity; I believe I may have pretended to be the daughter of a Belgian count. But those points are immaterial. The thing that matters is that in luring the young man into a trap for Krug I played into another net which Krug had spread for me."

Here the princess rose to her feet; her pretty fists were clenched, her eyes gleamed angrily.

"It was the knitting bag," she cried. "I had picked it up in the hotel parlors late in the evening before and taken it to my room. There Krug saw it at midnight, when he came to give me my orders. He admired

the bag. 'Have you bought something pretty for yourself?' he asked—he always took a fatherly tone with me. I told him it was not mine; it was one I had found that evening. 'The very thing for our purpose,' said he. 'Put the papers in it and give it to the young man, and some other woman will be suspected.'

"While I watched for Mr. Thurston next morning I concealed it beneath the folds of my gown. When I gave it to Mr. Thurston he immediately hid it under his coat. No one saw the bag in my possession except Mr. Thurston, Krug and myself, and I will swear that no one saw me hand it to the young man. You say that I was arrested because the bag was recognized as mine?"

"Yes."

"Has Mr. Thurston said that the bag was mine?"

"Yes, but not until this morning," Price answered, catching the drift of her thoughts. "But I heard about the bag last night."

"From that unspeakable detective?"

"If you mean Googan, yes."

"That was before the police had found Mr. Thurston?"

"Yes."

"Then," cried the princess, "Mr. Googan's information that the bag was mine must have come from Herr Krug. There can be no other explanation, for he was the only one who knew. He has played a double game. He has exploited my love for my father and used me as a tool, and now he throws me away. It is Krug and no one else who is responsible for my being in this wretched place."

"Why should Krug want to get you in trouble?"

"There are many possible reasons. Perhaps I know too much about him. Perhaps the police are on his track and he thinks to escape them by sacrificing me. Perhaps I have outlived my usefulness to him and he takes this means of putting me where I can do him no harm. Perhaps my father's enemies at Berlin have brought my arrest about, working through Krug, in order to discredit my father with Lord Benbold and any other friends my father may have in England—you can readily see how little influence a German pacifist would have in this country when it is known that his daughter is a spy. Whatever the reason, Krug is to blame for what has happened to me. Oh! if I had him here!"

Price thought it was a very good thing for Mr. Krug that Mr. Krug was not among those present.

"You have told me all this, I suppose," he said, "because you want Krug laid by the beels. You will have to give me further particulars about him. What are some of his crimes?"

"In Berlin," she replied, "there is a book. It contains hundreds of names—names of prominent English people. It is called 'The English Vice Directory,' and the people whose names are in that book do the bidding of our higher command. They dare not disobey."

"Blackmail, eh?"

As she nodded her head, the door opened and the chief of the bureau entered, followed by the guard, who beckoned to mademoiselle.

"Where does Krug figure in the scheme?" Price asked her.

"He is the resident ruler of that part of the English ruling class that is rutable from Berlin," the princess replied. "To-morrow I may tell you more."

The grateful newspaper man thrust his cigarette case and his match box into her hand, and she gave him in return a wonderful smile as she went away toward her cell.

CHAPTER X.

HERMITAGE ROAD.

It required the combined efforts of Ted Price, Mr. Herbert Wembley, Sir Arthur Purdoy and the American ambassador to secure Thurston's release from detention at Scotland Yard, and those efforts, powerful as they were, might have failed if Price had not gone over Googan's head and pledged himself as a hostage to a Ministerial Personage higher than any one at the Yard.

At the end of the day Tom walked out into Whitehall a free man, with his wits sharpened from hard thinking in his solitary confinement. Price and Mr. Wembley took him to supper at the Carlton. The story the yellow-haired young woman had told Price held first place in their talk.

"Did you repeat her story to the police?" Thurston asked Price.

"I did not. I have too much respect for my reputation among them. I went higher, to a man who has imagination. You want to say nice things about Lloyd George, my boy, in the stuff you write to America."

"I will," said Tom, suspecting how his deliverance had been effected. "Meanwhile, there is something bigger than blackmail in the wind that blows from Berlin."

Then, guided by the reasoning he had done in Scotland Yard that day, and aided now and then by hints from Mr. Wembley, he related to the newspaper man the incident of the lights in the sky and the episodes of the day of his visit to Finsbury.

"It's a whale of a story," Price exclaimed, when the recital was ended. "Here is the dope as I see it. Krug is the chief conspirator. Brompton and the yellow-haired girl are his accomplices. Miss Hatfield's letter in the *Mail* was an accident to their plans, for it led you to Brompton's door. But, Thomas, my boy, you had an accident, too. You told Brompton more than you had the right to tell him. You told him that you and Mr. Wembley had made a start in solving the mystery, didn't you?"

"Yes, but I didn't mention Krug by name."

"Are you sure of that?" Mr. Wembley asked.

"Come to think, I believe I did," Tom confessed. "It was early in our talk, before we got around to the light in the sky. We were discussing wealthy American book buyers."

"All the same, you see, you let Brompton know that we had a man named Krug in mind."

"I guess he did," said Price. "Thurston is the easiest mark in town—taking care of knitting bags and all that. But what happened as a result? Brompton went to the Salisbury late that night to warn Krug. It was their voices, Tom, that you heard in the yellow kid's room at midnight. A little later you saw Brompton leave the hotel. Next day the yellow kid put up a job on you that made you look like a German spy to Googan, who had been tipped off, probably by Krug, as to what to expect. The whole sinful affair is as clear as this pale and beautiful soup, which I will now absorb. For your precious sake to-day I went without lunch."

But Thurston was not satisfied with the clearness of the affair. Why had the princess wept so heartbrokenly in her room on the night of the Zeppelin raid?

"Perhaps she was frightened," Price suggested. "Perhaps she was homesick for her summer castle on the Rhine. Or, if her

sympathies are against the war, as she pretends, maybe she felt sorry for the murdered Britishers."

"Then will you tell me why she wore cornflowers at the funeral of the Zeppelin people next day?"

"She's a German, isn't she? It is quite possible, you know, that her to-day's story is true; she may be the daughter of a German duke, as she says. I'll ask Sir Arthur to ask Lord Benbold about her."

"The important thing for us to do," said Mr. Wembley, "is to reconnoiter Krug. You know the police quite well, don't you, Mr. Price?"

"Yes; but I'm afraid we shall have to do without help from that quarter. I had a little talk with Googan about Krug this afternoon, and Googan laughed at me. Krug, it seems, has been of use to Scotland Yard. I have reason to believe that it was he who turned in the tip that led to the hanging of the three German photographers in the Tower last month."

"I remember the case," said Mr. Wembley, with a smile. "The *Times* stated gravely that the court proceedings were held in camera."

"Googan is impervious to suggestions," Price continued. "I tried hard to instill a little suspicion into his mind, but it was no use. Evidently, he doesn't know yet that a favorite trick of big German secret agents the world over is to sacrifice the poor devils under them when they think it may strengthen their own position. Googan is incorruptible; I'll bet my last dollar on that; but he is hopeless just now, so far as Krug is concerned, and the more we give him our confidence, the less likely we shall be to land Krug."

"Then we shall have to take the law into our own hands," Mr. Wembley declared.

"That is what my friend higher up advises," said Price. "He knows nothing about this sky-lighting business, of course."

"What have you done with the war-office report I gave you this morning?" Thurston asked.

"Here it is," Price replied, drawing the document from his pocket. "It turns out to be six months old and of no particular value to the enemy or any one else. Keep it as a souvenir of the occasion."

Before the three amateur detectives parted, it was agreed that Mr. Wembley should give up his rambles in Kew Gardens

for a while and begin to ramble in Richmond, where Mr. Krug claimed residence; that Price should hold a second talk with the girl at Scotland Yard as soon as possible, and that Tom should attempt a little gumshoe work on Mr. Krug's trail when the chance offered, and employ some of his remaining time in securing, at the typewriter exchange in Cornhill, the home address of the pretty stenographer who took down Mr. Brompton's memoirs.

Then Tom recalled the complaint he had heard the girl make to the agency manager. "Where you sent me the first of the year, they keep me working till nine or ten at night. It wasn't agreed, and it isn't fair. And it isn't right for a girl to be out so late in London now, with the streets so dark." On the chance that this might be one of the nights when Mr. Brompton kept his secretary late, Tom crossed the square to the nearest underground station and took train toward the northern side of London. In the car behind him rode Mr. Googan, in his rusty mackintosh. Somewhere in the journey Tom changed from one tube to another, climbing flights of stairs, descending other flights and following painted arrows through queerly twisting corridors that might have been made by some gigantic and eccentric mole; and always, if he had listened, he would have heard the footfalls of Mr. Googan, the human ferret, coming along behind him through the runways.

When he emerged at last from the subterranean world he stood in a dark street near the southern end of Finsbury Park. Half a mile farther, at the upper end of the park, was Hermitage Road, where Mr. Brompton dictated his memoirs of a book-selling life. Thither Tom walked and stood at last before the lattice gate. Through the gate came the fragrance of apple blossoms.

The basement and first floor of the house were dark, but a light showed through a chink in the curtain of a window in the second story, and a shadow moved across the curtain. Unwilling to pull the bell and equally unwilling to leave the neighborhood while a chance remained that Mr. Brompton's secretary was within the house, Thurston crossed the street to a convenient seat under the high stone wall of "H. Hatfield's" abode and settled down to wait. It was ten o'clock when he sat down, and when he looked at his watch again it was half past the hour.

Strangely, now that he believed himself to be near the girl whose story in the type-writer agency had touched his heart, he found his thoughts wandering to the yellow-haired princess in Scotland Yard. She was a queer one. That she had been concerned in enemy plots and so deserved what had happened to her he doubted not, yet he was sorry for her. No girl except one in dire trouble could have given him that beseeching look of fear that he remembered on her face the last time he had seen her. As plain as words it said to him: "Help me! I cannot tell you the terror that hangs over me. But help me!"

His meditations were interrupted. From the Brompton house came the sudden sound of the slamming of a door and quick foot-falls on the walk that led to the gate. Then he heard a safety lock thrown back and a man's voice call peremptorily into the darkness of the walled garden:

"Grace! Come back!"

Listen as hard as he could, Tom could hear no answer to the command. What he heard was a heavy tread descending the steps of the house, and a muttered call of: "Grace, where are you?"

A minute of silence followed. Then a girl's voice cried: "Help!"

Thurston crossed the narrow street at a jump and thrust his face close to the lattice. In the garden shadows were sounds of a scuffle and a half-smothered curse. Then Tom saw a girl run toward him, followed by the bulkier form of a man. Her hands clasped and shook the lattice; she was breathing hard, and her face was turned over her shoulder toward the man who pursued.

"Stand back or I'll shoot!" Tom shouted.

On an impulse he had thrust his new bamboo cane through the gate and aimed it at the man's heart. The man halted, stood still for an instant, then did an unaccountable thing. He whirled about, ran precipitately toward the house, mounted the steps at a single bound, plunged inside and slammed, locked and bolted the door behind him. Tom had seen many a New Jersey commuter run for a train, but he had never seen a human being run as this man ran.

Said the girl, still clinging to the gate: "I can't open it. He has the key. Can you manage——"

"Sure I can," Tom replied. He twisted the shilling cane in the lattice until it

snapped in two. But some of the slats of the lattice snapped with it, and his hands finished the work, leaving a gap in the upper half of the gate wide enough for a girl to climb through if she were agile. Such a girl was this one; her lithe young arms needed no assistance from Thurston, and in a moment she stood beside him in the street.

Somewhere along the way a window was raised, and a voice called in the night: "What's wrong down there? Police! police!" Other windows flew up, and the demand for constabulary protection was vociferous and general.

"Come away," the girl whispered. Her manner was so insistent that Tom yielded. Side by side they hastened toward the park.

"You are Mr. Thurston, the man who called upon Mr. Brompton one day this week," she said. "How do you happen to be here to-night? They said you were in jail."

"The news of my arrest has traveled fast."

"We heard it at noon to-day. Won't you please hurry?"

"Take my arm," said Tom; and when she had done so, simply and without hesitation, he knew that she was trembling.

"You are very foolish to come back to Finsbury again," said the girl, "especially after——"

"After the anonymous warning you sent me?"

"Yes."

Tom's heart performed the caper known as leaping for joy.

"Will you tell me why you wrote me the note?"

"I overheard something said about you. You were taken for a government man, a detective. I found your card and address on Mr. Brompton's desk."

"Why should Mr. Brompton be afraid of a detective?"

"Oh, it wasn't Mr. Brompton. There are others in that house, sir; he has only the first floor. There is something unlawful and very desperate going on upstairs."

"But it was Mr. Brompton who ran into the yard after you just now."

"Yes."

They had come to the cricket ground at the northern end of the park. The girl halted before a bench. "I shall have to rest a minute," she said, and sank down with a sigh.

"You are chilled," said Tom. "You forgot your wraps when you ran away." He

slipped his overcoat off and placed it around her shoulders. "I'll lend you my hat, too, if you'll wear it."

"I'm used to going bareheaded, thank you," she replied, and lifted her hands to arrange her hair.

"Brompton was rough with you," said Tom.

"He didn't mean to be, I'm sure. It was dark where he found me, and I was a bit frantic."

"When you are ready to tell me what happened, I'm ready to listen," Thurston hinted. "But take your time."

She settled herself in the folds of his overcoat and began to talk without further urging. Not far away, in the shelter of a hawthorn thicket, Mr. Googan watched the pair on the bench; but after watching a while without being able to hear what was said, he tiptoed back across the park lawn toward Hermitage Road.

If he had lingered among the thorns five minutes longer he would have beheld odd behavior on the part of the young man and the young woman. He would have seen the young man spring to his feet and point southward across the cricket field toward a glow of soft and mellow light that burned in the midnight sky, and he would have had no difficulty in hearing the young man's exclamation.

"Look there, Miss Ashby! Look!"

"What do you see?" the girl asked, standing beside him.

"It has gone. But wait a minute."

Silently they watched the southern sky. Again the glow of light flared clear and bright.

"What is it?" she demanded.

"The Zeppelin light!"

"Do you think—does that light mean an air raid on London to-night?"

"It doesn't mean anything else. Lucky for us we're out here on the edge of town."

"I shall have to go at once," the girl declared.

"Why? Out here you're safe."

"But my brother—I must go to him."

There was no use in arguing with a girl like that.

"I'll see you home, if I may," said Thurston.

Guided by the glow in the sky they hastened to the lower end of the park. The boy on duty at the ticket window in the underground station offered them advice.

"Better stay where you are, sir. They say the Zeppelens are back again. They say they've bombed St. Paul's."

At every station of the underground the crowd on the platform was dense. At Kings Cross and Farringdon Street and Aldersgate hundreds of people packed the narrow footways, the men cursing, the women weeping, the little children yawning sleepily. Terror showed in the faces of the older folk; the little ones were spared from understanding the barbarous hatred that sought their lives. Through the crowd at Moorgate the girl and Tom worked their way, no one in the frightened throng noting that the young woman wore the young man's overcoat, nor that the young man carried in his hand the splintered stump of a bamboo cane.

Coming out into the open air in the midst of the old city, they heard the booming of distant guns and the pop of bursting shells, but in the maze of winding streets they could see little of the sky. Where he was Tom had no idea until they swung round a corner into sight of the dim spires of the Guildhall. Hurrying on, they came to a church and a little graveyard; through the bars of the iron fence stole the breath of spring flowers, sweetening the night air, speaking of happy times when the air of London was not fouled and poisoned for defenseless folk by sky-roving murderers.

At a corner of the churchyard the girl halted and, taking off the overcoat, hung it across Thurston's arm.

"Thank you for all your kindness," she said. "Good night."

He would have protested, but she held up a forbidding hand.

"I live only a step from here," she said. "Won't you say good night?"

"Not until I know how I am to find you again."

She laughed a merry little laugh. "Good-by," said she, gave him her hand and swung away. Considering himself in honor bound not to follow her, he stood listening until he heard her footsteps no longer. Then he set to work energetically to get his bearings.

He looked at the old church until he thought he could remember every shadow of it; this must have been one of the churches that made Christopher Wren famous. As he walked along he noted every turning he made in the crazy old streets of that ancient part of London so that he might find his way

back to the churchyard again. Quiet streets and deserted were these at night, though noisy enough in daytime, he knew, with the traffic of the British empire flowing through them.

After he had wandered half an hour it occurred to him that he should long before have come to the Guildhall. At last he inquired his way of a besotted person who seemed to be spending the night in holding up a lightless lamp-post.

"Gord's sake, man!" the person ejaculated. "You're two bloody miles from the Guildhall. This 'ere is Shoreditch. Hi say!"

The Zeppelins had gone homeward across the North Sea for another cargo of their shameful freight; the anti-aircraft guns had long ceased barking and the early dawn of England had lighted the streets a full hour before Thurston got down from a hansom cab in front of Morley's, where his friend Ted Price kept a bedroom for such nights as this had been.

Price had gone to sleep after a hard night's work and didn't want to wake up. So Thurston stretched out on the lounge, with a rug for cover. When he awoke, the sun was high in the sky and Price had gone.

CHAPTER XI.

GOOGAN'S COUNTERFEITERS.

At breakfast in a coffeehouse in St. Martin's Lane Thurston read a newspaper account of the air raid. The Zeppelins had won a staggering military victory, it seemed, having plumped a bomb through the roof of a home for superannuated nurses, in Southwark. It had been a great night for the frightful Hun.

Around the corner from the coffeehouse Tom came upon evidence of the fright the Hun had instilled in the heart of the British nation. From the tail of an empty furniture van a terror-stricken British veteran in a glittering gold-lace uniform of other days harangued a crowd apoplectically, and at the end of his speech a hundred terrorized young Britons marched away to enlist. Throughout London similar scenes by the score were acted that day, and the British volunteer army was swelled by thousands of recruits as a result of the German government's mid-night advertising.

Ted Price was at his desk when Thurston reached the office where the Chicago *Sun*

gathered its British news, and beside the desk sat the brisk Mr. Googan of Scotland Yard, in his rusty mackintosh.

"Listen to this, Tom," hailed Price. "You're a detective and don't know it. Hear what Googan has to report."

Mr. Googan's face wore a smile of self-satisfaction. Said he:

"I happened to be in the Finsbury Park district late last night. Have you ever heard of Hermitage Road?"

"Hermitage Road? I was there last night, myself."

"Ah! Then you don't deny it."

"Why should I?"

"Will you tell me what your business was in that remote part of London?"

"Certainly I'll tell you. I'm interested in a young woman out there."

"So interested in her that you smash garden gates for her and let her wear your overcoat, I observed."

Tom controlled his dudgeon and waited to hear what more the grinning Googan would say. He had now three good and valid reasons for disliking Mr. Googan. First, Mr. Googan had sent him on a wild-goose chase to the House of Lords. Second, Mr. Googan had let himself be used as a cat's-paw for the crafty Herr Krug; for how else than through Krug had Googan obtained the evidence on which he had locked up the princess and Tom? Third, Mr. Googan had, by his present admission, followed Tom to Hermitage Road, had watched him break through the lattice gate and had spied on him in Finsbury Park. Thurston's opinion of his friend Price's friend Googan was not flattering.

"Can you tell me," asked the detective, "where I can find the young woman?"

"I cannot."

"That's too bad, because she is needed as a witness. I presume you don't know, Mr. Thurston, that the house from which the young woman fled is a counterfeiters' nest?"

"I suspected as much from what she told me in the park last night, while she wore my overcoat and while you played Hawkshaw in the background. She will testify for you, if you can find her."

"Fortunately," continued Mr. Googan, "we have a clear case without her testimony; one of the clearest cases in my experience. If you had remained in Hermitage Road a little longer, Mr. Thurston, you would have seen a neat bit of police work."

"You pulled the joint, then?"

"We did. By front and rear we entered the house and captured the entire outfit; stamping tools, dies, engraving implements, molds, metal, electric furnaces, everything."

"Everything except the counterfeiters," Price added.

"But they had been there at work only a few minutes before we arrived," said Googan. "Their electric furnace was still hot. They had one of the best plants I have ever seen."

"The young woman was no party to the counterfeiting," Tom declared. "She was secretary to the old gentleman who occupied the first floor of the house. He wasn't in the gang; he lived alone, with a servant to look after him."

"Then why did he skip out with the others?" Googan demanded. "Why didn't we find him when we broke in?"

"That's beyond me," Tom answered. "I'm simply telling you what has been told to me. Brompton lived downstairs and rented the upper floors to his nephew, a research chemist, and it was the nephew who manufactured the bogus money. Miss Ashby discovered more than a month ago that things upstairs weren't straight, and she tried to quit her job with Brompton; but she couldn't find other work. I know that to be a fact. She had to keep on with Brompton, because she has two maiden aunts who look to her for support, and she has a brother who has just come home from the hospital after having had his jaw blown off by a German explosive bullet."

"If she knew things were wrong, why didn't she report them to the authorities?"

"She needed the money Brompton paid her. Furthermore, she did not discover until yesterday just what was going on above-stairs. Brompton kept her late at her writing on certain nights, perhaps as a blind in case of a police investigation. The thing that spilled the beans last night was the nephew's conduct toward Miss Ashby. He has been fresh at every chance. Last night, when Brompton was out of his study for a minute, the cad insulted her and frightened her so that she ran out into the garden. It was Brompton who followed her out and tried to coax her indoors again. The rest you know."

"A likely story," said Mr. Googan. "A very likely story. You swallow it, do you?"

"Of course I do," Tom exploded. Mr. Googan's conceit was irritating.

"You know all this, yet you don't know where the young woman lives. Where did you leave her last night?"

"Somewhere near the Guildhall. She wouldn't let me go all the way home with her. I'm afraid her aunts are a bit cattish."

Mr. Googan's grin spelled incredulity. "I may want to see you again about her," he said, rising to depart.

"Any time at all," said Tom. "By the way, is there any reason why Price and I shouldn't go out to Finsbury this afternoon and look the house over?"

Mr. Googan could think of no reason; and not without a little pride he scribbled a note to the local authorities in charge of the premises at Number 20, Hermitage Road. "They will honor that," said he.

"Talk about a bull in a china shop!" exclaimed Thurston, when the detective had gone. "That man is on the edge of the biggest piece of service a fellow in his business could render to his country, yet all he sees is a counterfeiting plant. Perhaps they did make bogus money in Brompton's house; but that was a part of their larger game; that was their nifty little way of throwing the police off the trail of the main thing they did there, which was to shoot a light on the sky for the Zeppelins. They studied to please Googan and his kind, and they succeeded."

Unfortunately for Thurston's effort to make himself clear, the useful word "camouflage" had not at that time been adopted out of France.

"I want to see that electric furnace Googan talks about," Tom went on, "and I want Mr. Wembley to see it. Can you spare a couple of hours?"

"I can spare a couple of weeks on a thing like this," said Price. "You want Wembley to go along, do you?"

Tom nodded, and Price reached for the telephone. Mr. Wembley was not at home in Kew that day. Price tried the Eccentric Club and there found the foremost scientific novelist of the times.

"But I'm in the middle of a checker game," Mr. Wembley protested.

"This is a better game than checkers," said Price.

At Piccadilly Circus the two Americans picked up the checker player, and the underground bore the three to Finsbury. The po-

lice officer at the broken gate admitted them, after reading Googan's note.

The interior of the house remained in much the same state as when the police had found it, except that the counterfeiting outfit on the top floor had been removed. This floor had lately been remodeled, as the marks of torn-out partitions gave evidence. Its front windows looked down through the boughs of the apple tree into the garden and the street beyond. The windows at the rear showed a property wall connecting through a gate with a common. An escape from the house in that direction would have been easy to arrange.

Around the room were workbenches equipped with tools enough for a small factory. But it was at a skylight in the ceiling that Mr. Wembley gazed. Having inspected the skylight from the front of the room and from the rear of the room, and still unsatisfied with the result of his inspection, he laid hands on a table that stood in his way and attempted to shove it aside. But the table budged not an inch, for it was bolted solidly to the floor; so Mr. Wembley clambered upon it, despite his plumpness, and gazed at the skylight again.

"What do you see?" Price asked. But Thurston, pointing toward Mr. Wembley's polished boots, cried, "Look here!"

Across the table top under Mr. Wembley's feet ran a series of straight lines cut into the smooth surface with a sharp instrument, the lines converging at a point on the edge of the table nearest the rear of the room.

Said Price: "It looks like a sundial."

"It has been laid out by compass," declared Mr. Wembley, stooping to look. "Here's the meridian, deeper marked than the rest. Now note the third line to the west of the north-and-south line. See that notch at the end of it? I wish I had a map of London."

"Here you are, sir," said Tom, who had pulled out a drawer under the table.

Mr. Wembley hopped to the floor and spread out upon the table the cloth map of the metropolis which Tom had unearthed. His hands shook with excitement as he arranged the map so that the longitude lines paralleled the deepest groove in the table top. "Hold it there," he commanded. Then, with pencil and ruler from the nearest workbench he traced a right line across the map from Hermitage Road, on the upper edge, through Charing Cross and beyond to the

lower edge. The pencil line came out in the groove that was distinguished by the notch at the end.

Next, he squatted down beside the table and looked up at its under side. Beneath the edges all around were marks where the teeth of clamps had bitten into the wood. Mr. Wembley rose beaming.

"Here's where they set their radioscope," he announced. "The notched line helped them to aim it. The skylight up forward there——" He seized a cord fastened at the side wall and gave it a pull. The window in the ceiling rolled noiselessly back.

Price and Thurston were convinced. From this room, from this table the Zeppelins had been guided in finding London in the dark. Further search of the workroom lent weight to Mr. Wembley's conclusion. In a corner overlooked by the police they found a spectrum chart. On the rear wall was a cut-off and a switchboard where an electric-light wire from the cables in Green Lanes entered the house. Bits of electrical apparatus cluttered the benches and the floor. The police, having discovered the electric furnace, had stopped there.

So the three went back to town, Price to his newspaper work, Mr. Wembley to his promising lead, and Thurston to spend the evening wandering in the labyrinth of the city with a paper bundle under his arm, looking for a churchyard with the perfume of spring flowers about it. The paper bundle contained the black straw sailor hat and the black cloth jacket that Grace Ashby had left behind in Mr. Brompton's study on the night of her flight from Hermitage Road.

Near midnight Tom drifted disconsolately in at Price's office door, the bundle still under his arm. The mystery of the lights in the sky bothered him less than the thought of the dark-haired girl whom he had befriended.

Price had another blow for him.

"I called at Scotland Yard," said the newspaper man, "and sent in word to the yellow kid that I had come for the rest of her story. She sent back word that she would hang herself before she would see me again."

"Temperamental as ever," Tom observed, and went on thinking of the dark-haired English girl who supported herself, her invalid brother and her maiden aunts on less money, perhaps, than the princess, in her hotel days, spent for cigarettes.

CHAPTER XII.

LORD BENBOLD.

The clerk at the Salisbury raised his eyebrows in astonishment as Thurston stopped at the desk that night for his room key.

"We thought——" he began.

"I know you did," said Tom. "You thought I had been locked up. But here I am, you see."

"Yes, sir. So sorry, sir. All a mistake, I presume?"

"All a mistake, but no harm done. Good night."

Tom's return to his hotel was an idea of Mr. Wembley's. That man of parts figured the situation thus:

"If Krug brought about your arrest, as we suspect, then it is to be supposed that he knows you have been released from custody. If you go back to the hotel he will have you where he can watch you, or where he can set other people to watch you, and this will cause him to feel easy in his mind. If you stay out of his sight he may worry and take alarm. The enemy a man fears is the invisible enemy."

So Thurston slept that night in his own bed, luxuriated next morning in a bath in his own tub and a shave before his own mirror, and brazenly took his morning coffee in the public breakfast room, under the eyes of any "Swiss" waiters who may have been interested in his reappearance. Throughout the meal he kept watch for the princess' enemy, the head waiter, but that unctuous person remained out of his sight.

After breakfast a Strand bus bore him eastward through Fleet Street, up Ludgate Hill and past St. Paul's to the Bank, whence he continued on foot down Cornhill to the American typewriter exchange.

A young woman sat at the manager's desk. The manager had enlisted, she said, and the office was now in her charge.

"I am looking for a stenographer who sometimes comes in here," Tom explained, rather painfully. "Ashby is the name—Miss Grace Ashby. Can you give me her address?"

The young woman opened a book and searched the pages. Miss Ashby's address, she said, was Hermitage Road, Finsbury; Number Twenty.

"That's where she used to work," said Tom. "It is her home address I need to know."

But the agency register book contained no further information about Miss Ashby.

Forth into the noisy city went Thurston with no better clew to the whereabouts of Mr. Brompton's secretary than that she dwelt in the neighborhood of one of Sir Christopher Wren's fifty-seven varieties of churches. Through the remainder of the morning he wandered at random, following street after street in the heart of the commercial district, coming out at towers, monuments, railway stations, bridges and public office buildings that had no business to be where they were. On his ramble he found a dozen ancient churches; in one of their yards was a bit of the original London Wall, nicely preserved with a fresh coat of white-wash and looked down upon by loft buildings where beads and spangles, soap, shoe laces and tinner's supplies were manufactured or sold. Spring flowers bloomed in most of the churchyards, but none of the yards was the one where he had parted with Miss Ashby on the night of the latest air raid.

He came to Friday Street and noted that Messrs. Hines, Stroud & Co., bedding manufacturers, seemed to be thriving in spite of the fact that the number over their door was 13. He must have roved in a sort of circle, for presently he found himself looking at a low and rakish building that seemed familiar. Of the six-foot policeman who guarded the entrance he inquired what the building was. The policeman looked him up and down scornfully.

"Don't you know wot plyce this is? My hye!" As if anybody on earth shouldn't have recognized the Bank of England.

Many things caught Thurston's American interest. A merchant in Fenchurch Street displayed a picture in his window, in which the kaiser was shown as waiting on table, the legend underneath reading: "Taking orders—Soon! But we are taking orders now." A bakeshop owner announced: "No Germans employed in my establishment." There were enlistment placards everywhere: "Men Physically Fit Who Do Nothing For Their Country—How Beneath Contempt!" "Germany Versus England. Sign at Once for the Grand International Final. Every Man Counts." And citizens were warned of the danger from shells and bullets that might be used in repelling airship attacks.

Coming to London Bridge and walking out upon it to get his bearings afresh, Tom

discovered from a sign posted on the wall that the small boys of London had been throwing stones off the bridge, to the indignation of boatmen passing underneath, so that it had become necessary for the police to warn the small boys that the London calaboose yawned for them. Among a thousand other immaterial things that he noted was the fact that the sparrow of the London streets resembles in every way the sparrow of Washington Square, New York.

Toward noon he arrived in front of the Guildhall in time to witness the departure of the Lord Mayor from a meeting of the London aldermen. Footmen in buff livery walked before the Lord Mayor. Next came a man in pink silk who carried in his arms a thing that looked to Tom like a gold fire plug, though it was only the official mace. Besides the mace bearer went the sword bearer with a gold-sheathed broadsword on his shoulder. Like Solomon in all his glory came the Lord Mayor himself; a pleasant-looking gentleman in a gold cocked hat, a powdered wig and a flowing gown of brilliant red, the skirts of which swept the pavement. He leaned on the arms of two aldermen, one in blue robes and one in orange, and behind came the rest of the city council in vestments of thrilling hues.

Into the state carriage climbed the Lord Mayor and his attendants. It was a bright blue carriage with golden spokes; it had four great golden lamps, one at each corner; and there was a platform behind for the footmen and a gold-embroidered sofa out in front for the coachman. The footmen sprang up behind, the coachman's whip popped over the backs of the four prancing horses, and away the gorgeous equipage went, clatter and jingle and gleam, toward the Mansion House, the gold mace sticking out at one window and the gold sword out opposite.

It all was entertaining enough, but it brought Tom Thurston and Miss Ashby no closer together. He gave up his profitless efforts at last and turned westward, resolving to place an advertisement in every newspaper in London and to inquire at the war office for the address of a British soldier named Ashby who had lately been invalided home.

In High Holborn he halted before a shop window and feasted his eyes on a first edition of the "Pickwick Papers" in their original paper backs, standing almost a yard

wide on their shelf and tied round with a cord. The price, he noted, was five pounds. He glanced at the sign above the door for the dealer's name and address. The sign read:

ISAAC BROMPTON.
OLD BOOKS BOUGHT AND SOLD.

At the tinkle of the shop bell a clerk came forward; he was old and dusty and dismal, to match the interior of the bookstall. Yes, he would put the "Pickwick Papers" away for the stranger if the stranger would leave a deposit of one pound. No, he was not the owner of the shop; the owner was an invalid. Rheumatism. If the stranger was interested in first editions he must have heard of Mr. Brompton, who numbered many of the quality among his patrons, as well as many wealthy foreigners. Tom wanted to inquire if Mr. Brompton's wealthy foreign patrons included any Germans; but the clerk was so plainly guileless and gave up the Finsbury address of Mr. Brompton so readily that Thurston withheld the question.

Going out, Tom collided with Mr. Googan.

"Hello, there," said he. But Mr. Googan frowned at him and went on into the shop.

In Ted Price's office at Charing Cross Sir Arthur Purdoy sat waiting for Price to come in, and with him sat a portly gentleman whose face was exceedingly red. As Thurston entered Sir Arthur rose.

"Lord Benbold," said he to the red-faced gentleman, "let me make you acquainted with Mr. Thurston, the American we spoke of a moment ago. We called to see Mr. Price," he explained to Tom, "but you will do as well."

"You are the man who was arrested at the Salisbury?" asked the British peer.

"Yes, sir."

"Sir Arthur tells me there is a young woman in the case, and that she pretends to know me."

"There is such a young woman, sir. She is locked up at Scotland Yard."

"And a good place for her. She claims to be the daughter of a German duke, I believe?"

"She does. According to her story, her father, the duke, is a lifelong friend of yours, and is now imprisoned in Germany for trying to stop the war."

"Bosh!" Lord Benbold exploded. "Twaddle and fiddlesticks! I have known many prominent men in Germany, it's true. I've entertained them here and been entertained by them in Germany, and I've learned to speak their infernal language as well as I speak my own. But as for my knowing a German pacifist duke, that's plain nonsense. I have gone carefully over the list of my acquaintances in Germany, and I find that not one of the dukes on the list is a peacemaker. They all are in the field murdering honest Englishmen. The girl's story is therefore a falsehood. Why she dragged my name into it I can only surmise. It is possible that her mention of me is part of the general German plan to create mistrust in the minds of the British public and thus lower our morale. Many stories that have been circulated about me in this country had their origin in Germany, as internal evidence will show. Again, this girl's story may be prompted by the spite of the German government toward me for my having failed to stop England from entering the war. In their scheme of things, my function, as I now see and freely admit, was to quiet British indignation when the German war plans against Belgium should be disclosed. Think of it, Purdoy!"

There could be no doubt of Lord Benbold's sincerity in the mind of any one who heard him. The trouble was that there were so few people in England who could hear him.

This was the closest that Thurston had ever come to the depths of international diplomacy, outside of the novels. He hoped Lord Benbold would say more, and Lord Benbold did.

"I was a personal friend of Prince Lichnowsky during his ambassadorship here, and the two of us worked together like Christian gentlemen to keep harmony between Germany and England. What is more, the prince was as honest in his desire for peace between the two nations as I was. But he was only a figurehead. Underneath him, and without his knowledge, things went on that he didn't see. Dark things were done behind his back. Those devils across the North Sea kept two systems of agents here, one set for show and another for business; and some of the underground outfit still remain among us, although the prince has gone home to face the disgrace of failing to prevent a war which his superiors at Pots-

dam and Vienna deliberately planned and precipitated. Some day," cried the big Englishman, removing his silk hat and mopping the sweat from his ruddy brow, "some day the prince will tell what he now must know of the dirty work that was done here under his nominal ambassadorship. Then, I hope, the people who slander me because of my German friendships will see the truth. They will know that no one worked harder than I did to keep the German dragon chained. But this is personal, and I apologize for saying so much."

Afterward Thurston learned much from Price of Lord Benbold's career and was able to sympathize with that statesman, whom the German secret government tricked for its own overreaching ends and left broken and discredited among his own people.

"The point of the whole matter," spoke Sir Arthur Purdoy, "is that powerful German agencies are still at work in London, the leader of which may be the man Krug against whom the young woman is so bitter. She was probably a tool in his hands, of whom he had begun to be afraid. Mr. Price tells me her anger against Krug could scarcely have been feigned. If she could be induced to drop this fiction of hers about her pacifist father and tell us the truth, we might get somewhere. But Mr. Price assures me that she refuses to add a word to what she has told him. I presume her fear of Krug has gotten the better of her."

"It is up to us to find Krug," said Thurston. "I am lying in wait for him at the hotel, but he hasn't been around there in two days. His key box at the desk is full of letters. Mr. Wembley is making inquiries in Richmond, where Krug told me he made his home."

"Then bet on it," spoke Lord Benbold, "that he lives in Limehouse, or Finchley Road, or some other part remote from Richmond. Do you know, Purdoy, I fancy I've met the fellow. There was a German chap who used to be rude to the prince—a sub-consul or a commercial agent he was. I came upon them together one day in Lichnowsky's apartments; the fellow was bullying and the prince decidedly embarrassed. I wish I might have a look at Krug."

"I wish you might," replied Sir Arthur, and there the conversation ended.

After vainly seeking Mr. Wembley by telephone that evening, Thurston went to the Duke of York's Theater to rest both his

mind and his feet. It was a Barrie night; there was a sad little curtain raiser in which an English boy spent his last evening at home before starting for the war. Tenderly the mother implored father and son, each privately in turn, to forget their British reserve and show their affection for each other before it should be too late. In turn father and son screwed up their courage for the ordeal. The mother bade them good night and withdrew, leaving man and boy alone together for perhaps the last time in life.

Awkwardly each made concessions, little by little putting aside the assumed indifference that had characterized their relations with each other. Each admitted that he had always thought the other a little bit of all right. The father hemmed and hawed and at last blurted out the truth that it made him proud to hear the son tell a funny story in company, and the son confessed that he had bragged of his father to the fellows at school.

The mother returned to show her soldier boy to bed.

"Good night—father," said the boy, with a painful effort.

"Night," growled the man.

There was a pause; then the boy mustered all his resolution, laid his hand for a second on the man's shoulder and said:

"Dear father!"

The man sat silent, motionless. But when he had heard the door close behind him he took the boy's photograph from the table and pressed it to his lips.

That was all. But Tom thought of Sir Arthur Purdoy, with the smile on his face and the primrose in his lapel—and his son at home blinded for life.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE REFUGEES.

After centuries of experimenting with behavior of all sorts, the human race has summed up its experience in two excellent maxims, namely, "Be good and you will be happy," and "Honesty is the best policy." To these may be added a third, which will maintain that "The churchgoing habit never does a man any harm." If Tom Thurston had not gone to church on the morning following his visit to the theater, his adventure of the Zeppelin lights might have ended in nothing.

Upon returning to the hotel from the play he had found this note from Sir Arthur Purdoy awaiting him:

MY DEAR THURSTON: Since my interest in certain matters is not known at the Salisbury, I have taken the liberty of inquiring there concerning our friend. I am informed that he has departed for America. You may be able to obtain verification of this. Truly yours,

A. PURDOY.

With Mr. Krug out of the country and Mr. Brompton hiding from the police, the mission Tom had undertaken for Mr. Wembley seemed to have run itself into a blind alley, leaving Tom free to pick up his own work again or to look about for something more useful to do than chasing midnight rainbows.

Like a good Christian he went to church to make a fresh and proper beginning, and as any other American might have done he chose the historic Abbey at Westminster for his devotions.

He found the Abbey packed to the outer doors with the Queen's Westminster Volunteer Infantry and their friends; the regiment was to depart for France before night to face the German dragon at Ypres. From the corner into which he worked his way, facing the memorials to Warren Hastings and Richard Cobden, he could hear a tenor voice far off in the shadowy church preaching earnestly on "Our Christian Duty as a Nation." The sermon came to an end, and the congregation, led by the organ and the regiment band, sang "Onward, Christian Soldiers"—sang the hymn all the way through six verses; and the deep-vaulted roof echoed again with the shout of the final chorus. They worshiped no brazen State, those people; they worshiped God. It was His battle as well as theirs they went forth to fight.

Thurston forgot his American neutrality and sang as hard as anybody, assuring himself that a man does not have a chance to sing a hymn like that in a church like that on an occasion like that every Sunday. A pause, then the drums sounded, the band and the organ chimed in, and the venerable shrine rang tremendously with the anthem, "God Save the King." Tom could not join very well in that, but he sang American words to the same good tune. much to the astonishment of an elderly Briton who stood beside him. One verse, then the organ softened down to humbler strains, the music died away, and the congregation, kneeling,

received the benediction. "The peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be with you now and forever more." Peace!--and only a few minutes' walk from the Abbey, in a window in Cockspur Street, Tom had seen that morning a badge displayed as a curiosity—a badge enameled in the colors of three "Christian" nations and one heathen nation, bearing across its face the legend: "Gott Strafe England!"

A motion-picture camera perched on the top of a taxicab caught the Queen's Volunteers as they marched out of the Abbey. Watching the operator, Tom heard a pleading voice at his side. Looking down, he saw a thin little woman who held a coin box toward him. "For the Belgians, please, sir," she said. He dropped a shilling into the box. Then, as the woman moved away through the crowd, he followed her with a question. But the woman's only English words were those he had heard. "For the Belgians, please, sir."

To a policeman Tom put his question, and the policeman had to consult a brother officer before he could answer: "You'd better try Alexandra Palace, sir. They had 'em there the last I heard."

To the northern edge of London Tom journeyed over the route he had taken to Finsbury. At the end of the last tram line he asked the conductor: "This is Alexandra Palace, is it?"

"Yes, sir; that's it, up top of the hill."

"That is where the Belgian refugees are?"

"Ho!" replied the conductor. "There ain't none of 'em here no more. They've all been took away. The gov'ment's cleared 'em out to make room for the bloody German prisoners o' war. They send the poor Belgians to stay anywheres and they put the blasted Germans in an 'andsome palace."

But the old keeper of the palace lodge had a different version of the removal of the Belgians. Through the chained and padlocked gate he explained:

"You see, sir, the big palace yonder on the hill is a landmark for miles around. If we fill it with German prisoners, then the Zeppelens won't drop no bombs on it. If it's Belgians you'd like to see, you want to go to Earl's Court."

Earl's Court lay on the opposite side of London, miles away, but the underground from Finsbury Park carried Thurston quickly across town, compelling him, however, to pay dearly for the service by reminding him

of a dark-haired, anxious-eyed English girl who had worn his overcoat down that same railway line two nights before.

Outside the gates at Earl's Court numbers of Belgians, sad-looking folk, waited hopelessly around for something that seemed in no immediate likelihood of turning up. Among them were Belgian children, their little faces bright as their yellow curls, though the garments in which their little bodies were clad could scarcely be called clothing.

In ordinary times Earl's Court is one of the Coney Islands of London. At the time of Thurston's visit it was a shelter for homeless Belgians driven from their own land by the German invasion. On every side Tom saw the carousels, the dance halls, the theaters, the slides and chutes and mystic mazes that had once provided amusement for holiday makers. But the crowds of simple folk who filled the court that day were not merry. The children laughed, indeed, when Tom produced a double handful of candies that a slot machine outside the gate had yielded up to him in exchange for a pocketful of coppers; and hundreds of little boys and girls played happily in the great halls and the sunny open spaces, as if their homes had not been heaps of shell-shattered stone.

But the older folk, the men uprooted from their own soil and flung upon the charity of a strange land, the women who sat dreaming in the noisy confusion of that grotesque house of refuge, dreaming of their tulip gardens, of their own hearthstones, of their menfolk left behind in King Albert's hunted little army—they did not laugh. Tom saw the lost, lorn, homesick look on their faces; he saw the gay background of the pleasure park and wondered if tragedy had ever chosen a more incongruous stage setting.

The Englishman who served as his guide led him through vast halls and showed him there mile after mile, it seemed, of iron cots, each bed neatly made up with an army blanket for a coverlet.

"In the dormitories it is necessary to separate families," he explained. "But the mothers and their children sleep side by side, and in the night the mothers are permitted to push their beds close up to the children's."

They looked in at what had once been a merry-go-round. Women and girls were busy over laundry tubs and ironing boards.

"Notice that one," said the guide, indicating a sturdy woman of perhaps thirty years; her eyes were red from weeping, and there were still tears in them. "I am glad she has found something to do. She is washing baby clothes for a mother of three, just for kindness. Yesterday she was quite out of her head with grief; she had just heard from France that her husband had been killed. But that is not all. Her only child, a boy of six, was taken to the hospital last week ill with scarlet fever, and the red post card from the doctors came to her yesterday. You can guess what that means."

A cinematograph hall had been turned into a Catholic chapel. Over the door a little white cross held up its message of hope.

"And now," said the guide, with his first smile, "now I'll introduce you to the lion show."

He led the way to a building where once the king of beasts had done tricks for the pleasure of the London populace. Entering, Tom looked upon rows of cradles, each one containing a sleeping or a sleepy baby. Nurses in white moved about the room. Following one of these with his eyes to a table where milk bottles were being washed, Tom suddenly left his guide to gape after him and rushed across the nursery as if one of the now departed lions had been behind him.

The guide saw him halt before the young woman in white and speak to her, and he saw the young woman drop the bottle in her hand and turn to the stranger with a smile of surprise and gladness. In a minute Tom came back, bringing the young woman with him, both of them blushing handsomely.

"Mr. Powell," said he, "Miss Ashby, here, is a friend of mine, and if it's all the same to you, I think I'll stay here a while and save the rest of the sights till later."

It was all right with Mr. Powell, especially when Tom followed up his declaration by thrusting a gold sovereign into the Englishman's hand—"to buy something for the Belgian kiddies." Not until sundown did Thurston hunt up Mr. Powell to thank him for his guidance and bid him good-by.

In the underground train back to town he told himself that it had been luck that had led him to Earl's Court, where Miss Ashby had found new work. But it had not been luck, at all. It had been his church-going habit, as must be clear to any one who reads this tale. For if Thurston had

not gone to the Abbey that morning he would not have been approached for a contribution for the Belgians; and if he had not been so approached, he might not have remembered that he wished to have a look at the refugees, and the delightful meeting in the day nursery at Earl's Court would never have happened. It was a beaming young man who rushed up the stairs in Northumberland Avenue and burst in at Ted Price's door.

"I've found her!" he cried.

"Found who?" growled the grammatical newspaper man, who was unhappy at the moment because there are no Sunday holidays for London correspondents.

"Miss Ashby—Mr. Brompton's secretary. She is at Earl's Court, helping among the refugees. I asked her if she didn't have sadness enough in her life without going to work in a house of trouble like that. She said she guessed people in trouble ought to be the best kind of people to take care of other people in trouble. She's a brick, Ted. But that isn't all. She knows where Brompton is."

"She does?"

"Yes; he's lying up somewhere in the Whitechapel District, in a lodging house, broken-hearted over the mess his vile young nephew has got him into."

"How does she know that?"

"He has called on her. He knows, it seems, where she lives; which is more than I know. He wants her to go on writing his memoirs for him. He offers to go with his old servant to some out-of-the-way place in the country where his rascally nephew can't find him, and to let Grace take one of her maiden aunts along as chaperon. Miss Ashby says there's no doubt of his being in earnest about those reminiscences of his."

"Evidently it's a move to get her out of the way," said Price. "The gang may think she knows more about them than she does, and they don't want to take a chance."

"That's what I told her," said Tom. "But when I went further and told her Brompton's real business, she vowed she would take up his offer and go with him if I gave the word. She doesn't love the Huns, you know, after what they did to her brother."

"This looks interesting," Price declared. "If she goes away with Brompton, we can easily arrange to stick around near enough to protect her in case of any danger. And

it may be—have you seen the stories in the papers to-day about the lights in the sky?"

He fetched a Sunday newspaper from the file rack and pointed out to Tom a leading article, in which the director of the Greenwich astronomical observatory and other scientists discussed the mysterious presence of a rosy light in the heavens above London on the night of every Zeppelin raid.

"So the authorities have known about the lights all along," said Thurston, after a hasty glance down the column.

"That's how it looks. They've kept mum about it, in typical British fashion, until the thing began to be talked about openly. Today they admit that such lights have appeared, but they have no good explanation, you see. The chap at Kensington Institute says, for instance, that it may be the Zeps themselves that produce the light, projecting it before them as they come——"

The telephone bell rang, and Price reached for the instrument. "Are you there? Yes. Good evening, Mr. Wembley. Here he is now. Want to talk with him?" Price handed the phone to Tom.

Mr. Wembley had news. He had spent the day rambling in Richmond, inquiring about a wealthy American named Krug. He found no one in Richmond who knew of such a man, but he found a gardener whose wife's sister had come home out of a job two days before, her employer and his family having closed their house and started for America.

Being interviewed, the gardener's wife's sister agreed that her former employer and his family might be Americans, for they spoke a foreign tongue. Bread in their house was always "brot" and butter was "booter," and when her little nephew had visited her one day he had been chased off the place by the American, her master, who spoke of the child as "dass ferdamp kint," or words to that effect. Yes, from their language the gardener's wife's sister was sure they were Americans. Her brother-in-law would take Mr. Wembley and show him the house.

"The house," said Mr. Wembley, over the phone, "is a villa in a little park all of its own."

"Is it built of red stone?" asked Tom, "with a red-tiled roof and outside chimneys and a red brick garage?"

"Yes, it is. How do you know?"

"There's evergreens in the yard, and a

flower garden at the side, and a dome for a telescope on the roof. Am I right?"

"You are," said Mr. Wembley. "The man was a crank on double stars; and he owned so much jewelry that he had to have an iron safe to keep it in; and his name was Burlington. Extraordinary, eh, what?"

"When did he leave?" Tom asked.

"Friday night, in time to reach Liverpool before sailing time Saturday. I'm afraid our game's up."

"Never think it," Thurston replied, and told Mr. Wembley then the news he had gathered at Earl's Court, Mr. Wembley exclaiming "Extraordinary!" an extraordinary number of times.

"Can you come out to Kew to-night?" the world's greatest living author asked, at the end of the tale.

"I'm sorry, but I can't," Tom answered.

"Then I'll run into town to see you."

"All right—only make it late, because I have a date at nine o'clock to see a young woman home across London." It wasn't safe for a girl to be out so late in London, with the street so dark.

Wisely, Mr. Wembley decided that morning would be a better time to call upon Mr. Thurston.

It was near midnight when Tom turned out of the Strand into the courtyard of his hotel. His feelings were the pleasantest of all in his life. Miss Ashby, freed from her duties at Earl's Court until the following day, permitted him to walk with her past the corner of the flower-scented churchyard and quite to her door, and her maiden aunts had invited him into supper.

Prim little old ladies they were. Miss Jane quoted Ruskin to the visitor to demonstrate that she was no ordinary person, and Miss Matilda regretted that he had chosen a poor time to visit England. They still warmed their souls before the burned-out fires of a departed era and were bewildered by the swift new age about them. They had made their home for years with Grace's father, their brother, who, Miss Jane said, had held a very important office at the London docks until the time of his death, three years before. Since then the burden of earning an income for the household had been borne by Grace and William—and William had gone to war at the first call and had come home grievously wounded.

"We still have a brother living," said Miss Matilda. "He ran away to the States when

he was eighteen. He now lives in Connecticut." She pronounced it "Connect-icut."

"He is in the cycle business," added Miss Jane. "Coming from America, you may know him. His name is Henry."

"Henry Ashby?" said Tom. "No, I'm afraid I'm not acquainted with him." Noting that the spinsters looked disappointed, he hastened to explain that he had never gone in for cycling.

Well satisfied with his day's adventures, Tom returned to his hotel. In the shadows of the archway a hand fell upon his arm, and he drew back with fists ready.

"Mr. Thurston, sir."

It was the head waiter of the breakfast room.

"That's my name. What do you want?"

"The young lady, sir, that you took breakfast with—Mademoiselle de Reuter; can you give me any news of her?"

"Why should you want news of her?"

"She is my sister, sir. I have the right to ask."

"Your sister!"

"It is the truth, sir. They arrested her last Wednesday afternoon. I have had no word from her since. If you could help me——"

The man's tone was anxious, his attitude cringing; he rubbed his hands nervously as he awaited Thurston's answer. Tom recalled the waiter's behavior toward the princess in the breakfast room and the part the man had played in the framed-up scene that had led both the princess and Tom to jail.

"I think you are a confounded liar," said Thurston, with righteous contempt. "But if you want information about the girl, inquire at Scotland Yard."

"So sorry, sir; thank you, sir," the man replied, humbly, and Tom left him standing in the archway shadow. Halfway up the stairs to his room he kicked himself to think he had not asked the man about Krug. Quickly he returned to the courtyard, but the waiter had vanished.

CHAPTER XIV.

SCOTLAND.

The month of May is as chilly indoors in Scotland as the month of April in England, especially when the person whose chilliness is concerned happens to be accustomed to American sunshine and American steam

heat. William Dean Howells has described the English sitting-room stove as possessing the capacity of a quart pot and the heating power of a glowworm. Thomas Thurston would have liked to hear Mr. Howells' opinion of the fireplace in the sitting room of the Temperance Hotel in the little town of Drumkenny, on the Scottish East Coast.

It was raining, as frequently happens in Scotland. The sun had not shone for three days, and the coals in the fireplace had done their best to make up for the lack of solar warmth. But it was a poor best, and all that saved Tom from shaking his joints loose was the society of Angus MacPherson.

Angus was the innkeeper. Rather, he was the husband of the innkeeper, for Mrs. MacPherson wore the trousers in that establishment. Mrs. Mac frowned upon the intimacy that had sprung up between her husband and the only guest her hotel contained, hence the visits Angus paid to the sitting room were more or less surreptitious. Always he watched the door, and whenever his wife's step sounded outside he became suddenly busy dusting the furniture, tending the fire, or polishing the brass candlesticks that ornamented the mantel.

This afternoon, however, he wore a more comfortable air than usual as he sat with Thurston before the fire, for Mrs. MacPherson had gone away for the afternoon to attend the monthly meeting of the local temperance society. Temperance was the ruling passion in that good woman's house.

"I wonder," said Tom, "if there is a copy of Bobbie Burns' poems around?"

"Dinna ca' him Bobbie," replied Angus MacPherson. "That gi'es ye awa' for an Amurrican. Ca' him Robbie."

"Robbie Burns, then," said Tom. "How is it there's no book of his poems in this hotel? I supposed he was in everybody's library in Scotland."

"Na, na," replied Angus, his eyes twinkling behind his tobacco smoke. "Ye'll no find Robbie Burns' poems in this hoose. Dinna ye hear that Robbie was a rovin', rantin' rake and a dretful yin wi' the drink? But what poem of his wad ye like to hear? Because I ken the maist o' them by heart."

Thurston laughed, denying that he had any particular song of the Ayrshire bard's in mind, though that was an untruth; for some verses about a "bonny wee thing" had run in his head since the day, now a week gone by, when he had arrived at this out-

of-the-way village in Scotland twenty-four hours behind Grace Ashby, Miss Jane Ashby and Mr. Isaac Brompton. Whenever Tom thought of Grace he tried to recall the words of Burns' gentlest of love lyrics; from which minor circumstance we may judge the state of Tom's heart.

Angus MacPherson, reveling in his afternoon of personal liberty, proved his familiarity with the Scottish poet by reciting "Tom O'Shanter" from beginning to end, dwelling upon the "cutty sark" lines with relish. The rain beat upon the windowpanes, and Tom, looking through them at the white-walled village street, wondered what the end of his adventure would be. Like Tam O'Shanter at the auld kirk at Alloway, he had looked in upon a scene which it was not his business to witness. Forgetting his errand in England, he had accepted a wild, vague commission from Mr. Herbert Wembley, whom some folk described as a lunatic. He had listened to the siren words of a yellow-haired and soulful-eyed stranger and landed in jail for that lapse from wisdom, and he had fallen in love with a plucky English girl who—

Who was at that moment crossing the street to the door of the Temperance Hotel, or else his eyes needed treatment at the oculist's!

He bolted from the sitting room, to the amazement of Angus, who had just begun "The Cotter's Saturday Night," and he flung open the street door, to the astonishment of the young woman in the rain outside. Her cheeks were pink from her walk of a mile in a Scottish downpour. A strand of dark hair blew across her lips, and there were raindrops on it. Quickly Tom relieved her of her dripping umbrella, helped her off with her raincoat and drew her in before the fire, where Angus got suddenly upon his feet, hiding his pipe behind his back.

"I'll gae tosh masel up," said Angus, and immediately made himself scarce.

"I didn't suppose you would come out on a day like this," said Tom, when he had pulled two chairs close together before the fireplace.

"I waited for you at the stationer's as usual," said Miss Ashby.

"Then consider me as groveling at your feet. Has anything happened?"

"You know the books Mr. Brompton has expected from London?"

"Yes."

"They came last night, in a large box, and he unpacked them to-day. But they aren't books, at all."

"What are they?"

"Electric batteries—cells and cells and cells of them."

"How do you know?"

"He let me see them. He intends to use them for his rheumatism. He has carried them upstairs into the room that was once the minister's study. Mr. Brompton calls it his sanctum, and no one enters there except himself. My aunt and I have a bedroom on the first floor, overlooking the garden. His old servant sleeps downstairs near us. We never go into his room upstairs, even to make his bed. It is the only thing he is strict about."

"How do the memoirs go?"

"We began chapter thirteen to-day; it is to be about Cecil Rhodes and the orders he used to give Mr. Brompton for old books on horse-racing. Really, you know, Mr. Brompton is so absorbed in his work and so interesting in his talk, I feel certain we have made a dreadful mistake about him. Still, those batteries—I thought you had better know."

"It's important that I should," said Tom, gravely. "What about the nephew? Any sign of him yet?"

"Not a sign. Now, sir, I've delivered my message and I must go back to the manse."

She rose as she spoke, but a tap came at the door and Angus entered with a tray upon which were tea things, a pot of tea, seven kinds of oatmeal biscuits and a jar of marmalade. He had toshed himself up by donning his Sunday coat.

"We may as weel mak' a pairty o' 't," said he. "The guid wife will be clackin' temperance an hour yet."

"What lovely old cups and saucers!" cried Grace, admiringly.

"'Tis our best cheeny," Angus confided. "She wad be gey sweet we'd be usin' it. But wha will tell her?"

So they made a party of it, and Miss Ashby spread marmalade on the seven varieties of oatmeal cakes for Tom to eat, which he did to oblige her, though disclaiming that he was a horse. As for Angus, he spread his own marmalade and enjoyed himself hugely, poor man!

The dark of a rainy evening had fallen on the village street, on cots and byres and gar-

dens, on the churchyard with its little white stone kirk, and on the rolling moors beyond, when Tom surrendered the umbrella to Miss Ashby and bade her good-by. Under a kirkyard tree whose leaves were too young to afford protection from the rain he watched her swing away along the path that led to the manse which Mr. Brompton had leased. A few paces up the path she turned.

"I forgot to tell you," said she, "that I think I shall have to go back to London."

"Why?"

"Because Mr. Brompton has taken a great fancy to Aunt Jane, and I'm afraid the feeling is mutual. If Mr. Brompton should turn out to be the villain we suspect, it would break her heart."

"It's rough on auntie, I know," said Tom. "But you aren't serious about going back, are you?"

She laughed at him. "I thought you Americans had so keen a sense of humor," she said, teasingly, and left him.

The manse toward which she went was of a little better quality than the rest of the houses in Drumkenny. There for many years the minister of the kirk had lived until he had finished his earthly service. For a year the manse had stood vacant owing to the inability of the elders and the congregation to unite upon a new minister. There was a schism in the kirk, it seemed, and no likelihood of healing it so long as the determined Mrs. Angus MacPherson remained alive to lead her faction of the flock against the faction represented by the ruling elders. Foreseeing a long war between Mrs. Angus and the session, the canny trustees had conceived the economical plan of letting the manse to a tenant pending the outcome of the hostilities, and the thrifty congregation, even including Mrs. MacPherson, had concurred in the plan. It was the only point on which the people of Drumkenny had been unanimous in a year.

A sixpenny advertisement in a London paper had brought an immediate response from a gentleman of literary inclinations, who desired a retreat in which he might compose his memoirs, and Mr. Brompton, masquerading as "James Treadwell, Esquire," had arrived duly and installed himself, as we have seen.

"Natur' aborris a vaccoom," said Angus, in explaining these matters to Thurston. "'Tis an ill wind that blaws naebody guid."

Through the rain Thurston plodded down the village street to the railway station, where he filed three telegrams, all to London. It was time for the evening train from the south, so he lingered to behold its arrival. From down the line came the tinny pipe of the locomotive, and presently the train stood in the station, the guards in their rubber coats running along its length and opening doors. Four passengers alighted. One of them was the adroit Mr. Googan of Scotland Yard, in his rusty mackintosh and now needing that garment for the first time Tom had seen him wearing it. With him were the two sturdy male persons who had invaded Thurston's room at the Salisbury on the day of his arrest. In watching the three, Tom failed to observe the fourth passenger. This person was a man plump of form and swarthy of complexion, who forbore to thrust himself upon public notice at the station, but made his way quickly across a siding and a vacant lot and disappeared toward the village.

Googan and his pair drew the station master into a corner and held mysterious talk with him, after which the station master went inside and returned with a shipping book, at which the three looked with close interest. Then, satchels in hand, they walked up the rainy street and entered the door of the Temperance Hotel.

What business had brought Googan to Scotland? Thurston could readily guess. He recalled how Googan's meddling had played the mischief with his and Mr. Wembley's plans all along the way. It was Googan who had caused Tom's arrest. It was Googan who had raided the house in Finsbury and scattered its nervous occupants to the four winds. Without a doubt it was Googan's stroke that had frightened Mr. Krug out of Richmond, out of London and perhaps out of Great Britain. Now Googan had come to meddle once more.

"You have some new guests," Tom remarked to Angus MacPherson late that night. "Why didn't they show up for supper?"

"Whist!" replied the landlord, his fingers on his lips. "'Tis no for me to be talkin' aboot them; but 'tis detectives they are, frae Scotlan' Yard. Aye, 'tis so. And wad ye believe it, there's a counterfeiter here in the toon and they've come for to spy on him."

"They told you all that, did they?"

"Aye."

"Did they tell you his name?"

"Na, but they spiered about the new tenant up at the manse."

"You don't think he could be a counterfeiter, do you? Why, man, he's an author."

"It might be," said Angus sagely.

Thurston, in his bedroom up the narrow stairs, doused the glim, raised his window and looked out into the night. The rain had ceased, though the drip still fell from the eaves. Opposite him the white houses straggled away along a wynd to the fields beyond. Above the fields a round, bare hill lifted its bulk against the horizon, and behind the hill a shaft of light flashed upward, lost itself in a bank of cloud, wavered a moment, then vanished.

Tom had essayed to mount that hill in the daytime and had been stopped halfway to the top by armed guards. But he knew what view lay behind the hill. All Britain knew, though few people cared to speak of it above a whisper. Beyond the hill was the fateful inlet from the sea, not three miles across at its widest, made by nature through millions of years for the purpose one day of becoming the heart of the world.

There, curtained by sea fogs from the North Sea, and screened from view on the landward side by bleak, heathery hills, lay the Grand Fleet of Britain at anchor behind its nets of steel, watching, ever watching, holding the Hun in his own harbors, keeping the seas free for the free peoples of the earth.

Free? On that very night in May when Tom looked forth at the searchlight of a battleship sweeping the clouds, frail boats filled with trembling women, shuddering children and grimly silent men crept into other harbors on a not far distant coast; and behind them in the dark waters drifted the dead bodies of a thousand free people like them, murdered that the Hun might call the seas his own.

The seas had not been free for the *Lusitania* that day, nor would it be free in the years to come for many another fair ship of the free nations. Still, through the dark years would the Grand Fleet keep its vigil, and still would the seas be free again, when the Teuton should have spent his blood and his treasure in his vain ambition to set the seal of Slavery upon a world of Citizens.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MIDNIGHT MOTORIST.

Mr. Googan of Scotland Yard wasted no time. Before bedtime he had visited the Drumkenny police office and held a long conference with the sergeant in charge, and before breakfast next morning he was out in the bright sunlight of the rain-washed street taking his bearings. At breakfast he came face to face with Thurston.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed. "You here, too, eh?"

He stared at the young man with a look that was not flattering.

"What brings you north?" Tom asked.

"The London and Northwestern," replied Mr. Googan, pointedly, whereat the two sturdy male persons, his companions, burst into oatmeal-porridgey laughter and had to wipe their mouths.

After the meal the trio went into secret session upstairs. It had been clear to Tom from their looks that his presence in Drumkenny gave them concern. He was not surprised, therefore, when the stouter of the under-detectives entered the sitting room and engaged him in talk.

"You flit about quite a bit, sir," said the stout man.

"Yes," Tom answered, "I'm quite a flitter."

Through the window he saw Googan and the other satellite set forth up the street toward the manse. Also he saw a round-bodied, swarthy-faced man saunter out of a grogshop across the way in the company of a soldier in kilts.

"I say!" cried the stout detective, as Tom sprang from his chair to gaze through the window at the grogshop pair. "What's the excitement?"

"A soldier in a saloon," Tom answered. "I didn't know it was permitted."

But it was at the soldier's companion that he stared, for the man who had come out of the beer shop with the Highlander was the head waiter of the Hotel Salisbury, London.

"I'm going out," said Thurston. "So long."

"I'll keep you company if you don't mind," said the detective.

The head waiter had followed Googan and the second detective up the street toward the kirk. Tom turned his steps in the same direction; there was no use in pretending

that his interest lay in any other. In the manse Mr. Brompton had a large boxful of storage batteries—cells and cells and cells of them—for what purpose Tom could well imagine. In the manse Grace Ashby watched Mr. Brompton's moves for Tom and Mr. Wembley. Toward the manse Mr. Googan had done with the intention probably of taking Mr. Brompton into custody for the common or garden crime of manufacturing spurious money. His interference at this time would break up the ferreting out of the gigantic conspiracy which Mr. Wembley had discerned, and would possibly permit the escape of a greater criminal than Mr. Brompton. For Tom, since leaving London, had received this letter:

MY DEAR YOUNG MAN: At the American line offices in Cockspur Street I learn that Mr. Burlington engaged passage for himself and family on *S. S. St. Louis*, but did not claim his reservations at Liverpool. In Richmond I learn that he went away from home in a big closed motor car. The presumption is that he has not left the kingdom. Verbum sap. H. W.

That Brompton and Krug were separated at the present moment by a very few miles Tom believed; and now that Googan threatened to spoil the game as he had spoiled it in Finsbury, Tom found himself taking sides against lawful police authority and wishing that something large and heavy might fall upon Mr. Googan. The evening train that day, he felt certain, would bring Mr. Wembley to Scotland to help him in watching the manse. But he told himself candidly that the chance of Mr. Brompton's remaining at the manse until evening was slight, unless Googan could be headed off.

Saying nothing to each other, Tom and the stout detective came to the kirk. Beyond it, across a little field, they saw the manse, partly screened behind yew hedges. Beyond the manse was a pasture where a red cow grazed, and at the farther side of the pasture a wood, green with the first touch of spring. Back of all was the round, bare hill that looked down from its hidden side upon the harbor where the dreadnoughts of Britain lay at anchor.

On the stone wall inclosing the kirkyard Tom sat down. Uncertain what move to make next, the detective loitered near, spelling out the epitaphs on the lichen-spotted gravestones. His time belonged to Thurston that morning.

The manse appeared to be unconscious of

the conflict of action that centered around its white walls. Tom could see Mr. Brompton's old servant in the yard at the rear, engaged in hanging out some linen to dry. His fancy pictured a peaceful literary scene within the house—Mr. Brompton in an old armchair dictating the recollections of a busy life; Grace seated near, her pretty head bent over her notebook; Aunt Jane knitting not far away, listening to the entertaining words of the retired bookseller and, perhaps, casting a melting though quite maidenly look in Mr. Brompton's direction. But what had become of Googan and the second detective? Where was the London waiter who had followed them up the road?

Beyond the manse, beyond the pasture and the woods, high up on the side of the big hill where the armed sentries lurked to stop curious wanderers, Tom saw a group of moving figures. A mile away they were, and hard to make out. There must have been a half dozen of them, at least. They passed over the brow of the hill and out of sight. Still no sign of Googan.

Tom had made up his mind as to the course he should pursue in case Googan approached the manse. He would intercept him, tell him everything and offer himself as a hostage, should Googan suspect him of being in league with Brompton; and he would resign all the credit for the exposure of the greater plot to Googan if that brisk person would consent to delay action for a single day.

But no Googan appeared, though Tom watched for an hour. The manse door opened and Grace came out to stretch her arms in enjoyment of the sunny morning. Tom saw her stroll down the walk toward the stile at the road; saw her stoop to the ground behind the hedge and, rising again, hold a flower to her face. From her manner it was clear that nothing untoward was going on within the house and that Mr. Googan was not there. Soon Grace went indoors and the manse resumed its former look.

But out of the wood and across the red cow's pasture came a figure that Thurston knew at once. The stout detective had sat down behind the wall to sharpen his pocketknife on a convenient headstone. Unobserved by him, the head waiter of the Hotel Salisbury, London, passed the manse, the kirkyard and the kirk and disappeared toward the village.

Tom, yawning, slipped down from the

wall. "I'll mosey back down the hill," said he. "Going my way?"

The detective decided that his knife was sharp enough. In silence they retraced their steps; and when Tom sat down in the sitting room of the Temperance Hotel to read "The Demon Rum," the detective settled himself comfortably near him and opened "Ten Nights in a Barroom." Thus they remained until the bustling Mrs. MacPherson commanded them to come to dinner.

At dinner the detective displayed uneasiness. A step sounded at the door and he looked up quickly, but it was only Angus MacPherson that he saw. Angus held in his hand a copy of an Edinburgh newspaper that had arrived on the noon train.

"Wull ye listen to this!" he cried. "They've sunk the *Lusitania!* A thousand puir folk drownit by a skulkin' submarine! Bairns and a'!"

Dinner forgotten, the detective seized the newspaper and ran through its brief account of the German crime, while Tom read the story over his shoulder. In the street outside, little groups of villagers gathered around lucky owners of newspaper copies and, having read all that was told, went back to their shopkeeping and their weaving, shaking their heads and muttering: "What a peety!"

Tom was bothered no more by his shadow that day, the shadow having gone up the hill alone, and into the woods beyond the manse, thence returning to the headquarters of the local constabulary with questions and becoming more worried with each passing hour. At four o'clock Thurston entered the village stationer's shop and looked over the scanty stock of magazines until Grace Ashby came in.

"You've heard the news—about the *Lusitania?*" she greeted him.

"Yes; I've heard."

"A woman driving past our house stopped at the stile and told me. I ran in and told Mr. Brompton, and he laughed aloud!" The girl shuddered. "I don't see how I can stay under the same roof with him another night—or let Aunt Jane stay."

"What did he say about the news?"

"He said, 'It is the beginning of the end.' Those were his words. Actually, he gloated. I must tell you, too, that he has been busy in his room up the stairs ever since breakfast. He did no dictating to-day."

"You must stay one more night," said

Tom. "I expect Mr. Wembley on the evening train, provided he received my telegram in time to leave London at midnight last night. You're not afraid, are you?"

"Not for myself," she replied. "But for others. Have I told you that Mr. Brompton had a visitor late last night?"

"No. Who?"

"A man. That's all I know. I heard them talking at the door long after midnight."

Tom thought of the London waiter.

"A few minutes after the man had gone away I heard the whir of a motor engine not far away. There are still prints of big tires in the road in front of the church, if you care to look."

"To-night at ten o'clock," said Tom, "I'll be at the kirk with Mr. Wembley, if he has arrived. Will you meet us there in case there's anything more to report?"

"I will," Miss Ashby promised.

In a shed behind the Temperance Hotel Angus MacPherson was putting a new splint seat in a century-old chair when Tom found him.

"Mac, there aren't many motor cars in this metropolis, are there?"

"Weel," the innkeeper's husband replied, "I heard a big yin gae by in the nicht. When the simmer comes thur'll be dizzens o' they."

"But there's none in the town now?"

"Aye, there's Gavin Haggart, the fishman's. 'Tis a wee contraption frae Amurrica wi' a smell to 't like finnan haddie cookit in benzine. But 'tis only the folk by the roadside has to smell it; 'tis ne'er Gavin—he aye rins so fast. When Gavin gaes by ye'll see folk sneezin' an' chokin' and the tears comin' oot their een like they had a cauld in the heid."

"Where can I find this Mr. Haggart?"

"Doon till his shope by the police barracks. Jist folly yer nose and ye'll no miss it."

At the fish market alongside the local police headquarters Gavin Haggart consented to take the stranger for a ride in consideration of a half crown; but the ride must be over by sundown, for he had an engagement at that time to drive the little Haggarts "to the big toon sax mile awa' to see thae shiftin' pictur's."

In the seat of the trusty American delivery car which Mr. Haggart used in his business of supplying the surrounding region

with fish, they drove up the hill to the church. There Tom descended to the ground and examined the tire prints reported by Grace. Big prints they were, and the tread had left an easily recognizable pattern in the soft earth.

"Which way was that car headed, do you suppose?" he asked his chauffeur.

"Yon way," Haggart replied, pointing back toward the village.

Down the hill, through the village, across the railway tracks and out upon the moors they rattled. Coming to a fork, they halted so that Tom might study the roadway again.

"Here they are," he called from a little distance up the right-hand road, and again the expedition got under way. Thrice more they stopped to pick up the trail, and went on over heathery hills and down into snug little valleys until, twelve miles from home, they came to a rusty iron gate that barred farther going in that direction.

Beyond the gate lay a park, unkempt in look and seemingly left neglected for years. Haggart explained about it. Had the American ever heard of Lord Benbold? He was one of the great men of the kingdom, and this place had once been his favorite country seat. Its acres were past counting; its brooks contained enough trout and salmon to feed all the town of Aberdeen.

"How far does it stretch from this gate?" Tom asked.

"Miles and miles," said Haggart. "A' the way to the sea."

"The place looks run down. Doesn't the owner come here any more?"

No, Lord Benbold had not visited the estate since his son Harry was killed there. The son was a naturalist. He had gone over the cliffs at the end of a rope to collect birds' eggs and been dashed to death on the beach a hundred feet below. No one witnessed the accident except a foreigner, a professor of a sort, who was out with the boy that day. Some people said the rope was cut, but more likely it had chafed in two on a bit of rock.

"And the place has stood idle ever since?"

"Ever since," said Haggart. "That was three year ago. Noo, if ye please, I must gae back till the weans."

A mile along the road homeward he brought the little car to a stop and pointed away through a gap in the hills to a spot of blue in the south.

"Do ye see what's yon?"

"I see water."

"There's mair than water," Gavin declared, in an awed whisper. "Yon's a sight the kaiser was gie his ane guid arm for to see. Yon's the Grand Fleet lyin' in wait for him."

The flivver went forward again and the view was gone.

"When we started out," said Thurston, "we were south of the Grand Fleet. Now we are north of it. Have we come around in a half circle to get here?"

"Aye."

The evening train had arrived at Drumkenny before the flivver reentered the village street. At the door of the Temperance Hotel stood Mr. Herbert Wembley, and with him Ted Price and Sir Arthur Purdoy.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAST SIGNAL.

At ten o'clock at night the manse, viewed from the kirkyard, was dark, but from the point where Thurston watched, just outside the yew hedge, a light showed behind the window shades in the upper room that Grace had described to him as Mr. Brompton's sanctum.

A window on the first floor was open; he could tell this because a white curtain swung softly to and fro in the night wind. By and by something else appeared in the open window; something that swung one foot, then another over the ledge and lowered itself quietly to the ground. In a moment Grace reached the stile, then entered the road. She gave a little gasp as he rose beside her.

They said nothing as they walked to the kirk, but Tom put out his hand and she took it. In the shadow of the wall four manly figures stood up to be introduced, the fourth and last being the stout detective who had played Siamese Twins with Tom that morning. This person's presence in company with Mr. Wembley, Mr. Price and Sir Arthur needs this explanation, that, having utterly lost track of his chief for twelve mortal hours, the man had also lost his nerve and thrown himself upon the good will of the other Londoners at the Temperance Hotel.

"But I'm not Mr. Googan's keeper," Tom reminded him. "If Googan wants to lose himself in the wilds of Scotland, is it any of my business?"

"Something's 'appened to him, sir," the detective insisted. "You saw him, and Hi saw him a-going up the road after breakfast, and he ain't been seen 'ide nor 'air of since. Hi think he's been made away with; it looks like foul play, and, that being the case, it's your dewty as a loyal subject of 'is majesty to 'elp me find him." Quite in a panic was Mr. Googan's satellite.

"Not being a subject of his majesty," Tom replied, "I can't see that my duty lies in the direction you suggest. But if you care to come along with us and keep your mouth shut, maybe you'll learn something."

The others consenting, the forlorn detective went along. His name was Hitt.

"Well, Miss Ashby," said Mr. Wembley, "what's the old chap up to to-night?"

"He is working in his room," Grace replied. "He has had his door locked quite all day. For the last half hour there has been a strange buzzing sound up there—I can't describe it—a sound as if a thousand bees were swarming in the room, and now and then a crackling and snapping sound, too, as if something were burning. My aunt suspects nothing; she has gone to sleep; but I am frightened enough for the two of us. After what he said about the *Lusitania* I am sure he is insane."

Mr. Wembley turned a pocket flash upon the face of his watch. "Ten-fifteen," he said. "Ten-thirty is the time, if this is to be one of their nights." He rested the flash on a partly folded map and said, "Let us stand where we can see the northern sky."

In a ghostly procession they moved around the kirk, Mr. Hitt stumbling over a tombstone and muffling an oath as he limped on. At the rear the graveyard ended at a stone wall, with an open field beyond, stretching toward the hill of the armed sentinels. The sky was faintly overcast, though here and there the stars shone through.

"This will do nicely," said Mr. Wembley; and they waited beside the wall, watching the sky in the north. Tom's heart thrilled when a timid hand slipped itself under his arm; and he experienced the odd sensation of having known this English girl all his life. Under the sky that night he doubted no more that an intelligent fate had brought them together than that Mrs. MacPherson would serve oatmeal porridge for breakfast in the morning.

"There it is!" Mr. Wembley and Sir Arthur exclaimed together.

The others gazed with staring eyes at a spot of light high in air and far away to the north. A second it glowed, then vanished, then reappeared a little higher and much brighter—a ruddy opalescence like a cloud of fire, that wavered and pulsated, expanded, contracted, dimmed and brightened until it stood out clear and steady above the harbor where the Grand Fleet watched the sea doors of Germany.

"It casts a shadow!" Mr. Wembley pointed to the ground behind the watchers, and they saw the outlines of their figures upon the graveyard turf. Startled, they turned to look again at the weird new thing in the sky, too deeply awed to remember the business at hand. It was Sir Arthur who spoke at last.

"This mustn't go on," he said. "We have wasted too much time already."

Through the kirkyard they picked their way to the road. In the dim glow of the uncanny ball of light still burning in its place in the sky they approached the manse. Tom, who had left Miss Ashby on the steps of the kirk under instructions to remain there, jumped as he heard her light footsteps at his side.

"I can't desert Aunt Jane," she said, and he let her remain close to the yew hedge. On the ground below her bedroom window he paused to listen, then lifted himself easily over the sill and into the room. Somewhere in the dark he heard the gentle snoring of Aunt Jane. Feeling his way along the wall to the door that opened into the inner hall, he turned the key without noise and stepped through into darkness. His hand found a stair round, then the newel post.

There was matting on the stairs, and his feet made no sound, although it would have meant little if they had; for down from the upper floor came the persistent humming that Grace had described as like the swarming of bees. Mingled with it was a sputtering sound that reminded Tom of an X-ray machine he had once heard in operation.

He reached the top of the flight safely. A faint line of light showed him Brompton's door. Drawing a deep breath, he stretched out his hand and tapped sharply on the panel.

There was a quick shuffling inside, then a gruff, "Who's there? I told you I didn't want to be disturbed."

"You didn't tell me," Tom shouted. "Open up or I'll smash down the door!"

Dead silence followed, then a rush, a scrambling and clawing, and silence again. Suddenly from outside came shouts, the crunch of running feet on gravel walks, the sound of some one stumbling, and a pistol shot that ended all the hubbub as a period stops a sentence.

For half a minute Tom strained his ears to listen, then heard a voice far in the distance, crying:

"This way! This way!"

He found the doorknob and turned it, but the door held fast. He placed his shoulder against a panel; the hallway was narrow and his foot found a wall to brace against. With a splintering of wood the door gave way and Tom plunged into the room.

On the mantel three oil lamps lighted the place. Before the north window stood a table upon which rested an instrument that looked like a stereopticon. The instrument was so set that its telescopelike nose pointed upward and outward. But a window shade of opaque material hung the full length of the window, shutting in the lamplight from the outer world. Tom thrust the shade aside and saw that the window was open.

It was an old-fashioned shade that worked—when it pleased—with a cord. In his impatience Tom tore it down from its roller—and before him in the sky hung the Zeppelin light, blazing away at its brightest.

Swiftly he examined the instrument on the table. From the end farthest from the window came the buzzing sound that he had heard outside. To this end heavy wires were attached. Following these by touch in the shadows of the floor, he came to a second table laden with a nest of storage batteries—cells and cells and cells of them, as Grace had said.

With a lamp in his hand he descended the stairs and opened the front door. The yard was still, but voices sounded from the direction of the kirk. Through the dark he ran toward them and arrived breathless in time to hear the equally breathless Mr. Wembley exclaim:

"Mr. Hitt, that was a good job. You've earned our thanks."

"That's all right, gunner," Mr. Hitt replied. He stood over the prostrate figure of Mr. Brompton. That person, though prostrate and bound hand and foot with knotted handkerchiefs, was far from inaudible. Of the rights of Englishmen he raved, and of the vengeance that should de-

scend upon lunatics who violated the privacy of an Englishman's home.

Leaving Mr. Hitt to guard the prisoner, the rest of the party went back to the manse and gathered round the sizzling instrument on the table in Mr. Brompton's sanctum. Mr. Wembley fairly danced with satisfaction. "This thing, gentlemen, is a magnified duplicate of the apparatus I described to the inquisitive Krug at the Flyfisher's Club less than a year ago."

"But the window shade was down," said Thurston.

"What's a window shade to an invisible ray?" asked Mr. Wembley.

"Shouldn't we disconnect the thing and stop the light up there?" queried Sir Arthur. "If past experience is any guide to us, the Zeppelins are making for the light this very minute, and the fleet is at their mercy."

Tom seized the wires that ran back to the battery, but Mr. Wembley cried:

"Wait! This is only half of the necessary machinery. Somewhere in the vicinity is another outfit like this. One is no good without the other."

"Then shut this one off," Sir Arthur insisted.

"Wait," said Mr. Wembley again, stepping to the back of the table. "Stand at the window, some of you, and watch."

Resting on four iron supports clamped to the table top, the business portion of the apparatus revolved on a ball-and-socket joint.

"Watch the sky and tell me what happens," Wembley commanded.

He shifted the instrument a few degrees to the right.

"The light has gone," Price reported, from the window. "There it is again," he added, as Mr. Wembley brought the machine back to its original position.

"Can you see it now?" The little author had pointed the nose of the machine to the left.

"No."

"Now?"

"Yes."

"Sir Arthur," said Mr. Wembley, "take the best observation you can of the position of the light. Use your cane; rest the ferrule on the window sill and aim the stick so that it points directly at the light."

Sir Arthur had to lie down on the floor to perform this part of the experiment.

"Got it? Good. Here's a pencil. Make

a mark on the floor where the handle of your cane rests. Now, you folk at the window, tell me what happens."

He elevated the breech of the machine, thus throwing the telescope end lower, until it pointed almost down to the horizon.

"The light has gone, sir," said Price.

"Watch closely, just above the sky line," Wembley directed, at the same time turning the instrument slowly from east to west.

"There!" Price sang out. "There it is again, just above the big hill in front of us, only much fainter than it was."

"That is because the two streams of rays no longer meet at right angles," Mr. Wembley explained. "But you can see it, can you?"

He went to the window himself to look.

"Yes, gentlemen, there it is. Now, Sir Arthur, put your cane in action again and mark the new direction."

Once more the nobleman rested the point of his walking stick on the window ledge and took the position of the light, making a new pencil mark on the matting.

"That's all, gentlemen," said Wembley. "We may disconnect the wires now and let the Zeppelins do their worst."

He sat down on the floor beside the marks that Sir Arthur had made. With pencil and paper he plotted the angle of difference between the two lines of sight which Sir Arthur had defined. Next he produced a pocket compass and his folded map. It was a large-scale topographical map of the region for twenty miles around the village of Drumkenny—such a map as German spies risk their lives to steal from the government archives.

Quietly and laboriously he made his calculations. Then, using Sir Arthur's cane for a ruler, he drew a pencil line across the map from the point where the manse was indicated, out across the moors, across the big, round hill with its closely printed isometric altitude lines, across the nameless little inlet which was the true heart of the world, continuing to the north shore of the harbor until the pencil mark cut a headland five miles beyond the harbor mouth and passed out to sea.

"Somewhere along that line, gentlemen," said Mr. Wembley, "we shall find the other half of this very interesting experiment."

Thurston, on his hands and knees, studied the map. With his eyes he traced the roads he had followed in Gavin Haggart's flivver

that afternoon, around the inner end of the harbor, over the hills and down the valleys, until the last of the roads ended at a spot colored in green. It was this green patch on the map that the pencil mark crossed before it ended at the sea; and this green patch represented the private estate of Lord Benbold.

He rose, caught Sir Arthur's eye and stepped out of the room, the nobleman following.

"I think I can tell you where the other half of this business is," said Tom. "I drove around to the north shore of the harbor to-day, following the tracks of a big motor car that stopped near this house last night. I traced the car to the gates of Lord Benbold's big summer place over there. You are a friend of Lord Benbold's. I think you ought to know of what I discovered, before I tell the others."

"Go ahead and tell them," cried Sir Arthur. "I wouldn't stop you if it were the estate of the king himself!"

At this moment a faint and quavering female voice called from the floor below.

"Grace! Where are you? What is the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter, auntie, dear," Miss Ashby hastened to reply, over the banister.

"All right," said Aunt Jane. "I thought I heard a noise."

CHAPTER XVII.

AT BENBOLD CASTLE.

Gavin Haggart's flivver stood in its shed behind the fish shop, its radiator still hot after its run homeward from the market town, six miles away, and his five wee Haggarts had just gone to sleep in their two beds to dream of the "shiftin' pictur's" they had seen that night. Haggart himself had partly undressed and wore only his red flannel undershirt and his trousers when he opened the door in answer to Thurston's hasty knock.

"A' richt, if it's in the name o' the king," said he, when explanations had been made to him.

Through the darkness the flivver jolted over the roads it had traveled in the afternoon. Sir Arthur Purdoy, by reason of his social station, sat beside the driver, while Mr. Wembley, Ted Price, Thurston and Mr. Hitt sat on the fishy floor of the car and held on as best they could. Mr. Brompton had been left behind in the safe deposit of the

police barracks, Mr. Hitt charging him with manufacturing bogus money.

It was past one o'clock when the expedition halted at the iron gates of the Benbold estate. There the adventurers left their chauffeur to await their return. Climbing the wall, they proceeded on foot, following the carriage road that wound through park woods and across sheep downs for two miles or more, until they came to the foot of the ascent that ended at the brow of the headland. From this point they could see, at the top of the hill, the twelfth-century castle which Lord Benbold's riches had transformed into a modern country palace. Lightless it stood against the sky.

Now Mr. Wembley called a council of war. Mr. Hitt, flushed with his success in felling the fugitive Brompton in the kirk-yard, voted for advancing upon Benbold Castle, ringing the doorbell and demanding the surrender of the occupants forthwith. Sir Arthur's voice was for discretion.

"There are not enough of us to surround the house properly," said he. "Let us wait and watch. It will be dawn in another hour."

The others agreed that since the perilous light in the sky had vanished there was no need of haste; and they settled down on the damp turf of the roadside to shiver in the chill night air and wait for daybreak.

For a long time they sat silent. Then said Mr. Wembley, "There ought to be an owl to hoot at us. This adventure is quite irregular without an owl."

"I think, Wembley," said Sir Arthur, "that you are owl enough, yourself. I'll leave it to the others."

The others admitted that Mr. Wembley's sagacity in tracing the second stream of invisible rays to its approximate source placed him in the bird-of-wisdom class beyond a doubt.

"Hoot, mon!" Mr. Wembley responded to their flattery.

They fell silent again until Price, who was nearest the great house on the hill, said, "Listen. What's that?"

They listened and looked. Something moved across the park lawn and down the hill toward them.

"A bloomin' sheep," said Mr. Hitt; but at once the blooming sheep lifted its nose in air and let loose a savage and bloodcurdling howl, and bounded down the hill with long, wild leaps, waking the woods with angry

barking. Ten yards away from the party the hound halted, bristling and growling and baying.

"Here, doggie; nice doggie," Price called softly. "Come along, old fellow."

At this invitation the old fellow came along two jumps nearer with such ferocity that Price fell back upon his reserves in disorder. From the house other hounds now rushed, filling the night with alarm. Charging down the hill, they formed a yowling, snapping ring around the intruders. At a window of the house a light gleamed, then disappeared.

"It's all up, gentlemen," said Sir Arthur, with decision, and advanced upon the nearest hound with his cane clubbed, ready to strike. Close behind him Mr. Hitt's automatic spat fire, and one of the dogs curled up in a heap while another ran limping and yelping up the hill. Again the pistol cracked, and Price's "nice doggie," in the act of springing at Price's throat, turned over in air and fell dead on its back.

"Spread out and close up around the house. Keep to cover," Mr. Wembley shouted.

With Thurston on the left of the line, Mr. Hitt on the right and Price, Mr. Wembley and Sir Arthur acting as the center, they raced up the hill to the edge of the house lawn. There they halted, and Tom found himself lying flat behind an evergreen, before him the house, beside him, not three paces away, the brink of the headland upon which some chieftain of another century had built his castle.

Down through the faint first light of dawn Thurston looked and saw the foam of breakers a hundred feet below; the throb and the rush of them came up to him through the ominous quiet that had fallen on the castle and the vicinity. Peering down the dizzy height once more, he saw a light beyond the line of the surf—a light that winked as rapidly as a man can close and open his eyes—three winks, then two, then five, just as the signal light on the bridge of Tom's liner had winked to the pilot boat at the Mersey bar six weeks before.

"Wembley," he called. "Come here if you can."

In a moment Mr. Wembley knelt beside him, gazing at the flashes from the dark sea below the cliff.

"A submarine," he said. Then he looked toward the house, but its side nearest the

water was invisible to them from where they watched.

The flashes ceased. There was no sound save the beating of the waves at the foot of the headland. Five minutes passed, and with every minute the early dawn of the north made their surroundings clearer.

Suddenly Mr. Wembley put out his hand and touched Tom's sleeve. Something was stirring behind the house on the side facing the sea. They heard a door hinge creak, a floor board rattle, then the spiteful bark of a gun and the sound of heavy feet running. A yell of fear and agony rang up to them from the cliff below and set the sea birds to screaming far up and down the shore.

Silence again, the sea birds wheeling back to their roosts, the sky brightening in the east, the gaunt old castle standing out distinct at last in every line.

"This w'y, gentlemen!"

The honest voice of Mr. Hitt was calling.

"This w'y, gentlemen. Hi think Hi winged the bloody hinseck as 'e went over the top. 'E'll never go over the top no more, 'e won't!"

Cautiously the besiegers rallied round the detective. He stood at the edge of a little grassplot behind the house, looking down a staircase of iron that descended over the face of the cliff.

"'E was makin' 'is lucky down the ladder when Hi popped 'im. 'E went down faster than wot 'e expected."

"Hitt," said Price, "that's the second hit you've made to-night."

Tom swept his eyes over the sea. The signal light had gone, and with it whatever vessel had sent the flashes landward.

"Our submarine seems to have ducked," Mr. Wembley chuckled.

"But there!"

Thurston pointed toward a dark shape that soared eastward through the air miles to the north of them, making swiftly for a fog bank on the horizon.

"A Zep!" cried Price.

"And hydroplanes after it!" Sir Arthur added. "Three of them!"

Straight for the fog bank the air monster sailed and was swallowed up in the mist, the sea planes hotly pursuing as kingbirds chase a hawk,

The great rooms of the castle were void of life. The furniture, sheathed in its winter ticking, stared at the searchers as they passed. To the south wing of the house

Mr. Wembley went, and there, in a room that had once been the nursery for Lord Benbold's children, he found the thing he sought—the duplicate of the apparatus in Brompton's sanctum at the manse.

From the instrument a set of insulated wires ran out through a window to the lawn beneath. Under the window, close to the house wall, stood a big closed motor car. Its rear wheels had been jacked up and seated on a pair of stout blocks; the tire of one of the drive wheels had been removed, and a leather belt passed around the denuded rim ran the shaft wheel of a bright new electric generator that was bolted to the side of an oak at the corner of the house.

"That handy power plant," said Mr. Wembley, "is one idea that Krug did not borrow from me."

At the foot of the iron staircase over the cliff they found the body of Mr. Krug of the Hotel Salisbury, alias Mr. Burlington of Richmond. In his pockets were papers that have since been of interest to the British government. His body was badly crumpled, but a large and glittering diamond pin in his cravat remained unmarred. This bit of jewelry is to-day in Thurston's possession, awaiting an owner to claim it.

They reascended the iron ladder and stood looking down upon the little harbor to the south where hundreds of war vessels lay safe at anchor. Sir Arthur drew Tom aside.

"This will kill poor Benbold," said he. "I would stake my life that he knows nothing of this shameful misuse of his property."

"I've been thinking," said Tom. "It isn't natural for a place like this to be left without caretakers. There must be some of Lord Benbold's people around."

They set off down a road that soon passed out of sight of the castle and led them to the stables of the estate.

"There's a door open," said Tom.

They looked in upon a room filled with dust-covered carriages, wagons and pony carts.

"Hello in here!" Tom shouted. Listening for an answer, they heard a faint cry from a distant end of the barns. Thurston called again, and this time they heard the cry distinctly. "Help!" it said.

In a stall, covered with straw, lay an old man whose gray hair was matted with blood. They had him out in the air in a minute, and Thurston brought water from a near-by

well. Presently the old man was able to sit up and talk, although he trembled as with the palsy.

"He tried to murder me," he said, his teeth chattering. "He told me he came from Lord Benbold to buy the furniture. I said to him, 'Aren't you the furriner professor that was with poor young Sir Harry when he fell over the cliff to his death?' With that he up and hit me over the head with a big wrench he had in his hand. How I came in the stable under the straw I don't know."

"You take care of the place for Benbold, do you?" Sir Arthur asked.

"Yes, sir."

"What day did the man come?"

"What day? It was a Wednesday, sir."

"And he tried to kill you that day?"

"Yes, sir, as soon as he got out of the big car that brought him. It was full of dogs, sir."

"And this is Sunday!" said Tom. "You must have lain near dead half a week."

"I've been calling for ever so long, sir. You can see I can't move the right side of me."

"How did the fellow get through the lodge gate?" asked Sir Arthur. "It's locked."

"I don't know, sir. He must have had a key."

In the late Mr. Krug's handsome motor car, its missing tire replaced on the rim and Sir Arthur at the wheel, the adventurers returned to the lodge gate. An examination of the lock showed that it had been pried apart and cleverly put together again, not so well reassembled, however, but that it fell in pieces in Mr. Wembley's hand.

Gavin Haggart and his flivver had gone home, lacking any great amount of patience to spend on night-roving folk who might turn out to be burglars. But Mr. Krug's car accommodated them all nicely, including the wounded old caretaker.

At the Temperance Hotel Mrs. MacPherson awaited them with frowns of displeasure; she did not approve of guests who stayed out all Saturday night and showed up late for their Sunday oatmeal. But when she saw the injured man they had brought with them, and satisfied herself that he had not come to his injuries through dallying with the demon rum, her scowl dissolved into a look of pity and she sent Angus to put the kettle on the hob.

Angus was in no haste to obey. "Let me tell the gentlemen the news," he pleaded,

but his wife shooed him away with a wave of her arm.

"He's a' excitit," she explained. "The military arrestit twa German spies yesterday in the glen behind the manse."

"Hitt," said Tom, "that's what became of Googan."

"Breakfast is waitin'," said Mrs. MacPherson, "and gettin' cauld."

"Breakfast!" cried Mr. Wembley. "I could eat one of those dogs back there—raw!"

Sir Arthur, Mr. Wembley and Price were similarly minded. But Tom went on up the hill to the manse, and was rewarded for his thoughtfulness of Miss Ashby and Aunt Jane by being invited to sit down to a meal of ham and eggs and honest coffee served charmingly by a dark-haired English girl, who smiled at him across the table in the pleasantest manner in the world.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MORE LIGHT THAN SHADOW.

"So you're back in London, are you? What brings you south? The London and Northwestern, I suppose?"

Tom Thurston grinned as he jollied Mr. Googan of Scotland Yard, who, in his rusty mackintosh, had just entered Price's office at Charing Cross. Price grinned, too.

"Have your little joke," Mr. Googan retorted with dignity. "But I noticed you weren't very happy to be locked up as a German spy, yourself, and I think you might be a little more sympathetic. You turned the tables on me rather neatly, Mr. Thurston, I must say."

"I? What did I have to do with your arrest?"

"Then I wish you'd tell me how else it happened," said Mr. Googan, incredulously. "Nobody but you would have wanted to play me such a trick."

"Perhaps," said Tom, "you remember arresting a young woman at the Hotel Salisbury on the night before you arrested me."

"Yes."

"Perhaps you don't know that the young woman has a brother, and that the brother was not a hundred yards behind you on the morning in Drumkenny when you went up the hill to arrest Brompton."

Mr. Googan let his mouth hang open.

"Was this brother a dark-skinned, waiterish-looking chap?"

"He was."

"Well, blow my eyes!" Googan exclaimed. "I went up the hill that morning with my man Giles, but not to make an arrest, as you think. I went to reconnoiter. At the little church a man overtook us--the same chap you mention. He asked us if we weren't the detectives from London. He said the local sergeant of constabulary had sent him to guide us to a place where the stranger at the manse had been seen burying something in the earth, presumably a hoard of counterfeit coins."

"I asked him why the sergeant hadn't told me this the night before. He replied the sergeant had only heard of it that morning. We went with him farther up the road and crossed a pasture into a wood. At the mouth of a little glen that ran back into the hills we came to a path where we had to walk single file, because the fir boughs were quite close there and wet from the rain. I went ahead, Giles came next, the other chap last. He said we should go cautiously there, and we obeyed like bally idiots."

"The glen led upward toward the high, round-topped hill that you may have seen from the village. We didn't know what was beyond the hill, no more than anything. All of a sudden we found ourselves surrounded by a couple of dozen of naked-legged soldiers who commanded us to surrender, which we did, they being armed with bayonets. I looked around for the dark-faced chap to see if they'd got him too, but he wasn't there."

"Well, gentlemen, they led us over the big hill to a little stone cow byre which they'd turned into a jail, and they clapped us in and gave us pretzels to eat and kept us there for two mortal days, while they wired to London to find out if we were what we said we were. When they let us go at last, my man Hitt had nabbed Brompton and left me holding the sack. Are you sure you didn't know about any of this before it happened?"

"On my word of honor, I didn't," said Tom. "I knew merely that the dark-faced chap followed you up the hill and came back down alone. Tell me this; when did you have your talk about Brompton with the local sergeant?"

"The night before, at the Drumkenny police office."

"Could any one have overheard you?"

"By gravy!" Googan cried. "There was a window open directly behind the desk. I remember now, because the smell of dead

fish came in there dreadfully from the fish market next door."

"A man outside the window could have overheard what you and the sergeant said?"

"It's quite likely."

"I'll tell you something else," said Thurston. "Early the next morning the man who afterward followed you up the hill had a talk with a soldier in kilts; and before they had their talk the soldier came to the hotel door and took a good, long look at you while you sat at breakfast. More than that, the moment you disappeared up the hill, with the dark-faced man after you, the soldier jumped on a bicycle and beat it down the road the other way as fast as he could go. Putting two and two together, I should say that the dark-skinned man informed the military authorities that you were a German spy and steered you into a trap that had been prepared for you at his suggestion."

Quite humbly Mr. Googan bowed his head.

"It's a painful subject, gentlemen," said he. "Let's talk about the young woman."

"Do you mean the yellow kid?" asked Price. "What's new about her?"

"She sent for me to-day," said Googan, "and made a signed and sworn confession. It seems there's been a conspiracy of a sort to light up the sky at night for the Zeppelens so they can find London easy, and she got wind of it. There's an American in London named Krug. I've known him quite well; in fact, he has helped me in a number of spy cases. He had a knack of overhearing things—it was really quite extraordinary. It was from him that I got the tip-off about you, Mr. Thurston, and about the girl in the case. Perhaps I was a bit hasty in that matter, and if so I wish to apologize. It never does a man any harm to own up, sir, if he has been in the wrong, and I'll admit that those pencil notes of yours on that newspaper may have been less important than they seemed to me at the time."

"The apology is accepted," said Tom.

"And very generous of you, sir," said Googan. "Well, it now appears that this man Krug was the head of the sky-lighting plot, and when his young lady friend, Miss de Reuter, learned what he was up to, she threatened to inform on him. That is why he framed up a rascally trick on her and put me up to arrest her. The reason she hasn't confessed before is that she is afraid to death

of Krug; she knew she was safer in jail than out. It is a strange case, but quite clear."

"I'm sure of that," said Tom. "What was the basis of the friendship between the girl and Krug?"

"It is a remarkable story," Googan replied. "Her mother, it appears, died in Denmark last winter, and Krug and his family, who happened to be visiting her father at Copenhagen, offered to take her traveling for a time to help her forget her grief. But when they reached London a young British nobleman who had been paying attentions to the elder Miss Krug fell head over heels in love with Miss de Reuter and she with him, which broke up the friendship between the family and her, although Krug stood by her. That explains, you see, why she was living at the hotel when she might have stopped with the Krugs at the mansion they had leased in Richmond. You should have seen the tears in her eyes when she told me that part."

"Why didn't she return to her father in Denmark?" Price queried.

"I asked her that question. She answered that she was as deep in love with the young nobleman as he with her, and that Krug asked her as a personal favor to stay on in London and keep the young man away from Richmond, on account of not wanting his daughters to marry titles and come to a sad end, the way so many American heiresses do. So, for her own sake as well as Krug's, she stayed; and one day she opened a letter by mistake and found out about Krug's real business in England. At the first chance she accused him of it, with the result which you know. It's a straight story, gentlemen, as straight as any I've ever heard, and I've promised to help the young woman as a return to her for telling the truth fair and square."

"Bully for you!" said Tom, and Price expressed the same sentiment by shaking the detective's hand warmly. But when Googan had gone away to look for Krug, whose dead body was bobbing about in the North Sea among the German floating mines and the corpses of honest British fishermen, Thurston said:

"Googan will get the princess her freedom, for he's a persistent chap. But I'm still up in the air on two points. Why did the girl sob and moan in her room the night the Zeppelin fell in Regents Park? And

why did she wear cornflowers at the funeral of the German airmen in Marylebone next day?"

"Whatever happened," said Prince, finally, "we shall never know the truth of it from Mademoiselle de Reuter—and that's a cinch!"

In the vestry room of a stately old church in the heart of the City, a church built by the illustrious Sir Christopher Wren, a quiet wedding occurred one day in June, and the breath of the flowers in the ancient churchyard came in through the windows to add their sweetness to the occasion.

Those present, besides the bride and bridegroom, were a tall young fellow in army khaki, his face swathed in bandages; a pair of prim maiden aunts who wept steadily throughout the ceremony; Mr. Herbert Wembley, who gave the bride away, and Ted Price, who served as best man. Sir Arthur Purdoy was unavoidably detained; he had to answer questions in Parliament that day; but he sent as his gift to the bride an Oriental rug that would have cost at least a thousand dollars in America, though the London price was probably not one-fourth of that amount. The wedding guests admired the rug afterward in the best room of the bride's home, before the young couple set forth on their honeymoon trip.

The wedding journey consisted of nothing more than a tram-car ride down the suburban lanes of the south of London to Crystal Palace and homeward again in the evening; for the Belgian babies at Earl's Court could not spare their dark-haired nurse very long, and a new job of government work awaited Thurston on the morrow at the Canadian high commissioner's office.

Homeward bound, they left the car at Lambeth and walked out upon Westminster Bridge at sunset, the tide swirling out among the piers, and London, with its towers and spires and palaces and bridges, stretching away in its beautiful imperial crescent from Vauxhall to St. Paul's.

"It was here, you know," said Grace, "perhaps at this very parapet where we are leaning, that Wordsworth wrote, 'Earth has not anything to show more fair.' You remember the sonnet?"

"But Wordsworth had never seen my wife," said Tom; and Mrs. Thomas Thurston let him see, in the depths of her dark eyes, that her heart was happy.

L o b s t e r P o t s

By Henry C. Rowland

Author of "The Arbiters," "Pep," Etc.

Summering on the coast of Maine may not be altogether what it seems. Also, there are more ways than one to catch the wily lobster

WHEN Jim Stevens departed for France with the first contingent of Y. M. C. A. workers his friends and especially Katherine Blue were a little disappointed. They had all expected Jim immediately to secure a commission in the navy, the marines, perhaps, and be among the first to fight. He was thirty-two, sound of body, very rich, extremely unmarried and an experienced yachtsman. The fact that for some years he had been a strenuous Y. M. C. A. settlement worker and organizer did not entirely excuse him.

But when on his return in June he departed immediately for his bungalow on the coast of Maine with the evident intention of passing the summer there, even Katherine's faith was shaken. It had in fact been shaken a little too soon, and Jim perceived it and grew curtly reticent as to his motives. He departed with a brief remark about needing a rest and that they would meet a little later when she came down to spend August with her sister who had a summer cottage near his own. This irritated Katherine, who felt herself almost as good as engaged to Jim and quite privileged to present candidly her plans for him and the war.

In flagrant disregard of popular sentiment Jim installed himself comfortably in his luxurious bungalow with three new and unknown servants. When the colleges closed, there came to spend the summer with him a pale, spectacled young man with a slight curvature of the spine whom he casually introduced as "Professor Perkins." Guest and host kept very much to themselves but made frequent excursions in Jim's seagoing motor boat, sometimes being absent for two or three days. This gave rise to the rumor that he was connected with the intelligence department, which was not at all the case.

Timothy French and his thirteen-year-old

son Lucien thought at first that Jim must have loaned the bungalow to some friend or relative. He was their nearest neighbor, situated directly opposite their island on a piney promontory about three miles across the inlet. Learning that he had indeed returned to spend the summer there Timothy raised his sandy eyebrows.

"I declare, son," said he to Lucien, "I'm plum' surprised."

Lucien's cherubic face expressed no dismay at this action on the part of a friend whom he esteemed. Once to win this boy's loyalty was to keep it through thick or thin.

"Jim must have some powerful good reason, dad," said he. "There ain't a grain of slacker in his stuff. Let's hop in the launch and run over and tell him howdy."

Timothy agreed, so they went down to the jetty and put off. Father and son made a curious couple. Timothy, the astute United States attorney of a Southern city; passed invariably with strangers for an artist or musician or poet by virtue of his soulful, dreamy eyes, ascetic features, black curling hair and languid manner. This was partly mask, partly the conservation of his fire for the startling effect of forensic shock when occasion required. In repose he was like a lazy hound, which animal he somewhat resembled physically as well as mentally. In action the similarity increased.

Lucien was the apt pupil of his father's painstaking lessons in criminology. The angel-faced boy was a sort of combination of Kim and Mowgli, his two childish patterns of instinct and intelligence. He had more than once actually helped his keen-sensed parent in the unraveling of some perplexing social problems, and Timothy accepted him rather as a confrère than a disciple. There was something almost pathetic in their undemonstrative devotion to each other.

Jim Stevens sighted the launch's approach and went down to receive his callers at the landing. He was a young man of small but well-rounded frame, plump in fact except for his face which was lean, alert and of kindly expression. He looked precisely what he was; an indefatigable social worker eager to do his conscientious best and ready to back his efforts with his large, independent income. But certain nervous lines suggested a possible impatience if his efficient plans were to meet with criticism. One did not need to be told that he was rich and used to having his own way.

"Hello, Judge—hello, Lucien," he called cheerily, and had them out and shaking hands and the launch made fast and a sort of questionnaire of their general well-being off the reel before his visitors had time to stretch their legs. He skipped between them, hooked arms in theirs and escorted them up the stone steps to the bungalow like a busy tug with a lumber schooner on the port and a little yacht on the starboard side, hustling to get somewhere before the tide turned.

Reaching the veranda he introduced Professor Jones, then touched a bell which was answered by a flaccid-looking manservant with restless hands.

"Set four places for lunch," he said, and quickly informed his guests that they were to remain whether they felt like it or not. "Got a lot of things to tell you about our work over there," said he, "and I may not get another chance. Got such an awful lot to get through between now and autumn and——"

He shot them a keen, half-defensive look as if expecting to be asked what he had to get through, but he was not. Timothy's dreamy eyes were resting on the door whence the butler had vanished as though his gaze having been passively led there was too inert to shift itself, while Lucien after a swift glance about the veranda, which was partly glassed-in, was looking at a blond young man with grimy hands and a chauffeur's cap who was going down the steps to the landing with a stillson wrench and a coil of copper tubing.

No, the slumbrous-eyed Southern hound and his silky, gifted pup had not the slightest desire to be told what work their host had to get through before the season's close. They knew. Timothy, in fact, had already

put the matter from his mind and was reflecting on the prison pallor, restless hands, lusterless eyes and silent, shuffling gait of the butler, and from this he turned slowly to a contemplation of the flaxen hair and thick shoulders of the chauffeur, disappearing down the steps. Jim—Stevens liked to be called by his nickname on short acquaintance by those whom he approved—followed his gaze, then looked at him with a smile.

"Spotted my two jailbirds already, haven't you old sleuth?" said he, lowering his voice. "Well, why not? I got 'em from the ex-convicts aid society. That Swede boy did his time for a well-proven charge of bar-ratry. Helped lose an ore ship he was mate of. That was three years before the war. The butler was chief steward of a royal mail ship and nabbed smuggling opium into Frisco. You know my ideas about giving a man a chance to make good—and besides this is no time to take men from useful occupations. Nobody wants these poor devils. They'd go on the bum or turn to crime again with wages at five dollars per day's unskilled labor."

Timothy draped one long leg over the other and rubbed his shaven chin. "Uhn-h'n," he assented. "There's right sma't of an idea for a solution of the male domestic servant problem. We might requisition a heap of timeservers and go their bonds, thereby savin' the gov'ment their keep. Car thieves and smugglers and *fo'gers*—and the like." His luminous eyes rested quizzically on Jim, who flushed a little not quite knowing whether this was irony or not. He did not pursue the topic but began to talk about the war and the great work of the Y. M. C. A. But although an interesting narrator his Southern guests were conscious that he was not absolutely at his ease. There was an accent not quite of challenge but as though he were inviting some query as to why he had returned from a field where workers were so badly needed, to summer in peace and quiet on the coast of Maine. This not being put he finally approached it of his own accord.

"Yes," said he, "we've got a splendid start, and those of us who have had the most to do with its organization now feel that what we most need is an army of men not qualified for fighters yet able to do the necessary things. The last thing we want is to steal men from the ranks."

"I reckon there ain't much danger of thet

when this new draft bill goes through," said Timothy dryly.

"No, of course not," Jim answered, and seemed embarrassed for a moment. Lucien, glancing at his father whose signals he had learned to read like a book, caught the heavy droop of the eyelid which he knew to be a masked wink. His own face was guileless as a seraph's, which showed this child's extraordinary powers of self-control. He was glad when presently they said good-by and got far enough away to have his laugh out in safety.

"Jim would have busted if we'd stayed much longer, dad," said he. "So would I."

"Uhn-h'n," answered Timothy, absently. "I wonder naow if maybe I oughtn't to tell him to look aout for that daid fish of a butler."

"Forger, ain't he, dad?"

"Uhn-h'n. Might have smuggled opium, too, as a side graft. I do natchully hate buttin' into crim'nal stuff on my vacation. Say, son, it sho' needs a simon-pure honest guy like Jim to rouse suspicion in the human mudhead."

"And to see through as easy as a Georgette blouse," said Lucien.

"Listen to me, Luce," said Timothy, pursuing his line of thought and ignoring Lucien's, "inside a fortni't some o' these porch-settin' gasbags will be botherin' the bureau of public information about a young man flush with money makin' mysterious runs offshore with a professor and a German-lookin' mechanic in a speed launch. Might make Jim a sight o' nuisance."

"Then why don't he say right out what he's aimin' at, dad?"

"H'm—partly because his friends and likely that Katherine girl of his have got him riled, and partly because he's afraid he might slip up on gettin' his commission, and a man like Jim can't bear a failure. No, he cal'lates to let 'em all go the limit knockin' him fo' a slacker while he's quietly crammin' up on navigation and gunnery and memorizin' pilot charts and all the other requirements, then go up for his naval exam and tear the pants off it. He's playin' dark horse, and he figures to collar his stripes and then give 'em the Cheshire cat. That's all right, but his housing those two calaboose veterans sorta worries me. Naow, I wonder——"

He paused for so long a time that Lucien asked a little diffidently: "If he got *them*,

dad—or they got him for some game of their own?"

"Uhn-h'n. You said it, son. We don't want to see Jim get in wrong. He did his trick in Y. M. C. A. work because it was immediately up to him and he wasn't then qualified to go after a commission. But he wanted the navy from the start, and naow he's after it tooth and nail, and he's got to go some to beat the draft. That tutor looks like a right capable higher-mathematic wiz."

"When I looked at the table and saw that book of logarithms and the chart and parallel rulers, and then thought of them running out every day to practice triangulatin' with that Boche-lookin' barrator I could hardly keep from laughin', dad. Could a fella stage spy stuff any better if he tried? What in the nation does Jim think, anyhow?"

"It's his spotless innocence and high endeavor, son," Timothy answered, a little impatiently. "A good many such snowy birds have made unnecessary work for the intelligence department. They can't jam the odor of suspicion and themselves into the same thought. Well, let's sit tight and see what happens, just for fun. They can't do more than teach him a little something besides plain sailing." He rubbed his chin. "But I wish he hadn't complicated his case with those two felons——"

Coached by his efficient and zealous tutor, Jim pursued his intensive nautical cramming in peace for about three weeks, during which time he made quite extraordinary progress. As an experienced yachtsman he was already a good boat handler and well grounded in seamanship, which had always appealed to him. Having gone to Yale from a military school, he had also received his due amount of infantry training in so far as it went.

It was practical navigation in dangerous waters that Jim wanted more than anything else, and this he was rapidly acquiring so that he was soon to take accurate sights on the swaying deck and work out his position closely from a solar or stellar observation, verifying it with azimuth bearings on known landmarks. He showed rather more sense about these maneuvers than the shrewd Timothy had given him credit for, so that his lessons were proceeding most satisfactorily, and he was beginning to feel confidence in himself for this sort of work when interruption came from the quarter which he had rather dreaded, yet anticipated with a certain amount of eagerness. This was the

arrival of Katherine Blue to spend three weeks with her sister who had a pretty summer place about half a mile from his own bungalow with its ten containing acres of rocks and pines.

Jim had first met Katherine there about four years previously and had pursued a sort of sporadic courtship of her ever since. This had been rather a perennial affair, burgeoning every summer in a season too short to bring it to maturity, like a semi-tropical tree planted in a harsh climate. They had not seen a great deal of each other in the winters, she living in Washington and he in New York. There had been some rather torrid passages between them, however, and Jim had about made up his mind that the way of happiness lay in his taking her to wife at some indefinite time. He considered her the most complete girl he had ever met, and she was indeed very lovely and desirable.

But one thing was quite certain in his mind, and that was his fixed determination not to marry until after the war. He did not indeed purpose even to become engaged until after the war. During his Y. M. C. A. service in France he had seen much of the unwisdom of these impulsive weddings and betrothals on the eve of separation. He knew Katherine to be a warm-natured girl, and ripe for matrimony as a peach which yields itself to the hand on the least pressure of its ruddy cheek, and feeling that she favored him he quite realized the danger of not being on guard.

Nevertheless, it gave him a decidedly pleasant thrill to learn that she had arrived and that there might be certain moonlight digressions from midnight oil and trigonometry. Jim had strongly resented her assumption that he had wearied of war work establishing Y. M. C. A. huts at the front, and had come home to slack down and enjoy his ease a little. But he felt quite able to forgive her that after a month of hard study and the almost exclusive society of his tutor; rather more ready in fact than was Katherine to condone his hauling off to the Maine coast to loaf about in his boat and make pretense of propaganda work when so many splendid ones not half so free to do so were cheerfully offering themselves to the sublime sacrifice.

Wherefore, through her temperament and his folly in not frankly telling of his ambition, they had rather a hot and cold monkey-

and-parrot time of it for a couple of weeks during which Katherine's disposition and Jim's nautical progress suffered painful setbacks, this resulting finally in a burst of indignation on her part and the request that he return her letters and consider all which might have passed between them as null and void. Jim was for heatedly protesting this ukase, but on second thought accepted it with bitter dignity.

This had happened on a bit of neutral ground, a strip of beach and boulders between their two places of abode and as they left it Jim thought he saw a dark figure slip from behind a big adjacent rock into the shadow of the pines. He could not be sure, however, nor could he imagine why anybody should have been spying on them, so he put the matter from his mind, and after escorting her home returned to the bungalow in a state of righteous and injured gloom. He would return her packet of letters with no further effort to see her, and a little later when she heard of his commission followed by speedy promotion to the command of a submarine chaser or destroyer or mine sweeper, she would realize her great mistake in him.

The next morning he sat down at his desk and unlocked the drawer to get the letters and send them forthwith. At sight of them a sudden tenderness possessed him. After all, no doubt she was right, thinking as she did. Still, she should have had more faith in him. Anyhow, there was one particular letter which he felt that he would like to read again. He had in fact reread it several times, the last quite recently. But now he searched for it in vain. That charming epistle was gone, and yet he distinctly remembered having replaced it with the others and slipping the narrow rubber band around the lot. More than that—for Jim was something of a precisian—he remembered that the band was old and stretched beyond its strength and had snapped as he replaced it, and when not finding another ready, he had passed it around and tied it in a square knot.

It struck him suddenly that the band he had just removed had stretched easily and with no threat of snapping. On the contrary it looked new, a pale-gray in color and very elastic. He examined the knot and his lips tightened as he discovered it to be not a square one but a granny. Jim never tied a granny. He had not tied a granny since

early boyhood when the captain of his father's schooner yacht had shown him the difference.

There was no longer any doubt. Somebody had picked the lock of the drawer and abstracted this particular letter. But why? Of what possible interest or value could that letter be to any third person? It was not a compromising letter. None of them were. Such a charming letter with its little hint of tender feeling might have been written by any well-bred girl to any young man for whom she had a little warmth of sentiment. So why steal it?

Jim was pondering the mystery, more puzzled than angry, when he heard a quick step on the veranda outside, then Lucien's voice asking for him. He remembered that he had asked the boy, of whom he was very fond, to run around to Rockland with him on the boat, Timothy being engrossed in some legal papers just received.

"Come on up, Luce," he called, and a moment later Lucien entered. Jim got up and greeted him, then closed the door. "Look here, Lucien," said he, "your dad swears that some day you are going to make Sherlock Holmes look like the village idiot, so now see what you can get out of this. Last night Katherine blew me up for being a slacker and asked me to send her letters back. Well, maybe I am and maybe I am't, but anyhow she bawled me out. Now, looking over her perfectly harmless correspondence, all or any of which might be read as models of discretion in any convent school, I find that one has been swiped. Very recently swiped, as I read it myself and put it with the others about ten days ago. More than that, there was a different band around the batch. What do you think?"

"Coarse work," said Lucien.

Jim smiled. "Granted," said he, "but that's not the point. Why any work at all? What's the good of the letter but to Katherine or me—and that's purely negative?"

Lucien opened the door, glanced out, then shut it softly.

"For a model," he answered. "You make me tired, Jim. Do you hope to get a commission in the navy with an ivory nut like that?"

Jim stared, then burst into a cackle: "Oh, so you've guessed, have you? Well, I reckon dad is right about his olive branch. Go on, my seraphic Machiavelli. Why a model, even if it is a pretty and winsome fist?"

"To copy, admiral," retorted Lucien. "To forge, crib, imitate or fake. To write you a billet-doux from your ex-inamorata and lure you off to a midnight reconciliation while your repentant sinners loot the shack and crack the crib and beat it in the boat. Are you trying for a billet on the naval intelligence, Jim, or the international naval strategy board?"

"I was," said Jim, "but I've changed my mind. Assistant barnacle scraper of the fourth class, or chain tailer's mate is about my fair rating. Oh, the vipers!"

"Any school child would pipe your butler for a writing master by his hands," said Lucien, "and if you clapped your hands behind that big manila-headed Swede he'd holler 'Kamerad.' I'll bet a prize hawg to a cootie that before we got into the war he was a motor-truck driver in the crown prince's furniture-moving corps."

"Sapristi, I believe you're right, seraph. How about my third bandit, the cook. He's a Greek named Sardanappoulous, or something of the sort."

"Is he a stone breaker, too?"

"Not to my knowledge. Just plain Greek."

"That's worse. He looks like a Gallipoli ghoul. Probably a triangle team."

"Never mind the triangle. I've been wearing it on my arm and the place is sore. What shall we do about these reformed apaches?"

Lucien reflected for a moment, when his oval face with its pure and perfect features, clear, fine skin and spiritual eyes would have led a Frenchwoman to exclaim: "*Ah, le petit Jésus!*"

"Better let on to fall for it like the goop they take you for, Jim, then put a signal over to dad and me. Dad sho'ly hates odd jobs when he's on his vacation, but it can't be he'ped. A crim'nologist is sorta like a doctor, always on the job. Dad's a roarin' lion when he takes after a crook, if he does look most times like he had to lean against the fence to bark."

"How will the trouble start, you little Alabama Kim?"

"The professor goes to bed early, don't he?" Lucien asked.

"Yes—and I follow in about six short hours."

"Well, that flat-foot steward of yours will probably bring you a note in Katherine's han'writin' sayin' she's sorry for the scrap

and will you meet her down on aidge of the rocks and kiss and make up. The buzzard mus' know you had a fallin'-out and that's why he wanted a specimen of her han'-writin'."

Jim nodded. "I thought I saw somebody sneaking off between the rocks when we left the beach," said he.

"That was your faithful felon Higgs. If it had been Jansen you would have seen his white top, and if it had been the Greek you wouldn't have seen him at all. There would only be a snake wabble in the sand. You took Katherine home and Higgs racked back here and got his specimen."

"Then you think the motive is robbery?" Jim asked. "There isn't much to steal."

Lucien looked for a moment like a meditative angel. He seemed a little loath to give his final decision.

"I don' see what else it could be, Jim," said he. "This yeah's a triflin' bunch of petty larceners and the times are hard. For one thing they know that their job with you is a'most over and like as not they count on y'-all bein' a Christian young man who will take his loss and let 'em go. Higgs prob'ly figgers like this: 'E's a sensitive bloke and 'as 'is pride, so 'avin' 'ired us from the ex-convicts aid 'e won't want 'is friend to 'ave the larf on 'im.'"

Jim grew rather red. "Higgs is darn near right," said he. "As a matter of fact that's just about what I would do. I signed them on with my eyes open and I'd stand the shot. There is always a bit of cash in my desk, and then I've got a few jeweled scarfpins and some table silver and trinkets and things——"

"And some valuable nautical instruments," Lucien added. "The chronometer and binoculars and sextants and compasses, all high-priced junk jes' this moment. They must realize that you could ketch 'em up befo' they got far, but you see they count on you lettin' 'em go."

Jim nodded. "Higgs knows of course that I'm cramming hard for a commission and trying to beat the draft to it. He's banking partly on my being an easy mark and partly on my having no time to bother with a criminal suit. Then, as you say, he reckons on my not caring to advertise myself as a darn fool. Well, he's right. I don't want to shove them in again, but I would like to give them a rattling good scare. How can we manage it, Luce?"

"I reckon I'd better ask dad. The chances are they'll make sure you've gone to keep the date before startin' in to crack your little safe. Maybe I'd best lope back and tell him 'bout it now." He rose and his violet eyes flitted about the room with a sort of birdlike curiosity. A door of the big clothes closet was open and something hanging from a hook caught his attention. "What's that rubber thing?" he asked.

"That is a funk bag, old sleuth. A rubber live-saving suit guaranteed to be warm and water-tight with grub lockers and brandy flask and a whistle to show them that you are not a floating mine when they come to pick you up. We all had them going over in case of getting torped. I bought mine so that anybody else could have my place in the boat." He stepped to the closet, took the suit from its sack and spread it out. "A nice little hood to keep your permanent Marcel wave intact. Leaded soles to hold you down to your load water line. I tried it here the other day and it was a lot of fun but I have no more time for toys, and it is not a becoming costume for a prospective Farragut, so I will make you a present of it. Keep it on that badly installed speed thing of yours which is sure to get on fire some day. You and the judge might both squeeze into it at a pinch."

Lucien's eyes glistened. He was after all just a fourteen-year-old boy though small for his age and with the face which goes with ten. He was delighted with the present and desired to try it immediately in spite of Jim's warning that he had better provide himself with an electric torch to find his way around inside it. But reflecting that priority should be given the donor's personal affairs, Lucien put the suit back into its sack, and telling Jim that he would watch for his return and run over immediately, went down to his launch and put off.

The boy was loath to disturb his father who was at work on the data of a criminal case which was the first on the autumn calendar. But Timothy heard him arrive and called out to know why he had returned.

Lucien hurried up the steep stone steps, his precious gift over his shoulder. Timothy had seen the device and asked: "Jim give you that, son?"

"Yes, sir," Lucien answered. "She's some suit, dad. You could use it for duck shootin' or to go ashore if your dinghy struck adrift, or campin' out and sleepin' in the rain——"

He suddenly bethought him of the important reason for his return. "Say, dad, Jim's buccaneers are fixin' to put one over on him and trickle away." And Lucien forthwith described the situation as he saw it, briefly and with the police-court slang so dear to his boyish heart.

Timothy hung himself in bights over his morris chair and listened, at first with an expression of sleepy, indulgent interest as one might turn from tedious application and give ear to the insistent prattle of a child, but as Lucien proceeded his attention seemed to waver and his soulful eyes which were brown and soft and slightly prominent turned frequently to the funk bag on the floor. Lucien finished and looked at him with the eager expectancy of the pup watching for some sign of action in the older dog. Timothy surveyed him with a sad and pensive air. His expression suggested philosophic disappointment.

"That all?" he asked.

Lucien squirmed uneasily. "Yes, sir, so far," he faltered.

"'Fraid this yeah toy sorta lured you off the trail, son; like a haoun' dawg jumpin' a fox when he's runnin' a deer."

"You reckon' there's more to it, dad?"

"Uhn-h'n. A whole heap. Trewth is our theories only touch in spots, Luce. Naow stop and think. Let's go back to the start and assume that Higgs overheard the lovers' quarrel and stole the letter. He's the brains of the scheme, ain't he?"

"Yes, sir. Jansen is thick as pea soup."

"And conspicuous, especially right naow. Higgs, on the contr'y, is a right commonplace-lookin' cuss with nothin' much to distinguish himself. Would he be apt to hitch up with Jansen?"

"He'd need Jansen to run the boat or the car."

"Maybe—if he wanted the boat or the car. But if his motive is robbery, he don't need the boat or car. Jim often goes off in the boat overnight and Higgs would have all the time he needed to make his get-away."

"Of co'se, dad," murmured Lucien, "but then he wouldn't need to fo'ge a note from Katherine, either."

"Ce'tainly not. But he must be aimin' to, or he wouldn't have stolen a specimen of her handwritin'. But he has, and that shows that he wants to pull this thing off when Jim is home. Why? Because when

Jim is there Jansen is there, and he needs Jansen. Why? He sho'ly ain't fool enough to try to steal the boat or the car. Then what is it he aims to steal that needs Jansen's help?"

The boy gave his father a sick look. "Jim, of course," he croaked, like a dejected little bitter. "I don't know where I been totin' my brains, dad."

"Nor I no more, son," drawled Timothy. "I declare, I'm plum' surprised. That bathe-and-keep-dry suit must have tu'ned your haid."

"Reckon so, dad. And here I've been tormentin' Jim about his ossified gray matter. Why, it's plain as plain. I never gave that old squid of a Higgs the credit for having the nerve. Of course he knows that Jim's in a desperate hurry, and every day worth a fortune if he hopes to beat the draft, now they've speeded it up. Higgs counts on his coming across first and trying to get him afterward—if he *does* try, which is doubtful. Jim's got a skin like a shedder crab when it comes to gettin' grilled."

"Uhn-h'n." Timothy leaned back, brought the tips of his long, slim fingers together and stared absently at a horse-mackerel harpoon which decorated the wall of the camp. "That boy ain't in a position for much roastin' just naow. For him to get kidnaped like a toddlin' baby might be as much as his chance of a commission was worth. What if they kept him so's he couldn't register? He might have a hard time putting himself right."

Lucien nodded. "They shorely could make him look plum' foolish, if not worse," he admitted. "S'ppose they claimed he was party to it? Even his friends have been hinting at his havin' a gun-shy streak. And what chance would he have with that big Scandabochian? He could shove Jim into his hip pocket and set on him. I don't like it, dad."

"Nor I, son. There are lots of lonesome places along this coast where they could stow a man away for a spell; deserted camps on wooded promontories and outlyin' islands with abandoned fishin' or lobsterin' camps." He unfolded his lank frame and rose. "I reckon I'll go over and talk to Jim a mite. In most cases I'd admire to nab those crimps in the act, but that ain't such a sight of importance here. The main thing is to get shut of them before they have a chance to start anything."

He strode to the door, then gave a snort of impatience. Picking up his glasses from the table he focused on some distant object. "There he goes naow. Full clip to the east-ward. Reckon we could overhaul him, son?"

Lucien shook his head. "Fraid not, dad, with that screw of ours. One of the blades is badly bent from that wipe we gave it. I was going to take her over to the yard to get it hammered out this afternoon. Besides, we're sho't of gas and he's got too big a start. But you don't reckon there's any immediate danger, do you?"

Timothy rubbed his chin and looked at his small son under corrugated brows. "Can't always tell which way such brutes may jump, son. Naow if that Higgs got the notion Jim missed the letter and was tellin' you about it he might spring his dead-fall right off. He only needed to sneak up and hear a word or two. Let's wait a shake and then spin over and see if he's there."

This they accordingly did, making with their damaged propeller about half of the swift launch's possible speed. Timothy was taciturn and laconic, but Lucien in a state of cold and nervous apprehension which increased to a dismal despair as they drew near enough to see that the windows of the bungalow were closed with the shades drawn snugly down. The place wore in fact an air of cold desertion. Many of the summer cottages had been shut up for the winter, especially where there were children in the family as the schools were about to begin—and also the 18-45 year draft! In the case of shore houses the floats and many of the boats were still in the water waiting for the local caretakers to find time to haul them out.

They made the launch fast and rapidly mounted the winding stone steps. And then as they reached the veranda Timothy stared at the front door and puckered his smooth-shaven lips with a long, low whistle. For a piece of typewriter paper was stuck against the glass inside and on this was written in a large, bold hand which much resembled, but was not that of Jim:

Gone for a short cruise. May return in ten days' time.

"Don't fret so, son," drawled Timothy. "'Twas my fault jes' as much as yours. More, I reckon, for not startin' right over the minute I guessed what was afoot."

Poor Lucien's eyes were red-rimmed and

his face haggard from worry and loss of sleep. The boy's bitter self-reproach for his unusual bungling in this of all cases was making him positively sick. He could not touch his breakfast, but Timothy was liberally disposing of the fat salt mackerel and delicious hot bread of their able, sable cook.

"Seems like we ought to be doin' something, dad," he protested for the tenth or twentieth time.

"We're pretty apt to, soon as we go over for the mail," said Timothy. "No use messin' things up. I'm naturally the man that Jim would turn to, 'specially as he knows I'm well acquainted at the bank in Po'tland. Right pleasant day for a spin over the road. Wonder what they'll have the gall to ask for Tim?"

"What I'm wondering is where and how they'll want the money handed over," Lucien answered. "Risky job for them, dad."

"*They* don't think so. But somehow I kinda look at it like you do, son."

Lucien shot him a quick glance. "If they want it left out on some offshore reef, they'll need a faster boat than Jim's to get away with it," said he. "We might get one of the patrol-fleet swifties with her three-inch gun."

"And give Jim dead away?" drawled Timothy, raising his bushy eyebrows. "He wouldn't thank us, Luce. No, I reckon we can pull it off without any he'p from the navy. Uhn-h'n." He rubbed his chin and smiled.

"Dog-gone it, dad!" Lucien burst out, "I know it's against the rules. It ain't etiquette and all that, but I'll begin to run around in circles if I don't know what's up your sleeve. My brain's been doing it all night. How the nation will they want this money paid over? Where will they want it put?"

Timothy appeared to hesitate. "Waal, son," he drawled, "of co'se I can't say for certain where *they* may want it put, but I'm plum' sure where *I'd* want it put if I was in their shoes. That would be some nice safe place about ten miles of a line of unbroken coast so's to give me plenty of leeway. And I'd give directions to have it put there about half an hour befo' dark and the depositor to mosey off in the opposite direction, so's I could see him out of sight before venturin' to c'llect."

Lucien wrinkled his infantile nose. "But where would you find such a place? And

with the big southeast swell that's been runnin' the last three days——"

"Wouldn't bother my place a mite, son. There's oodles of 'em all the way from Montauk to Sable Island inshore and offshore wherever the bottom's rocky."

"Land o' love! I declare, dad, I'm jes' like runnin' into the Bay o' Fundy; gettin' thicker and thicker every minute. Of co'se. A lobster pot——"

"There, you guessed right the very first time, Luce," said Timothy dryly. "That would be my scheme. A lobster pot on a sunken ledge about ten miles aout. A lobster pot with a nice bright red buoy, the third o' the line, maybe, and not too near the aide of the sunken reef. A nice fat roll of three figgers each in a preserve jar crammed in the way the lobster goes, and there you are. Safe, simple and easy; no resk, bother nor expense—except for Jim, and all he wants is what the whole world wants mo' than anything else jes' now: Liberty."

Lucien's face fell a little, then he glanced out of the window. "Then there's no chance—here comes the launch, dad."

A few minutes later they were speeding in after the mail, but to Lucien's distress no letter came until that of the evening, and this with a Portland postmark. There could be no doubt whatever but that it was Jim's own writing and composition, and as Timothy flicked it open there fell out a check to his order for ten thousand dollars.

"Uhn-h'n," he murmured, "about what I expected. Round and reasonable sum and no strain on Jim's cash balance. Let's see how he feels." It read:

DEAR JUDGE; No doubt after what Luce has told you, this comes as no surprise. My grateful timeservers acted on the opportunity I so kindly offered to make men of themselves. The cook was not mixed up in it. Higgs had maneuvered a blackmail on him for what he had been knocking down on household bills and made him beat it while the beating was good.

Higgs overheard enough of Luce's and my talk to know that he must get busy darn quick, and did. Jansen followed me down into the cabin when I went aboard the boat and put me to sleep without rocking. Then Higgs came aboard and now we are "somewhere in America," I don't know myself just where.

Needless to say, I am in a hurry to get back and prefer to pay the fare than be indefinitely delayed. Also, I prefer not to have the story get out or risk being late for my date with the navy examining and registration board. So please follow directions implicitly with no effort to collar these birds.

This is what I must ask you to do. Cash the check as quickly as possible for nineteen five hundreds and five hundred in three one hundreds and the rest tens and twenties. Place the roll in a preserve jar and, getting in your boat alone or with Luce, go to the Moser Ledge, which, as you know, is about five miles southwest of Pemaquid Point, and nearly halfway between it and Monhegan Island. Half or three-quarters of a mile due south of the nun buoy on Moser Ledge you will find a line of lobster pots, or at least their buoys which are black with white ends, as Holstein cows. But one has a lobster pot at the other end, and that is the fourth from the ledge. The others are tied to rocks.

Please go there the first clear evening at six-thirty p. m.; to-morrow if possible, weather permitting and visibility good, put the money in the lobster pot and proceed straight home. Any attempt to catch these birds might result in delay and I would rather pay the money. They will play the game and let me go as soon as they get the dough, knowing that unless I am released in the next few days I don't much care how long they keep me.

Of course, I feel no end of a fool, and don't want the story to get out, as it would make a silly goat of me and might hurt me in other ways. If there should be any wind and sea, wait until the weather moderates as the place is nasty with a sea running. Take my car to run into Portland after the money. The garage is not locked. In case of fog or thick weather please wait as you will be watched from some point.

Thanking you in advance and with many apologies for bothering you about the silly business, your foolish friend,
JIM.

"Golly, but he must be sore, dad," said Lucien.

"Likely to be——" Timothy glanced at the barometer. "Reckon we can manage it to-morrow evenin', son."

"Dad!" Lucien's face was pale and his eyes like sapphires.

"Waal, Luce?"

"We don't need to go to Portland."

"Jes' what I was thinkin', son."

"This stuff is no more of a roast on Jim than it is on me——"

"On us," Timothy corrected. "I went to sleep at the switch."

"We owe it to ourselves to nail those birds. Lucien's eyes strayed to the funk bag in the corner. Timothy drew down the corners of his mouth and laughed.

"Uhn-h'n. I figure to. You're improvin', son."

Lucien leaned forward with an eager face. "Dad, let me pull it off. I messed it up. Please let me, dad."

Timothy reached out a long arm and let his hand fall caressingly on the boy's curly,

chestnut hair. His soulful eyes were brimming with paternal love.

"Shucks, honey, you're not big enough. You would rattle aroun' in that thing like a pea in a pod. This is more fun than I've had since we rescued May. That May gal and Jim sho'ly need a nu'se."

He rose with surprising quickness, and deaf to Lucien's protests took out the life-saving suit and spread it on the floor. With deep chuckles rumbling in his chest he carefully examined the hood.

"Jes' needs a black mask and a little rockweed," he murmured. "Lordy, son, but that will sho'ly be one scandalized squarehead!" He straightened up and looked through the open door toward the float. "Let's hop in the boat and run over to taown and get us some black and white enamel quick-dryin' paint."

"Dad——"

"Yes, sonny."

"Those are powe'ful strong glasses of Jim's. This westerly weather is right clear, and if they're watchin' from Pemaquid Point or Monhegan they might smell a rat. You got to keep down on the flooring and I'm such a little tad. Seems like there ought to be two of us always in sight and one of us right tall."

Timothy rubbed his chin and stared thoughtfully at his son. "Uhn-h'n," said he. "Maybe you're right. The visibility is mighty high. But Jim is set on keepin' the business secret and you know what these fellas 'round here are like."

"Katherine Blue is right tall," said Lucien. "Got a heap of sense, too, and she means to marry Jim some day."

"H'm. Jim sho'ly needs a wife to mind him. You think she's game?"

"Sho' to be. When she learns what Jim's been up to she'll be sorry the way she flew off the handle."

Timothy indulged in one of those instantaneous reflections which occurred when his bright mind was sparking rapidly under its dull gray hood. He liked and admired Katherine Blue and considered that she would make a most desirable wife for Jim whether in peace or war.

"All right, Luce," said he. "We'll pass by there and you can invite her for an evening spin to haul some lobster pots. Don't tell her anything about Jim or what we aim to do. Jes' say we're goin' lobsterin' offshore

and if she'll come and he'p we'll give her the biggest lobster that we catch."

Experimenting with the life-saving suit proved as Timothy had feared, that it floated him entirely too high for his masked and hooded head to pass possibly for a lobster buoy, even with its Holstein camouflage and liberally fouled with seaweed. So his fertile brain suggested a safe and practicable way to sink his shoulders awash. He bought a length of lead water pipe, and this caught about his hips gave him the proper level while if so desired he could slip it by a slight tug with both hands.

In the water thus equipped with a fringe of rockweed tied about his neck and streaming off with the tide Lucien swore that the decoy was perfect. By tilting his head to the side he could get the proper angle for a lobster-pot buoy in the current over a ledge. He purposed to moor himself with a large flat stone and a stout cod line, naturally removing the actual buoy which his well-furnished head was to impersonate. Above the leaden girdle he would wear a belt in a holster of which on either side was a .38 revolver protected from the wet by a thin sheet of dentists' rubber which could readily be ripped away. A moment's immersion could do no harm.

Having tested everything to his satisfaction, Lucien assisting with a tense and worried face, Timothy stowed the whole in the little cabin and about the middle of the afternoon they shoved off and headed across the inlet to pick up Miss Katherine Blue, which young lady, in a very low state of mind over Jim and herself, had accepted with alacrity an invitation for a spin offshore with the only male individuals of the entire summer colony for whom she possessed a liking and esteem. Both Timothy and Lucien possessed a curious fascination for most people, especially women and children, who invariably offered them immediate friendship. By strange men they were usually accorded a sort of puzzled deference. Despite his slipshod, Southern speech and quaint, flowing style of dress Timothy was immediately assayed as the real thing; an eccentric, but distinguished personality while Lucien's seraphic beauty and hard, worldly knowledge with apt slang often invented for its aplomb excited a desire to know more of the odd pair. Both had the faculty of mixing without being mixed with.

Katherine, a temperamental and eager-

natured girl, was no exception to the rule. She had known them for a number of years, but never well, and desired to increase her acquaintanceship. She thought Timothy a dear and Lucien a darling, but was a bit awed by Jim's stories of their feats in the suppression of crime. It seemed incredible that throughout the Gulf States the mere mention of Timothy French's name was enough to make the malefactor shiver in his shoes. Though actually but forty, he might have passed for any age from twenty-five to sixty-five, and one would have placed him under a flowering tree reciting an ode to the curve of his lady's lip rather than tense and magnetic in a criminal court delivering a ferocious invective which would send some bloodstained local bogie to the gibbet.

Timothy greeted and assisted her aboard with old-fashioned Southern courtliness, then rather to her surprise as the swift launch proceeded to rip a long white scratch in the polished surface of the sea, reached in the locker cabin and extricating a newfangled life-saving suit from its sack began to put it on.

"Do you always do that when you go to sea in this boat, Judge French?" she asked, thinking that if this were a token of his confidence in the craft and the dangers of the deep to be anticipated aboard it he might have taken similar precautions in behalf of a lady guest.

"Only when we go lobsterin', Miss Katherine," said Timothy suavely. "Haulin' in the catch I might fall ove'board and I can't swim a blessed stroke."

"It must be very hot," she observed.

"Yeah, these things are certainly right stuffy," he admitted, "so with yore kind permission I reckon I'll lie daown here in the shade."

He stretched his inflated figure at her feet, his head pillowed on a heap of wet seaweed and it was then that Katherine noted the peculiar marking of the hood.

"Is the headpiece painted that way to attract attention?" she asked.

"Not exactly, Miss Katherine," Timothy answered. "That's jes' the latest camouflage. If Fritz was to sight it he'd take you fo' a lobster buoy struck adrift."

"How very ingenious," murmured the girl. "But that might cut both ways. What if he was fond of lobster?"

"Ah, my dear lady, but they can't cook on U-boats. Luce, give Miss Katherine an

oilskin ove'coat and a sou'wester. The spray is goin' to fly when we raoun' the p'int."

"Oh, thanks, but I have my raincoat," said the girl.

"No, I must insist," said Timothy with such finality that her gray eyes opened a little wider. He gave her his benevolent smile, and she wondered why his slumbrous orbs twinkled that way at the corners. "Lobsterin' is dreadful messy, Miss Katherine; mud and slime and putrid bait—and you know we caount on you to he'p."

She made no more demur but slipped on the garments Lucien offered for her, when being a tall and slenderly rounded girl of twenty-four she would have passed readily at five-mile range through a strong glass for Timothy.

"I see that Jim Stevens' boat is gone," said she, looking back toward the bungalow. Her positive, pretty face burned with a sudden flush. "Off for another little cruise, I suppose." She knit her straight brows and stared down at the recumbent Timothy. "You are an authority on human motive, judge. I wish you would tell me how it is that Jim can come here and fool around all summer at such a crisis in the world's history, and America's."

"Why don't you try to study it out fo' yourse'f, Miss Kath'rine?" was the unexpected answer.

"What? But I have. I can't——"

"Maybe you started with a preformed theory and tried to make things fit to it," Timothy suggested.

"I don't believe I understand," said the girl, a little stiffly.

"Of co'se you don't. You haven't tried to understand." A certain austerity infused the drawling voice. "You preferred to take it fo' granted that Jim was a slacker, and then set to work to find out *why* he was a slacker. Yore procedure was European, Miss Kath'rine, in assumin' that the accused was guilty and requirin' him to prove his innocence. We don't do it that way in America."

"But how could I assume anything else under the circumstances?" she demanded hotly.

"Just as we do in a co't of law when tryin' a criminal case. Examine the previous record of the accused. Is there anything in your knowledge of Jim's record that would warrant your assumption that he is unpatriotic or a coward, or cares mo' for his

personal comfort than fo' his honor and the Cause of Humanity?"

There was nothing somnolent about Timothy now, either in his eyes, voice or attitude. Neither was he severe. He was merely examining.

"Why—no," Katherine faltered. "That's what makes his behavior so incomprehensible."

"Then why do you try to comprehend something that you admit there is no reason to assume exists? You pronounce him guilty because you find him too proud or too indifferent to prove his innocence, and in the same breath you admit that you know of nothing in his character or past life to justify a conviction."

Katherine's eyes flashed. "Isn't his being here dawdling about on his boat proof enough that he's a slacker?" she demanded.

"Of *co'se* it isn't. I'm heah, and for all you know dawdlin' about on *my* boat but that doesn't prove me a slacker. I brought my work here with me. How do you know that Jim has not done the same? I'm only fo'ty, physically sound, of independent fo'tune and a native-bawn American, a widower with an only child whose future is amply provided for. Do you consider *me* a slacker?"

"Of course not. Your work is to suppress crime here while our soldiers and sailors suppress it over there. We can't leave our country at the mercy of lawbreakers."

"But you happen to know what my work is." Timothy's tone fairly reeked with a suggestion, but it was lost on this arbitrary beauty.

"Well," said she, "until I know that Jim's is something more patriotically strenuous than writing his war memoirs, the chances are I'll feel the same about him, and that isn't feeling very much."

The luster seemed to fade in Timothy's eyes leaving them dreamy again. "Uhn-h'n. Well, maybe after all that's better, Miss Kath'rine." And he began to discuss the merits of the new draft.

They had brought their supper with them, and presently Lucien who had grown very quiet as they sped along, gave the wheel to Katherine and proceeded to lay out a repast which the food administration might have disapproved, but could not have censured, all of its directions being duly observed. It takes more than scant material to dismay an Alabama cook, and the absence

of meat, sugar and flour are the very least of his cares. There were big, deviled crabs and a chicken salad and several varieties of hot breads light as toy balloons, from the boat's fireless cooker, and golden honey with the bees' hive tag on it. Timothy and Lucien were what a New England housewife of the grease-and-sinker school would have called "finicky feeders."

Lucien had no intention whatever that his beloved parent should commit his body to the deep ballasted amidships with no more than a lead pipe, and Katherine was equally amazed at the tender solicitude with which the boy plied him with food, and Timothy's liberal imbibing of hot tea while incased in an air-tight life-saving suit. In fact the girl was rather bewildered with the whole picnic. It struck her as decidedly uncommon to be lectured on the error of jumping to conclusions by a distinguished Southern United States attorney baled up in a rubber suit with a freshly painted hood while tearing miles and miles to sea in quest of lobster. She could not understand why it was necessary to burn so much gasoline in pursuit of this most edible scavenger, and presently said so.

"Why are we going so far?" she inquired. "We've been passing lobster pots ever since we left."

"Ah, Miss Kath'rine," said Timothy, "but we're not after the common, ordinary little ol' lobster. The kind we want is right sca'te jes' now and we have to go 'way out to get him."

"Don't you find it rather stupid lying there in the bottom of the boat, judge?" She then asked: "Why don't you get up and look around?"

Timothy, who was raised on one elbow munching corn biscuits and honey, shook his head. "I'm a powerful bad sailor, Miss Kath'rine," said he, "and this long swell is mighty disturbin'. Sighted the buoy, son?" For Lucien had picked up his glasses.

"Dead ahead about two miles, dad," the boy answered, and Katherine wondered at his pale and anxious look. She had never heard that lobstering was a dangerous sport except in the careless handling of the game.

The maneuvers which then began made her wonder if she was herself quite sane or had possibly been enticed upon an outing by two members of a family afflicted with periodical lunacy. Lucien asked her to take the wheel and steer for the speck ahead,

then proceeded to festoon the neck and shoulders of his parent with masses of rockweed which he secured with fishline. This done he took from the cabin a circle of lead pipe which Timothy clasped about his waist. A leather belt from which hung what appeared to be two cracked-ice bags was adjusted above it.

Timothy then fitted the black-and-white hood snugly over his head, keeping all the time below the coaming of the launch. But when Lucien produced a black mask with two slits for the eyes and strings at the four corners and began to tie this on his father's face, the young girl could no longer contain her fears.

"Merciful Heaven!" she breathed. "Do you intend to haul your lobsters up or go down after them?"

"This kind takes a heap of careful stalkin', Miss Kath'rine," mumbled Timothy.

"But you haven't any mask—I mean helmet." Katherine's head was beginning to spin. "You'll drown!"

"I don't figure to go plum' to bottom," Timothy answered. "Eve'ybody has his own method, and mine is to bob 'round on the surface and sing. The lobster leads a lonely life and has a shy but sociable nature. Professor Agassiz demonstrated that he was a true music lover. Better slow daown, Luce, and get that mooring stone ready to slide over."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Spotted the fourth buoy?"

"Almost up to it, dad." Lucien released the clutch and slowed the motor. Katherine, now convinced from the expression of the boy's face that they were about some purposeful and deadly serious business, invited no more mocking answers but stood by to lend a hand if required.

The launch glided slowly up to a lobster buoy painted precisely like Timothy's hooded head and the girl's heart gave a sudden flutter. So this was the game; spy hunting; communication between the shore and an enemy submarine! Her eyes flashed down at Timothy, and suddenly reaching out her hand she laid it against one of the rubber sacks and felt the butt of the revolver within.

"I see——" she whispered. "You are a wonder, judge."

"Now don't jump at conclusions, Miss

Kath'rine," Timothy answered in a muffled drawl. "We haven't caught our lobster yet."

Lucien hooked up the buoy and drew it inboard. "You two haul the boat across the coamin' 'thwartships," directed Timothy, "then as the la'nch drifts fore and aft to Pemaquid Point and Monhegan, I'll slip over behind it. Here she comes—keep between me and Monhegan, Miss Kath'rine."

The lath trap with its ballast of stones came to the surface presently and was hauled over the side. Timothy, keeping low and between the "pot" and Katherine wormed over the side and into the water. Lucien lowered the mooring stone after him and Timothy gathering in the line caught a turn of it in his belt. "All right," said he, "let her go and beat it, son. Jim and I will follow sho'tly."

"Jim!" cried Katherine, wildly. "Jim Stevens a spy—impossible——"

"Naow there you go beatin' the pistol again, Miss Kath'rine," said Timothy. "Ain't it jes' as possible as Jim's bein' a slacker? I declare, young lady, I'm afraid yo're goin' to be awfully disappointed about your lobster. Unhook her, son."

Lucien's face had the bleak, strained look of a thirteen-year-old boy who is exerting all of his will power to obey with military promptness and fight back the tears. His adored father had always seemed invulnerable to him so far as mere men were concerned, but that which took the limit of the little fellow's nerve was to leave him thus alone suspended over the abyss. What if the rubber suit were to spring a leak or a big cruising shark to pass that way and scent meat inside that inhuman-looking object? Local fishermen had told him that a person in the water falling foul of a school of dogfish would probably be cut to pieces and devoured. There was a distinctly blubberish look to the bleated contraption, and Lucien's heart was fathoms deep.

But the boy had been trained by love to unquestioning obedience and knew that one infraction of this would mean future exclusion from his father's man hunts. Timothy had indeed told him as much. So with white, tense features and a curt "good luck, dad," he reached for his controls and a moment later the launch was tearing away over the long, glassy undulations.

Timothy watched it out of sight which did not take long, his horizon being the

minimum except when slowly raised on the great ground swell. He found a curious interest in his peculiar situation and speculated on the emotions of a man thus struck adrift on the sinking of his ship in mid-ocean. It struck him the Almighty had grievously hampered the human creature in not providing it with wings, and he watched enviously the little terns which were circling about attracted by the brine stirred up from the thrash of the boat's propeller.

One of these presently fluttered down to light upon his head, where it perched investigating the seaweed trailing from his shoulders as though foul of the buoy line. Timothy was greatly pleased at this proof of the efficiency of his camouflage and reflected that if he could fool a seabird he had little need to fear detection from a Swede. He was in no way anxious over the outcome of his stratagem or the position in which he found himself, neither did Lucien's shark reflections disturb him. He reasoned that such a marauder would appear upon the surface to investigate before venturing to attack, and that a bullet through the dorsal fin and with the concussion close to the water would discourage molestation. As one would naturally expect of a Gulf State United States prosecuting attorney, Timothy was an expert with firearms and had yet to meet his equal in fancy shooting. The practice was in fact one of his favorite recreations.

The launch dissolved into the void and the afterglow faded slowly in the depths of limitless space. It seemed to Timothy that he was the most minute particle of indivisible matter, an atom which it needed but a drop to dissolve. He decided that after all it would not be very painful to perish under similar circumstances, one being so overwhelmed with a sense of insignificance.

This dwindling impression was suddenly arrested by a throbbing against his ears, the rubber covering of which acted as a tympanum. Timothy was quick to recognize the staccato thump of a "make-and-break" gas engine of the sort in general use on fishing boats. The sound appeared to come from directly underneath him and Timothy chuckled at the fantastic idea of being suddenly boosted in air astride a periscope. He thought of what a joke it would be to get behind the opening hatch and hold up the outfit like a lonely sea highwayman.

Then in the growing gloom he suddenly sighted on the crest of a moving, burnished hill a small object which he correctly guessed to be a fisherman's motor dory. It was almost in line with the end of Pemaquid Point, which did not surprise Timothy as he had thought of the wooded banks along the John's River with their widely separated camps, now unoccupied owing to the war, as an excellent place to hold a prisoner for a few days.

The big dory rapidly approached and Timothy discovered it to contain two figures, one leaning over either side. He chuckled to himself and decided that there was in this case probably also a third; that of Jim. Neither kidnaper would trust the other to go for the ransom alone and the chances therefore were that they would have brought their victim with them, no doubt secured against the possibility of mischief in the bottom of the boat.

The dory came surging noisily up and in the gathering murk—for they had timed their coming just as darkness fell—Timothy through the slits in his mask saw Higgs and Jansen staring eagerly over the bows. Within fifty feet the current was switched off and then as the boat drifted down upon him the prodigy occurred.

Jansen was leaning far over the gunnel to grasp the buoy when Timothy loosed the lead pipe and let it sink. The result of this jettisoning was that he bobbed up suddenly chest-high, his head actually coming in contact with that of the Swede. Timothy let out a rebel yell which was drowned in that of Jansen and poorly echoed by the terrified Higgs in a sort of quavering bleat.

It must indeed be painfully upsetting to reach over for the buoy of a lobster pot presumably containing a liberal stake and in the act of so doing have a bloated, screaming, black and faceless creature leap at you from the depths. In fact it came very near upsetting the dory, both the big Swede and the bulbous Higgs going over backward so violently that if Timothy had not flung his arms over the gunnel the boat might have capsized. Observing the morale of his *coup de théâtre*, he let out another and more bloodcurdling catamount screech, and at this horror the blond viking utterly collapsed. He floundered in the bottom of the boat in an absolute convulsion of terror. And Higgs was not much better off. Even Jim in the stern sheets, hand bound behind his back

and secured to a ringbolt, was petrified with shock and dread.

"Eeeee-yaow-w-w-w-w!" screeched Timothy a third time with the fearful Louisiana Tiger yell, and getting nothing but squawks and burbles in reply began to change his note. He screamed with laughter and as this outrageous mirth trickled through the auditory nerves of the kidnapers Jansen's big arms came slowly down from before his face and he stared with growing infinite relief into the muzzle of a .38. This slowly reassured him. It percolated to his brain that the monster was not the Old Man of the Sea or the revived corpse of a submarined sailor come to get him, but merely a creature of flesh and blood who had managed somehow to pop up out of the water for the purpose of marching him back to prison.

If Timothy could have swarmed into the dory unassisted he would not have needed any weapon at all. Even as it was, it took some time for the blasted nerves of his captives to respond to stimulus. Higgs was the first to recover sufficiently to obey the drawling admonitions delivered him with the sting of a black-snake whip.

"Tu'n yore master loose, yo' putty-faced fool," requested Timothy. "Get a move on, naow, before I put a leak in yo'. Crawl aft you Scandahoovian or I'll crease yore hide. Git aft, dog-gone ye—yo' hear me talkin'?"

"Oh, sir!" panted Higgs. "You give us such a turn, sir. One minute, sir." And wabbling to the stern his trembling fingers found a knife and cut Jim's bonds.

"Kick that Swede aft, Jim, and he'p me

aboard," said Timothy. "It's gettin' late and Lucien's shore to be plum' anxious."

"One minute, judge," Jim answered. "Give me a second to make up my mind whether I'm going to laugh or cry."

The ancient 5-HP motor pounded the big dory along at a good clip and the night was still young when they chugged past the bell buoy off The Hypocrites. Jim looked at the drooping figures in the bow and laughed.

"Let's let 'em go, judge," said Jim. "If they got half the scare I did when you bobbed up over the side and cut loose that rebel yell they've been punished enough. Besides, we've got something to laugh at for the rest of our lives."

Higgs stirred in the bow and looked aft appealingly. "Thank you, sir," said he. "I assure you, sir, my 'eart will never be the syne again, sir."

"How about you, Jansen?" Jim asked.

The big Swede gave a deep sigh. "I ban scairt to death, zir," he answered. "Yo—I still feel pretty bad."

"Well, cheer up, then," said Jim. He reflected for an instant. "What will you do if we let you off?" he asked.

"I do what you say, zir," Jansen answered, promptly.

"All right. That's a bargain." He turned to Timothy. "Say, judge, what did you think about while you were anchored out there?"

The lawyer hunched his shoulders a little higher. He had taken off the rubber suit and there was a chill in the night air.

"I was thinkin' about Lucien," he answered, "and how sometimes he was the image of his ma."



THE READY LETTER WRITER

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JOHN M. HANCOCK, in the paymaster's office in the navy department, holds the government record as a letter writer. He exhausts two stenographers every day, and frequently renews the torture in the evening.

The first one goes on duty in his office at eight in the morning and is loaded with hieroglyphics until one in the afternoon, at which time she fades from the picture suffering from wrist drop, ankylosed elbow and sprained shoulder. She is succeeded by the second, who stabs her notebook without intermission until six.

They take turns showing up at eight in the evening and finding out whether he intends to dictate for only a sprint of a half hour or so or has decided to make it a full day by working until midnight. They describe his enunciation as perfect and his industry as savage.

On a Lee Shore

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "Ten Fathoms Down," "Too Scared to Run," Etc.

This is the sixth and last story in Mr. Paine's series on the American navy, and we think the yarns have been up to expectations. Which of them have you liked best? Later on, we will probably give you more of the same variety

BULL" MADDOCK had enlisted in the navy for private and personal reasons which had nothing to do with making the world safe for democracy or fighting for the freedom of the seas. He had been a fireman in an American liner between New York and Liverpool, a grimy slave of the slice bar and shovel who sweated for wages which enabled him to get drunk and stay so while in port. He was troubled by no wider ambition than this. When stripped to the waist in the stoke-hole, the brawn of him was revealed as superb and youth also was in his favor, for which reasons this sodden existence had not corroded his vigor. He was a surly, silent brute with a temper which was apt to flare wickedly when fed with cheap whisky. There were women of the water front who admired his strength and thought him good to look at, and more than one had been fond of him even after his money was gone.

It was because of a girl that Bull Maddock swung his fist to the jaw of the mate of a Swedish cargo boat. The mate crumpled under the table of the back room of the Front Street saloon and it was the concerted opinion of the spectators, versed in such matters, that the fireman had croaked him. At any rate, the mariner from Sweden remained inert so long after the count of ten that Maddock was strongly advised to beat it. He had been justified, no doubt, in showing the meddlesome squarehead where he got off, but breaking his neck was a trifle far-fetched. It wasn't usually done, even in Front Street circles.

The police knew Bull Maddock quite intimately. He had made an impression upon as many as four of them who were required to put him aboard the patrol wagon while ashore from a previous voyage. Here was an episode, however, which appeared to be

so much more serious that he instantly concluded to let his ship sail without him. With what was left of his wages he fled as far as Boston and then his purpose wavered. They would hunt for him in the Atlantic ports, raking the wharves, the steamers, and the sailors' boarding houses. It never occurred to him to turn inland. All he knew was the sea and its bitter toil.

Steering an aimless course, he wandered past a navy recruiting booth on Boston Common and halted while a spruce boatswain's mate appealed to the crowd in words of fiery eloquence. There was no responsive glow in the heart of Bull Maddock who stood there, a hulking, glowering figure tormented by a raging thirst. Presently he roughly shouldered his way to the front and told the yeoman that he was ready to sign on. The crowd cheered. Here was the kind of recruit to put a crimp in the Huns. He would eat 'em alive.

The navy was sorely in need of seasoned firemen and the oratorical boatswain's mate jumped down to slap Maddock on the back and tell him he was the real stuff. The fugitive grunted and pulled out a packet of discharges from former ships. He was proud of them, for although his behavior might be outrageous ashore, his work at sea had been certified as excellent by one chief engineer after another. He could make steam and hold it in all weathers. This was enough.

He had intended to enlist under a false name, but his wits were muddled, and having exhibited his discharges there was nothing to do but sign as James J. Maddock, with his next of kin an old mother of whose whereabouts he had not the slightest idea. The recruiting booth snatched him into the service as a prize and hustled him over to the office to be examined and sworn in. For the time he had lost volition. He went

dumbly in the hope of escaping the police and the electric chair. It was any port in a storm, and he was on a lee shore.

The navy doctor surveyed this strapping fireman, thumped him with a gloating air, and perceived that he was physically flawless, barring ragged nerves and recent saturation with bad booze. While awaiting further orders Bull Maddock scanned the latest New York newspapers with painful attention, but failed to find any mention of the murder of the mate of a Swedish merchant steamer in the back room of a Front Street saloon. This seemed odd. Homicide and manslaughter were routine occurrences in the surging metropolis, but the reporters never passed them by. It filtered into the mind of the sullen recruit that possibly he had failed to break the neck of the square-head who had tried to steal his girl. Instead of feeling gratitude for his deliverance, Maddock was indignant. He swore vengeance against the unfortunate mate for having tricked him.

"The big stiff! Look what he let me in for," he muttered to himself. "This damn navy has gone and pinched me and I can't get out. And a guy in uniform can't get a drink nowhere, not if he's perishin' for it. If I ever meet that Swede I'll hit him twice and make sure he stays out."

Disconsolately and as docile as a sheep, Maddock was passed along from one officer to another until he came to rest in a navy-yard barracks. He was accustomed to obey men who wore blue uniforms and brass buttons in the merchant marine, but he had been his own master in port. Now he was a prisoner, with every hour of the night and day to be accounted for, and punishment swift and stern awaiting the smallest lapse of duty. Afraid to show how much he loathed the prospect but inwardly rebellious, he had nothing to say to the other men who agreed that he was a hard guy and had better be left alone.

A few days in barracks and Bull Maddock looked most unlike the drunken vagabond who had skulked into Boston. His eye was clear, his hand steady, and he ate like a man with a healthy appetite. Cleanliness was a luxury which he had never known before. The navy compelled him to bathe and shave and wear fresh clothes. It provided him with immaculate living quarters and fed him with the most scrupulous care. In his own experience a marine fireman was treated like

a dog. This was all amazingly different. It did not reconcile him to his destiny, but it was good for him nevertheless.

He was assigned to hard labor, trimming coal on the docks and firing a stationary boiler, and he did it easily, with contempt for the recruits of softer fiber who nursed blistered hands and aching backs. No liberty was granted him and he abandoned all hope of getting drunk. At length an officer came to his name on a typewritten list and checked it with a pencil as he said to his aid:

"Maddock, James J.—send him to the *Albacore* with that draft of reserves. They need him. Know him by sight, do you?"

"Yes. He's a bear. I thought we'd have to treat him rough, but he has made no trouble so far. A course of fresh air and exercise has made him as fit as a fiddle."

"Good! The skipper of the *Albacore* ought to thank us. He will be sure of one real husky in the black gang. I can't say I envy Lieutenant Commander Lester Duncan that job of his—sailing hell-bent for France in a fancy yacht with a crew of cheerful greenhorns."

"Duncan likes it. He's as happy as a kid with a new toy, although he is the only regular navy officer in the outfit. His navigator was chief clerk to the president of a gas company and the executive manufactured plumbers' supplies."

"And the blooming yacht is just slinging her guns aboard. They are all sawing and hammering and ripping things out like mad—the whole crew—with orders to clear for sea to-morrow night."

"France needs more ships to keep Fritz under," said the other, "so we'll have to shove along whatever is handy."

This was how Bull Maddock happened to shoulder his canvas bag and march aboard the shapely, seagoing yacht which had been converted into a war vessel at such exceedingly short notice. He reported to a harassed young engineer officer who sent him to join the bluejackets' coaling ship. It was odd company for Maddock, and he felt bewildered. One of these enlisted men had been captain of a Yale eleven, another was the son of a railroad magnate, as casual remarks disclosed, and a third referred to a famous rear admiral as "good old dad." They greeted the frowning Bull Maddock with affable good nature, but he was suspicious and aloof. It was a bughouse per-

formance, he reflected, to take a ship to sea with a bunch of 'rah, 'rah boys and ama-choors that had never been up against a he-man's game.

The navy has a trick of getting things done somehow, and the *Albacore* went to sea next night with her undaunted crew still ripping out partitions, boarding up windows, and setting bunks in place. Their spirits were jubilant because they were bound across to hunt submarines. It was in the month of August and heavy weather seemed unlikely. The transformed yacht, built for ocean cruising, laid a course for the Azores as a port of call, and flung the miles behind her with an easy stride.

His watches in the fireroom were mere play for Bull Maddock who had stoked the ravening furnaces of liners driven at top speed, when men dropped in their tracks and were dragged or kicked aside. It was an inhuman trade, as he knew it, with little sympathy for the poor devils who could not stand the pace. This was a scratch crew hastily mustered, these eighty-odd men in the *Albacore*, and among Bull Maddock's mates below decks only two or three were trained navy stokers. Toward the others his attitude was calloused, unfeeling, at times openly derisive. Seasickness afflicted them and when, with a following breeze, the heat rose to a hundred and twenty degrees they wilted helplessly and had to be revived.

Bull Maddock, bare to the waist and hard as nails, a blackened towel around his neck, swigged gallons of oatmeal water, and snarled from a corner of his mouth:

"That's right. Lay down and quit. What the hell did you come to sea for, Willie? Curl up like a dog, uh? Watch your gauge. Droppin' again. You couldn't fire a coffee-pot."

He seemed to cherish a particular dislike for a plucky stripling of the naval reserve whose name was Spencer Lucas. The dizzy heat, the smell of the bilges, the erratic motion of the floor were almost more than he could endure, but he never missed a watch and swore to qualify as a fireman if it killed him. He was a tall, shy youth with a manner excessively polite, who had been studying for his Ph. D. at a Western university. He was so much the gentleman that Bull Maddock mistook his courtesy for cowardice and considered him an easy mark.

At length Mr. Spencer Lucas lost his tem-

per and smote Maddock over the head with a shovel. The weapon bounced from the skull of the toughened warrior who staggered back and burned his arm against a furnace door. This annoyed him and he slapped Mr. Spencer Lucas, who sprawled on his face at a distance of some ten feet from the spot. It was the judgment of the machinist's mate, who interfered, that if Maddock had soaked him with a solid punch the lad would have been driven through the side of the ship. The engineer officer strongly objected to locking them up and leaving his force short-handed, so Lieutenant Commander Lester Duncan haled them on deck at mast next morning to inflict deferred penalties and likewise to get better acquainted with the unruly Maddock, James J.—fireman third class.

The skipper of the *Albacore* had been coxswain of an Annapolis crew, which may indicate that he was no six-foot hero. To his friends he was known as "Dusty" Duncan and the nickname was highly meritorious. Quick at decisions, jauntily cool in a crisis, he was an excellent type of officer for the hair-trigger game of exterminating hostile submarines or guarding a convoy. When he twisted an end of his little black mustache and suavely gave an order there was obedience hearty and implicit. To sail with Dusty Duncan meant something doing.

To the quarter-deck trooped the culprits, big Bull Maddock and the scholarly Spencer Lucas, almost a Ph. D., with two other firemen and a coal passer as witnesses. They were trim and clean, of course, but the grime was never quite removed from beneath the eyes of the "underground savages," and it lay like dark shadows, giving this group a wearied and melancholy air. The case of Lucas was easily disposed of. He had been provoked to chastise his tormenter with a shovel. The provocation was clear. But he could not be permitted to take the law into his own hands and, for the sake of discipline, he would have to suffer loss of pay and liberty. The skipper made it as mild as possible. In the same circumstances he would have been tempted to floor Maddock with a slice bar.

The lieutenant commander's face hardened when the stalwart bully confronted him. There was insolence in the man's bearing, smoldering hatred of authority. Duncan read the symptoms. Maddock was unaccustomed to decent treatment. Until

he entered the navy he had been handled as a brute who must be kept under. Duncan surmised that there was a spark of manliness in him, that the soul could not be wholly extinguished. His features no longer clouded by dissipation, Bull Maddock appeared to be something better than a powerful animal. There was stubborn courage in the bold chin and straight mouth, and the gray eyes were rather candid than shifty. The gleam in them reminded Duncan of a good dog spoiled by cruel masters. He spoke to Maddock with unusual patience.

"You have been looking for trouble ever since you came aboard this ship. Have you any complaints—has anybody abused you or handed you a dirty deal?"

"No, it ain't that, sir," replied the fireman, evidently surprised by the turn of the inquiry.

"Well, what is it?" sharply demanded the skipper. "Here you are, an old hand, and a regular bruiser of a man—just the kind the navy needs to shovel the coal in. It's the finest kind of a chance to do your bit."

"Ain't I doing it?" fiercely interrupted Maddock. "Show me any three guys that do as much in a watch."

"I grant you that," evenly replied Duncan, "but why don't you help the other men to learn the trick of it? They have enlisted because they love their flag and country. They don't pretend to be expert firemen or coal passers. I thought I was lucky when I laid eyes on you and looked up your record at sea. I expected to give you a better rating before long. But you are a chronic disturbance, you hinder the work below, and I don't propose to stand for it."

From his towering height Bull Maddock looked down at the dapper officer and said with a grin:

"Aw, this make-believe sailoring gets my goat. You leave those left-footed young loafers to me and I'll make firemen of 'em or they'll wish they was in hell."

"Make-believe sailoring, is it, Maddock?" crisply responded Lieutenant Commander Dusty Duncan. "That's quite enough from you. Here, master-at-arms, put the irons on this man and confine him on bread and water. It may sweeten him up a bit."

Bull Maddock stepped back and cleared for action. He felt in honor bound to give as good an account of himself as he had in the case of the four New York policemen who had inserted him into the patrol wagon.

The navy moved with a celerity, however, which baffled his intentions. An automatic pistol poked him in the stomach and while he hesitated the bracelets clicked on his wrists. His surrender was immediate and unconditional. As he passed along the deck in custody of the master-at-arms whose demeanor was stolid and unruffled, there was never a gleam of sympathy among the crew. The youngsters grinned and nudged each other and Maddock observed their mirth.

For him there was no novelty in sitting in a cell with barred windows nor could he feel the stigma of disgrace, but the sense of humiliation scorched him like a live coal and his anger was stirred to its muddy depths. To be laughed at by these boyish rookies of the navy was intolerable, but he hated them not so much as he did the skipper of the *Albacore*, the dapper little lieutenant commander who had ordered him flung into the brig. Brooding in the gloomy room, he said to himself:

"He looked at me like I was dirt, the chesty gink! I wasn't giving him any lip—I hadn't started nothin' rough—and he was hopin' for a chance to drill me with a bullet. Navy stuff, uh? Get a man that can do his work and then hand it to him worse'n a dog. Maybe I'll show this bird—the two of us'll be ashore some night and there won't be no Johnny legs handy with a gun and a pair of irons."

At dinner in the wardroom, the engineer officer seemed annoyed as he said to Dusty Duncan:

"You went and pinched my bucko fireman after all. What am I going to do without him?"

"Your problem, my dear boy," was the urbane answer. "Apparently you couldn't manage him, so I had to draw cards. He is mean clear through. If he seems sorry for his sins I will return him to-morrow."

"You better had, skipper, if you expect standard speed when his watch is on. Wow, but he is some walloper of a coal tosser."

"But he can't be permitted to run this ship," was the stiff retort. "I intend to keep an eye on him. He has the makings of a useful gob."

Unrepentant, but outwardly subdued, Bull Maddock returned to duty and ceased to curse or taunt his companions of the fire-room. He became even more solitary and detached than before. Oddly enough, the first man to break through his resentful reti-

cence was the intellectual youth, Spencer Lucas, who had attempted to brain him with a shovel. They slept in the same tier of bunks forward and faced each other across the mess table. Maddock must have cherished a sneaking respect for the valor of the sea-sick amateur in assaulting him, and Spencer Lucas, for his part, may have regarded the big fireman as a study in psychology. At any rate, they were seen talking together on deck, to the amazement of all hands.

"He really loosened up," Lucas explained to a chum. "I promised to write a letter for him—to a girl in New York, telling her what had become of him. He left her suddenly, it seems, under the mistaken impression that he had broken the neck of a rival. There's romance for you! Could you beat it? And I want to write realistic fiction some day. I shall cultivate Bull Maddock."

It was not so strange, after all, that this pair of shipmates, so utterly dissimilar, should have arrived at an understanding although they had nothing whatever in common. The war had snatched Spencer Lucas, the student, from a sheltered, uneventful existence that was almost cloistered. He was ignorant of life, as the saying is, excepting as he had read of it in books. This Bull Maddock, speaking a different language, revealed to him glimpses of a world raw, passionate, and turbulent in which the weaker man was stamped underfoot. And because Spencer Lucas was genuinely interested in what he had to say, the bully of the fire-room gang became less taciturn, more human. Nobody else had ever cared. They were brief tales, gruff references, told without egoism or boasting, but to the sensitive imagination of young Lucas they were like pictures such as an artist conjures on canvas with a few sweeping strokes of the brush. They vividly portrayed for him the eternal conflict of men with the sea, and the fleeting respites whose vision knew naught else than the gin mills, brawls, and brothels of Singapore, Valparaiso, or Hongkong, which seemed so sad and wicked and forlorn.

This one redeeming virtue was to be inferred, that Bull Maddock had never dodged a fight or left a pal in the lurch. And while Spencer Lucas listened so attentively and coaxed for more, the stalwart wastrel was also caught and held by new impressions. Unconsciously they were influencing him to doff a little of his brutal, uncouth demeanor.

At times his eyes were wistful and perplexed as though he were groping for something which eluded him. It was perhaps because he began to surmise that he was his worst enemy.

Spencer Lucas discovered that he had once put on the gloves against the heavy-weight champion of the British navy and had knocked him over the ropes in six rounds. Lucas persuaded him to box an exhibition bout with a beefy gunner's mate of the *Albacore* who had bragged of his own prowess. Maddock showed a speed and skill which smothered his opponent, but he was merciful and inflicted no serious damage. Nothing could have been better for Maddock than the hearty cheers of his shipmates. He actually grinned and ducked his head in response. In the fireroom that night, Spencer Lucas said to him:

"The whole outfit respected you for the way you handled yourself, Bull."

"Uh? I don't get you. You mean they think I'm not so rotten?"

"Precisely that. You put up a fair, clean scrap with Brady—kept your temper, and boxed like a wizard."

"Lay off that stuff, bo. Nothin' to it. The skipper thinks I'm a dirty hound, and the boys follow his lead. I'll never get by with the navy."

Spencer Lucas earnestly disputed this. He felt convinced that Maddock had acquired merit and would some day make a corking bluejacket. The *Albacore* pursued her long voyage with the favor of bright skies and a kindly sea while the crew adapted itself, with a zealous intelligence, to the complex routine of the day's work. There were a few seasoned petty officers to leaven the raw lump, and Lieutenant Commander Dusty Duncan possessed an extraordinary knack of infusing a ship's company with his own alert and disciplined personality. He dared not trust too much to his officers, and he grew thin with loss of sleep, but his demeanor was no less jaunty and he smiled approvingly when the fo'castle quartet rolled out the chorus that ended:

"Though it's mighty inconvenient
To be heaving up your grub,
Still we're steaming to the east'ard
And we're hunting for a sub."

And so they rolled into the Bay of Biscay and sighted the bold headlands of France where the valiant little torpedo boats, flying the tricolor, came out to meet and welcome

them, and sea planes swooped overhead. The *Albacore*, quite shipshape by now, steamed into an ancient port whose gray citadel had beheld the navies, forays, and invasions of a thousand years. She anchored in the shelter of a breakwater and saw the huge, crowded troopships disembarking their regiments of men in khaki who were resolved to smash their way to Berlin. American yachts and destroyers were already in the harbor and with blinker and flag hoist they signaled cheery greetings. To the men of the *Albacore* it was thrilling to feel that they were in the game and about to play a hand.

The liberty parties swarmed into the boats, eager to hit the beach, and discover what France was like, but there was no shore leave for Bull Maddock. He was not alone in his misery, for Spencer Lucas also suffered the penalty because of that argument with a coal shovel. As befitted a student of philosophy he forbore to rail against his fate, but the big fireman cursed his luck and hated Lieutenant Commander Dusty Duncan more earnestly than ever. There was no law to stop a man in uniform from buying a drink, so Bull had discovered, and the French girls were said to admire the bold Yankee bluejacket, wherefore it was a sore affliction to be marooned aboard the *Albacore*.

He was in a disgruntled humor, darkly nursing his grievances, when the yacht sailed four days later on escort duty with a coast-wise merchant convoy bound across the English Channel. Off Ushant she sighted a German submarine which hoped to play havoc with the plodding cargo boats, like a coyote in a sheepfold, but the jubilant tars of the *Albacore* banged away with four-inch shells and compelled the pirate to submerge. By way of good measure, two depth bombs were dropped from the stern and they may have damaged Fritz, for he leaked a large amount of oil which floated up in glistening blobs.

The explosion of the bombs shook the yacht as if she had run on a reef. Down in the fireroom Bull Maddock and Spencer Lucas were knocked headlong and they were ready to swear that the ship had been torpedoed.

"A great life—nix," growled Maddock as he rubbed a bruised ear. "These guys get into a fine little scrap—shootin' up a Hun and letting him have a couple of depth bums, and where do we come in, uh? Not

a thing do we see of it, and we get stood on our heads."

"Oh, we have to be satisfied with doing our duty," replied Spencer Lucas.

"Duty? I'd like to meet the lad that invented that word," angrily observed Maddock. "This war and me don't hit it off at all."

The skipper was in a more jovial mood than this. His yacht had behaved with credit in the first encounter with the enemy and the convoy was safeguarded against loss. It was because of the efficient conduct of the watches below that full steam pressure had been given when needed and the *Albacore* was thereby enabled to make for the U-boat at top speed and so release the deadly charges that exploded under water. As one of the gang to receive commendation, Bull Maddock was restored to favor and could look forward to a brief liberty at the end of the voyage.

The paymaster was waiting for the *Albacore* when she returned to port, and Maddock had a roll of money in his pocket. Spencer Lucas went ashore with him, hoping for the best, but expecting the worst. As a chaperon and guardian of morals, the scholar of the stokehole felt that his work was cut out for him. Maddock looked spick and span in a new uniform and was a credit to the navy. He had intentions, however, which were not so creditable, and he confided to his companion, in accents deep and sincere:

"Watch my smoke, kid. I'm liable to give you an imitation of a strong man soused to the guards. And then if I run afoul of Lieutenant Commander Dusty Duncan, he'll have something to put me in irons for."

"But, my goodness, Bull," gasped the horrified Spencer Lucas, "if you lay hands on an officer you may be sent to prison for the rest of your life. Please come along with me and we'll have a nice little dinner at the Y. M. C. A., and——"

Bull Maddock laughed at this and rudely broke in:

"And play checkers and eat ice cream, uh? You won't do, kid. I guess we part company. Our ideas of shore liberty don't hitch. Wow, look at the joint with a million bottles in the window. And pipe the dame behind the bar! So long! This village sure does look good to me."

Disconsolately, the conscientious Spencer Lucas proceeded up the street alone, con-

vinced that his labors had been wasted. The big fireman was a hopeless blackguard instead of a brand plucked from the burning. For his own part, Maddock was also suffering disappointment. There was never a whisky bottle in the wine shop nor could he buy any other tippie with a real kick to it, for cognac was under the ban. He swigged red wine and white wine, shifted to sweet champagne, topped it off with sherry, and accumulated no more than a warm glow and a slightly fuzzy sensation in the head.

"I'll be drowned before I get the feel of liquor in me," he sadly observed to the black-eyed young woman who served him, but she could only smile and mystify him with vivacious repartee of which he understood not a word. He determined to seek other havens and, with the instinct of his kind, steered a course for the most disreputable quarter of the city, jostling French sailors, Sengalese infantrymen, negro stevedores, and Tonkin coolies from his path. At the head of a drowsy alley in which slatternly, painted women loitered in the doorways, a trim young American bluejacket raised his truncheon and curtly announced:

"Nothing doing, old top. Out of bounds, savvey? No Yanks need apply."

"Beat it, son. You're obstructin' traffic," growled the fireman.

The youngster rapped on the pavement and three other sturdy members of the naval patrol force mobilized from streets near by. They came on the run and Maddock concluded to move on. The meddlesome navy had interfered with him again. What right had it to police the red-light district of a French town? Bull Maddock was unable to fathom it, but there was no use in arguing the matter. The odds were against him and he was still too sober to fight all hands.

For hours he wandered and grew weary of white wine and red, nor was he a sociable creature by nature, so that he failed to enjoy the cosmopolitan atmosphere of this port of many nations. It was in the evening when he became conscious of a gnawing hunger which increased his irritation. He had eaten what one or two little French restaurants had to offer, but this was no more than a provocation. One could not call it grub for a strong man like Bull Maddock. At length his aimless pilgrimage carried him past a large building facing an open square and he halted to stare through the uncurtained windows. In the gloom he

failed to discern the sign above the door, but the place was mightily attractive.

Yankee bluejackets were eating at small tables, a piano was rattling ragtime, and there were glimpses of two or three women in a sort of natty uniform who appeared to be in charge. Bull Maddock moved nearer, and as the door swung open there was wafted out the savor of real coffee such as is brewed in God's country. These women, they were not French, reflected the derelict, and although he had never moved in respectable circles he was quite certain that they were not the kind he knew. They were actually waiting on the American gobs at the tables and talking with them. Maddock was inclined to shy off, but at recognizing two lads from the *Albacore* he overcame his diffidence and hovered in the doorway.

"A swell dump, and I don't get it at all," he said to himself, "but I'm pavement sore and adrift with nowheres to go."

When he entered the room his manner was truculent as though he dared them to throw him out, but nobody seemed to consider him an intruder and he slumped into a chair at the nearest table. Presently he was ordering a steak, French-fried potatoes, apple pie and coffee, with doughnuts and cheese on the side. The menu card disclosed the appalling fact that he had strayed into the Y. M. C. A., but under the mellowing influence of a square meal he ceased to care. There was no preaching sermons at him and he was not regarded as a lost soul. In fact it was a sailors' hang-out, but cleaner and sweeter than he had ever dreamed such a resort could be.

A burly, resolute figure of a bluejacket as he sat there, one of the women noticed him and was quick to read the kind of man he was. At home she had been accustomed to wealth and social station, but she seemed no less at ease amid these strange surroundings. Bull Maddock eyed her with curiosity and wonderment. She was what they called a lady, he concluded, you could gamble on that, and she was still youthful, with bonny brown hair and a fine color and a smile that was jolly and frank. Maddock lingered, smoking cigarettes and listening to the chorus of bluejackets at the piano.

After a while the lady crossed the room and halted to say to the silent fireman of the *Albacore*:

"Is this your first visit in port? I am sure you haven't been in here before?"

"Yes, ma'am, it's my first offense," replied the blushing giant, who was very much confused.

"I am Miss Penfield, of Baltimore," was the gracious information. "And your name?"

"Maddock, James J., ma'am. I was in Baltimore three years ago, in a fruit company's steamer, and busted my crust fallin' through a hatch."

"How unfortunate! But it mended, of course. You look as though nothing could hurt you very much. Is the Y. M. C. A. so dreadful, after all? You seemed all fussed up when you came in."

"Well, a tramp like me ain't in the habit of it," admitted Maddock, in apologetic tones. "But I'm ready to murder the lad that knocks this joint of yours. What's the idea? In the merchant service most people didn't care whether a sailor went to hell or not. At least, I never run into no life-savin' apparatus like this. Perhaps I was out o' luck."

"I am sure you were," Miss Penfield replied, with grave sympathy, and her voice was almost motherly. "The folks at home expect us to take the best of care of you boys. Have you been in the navy long?"

"No, ma'am, but I'm an old hand at stokin' furnaces and there's few seas I haven't sizzled in."

"Oh, dear. A hard life, but it's different now that you are serving the flag, Mr. Maddock."

In the bold face of the outcast there was a responsive gleam. The episode was so prodigiously novel that new emotions stirred within him. He became loquacious while they talked of ships and convoys and submarines and the gossip of the fleet. The other men went out until the room was almost empty. Maddock glanced at the clock on the wall. It was almost time for him to seek the boat at the landing stage. Miss Penfield exclaimed:

"I'm so sorry, but I must begin to batten things down for the night. It is my late trick and the other girls have gone. And the French janitor was taken ill this mornin'."

"Let me bear a hand, ma'am," urged Maddock.

"Thank you so much. The wooden shutters are rather clumsy to close and fasten."

Before the lights were turned out, he looked again at the clock. He had not a

minute to spare, but Miss Penfield was standing irresolute as though waiting for some one. Bull Maddock thought of the throngs of alien soldiers and sailors in the dim and narrow streets and a vague sense of chivalry caused him to suggest:

"It don't seem right to me for a lady to be pesterin' around alone at this hour."

"I expected a friend," she explained, "but I won't wait. Three of us girls have a little apartment together beyond the Rue Saigon, and I can find it with no trouble whatever."

"Not by yourself you don't, ma'am," heavily objected Bull. "I tacked across the Rue Saigon a couple of times to-day and it looked rough to me. It's right next to the — to the district that's put out of bounds."

"I understand," said Miss Penfield, smiling at his manly concern for her welfare. "If you insist, Mr. Maddock, it will be pleasant to have you walk along with me."

"Nothing else to it, ma'am," declared her worshipful protector, who knew full well that he would be logged and punished for missing the liberty boat. This was of no consequence. The lady had been good to him and it was his duty to stand by. It was altogether a wonderful experience which rather bedazed him. Swinging along beside Miss Penfield, he towered masterfully above her and there was a chip upon that broad shoulder of his. If she had been so much as jostled there would have been need of an undertaker. When they parted at the door of the picturesque old dwelling, Bull Maddock said, with simple sincerity:

"This has been one whale of a night, ma'am. I'll call myself a liar whenever I wake up and think about it at sea."

"You will be sure to come and see us again?" asked Miss Penfield, a little anxiously.

"If I have to swim for it, so help me," answered Bull Maddock. He stood looking at the house after she had vanished within, not in sentimental rapture, but as one whose soul was filled with amazed gratitude. Then he trudged in the direction of the harbor in the faint hope that he might be able to return to his ship. At a twist of a small, darkened street he saw, by the glimmer of an overhead light, a man approaching whose uniform was unmistakably that of an American naval officer. More than this, Bull Maddock was able to identify him as the skipper of the *Albacore*, Lieutenant Commander Dusty Duncan. Maddock himself

was screened by the gloom and he could have stepped aside and waited.

It was the opportunity which his brooding hatred had yearned for, the chance to satisfy his grudge and go undetected. To knock the skipper senseless and then kick him in the face or ribs—this would have been the procedure of the Bull Maddock who had raged through Front Street and the Ratcliff Road. It was not only because he happened to be sober that he let the lieutenant commander pass unscathed. He had given his word to Miss Penfield that he would go to the Y. M. C. A. for his next liberty, and he proposed to earn it. And beating up his skipper did not seem to be playing square with the lady. Bull Maddock could not have reasoned it clearly for you, but such a deed of violence was not the proper way of finishing this particular evening.

"She wouldn't like it," reflected he, breathing heavily as he resumed the march to the landing stage. "Ladies like her don't understand the rough stuff."

Alas, there was no boat to carry him off to the *Albacore*, and he loitered forlornly, vainly trying to explain his plight to the crew of a French torpedo boat. At length, he found a hotel and turned in for the rest of the night, but slept poorly. It was eight o'clock next morning when he reported aboard in the old, surly humor, feeling that every man's hand was against him. The gaze of the righteous Spencer Lucas was reproachful and his greeting distant. He assumed, of course, that the black sheep had been shamefully drunk as announced beforehand. The commanding officer held the same opinion when he summoned the culprit aft.

"Anything to say for yourself?" asked Dusty Duncan, very peppery and disgusted.

"Not a word, sir," glowered Bull Maddock.

"No excuse for overstaying liberty? I thought you might try to fake up a new story, but you are too dumb for that. I'm sorry, my man. I'd like to hear you say you were sober, even if I couldn't believe it."

"I ain't fram' up any alibi, sir. Nobody ever saw me squeal on taking my medicine."

Strange that although Bull Maddock had not the slightest conception of the code of a gentleman, something told him that it was

dirty work to drag a lady's name into a mess like this or to use her as a shield. Stolidly he stood while the commander rapped out the penalty of liberty stopped and wages docked. Cheap at the price, said the offender to himself, as he recalled his rôle of a guardian to the winsome Miss Penfield, but he hated Dusty Duncan rather more than less.

Disaster came when least expected in the game which the navy played off the coasts of France and England. The *Albacore* sailed soon after this to shepherd a group of empty transports and see them well on their homeward way. Safely the gallant yacht performed her task and was heading back for port when a torpedo hit her almost amidships in the dark of a windy night. It was a chance shot for the prowling U-boat which happened to poke up a periscope at precisely the right time and place. Unseen by the vigilant gun crews and lookouts of the *Albacore*, the pirate submarine launched the missile at less than a thousand yards.

The yacht seemed to fly to pieces, to disintegrate. Her structure was too fragile to withstand the rending detonation in her vitals. And yet in these moments of hideous destruction, the discipline and the spirit of the navy held these young bluejackets steady. They tried to do what they had been taught, to carry on as long as the deck floated under their feet. Those who were not instantly killed obeyed the orders of their officers and thought not of their own salvation.

Down in the fireroom, Bull Maddock had leaped for a ladder, ramming and thrusting Spencer Lucas up ahead of him. The black water was boiling over the plates even as they fled. The coal bunkers had protected them against death, given them a brief respite, and instead of being torn to pieces most of the men of the watch were able to scramble to the deck. When they reached it, the yacht was about to plunge under. The boats had been cut away, life rafts shoved overside, and men were jumping into the water to escape the suction of the drowning ship. There were few cries for help. They took it grimly, as in the day's work, and blindly trusted to the luck of the navy.

Bull Maddock dived from the shattered bulwark and came up clear of the wreckage, swimming powerfully with an overhand stroke.

Colliding with a floating bit of woodwork, he clung to it with one hand and steadily forged ahead in the direction of a boat which showed the gleam of a flash light. The boat was moving away from him, however, and he scorned to yell after it.

"Jammed full already and probably busted all to hell," he muttered. "They won't be lookin' for more passengers."

The yacht foundered with a great hissing of steam and the ocean was dotted with the men hidden in the profound obscuration of the cloudy sky. Most of them were slowly collecting together on the rafts or in the boats which had not been destroyed, but a few like Bull Maddock were farther away and therefore undiscovered. He was not greatly troubled. Help would come after a while and he could hang on until daylight. It was lonely, however, and when he decided to shout, the other castaways off to windward failed to hear him.

He was pleased when a voice answered his hail and he paddled closer, but the call became so faint that he almost lost it. Then he changed his course and fairly bumped into a man who was swimming without even a life belt. Recognition was mutual. Feebly, but with a note of cheer in it, Lieutenant Commander Dusty Duncan piped up:

"Maddock, is it? I heard you grunt and cuss just now. How are you making it?"

"Fine and dandy, sir," answered the fireman, by no means cordial. "It's a hell of a long swim to port."

"Right you are. Our people have drifted away from us. I went down with the ship—she was in such a blazing hurry to plunge under—and I reckon they thought I was done for."

"You're in a bad fix now," declared Maddock. "Grab hold of this piece of bulkhead of mine. I've a good mind to shove you under, but it don't seem quite fair."

"Oh, don't put yourself out if you feel that way," murmured the undaunted skipper.

"You surely have treated me mean," asserted Maddock. "It 'u'd serve you right. Here, you shrimp, lay hold of this raft of mine."

Duncan laughed and obeyed orders. They floated a little while, but the weight of the

two men was sagging the bit of bulkhead under water and Maddock perceived that the commander had almost no strength left. Swearing in a scandalous manner, the fireman looped his broken belt about Duncan's shoulders and caught it over a spike in the broken timber. Then the giant of the stoke-hole, impervious to cold and exposure, loosened his own hold of the wretched little raft and swam near by.

One of the boats found them two hours later, Duncan unconscious but alive, Bull Maddock still afloat although almost rigid. Soon after daybreak a French patrol boat gathered them up and fled back to their own port to give them over to the care of the American admiral. The radio carried the news and a crowd from the other yachts was waiting to welcome the survivors of the *Albacore*. Some were put into ambulances, but Bull Maddock walked down the gangway. With him was Spencer Lucas, pallid and limping but anxious to be sent to another ship.

Lieutenant Commander Dusty Duncan made a brave attempt to carry it off, but his gait wobbled and his navigator steadied him with an arm until they were on the wharf. The skipper of the *Albacore* sat down upon a coil of hawser to watch his men brought ashore. Presently he turned and jumped to his feet, all pain and weariness forgotten. A woman, charming and youthful, was hastening toward him and the light in her face was very wonderful. Those who saw them meet were tactful enough to look elsewhere, but Bull Maddock stared rudely and with his mouth open. Miss Penfield had kissed the lieutenant commander who seemed not in the least surprised.

"My Gawd, what do you think of that?" muttered Bull Maddock.

"They are engaged to be married, you big simp," chided the scholarly Spencer Lucas. "Everybody knows that. It happened before they left home."

The fireman grinned, groped with the problem, and announced with great good humor:

"Listen, kid. I've been tryin' to dope out what kind of a present I could give her. She was good to me, all right. This looks as if I win, for in giving her the skipper I guess I made a hit."

The Wolf Pack

By Caroline Lockhart

Author of "The Man from the Bitter Roots," Etc.

We consider it an event when a novel of Caroline Lockhart's comes into our hands. She is one of the few women who get our story angle, and she is one of the few writers of either sex with a strong sense of humor. In this novel she has set for herself a tremendous task which we think she has achieved most credibly. However, we leave it to our readers' judgment. There is a big canvas in the story, a whole community in fact, and the characters are as real as your own neighbors. Kate, the heroine, dominates the scene, and works out a career against odds that would have given pause to even the most stout-hearted man. It is a story worth reading and rereading, and we hope none of our readers will miss it.

(A Four-Part Novel)

CHAPTER I.

THE SAND COULEE ROAD HOUSE.

A HEAVILY laden freight wagon, piled high with ranch supplies, stood in the dooryard before the long log house. The yard was fenced with crooked cottonwood poles so that it served also as a corral, around which the leaders of the freight team wandered, stripped of their harness, looking for a place to roll.

A woman dressed for utility alone, in a short denim skirt, man's coat and Stetson hat and a flannel shirt, with a boy's stout brogans on her small feet, stood on tiptoe gritting her teeth in exasperation as she tugged at the checkrein on the big wheel horse which stuck obstinately in the ring. When she loosened it finally, she stooped and looked under the horse's neck at the girl of fourteen or thereabouts, who was unharnessing the horse on the other side. "Good God, Kate," exclaimed the woman irritably in a croaking voice, "how many times must I tell you to unhook the traces before you do up the lines? One of these days you'll have the damnedest runaway in seven States."

The girl, whose thoughts, obviously, were not on what she was doing, obeyed immediately, and without replying, looped up the heavy traces, throwing and tying the

lines over the hames with experienced hands.

The resemblance between mother and daughter was so slight that it might be said not to exist at all. It was clear that Kate's wide, thoughtful eyes, generous mouth and softly curving but firm chin came from the other side, as did her height. Already she was half a head taller than the short, wiry, tough-fibered woman with the small, hard features who was known throughout the southern half of Wyoming as "Jezebel of the Sand Coulee."

A long, flat braid of fair hair swung below the girl's waist and on her cheeks a warm, rich red showed through the golden tan. Her slim, straight figure was eloquent of suppleness and strength and her movements, quick, purposeful, showed decision and activity of mind. They were as characteristic as her directness of speech.

The Sand Coulee Road House was a notorious place. The woman who kept it called herself Isabel Bain—Bain having been the name of one of the numerous husbands from whom she had separated to remarry in another State, without the formality of a divorce. She was noted not only for her remarkable horsemanship, but for her exceptional handiness with a rope and branding iron and her inability to distinguish her neighbors' live stock from her own.

The bewildering frequency with which she changed mates and the bluntness with which she dismissed them when she tired, formed one of the country's jests, contributing its share to the Sand Coulee's undesirable name.

"Pete Mullendore's gettin' in." There was a frown on Kate's face as she spoke and uneasiness in the glance she sent toward the string of pack horses filing along the fence. "He's welcome." Then, warningly: "Don't you pull off any of your tantrums—you treat him right."

"I'll treat him right," hotly, "as long as he behaves himself. - Mother," with entreaty in her voice, "won't *you* settle him if he gets fresh?"

"He's known you since you were kickin' in a crib. You're too touchy; he's just plaguin' you," Isabel answered.

"Nobody else plagues me the way he does," the girl responded.

The woman only laughed carelessly, and as the gate of the corral scraped when Mullendore pulled it open to herd a saddle horse and pack ponies through, she called out in her harsh croak:

"Hello, Pete!"

"Hello yourself," he answered, but he looked at her daughter.

As soon as they were through the gate the pack ponies stopped and stood with spreading legs and drooping heads while Mullendore sauntered over to Kate and laid a hand familiarly on her shoulder.

"Ain't you got a howdy for me, kid?"

She moved aside and began stripping the harness from the horse for the quite evident purpose of avoiding his touch.

"You'd better get them packs off," she replied curtly. "Looks like you'd got on three hundred pounds."

"Wouldn't be surprised. Them bear traps weigh twenty poun' each, and green hides don't feel like feathers, come to pack 'em over the trail I've come."

• Kate looked at him for the first time.

"I wisht I was a man! I bet I'd work you over for the way you abuse your stock!"

Mullendore laughed.

"Glad you ain't, Katie—but not because I'd be afraid of gettin' beat up."

He looked her up and down with mocking significance. "Say, but you'll make a great squaw for some feller. Been thinkin' I'd make a deal with your mother to take you back to the mountings with me when I go.

I'll learn you how to tan hides, and a lot of things you don't know."

"Yes, I'd *like* to tan hides for *you*, Pete Mullendore! When I get frostbit in August I'll go, but not before."

He replied easily:

"You ain't of age yet, Katie, and you have to mind your maw. I've got an idee that she'll tell you to go if *I* say so."

"A whole lot my mother would mind what *you* say!" Yet in spite of her defiance a look of fear crossed the girl's face.

She slipped her arm through the harness and started toward a shed, Mullendore following with his slouching walk, an unprepossessing figure in his faded overalls, black-and-white Mackinaw coat, and woolen cap.

The trapper was tall and lank, with a pair of curious, unforgettable eyes looking out from a swarthy face that told of Indian blood. They were round rather than the oblong shape to be expected in his type, and the iris a muddy blue-gray. The effect was indescribably unique, and was accentuated by the coal-black lashes and straight black brows which met above a rather thick nose. He had a low forehead, and when he grinned his teeth gleamed like ivory in his dark face. He boasted of Apache-Mexican blood "with a streak of white."

While Kate hung the harness on its peg, Mullendore waited for her outside.

"My! My! Katie," he leered at her as she came back, "but you're gettin' to be a big girl! Them legs looked like a couple of pitchfork handles when I went away, and now the shape they've got!"

He laughed in malicious enjoyment as he saw the color rise to the roots of her hair; and when she would have passed, reached out and grasped her arm.

"Let me be, Pete Mullendore!" She tried to pull loose.

"When you've give me a kiss." There was a flame in the muddy eyes.

With a twist she freed herself and cried with fury vibrating in her voice: "I hate you—I hate you! You"—she sought for a sufficiently opprobrious word—"nigger!" And with all her young strength she struck him a stinging blow across the cheek.

Mullendore lurched with the force of it, and in the dazed second that passed his face took on a peculiar ashiness. Then with an oath and a choking snarl of rage he jumped for her. Kate's long braid just escaped his finger tips.

"Mother! Mother! Make him quit!" There was terror in the shrill cry as the girl ran toward the freight wagon. The response to the appeal came in a hard voice:

"You needn't expect me to take up your fights. You finish what you start."

Kate gave her mother a swift, despairing look and ran toward the pack ponies, with Mullendore now close at her heels. Spurred by fear, she dodged in and out, doubling and redoubling, endeavoring to keep a pony between herself and her pursuer. Once or twice a fold of her skirt slipped through his grasp, but she was young and fleet of foot, and after the game of hare and hounds had kept up for a few minutes her pursuer's breath was coming short and labored. Finally he stopped.

"You little——" He panted the epithet. "I'll fix you yet!"

She glared at him across a pony's neck and ran out her tongue. Then defiantly:

"I ain't scairt of you!"

A soft, drawling, mocking voice made them both turn quickly.

"As an entirely impartial and unbiased spectator, friend, I should say that you are outclassed." The man addressed himself to Mullendore. The stranger unobserved had entered by the corral gate. He was a typical sheep-herder in looks if not in speech, even to the collie that stood by his side. He wore a dusty, high-crowned black hat, overalls, and a Mackinaw coat, with a woolen scarf twisted about his neck, and in his hand he carried a gnarled staff. His expressive eyes had a humorously cynical light lurking in their brown depths.

Mullendore did not reply, but with another oath began to untie the lash rope from the nearest pack.

"Wonder if I could get a drink of water?"

The stranger turned to Kate as he spoke, lifting his hat to disclose a high, white forehead—a forehead as fine as it was unexpected in a man trailing a bunch of sheep. The men who raised their hats to the women of the Sand Coulee were not numerous, and Kate's eyes widened perceptibly before she replied heartily:

"Sure you can."

Jezebel, who had come up leading the big wheel horse said significantly: "Somethin' stronger, if you like."

The fierce eagerness, the craving hunger which leaped into the stranger's eyes flaunted his weakness, yet he did not jump

at the offer she held out. The struggle in his mind was obvious as he stood looking uncertainly into the face that was stamped with the impress of wide and sordid experiences. Kate's voice broke the short silence:

"He said 'water,' mother." She spoke sharply, and with a curt inclination of her head to the sheep-herder, added: "The water barrel's at the back door, mister. Come with me."

Apparently this made his decision for him, for he followed the girl at once, while Jezebel with a shrug walked on with the horse.

Kate handed the stranger the long-handled tin dipper and watched him gravely while he drank the water in gulps, draining it to the last drop.

"Guess you're a booze fighter, mister," she observed casually, much as she might have commented that his unkempt beard was brown. Amusement twinkled in his eyes at the personal remark and her utter unconsciousness of having said anything at which by any chance he could take offense, but he replied noncommittally:

"I've put away my share, miss."

"I can always pick 'em out. Nearly all the freighters and cow-punchers that stop here get drunk."

He looked at her quizzically.

"The trapper you were playing tag with when I came looks as if he might be ugly when he'd had too much."

He was startled by the intensity of the expression which came over her face as she said between her clenched teeth:

"I hate that breed!"

"He isn't just the pardner," dryly, "that I'd select for a long camping trip."

Her pupils dilated and she lowered her voice:

"He's *ornery*—Pete Mullendore."

As though in response to his name, that person came around the corner with his bent-kneed slouch, giving to the girl as he passed a look so malignant, and holding so unmistakable a threat, that it chilled and sobered the stranger who stood leaning against the water barrel. The girl returned it with a stare of brave defiance, but her hand trembled as she returned the dipper to its nail. She looked at him wistfully, and with a note of entreaty in her voice asked:

"Why don't you camp here to-night, mister?"

The sheep-herder shook his head.

"I've got to get on to the next water hole."

I have five hundred head of ewes in the road and they haven't had a drink for close to two days. They're getting hard to hold."

Kate volunteered:

"You've about a mile and a half to go."

"Yes, I know. Well—s'long, and good luck!" He reached for his sheep-herder's staff and once more raised his hat with a manner which spoke of another environment. Before he turned the corner of the house an impulse prompted him to look back. Involuntarily he all but stopped. Her eyes had in them a despairing look that seemed a direct appeal for help. But he smiled at her, touched his hat brim and went on. The girl's look haunted him as he trudged along the road in the thick, white dust kicked up by the tiny hoofs of the moving sheep.

"She's afraid of that breed," he thought, and tried to find comfort in telling himself that there was no occasion for alarm, with her mother, hard-visaged as she was, within call. Yet as unconsciously he kept glancing back at the lonely road house, sprawling squat and ugly on the desolate sweep of sand and sagebrush, the only sign of human habitation within the circle of the wide horizon, he had the same sinking feeling at the heart which came to him when he had had to stand helpless watching a coyote pull down a lamb. It was in vain he argued that there was nothing to do but what he had done—go on and mind his own business—for the child's despairing, reproachful eyes followed him and his heavy-hearted uneasiness remained with him after he had reached the water hole. While the sheep grazed after drinking he pulled the pack from the burro that carried his belongings. From among the folds of a little tepee tent he took out a marred violin case and laid it carefully on the ground, apart. A couple of cowhide panniers contained his meager food supply and blackened cooking utensils. These, with two army blankets, some extra clothing and a bell for the burro, completed his outfit.

The sheep dog lay with his head on his paws, following every movement with intelligent, loving eyes.

The sheep-herder scraped a smooth place with the side of his foot, set up his tepee and spread the blankets inside.

By the time the herder had eaten, washed his dishes and finished his pipe, the sun was well below the horizon and the sky in the west a riot of pink and amber and red. The

well-trained sheep fed back and dropped down in twos and threes on a spot not far from the tepee where it pleased their fancy to bed. Save for the distant tinkle of the bell on the burro and the stirring of the sheep, the herder might have been alone in the universe.

When he had set his dishes and food back in the panniers and covered them with a piece of "tarp," in housewifely orderliness, he opened the black case and took out the violin with a care that amounted to tenderness, a faint smile, and an anticipatory gleam in his brown eyes. The first stroke of the bow bespoke the trained hand. He did not sit, but knelt in the sand with his face to the west as he played like some pagan sun worshiper, his expression rapt, intent. Strains from the world's best music rose and fell in throbbing sweetness on the desert stillness, music which told beyond peradventure that some cataclysm in the player's life had shaken him from his rightful niche. It proclaimed this travel-stained sheep-herder in his faded overalls and peak-crowned, limp-brimmed hat another of the incongruities of the Far West.

While he poured out his soul with only the sheep and the tired collie sleeping on its paws for audience, the gorgeous sunset died and a chill wind came up, scattering the gray ashes of the camp fire and swaying the tepee tent. Suddenly he stopped and shivered a little in spite of his woolen shirt.

"Dog-gone!" he said abruptly, aloud, as he put the violin away, "I can't get that kid out of my thoughts!"

Though he could not have told why he did so, or what he might, even remotely, expect to hear, he stood and listened intently before he stooped and disappeared for the night between the flaps of the tent.

He turned often between the blankets of his hard bed, disturbed by uneasy dreams quite unlike the deep oblivion of his usual sleep.

"Oh, mister! Where are you?"

The sheep-herder stirred uneasily.

"Please—please, mister, won't you speak?"

The plaintive, pleading cry was tremulous and faint like the voice of a disembodied spirit floating somewhere in the air. This time he sat up with a start.

"It's only me—Katie Prentice, from the road house. Don't be scairt."

The wail was closer. There was no mis-

take. Then the dog barked. The man threw back the blanket and sprang to his feet. It took only a moment to get into his clothes and step out into a night that had turned pitch dark.

"Where are you?" he called.

"Oh, mister!" The shrill cry held gladness and relief.

Then she came out of the blackness, the ends of a white nubia and a little shoulder cape snapping in the wind, her breath coming short in a sound that was a mixture of exhaustion and sobs.

"I was afraid I couldn't find you till daylight. I heard a bell, but I didn't know where to go, it's such a dark night. I ran all the way, nearly, till I played out."

"What's the row?" he asked gently.

She slipped both arms through one of his and hugged it convulsively, while in a kind of hysteria she begged:

"Don't send me back, mister! I won't go! I'll kill myself first. Take me with you—please, please let me go with you!"

"Tell me what it's all about."

She did not answer, and he urged:

"Go on. Don't be afraid. You can tell me anything."

"Pete Mullendore, he——"

A gust of wind blew the shoulder cape back and he saw her bare arm with the sleeve of her dress hanging by a shred.

"He did this?"

"Yes. He—insulted—me—— I—can't—tell—you—what—he—said."

"And then?"

"I scratched him and bit him. I fought him all over the place. He was chokin' me. I got to a quirt and struck him on the head with the handle. It was loaded. He dropped like he was dead. I ran to my room and clum out the window——"

"Your mother?"

"She—laughed."

— "What!" He stooped and picked up the little bundle she had dropped at her feet. "Come along, partner. You are going into the sheep business with 'Mormon Joe.'"

CHAPTER II.

AN HISTORIC OCCASION.

The experienced ear of Major Stephen Douglass Prouty told him that he was getting a hot axle. The hard, dry squeak from the rear wheel of the "democrat" had but one meaning—he had forgotten to grease it.

This would seem an inexcusable oversight in a man who expected to make forty miles before sunset, but in this instance there was an extenuating circumstance. Immediately after breakfast there had been a certain look in his hostess' eye which had warned him that if he lingered he would be asked to assist with the churning. Upon observing it, he had started for the barn to harness with a celerity that approached a trot.

Long years of riding the grub line had developed in the major a gift for recognizing the exact psychological moment when he had worn out his welcome as company and was about to be treated as one of the family and sicked on the woodpile, that was like a sixth sense.

He leaned from under the edge of the large cotton umbrella which shaded him amply, and squinted at the sun. He judged that it was noon exactly. His intention seemed to be communicated to his horses by telepathy, for they both stopped with a suddenness which made him lurch forward.

"It's time to eat, anyhow," he said aloud as he recovered his balance with the aid of the dashboard, disentangled his feet from the long skirts of his linen duster and sprang over the wheel with the alacrity of a man who took a keen interest in food. Unhooking the traces, he led the team to one side of the road, slipped off the bridles and replaced them with nose bags containing each horse's allotment of oats—extracted from the bin of his most recent host. Then he searched in the bottom of the wagon until he found a monkey wrench which he applied to the nut and twirled dexterously once it was started. Canting the wheel, he moistened his finger tip and touched the exposed axle.

"Red hot! Lucky I stopped."

He left it to cool and reached under the seat for a pasteboard shoe box and bore it to the side of the road, where he saw a convenient rock. Both the eagerness of hunger and curiosity was depicted on his face as he untied the twine which secured it. He was wondering if she had put in any cheese. The major especially liked cheese and had not failed to mention the fact when his hostess had let drop the information that a whole one had come in with the last freight wagon from town. He removed the cover and his smile of anticipation gave place to a look of astonishment and incredulity. It was difficult to believe his eyes! Not

only was there no cheese, but that chicken wing and back which had been left on the platter last night, and which he had been as sure of as though he had put them in himself, was not in the box. He felt under the paper as though hoping against hope that the box contained a false bottom where the chicken might be concealed. There was no deception. He saw all there was.

"Sinkers!" His voice expressed infinite disappointment and disgust.

On his left the sand and sagebrush, cacti and sparse bunch grass was bounded by the horizon; behind him, in front of him, it was the same; only on the right was the monotony broken by foothills and beyond, a range of purple, snow-covered peaks. From the slight elevation, or "bench," upon which he sat, he looked down upon a greasewood flat where patches of alkali gleamed dazzling white under the noonday sun. The flat was quarter-circled by a waterless creek upon whose banks grew a few misshapen and splintered cottonwoods.

The countless millions of nearly invisible gnats that breed in alkali bogs sighted the major and promptly rose in swarms to settle upon his ears and in the edges of his hair. He fanned them away automatically and without audible comment. Perhaps they served as a counterirritant; at any rate, the sting of the indignity put upon him by what he termed a "hobo lunch" grew gradually less, and was finally forgotten in more agreeable thoughts.

In the distance there was an interesting cloud of dust. Was it cattle, loose horses, or some one coming that way? The major's eyesight was not all it had been, and he could not make out. Since they were coming from the opposite direction, he was sure to have his curiosity gratified. His roving eyes came back to the greasewood flat and rested there speculatively. Suddenly his jaw dropped and a crumb rolled out. He looked as though an apparition had risen before his bulging eyes. Involuntarily he sprang to his feet and cried:

"My Gawd—what a great place to start a town!"

The idea came with such startling force that it seemed to the major as if something broke in his brain. Other ideas followed. They came tumbling over each other in their struggle to get out all at once. A panorama of pictures passed so swiftly before his eyes that it made him dizzy. His eyes gleamed,

the color rose in his weather-beaten cheeks, the hand with which he pointed to the greasewood flat below trembled as he exclaimed in an excitement that made his breath come short:

"The main street'll run up from the creek, and about there I'll put the op'ry house. The hotel'll stand on the corner and we'll git a Carnegie libery for the other end of town. The high school can be over yonder, and we'll keep the saloons to one side of the street. There'll be a park where folks can set, and if I ain't got pull enough to git a fifty-thousand-dollar Federal buildin' I'll eat that 'off' horse!"

Then came the inspiration which made the major stagger back:

"I'll git the post office, and name it—*Prouty!*"

He felt so tremulous that he had to sit down.

It seemed incredible that he had not thought of this before, for deep within him was a longing to have his name figure in the pages of the history of the big, new State. Tombstones blew over, dust storms obliterated graves, photographs faded, but with a town named after him and safely on the map, nobody could forget him if he wanted to.

There was small danger that the major would be obliged to keep his vow in regard of the "off horse," for his assertion concerning his "pull" was no idle boast. There were few men in the State with a wider acquaintance than he, and he was a conspicuous figure around election time. The experience he had acquired in his younger days selling Indian Herb Cough Sirup from the tailboard of a wagon, between two sputtering flambeaux, served him in good stead when later he was called upon to make a few patriotic remarks at a Fourth of July celebration. His rise was rapid from that time until now his services as an orator were so greatly in demand for corner-stone layings and barbecues that, owing to distance between towns, it kept him almost constantly on the road.

The major sold an occasional box of salve, and in an emergency pulled teeth, in addition to the compensation which he received for what was designated privately as his "gift of gab." At the moment, however, he actually suffered because there was no one present to whom he could communicate his thoughts.

The cloud of dust was closer, and a horseman that had ridden out of the creek bed was scrambling up the side of the "bench." He was dressed like a top cow-puncher—silver-mounted saddle, split-ear bridle and hand-forged bit. He was familiar with the type, though this particular individual was unknown to him.

"Howdy!" The cowboy let the reins slip through his fingers so his horse could feed, and sagged sidewise in the saddle.

"How are you, sir!" There was nothing in the dignified restraint of the major's response to indicate that his vocal cords ached for exercise and he was fairly quivering in his eagerness for an ear to talk into. There was a silence in which he removed a nose bag, bridled and shoved a horse against the tongue.

"Back, can't ye!"

"Nooned here, I reckon?"

The major thought of his chickenless hand-out and his face clouded.

"I et a bite."

"Thought maybe you was in trouble when I first see you."

"Had a hot box, but I don't call that trouble." He added humorously: "I can chop my wagon to pieces and be on the road again in twenty minutes, if I got plenty of balin' wire."

The cowboy laughed so appreciatively that the major inquired ingratiatingly:

"I b'leve your face is a stranger to me, ain't it?"

"I don't mind meetin' up with you before. I've just come to the country, as you might say."

The major waited for further information, but since it was not forthcoming he ventured:

"What might I call your name, sir?"

The cowboy shifted his weight uneasily and hesitated. He said finally while the red of his shiny, sun-blistered face deepened perceptibly:

"My name is supposed to be Teeters—Clarence Teeters."

As a matter of fact he *knew* that his name was Teeters, but injecting an element of doubt into it in this fashion seemed somehow to make the telling easier. Teeters was bad enough, but combined with Clarence! Only Mr. Teeters knew the effort it cost him to tell his name to strangers. He added with the air of a man determined to make a clean breast of it:

"I'm from Missouri."

The major's hand shot out unexpectedly. "Shake!" he cried warmly. "I was drug up myself at the feet of the Ozarks."

"I pulled out when I was a kid and wrangled 'round consider'ble." Teeters made the statement as an extenuating circumstance.

"I took out naturalization papers myself," replied the major good-humoredly. "My name is Prouty—Stephen Douglass Prouty. You'll prob'ly hear of me consider'ble if you stay in the country. The fact is, I'm thinkin' of startin' a town and namin' it Prouty."

"Shoo—you don't say so!" In polite inquiry: "Whur?"

"Thur!"

Mr. Teeters looked a little blank as he stared at the town site indicated.

"It seems turrible fur from water," he commented finally.

"Sink—drill—artesian well—maybe we'll strike a regular subterranean river. Anyway, 'twould be no trick at all to run a ditch from Dead Horse Cañon and get all the water we want for household use and irrigatin' purposes." He waved his arm at the distant mountains and settled that objection.

"I've got to be movin'," the major continued. "I'm on my way from a corner-stone layin' at Buffalo Waller to a barbecue at No-Cross Crick. I'd kind of an orator," he added modestly.

"And I got about three hundred head of calves to drag to the fire, if I kin git my rope on 'em," said Teeters, straightening in the saddle.

The major asked in instant interest:

"Oh, you're workin' for that wealthy Eastern outfit?"

"Don't know how wealthy they be, but they're plenty Eastern," Teeters replied dryly.

"I was thinkin' I might stop overnight with 'em and git acquainted. The Scissors outfit can't be more'n fifteen mile out of my way, and it'll be a kind of a change from the Widder Taylor's, whur I stop generally."

The cowboy combed the horse's mane with his fingers in silence. After waiting a reasonable time for the invitation which should have been forthcoming, the major inquired:

"They're—sociable, ain't they?"

"They ain't never yit run out in the road

and drug anybody off his horse," replied Teeters grimly. "They charge four bits a meal to strangers."

"What?" Surely his ears had deceived him.

Inspired by the major's dumfounded expression, the cowboy continued:

"They have their big meal at night and call it dinner, and they wash their hands at the table when they git done eatin', and Big Liz has to lope in from the kitchen when she hears the bell tinkle and pass 'em somethin' either one of 'em could git by reachin'. Most any meal I look fur her to hit one of 'em between the horns."

The major stared round-eyed, breathless, like a child listening to a fairy tale which he feared would end if he interrupted.

"In the evenin' the boss puts on a kind of eatin' jacket, a sawed-off coat that makes a growed man look plumb foolish, and she comes out in silk and satin that shows considerable hide, Big Liz tells me. Have you met this here Toomey?"

"Not yit; that's a pleasure still in store for me."

"Pleasure!" exclaimed Teeters, who took the polite phrase literally. "More like you'll want to knock his head off. Old-timer," he leaned confidentially over the saddle horn, "sein' as you're from Missouri, I'll tell you private that you'd better keep on travelin'. Company ain't wanted at the Scissors Outfit, and they'd high-tone it over you so 'twouldn't be no ways enjoyable."

"There is plenty of ranches where I *am* welcome," replied the major with dignity. "I kin make the Widder Taylor's by sundown."

"Miss Maggie plays good on the pianner," Teeters commented, expectorating violently to conceal a certain embarrassment.

"And the doughnuts the old lady keeps in that crock on the kitchen table is worth a day's ride to git to." The major closed an eye, and with the other looked quizzically at Teeters, adding: "If it wa'n't for Starlight——"

"Starlight is shore some Injun," replied the cowboy, grinning understandingly.

"Now what for an outfit's that?" The moving cloud of dust which the major had forgotten in his keen interest in the conversation was almost upon them. "A band of woolies, a pack burro, one feller walkin', and another ridin'."

The cowboy's eyes were unfriendly, though he made no comment as they waited.

"Howdy!" called the major genially as, with a nod, the herder would have passed without speaking.

The stranger responded briefly, but stopped.

"Come fur?" inquired the major sociably.

"Utah."

"Goin' fur?"

"Until I find a location. I rather like the looks of this section."

"Sheep spells 'trouble' in this country," said the cowboy significantly.

"Think so?" indifferently.

Seeing Teeters was about to say something further, the major interrupted:

"What might I call your name, sir?"

"Just say 'Joe' and I'll answer."

The major looked a trifle disconcerted, but in his rôle of master of ceremonies continued:

"I'll make you acquainted with Mr. Teeters."

The two men nodded coldly.

To break the strained silence the major observed:

"Got a boy helpin' you, I notice."

"Girl," replied the sheep-herder briefly.

"Girl? Oh, I see! Them overalls deceived me. Daughter, I presume."

"Pardner," laconically.

The major looked incredulous, but said nothing, and while he sought for something further to say in order to prolong the conversation they all turned abruptly at the rattle of stones.

"The boss," said Teeters sardonically from the corner of his mouth, and added: "That's a young dude that's visitin'."

Toomey was perfectly equipped for a ride in Central Park. He looked an incongruous and alien figure in the setting in his English riding clothes and boots. The lad who accompanied him was dressed in exaggerated cowboy regalia.

Toomey used a double bit and now brought his foaming horse to a short stop with the curb. He vouchsafed the unimportant "natives" in the road only a brief glance, but addressed himself to Teeters.

"Where have you been?" he demanded in a sharp tone.

"I ain't been lost," replied Teeters calmly. "Where would I be 'cept huntin' stock?"

"Why didn't you follow me?"

"I think too much of my horse to jam him over rocks when there ain't no special call for it. I kin ride on a run 'thout fallin' off when they's need to."

Toomey's brilliant black eyes flashed. Swallowing the impudence of these Western hirelings was one of the hardest things he had to endure in his present life. Even he could see that Teeters thoroughly understood cattle, else he would have long since discharged him.

"I've ridden about ten extra miles trying to keep you in sight."

"If you'd let them sturrups out like I told you and quit tryin' to set down standin' up, ridin' wouldn't tire you so much." Teeters looked at the English pigskin saddle in frank disgust.

Toomey ignored the criticism and said arrogantly:

"I want you to follow me from now on."

An ominous glint came in the cowboy's eye, but he still grinned.

"I wa'n't broke to foller. Never was handled right when I was a colt. Don't you wait for me, feller, you jest sift along in and I'll come when I git done."

Judging from the expression on Toomey's face, it seemed to the major an opportune time to interrupt.

"Since nobody aims to introduce us——" he began good-naturedly, extending a hand. "My name is Prouty—Stephen Douglass Prouty. You've heard of me, like as not."

"Can't say I have," replied Toomey in a tone that made the major flush as he shook the extended hand without warmth.

To cover his confusion, the major turned to the sheep-herder whose soft, brown eyes held an amused look.

"Er—Joe—I'll make you acquainted with Mr. Jasper Toomey, one of our leadin' stockmen in these parts."

The introduction received from Toomey the barest acknowledgment as he directed his gaze to the grazing sheep.

"Where you taking them?" he asked in a curt tone.

"I really couldn't tell you yet."

Toomey glanced at him sharply, attracted by the cultivated tone.

"I wouldn't advise you to locate here; this is my range."

"Own it?" inquired the herder mildly.

"N-no."

"Lease it?"

"N-no."

"No good reason then is there to keep me out?"

"Except," darkly, "this climate isn't healthy for sheep."

"Perhaps," gently, "I'm the best judge of that."

"You'll keep on going, if you follow my advice." The tone was a threat.

"I hardly ever take advice that's given unasked."

"Well—you'd better take this."

The sheep-herder looked at him speculatively, with no trace of resentment in his mild eyes.

"Let me see," reflectively. "It generally takes an Easterner who comes West to show us how to raise stock, from three to five years to go broke. I believe I'll stick around a while; I may be able to pick up something cheap a little later."

A burst of ringing laughter interrupted this unexpected clash between the strangers. It was clear that the lack of harmony did not extend to their young companions, for the lad and the girl seemed deeply interested in each other as their ponies grazed with heads together. The immediate cause of their laughter was the boy's declaration that when he came to see the girl he intended to wear petticoats.

When their merriment had subsided she demanded:

"Don't you like my overalls?"

He looked her over critically—at her face with the frank, gray eyes and the vivid red of health glowing through the tan to give it a warm coloring, at the long, flat braid of fair hair, which hung below the cantle of the saddle; at her slender bare feet thrust through the stirrups.

"You'd look pretty in anything," he responded gallantly.

She detected the evasion and persisted: "But you think I'd look nicer in dresses, don't you?"

Embarrassed, he responded hesitatingly: "You see—down South where I come from the girls all wear white and lace and ribbon sashes and carry parasols and think a lot about their complexions. You're just—different."

The herder waved his arm. "Way 'round 'em, Shep," and the sheep began moving.

"Good-by." The girl gathered up the reins reluctantly.

"You didn't tell me your name."

"Katie Prentice."

"Mine's Hughie Disston," he added, his black eyes shining with friendliness. "Maybe I'll see you again some time."

She answered shyly: "Maybe."

Toomey started away at a gallop calling sharply: "Come on, Hughie!"

The boy followed with obvious reluctance, sending a smile over his shoulder when he found that the girl was looking after him.

"Hope you make out all right with your town," said Teeters politely as, ignoring his employer's instructions, he turned his horse's head in a direction of his own choosing.

"No doubt about it," replied the major briskly, gathering up the lines and bringing the stub of a whip down with a thwack upon each back impartially. "S'long!" He waved it at the girl and sheep-herder. "I trust you'll find a location to suit you."

"Pardner," said Mormon Joe suddenly when the major was a blur in a cloud of dust and the horsemen were specks in the distance, "this looks like home to me, somehow. There ought to be great sheep feed over there in the foothills and summer range in the mountains. What do you think of it?"

"Oh, goody!" the girl cried eagerly. "Isn't it funny, I was hoping you'd say that."

He looked at her quizzically. "Tired of trailing sheep, Katie, or do you think you might have company?"

She flushed in confusion, but admitted honestly: "Both, maybe."

CHAPTER III.

PROUTY.

Whenever its founder's thoughts dwelt upon Prouty his eyes held the brooding tenderness of a patron saint. St. Genevieve hovering over Paris must wear the same rapt look as, with a beatific smile, the major hung over the hitching rack in front of the post office listening to the rat-a-tat of the hammer and the zz-zz-zz of the saw. The sound came from the opera house going up at the corner of Prouty Avenue and Wildwood Street.

In other words, the major's dream was an accomplished fact, and Prouty was indelibly on the map.

Hiram Butefish passed.

"How are you, major—sunnin' yourself?" Enthusiastically: "Tell *you*, looks like we're goin' to have a big turnout to-night."

"I trust so, Hiram."

Aside from himself, no one person had contributed more to Prouty's growth than the editor of *The Prouty Grit*.

Mr. Butefish had arrived among the first with the intention of opening a plumbing shop, but since the water supply was furnished by a windmill in the center of the town, the demand for his services was not apt to be great for some time to come, so, with true Western resourcefulness, he bought the hand press of a defunct sheet and became a molder of public opinion. The optimistic editorials of *The Grit* were mailed broadcast, and Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri responded nobly to its impassioned appeals to come out and help build an empire and found a metropolis before all the choice land and lots were gobbled up.

Boundless enthusiasm, optimism unrestrained, was the keynote of the new town. The newcomers walked with their heads in the clouds and their eyes on the roseate future which was somehow to bring them affluence.

The major's eyes lingered lovingly upon the not too handsome yellow structure at the end of the wide Main Street, known as the Prouty House, upon the White Hand Laundry, an unmistakable milestone on the road of Progress heralding the fact that the day was not far distant when a boiled shirt on the streets of Prouty would cease to cause comment. Three saloons, the Prouty General Merchandise Emporium, a blacksmith shop and Doc Fussel's Drug Store completed the list of business enterprises as yet, but three others were in contemplation and two under way.

While the major stood, a slight figure in a black, tall-crowned hat turned a corner and came down the street. An observer might have noted that the major's expression became a shade less benevolent when his failing eyesight finally enabled him to make out who it was.

It had reached his ears that Mormon Joe had said that Prouty had no more future than a prairie-dog town. The fact that he had been drinking did not palliate the offense, for undoubtedly he had expressed his true thoughts.

Who was he anyhow? the major demanded of himself. Of what benefit to a community was a man like that? He had built himself a ten-by-twelve tar-paper shack on a vacant lot to save hotel bills when business

brought him to town. He sent away for the few provisions that he bought, and the little money he spent was over the bar of the Prouty House—upon himself. It was not known that he ever had asked any one to join him in a drink.

He had taken up a homestead and desert claim twenty miles back in the hills where he lived in a couple of tents with a girl who was said to be the daughter of Jezebel of the Sand Coulee. He had been there a couple of years running a little band of sheep and still not a house to his back. Yes, he ruminated as the object of his thoughts leaned against the post which supported the sign of the White Hand Laundry, the fellow was an undesirable citizen and undoubtedly a bad lot.

Suddenly the major's face brightened and he straightened up, alert. There, that was the kind of man that helped a town! Spent money like a prince—with both hands—put some ginger into the place whenever he came. A few more moneyed people like the Jasper Toomeys and the country's future was assured.

While Mormon Joe leaned against the post bearing the sign which announced that the White Hand Laundry was prepared to do "both fancy starched and flat work" at reasonable rates, Toomey sitting high-headed and arrogant in a smart Brewster cart turned the corner by the Prouty House and clattered down the street. He brought the fretting, velvet-mouthed horse to a sharp standstill in front of the laundry where, reaching under the seat, he drew forth a bag which he tossed into the sheepman's arms, saying casually:

"Take that inside, my man."

Instinctively, Mormon Joe caught it. Then at Toomey's words he rolled it compactly, making a kind of football of it and without a change of expression kicked it over the horse's back into the middle of the street where it lay with one of its owner's garments protruding.

"T'hell with you and your laundry," he said calmly. "I don't wear brass buttons."

There was a vein under one of Toomey's eyes and another on his right temple which had a way of swelling and standing out prominent and purple when he was angry. The peculiarity gave his sallow face a violent expression that was altogether ferocious and ugly. They stood out like cords now as he retorted furiously:

"You'll wear stripes instead of brass buttons if you don't quit watering on Bitter Creek, you pauper sheep-herder!"

Mormon Joe studied Toomey's face with impassive curiosity, then with a shrug, as though he had satisfied himself of something, he turned away without replying.

Walter Scales of the Emporium dashed into the street and recovered the laundry.

"There is always an influx of rough characters into a new country," said Mr. Scales apologetically, as though he were somehow responsible and wished to propitiate a customer who bought with such reckless extravagance. "It's best to ignore them. I hope, sir," suavely, "you are planning to stay in for the Boosters Club to-night. We need men like you, and we are confident something tangible in regard to the irrigation ditch will result from the meeting."

Mormon Joe was not honored with any such pressing invitation to attend the meeting of the Boosters Club, which had been called to consider ways and means to build a ditch that would bring water from the mountains. When he was sober he was reserved to the point of taciturnity, transacting his business in the fewest words possible, replying in monosyllables to the occasional sociable remarks addressed to him. But when he had been drinking, it loosed his tongue and brought to the surface another personality. Then the thoughts that he had when sober, his observations and deductions, came forth fluently and in carefully chosen English. Sometimes he expressed himself in pictures of fanciful, even beautiful, imagery, though it passed over the heads of his listeners, who dubbed as foolish what they could not understand, and grinned at the flashes which betrayed the delicate soul of a poet. More often, however, they smarted with resentment under his raillery.

The meeting had been under way for some time and Mr. Abram Pantin, a stranger who was looking about with a view to locating, having been called upon for a few words, was closing his remarks with the conservative statement that an ample water supply was an asset to any community, and he judged from a superficial observation of conditions that it would prove so to Prouty.

Prouty's leading citizens already had spoken—the major, Mr. Scales, Doc Fussel, Tinhorn Frank of the Paradise Saloon, and all had agreed that the only thing needful to make Denver look like a suburb was *water*.

The opinion was unanimous that the enterprise should be financed to as great an extent as possible, by local capital.

Much was expected of the chairman, Mr. Butefish, who followed Mr. Pantin, and he did not disappoint them. Pausing long enough to allow Mormon Joe to settle himself and get quiet, he began by paying a tribute to the two front rows of tousled gentlemen who had been trying for two years to make a living by dry farming.

"The farmer is the bone and sinew of a community," declared Mr. Butefish as impressively as though the phrase were original with himself, while the "bone and sinew," who wore patched shirts and had their faded overalls attached to their galluses with shingle nails, grinned foolishly at thus being singled out. "It's the honest tiller of the soil who furnishes the lifeblood to keep the heart of great cities beatin'. Where," demanded the speaker of an attenuated agriculturist who was oppressed by the knowledge that his oat crop was drying up, "where would New York City be if it wa'n't for men like you?"

The person thus addressed looked startled at this fresh responsibility and moved uneasily.

"Dry farmin' is all right—nobody can dispute that. Kansas has proved it. Time was when there was children in Kansas seven year old that never had saw rain, and now they's a batch of 'em drowned reg'lar every spring. What done it? Turnin' the soil produced moisture and increased the rainfall from nothin' a year to Lord knows how much. But about six different crops of homesteaders dried up and blew off, or starved out, before this come about.

"However, gentlemen, the changin' of a climate takes too much time. Here we've got another way out. We hold the answer in the holla of our hand. Back there in the mountains is a noble stream waitin' to arri-gate a thirsty land! For twenty thousand dollars—an infinitissimal sum—we can plow a ditch that will not only deliver all the water we can use, but enable us to reimburse ourselves by selling rights to the new settlers. It's been did a thousand times and our problem here is so simple that I'm amazed we've delayed as long as we have."

Mr. Butefish produced a handkerchief and dried the inside of his collar as he sat down amidst the indorsement of hearty applause.

The evening had been a veritable love

feast without a jarring note, and everybody glowed with hope and a warm feeling of neighborliness. In the momentary silence following the demonstration of approval a chair squeaked and Mormon Joe got noisily and uncertainly to his feet.

"Mr. Chairman——"

There was a general turning of heads.

"May I have a word?"

The members exchanged annoyed looks.

"Kindly make it brief," replied Mr. Butefish reluctantly. "The club has important business to transact."

"The Greeks have a saying that 'The truth is acid.' They're right. But while it burns it sometimes has a salutary effect." Mormon Joe's tongue was thick and he lurched over the back of the seat in front. "I want to say, being tolerably drunk and therefore frank, that when this town got bigger than a saloon and a blacksmith shop, it overreached itself." There was a sudden tightening of lips and frowning brows. "This is a stock country pure and simple, and it hasn't any more natural resources than a tin-roof."

A general movement of displeasure made the chairs squeak but, oblivious, he went on:

"One-third of the work that these farmers put in trying to make ranches out of arid land would bring them independence where soil and climatic conditions are favorable to raising crops.

"There never was an irrigation project yet that did not cost double and treble the original estimate, and if the whole lot of you contributed your work and every dollar you've got, you haven't money enough to build half that ditch without outside help. If you try it you'll all go broke. You haven't one damned asset but your climate, and you're wasting your time and energy until you figure out some way to realize on that."

Underneath his mocking tone there was a note of earnestness that held his listeners in spite of themselves. Shabby, undersized, partially drunk, he made a figure unheroic and undignified as he stood swaying on his feet, yet there was something in his words which, momentarily, was echoed within them by the still, small voice of caution and common sense. A chill wave of depression swept over them that was like a premonition of ill to come, until Tinhorn growled, glowering under his brows:

"Put him out! A feller like that is a public nuisance."

Mormon Joe went peaceably enough, indifferent to the fact that he had committed the supreme offense in a Western community—he had "knocked" the country. Henceforth and forever he was a marked man, to be discredited; shunned, and if possible crushed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WAGER.

"Here, Hughie, this may interest you." Toomey's thin lips curled in supercilious amusement as he threw an envelope across the table at the boy who had arrived a few days before to spend the summer.

It was an invitation composed and printed by Mr. Butefish, after much mental travail, requesting the pleasure of their company at a reception and dance to be given in the Prouty House to celebrate the third year of Prouty's prosperity and progress.

"You'll go, won't you?" Hughie asked eagerly, after reading it.

"Oh, no," Mrs. Toomey's smile and tone expressed ineffable exclusiveness. "We do not attend these local functions. We never associate with the natives."

The boy's face fell in disappointment.

Mrs. Toomey added, looking at her husband for approval of the suggestion:

"But why don't you go, Hughie? It will be amusing, and you'll enjoy it."

"Sure!" Toomey echoed heartily. "Go and hoe it down with the roughnecks—you'll get a lot of fun out of it."

"But I don't know anybody."

"Don't let that worry you," Toomey responded. "They'll fall over themselves to get acquainted—a lot of bootlickers."

"If there was some girl I could ask to go with me, I'd do it." His black eyes sparkled.

Mrs. Toomey suggested, smiling: "There's Maggie Taylor over in the mountains."

"Then he'd have Teeters after him. The only other female nearer than Prouty is Mormon Joe's Kate." Toomey laughed disagreeably. Then, with animation: "I dare you!"

The boy asked curiously: "What about her? Who is she?"

"Say—by George—you met her, Hughie! When you were here before and we were riding after cattle. We came across a herder driving a little band of sheep, and

there was a girl on horseback, wearing overalls and barefooted."

"I remember! They stopped here then; they didn't go any farther?"

"No, confound 'em!" Toomey's face darkened. "I've had more than one run-in since with that herder over range and water." After a moment he added: "Don't let that stop you, however; go and ask her. You'll get some fun out of it. They live like a couple of Indians back there in the foothills, and she's some greener than alfalfa, I guess. I'll bet you a Navaho saddle blanket that you haven't the nerve to take her to that dance."

"Done!" exclaimed the boy, his eyes dancing. "If it fails me when I see her, you get the blanket."

Hugh Dixon was a tall boy of nineteen now—handsome, attractive, with the soft drawl of his Southern speech, and the easy manners of those who have associated much with womenfolk. He never had forgotten Kate. The barefoot girl in overalls, with her long braid and her candid eyes, was so totally unlike any other he had ever known that she was the one figure that stood out most clearly in his recollection of that summer in the West. Therefore he was more than a little curious to see what she was like—into what sort of young woman she had grown.

One morning early he and Teeters turned off from the main road to the faint trail that led along Bitter Creek back into the hills, where he became all interest when he first caught a glimpse of the white tops of two tepees and an eight-by-ten wall tent shining through the trees.

Teeters listened. The faint tinkle of bells came to their ears.

"We're in luck. I thought they would be out in the hills and we'd have to hunt. They've got the sheep in the corrals—must be cuttin' out."

The corral was a crude affair, built at the minimum of expense of crooked cottonwood poles, willow sticks and brush interlaced. It was divided into three pens, and there was a chute running from the larger into the two smaller pens, the chute being divided at the far end by a wooden gate swinging either way.

Mormon Joe flapped a grain sack over the backs of the sheep still in the larger pen and a leader having started, those behind followed. As they came through on the run,

Kate not only separated the wethers and bucks from the ewes by the slamming of the gate, but noted the crippled and sick and kept count, calling "tally" with each hundred that passed.

It was no mean feat, as even the boy could see, and he watched with unflagging interest until the last sheep was through and Kate called in a tired but jubilant voice while her aching arm dropped limply to her side:

"I don't believe I've made a single mistake this time, Uncle Joe!"

Mormon Joe looked up quickly, and with an expression not too friendly, as Teeters and Hugh rode out of the willows. His face relaxed instantly as he recognized the former, and he called genially:

"How are you, pardner!"

The visitors, since he had taken up the ranch, could be counted on the fingers of one hand, and since they had come through curiosity those who followed were not apt to be overwhelmed with hospitality.

"Maybe you don't remember this here gent," said Teeters, indicating Hugh with his thumb as they rode closer. "He's grown about four feet since you saw him."

Mormon Joe gave Disston a quick glance and extended a hand cordially.

"I do—very well." His tone and manner had the suavity and polish that appeared upon rare occasions, and which was so at variance with his general appearance that it was noticeable to the least observant.

Kate, unaware of the presence of strangers, was in one of the smaller pens catching a wether.

"Behave yourself, can't you?" she admonished, as she held it between her knees and buckled a bell on it. This accomplished, she singled out another while Hugh, leaving Teeters and Mormon Joe to a conversation that did not interest him, rode closer. His face was a mixture of expressions as he watched her—amusement, astonishment, disapproval, mingled with a grudging admiration.

Kate, too, had grown in the interim—tall, straight and slim as an Olympian runner. Her hair swung in a braid far below her waistline, and she wore a high-crowned, black Stetson, now white with corral dust, that quite obviously Mormon Joe had discarded. Her man's blue flannel shirt was faded through much washing, and the ragged sleeves were cut off at the elbow for convenience. Her short skirt was of stiff blue

denim, and a pair of coarse brown-and-white cotton stockings showed between the hem of it and the tops of the heavy boys' shoes which disguised the slenderness of her feet. It would be difficult to imagine clothes that would place a woman at a greater disadvantage, yet Kate managed to be graceful and picturesque in spite of them—a fact which Disston recognized.

She looked up and saw Disston regarding her. Her eyes widened at sight of a stranger, and then when he smiled she knew him instantly. She colored furiously as she walked toward him, becoming suddenly conscious of her clothes and grimy hands and face; besides, she felt intuitively that he was shocked at the work she was doing.

"I remember you," she said frankly. "You're the boy that didn't like my overalls when we trailed the sheep here."

"I was more candid than polite," he answered, laughing. "Anyway, they haven't kept me from riding over on purpose to see you."

"Did you, truly?" She did not attempt to disguise her pleasure.

"Honest," he assured her. "I came to ask if you would like to go to the dance in Prouty."

The radiance that leaped into her face startled him. He looked at her curiously. He had had no idea that such a small thing would mean so much to her.

"Oh, but I *would* like it!" she cried joyously. "I've never been to a dance in all my life! I've never been anywhere since we came into the country! It's so *good* of you to ask me."

"Not a bit of it," he answered, a little shamefacedly, thinking of the wager. "We live so close—eight miles, isn't it?—that we should be neighborly."

She looked at him quizzically.

"The Toomeys don't feel that way about it."

"I'm my own boss," he replied with boyish boastfulness. "I'm not affected by other people's opinions."

He noted with satisfaction that she was impressed and pleased by his independence.

Suddenly her face fell and she said almost tearfully: "But I don't know how to dance—there wouldn't be any fun in going, would there?"

"You don't?" incredulously. He thought everybody knew how to dance—they did where he came from. "Never mind—I can

teach you. It isn't until two weeks from Saturday. I'll ride over often and I'm sure you'll learn in a few lessons. Then at the party I can introduce partners to you who will take you through safely. We'll go in the trap in time for supper and drive out afterward."

"The what?"

"The cart that Mr. Toomey drives," he explained, seeing the word was unfamiliar.

Her face sobered. "I'd rather not. He isn't friendly to Uncle Joe. Let's go on horseback."

"But your clothes," he protested, "you'll want to change in Prouty."

"I can put them in a flour sack," decidedly.

Disston grinned. That *would* be a lark, and give color to the story when he came to tell in Chattanooga how "Mormon Joe's Kate" had tied her ball gown on the back of the saddle.

"Yes, we can do that if you prefer," he conceded.

So it was settled, and they talked of other things, laughing merrily and frequently, while Mormon Joe and Teeters discussed with some gravity the fact that it had been several months since the latter had been able to get any wages out of Toomey.

"Tell you what I think—he's been workin' on borried cap'tal and they're shuttin' down on him. Certain shore he don't spend money like a feller that's made it himself. That kid's old man has got a considerable interest, you can gamble on that, and he'd better pull out or he'll lose his wad, the way it looks to me. O' course, Toomey talks big and throws a bluff. Howsomever, he can't make it stick with me. I'll have my wages when I git ready to leave or take 'em out'n his hide. He's high-toned it over me till it 'u'd only take about six words——" The significant look which Teeters cast at the prominent knuckles on his fist indicated what the wrong six words would do.

Mormon Joe studied the ground. When he looked up he said:

"You hang on a while. Nobody knows what is waiting around the corner, my boy. You may be boss of the Scissors outfit yet."

"Say"—in an awed tone—"a sperrit told me somethin' like that!"

Teeters did not feel called upon to explain that for the privilege of touching little fingers with "Miss Maggie" he put in

many hours which otherwise would have been martyrdom while waiting for the spirits to "take holt."

Perhaps Mormon Joe understood, for he eyed Teeters quizzically and laughed.

Kate did not tell Mormon Joe of her invitation after Hugh and Teeters had ridden away. Perhaps it was that she wanted to have something to talk about when they came back to the camp after a day alone in the hills with the sheep; perhaps it was that for a time she wanted to hug this glorious happiness to her heart before she imparted it; perhaps it was that far back in her subconscious mind there was a fear that he might object. Whatever the reason was, or the combination of all three, she did not tell him until the two bands of sheep were bedded for the night, supper over, the dishes out of the way, and, as was their custom when the evening was not too cold, they were sitting on a couple of boxes watching the stars, while Mormon Joe smoked his pipe.

They talked of the range, of the sheep, congratulating themselves upon the fine condition of the yearling herd and the prospects of the "lamb crop."

Finally, she found opportunity to broach the subject concerning which she felt a quite inexplicable diffidence.

"Uncle Joe, that—boy asked me to go to a dance."

He turned his head quickly. "Where?"

"In Prouty."

"What did you say?"

"That I'd go if you didn't object."

After a silence in which she waited breathless, he asked quietly:

"Do you want to go very much?"

"I can't tell you how much!" She clasped her hands in ecstasy. "It seems too good to be true. I can hardly believe that it's me—that is invited to a dance. Just think, Uncle Joe, I've never been anywhere in the evening once in all my life. I don't know a single girl of my own age, and you could count on the fingers of one hand the women that I'm even acquainted with enough to bow to. I've never heard music except your violin and a couple of phonographs and mouth organs and jew's-harps at the Road House. Why, I don't know anything," she laughed aloud in her happiness, "except what I've learned from the books you've made me read—and *sheep*. Just think," she

hurried on, "he's going to teach me to dance steps and introduce everybody to me, and I'll make a lot of friends, and I'll ask 'em to come and see us. Oh, this is a great event, Uncle Joe"—she laughed gleefully—"what the stories call 'a crisis in my life!'"

Mormon Joe knocked the ashes from his pipe on a corner of the box. All this was a revelation to him. He had not dreamed that she had been lonely, that she had yearned for young companionship.

"What makes you so sure that you will make friends? The children bleated at you that time you went to town, and you said you never would go again."

She protested hastily: "Oh, but they wouldn't do that now—they're grown up, too. Besides, with other outfits in the country, they're used to sheep. But don't you want me to go?" There was a quaver in her voice.

He replied slowly: "I care too much for you to see you put yourself in a position to get hurt."

"But what would anybody hurt me for?" she asked wide-eyed.

"I'm not altogether popular, you know," he replied dryly.

"What has that to do with me? Surely nobody would take it out on me because they didn't happen to like you."

"Perhaps not," reluctantly. "They may be bigger than I give them credit for. I suppose you might as well find out now as any other time."

Silence fell between them, for his unresponsiveness had chilled her enthusiasm somewhat. But he had not forbidden her to go, which was the chief thing.

A howl—prolonged, deep, rose from somewhere back in the hills and floated down the creek. The girl shuddered.

"I wish he hadn't done that—a wolf is bad luck. It always makes me think of black things—treachery—Mullendore." She added after a silence: "We thought he lied, but he must have told the truth when he came after me that time and said mother was sick and couldn't get well. It's queer, too, that we never saw him again, for he isn't the kind to forget such a poundin' as he got from you. Sometimes I'm afraid that——"

"Nonsense—go to sleep!" He patted her shoulder and turned her gently toward her tepee tent.

CHAPTER V.

DISILLUSIONMENT.

It was the most ambitious affair that had been attempted in Prouty, this function at the Prouty House. The printed invitations had made a deep impression since information of this nature had been conveyed heretofore by word of mouth; besides, wild rumors were flying about as to the elaborate costumes that were to be worn by the socially prominent.

He was a dull clod indeed who could not feel the tremors in the air that momentous Saturday. Breathless ladies sped from house to house asking final opinions upon the hang of a skirt, or as to the becomingness of new coiffures.

By night there was not tying space at any hitching rack. Pampered husbands sat down to cold snacks. Children were sent wailing to bed before it was dark, while cats and dogs and chickens went supperless—forgotten in the excitement and disorganization which prevailed.

If the ball loomed so large to the presumably somewhat ennuied townfolk, it may be assumed that Kate's anticipation was no less. As a matter of fact, she could scarcely sleep for thinking of it. She did not know much about God—Mormon Joe was not religious—but she felt vaguely that she must have Him to thank for this wonderful happiness. It was the most important happening since she had run terrified from home that black night three years ago.

Kate interested Hugh. Her exuberant vitality and wholesomeness had their attraction, together with her warm-hearted impulsiveness; her steady-eyed frankness, also, was in contrast to the instinctive feminine subtleties to which he was used even at his age.

"There's no one else around," he told himself, to explain the eagerness with which he rode over while he was teaching Kate to dance.

The boy was intelligent enough to recognize the fact that however unschooled Kate might be in the things that counted in the outside world, she was not ignorant when it came to those within her ken. She knew the habits and peculiarities of wild animals and insects, every characteristic of sheep, and she was a nearly unerring weather prophet through her interpretation of the meaning of wind and sky and clouds. Her

knowledge of botany was a constant surprise to him, for she seemed to know the name and use of the tiniest plant or grass that grew upon the range.

Because of these conjectures the boy took more than a casual interest in the flour sack which Kate tied to the back of her saddle when he came for her the afternoon of the dance.

"I suppose my dress will be wrinkled," she said ruefully, "but perhaps it will shake out."

She had something special then—that was a relief; at least, she did not plan to appear in divided skirt and cowboy riding boots!

Restraining their trembling haste, yet fearing that they might miss something, the initiated townsfolk managed to stay away from the Prouty House until the fashionably late hour of eight, but the simpler rural guests having eaten at six were ready and holding down the chairs in the office before "the music" had arrived. There was a flutter of puzzled inquiry among the early birds when Mrs. Abram Pantin, Mrs. Sudds and Mrs. Myron Neifkins with an air of conscious importance stationed themselves in a row at the door opening into the dining room, which was now being noisily cleared of tables and chairs.

Mrs. Pantin, as gossip had surmised, wore electric blue with collar and cuffs of lace that presumably was real, while Mrs. Sudds looked chaste, if somewhat like a windmill in repose, in her bridal gown of white "lans-downe." Mrs. Neifkins certainly came up to expectations too in her peachblow satin.

For while the ladies of the receiving line found their position somewhat of a sinecure, for nobody knew what they were standing there for until Mrs. Rufus Webb, the wife of Prouty's new haberdasher, arrived. Mrs. Webb had been called home to her dying mother's bedside, but fortunately had been able to return from her sad errand in time for the function at the Prouty House. When she laid aside her wrap it was observed that she had gone into red.

Kate was an unconscionable time, Hugh thought, considering that a flour sack seemed to contain her wardrobe easily enough, but as he waited in the office he was enormously entertained by the novelty of the scene and, particularly, in considering the remarkable transformation which had taken place in the appearance of Mrs. Neifkins since he had seen her last. A sheep wagon was the sum-

mer and winter residence of the Neifkin family as yet, though upon the occasion when he and Teeters had stopped at their camp she had discussed volubly upon the spacious residence they contemplated building in town, the cut glass she had in storage; and to offset the slat sunbonnet and Mother Hubbard wrapper she wore at the time, expatiated at length upon the elegance of the apparel she had in a box under the bunk.

Hugh's attention was then focused upon Mrs. Neifkins, when a lull in the hubbub that became a hush caused him to look up. His eyes followed the gaze of every other pair of eyes to the head of the stairs that came down from the floor above into the office. He saw Kate, dreadful as to clothes as a caricature or a comic valentine! She had a wreath of red paper roses in her hair and a chain of them reached from one shoulder nearly to the hem of her skirt on the other side. The dress itself was made without regard to the prevailing mode and of the three-cent-a-yard bunting bought by sheepmen by the bolt to be used for flags to scare off coyotes in lambing time. The body of the dress was blue, trimmed with the same material in red. The sleeves were elbow length, and she wore black mitts. But the crowning horror, unless it was the wreath, was the string of red, wild-rose seed pods around her neck.

Kate had cut out her gown without a pattern and laboriously made it by hand. With no mirror to guide her, the skirt was several inches shorter behind than in front, and a miscalculation put the gathers chiefly in one spot.

She was not recognized at first, for her visits to Prouty had been made at too long intervals for her to be known save by a few. Then, quickly—"Mormon Joe's Kate!" was whispered behind hands and passed from mouth to mouth.

The girl's eager, glowing face was the one redeeming thing of her appearance. Half-way down the stairs she stopped involuntarily and looked with an expression of wondering inquiry down into the many staring eyes focused upon herself. Then a titter, nearly inaudible at first, grew into a general snicker throughout the room.

They were laughing at her! There was no mistake about that. Kate shrank back as though she had been struck, while the radiance faded from her face, and it turned as white as the wall at her back.

What was the matter? What had she done? Wasn't she all right? She asked herself, while her heart gave a great throb of fear. She gripped the banister while her panic-stricken eyes sought Hughie in the crowded office. Where was he? Did he mean to leave her alone? It seemed minutes that she stood there, though it was only one at most.

In spite of his worldly air and social ease, Disston was only a boy after all, with a boy's keen sensitiveness to ridicule, and this ordeal was something outside the experience of his nineteen years. The worst he had expected was that she would be frumpish, or old-fashioned, or commonplace like these other women standing about, but it had not occurred to him that she might be conspicuously grotesque.

There was a moment of uncertainty which seemed as long to the boy as it did to Kate, and then the chivalry of his good Southern blood responded gallantly to the appeal in her eyes. His dark face was dyed with the blood that rushed to the roots of his hair, and his forehead was damp with the moisture of embarrassment, but he arose from his seat and went to meet her with a welcoming smile.

"Oh, Hughie!" she gasped tremulously in gratitude and relief as she ran rather than walked down the remaining stairs.

The grinning crowd parted to let them pass as, self-conscious and stiffly erect, they walked the length of the office toward the dining room. Figuratively speaking, Prouty stood on tiptoe to see what sort of reception they would meet from the receiving line.

Of its kind, it was as thrilling a moment as Prouty had experienced. Mrs. Myron Neifkins had immediately recognized Kate and passed the word along to Mrs. Pantin who, although a comparative stranger, had been properly supplied with information as to the community's undesirables. Mormon Joe's Kate, the daughter of the notorious Jezebel of the Sand Coulee Road House, naturally was included in the list.

Mrs. Pantin's eyes had all the warm friendliness of two blue china knobs and her thin lips were closed until her mouth looked merely a vivid scratch. Yet, somehow, the boy managed to say with his manner of deferential courtesy:

"Mrs. Pantin, do you know Miss Prentice?"

Ordinarily, a part of Mrs. Pantin's society manner was a vivacious chirp, but now she said coldly between her teeth:

"I haven't that pleasure." She gave Kate her extreme finger tips with such obvious reluctance that the action was an affront.

Disston glanced at Mrs. Sudds in the hope of finding friendliness. That lady had drawn herself up like an outraged tragedy queen. No one would have dreamed, seeing Mrs. Sudds at the moment with her air of royal hauteur, that in bygone days she had had her own troubles making twelve dollars a week as a stenographer.

His glance passed on to Mrs. Neifkins, who was picking at a French knot in a spasm of nervousness lest Kate betray the fact that they had met.

Mrs. Neifkins was the sort of woman who would not have the moral stamina to defend her own mother against a verbal attack from some one who seemed to be socially important.

Disston was aware that Mrs. Neifkins knew Kate and his lip curled at her cowardice. He raised his head haughtily; he would not subject his partner to further rebuffs.

"Come on, Katie," he said, curtly, and they passed into the dining room.

The girl's cheeks were flaming as they sat down on the chairs ranged against the wall.

"Hughie." Her fingers were like ice as she clasped them together in her lap. "What's the matter? Do I look—queer?"

He answered shortly: "You're all right."

They sat watching the crowd file in. Suddenly Hughie exclaimed in obvious relief:

"There's Teeters, and Maggie Taylor and her mother! Wait here—I'll bring them over."

He went up to them with assurance, for their friendliness and hospitality had been marked upon the several occasions that he had accompanied Teeters, who always had some transparent excuse for stopping at their ranch.

Mrs. Taylor's singularly unattractive appearance, coupled with her backwoods conceit and large, patronizing manner had been especially amusing to Hughie, but now in this uncomfortable situation she looked like a haven in a storm as he saw her towering by nearly half a head above the tallest in the crowd.

Mrs. Taylor dated events from the time "Mr. Taylor was taken," though there was

always room for doubt as to whether Mr. Taylor was "taken" or quite deliberately went.

Miss Maggie was tall and sallow and was anticipating matrimony with an ardor that had made the maiden one of the country's stock jokes, since the sharer of it seemed to be of secondary importance to the fact. All her spare change and waking hours were spent buying and embroidering linen for the "hope chest" that spoke of her determined confidence in the realization of her ambition.

The three greeted Hughie warmly. Miss Maggie flashed her dazzling teeth; Teeters reached out and smote him with his fist between the shoulder blades; Mrs. Taylor laid her hand upon his arm with her large, smug air of patronizing friendliness, and, stooping, beamed into his face.

"We were not looking for *you* here. Did Mr. and Mrs. Toomey come? Are you alone?"

"I brought Katie Prentice—she's sitting over there."

"Oh!" Mrs. Taylor's swift change of expression was ludicrous.

He looked at her pleadingly as he added: "She has so few pleasures, and she would so like to have acquaintances—to make friends."

"I dare say," dryly.

"She—she doesn't know any one. Won't you-all come and join us?" There was entreaty in the boy's voice.

Mrs. Taylor seemed to rise out of her angular hips until she looked all of seven feet tall to Hughie.

"You must excuse me, Mr. Disston," she reproved with an access of dignity, then added in explanation: "When we came West I told myself that I must not allow myself to deteriorate in rough surroundings, and I have made it a rule never to mingle with any but the *best*, Mr. Disston. My father," impressively, "was a prominent undertaker in Philadelphia, and as organist in a large Methodist church in that city I came in contact with the best people, as you understand," blandly, "don't you?"

The boy was red to the rim of his ears as he bowed formally to mother and daughter.

"I don't in the least," he replied coldly.

The pain in Kate's eyes hurt him like a stab when he returned to his seat and she asked:

"They wouldn't come?"

He hesitated, then answered bluntly: "No."

"H-had we better stay?"

"Yes," he replied doggedly, "we'll stay."

Their efforts at conversation were not a success, and it was a relief to them both when Hiram Butefish, as floor manager, commanded everybody to take partners for a waltz.

"We'll try this." He arose and held out his hands to Kate.

"Hughie, I can't," she protested, shrinking back. "I'm—afraid."

"Yes, you can," determinedly. "Don't let these people think they can frighten you."

"I'll try because you want me to," she answered, "but it's all gone out of my head, and I know I can't."

"You'll get it directly," as he took her hand. "Just remember and count. One, two, three—now!"

The bystanders tittered as she stumbled. The sound stung the boy like a whip, his black eyes flashed, but he said calmly enough:

"You make too much of it, Katie. Put your mind on the time and count. You can waltz well enough."

She tried once more with no better result. She merely hopped, regardless of the music, and again tripped so badly that she all but fell.

"I tell you I can't, Hughie," she said despairingly. "Let's sit down."

"Never mind," soothingly as he acquiesced, "we'll try it again after a while. The next will very likely be a square dance and I can pilot you through that."

"You're so good!"

He looked away to avoid her grateful eyes. What would she say if she knew the reason he had brought her there? On a bet! He had seen only what appeared to be the humorous side. Hughie's own pride enabled him to realize how deep were the hurts she was trying so pluckily to hide. But why did they treat her so? Even her dreadful get-up seemed scarcely to account for it.

The next number, as he surmised, was a square dance.

"Take your pardners fer a quadrille!"

In response to Mr. Butefish's stentorian voice there was a scrambling and a sliding over the floor, accompanied by much laughter, to the quickly formed "sets."

"There's a place, Kate—on the side, too,

so you have only to watch what the others do."

She hesitated, but he could see the longing in her eyes.

He taunted boyishly: "Don't be a 'fraidy cat." At which for the first time they both laughed with something of naturalness.

Mr. Scales of the Emporium and the plump bookkeeper on the "Ditch" were there, and the willowy barber with the stylish operator of the new telephone exchange, while Mr. and Mrs. Neifkins made the third couple, and Hugh and Kate completed the set.

There was an exchange of looks as the pair came up. The stylish operator lifted an eyebrow and drew down the corners of her mouth. The bookkeeper said "Well!" with much significance, but it remained for Mrs. Neifkins, who had been preening herself like some vain little bush bird, to give the real offense. The expression on her vapid face implied that she was aghast at their impudence. Gathering the fullness of her skirt as though to withdraw it from contamination she laid the other hand on her husband's arm:

"There's a place over there, Myron, where we can get in."

"It's nearer the music," said Neifkins with an apologetic grin to the others.

Those who stayed had something of the air of brazening it out. In vain Mr. Bute-fish called sternly for, "One more couple this way!"

It was Scales of the Emporium who said, finally:

"Looks like we don't dance—might as well sit down."

Every one acted on the suggestion with alacrity save Kate and Hughie. When he turned to her he saw that she was swallowing hard at the lump that was choking her.

"It's on account of me that they act so, Hughie! You stay if you want to; I'm going."

"Stay here?" he cried in boyish passion. "You're the only lady in the room so far as I can see! What would I stay for?"

The citizens of Prouty were still deeply impressed by each other's pretensions, as the reputations the majority had left in their "home towns" had not yet caught up with them. Therefore, being greatly concerned about what his neighbor thought of him, no one would have dared be friendly to the ostracized couple even if he had wished.

Kate and Hughie walked out very erect, and looking straight ahead followed by a feeling of satisfaction that this opportunity had presented itself for the new order, to show where it stood in the matter of accepting doubtful characters on an equal social footing. It had properly vindicated itself of the charge that Western society was lax in such matters. That they had hurt—terribly hurt another—was of small importance.

CHAPTER VI.

FOR ALWAYS.

In the little room upstairs where less than an hour before she had dressed in happy excitement, Kate tore off the paper flowers and wild-rose pods. She threw them in a heap on the floor—the cherished mitts, the bunting dress—while she sobbed in a child's abandonment, with the tears running unchecked down her cheeks. The music floating up the stairway and through the transom, the scuffling sound of sliding feet, added to her grief. She had wanted, oh, how she had wanted to dance!

The thought that Hughie had suffered humiliation because of her was little short of torture. But he had not deserted her—he had *stuck*—even in her misery she gloried in that—and how handsome he had looked! Why, there was not a man in the room that could compare with him! His clothes, the way he had borne himself, the something different about him which she could not analyze. It was a woman's pride that shone in her swollen, red-lidded eyes as she told herself this. She pinned on her shabby Stetson in trembling haste, buckled the spurs on her boots and snatched up her ugly Mackinaw.

Hugh was waiting for her in the office below.

"What—goin' already?" some one asked in feigned surprise. "Won't you be back?"

"No," said Hughie curtly as he opened the door for Kate.

The horses were tied to the hitching rack. Kate gulped down the lump that rose in her throat as she swung into the saddle. The orchestra was playing "The Blue Danube," and she specially loved that waltz. The strains followed them up the street, and tears she could not keep back fell on the horse's mane as she drooped a little over the saddle horn.

She looked down through dimmed eyes

upon the lights streaming from the windows of the Prouty House, as they climbed the steep pitch to the bench above town, and the alluring brightness increased the aching heaviness of her heart, for she felt that she was leaving all they represented behind her forever. She knew she never could find the courage to risk going through such an ordeal again.

The moon came up after a while, full and mellow, and the night air cooled Kate's hot eyes and flaming cheeks. The familiar stars, too, soothed her like the presence of old friends, but, more than anything, the accustomed motion of her horse, as it took its running walk, helped to restore her mental poise and aid her taut nerves to relax.

At the top of a hill both drew rein automatically. Walking down steep descents to save their horses and themselves was an understood thing between them. At the bottom they still trudged on, leading their horses and exchanging only an occasional word upon some subject far removed from their real thoughts. It was Kate who finally said:

"When I went there to-night I was so sure of everybody's kindness."

"Katie," turning to her. "I'd do anything in the world to make amends for what happened to-night. Isn't there some way—something I can do for you? Anything at all," he pleaded. "Just tell me—no matter what it is—you've only to let me know."

She looked at him with glowing, grateful eyes, but shook her head.

"No, Hughie, there's nothing you can do for me." She caught her breath sharply and added: "Ex-cept to go on liking me. It would break my heart if you went back on me, too."

"Kate!"

"If you didn't like me any more——" She choked.

"Like you!" impetuously. "I'd do more than *like* you if I never had seen you before to-night!" He dropped the bridle reins and laid a hand on either shoulder, holding her at arms' length. "Your eyes are like stars! And your mouth looks so—sweet! And your hair is so soft and pretty when the wind blows it across your forehead and face like that! I wish you could see yourself. You're *beautiful* in the moonlight, Kate!"

"Beautiful?" incredulously. Then she laughed happily: "Why, I'm not even pretty, Hughie."

"And what's more," he declared, "you're a wonderful girl—different—a fellow never gets tired of being with you."

"You are making up to me for what happened to-night! I nearly forget it when you tell me things like that."

"I didn't know how much I did care until they hurt you. I could have killed somebody if it wouldn't have made things worse for you."

"As much as that?" She looked at him wistfully. "You care as much as that? You see," she added slowly, "nobody's ever taken my part except Uncle Joe—not even my mother; and it seems—queer to think that anybody else likes me well enough to fight for me."

The unconscious pathos went straight to the boy's chivalrous heart.

"Oh, honey!" he cried impulsively, and taking her hand in both of his he held it tight against his breast.

Her eyes grew luminous at the word and the caress.

"Honey!" she repeated in a wondering whisper. "I *like* that."

Her lids lowered before the new and strange expression in his face.

"You've always seemed so independent and self-reliant, like another fellow, somehow. I didn't know you were so sweet. I'm just finding you out, Kate."

She looked at him before replying, but he trembled before the soft light shining in her eyes.

He stood for a moment uncertainly, fighting for his self-control, then, casting off restraint, he threw his arms about her, crying passionately:

"I love you! I love you, Kate! There's nobody like you in the whole world. Kiss me— Sweet!"

She drew back startled, looking into his eyes. Her own seemed to melt under what she saw there, and she slowly lifted her lips.

"You'll love me for always, Hughie?"

"For always," huskily. "Forever and ever, Katie."

CHAPTER VII.

THE WOLF SCRATCHES.

Mormon Joe had underestimated Jasper Toomey's capacity for extravagance and mismanagement when he had given him five years to "go broke" in, as he had accomplished it in four most effectively—so com-

pletely, in fact, that they had moved into town with only enough furniture to furnish a small house, which they spoke of as having "rented," though as yet the owner had had nothing but promises to compensate him for their occupancy.

It was close to a year after their advent in Prouty that Mrs. Toomey awakened in the small hours, listened a moment, then prodded her husband sharply:

"The wind's coming up, Jap, and I left out my washing."

Already awake, he replied dryly:

"Never mind—I'll borrow a saddle horse in the morning and go after it."

"Everything will be whipped to ribbons," she declared plaintively.

"I'm not going out this time of night to collect laundry; besides, the exercise would make me hungrier."

"Are you hungry, Jap?"

"Hungry! I've been lying here thinking of everything I ever left on my plate since I was a baby!"

Mrs. Toomey sighed deeply.

"Do you suppose we'll ever be in a hotel again where we can get what we want by ringing? Wouldn't a fat club sandwich with chicken, lettuce, thin bacon, and mayonnaise dressing——"

"Hush!" Toomey exploded savagely. "If you say that again I'll dress and go out and rob a henroost!"

"Jap, we've simply got to do something! Can't you borrow?"

"Borrow! I couldn't throw a rock inside the city limits without hitting some one to whom I owe money. Come again, old dear," mockingly.

"Wouldn't Mormon Joe——"

"I'd starve before I'd ask that sheep-herder!" His face darkened to ugliness. "I'm surprised at you—that you haven't more pride. You know he broke me, shutting me off from water with his leases. I've explained all that to you."

She was silent; she didn't have the heart to hit him when he was down, though she had her own opinion as to the cause of his failure.

Since she did not reply, he went on vindictively:

"I've come to hate the sight of him—his damned insolence. Every time I see him going into his shack over there," he nodded toward the diagonal corner, "I could burn it."

"It's funny—his building it."

"To save hotel bills when he comes to town. Yes," ironically, "I can see *him* lending *me* money."

Mrs. Toomey sat up as though a spring in her back had been released, and cried excitedly:

"Jap, let's sell something! There's that silver punch bowl that your Uncle Jasper gave us for a wedding present——"

Toomey's brow cleared instantly.

"We *can* do that—I'll raffle it—the punch bowl—and get a hundred and fifty out of it easily." He discussed the details enthusiastically, blowing out the light and going to sleep as contentedly as though it already had been accomplished.

But in the darkness Mrs. Toomey cried quietly. Selling tickets for a raffle which was for their personal benefit seemed a kind of genteel begging. She wondered that Jap did not feel as she did about it. And what would Mrs. Pantin think? What Mrs. Abram Pantin thought had come to mean a great deal to Mrs. Toomey.

The wind had risen to a gale and she thought nervously of fringed napkins and pillow slips—the wind always gave her the "blues" anyway, and now it reminded her of winter, which was close, with its bitter cold—of snow driven across trackless wastes, of gaunt, predatory animals, of cattle and horses starving in draws and gulches, and all the other things which winter meant in that barren country. She slept after a time to find the next morning that the wind still howled and the fringe on her laundry was all she had pictured.

Toomey set forth gayly immediately after breakfast with the punch bowl wrapped in a newspaper, and Mrs. Toomey nerved herself to negotiate for the sale of the teapot to Mrs. Suds, in the event of his being unsuccessful.

She watched for his return eagerly, but it was two o'clock before she saw him coming, leaning against the wind and claspng the punch bowl to his bosom. Her heart sank, for his face told her the result without asking.

Toomey set Uncle Jasper's wedding gift upon the dining-room table with disrespectful violence.

"You must be crazy to think I could sell that in Prouty! You should have known better!"

"Didn't anybody want it, Jap?" Mrs. Toomey asked timidly.

"Want it?" angrily. "Tinhorn Frank thought it was some kind of a tony cuspidor, and a round-up cook offered me a dollar and a half for it to set bread sponge in."

"Never mind," she said soothingly. "I'm sure we will find a way."

The wind continued to blow as though it meant never to stop. It was a wind of which the people of the East who speak awesomely of their own "gales" and "tempests" wot not. Forsooth, they know only zephyrs—at most, brisk breezes that rattle window-panes, blow down signs, and break an occasional limb from a peach tree.

This wind which had kept Prouty indoors for close to a week came out of a cloudless sky, save for a few innocent-looking streaks on the western horizon. It had blown away everything that would move. All the loose papers had sailed through the air to an unknown destination—Nebraska, perhaps—while an endless procession of tumbleweed had rolled in the same direction from an apparently inexhaustible supply in the west.

Housewives who had watched their pile of tin cans move on to the next lot found their satisfaction short-lived, for as quickly they acquired the rubbish that belonged to their neighbor on the other side. Shingles flew off and chimney bricks, and ends of corrugated iron roofing slapped and banged as though frantic to be loose. Houses shivered on their foundations, and lesser buildings lay on their sides. Clouds of dust obscured the sun at intervals, and the sharp-edged gravel driven before the gale cut like tiny knives.

Any daring chicken that ventured from its coop slid away as if it were on skates.

No one could seem to remember that it had not always blown, or realize that it would some time stop. No character was strong enough to maintain a perfect equilibrium after three days of it. Logic or philosophy made no more impression upon the mental state than water slipping over a rock. It set the nerves on edge. Irritation, restlessness and discontent were as uncontrollable as great fear. Two wild cats tied together by the hind legs were not more incompatible than husbands and wives, who under normal conditions lived together like turtledoves. Doting mothers become shrews; fond fathers, brutes, lambasting their offspring on the smallest pretext; while

seven was too conservative an estimate to place upon the devils of which the children who turned the house into Bedlam seemed to be possessed.

Optimists grew green with melancholia, pessimists considered suicide as an escape from the futility of life, neighbors that had buried hatchets for policy's sake resurrected them to flourish in each other's faces. Friends brooded over friends' faults. Enemies considered methods of killing each other as soon as the wind let up. Hypochondriacs discovered new symptoms which presaged a speedy demise. Those who carried a burden of financial debt felt their backs break, and saw the doors of the poor-house not more than six jumps in front of them.

If the combination of wind and altitude had this effect upon phlegmatic temperaments, something of Mrs. Toomey's state may be surmised. With nerves already overwrought from anxiety and sleeplessness, this prolonged windstorm put her in a condition in which, as she declared hysterically to her husband, she was "ready to fly."

Lying on his back on the one-time handsome sofa, where he spent many of his waking hours, Toomey responded, grimly:

"I'm getting so light on that breakfast-food diet that we'll *both* fly if I don't make a 'touch' pretty quick. I'm most afraid to go out in a high wind without running a little shot in the hem of my trousers."

Mrs. Toomey, who was standing at the dining-room table laying a section of a newspaper pattern upon a piece of serge, felt an uncontrollable desire to weep. With no sense of humor whatever herself, she could not understand how Toomey could jest about their predicament. Furthermore, the conviction seized her that, turn and twist the pattern as she might, she was not going to have material enough unless she pieced.

Her lids turned pink and her eyes filled up.

"Isn't it awful, Jap, to think of *us* being like this?"

"Don't! You make me think of a rabbit when you sniffle like that. Can't you cry without wiggling your nose?"

Mrs. Toomey's quavering voice rose to the upper register:

"Do you suppose I care how I look when I feel like this?"

"How do you think I feel," ferociously, "with my stomach slumping in so I can

hardly straighten up?" He raised a long arm and shook a fist as though in defiance of the Fate that had brought him to this: "I'd sell my soul for a ham!"

"That's wicked, Jap."

"I'm going to Scales and put up a talk."

"Couldn't you intimate that you had something in view?"

Toomey put on his hat and coat. "Don't cut your throat with the scissors while I'm gone, Little Sunbeam, and I'll be back with a ham pretty quick—unless I blow off."

He spoke with such confidence that Mrs. Toomey looked at him hopefully. When he opened the door the furious gust that shook the house and darkened the room with a cloud of dust seemed to suck him into a vortex. Mrs. Toomey watched him round the corner with a sense of relief. Now that she was alone she could cry comfortably and look as ugly as she liked.

Finally, after a glance at the clock, she walked to the window to look for her husband. He was not in sight. As she lingered her glance fell on Mormon Joe's tarpaper shack that set in the middle of the lot on the diagonal corner from their house, and she told herself bitterly that even that drunken renegade, that social pariah, had enough to eat.

Her face brightened as Toomey turned the corner and promptly lengthened when she saw that he was empty-handed and walking with the exaggerated swagger which she was coming to recognize as a sign of failure. She wondered if her eyes were red, and reflected that there was a little rice and a can of condensed milk in the house.

A glimpse of his face as he came in, banged the door, and flung off his hat and coat made her hesitate to speak.

"Well?" he glared at her. "Why don't you say something?"

"What is there to say, Jap?" meekly, "I see he refused you."

"Refused me? He insulted me!"

Mrs. Toomey looked hurt. "He's never done that before. He's always been rather nice, hasn't he? What did he say, Jap?"

"He offered me fifteen dollars a week to clerk." Toomey resented fiercely the pleased and hopeful expression on his wife's face, and added: "I suppose you'd like to see me cutting calico and fishing mackerel out of the brine?"

She ventured timidly: "I thought you

might take it until something worth while turned up."

Toomey paced the floor for a time, then sank into his usual place on the sofa, where he prepared to roll a cigarette. Mrs. Toomey permitted herself to observe sarcastically:

"It's a wonder to me you don't get bed sores—the amount of time you spend on the flat of your back."

"What do you mean by that?" suspiciously. "Do you mean I'm lazy because I didn't take that job?"

Since she made no denial, conversation ceased, and the silence was broken only by the sound of her scissors upon the table and the howling of the gale.

He smoked cigarette after cigarette in gloomy thought, finally getting up and going to a closet off the kitchen that was filled with a variety of unneeded things.

"What are you looking for, Jap?" she called as she heard him rummaging.

He did not reply, but evidently found what he sought for he came out presently carrying a shotgun.

"Are you going to try and raffle that?"

Still he did not deign to answer, but preserved his injured air, and getting once more into his hat and coat started off with the martyred manner of a man who has been driven from home.

"I shouldn't have said that," she thought immediately after he was gone. "And yet—somehow—I suppose it's my middle-class bringing up. I can't feel that when people are as poor as we are that it is any disgrace to work."

She finally threw down her scissors with a gesture of despair. She was too nervous to do any more. The wind, her anxious thoughts, the exacting task of cutting a suit from an inadequate amount of cloth, was a combination that proved to be too much. She glanced at the clock on the bookcase—only three o'clock! Actually there seemed forty-eight hours in days like this. She stood uncertainly for a moment, then determination settled on her tense, worried face. Why put it off any longer? It must be done sooner or later—she was sure of that. The small amount Jap would get on the shotgun would not last long. Besides, nothing ever was as hard as one anticipates. This was a cheering thought, and the lines in Mrs. Toomey's forehead smoothed out as she stood before the mirror buttoning her coat and tying a veil over her head.

Mr. Pantin thought he heard the gate slam and peered out through the dead wild-cucumber vines which framed the bay window to see Mrs. Toomey coming up the only cement walk in Prouty. He immediately thrust his stockinged feet back in his comfortable Romeos preparatory to opening the door, but before he got up he stooped and looked again, searchingly. Mr. Pantin was endowed with a gift that was like a sixth sense, which enabled him to detect a borrower as far as his excellent eyesight could see him. This intuition, combined with experience and the habit of observation, had been developed to the point of uncanniness.

It availed Mrs. Toomey nothing to tell herself that Mrs. Pantin was her best friend, and that what she was asking was merely a matter of business—the sort of thing that Mr. Pantin was doing every day. Her heart beat ridiculously and she was rather shocked to hear herself laughing shrilly at Mr. Pantin's commonplace inquiry as to whether she had not "nearly blown off." He added in some haste:

"Priscilla's in the kitchen."

Mrs. Pantin looked up in surprise at her caller's entrance. She had not lived twelve years with Abram in vain. A look of suspicion crossed her face as she inquired:

"Is anything wrong? Bad news from home?"

"It's money?" Mrs. Toomey blurted out. "We're dreadfully hard up. I came to see if we could get a loan."

It was only a moment before Mrs. Pantin recovered herself and was able to say with sweet earnestness:

"I haven't anything to do with that, my dear. You'll have to see Mr. Pantin."

Mrs. Toomey clasped her fingers tightly together and stammered in embarrassed distress:

"If—if you would speak to him first—I—I thought perhaps——"

Mrs. Pantin's set society smile was on her small mouth, but the finality of the laws of the Medes and the Persians was in her tone as she replied:

"I never think of interfering with my husband's business or making suggestions. As fond as I am of you, Della, you'll have to ask him yourself."

Mrs. Toomey had the feeling that they never would be quite on the same footing again. She knew it from the way in which Mrs. Pantin's eyes traveled from the un-

becoming brown veil on her head to her warm but antiquated coat, stopping at her shabby shoes which, instinctively, she drew beneath the hem of her skirt.

"Abram is alone in the living room—you might speak to him."

"I think I will." Mrs. Toomey endeavored to repair the mistake she felt she had made by speaking in a tone which implied that a loan was of no great moment after all.

Seeing Mrs. Toomey, Mr. Pantin again hastily thrust his toes into his slippers—partly because he was cognizant of the fact that no real gentleman will receive a lady in his stocking feet, and partly to conceal the neat but large darn on the toe of one sock. As he arose he waved Mrs. Toomey to a chair with a display of upper teeth as perfect as a dentist's handiwork, which, however, they were not. He was courteous amiability itself, and Mrs. Toomey's hopes shot up.

"I came to have a little talk."

"Yes?"

Mr. Pantin's smile as he reseated himself deceived her and she plunged on with confidence:

"I—we would like to arrange for a loan, Mr. Pantin."

"To what amount, Mrs. Toomey?"

Mrs. Toomey considered.

"As much as you could conveniently spare."

"What security would you be able to give, Mrs. Toomey?"

Security? Between friends? She had not expected this.

"I—I'm afraid I—we haven't any, Mr. Pantin. You know we lost everything when we lost the ranch. But you're perfectly safe—you needn't have a *moment's* anxiety about *that*."

Immediately it seemed as though invisible hands shot out to push her off, yet Mr. Pantin's tone was bland as he replied:

"I should be delighted to be able to accommodate you, but just at the present time I——"

"You can't? Oh, I wish you would reconsider—as a matter of friendship. We need it—desperately, Mr. Pantin!" Her voice shook.

"I regret very much——"

The hopelessness of any further plea swept over her. She arose with a gesture of despair, and Mr. Pantin smiling, suave,

urbane, bowed her out and closed the door. He watched her go down the walk and through the gate, noting her momentary hesitation and wondering where she might be going in such a wind, when she started in the opposite direction from home and walked rapidly down the road that led out of town. It flashed through his mind that she might be bent on suicide—she *had* looked desperate, no mistake—but since there was no water in which to drown herself, and no tree from which to hang herself, and the country was so flat that there was nothing high enough for her to jump off of and break her neck, he concluded there was no real cause for alarm, and did not disturb himself further.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BLOOD OF JEZEBEL.

The prognostication made by the citizens of Prouty that it was "gettin' ready for somethin'" seemed about to be verified out on the sheep range twenty miles distant, for at five o'clock one afternoon the wind stopped as suddenly as it had arisen and heavy snow clouds came out of the northeast with incredible swiftness.

Mormon Joe walked to the door of the cook tent and swept the darkening hills with anxious eyes. Kate should have been back long before this. What could be keeping her? He always had a dread of her horse falling on her and hurting her too badly to get back. That was about all there was to fear in summertime, but to-night there was the storm—it was going to snow pretty quick.

There was not a horse to ride to hunt for her, since they had only Kate's saddle horse and the team they used to pull the wagon when they moved camp. It was the latter that had broken their hobbles and gotten away—headed, no doubt, for the ranch on the other side of Prouty where they had been raised.

Kate had left immediately after breakfast, and since the horses had only a few hours' start and would probably feed as they went, she had expected to be back by noon.

He was trying the potatoes with a fork when he raised his head sharply. He was sure he heard the rattle of rocks. A faint whoop followed.

"Thank God!" He breathed the ejaculation fervently, yet he said merely as he stood up: "Got 'em, I see, Katie!"

"Sure. Don't I always get what I go after?" Then, with a tired laugh: "I'm disappointed, I thought you would be worried about me."

He smiled quizzically: "I don't know why you'd think that."

"I'll know better next time," she replied good-humoredly, as she swung down with obvious weariness.

"There won't be any 'next time,'" he replied abruptly, "at least not at this season of the year."

"Oh, but I'm glad I went—I wouldn't have missed it for anything," she interposed hastily.

As Mormon Joe unwrapped the lead rope from the saddle horn and took the horses away to picket, he wondered what wonderful adventure she would have to relate, for she seemed able to extract entertainment from nearly anything. By the time he returned she had removed her hat, gloves and spurs, washed her dust-streaked face, smoothed her hair, slipped on an enveloping apron over her riding clothes and had the chops frying.

They talked of the coming snowstorm, and the advisability of holding the sheep on the bed ground if it should be a bad one; of the trip to town that he was contemplating; of the coyote that was bothering and the possibility of trapping him. There was no dearth of topics of mutual interest, albeit many of them were worn threadbare by much discussion. Nevertheless, Mormon Joe knew that she was holding something in reserve and wondered at this reticence, for she had a child's candor in always relating first that which was new and therefore important. It came finally when they had finished and still lingered at the table.

"Who do you suppose I met to-day when I was hunting horses?"

"Teeters?" Mormon Joe was tearing a leaf from his book of cigarette papers.

"Guess again."

He shook his head.

"Can't imagine. You've never given me a complete list of your acquaintances."

"Unnecessary. It begins and ends with Teeters."

"This suspense is killing me, Katie," severely, "you know how I suffer when I'm curious."

At which they both laughed heartily, since curiosity was the last thing of which Mormon Joe could be suspected.

She announced impressively: "Mrs. Toomey!"

He was distributing tobacco from the sack upon the crease in the paper with exactitude. He made no comment, so Kate said with increased emphasis:

"She was crying!"

Still he was silent, and she demanded, disappointed:

"Aren't you surprised?"

"Not greatly," he replied dryly.

She looked crestfallen, so he asked obligingly:

"Where did all this happen?"

"In a draw a couple of miles this side of Prouty, where I found the horses. They had gone there to get out of the wind and it was by only a chance that I rode down into it.

"She was in the bottom, huddled against a rock, crying, and didn't see me until I was nearly upon her. I thought she was sick—she looked terribly."

"And was she?"

"No—she was worried."

"Naturally," dryly, "any woman would be who married Toomey."

"About money."

"Indeed." His tone and smile were ironic.

Kate, a trifle disconcerted, continued:

"She didn't say that he was not kind to her, but he's had bad luck."

"He's had the best opportunities of any man who's come into the country."

"Anyway," she faltered, "they haven't a penny except when they sell something."

He shrugged a shoulder, then asked teasingly:

"Well—what were you thinking of doing about it?"

"I said—I promised," she blurted it out bluntly—"that we'd loan them money."

"What!" incredulously.

"I did, Uncle Joe."

He answered with a frown of annoyance:

"You exceeded your authority, Katie."

"But you will, won't you?" she pleaded.

"You've never refused me anything that I really wanted badly, and I've never asked much, have I?"

"No, girl, you haven't," he replied, gently.

"And there's hardly anything you could ask, within reason, that wouldn't be granted."

"But they only need five hundred until he gets into something. You could let them have that, couldn't you?"

His face and eyes hardened.

"I could, but I won't," he replied curtly.

When Prouty was in its infancy, certain citizens had been misled by Mormon Joe's mild blue eyes, low voice and quiet manner. His easy-going exterior concealed an incredible hardness upon occasions, but this was Katie's first knowledge of it. He never had displayed the slightest authority. In any difference, when he had not yielded to her good-naturedly, they had argued it out as though they were in reality partners. At another time she would have been wounded deeply by his brusque refusal, but to-night it angered her instantly. Because of her intense eagerness and confidence that she had only to ask him, it came as the keenest of disappointments. This together with her worn-out physical condition combined to produce a display of temper as unusual in her as Mormon Joe's own attitude.

"But I promised!" she cried, impatiently. "And you've told me I must always keep my promise, 'if it takes the hide!'"

"You exceeded your authority," he reiterated. "You've no right to promise what doesn't belong to you."

"Then it's all 'talk' about our being partners," she said sneeringly. "You don't mean a word of it."

"You shan't make a fool of yourself, Katie, if I can help it," he retorted.

"Because you don't care for friends, you don't want me to have any!" she flung at him hotly.

"That's where you're mistaken, Katie. If I have one regret it is that in the past I have not more deliberately cultivated the friendship of true men and gentle women when I have had the opportunity. It doesn't make much difference whether they are brilliant or rich or successful, if only they are true-hearted. Loyalty is the great attribute—the essential qualification—but," dryly, and he shrugged a shoulder, "it is my judgment that you will not find it in that quarter."

"You're prejudiced—unreasonable."

"It is my privilege to have an opinion," coldly.

"We were going to be friends—Mrs. Toomey and I—we shook hands on it!" Tears of angry disappointment were close to the surface.

He replied, doggedly:

"If you have to *buy* your friendships, Katie, you'd better keep your money."

The speech stung her. She glared at him across the narrow table, and, in the moment, each had a sense of unreality. The quarrel was like a bolt from the blue, as startling and unexpected—as most quarrels are—the bitterest and most lasting. Then she sprang to her feet and hurled a taunt at him some imp of darkness must have suggested:

"You're jealous!" She stamped a foot at him. "That's the real reason. You're *jealous* of everybody that would be friends with me! You're jealous of Hughie. You didn't like his coming here and you don't like his writing to me! I *hate you*—I won't stay any longer!" It was the blood of Jezebel of the Sand Coulee talking, and there was the look of her mother on the girl's face, in her reckless, uncontrolled fury.

Mormon Joe winced.

"I had no notion that you entertained any such feeling toward me. It is something in the nature of a—er—revelation. You are quite right about leaving. Upon second thought, you are quite right about everything—right to keep your promise to Mrs. Toomey, since you gave it, right in your assertion that I am jealous. I am—but not in the sense in which you mean it.

"I have been jealous of your dignity—of the respect that is due you. I have resented keenly any attempt to belittle you. That is why Disston was not welcome when he came to see you. It is the reason why I have not shown a pleasure I did not feel in his writing you!"

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"I mean that he took you to that dance on a wager—a bet—to prove that he had the courage. To make a spectacle of you—for a story with which to regale his friends and laugh over."

She groped for the edge of the table.

"Who told you?"

"Toomey."

"I don't believe it!"

"Teeters verified it."

She sat down on the box from which she had risen.

Unmoved by the blow he had dealt her, he continued:

"You went to that dance against my wishes. What I expected to happen *did* happen, though you did not choose to tell me.

"To-morrow I am going to Prouty and

mortgage the outfit for half its value. It will be yours to use as it pleases you. You have earned it. Then," with a gesture of finality, "the door is open to you. I want you to go where you will be happy."

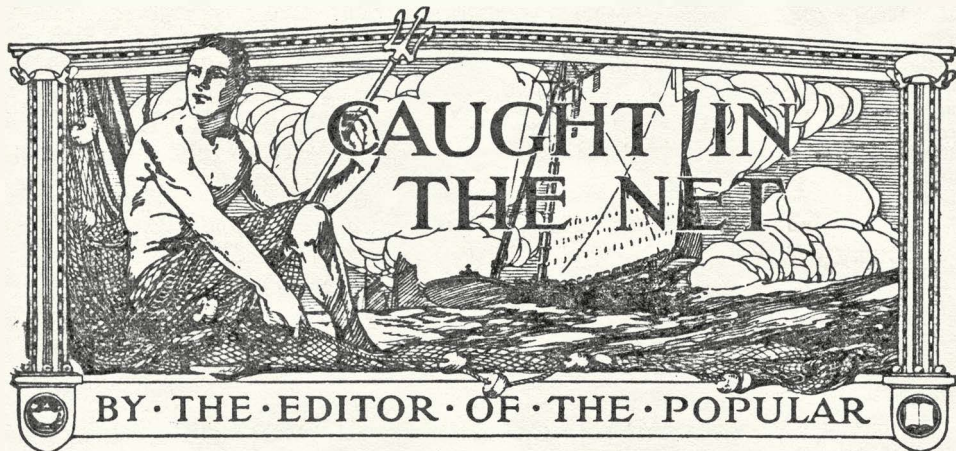
With his usual deliberation of movement he put on his hat and slicker and went out to change the horses on picket.

It was Mormon Joe's invariable custom to help her with the dishes, but he did not return, so she arose, finally, and set the food away automatically, with the unseeing look of a hypnotic subject. She washed the dishes and dried them, trying to realize that she would be leaving this shortly—that there would be a last time in the immediate future. Her anger was lost in grief and amazement. There was something so implacable, so steel-like in Mormon Joe's hardness that it did not occur to her to plead with him for forgiveness. And Hughie! With a pain that was like a knife in her heart she told herself that she could not turn to a traitor for help or sympathy. She blew out the lantern, tied the tent flap behind her, and ran through the fast-falling snow to her wagon.

Kate dozed toward morning after a sleepless night of wretchedness and was awakened by a horse's shrill whinny. Listening a moment, she sprang out and looked through the upper half of the door, which opened on hinges. It was a white world that she saw, with some four inches of snow on the level, though the fall had ceased and it was colder. Mormon Joe, dressed warmly in leather "chaps" and sheep-lined coat, was riding away on one of the work horses.

Never since they had been together had he gone to Prouty without some word of farewell—careless and casual, but unailing. Nor could she remember when he had not turned in the saddle and waved at her before they lost sight of each other altogether. This time she waited vainly. He went without looking behind him, while she stood in the cold watching his peaked, high-crowned hat bobbing through the "giant" sagebrush until it vanished. She had thrust out a hand to detain him—to call after him—and had withdrawn it. Her pride would not yet permit her to act as her heart prompted.

Chattering, shivering, she crept back to her bunk, and there, hugging a pillow tight she sobbed with a child's abandon.



GOOD BUSINESS

THEODORE H. PRICE, who for many years was the foremost figure in the cotton world and who now is serving the government for one dollar a year as Actuary of the Railroad Administration, tells a story that is unique in commercial history.

Thirty-five years ago, when he was a youth of twenty-two, he embarked in the cotton business in Norfolk, Virginia. He made arrangement with one of the biggest insurance companies of Great Britain to carry his risks. His capital was small, only twenty thousand dollars.

He had been in business only a short time when he bought one thousand bales of cotton. The day after he bought the one thousand bales the cotton was burned en route to Norfolk.

Cotton passes through many hands. Policies cannot be issued immediately to each successive purchaser. The custom was to enter on a firm's books notice of insurance of the commodity and then forward details as to the number of bales and the value of the cotton to the company.

The one thousand bales were worth fifty thousand dollars. Price had made entry on his books of the fact and of the application for insurance.

The fire had occurred so soon after he had begun business that this very fact lent basis for suspicion. If the company wished to do so, it could avoid payment. That meant ruin to Mr. Price.

He cabled to the company information about the fire. Then he waited. The following day this answer came to him:

"Draw on us for your losses."

In the many years since then Theodore H. Price has handled many hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of bales of spot cotton. The policies written probably have aggregated one hundred millions of dollars or more. The premiums he has paid would make a fortune.

And never has he handled a bale that he did not give the insurance to the company that showed its faith in him in the first crisis of his business career.

RELIGION AND THE WAR

THE strongest appeal to the collective human mind is made by neither spiritual nor material considerations as such—by neither religion nor the opportunity to prosper in worldly matters—but by nationalism. The war proved it, if new proof were needed. Catholic Italy and France fought Catholic Austria, Lutheran Germany sought to annihilate Protestant England, and the adherents of the Greek church among both the Greeks and the Slavs struggled against both Catholics and Protestants who make

up the population of the Central Empires. The Mohammedans of Arabia who helped the British wipe out the Turks in the Holy Land are of the same general faith as their enemies, but are largely members of the same sect, the Sunnites, and yet they did not love the Osmanli of European Turkey, whose hope of enlisting the Mohammedans of the world in a "holy war" was blasted before the beginning of Turkish participation in the war, when those of their faith were already fighting with the French.

In the United States there was little mention of religion in the war except in the way of rivalry between the Y. M. C. A. and the Knights of Columbus to see which organization could do the more for the American soldiers overseas. As the followers of the Church of England split in Revolutionary times on national grounds, the Protestant Episcopal church resulting, so the Methodists split in Civil War times, and if other religious societies as a body had attempted to force their members to champion one side or the opposite, more of them would have been split.

Not since the early Christians defied national feeling for their religion in Rome, dying rather than serve in Cæsar's armies, have the peoples of the Aryan race preferred religion to nationalism. The Socialists, before the Great War, said their party members would rise superior to national—they sneeringly called it "tribal"—sentiment, but they produced not one martyr to their cause. And not since the time of Mohammed himself have the Semitic peoples risen superior to nationalism in their wars.

It was Italian soldiery who deprived the papacy of temporal power in order to make Italy great as a nation, and it was a Catholic cardinal, Richelieu, who, to humble the Hapsburgs and build up the Bourbon power, aided the Protestant princes of Germany, even paying Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden a million lire annually to fight on his side. Cardinal Wolsey was another prelate who sacrificed religious to national sentiments, and, according to Shakespeare, lived to lament, in these words:

Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served my king, He would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies.

FORTY-EIGHT HOURS A DAY!

OUR fictional friend, Arnold Bennett, once wrote an essay telling his fellow Londoners how they might live twenty-four hours a day; but when the author came to the city of New York he found that he was away behind the times, for the metropolis had forty-eight hours a day! That is, the inhabitants amazed him by doing ordinarily the work of two days in one, and thought nothing of it. No wonder that the big town turns out more than two billion dollars' worth of goods every year, and that one-tenth of the manufactured products of the United States are from New York.

Besides keeping a dozen business engagements and dodging a hundred autos daily that would take his life, the average New Yorker finds opportunity for play and amusement. There is more money spent in Manhattan on amusement of an evening than in any other place on earth. The New Yorker can attend a different theater every week of the year, not to mention the thousands of movie houses at his command. He can eat in a different restaurant every meal of his annual three hundred and sixty five days. If he wishes, he can buy a newspaper printed in practically any of the well-known languages, including those that have come into recent prominence—Croat, Slovakian, Lettish, Finnish and Slovene.

There is a rather good anecdote illustrating the fact that anything can be found in our Big Town. One native New Yorker boasted of this in a mixed party. A visiting Westerner challenged the assertion. Said the Wyomingian: "You can't show me any real honest-to-goodness Injuns in this town of yours!" The native New Yorker, in nowise nonplused, replied: "You can't be so sure of that, Bill." Bets were made. Within an hour the Westerner had been taken to an Indian encampment on top of one of the large hotel roofs, the redskins living in this fashion during their sojourn to New York and while appearing regularly in a theatrical spectacle.

To keep up with what is going on, the New Yorker needs forty-eight hours a day.

REBUILDING MEN

VOCATIONAL reëducation for our disabled soldiers will be one of our most immediate and necessary tasks. Abroad, in France, England and Belgium there are hundreds of schools devoted to the work of rehabilitating *mutilés*, who are made useful members of society again despite the loss of limbs, and trades and occupations are given them for their future self-support and comfort. In this new field of physiotherapy the French doctors have developed a high degree of skill which should prove of inestimable value to American physicians in their application to the delicate and complex problems involved.

The *mutilés*—a softer word than our English “cripples”—are furnished with artificial bodily members that are marvels of mechanism, most of them especially adapted and designed for whatever line of work the subject will follow. Numerous trades are taught the maimed men from carpentry to diamond cutting. There are special schools for glass blowing, toy making, tapestry weaving and other textile industries. The length of time required to learn a trade in a French reëducational school varies with the trade and the school. At the *Ecole Joffre* and the *Ecole de Tourvielle* in Lyons the courses are long, six months being the shortest course offered, which is that in beadwork for badly injured men. Usually, eight months are required for bookkeeping, radio-telegraphy, and galosh making; a year is required for shoemaking, fur work, horticulture, paper-box making, and bookbinding; and eighteen months for tailoring, cabinet making, toy making, and the manufacture of artificial limbs. At the *Ecole normale et pratique* of Bordeaux, which is held to be a model school, the length of apprenticeship in the different trades is as follows:

Machinists and metal turners, ten to twelve months; locksmiths and forge workers, ten to twelve months; agricultural machinery and automobiles, five to seven months; oxy-acetylene welding, four to five months; shoemaking, six to nine months; sandal making, three to four months; pottery, ten to twelve months; binding, plain and artistic, eight to ten months; gilding, four to six months; paper-box making, four to six months; toy making, three to five months; tailoring, ten to twelve months; musical engraving, six to eight months; basketry and caning, five to eight months; industrial designing, six to eight months; truck gardening, five to six months; bookkeeping, nine to ten months.

Though in some cases the apprenticeship seems long for a man who must earn a livelihood, it is made easier for him inasmuch as he is often paid regular wages during the latter part of his course.

The prosthetic appliances are of minute adaptability, as may be imagined. For instance, a Doctor Boureau has invented a whole series of hands for different occupations. Besides the laborer's hand, he has a hand for the vine grower, for the postman, for a chair caner, for a leather cutter, for a solderer, for a plumber, for a jeweler, for a priest, for a driver of animals, et cetera, et cetera.

We in the United States have begun on this great task of fitting our *mutilés* for the world of labor. There is a Red Cross Institute for Crippled and Disabled Men in New York City, where already success has crowned the undertaking. During the past year men have been trained there in many branches of industry, and upward of a thousand have found permanent employment due to the training received.

VAGARIES OF PRONUNCIATION

WHILE there may be more or less rigid rules in English grammar, it has been demonstrated both in the past and at the present time, that there is no hard-and-fast rule as to spelling and pronunciation in English-speaking countries.

The first colonizers sent to Ireland from the western shires of England gave the Irish Celts their first lessons in English, through intercourse with them and the so-called Irish “brogue” resulted. As a matter of fact the Irish brogue, as spoken then and now, was more nearly correct in the pronunciation of certain words at that time than in the generally accepted pronunciation of these words to-day. Then, such words as “clean” and “mean” were pronounced throughout England by both the educated and

uneducated, as if they were spelled "clane" and "mane;" "please" was pronounced "plaze," and so on. In fact the Irish peasant of to-day has somewhat the same accent as Shakespeare had in "the spacious times of great Elizabeth." The Irish Celts are the true purists in pronunciation.

The changes still go on, with the United States in the lead in the movement. In the British Islands such names as Moran and Horan are accented on the first syllable and in the United States are now accented on the second syllable. On the other hand while Forsyth and several other English names are accented on the second syllable in Great Britain and Ireland, the first syllable is accented here. Smyth, or Smythe, one of the best-known English names, is frequently pronounced Smith—though the latter spelling is used in rare instances—in the British Islands. Here we often have separate pronunciation for Smyth, or Smythe, and Smith; the "y" being sounded in the former. Among the departures from the English style of spelling is the changing of the last syllable in many words ending in "re," to "er," as in theater, spelled theatre in Great Britain and Ireland.

The spelling of places is also changing here. The last instance was the change in the spelling of the island of Heligoland to Helgoland, pronounced Hellgoland, throughout the United States. The former spelling and pronunciation, however, have been recently resumed, probably because of the unpleasant idea suggested by the first syllable of Helgoland. How it may be spelled ten years hence no one can predict.

Thus it may be seen that from the days of Chaucer, whose poems as they appeared first would be difficult reading for the present day, the spelling and pronunciation of words have always been as liable to change as the weather.

THE GODDESS IN THE MACHINE

IMPERSONALLY, impartially she harkens to our cabalistic desire and swiftly she moves to grant it, whether joy or sorrow is the outcome. Awake, alert at any hour, she awaits our call.

Though we cannot see her, we hear her thousand voices sounding over the wide world. With the true grace of an immortal, she favors none. Against our pleasure or our anger she is proof. Rich and poor are alike in her sight. The tribute she demands is small, and the laborer's mite is as welcome as the plutocrat's offering.

For us she annihilates time and space, and if we cry for the impossible she will endeavor to achieve it that we may be satisfied.

She is the daughter of Democracy and Invention, and her name is Hello Central.



POPULAR TOPICS

OUR war losses have been terrible enough, but nothing as compared with the casualties of our allies. Actually, the deaths and injuries sustained by the American expeditionary force have not equaled those that we suffer annually in accidents. Each year in the United States approximately seventy-five thousand lose their lives through accidents, and the number injured is more than two million persons. Homicides and suicides are not included in this tabulation. The Census Bureau estimates that forty thousand persons are killed at their occupations each year.



THE vicissitudes of life bring to mind the wonderful work that our coast guard performs in the course of its daily round. Its duties are manifold and diverse. Besides the assistance given vessels in distress, the coast guard engages in such activities as medical and surgical aid to the sick and injured, recovery and burial of bodies cast up by the waves, the extinguishing of fires on wharves, vessels, dwelling and business structures, fighting forest fires, coöperating with local authorities in the maintenance of public order, apprehending thieves and other lawbreakers, preventing suicides, restoring lost children to their parents, recovering stolen property and salvaging miscellaneous articles from danger or

destruction, and furnishing transportation and assistance to other branches of the public service. One of the most important features of the coast guard work is the resuscitation of supposedly drowned persons, and the majority of the victims are saved. A body is worked over by them for from one to four hours, or, in other words, until there is absolutely no hope.



YOU would scarcely think that canaries are sometimes life-savers. They render this service in mines after fires and explosions. The canary is extraordinarily sensitive to any deadly gas, and is used by rescue crews and miners in testing the air of mines. When the bird shows signs of distress, the men know it is time to don their rescue apparatus. Often the canary is overcome by the fumes of the carbon monoxide and is asphyxiated, but the miners have a specially devised inclosed cage for the resuscitation of their feathered barometer.



ALL of us have said that after the war was over there would be startling revelations made of various sorts. And the disclosures are proceeding. The radio telephone used by American aviators between themselves on the wing and with squadron commanders on the ground was among the earliest secrets revealed to us, and it is an invention that possesses untold and invaluable potentialities for the future. It predicates the day when we may find ourselves equipped with pocket telephones usable anywhere.



TO facilitate the cultivation of abandoned soil in France a bill has been enacted by the French government which makes it possible for the owner or cultivator of an abandoned farm to claim seventy-five dollars an acre toward its rehabilitation.



PHILIPPINE tobacco is making great headway in this country. In the last yearly report of trade with the islands it was shown that three hundred and eighteen million five hundred and sixty-four thousand cigars had been taken by us, or nearly fifty per cent more than formerly. Also the export of unmanufactured tobacco established a new high record, exceeding forty million pounds.



JUDGING from items in German newspapers, the German industrialists who have faith in the future of Germany's trade balance, are relying on the following productions to offset the lack of raw materials: the increased cultivation of flax and hemp, intensified nettle culture, and wood-fiber manufactures. These are to take the place of cotton and wool. Nettles make an excellent silk, while wood fiber can be made into good cloth.



TWO new words have come into the English language to stay—"Bolshevik" and "Soviet." Only too well do we know what the former means. But the latter term is in doubt in many minds. Herbert N. Casson writing to the *Boston News Bureau* has given us a good definition of it. He said: "A soviet is practically a self-elected despotism, representing a mob. It is a governing body that has not been regularly chosen by its constituents and that is not responsible for its acts. It is an emergency committee that has for the moment assumed the task of leadership in order to make war upon some other body." Mr. Casson makes the further discovery that the "Soviet" in word and fact has recently come to England. Evidently it is epidemic. Let us be wary and politically prophylactic as possible.



IT remained for that grand old man of France, Clemenceau, to say the most memorable thing about President Wilson's mooted Fourteen Points. Said the Tiger with a grin: "Fourteen points? Why, that's a little strong! The good Lord had only ten!"

He Produced the \$100,000,000 Idea

By James Hay, Jr.

Author of "The Price of Prominence," Etc.

A little essay on a fact well known but too often disregarded—that a simple and valuable idea seems easy enough for you to get, only you don't happen to think of it

WASHINGTONIANS were talking about the "hundred-million-dollar idea." In the national capital, where nowadays the biggest of big things command only passing interest, "Haskin's hundred-million-dollar idea" was described to me by actors, business men and government officials. They looked upon it as one of the most brilliant achievements of civilian brains since America's war-making had begun.

Obviously, its originator had won out in the great game, had learned the moves that lead to the king row.

An idea big enough to dominate the gossip of Washington is worth studying. I wanted to know all about it. Particularly, I wanted to know how a penniless, unschooled country boy—born and reared in Shelbina, Missouri—had trained and improved his mind so that, when opportunity offered, he could wring from it an idea worth that much money.

For this lad, shouldering at the age of ten the burden of supporting himself and his invalid mother, had enjoyed no financial backing, had relied on no influential friendship, had cherished no fascinating ambition to lift him over the hard places, had invented no new thing, had discovered no magic button with which to turn on the sudden light of unexpected success, had found no map showing a short cut to fame.

He had traveled the road of rough knocks and had manufactured his career from the little things that come to every youngster. The prosaic was all he had ever known, the prosaic made impressive and painfully real by bills to be paid, agreements to be kept, contracts to be filled and disappointments to be discounted. He had solved the problem of successful salesmanship—and the ability to sell is the foundation of every undertaking. Without it, neither the lawyer nor the merchant, the manufacturer nor the

preacher, can go far. Without it, genius itself is nothing but a voice crying in the wilderness.

"Suppose," I said, "that you had before you fifty young men who wanted you to tell them something valuable about how to make the best of their lives, how to succeed. What would you say?"

"Most men," he replied, "are only half successful because they go into a business or a profession only half baked. They don't learn their business. They're not thorough. Studying your job, the facts about it and the possibilities in it, is the prime requisite of all success.

"Successful salesmanship, it seems to me, is the knack of knowing in a polite way more than your prospect knows, and then giving him the benefit of your knowledge.

"And to a thorough knowledge of your job add a stick-to-it courage and inoffensive persistency.

"The always-knowing-and-never-say-die man is unbeatable."

During the closing days of the drive for the Third Liberty Loan, everybody connected with it was trying to devise something that would bring in money swiftly and generously. Frederic J. Haskin had been speaking twice daily in a Washington theater, putting on "stunts" and thinking up "tricks" to get the interest and open the purses of the audiences. His success had been phenomenal.

One afternoon he went to the White House and laid before the president this scheme: Mr. Wilson was to go to the theater the next evening, and during the nine-o'clock intermission in the performance buy on the installment plan a fifty-dollar Liberty Bond, making the request that everybody in the audience "match" him with a similar purchase—that is, duplicate the president's act. Mr. Wilson readily agreed.

Haskin's next visit was to the McAdoo

offices in the treasury department, where he said: "Let's have every Liberty Loan speaker in every theater and at any other public performance throughout the whole country ask the members of his audience at nine o'clock to-morrow night to 'match' the president, who at that moment will be making his purchase here."

To "put over" the scheme required an immense amount of labor. One item was the sending of sixty-five thousand telegrams, the message a little under a hundred words, to Liberty Loan speakers everywhere. But the results paid for the effort. In less than forty-eight hours, according to treasury estimates, it brought in a total of more than one hundred million dollars invested in Liberty Bonds. That's why the government financiers are still talking about "Haskin's hundred-million-dollar idea."

That, of course, was not the first publicity work Haskin had done. It was merely an impressive link in a whole chain of similar feats.

"The man who wants to make the most out of himself, to invest his powers and capabilities so that the harvest will be the best possible," he answered a question, "has got to realize that success is not a flower which blooms overnight. To have an idea and then work it for all there is in it, is the only way to make it certain that you will have other and better ideas as the days go by. This is only to say that the study of your job is the first essential of progress in life.

"To say that you can win promotion without learning your present position, without mastering all its intricacies, is as sensible as to say you can find the shortest path across the Sahara Desert without a guide.

"You've asked me about my own experience. Whatever I've accomplished is due to the fact that I tried to learn everything there was to be learned about a job or an enterprise before I tackled it. I don't mean I did learn *everything* about it. But, by starting out with that ideal, I was compelled to absorb a lot. And I soon discovered that the more you put into your head about a project, the richer the project becomes.

"The principles of successful salesmanship are the principles of success in anything. Everywhere you find this absolute requirement: learn your job, learn the business. That means: study your public, study your purchaser, study the times and the pos-

sible changes of the times, study your product, and study and improve your own methods. And all this applies to every branch of human endeavor, whether you're trying to sell novels, or promote a corporation, or sell stove polish.

"There are two things every man must do: make or get something the public wants, and then make the public want it more and more.

"The half-baked salesman can never initiate anything, never assume command in the course of a deal, when he has to do with an able, astute purchaser. In his own heart, he recognizes his inferiority, and becomes merely a suppliant who says to himself: 'I hope this man will buy.' He never can think honestly: 'I'm going to show this fellow why he's got to buy. I'm going to prove to him that he can't afford to let the stuff go by.'

"Have for your ambition this: I shall learn more about my prospect's business than he himself knows; when I walk into his office, he won't be able to tell me anything I don't know.

"That is not an impossible ambition. You will find that there are as many half-baked purchasers as there are half-baked salesmen. And that is exactly the reason why the learning of your job, the learning of your 'line,' is so important and so profitable. Add to your selling talk a suggestion which will bring extra profits to your prospect's pocket, and forever after you will be a welcome visitor to his office.

"Unless you can do this, there's nothing creative about you. You won't build up your patronage. You're a well-dressed talker, a parrot full of commercial phrases, a human phonograph record—and a phonograph record, if you play it all the time, gets to be a nuisance."

Frederic J. Haskin, barefooted, ten years old, small for his age, needed money to buy food and pay doctors' bills. He earned it at first by selling Kansas City and St. Louis newspapers to the inhabitants of Shelbina. To the papers, he added after a while weekly and monthly magazines. In between times he swept out the office of *The Torchlight*, Shelbina's weekly paper.

He got a box high enough to lift him within reach of the type cases. He learned to set type. *The Torchlight* began to flicker; financially, it died down completely.

Haskin, still only a child, bought the type, paper, business and all for one thousand dollars, giving notes for it and paying the notes when they fell due.

While running the paper, he wrote weekly letters and special articles for cosmopolitan journals. His next step was to turn *The Torchlight* over to an assistant for a few months while he traveled to Alaska, Cuba, Mexico or other foreign countries and sent back to his "city customers" special articles on what he saw and heard.

Sometimes on these trips he went broke—checks from back home did not reach him promptly, or he spent more than he had thought would be necessary. When the bank roll was gone, he quit writing and got a job, always a job selling something, and held it long enough to accumulate the coin he needed. In those days, he was known as a record breaker for selling advertising space in telephone directories, city directories, anything of that sort.

Observe that he worked at something connected with newspapers, a business he had been studying for years. He wasted no time on "new" propositions.

When he had enough to pay the railroads and hotels what they charged him, out came the pen again, and the special articles were resumed. His trips got to be longer and longer; the articles earned bigger and bigger prices. At last, he sold *The Torchlight*, settled in Washington and proceeded to sell to newspapers a daily article dealing with something informative and interesting.

Also, he wrote and sold books of the same general character as his articles. He now has twenty million readers of the daily letters, and he has sold more than a million of his books.

"My business," he said, "is with newspapers; and I study newspapers all the time,

because I realize that the more I know about them, from the setting of the type to the methods of distribution, just that more apt I am to sell them the stuff they want. Like any other business man, I have to learn, and learn some more, and then keep on learning.

"There is never a time when a man can say, 'I'm acquainted with the tricks of the trade.' The trade is getting up new tricks, new requirements, every minute. And you can't do business to-day on what you learned last June. That attempt is 'old fogyism.' It won't work.

"Learn! That's the path to success. Learn the present. Learn the past. And, having saturated yourself in all these phases of your job, learn one thing more; learn to light up the future, to estimate it, to see and impress on others its possibilities. That's one of the benefits of real study of your job; by sizing up the past and present, you're enabled to discount the future.

"It takes time? Sure, it does. The man who thinks his brain entitles him to reach the top in one jump stays at the bottom. The time you put in studying is that useful commodity known as valuable experience. It is the thing which some day makes you worth ten thousand a year more than the other fellow.

"One idea begets another. And the man who comes to the front with a great big idea is the man who has spent a lot of time squeezing everything possible out of smaller ideas."

That last sentence was, in fact, the biography of the hundred-million-dollar idea. It came from a man who had woven the prosaic hours of childhood poverty and youthful struggle into the golden romance of business success. And it described the only Aladdin's magic lamp that a red-blooded, hustling young American needs.

WHAT AILED THE ACTRESS

JOHAN MASON, the actor, was having his troubles as a costar with a famous actress. Mason himself is good-natured, easy-going and a stranger to all the little irritabilities that prey on genius during play rehearsals. The actress, however, was a human time bomb, set to explode every half hour.

Finally, she lost her temper completely, hit the ceiling, came back to earth with a thud, and, on the rebound, collided with Mason and gave him an old-fashioned, unrestrained tongue-lashing.

At his club that night Mason was kidded about the way she had bawled him out.

"Nothing!" he said carelessly. "A mere nothing. The only trouble with her is that she has prima-donna emotions and stage-hand brains."

Live Bait

By Frederick Irving Anderson

Author of "When, If and As," Etc.

In playing the newspaper game one has to sense things unsaid and unseen and, furthermore, judge whether they ought to be said or seen. There's the rub!

MACLEOD, Janeway and Watterson occupied swivel chairs; ate their meals at table; and slept in real beds. They seldom set their feet off made roads; rarely moved more than a day's journey from the mothering care of their respective wives; and, in spite of the insignia of the general staff they wore on their collars, they punched time clocks four times a day as precept and example. Early in youth, at widely separated geographical points, each had developed an aptitude for mathematics, linguistry and history; one way and another, the trio found themselves in the same class at West Point. They had the health, nerve and brains to stick through those four years; and instead of marrying young and rich, and retiring to the engineering profession or landscape gardening, they adhered to the career for which they had been pruned and polished at great expense. War as a life work was rather a putative desultory profession at best; so each in his own way had found time for a hobby: Macleod studied alloys, particularly of tungsten and molybdenum; Janeway went in for faints and fevers; and Watterson had the technology of transportation at his fingers' end, from paper cart wheels to compound locomotives—he would have made an excellent general superintendent, or a yardmaster of merit.

When the war came, these three were in the thick of it. Not among shot and shell and gas, but in swivel chairs. It wasn't exactly their idea of practicing the art of tactics and strategy as they had absorbed it in beardless youth. It was mostly adding machine; actuaries' tables; B. T. U. of coal, and test tubes. But it was war, nevertheless; and they were hog-tied to their swivel chairs through their special gifts. No one ever suggested by any chance that they occupied bombproof jobs, or were the objects of any special favor.

Occasionally, these three classmates encountered each other in that dense-growing shrubbery called inter-department correspondence, in which they invariably had the honor, sir, to be et cetera and et cetera; and occasionally in the street or the drawing-room, where they recollected each other vaguely not as definite functionaries of the present, but for some weird characteristics they had displayed in remote cadet days: Macleod, six feet six in his regulation socks, and with an ultramarine beard shining through his skin like gunpowder, had been known then as Bertha; little Janeway as The Insect because of his predilection for bugs and bug hunting; and the sedate Watterson as Owensboro Watt, the Ohio River Gambler, because of his habitat and his religious horror of all games of chance.

In leisure times, now filed away for reference, the big Scot dearly loved his fowling pieces; Janeway still pursued etymology; and Watterson was solemnly addicted to his church and family. No random chance would ever have drawn these three together as fast friends. It would have taken something cataclysmic to make them brothers.

At seven, on the morning of the thirteenth of June, Macleod, Janeway and Watterson, severally and without being aware of each other's proximity, cantered up to the gap in the hedge of the garden in Cabin John Park, tossed their reins to the hostler, slapped their shiny boots with their gauntlets through force of habit, looked around at the scene, identified a specified spot, and sat down for breakfast at the same table.

They were surprised to find one another there, and took pains not to show it. A great many men, in carload lots, took orders from these three every day. And a few men gave them orders. After all, there was nothing unusual in discovering three fellow classmen had received identical orders. They

saluted each other's uniform and insignia gravely, and conversed casually on subjects in which they took no interest.

Suddenly the three, as if actuated by one spring, rose to their feet and stood stiffly at attention. The Fourth Chair was in the act of seating himself. This accomplished, the three functionaries resumed their seats, respectful and alert.

The Fourth Chair was a little man of civilian attire and manner; boyish in appearance except for his eyes, which were very old and tired. He took charge of the ceremony of breakfast, with that perfunctory ease which a public person picks up unconsciously through living his whole life among strangers. The three functionaries, following his lead in small talk, laughed at his rather pallid essays at wit, all the time gnawed with curiosity. Why were they here? What had this personage, who had the right to give them orders, during the current phase of the political moon, linked this particular trio for so awkward an occasion as breakfast at seven in the morning?

Finally, the little man pushed back his breakfast things, fixed his tired eyes on Macleod, Janeway and Watterson in turn, glanced around the park. Their table was isolated; there was no one within earshot. He lowered his voice, and said:

"What I have to say can be said very briefly. Each of you gentlemen is already in possession of one-third of the details. It is merely necessary for me to articulate the facts, so that you may fully comprehend the significance of various happenings that have come under your scrutiny in your several tasks during the last few months. I have had memos from each of you in turn, calling to my attention what seemed to be inexplicable loose ends. It is concerning these loose ends I wish to speak."

He began to talk in a droning voice, as if dictating to a stenographer. The three officers of the general staff had arranged themselves easily with their cigars. Their interest was whetted by this promise to illuminate some of the part truths of their daily harvest: buried under the detail of their individual offices, these three were cut off from perspective.

So completely did the Fourth Chair elide detail, touching only the high lights of his subject, that an eavesdropper would have been rewarded with very thin soup indeed. That his droning, unpunctuated phrases

went home to his hearers, however, was evidenced by a sudden glow in the eyes of one or another, as the coordinating words of their chief made clear some blurred incident in department routine.

"Now, gentlemen, you know more of what I am talking about, why we are here, than I do myself," said the Fourth Chair, coming to an abrupt end.

The three functionaries nodded, involuntarily drew up their chairs, turned to him expectantly. He had hooked them on splendidly; a very easy, friendly feeling had miraculously replaced the stiff intercourse of their breakfast. They liked this little man; every one liked him who was privileged to come in contact with him.

"What I am about to say now is difficult," said the little man. His tired eyes searched the trees. He seemed to be trying to frame his thoughts. When he spoke, it was in the metaphor of the hunter, which is still the basis of so much of our national figure of speech.

"We have tried all kinds of bait," he began. "We have handled it with tongs; we have salted our trail; we have even fed them live stuff to catch them less wily. But"—with an impatient gesture—"they steal our bait—grow fat on it. When I was a boy," and a glow of animation swept over his face, "we had an old fox in the woods that wouldn't eat unless he could steal his food out of a trap. He had a very lively sense of humor, that fox." He smiled thinly at the three attentive faces.

"I won't detail the steps we have taken, the methods we have pursued," he went on. "Enough that we have failed utterly. I have one card yet unturned. It concerns one of you three gentlemen. I do not know which one." His eye traveled over the three listeners. "There can be only you three to choose from."

He paused for a dramatic moment.

The three chairs scraped in unison, as the three men drew closer. Even your dried-up department specialist, who fights wars with adding machines and time-tables, nurses the spark of action. They had no idea what he was driving at. But his words suggested a surcease from swivel-chair chains—for one lucky one of them, at least.

"We prate a good deal about the thing we call honor," said the Fourth Chair. "Our phrases about it become cant. As some one

has said, we carry the real thing in our hearts without thought; the thing we talk about, we carry on our sleeve.

"An officer, and a gentleman!" he went on. There was just the suggestion of irony in his tone. "It is a fine figure! A trifle threadbare in spots, maybe. Your God, your honor, and your country! That's the usual order, isn't it?" He asked the question, but did not pause for reply. "In your cadet days, you were taught that, in your careers as officers and gentlemen, you would never be asked, ordered, required, to do any act incompatible with your honor."

He looked at them sharply, forcing some response; and they nodded uneasily. What the deuce was he driving at?

"I think very few men we call dishonorable, deliberately violate their own principles of honor." The Fourth Chair was continuing. "No matter how low or vile their acts may be, some way, somehow, they manage to square them with their principles of right, to justify themselves to their conscience. When a man deliberately, and with open mind, commits a dishonorable act, I suppose he is beyond salvation. The sin is no longer venal; it is cardinal."

The three officers had let themselves slump back in their chairs again, and gave attention to their cigars.

Without changing the tempo of his words, the little man suddenly laid his last card on the table; he said:

"Gentlemen, it is my painful duty to ask one of you three to forfeit his own self-respect."

In the hush that followed, a queer, crooked smile flitted across the face of Macleod; Janeway turned ashen white; Watterson the devout actually crossed himself. They were still struggling under the impact of the shock, when their chief followed through, quickly:

"Not his reputation, mind. That's a matter of the personal opinion of one's friends, and the world—right or wrong. There's nothing absolute about that. It is his own self-respect he must forfeit. Something he has got to live, eat his meals with, day in and day out."

The three were staring at him nonplused.

"If we succeed—God helping us!—the end will justify the means," said the Fourth Chair sententiously.

The big Scot nodded vigorously as if this

last remark squared with some line of casuistry he was running out with his own hairsplitting intellect. The other two made no sign.

"If we fail—which God forbid!—the unlucky man—and myself—will have to live with himself for the rest of his life, and try in some small measure at least to repair the wrong he has done. Now gentlemen," he said, rising. "I leave you. You will determine the man among you in your own way. That man will be admitted without his card at my office at three this afternoon. I bid you good morning."

After a pause the three officers rose and called for their mounts. They made their way back to Washington just when the lazy, carefree world began to bestir itself for the day and take to the road. Macleod, Janeway and Watterson were constantly at salute, as the streams of magnificent motors rolled by.

"Owensboro Watt!" cried the big Scot suddenly.

"Present and voting, Bertha," responded the devout little rider, with an instinctive lapse into the argot of the good bad days of their novitiate.

"Watt, now that you are about to die, put your scruples aside and try to be human. Ever play motor poker? No? Not? Well, you are about to plunge. At the start, it may be some solace to you, to know that beginners have fool's luck. You draw your hand from the number plates of the autos as they pass. Gentlemen, the Ohio River Gambler will draw the first number plate that contains five digits. The Insect will take the second plate. Myself, the dealer, will take the third. Discard what you don't want, and fill your hand from the next three plates in the same order, drawing from left to right consecutively. Be easy about it. This is likely to cost us a tour in the guardhouse."

They rode on.

"I've got three deuces—with an eight and a six to discard," announced Janeway some time later.

"I've got a straight with a hole in the middle," said Macleod. "Watt, under the circumstances, I think I should advise you to throw away your hand and call for a new book."

These three were in the way of becoming fast friends, brothers tied by a cataclysm.

II.

One day when Farmer Marshall was moving along the blood-sweating pavement of Pennsylvania Avenue under a Sahara sun, a youth stopped him respectfully and said that the Chief would like to see the Farmer at four, if convenient.

Everybody wanted to see the Farmer, at any time. All men told the Farmer all things, in strictest confidence. In his twenty years in Washington, generals, cabinet ministers, diplomats, senators, had conveyed so many unprinted and unprintable facts to him, that he was now a walking elevator of interdicted information. The Farmer as a cache would have been priceless; and numerous gentlemen whose careers were for the most part underground, were wont to gaze longingly at his shambling figure, and yearn for some means of extracting from it secrets worth their weight in platinum. The Farmer was a Journalist, with a capital J.

Not all the news is fit to print, by any manner of means. Some of it is rank, some fragile, some virulent. Some has to be sprinkled with lime and hermetically sealed; some is as capriciously explosive as chlorate when exposed to the light. Sifting the day's run of news is a calling, a gift. And the Farmer's gift lay in knowing what not to print.

Fame travels devious paths, and stops off at unexpected tank towns. Every trade and every profession has its saint and its shrine, for the most part unsung, outside of its guild. Fame had put her finger on Farmer Marshall. Editorial adepts with paste pot and scissors clipped and pasted him every morning. His paper was a little one-horse affair two-thirds boiler plate; his town was merely a crossroads, with one wide street in which farmers' flivvers were wont to sun themselves each noon, parked herringbone fashion. There are some twenty newspapers in the United States out of the thousands that daily clog the mail, that have the right of way on the exchange table. Stir the editorials and special-news features of these twenty in a crucible each morning, and you arrive pretty nearly at the national trend of thought for that day and hour. In the constellation are one *Globe*, two *Worlds* and two *Suns*, three *Stars*, a *Republican* a hyphenated *Democrat*, a *Ledger*, a *State Capital*, et cetera. Some of them are one-horse, patent-inside affairs, like Farmer

Marshall's *News*; and some of them are huge dreadnoughts of the line that print, trim, fold and count their four hundred thousand before sunup every morning.

The Farmer had made his *début* in this world as Enoch Marshall. But his later appellation was one of those truths which is self-evident. His sobriquet had been fastened to him during his first days in Washington; and in the course of years had assumed the dignity of a baptismal title: his dispatches were signed Farmer Marshall, and he had a son matriculated at Armour Tech, as Farmer Junior. He was a spindling man of studious aspect, with a freckled dome that bulged above the ears, with large child-like eyes behind thick glasses, and thick lips which he carried pursed as if saying prunes. His clothes, spick and span, always seemed to resent their owner. He wore from habit a gray silk four-in-hand, a boiled shirt, and a tall shiny collar so carefully fitted that it might have been sweated on by a skilled plumber each morning. He was as methodical in habit as a grandfathers' clock. Mogul publishers tried to win him away, with fatuous offers of gold; but Farmer Marshall and the *News* were born united, like the Siamese twins, and an operation would have been fatal. He was a De Blowitz of a later day, with no aspirations to distinction.

At four, prompt to the minute, Farmer Marshall mounted the arduous marble steps, displayed his pass to the sentry at the wicket, passed down the hollow corridor, and by due process of secretarial refining, found himself standing alone in the anteroom of the Chief. Through a half-open door he saw, seated at the broad desk within, a little man of civilian attire and mien, with a boy's face and an old man's eyes. Beside him lolling with his accustomed studied grace stood Kirke Winslow, a competent fellow craftsman of Farmer Marshall. The two men suddenly became aware of the Farmer's scrutiny. They paused, stared at him for an instant, then continued their conversation in lower tones. The Chief rose smiling, extended his hand, and led his caller to the door. Farmer Marshall caught the usual formula on the Chief's lips:

"Not for publication—merely for your own information."

The Chief turned back to his desk.

"Lo, Farmer," said the elegant Kirke.

The Farmer merely nodded his greeting. He didn't like this man. He didn't like his

clothes. That was about as far as the shabby Farmer ever got in analyzing his antipathy for the dandy.

"I have a wire from the Big Gun," said Winslow, handing the Farmer a telegram. "He's here to-morrow—wants to see you. Has something to offer."

All the Big Guns, of all four-hundred-thousand-copy dreadnoughts, wanted to see the Farmer, had something to offer.

"Thanks. I am afraid I won't be able to arrange it." The Farmer was pushing rather awkwardly through what to him was an embarrassing situation.

"You make a mistake, Farmer. Believe me, he wants you, and he is willing to pay for you. I have already wired him that I will have you there at three to-morrow afternoon. Don't put me in a bad hole, Farmer."

Then Farmer Marshall became deliberately offensive.

"I will tell you, Winslow," said he slowly, "that your Big Gun has some peculiar policies with which I do not care to be associated. You may tell him that if you wish—or if he wants to come to my office, I will tell him that myself." The Farmer's furtive eye was sweeping the ceiling for cobwebs. In the end it rested full and accusing on Kirke.

Winslow was in the act of protesting, when a clerk put his head in at the door, and nodded to the Farmer; the Farmer passed on into the sanctum. At the dignitary's desk, he drew up his accustomed chair and sat down, and waited in silence. The Chief was making pothooks on a bulky envelope; he said, without looking up:

"You were in town on the eighteenth, weren't you, Farmer? Sending your usual dispatch?"

"Yes," replied Farmer Marshall, rummaging in his mind for the events of that date. Nothing had occurred, mere routine.

From the envelope the Chief produced a clipping, a newspaper column, double-leaded.

"Is this your dispatch of that day and date, Farmer?" he asked, as he passed the clipping to his visitor. The Farmer read it methodically, before responding; he said that it was.

"You were authorized to use it?" inquired the Chief.

"Yes."

"By whom?"

The Chief was now looking at him steadily.

"I cannot tell you. I am not permitted to say. You quite understand it is impossible for one to reveal the sources of one's information," said the Farmer quickly.

"Obviously," went on the Chief in a colorless voice, "your informant was some one subject to the jurisdiction of this department."

"That is a matter between you and your superiors and your subordinates."

"There was no intimation given you that the matter was confidential?"

"None whatever. In fact, I was asked to prepare the copy, and submit it to my informant for his O. K. before I wired it."

"And?"

"I did so."

"He O. K.'d it?" asked the Chief slowly.

"He did."

"In writing?"

"No; by word of mouth." The Farmer added earnestly: "I am positive my informant had no suspicion that the matter was in any way interdicted. If it is a question of any one's being disciplined for the slip, I think I am quite as much to blame as my informant. I wish you would bear that in mind, sir."

For answer, the Chief touched a bell, and glanced at a side door. A clerk appeared.

"Ask Major Janeway if I can see him for a moment."

At the sound of Janeway's name, Farmer Marshall's eyes wavered for the fraction of a second. The little bug-hunting major came trotting in. He was halfway across the big room before he noticed Farmer Marshall. He barely glanced in his direction. The Chief was stifling a yawn, and looking absent-mindedly at his watch, as if the approach of the lunch hour occupied his mind. With a listless hand he passed the clipping to the major.

"Can you help us out on this, I wonder, major?" he said.

Janeway read the clipping line by line. When he spoke it was as if he were alone with his Chief.

"I did not know that this matter had been printed, sir," he said.

"It has not been printed, except in a single isolated paper in the Middle West," said the Chief. "Did you, major, by any chance, divulge the subject of this article to any one? I ask you, because I know you

were one of several who had the information."

"Yes; I told it to Farmer Marshall, for his own information."

"Without permission to print it?"

"Absolutely forbidding it, sir."

Farmer Marshall stirred in his chair; but his childlike eyes never left the major's face.

"Did you O. K. his dispatch before it was sent?" asked the Chief deliberately.

The major reddened and stuttered.

"I did not, sir—I did not! The distinct understanding was, that it was not to be made public."

"You note that it is published," remarked the Chief dryly.

While one might count ten, the scene froze into this attitude: the major stiffly erect and staring out of a window; Farmer Marshall dully regarding the head of his cane, which he twirled slowly between his fingers; the Chief tapping out the tempo of some tune on the edge of his desk. He was the first to break the spell.

"That will be all, major. Thank you very much. Please erase the incident from your mind," he said. Major Janeway walked out. Under his toe the Chief felt for a secret button. When a situation threatened to become strained, this secret button was his escape. It summoned a clerk, who had instructions to present something urgent for his Chief's decision.

The Chief abruptly turned to the clerk's papers, seeming to forget the Farmer's presence. After several seconds he looked up.

"I will have to ask you to excuse me now, Mr. Marshall," he said abstractedly; and as the clerk opened the door for the Farmer's exit, the Chief added in raised tones: "Please consider what I have told you not for publication—merely for your own information."

There was no doubt in Farmer Marshall's mind as to the extent of the catastrophe which had this day overtaken him. After twenty years of faithful service, twenty years in which he had earned a unique reputation for probity, honor and discernment, it was his portion to be demolished in a single moment by the "J'accuse" of an irresponsible petty official, whose sole excuse was to save his own hide from the consequences of some random indiscretion.

The very casualness with which the whole thing had transpired, was the more signifi-

cant. Justice, blind and absolute, was personified by the little Chief, who at the moment of the crisis had seemed more concerned with the approach of his lunch hour than with the good name he was damning. His final words in the well-known formula: "This is merely for your own information—not for publication"—in the light of events had assumed an indescribable irony.

There was no defense. In common with the priest and the physician, Farmer Marshall and the members of his craft needs must submerge their identity in their guild. They cease to exist as individuals; they become integral members of an institution. But, where the arms of the church shield her vicar in keeping the secrets of the confessional inviolate, and the arbitrary law of professional ethics protects the physician from betraying his patient, the journalist is without recourse. Having no individuality, he can have no personal controversies with those dignitaries whose confidences it is his business to invite. In success he is bulwarked by his institution; in error he must stand alone. A newspaper has no place for mistakes, either in fact or opinion. There are no excuses, because whatever the extenuating circumstances, there are no ears to hear.

The steady, dependable old Farmer had watched callow officials, suddenly elevated by political fortune beyond their capacity, come and go through session after session. He had held out a hand to many of them, eased them over hard spots, edited their indiscreet utterances. Those of them who had survived had thanked him for saving them from themselves. That was the keystone of his reputation. He never made a man say anything he should not say. And now without warning he suddenly found himself forsworn.

The Farmer laboriously took to pieces the offending dispatch, trying to divine some reason for the disaster. Learned as he was in the significance of trivialities, he failed to uncover its purport. The dispatch treated of a plan for extensive maneuvers of the border patrol during the first week in October. The border, with its spasmodic guerrilla warfare, had assumed an entirely subsidiary place in the news. Those fractional divisions of raw levies who were given a stunt at patrolling the boundary as part of the elementary course in the science of war, were to be brought together on a certain day

to give recent brigadiers and major generals an opportunity of handling men in the mass. The same thing was occurring in a dozen cantonments throughout the country weekly, and swivel-chair officials went to especial pains to see that the details reached newspaper correspondents. It was well known that a certain strength of men and material were maintained at all times on the border; and why the random activities of those units which happened to be going through the parched dusty business of riding the line during October, should be regarded as interdicted information, was more than the Farmer could guess. It was only when he searched out his original copy that with a start he noticed the handwriting of the man who had visé this dispatch, in several insignificant interlineations. Methodically he erased these, reproduced them in his own cramped handwriting. Evidence was futile. It would serve only to further damn the perjurer who had already damned himself.

Then the Farmer sat down at his typewriter. And, as was his custom, religiously adhering to the touch system, regardless of the laws of time and space, he fixed his eyes on the ceiling and began to compose. It was an essay on press censorship, the burden being that the public should not be too greedy for details. The most unconsidered item, harmless in itself, might, in articulation with some similar harmless item, prove the key to a puzzle which enemy spies were at all times seeking to unravel. The essay was a classic, in the Farmer's best style. It should have been printed. But the Farmer had not set it down on paper for publication; it was merely to clarify his own thoughts. Being a writing man, he could think most clearly in print. He carefully tore the composition into bits and consigned them to the wastebasket.

One more task suggested itself. It was rather voluminous, but the Farmer had a world of patience. He waded through mountains of exchanges, seeking a recurrence of the information conveyed in his dispatch of the eighteenth. There was not a line of it. The Chief had spoken truly when he had said, with just a trace of malice in his tone, that the matter had got into print only in a single instance—that of an obscure paper in the Middle West—the Farmer's *News*. Even the paragraphers, and the editorial snipers who found so much meat for a

day's work in the Farmer's column, had steered clear of it. The obvious reason was its triviality. The Farmer rejected this at once. Neither chance nor its insignificance could explain the fact that of all the hundreds of correspondents in Washington, and of all the thousands of newspaperers in the United States, himself, and his *News*, were the only ones who had made use of it. However, this line of reason only availed to befuddle him more thoroughly.

The Farmer went about his daily grind without missing a beat. Days passed. At the end of the first week, a less astute man might have deluded himself into the belief that the incident was closed. The Farmer fell into no such error; he knew that sooner or later the blow would fall. He sat several times in the same chair, in the Chief's inner office; there was no hint of any change in the friendly intercourse of these two. There was never any recurrence of the subject.

At the end of the second week in July, he took an inventory of his affairs. The week had been particularly irritating. Here and there he had been kept waiting, left to cool his heels in anterooms, alongside of callow cubs, and free-lance operators. One day Kirke Winslow had paused, drawing, in front of him:

"What, Farmer! Do you mean to say this new breed of clerks has got your number? I thought you had perfected a patent box barrage, to put yourself through without delay!"

Several definite appointments had been broken. Bentley, a boyhood friend, now a major general with an army corps of adding machines and clerks as his tin soldiers, with whom Farmer Marshall was wont to dine every Tuesday, had telephoned and suggested that they put their dinners on ice for a time, at least until the stress of detail was over. The most disturbing incident of the bad week, however, was the omission of his dispatch entire from the *News* one day. A drunken telegraph operator seemed to explain this.

Everything that happened had a plausible explanation. A cabinet minister, a food administrator, an ordnance officer, occasionally find it necessary to erase set appointments; and a boyhood friend, who happens to be a major general, may be called upon to omit the obligations of comradeship. The methodical Farmer listed the

coincidences of irritations for the past seven days. Like an echo in his mind, came the parting shot of the Chief: "This is merely for your own information."

"It would be more decent," concluded the Farmer suddenly, "if they were to hit me with an ax."

August passed. All men told the Farmer all things, in strictest confidence—after they had been well aired elsewhere. Several times he experienced that horrible sensation of the true reporter, to read *news* in the columns of his contemporaries. Somewhere beneath the surface, a slow disintegrating process had set in. The Farmer was losing his grip.

Meantime Janeway had been jumped over thirty numbers that outranked him, and made a full colonel. Kirke Winslow, the stormy petrel, brought this information to Farmer Marshall.

"Take my tip," pursued the gossip. "Janeway will be given a peacock job. Something is in the wind. They have been sidetracking him lately. That's the English of it. If a man puts his foot in it, make him a knight, and put him in a glass case." He turned suddenly on the Farmer. "Did you ever hear anything against him, Farmer?"

"No; except that he was indispensable to the surgeon general."

"Wait and see," retorted Kirke. "My tip is he will join the rocking-chair fleet before many moons. He has grown too gabby about the mouth."

This conversation occurred in the Farmer's office one evening. Kirke was moving toward the door, when he paused, hesitating. He came back and drew up a chair close to the Farmer's desk. In a low tone he said:

"De Groot, of the Wendover Syndicate, tells me your people are angling for the Wendover service. What do you know about that? Are you going to retire to a chicken farm, or something, Farmer?"

There was an impudent directness about Winslow.

The Farmer pounded his typewriter with even greater violence than before, but held his peace.

"I thought you'd want to know. You'd do the same for me, wouldn't you?"

"Thanks," said the Farmer dryly. "I won't put up the umbrella until it begins to rain."

"If it does rain, Farmer—queer things do happen, you know"—persisted the other—"my Big Gun wants you. He's willing to pay for you. He thinks you are a walking statistical abstract. It would be soft and easy, and a fat pay check. All he wants is your name. You could live here in Washington, in your carpet slippers. No leg chasing, or cooling your heels in ante-rooms. Just 'think' stuff. You could get the office cat to write it for you."

The Farmer lifted a quizzical eyebrow.

"Thanks, no! My personal opinion of your Big Gun is that he gets away with murder every day of his life. Now run along. I am trying to finish my story."

A week later, the Farmer's publisher, Watson, blew in unexpectedly. There was the usual conference between master and man lasting far into the night. Annually Watson and the Farmer had this confab, which had to do mostly with unprinted and unprintable news. It was the way Watson kept in touch with the significance of events.

Suddenly the publisher said, out of the air:

"The major general stopped off on his way West last week."

Major General Bentley was a native of Farmer Marshall's town, and to all denizens of that town, only one major general existed, in spite of the roster as evidence to the contrary.

"Yes?" responded the Farmer inquiringly.

"Yes; he told me about you." Watson paused and fixed a disconcerting look on the Farmer. "That's the reason I am here at this time," he went on. "I have been working you like a truck horse. I didn't know."

"I never felt better in my life," protested the Farmer. "Bentley has got it wrong. I haven't seen him for six weeks."

Watson smiled his disbelief.

"That's what they all say," he said, in the idiom of the comic page. "But I have taken the matter into my own hands. I have fixed up a nice little rest for you. You are going to run away and play."

"I don't want to run away and play, Watson. Bentley has got it wrong, I tell you. Bentley is always worrying over somebody else's liver. Mine is right side up. Where I am needed is right here. And here I stay."

"You are in the hands of your friends, Farmer," laughed the proprietor. "It's all

arranged. Full pay and all that. Until you are fit again. I have contracted with the Wendover Syndicate to fill your column till you get on your feet again."

This was the final blow. The Farmer took it standing.

"Very well," he said. "Never mind the pay. It isn't a question of money. I'd feel better about it to break clean, if you don't mind."

There would be other offers, of course, once it was noised about that the Farmer and his precious *News* had parted for the benefit of their respective healths. The Farmer, like others of his craft, was a fatalist. There was no use fighting it. The conviction came to him that he was through. The process had been a little more delayed, long drawn out, more cruel than he had anticipated in the beginning. What he would avoid, above all things was the spectacle of a burned-out genius on skids, as they have the habit of saying in his world—sliding back, through one job after another, to nonentity.

The Farmer was spared annoyance. The other Big Guns did not come forward with their fatuous offers of gold. The grapevine telegraph had passed the word. In some midnight confidences, when men rake over the dead bones of their craft, it was suggested that the Farmer in these perilous times, had been guilty of some act of commission or omission—that certain personages in exalted places would be just as well pleased if the Farmer did not have a ticket to pass the sentry. In other midnight conferences it was put forward as the case of another candle that had reached the end of its wick. Paste pot and shears adepts throughout the country dug among their damp exchanges for another tin god to help them out on their paraphrasing. And the Farmer, like a helpless comet, caught in the swirl of a constellation, continued to move about Washington. It was the only life he had ever known.

III

There were pins and pins and pins. Of almost every conceivable color. They were stuck in a map in the style of Mercator's projection, that occupied the entire south wall of the big room.

At the head of the room sat a good-looking young man named Hurd. He spent all his days with those pins. They were mov-

ing incessantly, like ants on an ant hill. Their movement, and the infinite combinations of number, color and locality made a fascinating study—to any one acquainted with these particular pins.

These pins did not locomote by themselves. Clerks moved them. For the most part it was a brisk, elderly woman who would pop in and out of the room silently. Consulting memoranda, usually consisting of numbers that had just arrived from the four winds in the mail bag, or by wire, she would select this pin and that for a journey—or drop it in the discard. Those pins occupied the major part of her time, eight hours a day, for which she was paid eighteen dollars a week. The work was easy, and did not try the intellect; and while in the beginning she had permitted herself some curiosity as to the pin game, later it became as automatic as gum chewing.

On the second day of October, among the hundreds and thousands of varicolored pins on the map, there were, by actual count, forty-eight pins of a robin's-egg-blue color. They were scattered over the face of the map, and apparently had nothing in common except color. At ten o'clock several early callers who had been waiting in the anteroom, were dismissed by a clerk with the information that Mr. Hurd was occupied and would not be at liberty for some time. At this moment, Mr. Hurd sat back in his chair, his head pillowed in his cupped hands, smoking a big cigar.

The alert, elderly woman popped in and out, vaguely aware of the abstraction of her chief, and wondering how he got away with his big salary when he so persistently refrained from both work and fight hour after hour.

Toward eleven o'clock, there came to be a gradual waking up among these blue pins. One of them shifted from Fort Huron to Fort Wayne; another from Chatham Bars to New Bedford; a third from Omaha City to Topeka; a fourth moved from Helena to Gallatin. And so on. One by one the blue pins packed their bags, stepped aboard trains, and were en voyage. The lady clerk of course failed to note this, because she was dealing in all colors of the rainbow.

Even if an untrained observer had been told to note this spontaneous shifting of the blues, it would have been all Greek to him. They seemed to be aiming in no single gen-

eral direction. That is, in the beginning. One had to be fairly familiar with mountain ranges, river courses, the valleys and the plateaus, of the continent, also with Bullinger's, and the X Y Z Guide, to understand why the blues, as if actuated by a common impulse, should move in such diverse ways: some started north, some north by west, some due east, some due south. The pins continued to move like ants on an ant hill.

Hurd finished one cigar and began on another. After the lunch hour—he never lunched—he came out of the silence and put in an afternoon dictating, at a speed that satisfied even the pin lady. At noon the next day, he got out a parallel ruler and fussed with a little map he held before him. By and by he satisfied himself that an area of low pressure—as his Weather Bureau friends would say—was developing in the Southwest. At least so far as the robin's-egg-blue pins were concerned. At two in the afternoon, he was so thoroughly convinced of this, that he had almost determined the eye of the storm. He wired Stevens, in Jefferson City:

"Shipment of gills, consigned to Methodist Book Concern. Please verify manifest."

It was all very simple. Every one of those pins meant a man; and every color, every shade, every series of numbers that decorated the heads of those pins, meant some particular line of endeavor. Each of the robin's-egg-blue men was tied by the heels to a second man—who didn't know it. Every time this second man moved, a robin's-egg-blue pin moved in the same direction, telegraphing his locality and routing each day to the elderly, alert lady of the pins.

After sending his wire, Hurd took his mind off the robin's-egg-blues, as Stevens was thoroughly dependable. During the next few days he went through his usual motions, cognizant no doubt, out of the tail of his eye, of any peculiar idiosyncracies showing itself among the mauves, the champagne grays and the Alice pinks—also the robin's-egg-blues. His was a colorful life.

As for the blues, in their succeeding activities, they merely verified his wire to Stevens on the second day, and were now moving swiftly in converging lines toward the area of low pressure.

Hurd looked out of the window. On a bench in the park opposite sat an indolent

figure of a man. More or less, for several weeks, this man had occupied this bench in the shade for several hours each day. The square faced the White House on one hand, and just beyond were various departments. All Washington flowed through this little square throughout the day. This man on the bench would occasionally rise briskly and be off as though on some important mission. Half an hour, or an hour later, he would come straggling back. He had a wide acquaintance, and seemed to take great pleasure from many bows from dignitaries he was able to collect in the course of a morning or afternoon.

Hurd put on his hat and went out, and crossed over to this bench.

"Morning, Farmer," he saluted, cheerily. He paused to mop his forehead, for the heat was excessive; then sat down, fanning himself.

"I hear you have been ill," said Hurd. "Sorry to hear that. Has it kept you out of the running altogether?"

"Oh, yes, yes," said the Farmer slowly. "Didn't you know? I thought all my friends knew. It was in the papers."

He took out an envelope and produced a clipping; the clipping was soiled and torn from many thumbs. It was the panegyric of the Farmer's *News*, when one day it announced, with heavy heart—in print—that its famous Washington correspondent, Farmer Marshall, had been forced to take a furlough on imperative orders from his physician. It added that the sympathy, the affection, and the concern of the newspaper-reading public, would follow the Farmer into his enforced retirement; and it said that the loss to the man in the street was no less acute than to the *News* itself; it concluded with the Farmer's honorable and conspicuous services for twenty years; et cetera.

In fact it was a column brimful of that product of the editorial sanctum which newspaper men call "slush." It was slush; and the Farmer knew it. But it answered a multitude of questions for that portion of his public who did not read between the lines; and the Farmer kept it by him to spare embarrassing explanations.

"Farmer, can you see me in my office at four this afternoon?" asked the pin specialist, as he handed back the clipping.

"What? Me? Why yes—yes! Certainly, Mr. Hurd. I'll be there on the minute!"

The Farmer's embarrassing eagerness was positively painful. Hurd rose with a feeling of shame that he had thus put a fine old lion like the Farmer through his tricks.

Hurd made several calls; and shortly before four, a clerk put his head in at the door and nodded, then withdrew. Hurd caught up his hat and hurried out. He encountered as if by chance, Kirke Winslow, swinging along, bound somewhere in great haste.

Hurd put a detaining hand on his arm.

"Will you take a little walk with me?" he asked sweetly.

"Why, yes—if you are going in my direction. How far? I am in a hurry," said Kirke, looking at his watch.

"How far, Kirke?" repeated Hurd, still smiling. "That I cannot say. Possibly as far as Atlanta—or Leavenworth. I can't say."

The two men eyed each other quietly. Kirke Winslow began picking among the grass roots with the tip of his cane.

"All right," he agreed suddenly, and the two passed back toward Hurd's office.

The Farmer was prompt to the minute. He walked up through the hall into Hurd's office at a sign from the boy at the gate; inside he caught a glimpse of Hurd, and the little Chief, in close conference. He was about to withdraw, when they saw him and hailed.

"Come in, Farmer!" bellowed Hurd. "Don't stay outside in the wet. You know the Chief here? Why, of course. Old friends——" The pin specialist took the Farmer's reluctant hand and put it in the Chief's, and beamed on the pair as they shook hands.

"This happens to be a red-letter day for us, Farmer," rumbled Hurd. "Just cast your eye on that, and tell us what you think of it!"

He pointed to his Mercator's projection. Vaguely, the Farmer examined the map. Pins, pins, pins. This meant nothing to him.

"Now," said Hurd, sotto voce, "this is strictly for your own information—purely a department matter." He took up a pointer, and indicated a covey of blue pins perched on the border line like a row of sparrows on the eaves. Directly across from them, on the Mexican side, was a covey of yellow pins.

"This map is not exactly correct—merely graphic," he explained. "These blue pins

and these yellow pins seem to be separated by the border line. As a matter of fact, they are not. Not by a jugful. Not by twelve hours! At this particular moment, these yellow gentlemen are safely jailed, on the American side. And I suspect the blue gentlemen are sitting in the shade outside the jails, either knitting for the Red Cross or else writing me reports recommending themselves for promotion. Three hundred and sixty-seven yellow ones, Farmer! In twelve hours! Some bag!"

What the "yellow" ones were was perfectly apparent to the Farmer. He knew that Hurd's specialty was dealing with alien enemies in various stages of moral turpitude.

"Some bag!" repeated the Farmer, almost timidly; it was hard for him to believe that he was back in the family, even for this moment.

"We had to use live bait to bag 'em, Farmer," rattled on the pin specialist. "We happened on a good lively one. We hooked him through the dorsal fin—and let him squirm on the end of a line. Finally they rose to it. Not very agreeable for the live bait, Farmer. But when you consider we caught three hundred and sixty-seven in one bunch, I've got an idea that even the live bait would cheer up a bit, and be proud of himself. Don't you think so, Farmer?"

"Yes. Yes," repeated the Farmer vaguely. The pin specialist and the little Chief were eying each other queerly. The Farmer felt strangely uneasy.

"These three hundred and sixty-seven were a choice lot, Farmer," began the pin man, sitting down at his desk. "They were the pick of a bunch of Hun reservists that have been filtering across the line into Mexico ever since 1914. They were attending a postgraduate school over there—back in the mountains—in—well, in their particular specialty. They had things whittled down to a fine point. They had lieutenants in every State in the Union, spotting the weak points, collecting employees' passes and countersigns. The idea was to parcel out a squad of these postgraduates to each lieutenant, smuggle them across the line in one batch, get them all set, and have one grand blow-off. Same hour, same day, all over the map. Moral effect, Farmer! Quite by accident, we happened to have one or two matriculates in that same school, right here in Washington." Hurd smirked at himself comically in the mirror. "We laid traps

for them over here. We left holes open for them to come through; but they were shy. They were afraid of our armed guard. Finally it narrowed down to a live-bait proposition. I don't like to use live bait, as a rule. It's a cruel, cruel sport!" He glanced at the little Chief speculatively.

"Along back in the summer, you may remember, we decided it might be a good idea to have some maneuvers on a big scale down at El Paso. You see we wanted to be obliging and remove this armed guard; and we had to have some plausible pretext to do it." He paused for a second, but the Farmer only stared. "With a ripe bunch, like these three hundred and sixty-odd schrecklichters, trying to ease across the border, you wouldn't think, offhand, any staff of idiots would call off the guard, just to give some nice old brigadiers a chance to put the boys through their paces for the benefit of the ladies of the post. But it might have been all right at that, if the news of it hadn't leaked—got into print in an obscure paper in the Middle West. Farmer, we had to call that man a liar, discipline him, treat him rough, try to cover up a bad break."

The Farmer suddenly rose, very white.

"At the present moment, Mr. Hurd," he said, speaking with difficulty, "I have no connection with any newspaper. There is no reason why I should be given this, or any other information, either for my own use, or for publication. Sir," he said, turning to the little Chief. "I don't know why you think it necessary to rake over these coals."

Abruptly he started for the door. The two men pounced on him and dragged him back.

"Farmer, you dod-gasted old dodo! Can't you see what we are driving at?" cried the Chief. "Can't you see—the whole of this was a plant—from the beginning. You were the live bait, Farmer. You were the poor devil we hooked on, hooked through the backbone—left dangling helpless at the end of a line. So that through your unconscious agency, we might round up this precious bunch of bomb slingers—and Kirke Winslow——"

"What?" roared the Farmer, bristling suddenly in every hair.

"Quite so," said the Chief. "He was born Kurt Weinslau. He didn't know we knew that. There were a lot of things he didn't know, Farmer." The Chief fell to chuckling. He pushed the Farmer back in his

chair. "In the first place, he wouldn't believe we were idiots enough to draw off the guard for maneuvers. But he had sources of information, Farmer. We saw to that. When he found that we had quietly called you a liar, kicked you down the back stairs—then he began to guess again. When he saw us walking on eggs scared to death for fear some one would guess why we were turning you into a pariah—then——"

"Wait—just a moment," said the Farmer. He raised frightened eyes to the Chief. "Janeway?" he ventured hesitatingly.

"Quite so. Janeway. Poor old colonel. We pinned on him the nice little task of calling you a liar to save his own skin. For Haven's sake, why don't you smile, Farmer? This isn't a funeral. This is a resurrection! When your friend Kirke saw you get the boot—when he saw Janeway shunted off into a nice rocking-chair job, he began to outguess himself bad. Then he *knew* we were going to hold the maneuvers." The Chief suddenly lowered his tone. "This is for your own information, Farmer, not for publication. We did hold the maneuvers. For the last forty-eight hours we have been secretly—oh, so secretly—drawing off company after company of the guard—heading them for El Paso. Then Herr Weinslau got into action. He tipped off his bunch that there was a hole in the border from El Paso to Fort Buchanan—and his precious post-graduate bomb slingers began to move. They found the hole all right. Not a soul to say them nay—— They stepped across the line——"

"Into the arms of my nice little blue pins," interjected Hurd. He slapped Farmer Marshall on the back. "Farmer, for the love of Mike, wake up! Laugh! Cry! Cuss! Do anything! Do something! Can't you get it through your thick skull that this is a party for you—you, you live bait, that never let out a whimper, when we perjured you—blackballed you—turned you out. Wake up, Farmer. It's all a dream."

The Farmer raised his head.

"Will you give me just a moment to myself, gentlemen? Until I get my bearings. I am not as young as I used to be."

He dropped his head in his hands; the two gently slipped out of the room. Minute after minute passed. At a sound the Farmer looked up. There sat Janeway. No word passed between these two. They gripped each other's hands.

Mr. Standfast

By John Buchan

Author of "Greenmantle," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

General Hannay has been made a brigadier for gallantry in action when the British war department makes a secret-service agent of him, against his wishes, and sets him on the trail of pro-German agitators. He finds them a peculiar lot, consisting mostly of persons with distorted views who are used by a few clever spies among them. One of the chief of the German agents is living under the game of Ivery, and it is him that Blenkiron, a fellow worker with Brand, and Macgillivray of Scotland Yard, are especially anxious to capture with evidence against him. One of the feminine secret agents for the British is Mary Lamington, whom Brand encounters at various places, and he becomes much interested in her personally. After a time he is sent to Glasgow, engages in a serious fight with soldiers and sailors at a pacifist meeting, escapes, and proceeds to the country district of Skye in the West Highlands, to get evidence. A suspected man named Gresson travels on the same boat along the coast, and he stumbles against Brand in the dark on the slippery deck, and almost knocks him into the sea. While investigating mysterious doings in rural parts, Brand is threatened with arrest, but finally convinces an official that he is a British army captain on leave, and is put up at his house. A son, a wounded soldier, accepts Brand's story when the latter talks familiarly of officers whom the boy knows.

Brand, or Hannay, meets a pacifist named Wake, whom he suspects of being a German agent, but learns that he is also working for the government. Hannay overhears a conversation near what he thinks is a submarine base, in which an organization of "Wild Birds" is mentioned in German. The authorities get on his trail and he has to flee to London. After many adventures he rejoins his fellow secret-service workers in London. They devise plans for capturing Ivery, and are surprised when Mary Lamington, after saying that she knows one weak spot in the Ivery armor, adds that he is in love with her.

(A Four-Part Story—Part Three)

CHAPTER XII.

I BECAME A COMBATANT ONCE MORE.

I RETURNED to France on the thirteenth of September, and took over my old brigade on the nineteenth of the same month. We were shoved in at the Polygon Wood on the twenty-sixth, and after four days got so badly mauled that we were brought out to refit. On the seventh of October, very much to my surprise, I was given command of a division, and was on the fringes of the Ypres fighting during the first days of November. From that front we were hurried down to Cambrai in support, but came in only for the last backwash of that singular battle. We held a bit of the St. Quentin sector till just before Christmas, when we had a spell of rest in billets, which endured, so far as I was concerned, till the beginning of January, when I was sent off on the errand which I shall presently relate.

I inspected the men and my eyes caught

sight of a familiar face. I asked his name and the colonel got it from the sergeant major. It was Lance Corporal George Hamilton.

Now I wanted a new batman and I resolved then and there to have my old antagonist. That afternoon he reported to me at brigade headquarters. As I looked at that solid, bandy-legged figure, standing as stiff to attention as a tobacconist's sign, his ugly face hewn out of brown oak, his honest, sullen mouth, and his blue eyes staring sternly into vacancy, I knew I had got the man I wanted.

"Hamilton," I said, "you and I have met before."

"Sirr?" came the mystified answer.

"Look at me, man, and tell me if you don't recognize me."

He moved his eyes a fraction, in a respectful glance.

"Sirr, I don't mind of you."

"Well, I'll refresh your memory. Do you remember the hall in Newmilns Street and

the meeting there? You had a fight with a man outside, and got knocked down."

He made no answer, but his color deepened.

"And a fortnight later in a public house in Muirtown you saw the same man, and gave him the chase of his life."

I could see his mouth set, for visions of the penalties laid down by the king's regulations for striking an officer must have crossed his mind. But he never budged.

"Look me in the face, man," I said. "Do you remember me now?"

He did as he was bid.

"Sirr, I mind of you."

"Have you nothing more to say?"

He cleared his throat. "Sirr, I did not ken I was hittin' an officer."

"Of course you didn't. You did perfectly right, and if the war was over and we were both free men, I would give you a chance of knocking me down here and now. That's got to wait. When you saw me last I was serving my country, though you didn't know it. We're serving together now, and you must get your revenge out of the Boche. I'm going to make you my servant, for you and I have a pretty close bond between us. What do you say to that?"

This time he looked me full in the face. His troubled eye appraised me and was satisfied. He saluted and marched off.

The second episode befell during our brief rest after the Polygon Wood, when I had ridden down the line one afternoon to see a pal in the heavy artillery. I was returning in the drizzle of evening, clanking along the greasy *pavé* between the sad poplars, when I struck a labor company repairing the ravages of a Boche *strafe* that morning. I wasn't very certain of my road and asked one of the workers. He straightened himself and saluted, and I saw beneath a disreputable cap the features of the man who had been with me in the Coolin crevice.

I spoke a word to his sergeant, and he was allowed to walk a bit of the way with me.

"Great Scott, Wake, what brought you here?" I asked.

"Same thing as brought you. This rotten war." I had dismounted and was walking beside him, and I noticed that his lean face had lost its pallor and that his eyes were less hot than they used to be.

"You seem to thrive on it," I said, for I did not know what to say. A kind of shyness possessed me. Wake must have gone

through some violent cyclones of feeling before it came to this. He saw what I was thinking and laughed in his sharp, ironical way.

"Don't flatter yourself you've made a convert. I think as I always thought. But I came to the conclusion that since the Fates had made me a government servant I might as well do my work somewhere less cushioned than a chair in the Home Office. Oh, no, it wasn't a matter of principle. One kind of work's as good as another, and I'm a better clerk than a navvy. With me it was self-indulgence. I wanted fresh air and exercise."

I looked at him—mud to the waist, and his hands all blistered and cut with unaccustomed labor. I could realize what his company must mean to him, and how he would relish the rough-tonguing of noncoms.

"You're a confounded humbug," I said. "Why on earth didn't you go into an O. T. C. and come out with a commission? They're easy enough to get."

"You mistake my case," he said bitterly. "I experienced no sudden conviction about the justice of the war. I stand where I always stood. I'm a noncombatant, and I wanted a change of civilian work. No, it wasn't any idiotic tribunal sent me here. I came of my own free will, and I'm really rather enjoying myself."

"It's a rough job for a man like you," I said.

"Not so rough as the fellows get in the trenches. I watched a battalion marching back to-day and they looked like ghosts who had been years in muddy graves. White faces and dazed eyes and leaden feet. Mine's a cushy job. I like it best when the weather's foul. It cheats me into thinking I'm doing my duty."

We shook hands, and the last I saw of him was a figure saluting stiffly in the wet twilight.

The third incident was trivial enough, though momentous in its results. Just before I got the division I had a bout with malaria. We were in support in the salient, in very uncomfortable trenches back of Wieltje, and I spent three days on my back in a dugout. Outside it was a blizzard of rain, and the water now and then came down the stairs through the gas curtain and stood in pools at my bed foot. It wasn't the merriest place to convalesce in, but I was as

hard as nails at the time and by the third day I was beginning to sit up and be bored.

I read all my English papers twice and a big stack of German ones which I used to have sent up by a friend in the G. H. Q. Intelligence who knew I liked to follow what the Boche was saying. As I dozed and ruminated in the way a man has after fever, I was struck by the tremendous display of one advertisement in the English press. It was a thing called "Mr. Gussiter's Deep-breathing System," which, according to its promoter was a cure for every ill, mental, moral or physical, that man can suffer. Politicians, generals, admirals and music-hall artists all testified to the new life it had opened up for them. I remember wondering what these sportsmen got for their testimonies, and thinking I would write a spoof letter myself to old Mr. Gussiter.

Then I picked up the German papers, and suddenly my eye caught an advertisement of the same kind in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. It was not Gussiter this time, but one Weissmann, but his game was identical—"deep breathing." The Hun style was different from the English—all about the Goddess of Health, and the Nymphs of the Mountains, and two quotations from Schiller. But the principle was the same.

That made me ponder a little and I went carefully through the whole batch. I found the advertisement in the *Frankfurter* and in one or two rather obscure *Volksstimmes* and *Volkszeitungs*. I found it too in *Der Grosse Kriez*, the official German propagandist picture paper. They were the same all but one, and that one had a bold variation. For it contained four of the sentences used in the ordinary English advertisement.

This struck me as fishy, and I started to write a letter to Macgillivray pointing out what seemed to be a case of trading with the enemy, and advising him to get on to it. And then I had another thought, which made me rewrite my letter.

I went through the papers again. The English ones which contained the advertisement were all good solid bellicose organs; the kind of thing no censorship would object to leaving the country. I had before me a small sheaf of pacifist prints, and they had no advertisement. That might be for reasons of circulation, or it might not.

The German papers were either Radical or Socialist publications, just the opposite of the English lot except the *Grosse Kriez*.

Now, we have a free press, and Germany had, strictly speaking, none. All her journalistic indiscretions were calculated. Therefore the Boche had no objection to his rags getting to enemy countries. He wanted it. He likes to see them quoted in columns headed "Through German Eyes," and made the text of articles showing what a good democrat he is becoming.

As I puzzled over the subject, certain conclusions began to form in my mind. The "Deep Breathing" had Boche affiliations. Here was a chance of communicating with the enemy which would defy the argus-eyed gentleman who examines the mails. What was to hinder Mr. A. at one end writing an advertisement with a good cipher in it, and the paper containing it getting into Germany by Holland in three days? Herr B. at the other end replied in the *Frankfurter*, and a few days later shrewd editors and acute intelligence officers—and Mr. A.—were reading it in London, though only Mr. A. knew what it really meant.

It struck me as an uncommon bright idea, the sort of simple thing that doesn't occur to clever people, and very rarely to the Boche. I wished I was not in the middle of a battle, for I would have had a go at investigating the cipher myself. I wrote a long letter to Macgillivray putting my case, and then went to sleep. When I woke I reflected that it was a pretty thin argument, and would have stopped the letter, if it hadn't gone off early by a ration party.

After that things began very slowly to happen. The first was when Hamilton, having gone to Boulogne to fetch some mess stores, returned with the startling news that he had seen Gresson. He had not heard his name, but described him dramatically to me as "the wee red-headed deevil that kicked Ecky Brockie's knee yon time in Glesca, sirr." I recognized the description.

Gresson, it appeared, was joy riding. He was with a party of labor delegates who had been met by two officers and carried off in *char à bancs*. Hamilton reported from inquiries among his friends that this kind of visitor came weekly. I thought it a very sensible notion on the government's part, but I wondered how Gresson had been selected. I had hoped that Macgillivray had long ago made a long arm and quodded him. Perhaps they had too little evidence to hang him, but he was the blackest sort of suspect and should have been interned.

A week later I had occasion to be at G. H. Q. on business connected with my new division. My friends in the Intelligence allowed me to use the direct line to London and I called up Macgillivray. For ten minutes I had an exciting talk, for I had had no news from that quarter since I left England. I heard to his disgust that the Portuguese Jew had escaped—had vanished from his native heather when they went to get him. They had identified him as a German professor of Celtic languages, who had held a chair in a Welsh college, a dangerous fellow, for he was an upright, high-minded, mad fanatic. Against Gresson they had no evidence at all, but he was kept under strict observation. When I asked about his crossing to France, Macgillivray replied that that was part of their scheme. I inquired if the visit had given them any clues, but I never got an answer, for the line had to be cleared at the moment for the war office.

I hunted up the man who had charge of these Labor visits, and made friends with him. Gresson, he said, had been a quiet, well-mannered and most appreciative guest. He had wept tears on Vimy Ridge and—strictly against orders—had made a speech to some troops he met on the Arras road about how British Labor was remembering the army in its prayers and sweating blood to make guns. On the last day he had had a misadventure, for he got very sick on the road—some kidney trouble that couldn't stand the jolting of the car—and had to be left at a village and picked up by the party on its way back. They found him better, but still shaky. I cross-examined the officer in charge about that halt, and learned that Gresson had been left alone in a peasant's cottage, for he said he only needed to lie down. The place was the hamlet of Eau-court Sainte Anne.

For several weeks that name stuck in my head. It had a pleasant, quaint sound, and I wondered how Gresson had spent his hours there. I hunted it up on the map, and promised myself to have a look at it the next time we came out to rest. And then I forgot about it till I heard the name mentioned again.

On the twenty-third of October I had the bad luck, during a tour of my first-line trenches, to stop a small shell fragment with my head. It was a close misty day, and I had taken off my tin hat to wipe my brow when the thing happened. I got a long, shal-

low scalp wound which meant nothing, but bled a lot. However, as we were not in for any big move, the M. O. sent me back to a clearing station to have it seen to. I was three days in the place and, being perfectly well, had leisure to look about me and reflect, so that I look back on that time as a queer, restful interlude in the infernal racket of war. I remember yet how on my last night there a gale made the lamps swing and flicker, and camouflaged the gray-green canvas walls into a mass of mottled shadows. The floor canvas was muddy from the tramping of many feet bringing in the constant dribble of casualties from the line.

I remember how the talk meandered on as talk does when men are idle and thinking about the next day. I didn't pay much attention, for I was reflecting on a change I meant to make in one of my battalion commands, when a fresh voice broke in. It belonged to a Canadian captain from Winnipeg, a very silent fellow who smoked Boer tobacco.

"There's a lot of ghosts in this darned country," he said.

Then he started to tell about what happened to him when his division was last back in rest billets. He had a staff job and put up with the divisional command at an old French château. They had only a little bit of the house; the rest was shut up, but the passages were so tortuous that it was difficult to keep from wandering into the unoccupied part. One night, he said, he woke with a mighty thirst, and since he wasn't going to get cholera by drinking the local water in his bedroom, he started out for the room they messed in to try and pick up a whisky and soda. He couldn't find it, though he knew the road like his own name. He admitted he might have taken a wrong turning, but he didn't think so. Anyway, he landed in a passage which he had never seen before, and, since he had no candle, he tried to retrace his steps. Again he went wrong, and groped on till he saw a faint light which he thought must be the room of the G. S. O. I., a fellow and a friend of his. So he barged in, and found a big dim salon with two figures in it and a lamp burning between them, and a queer unpleasant smell about. He took a step forward, and then he saw that the figures had no faces. That fairly loosened his joints with fear, and he gave a cry. One of the two ran toward him, the lamp went out, and the sickly scent

caught suddenly at his throat. After that he knew nothing till he awoke in his own bed next morning with a splitting headache. He said he got the general's permission and went over all the unoccupied part of the house, but he couldn't find the room. Dust lay thick on everything, and there was no sign of recent human presence.

I give the story as he told it in his drawling voice. "I reckon that was the genuine article in ghosts. You don't believe me and conclude I was drunk? I wasn't. There isn't any drink concocted yet that could lay me out like that. I just struck a crack in the old universe and pushed my head outside. It may happen to you boys any day."

The Highlander began to argue with him, and I lost interest in the talk. But one phrase brought me to attention. "I'll give you the name of the darned place, and next time you're around you can do a bit of prospecting for yourself. It's called the Château of Eaucourt Sainte Anne, about seven kilometers from Douvecourt. If I was purchasing real estate in this country I guess I'd give that location a miss."

After that I had a grim month what with the finish of Third Ypres and the hustle to Cambrai. By the middle of December we had shaken down a bit, but the line my division held was not of our choosing, and we had to keep a wary eye on the Boche doings. It was a weary job, and I had no time to think of anything but the military kind of intelligence—fixing the units against us from prisoners' stories, organizing small raids, and keeping the Royal Flying Corps busy. I was keen about the last, and I made several trips myself over the lines with Archie Roylance, who had got his heart's desire and by good luck belonged to the squadron just behind me. I said as little as possible about this, for G. H. Q. did not encourage divisional generals to practice such stunts, though there was one famous army commander who made a hobby of them. It was on one of these trips that an incident occurred which brought my spell of waiting on the bigger game to an end.

One dull December day, just after luncheon, Archie and I set out to reconnoiter. You know the way that fogs in Picardy seem suddenly to reek out of the ground and envelope the slopes like a woolly coat. That was our luck this time. We had crossed the lines, flying very high. After a mile or two the ground seemed to climb up to us, though

we hadn't descended and presently we were in the heart of a cold clinging mist. We dived for several thousand feet, but the confounded thing grew thicker and no sort of landmark could be found anywhere. I thought if we went on at this rate we should hit a tree or a church steeple and be easy fruit for the enemy.

"We've mislaid this blamed battle," he shouted.

"I think your rotten old compass has soured on us," I replied.

We decided that it wouldn't do to change direction, so we held on the same course. I was getting as nervous as a kitten, chiefly owing to the silence. It's not what you expect in the middle of a battlefield. I looked at the compass carefully and saw that it was really crooked. Archie must have damaged it on a former flight and forgotten to have it changed.

He had a very scared face when I pointed this out.

"What the devil are we to do?" he croaked.

And then to put the lid on it his engine went wrong. We dived steeply and I could see by Archie's grip on the stick that he was going to have his work cut out to save our necks. Save them he did, but not by much, for we jolted down on the edge of a plowed field with a series of bumps that shook the teeth in my head. It was the same dense dripping fog, and we crawled out of the old bus and bolted for cover like two ferreted rabbits.

Our refuge was the lee of a small copse.

"It's my opinion," said Archie solemnly, "that we're somewhere about Le Cateau. Tim Wilbraham got left there in the Retreat, and it took him nine months to make the Dutch frontier. It's a giddy prospect, sir."

I sallied out to reconnoiter. At the other side of the wood was a highway, and the fog so blanketed sound that I could not hear a man on it till I saw his face. The first one I saw made me lie flat in the covert. For he was a German soldier, field gray, forage cap, red band and all, and he had a pick on his shoulder.

A second's reflection showed me that this was not final proof. He might be one of our prisoners. But it was no place to take chances. I went back to Archie, and the pair of us crossed the plowed field and struck the road farther on. There we saw a farmer's

cart with a woman and a child in it. They looked French, but melancholy, just what you would expect from the inhabitants of a countryside in enemy occupation.

Then we came to the wall of a great house, and saw dimly the outlines of a cottage. Here sooner or later we would get proof of our whereabouts, so we lay and shivered among the poplars of the roadside. No one seemed abroad that afternoon. For a quarter of an hour it was as quiet as the grave. Then came a sound of whistling, and muffled steps.

"That's an Englishman," said Archie joyfully. "No Boche could make such a beastly sound."

He was right. The form of an army service-corps private emerged from the mist, his cap on the back of his head, his hands in his pockets, and his walk the walk of a free man. I never saw a welcomer sight than that jam merchant.

We stood up and greeted him. "What's this place?" I shouted.

He raised a grubby hand to his forelock. "Ockott Saint Anny, sir," he said. "Beg pardon, sir, but you ain't hurt, sir?"

Ten minutes later I was having tea in the mess of an M. T. workshop while Archie had gone to the nearest signals to telephone for a car and give instructions about his precious bus. It was almost dark, but I gulped my tea and hastened out into the thick dusk. For I wanted to have a look at the château.

Clearly the château was not being used for billets. There was no sign of the British soldier; there was no sign of anything human; I crept through the fog as noiselessly as if I trod on velvet, and I hadn't even the company of my own footsteps. I remembered the Canadian's ghost story, and concluded I would be imagining the same sort of thing if I lived in such a place.

The door was bolted and padlocked. I turned along the side of the moat, hoping to reach the house front, which was probably modern and boasted a civilized entrance. There must be somebody in the place, for one chimney was smoking. Presently the moat petered out, and gave place to a cobbled causeway, but a wall, running at right angles with the house, blocked my way. I had half a mind to go back and hammer at the door, but I reflected that major generals don't pay visits to deserted châteaux at night

without a reasonable errand. I should look a fool in the eyes of some old *concierge*.

But I wanted to see what was beyond the wall—one of those whims that beset the soberest men. I rolled a dissolute water butt to the foot of it, and gingerly balanced myself on its rotten staves. This gave me a grip of the flat brick top, and I pulled myself up.

I looked down on a little courtyard with another wall beyond it, which shut off any view of the park. On the right was the château, on the left more outbuildings; the whole place was not more than twenty yards each way. I was just about to retire the road I had come, for in spite of my fur coat it was uncommon chilly on that perch, when I heard a key turn in the door in the château wall beneath me.

A lantern made a blur of light in the misty darkness. I saw that the bearer was a woman, an oldish woman, round-shouldered like all French peasants. In one hand she carried a leather bag, and she moved so silently that she must have worn rubber boots. The light was held level with her head and illumined her face. It was the vilest thing I have ever beheld, for some horrible scar had puckered the skin of the forehead and drawn up the eyebrows so that it looked like some diabolical Chinese mask.

Slowly she padded across the yard, carrying the bag as gingerly as if it had been an infant. She stopped at the door of one of the outhouses and set down the lantern and her burden on the ground. From her apron she drew something which looked like a gas mask, and put it over her head. She also put on a pair of long gauntlets. Then she unlocked the door, picked up the lantern and went in. I heard the key turn behind her.

As I crouched on that wall, I felt a very ugly tremor run down my spine. I had a glimpse of what the Canadian's ghost might have been. That hag, hooded like some venomous snake, was too much for my stomach. I dropped off the wall and ran—yes, ran till I reached the highroad and saw the cheery headlights of a transport wagon, and heard the honest speech of the British soldier. That restored me to my senses, and made me feel every kind of a fool.

As I drove back to the line with Archie, I was black ashamed of my funk. I told myself that I had seen only an old country-woman going to feed her hens. I convinced

my reason, but I did not convince my soul. An insensate dread of the place hung around me, and I could only retrieve my self-respect by resolving to return and explore every nook of it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE PICARDY CHATEAU.

I looked up Eaucourt Sainte Anne on the map, and the more I studied the position the less I liked it. It was the nodal point from which sprang all the main routes to our Picardy front. If the Boche ever broke us, it was the place for which old Hindenberg would make. At all hours troops and transport trains were moving through that insignificant hamlet. Eminent generals and their staffs passed daily within sight of the chateau. It was a convenient halting place for battalions coming back to rest.

From them I got a chit to the local French authorities, and, as soon as we came out of the line toward the end of December, I made straight for the country town of Douvecourt. By a bit of luck our divisional quarters were almost next door. I interviewed a tremendous swell in a black uniform and black kid gloves, who received me affably and put his archives and registers at my disposal. By this time I talked French fairly well, having a natural turn for languages, but half the vapid speech of the *sous-prefet* was lost on me. By and by he left me with the papers and a stolid clerk, and I proceeded to grub up the history of the chateau.

It had belonged since long before Agincourt to the noble house of the D'Eaucourts, now represented by an ancient marquise who dwelt in Biarritz. She had never lived in the place, which a dozen years before had been falling to ruins, when a rich American leased it and partially restored it. He had soon got sick of it—his daughter had married a blackguard French cavalry officer with whom he quarreled, said the clerk—and since then there had been several tenants. I wondered why a house so unattractive should have let so readily, but the clerk explained that the cause was the partridge shooting. It was about the best in France, and in 1913 had shown the record bag.

The list of the tenants was before me. There was a second American, an Englishman called Halford, a Paris Jew banker, an Egyptian prince. But the space for 1913 was blank, and I asked the clerk about it.

He told me that it had been taken by a woolen manufacturer from Lille, but he had never shot the partridges though he had spent occasional nights in the house. He had a five years' lease, and was still paying rent to the marquise. I asked the name, but the clerk had forgotten.

He examined the page and blinked his eyes. "Some one indeed must have slept. No doubt it was young Louis who is now with the guns in Champagne. But the name will be on the commissary's list. It is, as I remember, a sort of Flemish."

He hobbled off and returned in five minutes.

"Bommaerts," he said, "Jacques Bommaerts. A young man with no wife, but with money—oceans of it!"

That clerk got twenty-five francs, and he was cheap at the price. I went back to my division with a sense of awe on me. It was a marvelous fate that had brought me by odd routes to this out-of-the-way corner. First, the accident of Hamilton's seeing Gresson; then the night in the Clearing Station; last the mishap of Archie's air plane getting lost in the fog. I had three grounds of suspicion—Gresson's sudden illness, the Canadian's ghost, and that horrid old woman in the dusk. And now I had one tremendous fact. The place was leased by a man called Bommaerts, and that was one of the two names I had heard whispered in that far-away cleft in the Coolin by the stranger from the sea.

A sensible man would have gone off to the *contre-espionage* people and told them his story. I couldn't do this; I felt that it was my own private find, and I was going to do the prospecting myself.

I did not get a chance till Christmas Eve. The day before there had been a fall of snow, but the frost set in and the afternoon ended in a green sunset with the earth crisp and crackling like a shark's skin. I dined early, and took with me Geordie Hamilton.

Once I turned the corner of the chateau and saw the long ghostly façade white in the moonlight I felt less confident. The eeriness of the place smote me. In that still snowy world it loomed up immense and mysterious with its rows of shuttered windows, and with that air which empty houses have of concealing some wild story. I reflected that it must take some nerve to burgle an empty house. It would be good enough fun to break into a bustling dwell-

ing and pinch the plate when the folk were at dinner, but to burgle emptiness and silence meant a fight with the terrors in a man's soul. It was worse in my case for I wasn't cheered with prospects of loot. I wanted to get inside chiefly to soothe my conscience.

I hadn't much doubt I would find a way, for three years of war and the frequent presence of untidy headquarters' staffs have loosened the joints of most Picardy houses. There's generally a window that doesn't latch or a door that doesn't bar. But I tried window after window in the terrace without result. The heavy, green sun shutters were down over each, and when I broke the hinges of one there was a long bar within to hold it firm. I was beginning to think of shinning up a rain pipe and trying the second floor when a shutter I had laid hold on swung back in my hand. It had been left unfastened, and, knocking the snow from my boots, I entered a room.

A gleam of moonlight followed me and I saw I was in a big salon with a polished wood floor and dark lumps of furniture swathed in sheets. I clicked the bulb at my belt, and the little circle of light showed a place which had not been dwelt in for years. At the far end was another door, and as I tiptoed toward it something caught my eye on the parquet. It was a piece of fresh snow like that which clumps on the heel of a boot. I had not brought it there. Some other visitor had passed this way and not long before me.

Very gently I opened the door and slipped in. In front of me was a pile of furniture which made a kind of screen, and behind that I halted and listened. There was somebody in the room. I heard the sound of human breathing and of soft movements. The man, whoever he was, was at the far end from me, and though there was a dim glow of moon through a broken shutter I could see nothing of what he was after. I was beginning to enjoy myself now. I knew of his presence and he did not know of mine, and that is the sport of stalking.

An unwary movement of my hand caused the screen to creak. Instantly the movements ceased and there was utter silence. I held my breath and after a second or two the tiny sounds began again. I had a feeling, though my eyes could not assure me, that the man before me was at work, and was using a very small shaded torch. There

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was just the faintest moving shimmer on the wall beyond, though that might come from the crack of moonlight.

Apparently he was reassured, for his movements became more distinct. There was a jar as if a table had been pushed back. Once more there was silence, and I heard only the intake of breath. I have very quick ears, and to me it sounded as if the man was rattled. The breathing was quick and anxious.

Suddenly it changed and became the ghost of a whistle—the kind of sound one makes with the lips and teeth without ever letting the tune break out clear. We all do it when we are preoccupied with something—shaving, or writing letters, or reading the newspaper. But I did not think my man was preoccupied. He was whistling to quiet fluttering nerves.

Then I caught the air. It was "Cherry Ripe."

In a moment, from being hugely at my ease, I became the nervous one. I had been playing peep-bo with the unseen, and the tables were turned. My heart beat against my ribs like a hammer. I shuffled my feet, and again there fell the tense silence.

"Mary," I said, and the words seemed to explode like bombs in the stillness. "Mary! It's me. Dick Hannay."

There was no answer but a sob and the sound of a timid step.

I took four paces into the darkness and received in my arms a half-fainting girl.

Often in the last months I had pictured the kind of scene which would be the culminating point of my life. When our work was over and war had been forgotten, somewhere—perhaps in a green Cotswold meadow or in a room of an old manor—I would talk with Mary. By that time we should know each other well and I would have lost my shyness. I would try to tell her that I loved her, but whenever I thought of what I should say my heart sank, for I knew I would make a fool of myself. You can't live, my kind of life for forty years wholly among men and be any use at pretty speeches to women. I knew I should stutter and blunder, and I used despairingly to invent impossible situations where I might make my love plain to her without words by some piece of melodramatic sacrifice.

But the kind Fates had saved me the trouble. Without a syllable save Christian names stammered in that eerie darkness we

had come to complete understanding. As I held her in my arms, I stroked her hair and murmured things which seemed to spring out of some ancestral memory. Certainly my tongue had never used them before, nor my mind imagined them. By and by, she slipped her arms round my neck and with a half sob strained toward me. She was still trembling.

"Dick," she said, and to hear that name on her lips was the sweetest thing I had ever known. "Dick, is it really you? Tell me I'm not dreaming."

She disengaged herself and let her little electric torch wander over my rough habiliments.

"You look a tremendous warrior, Dick. I have never seen you like this before. I was in Doubting Castle and very much afraid of Giant Despair, till you came."

"I think I call it the Interpreter's House," I said.

"It's the house of somebody we both know," she went on. "He calls himself Bommaerts here. That was one of the two names, you remember. I have seen him since in Paris. Oh, it is a long story, and you shall hear it all soon. I knew he came here sometimes, so I came here too. I have been nursing for the last fortnight at the Douvecourt Hospital only four miles away."

She had won back her composure, and I turned on my light to look at her. She was in outdoor nurse's uniform, and I thought her eyes looked tired. The priceless gift that had suddenly come to me had driven out all recollection of my own errand. I thought of Ivery only as a would-be lover of Mary, and forgot the manufacturer from Lille who had rented this house for the partridge shooting.

"And you, Dick," she asked. "Is it part of a general's duties to pay visits at night to empty houses?"

"I came to look for traces of Monsieur Bommaerts. I, too, got on his track from another angle, but that story must wait."

"You observe that he has been here today?"

She pointed to some cigarette ash spilled on the table edge, and a space on its surface cleared from dust. "In a place like this the dust would settle again in a few hours, and that is quite clean. I should say he has been here just after luncheon."

"Great Scott!" I cried, "what a close shave! I'm in the mood at this moment to

shoot him at sight. You say you saw him in Paris and know his lair. Surely you had a good enough case to have him collared."

She shook her head. "Mr. Blenkiron—he's in Paris too—wouldn't hear of it. He hasn't just figured the thing out yet, he says. We've identified one of your names, but we're still in doubt about Chelius."

"Ah, Chelius! Yes, I see. We must get the whole business complete before we strike. Has old Blenkiron had any luck?"

"Your guess about the 'deep-breathing' advertisement was very clever, Dick. It was true, and it may give us Chelius. I must leave Mr. Blenkiron to tell you how. But the trouble is this. We know something of the doings of some one who may be Chelius, but we can't link them with Ivery. We know that Ivery is Bommaerts, and our hope is to link Bommaerts with Chelius. That's why I came here. I was trying to burgle this escritoire in an amateur way. It's a bad piece of fake Empire and deserves smashing."

It was a flat table with drawers, and at the back a half circle of more drawers with a central cupboard. I tilted it up and most of the drawers slid out, empty of anything but dust. I forced two open with my knife and they held empty cigar boxes. Only the cupboard remained, and that appeared to be locked. I wedged a key from my pocket into its keyhole, but the thing would not budge.

"It's no good," I said. "He wouldn't leave anything he valued in a place like this. That sort of fellow doesn't take chances. If he wanted to hide something there are a hundred holes in the château which would puzzle the best detective."

"Can't you open it?" she asked. "I've a fancy about that table. He was sitting here this afternoon, and he may be coming back."

I solved the problem by turning up the escritoire and putting my knee through the cupboard door. Out of it tumbled a little, dark-green attaché case.

"This is getting solemn," said Mary. "Is it locked?"

It was, but I took my knife and cut the lock out and spilled the contents on the table. There were some papers, a newspaper or two, and a small bag tied with black cord. The latter I opened, while Mary looked over my shoulder. It contained a fine yellowish powder.

"Stand back," I said harshly.

With trembling hands I tied up the bag again, rolled it in a newspaper, and stuffed it into my pocket. For I remembered a day near Péronne when a Boche plane had come over in the night and had dropped little bags like this. Happily they were all collected and the men that found them were wise and took them off to the nearest laboratory. They proved to be full of anthrax germs. I remember how Eaucourt Sainte Anne stood at the junction of a dozen roads where all day long troops passed to and from the lines. From such a vantage ground an enemy could wreck the health of an army.

I remembered the woman I had seen in the courtyard of this house in the foggy dusk, and I knew now why she had worn a gas mask.

This discovery gave me a horrid shock. I was brought down with a crash from my high sentiment to something earthy and devilish. I was fairly well used to Boche filthiness, but this seemed too grim a piece of the utterly damnable. I wanted to have Ivery by the throat and force the stuff into his body, and watch him decay slowly into the horror he had contrived for honest men.

"Let's get out of this infernal place," I said.

But Mary was not listening. She had picked up one of the newspapers and was gloating over it. I looked and saw that it was open at an advertisement of Weissmann's "Deep-breathing System."

"Oh, look, Dick," she cried breathlessly.

The column of type had little dots made by a red pencil below certain words.

"It's it," she whispered, "it's the cipher—I'm almost sure it's the cipher!"

"Well, he'd be likely to know it if any one did."

"But don't you see it's the cipher which Chelius uses—the man in Switzerland? Oh, I can't explain now, for it's very long, but I think—I think—I have found out what we have all been wanting. Chelius——"

"Whist!" I said. "What's that?"

There was a queer sound from the out of doors, as if a sudden wind had risen in the still night.

"It's only a car on the main road," said Mary.

"How did you get in?" I asked.

"By the broken window in the next room. I bicycled out here one morning and walked round the place and found the broken catch."

"Perhaps it is left open on purpose. That

may be the way Bommaerts visits his country home. Let's get off, Mary, for this place has a curse on it. It deserves fire from heaven."

I slipped the contents of the attaché case into my pockets. "I'm going to drive you home," I said. "I've got a car out there."

"Then you must take my bicycle and my servant, too. He's an old friend of yours—one Andrew Amos."

"Now, how on earth did Andrew get over here?"

"He's one of us," said Mary, laughing at my surprise. "A most useful member of our party, at present disguised as an *infirmier* in Lady Manorwater's hospital at Douvecourt. He is learning French, and he——"

"Hush!" I whispered. "There's some one in the next room."

I swept her behind a stack of furniture with my eye glued on a crack of light below the door. The handle turned and the shadows raced before a big electric lamp of the kind they use for stables. I could not see the bearer, but I guessed it was the old woman.

There was a man behind her. A brisk step sounded on the parquet, and a figure brushed past her. It wore the horizon blue of a French officer, very smart, with those French riding boots that show the shape of the leg, and a handsome fur-lined pelisse. I would have called him a young man, not more than thirty-five. The face was sallow and clean shaven, the eyes bright and masterful. Yet he did not deceive me. I had not boasted idly to Sir Walter, when I said that there was one man alive who could never again be mistaken by me.

I had my hand on my pistol, as I motioned Mary farther back into the shadows. For a second I was about to shoot. I had a perfect mark and could have put a bullet through his brain with utter certitude. I think if I had been alone I might have fired.

I stepped into the light.

"Hullo, Mr. Ivery," I said. "This is an odd place to meet again!"

In his amazement he fell back a step, while his hungry eyes took in my face. There was no mistake about the recognition. I saw something I had seen once before in him and that was fear. Out went the light and he sprang for the door.

I fired in the dark, but the shot must have been too high. In the same instant I heard

him slip on the smooth parquet and the tinkle of glass as the broken window swung open. Feverishly, I reflected that his car must be at the moat end of the terrace, and that therefore to reach it he must pass outside this very room. Seizing the damaged *escritoire* I used it as a ram, and charged the window nearest me. The panes and shutters went with a crash, for I had driven the thing out of its rotten frame. The next second I was on the moonlit snow.

I got a shot at him as he went over the terrace, and again I went wide. I never was much good with a pistol. Still, I reckoned I had got him, for the car which was waiting below must come back by the moat to reach the highroad. But I had forgotten the great closed park gates. Somehow or other they must have been opened, for as soon as the car started it headed straight for the grand avenue. I tried a couple of long-range shots after it, and one must have damaged either Ivery or his chauffeur, for there came back a cry of pain.

I turned in deep chagrin to find Mary beside me. She was bubbling with laughter.

"Were you ever a cinema actor, Dick? The last two minutes have been a really high-class performance. 'Featuring Mary Lamington.' How does the jargon go?"

"I could have got him when he first entered," I said ruefully.

"I know," she said in a graver tone. "Only of course you couldn't. There are some things we can't do even to win."

She put her hand on my arm. "Don't worry about it. It wasn't written it should happen this way. It would have been too easy. We have a long road to travel yet before we clip the wings of the Wild Birds."

"Look," I cried, "the fire from heaven!"

Red tongues of flame were shooting up from the outbuildings at the farther end, the place where I had first seen the woman. Some agreed plan must have been acted on, and Ivery was destroying all traces of his infamous yellow powder. Even now the *concierge* with her odds and ends of belongings would be slipping out to some refuge in the village.

In the still, dry night the flames rose, for the place must have been made ready for a rapid burning. As I hurried Mary round the moat I could see that part of the main building had caught fire. The hamlet was awakened and before we reached the corner of the highroad sleepy British soldiers

were hurrying toward the scene, and the town mayor was mustering the fire brigade. I knew that Ivery had laid his plans well and that they hadn't a chance—that long before dawn the Château of Eaucourt Sainte Anne would be a heap of ashes, and that in a day or two the lawyers of the aged marquise at Biarritz would be wrangling with the insurance company.

At the corner stood Amos beside two bicycles, solid as a graven image. He recognized me with a gap-toothed grin.

We packed, bicycles and all, into my car with Amos wedged in the narrow seat beside Hamilton.

As for me, the miles to Douvecourt passed as in a blissful moment of time. I wrapped Mary in a fur rug, and after that we did not speak a word. I had come suddenly into a great possession and was dazed with the joy of it.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. BLENKIRON DISCOURSES.

Three days later I got my orders to report at Paris for special service. They came none too soon, for I chafed at every hour's delay. Every thought in my head was directed to the game which we were playing against Ivery. He was a big enemy, compared to whom the ordinary Boche in the trenches was innocent and friendly. I had lost interest in my division, for I knew that for me the real battle front was not in Picardy, and that my job was not so easy as holding a length of line. Also, I longed to be at the same work as Mary.

I was summoned to G. H. Q., where I had half an hour's talk with the greatest British commander. I can see yet his patient, kindly face and that steady eye which no vicissitude of fortune could perturb. He took the biggest view, for he was statesman as well as soldier, and knew that the whole world was one battlefield and every man and woman among the combatant nations was in the battle line.

One morning a few days later I picked up Mary in Amiens. I always liked the place, for after the dirt of the Somme it was a comfort to go there for a bath and a square meal, and it had the noblest church that the hand of man ever built for God. It was a clear morning when we started from the boulevard beside the railway station and the roadside trees were heavy with mistletoe. On the table-land beyond the Somme

valley the sun shone like April. At Beauvais we lunched badly in an inn—badly as to food, but there was an excellent Macon-Fleury at two francs a bottle. Then we slipped down through little flat-chested townships to the broad Seine, where it corkscrews toward the sea, and in the late afternoon passed through St. Germain Forest. The wide green spaces among the trees set my fancy dwelling on that divine English countryside where Mary and I would one day make our home. She had been gay and buoyant all the journey, but when I spoke of the Cotswolds her face grew grave.

"Don't let us speak of it, Dick," she said. "It's too happy a thing and I feel as if it would wither if we touched it. I don't let myself think of peace and home, for it makes me too homesick. I think—I think we shall get there some day, you and I, but it's a long road to the Delectable Mountains and Faithful, you know, has to die first. There is a price to be paid."

The words sobered me.

"Who is our Faithful?" I asked.

"I don't know. But he was the best of the Pilgrims."

Then, as if a veil had lifted, her mood changed, and when we came through the suburbs of Paris and swung down the Champs Elysées she was in a holiday humor. The lights were twinkling in the blue January dusk, and the warm breath of the city came to greet us. I knew little of the place, for I had visited it once only on a four days' Paris leave, but it had seemed to me then the most habitable of cities, and now coming from the battlefield with Mary by my side it was like the happy ending of a dream.

I left her at her cousin's house near the Rue St. Honoré and deposited myself, according to instructions, at the Hotel Louis Quinze. There I wallowed in a hot bath, and got into the civilian clothes which had been sent on from London. They made me feel that I had taken leave of my division for good and all this time.

Blenkiron had a private room, where we were to dine, and a more wonderful litter of books and cigar boxes I have never seen, for he hadn't a notion of tidiness. I could hear him grunting at his toilet in the adjacent bedroom, and I noticed that the table was laid for three. I went downstairs to get a paper, and on the way ran into Launcelot Wake.

He was no longer a private in a labor bat-

alion. Evening clothes showed beneath his overcoat.

"Hullo, Wake, are you in this push too?"

"I suppose so," he said, and his manner was not cordial. "Anyhow I was ordered down here. My business is to do as I am told."

"Coming to dine?" I asked.

"No. I'm dining with some friends at the Crillon."

Then he looked me in the face, and his eyes were hot as I first remembered them. "I hear I've to congratulate you, Hannay," and he held out a limp hand.

I never felt more antagonism in a human being.

"You don't like it?" I said, for I guessed what he meant.

"How on earth can I like it?" he cried angrily. "Good Lord, man, you'll murder her soul. You an ordinary, stupid, successful fellow and she—she's the most precious thing God ever made. You can never understand a fraction of her preciousness, but you'll clip her wings all right. She can never fly now——"

He poured out this hysterical stuff to me at the foot of the staircase within hearing of an elderly French widow with a poodle. I had no impulse to be angry, for I was far too happy.

"Don't, Wake," I said. "We're all too close together to quarrel. I'm not fit to black Mary's shoes. You can't put me too low or her too high. But I've at least the sense to know it. You couldn't want me to be humbler than I feel."

He shrugged his shoulders, as he went out to the street. "Your infernal magnanimity would break any man's temper!"

I went upstairs to find Blenkiron, washed and shaven, admiring a pair of bright patent-leather shoes.

"Why, Dick, I've been wearying bad to see you. I was nervous you would be blown to glory, for I've been reading awful things about your battles in the papers. The war correspondents worry me so I can't take breakfast."

He mixed cocktails and clinked his glass on mine. "Here's to the young lady. I was trying to write her a pretty little sonnet, but the darned rhymes wouldn't fit. I've gotten a heap of things to say to you when we've finished dinner."

Mary came in, her cheeks bright from the weather and Blenkiron promptly fell

abashed. But she had a way to meet his shyness for, when he began an embarrassed speech of good wishes, she put her arm round his neck and kissed him. Oddly enough, that set him completely at his ease. He called her a "good girl," and talked learnedly of wedding presents.

With his first cigar Blenkiron got to business.

"You want to know about the staff work we've been busy on at home. Well, it's finished now, thanks to you, Dick. We weren't getting on very fast till you took to perusing the press on your sick bed and dropped me that hint about the 'deep-breathing' ads."

"Then there was something in it?" I asked.

"There was black hell in it. There wasn't any Gussiter, but there was a mighty fine little syndicate of crooks with old man Gresson at the back of them. First thing, I started out to get the cipher. It took some looking for, but there's no cipher on earth can't be got hold of somehow if you know it's there, and in this case we were helped a lot by the return messages in the German papers. It was bad stuff when we read it, and explained a lot of the darned leakages in important news we've been up against. At first I figured to keep the thing going and turn Gussiter into a corporation with John S. Blenkiron as president. But it wouldn't do, for at the first hint of tampering with their communications the whole bunch got leery and sent out S O S signals. So we tenderly plucked the flowers."

"Gresson, too?" I asked.

He nodded. "I guess your seafaring companion's now under the sod. We had collected enough evidence to hang him ten times over. But that was the least of it. For your little old cipher, Dick, gave us a line on Ivery."

I asked how, and Blenkiron told me the story. He had about a dozen cross-bearings proving that the organization of the "deep-breathing" game had its headquarters in Switzerland. He suspected Ivery from the first, but the man had vanished out of his ken, so he started working from the other end, and instead of trying to deduce the Swiss business from Ivery he tried to deduce Ivery from the Swiss business. He went to Berne and made a conspicuous public fool of himself for several weeks. He got himself appointed the official head of the American

propaganda there, and took some advertising space in the press and put in spread-eagle announcements of his mission, with the result that the Swiss government threatened to turn him out of the country if he tampered that amount with their neutrality. He also wrote a lot of rot in the Geneva newspaper, which he paid to have printed, explaining how he was a pacifist, and was going to convert Germany to peace by "inspirational advertisement of pure-minded war aims." All this was in keeping with his English reputation and he wanted to make himself a bait for Ivery.

But Ivery did not rise to the fly, and though he had a dozen agents working for him on the quiet he could never hear of the name Chelius. That was, he reckoned, a very private and particular name among the Wild Birds. However, he got to know a good deal about the Swiss end of the "deep-breathing" business. That took some doing and cost a lot of money. His best people were a girl who posed as a *mannequin* in a milliner's shop in Lyons and a *concierge* in a big hotel at St. Moritz. His most important discovery was that there was a second cipher in the return messages sent from Switzerland different from the one that the Gussiter lot used in England. He got this cipher all right, but though he could read it he couldn't make anything out of it. He concluded that it was a very secret means of communication between the inner circle of the Wild Birds, and that Ivery must be at the back of it. But he was still a long way from finding out anything that mattered.

Then the whole situation changed, for Mary got in touch with Ivery. I must say she behaved like a shameless minx, for she kept on writing to him to an address he had once given her in Paris, and suddenly she got an answer. She was in Paris herself, helping to run one of the railway canteens, and staying with her French cousins, the De Mezieres. One day he came to see her. That showed the boldness of the man, and his cleverness, for the whole secret police of France were after him and they never got sight or sound. Yet here he was coming openly in the afternoon to have tea with an English girl. It showed another thing, which made me blaspheme. A man so resolute and single-hearted in his job must have been pretty badly in love to take a risk like that.

He came, and he called himself the Capi-

taine Bommaerts, with a transport job on the staff of the French G. Q. G. He was on the staff right enough, too. Mary said that when she heard his name she nearly fell down. He was quite frank with her, and she with him. They were both peace-makers, ready to break the laws of any land for the sake of a great ideal. Goodness knows what stuff they talked together. Mary said she would blush to think of it till her dying day, and I gathered that on her side it was a mixture of Launcelot Wake at his most pedantic and schoolgirl silliness.

He came again, and they met often, unbeknown to the decorous Madame de Mezieres. They walked together in the Bois de Boulogne, and once, with a beating heart, she motored with him to Auteuil to luncheon. He spoke of his house in Picardy and there were moments, I gathered, when he became the declared lover, to be rebuffed with a hoydenish shyness. Presently the pace became too hot, and after some anguished arguments with Bullivant on the long-distance telephone she went off to Douvecourt.

Then Blenkiron took up the tale. The newspaper we found that Christmas Eve in the château was of tremendous importance, for Bommaerts had pricked out in the advertisement the very special second cipher of the Wild Birds. That proved that Ivery was at the back of the Swiss business. But Blenkiron made doubly sure.

"Who is Ivery anyhow?" I asked. "Do we know more about him than we knew in the summer? Mary, what did Bommaerts pretend to be?"

"An Englishman." Mary spoke in the most matter-of-fact tone, as if it were a perfectly usual thing to be made love to by a spy, and that rather soothed my annoyance. "When he asked me to marry him he proposed to take me to a country house in Devonshire. I rather think, too, he had a place in Scotland. But of course he's a German."

"Ye-es," said Blenkiron slowly, "I've got on to his record, and it isn't a pretty story. It's taken some working out, but I've got all the links tested now. He's a Boche and a large-sized nobleman in his own state. Did you ever hear of the Graf von Schwabing?"

I shook my head.

"I think I have heard Uncle Charlie speak of him," said Mary, wrinkling her brows, "He used to hunt with the Pytchley."

"That's the man. But he hasn't troubled the Pytchley for the last eight years. There was a time when he was the last thing in smartness in the German court—officer in Guards, ancient family, rich, darned clever—all the fixings. Kaiser liked him, and it's easy to see why. I guess a man who had as many personalities as the graf was amusing after-dinner company. Specially among Germans, who in my experience don't excel in the lighter vein. Anyway, he was William's white-headed boy, and there wasn't a mother with a daughter who wasn't out gunning for Otto von Schwabing. He was about as popular in London and New York—and in Paris, too. Ask Sir Walter about him, Dick. He says he had twice the brains of Kühlmann, and better manners than the Austrian fellow he used to yarn about—Well, one day there came an almighty court scandal, and the bottom dropped out of the graf's world. It was a pretty beastly story, and I don't gather that Schwabing was as deep in it as some others. But the trouble was that those others had to be shielded at all costs, and Schwabing was made the scapegoat. His name came out in the papers and he had to go."

"What was the case called?" I asked.

Blenkiron mentioned a name, and I knew why the word Schwabing was familiar. I had read the story long ago in Rhodesia.

Next morning in miserable sloppy weather Blenkiron carted me about Paris. We climbed five sets of stairs to a flat away up in Montmartre, where I was talked to by a fat man with spectacles and a slow voice and told various things that deeply concerned me. Then I went to a big room in the Boulevard St. Germain, with a little room opening off it, where I was shown papers and maps and some figures on a sheet of paper that made me open my eyes. We lunched in a modest café tucked away behind the Palais Royal, and our companions were two Alsatians who spoke German better than a Boche and had no names—only numbers. In the afternoon I went to a low building beside the Invalides and saw many generals, including more than one whose features are familiar in two hemispheres. I told them everything about myself, and I was examined, like a convict, and all particulars about my appearance and manner of speech written down in a book. That was to prepare the way for me, in case of need, among the vast army of those who work underground

and know their chief but do not know each other.

The rain cleared before night and Blenkiron and I walked back to the hotel through that lemon-colored dusk that you get in a French winter. We passed a company of American soldiers and Blenkiron had to stop and stare. I could see that he was stiff with pride, though he wouldn't show it.

"What d'ye think of that bunch?" he asked.

"First-rate stuff," I said.

That night at dinner we talked solid business—Blenkiron and I and a young French colonel from the III^d Section at G. Q. G. Blenkiron, I remember, got very hurt about being called a business man by the Frenchman, who thought he was paying him a compliment.

"Cut it out," he said. "It is a word that's gone bad with me. There's just two kinds of men, those who've gotten sense and those who haven't." The talk switched to spies. Blenkiron said suddenly:

"Within the next two months we've got to get even with the Wild Birds."

The French colonel—his name was De Vallière—smiled at the name and Blenkiron answered my unspoken question.

"Yes. But all the birds aren't caged. There's just a few outside the bars and they don't collect news. They do things. If there's anything desperate, they're put on the job, and they've got power to act without waiting on instructions from home. I've investigated till my brain's tired and I haven't made out more than half a dozen whom I can say for certain are in the business. There's your friend, the Portuguese Jew, Dick. Another's a woman in Genoa, a princess of some sort married to a Greek financier. One's the editor of a pro-Ally, up-country paper in the Argentine. One passes as a Baptist minister in Colorado. One was a police spy in the czar's government, and is now a red-hot revolutionary in the Caucasus. And the biggest, of course, is James Ivery, who in happier times was the Graf von Schwabing. There aren't above a hundred people in the world know of their existence, and these hundred call them the Wild Birds."

"Do they work together?" I asked.

"Yes. They each get their own jobs to do, but they're apt to flock together for a big piece of devilment. There were four of them in France a year ago before the battle

of the Aisne, and they pretty near rotted the French army. That's so, colonel?"

The soldier nodded grimly. "They seduced our weary troops and they bought many politicians. Almost they succeeded, but not quite. The nation is sane again, and is judging and shooting the accomplices at its leisure. But the principals we have never caught."

"You hear that, Dick," said Blenkiron. "You're satisfied this isn't a whimsey of a melodramatic old Yank like me? I'll tell you more. You know how Ivery worked the submarine business from England. Also, it was the Wild Birds that wrecked Russia. It was Ivery that paid the Bolsheviks to seduce the army, and the Bolsheviks took his money for their own purpose, thinking they were playing a deep game, when all the time he was grinning like Satan, for they were playing his. It was Ivery that handled the brigades that broke at—Caporetto. If I started in to tell you the history of their doings you wouldn't go to bed, and if you did you wouldn't sleep. There's just this to it. Every finished subtle devilry that the Boche has wrought among the Allies since August, 1914, has been the work of the Wild Birds and more or less organized by Ivery. They're worth half a dozen army corps to Ludendorff. They're the mightiest poison merchants the world ever saw, and they've the nerve of hell——"

"I don't know," I interrupted. "Ivery's got his soft spot. I saw him in the tube station."

"Maybe, but he's got the kind of nerve that's wanted. And now I rather fancy he's whistling in his flock."

Blenkiron consulted a notebook. "Pavia—that's the Argentine man—started last month for Europe. He transshipped from a coasting steamer in the West Indies and we've temporarily lost track of him, but he's left his hunting ground. What do you reckon that means?"

"It means," Blenkiron continued solemnly, "that Ivery thinks the game's nearly over. The play's working up for the big climax. And that climax is going to be damnation for the Allies, unless we get a move on."

"Right," I said. "That's what I'm here for. What's the move?"

"The Wild Birds mustn't ever go home, and the man they call Ivery or Bommaerts or Chelius has to decease. It's a cold-

blooded proposition, but it's he or the world that's got to break. But before he quits this earth we're bound to get wise about some of his plans, and that means that we can't just shoot a pistol at his face. Also, we've got to find him first. We reckon he's in Switzerland, but that is a state with quite a lot of diversified scenery to lose a man in. Still, I guess we'll find him. But it's the kind of business to plan out as carefully as a battle. I'm going back to Berne on my old stunt to boss the show, and I'm giving the orders. You're an obedient child, Dick, so I don't reckon on any trouble that way."

Then Blenkiron did an ominous thing. He pulled up a little table and started to lay out Patience cards. Since his duodenum was cured he seemed to have dropped that habit, and from his resuming it I gathered that his mind was uneasy. I can see that scene as if it were yesterday—the French colonel in an armchair smoking a cigarette in a long amber holder, and Blenkiron sitting primly on the edge of a yellow silk ottoman, dealing his cards and looking guiltily toward me.

I asked if I was to be with Peter, much cheered at the prospect.

"Why, yes. You and Peter are the collaterals in the deal. But the big game's not with you."

I had a presentiment of something horribly anxious and unpleasant.

"Is Mary in it?" I asked.

He nodded and seemed to pull himself together for an explanation.

"See here, Dick. Our main job is to get Ivery back to Allied soil where we can handle him. And there's just the one magnet that can fetch him back. You aren't going to deny that."

I felt my face getting very red and that ugly hammer began beating in my forehead. Two grave patient eyes met my angry glare.

"I'm damned if I'll allow it," I cried. "I've some right to a say in the thing. I won't have Mary made a decoy. It's too infernally degrading."

I was as angry as sin but I felt all the time I had no case. Blenkiron stopped his game of Patience, sending the cards flying over the carpet and straddled on the hearth-rug.

"You're never going to be a pikar.

"Besides," he went on, "what a girl it is! She can't scare and she can't soil. She's white-hot youth and innocence, and she'd

take no more harm than clean steel from a muck heap. Why, she's like the princess in the fairy story that walked in the dungeon and the snakes and toads became jewels when they touched her skirts."

I knew I was badly in the wrong, but my pride was all raw.

"I'm not going to agree till I've talked to Mary."

"But Miss Mary has consented," he said gently. "She made the plan."

Next day in clear blue weather that might have been May I drove Mary down to Fontainebleau. We lunched in the inn by the bridge and walked into the forest. I hadn't slept much, for I was tortured by what I thought was anxiety for her, but which was in truth jealousy of Ivery. I don't think that I would have minded her risking her life for that was part of the game we were both in but I jibbed at the notion of Ivery coming near her again. I told myself it was honorable pride, but I knew it was jealousy.

I asked her if she had accepted Blenkiron's plan, and she turned mischievous eyes on me.

"I knew I should have a scene with you, Dick. I told Mr. Blenkiron so. Of course I agreed. I'm not even very much afraid of it. I'm a member of the team, you know, and I must play up to my form. I can't do a man's work, so all the more reason why I should tackle the thing I can do."

"But," I stammered, "it's such a—such a degrading business for a child like you. I can't bear— It makes me hot to think of it."

Her reply was merry laughter.

"You're an old Ottoman, Dick. You haven't doubled Cape Turk yet, and I don't believe you're round Seraglio Point. Why, women aren't the brittle things men used to think them. They never were, and the war has made them like whipcord. Bless you, my dear, we're the tougher sex now. We've had to wait and endure, and we've been so beaten on the anvil of patience that we've lost all our megrims."

I hadn't anything to say, except contrition, for I had had my lesson. I had been slipping away in my thoughts from the gravity of our task, and Mary had brought me back to it. I remember that as we walked through the woodland we came to a place where there were no signs of war.

Mary clung to my arm as we drank in the peace of it.

"That is what lies for us at the end of the road, Dick," she said softly, and quoted some lines of poetry.

"Thou in the daily building of thy tower,
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's
sake,
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest atop of it."

CHAPTER XV.

ST. ANTON.

Ten days later, the porter, Joseph Zimmer of Arosa, clad in the tough and shapeless trousers of his class, but sporting an old velveteen shooting coat bequeathed to him by a former German master—speaking the guttural tongue of the Grisons, and with all his belongings in one massive rucksack, came out of the little station of St. Anton and blinked in the frosty sunshine. He looked down upon the old village beside its icebound lake, but his business was with the new village of hotels and villas which had sprung up in the last ten years north of the station. He made some halting inquiries of the station people, and a cab driver outside finally directed him to the place he sought—the cottage of the Widow Summermatter, where resided one Peter Pienaar.

The porter Joseph Zimmer had had a long and roundabout journey. A fortnight before he had worn the uniform of a British major general. Then he had been the inmate of an expensive Paris hotel, till one morning in gray tweed clothes and a limp he had taken the Paris-Mediterranean Express with a ticket for an officer-convalescent home at Cannes. Thereafter he had declined in the social scale. At Dijon he had been still an Englishman, but at Pontarlier he had been an American bagman of Swiss parentage, returning to wind up his father's estate. At Berne he limped excessively, and at Zurich, in a little back-street hotel, he became frankly the peasant. For he met a friend there from whom he acquired clothes with that odd, rank smell, far stronger than Harris tweed, which marks the raiment of most Swiss guides and all Swiss porters. He also acquired a new name and an old aunt, who a little later received him with open arms and explained to her friends that he was her brother's son from Arosa, who three winters ago had hurt his leg woodcutting and had been discharged from the levy. A kindly Swiss gentleman, as it chanced, heard of the deserving Joseph

and interested himself to find him employment. The said philanthropist made a hobby of the French and British prisoners returned from Germany, and had in mind an officer, a crabbed South African with a bad leg, who needed a servant. He was, it seemed, an ill-tempered old fellow who had to be billeted alone, and since he could speak German, he would be happier with a Swiss native. Joseph haggled somewhat over the wages, but on his aunt's advice he accepted the job, and, with a very complete set of papers and a store of ready-made reminiscences set out for St. Anton, having dispatched beforehand a monstrosity ill-spelled letter announcing his coming. He could barely read and write, but he was good at maps, which he had studied carefully, and he noticed with satisfaction that the valley of St. Anton gave easy access to Italy.

As he journeyed south the reflections of that porter would have surprised his fellow travelers in the stuffy third-class carriage. He was thinking of a conversation he had had some days before in a café at Macon with a young Englishman bound for Modane.

We had bumped up against each other by chance in that strange flitting when we all went to different places at different times, asking nothing of each other's business. Wake had greeted me rather shamefacedly and had proposed a dinner together.

I am not good at receiving apologies and Wake's embarrassed me more than they embarrassed him. "I'm a bit of a cad, sometimes," he said. "You know I'm a better fellow than I sounded that night, Han-nay."

I mumbled something about not talking rot, the conventional phrase. What worried me was that the man was suffering. You could see it in his hot eyes. But that evening I got nearer Wake than ever before, and he and I became true friends, for he laid bare his soul before me. That was his trouble, that he could lay bare his soul, for ordinary healthy folk don't analyze their feelings. Wake did, and I think it brought him relief.

"Don't think I was ever your rival. I would no more have proposed to Mary than I would have married one of her aunts. She was so sure of herself, so happy in her single heartedness that she terrified me. My sort of man is not meant for marriage, for

women must be in the center of life, and we must always be standing aside and looking on. It is a damnable thing to be born left-handed."

Then I knew that Wake's fault was not spiritual pride, as I had diagnosed it as Biggleswick. The man was abased with humility.

I found the cottage, a little wooden thing which had been left perched on its knoll, when the big hotels grew up around it. It had a kind of fence in front, but behind it was open to the hillside. At the gate stood a bent old woman with a face like a pippin. My make-up must have been good, for she accepted me before I introduced myself.

"God be thanked you are come," she cried. "The poor lieutenant needed a man to keep him company. He sleeps now, as he does always in the afternoon, for his leg wearies him in the night. But he is brave, like a soldier. Come, I will show you the house, for you two will be alone now."

Stepping softly she led me indoors, pointing with a warning finger to the little bedroom where Peter slept. I found a kitchen with a big stove and a rough floor of planking, on which lay some badly cured skins. Off it was a sort of pantry with a bed for me. She showed me the pots and pans for cooking and the stores she had laid in, and where to find water and fuel.

"I will do the marketing daily," she said, "and if you need me my dwelling is half a mile up the road beyond the new church. God be with you, young man, and be kind to that wounded one."

When the Widow Summermatter had departed I sat down in Peter's armchair and took stock of the place. It was quiet and simple and homely, and through the window came the gleam of snow in the diamond hills. On the table beside the stove were Peter's cherished belongings—his buckskin pouch and the pipe which Jannie Grobelaar had carved for him in St. Helena, an aluminum field match box I had given him, a cheap large-print Bible such as padres present to well-disposed privates, and an old battered "Pilgrim's Progress" with gaudy pictures. The illustration at which I opened showed Faithful going up to heaven from the fire of Vanity Fair like a woodcock that has just been flushed. Everything in the room was exquisitely neat, and I knew that that was Peter and not the Widow Summer-

matter. On a peg behind the door hung his much-mended coat and sticking out of a pocket I recognized a sheaf of my own letters. In one corner stood something which I had forgotten about—an invalid chair.

The sight of Peter's plain little oddments made me feel solemn. I wondered if his eyes would be like Mary's now, for I could not conceive what life would be for him as a cripple. Very gently I opened the bedroom door and slipped inside.

He was lying on a camp bedstead with one of those striped Swiss blankets pulled up round his ears, and he was asleep. It was the old Peter beyond doubt. He had the hunter's gift of breathing evenly through his nose, and the white scar on the deep brown of his forehead was what I had always remembered. The only change since I last saw him was that he had let his beard grow again, and it was very gray.

As I looked at him the remembrance of all we had been through together flooded back upon me, and I could have cried with joy at being beside him. Women, bless their hearts! can never know what long comradeship means to men; it is something not in their line, something that belongs only to that wild, undomesticated world which we forswear when we find our mates. Even Mary understood only a bit of it. I had just won her love, which was the greatest thing that ever came my way, but if she had entered at that moment I would scarcely have turned my head. I was back again in the old life, and was not thinking of the new.

Suddenly I saw that Peter was awake and was looking at me.

"Dick," he said in a whisper, "Dick, my old friend."

The blanket was tossed off and his long lean arms were stretched out to me. I gripped his hands, and for a little we did not speak. Then I saw how woefully he had changed. His left leg had shrunk, and from the knee down was like a pipestem. His face, when awake, showed the lines of hard suffering, and he seemed shorter by half a foot. But his eyes were still like Mary's. Indeed they seemed to be more patient and peaceful than in the days when he sat beside me on the buck wagon and peered over the hunting veld.

I picked him up—he was no heavier than Mary—and carried him to his chair beside

the stove. Then I boiled water and made tea, as we had so often done together.

"Peter, old man," I said, "we're on trek again, and this is a very snug little *ronduvel*: We've had many good yarns, but this is going to be the best. First of all, how about your health?"

"Good. I'm a strong man again, but as slow as a hippo cow. I have been lonely sometimes, but that is all by now. Tell me of the big battles."

But I was hungry for news of him and kept him to his own case. He had no complaint of his treatment except that he did not like Germans. The doctors at the hospital had been clever, he said, and had done their best for him, but nerves and sinews and small bones had been so wrecked that they could not mend his leg, and Peter had all the Boer's dislike of amputation. One doctor had been in Damaraland and talked to him of those baked sunny spaces and made him homesick. But he returned always to his dislike of Germans. He had seen them herding our soldiers like brute beasts and the commandant had a face like Stumm and a chin that stuck out and wanted hitting. He made an exception for the great airman Lensch, who had downed him.

"He is a white man, that one," he said. "He came to see me in hospital and told me a lot of things. I think he made them treat me well."

Then he told me that to keep up his spirits he had amused himself with playing a game. He had prided himself on being a Boer, and spoken coldly of the British. He had also, I gathered, imparted many things calculated to deceive. So he left Germany with good marks, and in Switzerland had held himself aloof from the other British wounded, on the advice of Blenkiron who had met him as soon as he crossed the frontier. I gathered it was Blenkiron who had had him sent to St. Anton, and in his time there, as a disgruntled Boer, he had mixed a good deal with Germans. They had pumped him about our air service, and Peter had told them many ingenious lies and heard curious things in return.

"They are working hard, Dick," he said. "Never forget that. The German is a stout enemy and when we beat him with a machine he sweats till he has invented a new one. They have great pilots, but never so many good ones as we, and I do not think in ordinary fighting they can ever beat us."

That night I cooked our modest dinner, and we smoked our pipes with the stove door open and the good smell of wood smoke in our nostrils. I told him of all my doings and of the Wild Birds and Ivery and the job we were engaged on. Blenkiron's instructions were that we two should live humbly and keep our eyes and ears open, for we were outside suspicion—the cantankerous lame Boer and his loutish servant from Arosa. Somewhere in the place was a rendezvous of our enemies, and thither came the mysterious Chelius on his dark errands.

Peter nodded his head sagely. "I think I have guessed the place. The daughter of the old woman used to pull my chair sometimes down to the village, and I have sat in cheap inns and talked to servants. There is a fresh-water pan there, but it is all covered with snow now, and beside it there is a big house that they call the Pink Châlet. I do not know much about it, except that rich folk live in it, but I know the other houses and they are harmless. Also, the big hotels which are too cold and public for strangers to plot in."

Next day a bath chair containing a grizzled cripple and pushed by a limping peasant might have been seen descending the long hill to the village. It was clear, frosty weather which made the cheeks tingle, and I felt so full of "pep" that it was hard to remember my game leg. The valley was shut in on the east by a great mass of rocks and glaciers, belonging to a mountain whose top could not be seen. But on the south, above the snowy fir woods, there was a most delicate lacelike peak with a point like a needle. I looked at it with interest, for beyond it lay the valley which led to the Staub Pass, and beyond that was Italy—and Mary.

The old village of St. Anton had one long narrow street which bent at right angles to a bridge which spanned the river flowing from the lake. Thence the road climbed steeply, but at the other end of the street it ran on the level by the water's edge, lined with gimcrack boarding houses, now shuttered to the world, and a few villas in patches of garden. At the far end, just before it plunged into a pine wood, a promontory jutted into the lake, leaving a broad space between the road and the water. Here were the grounds of a more considerable dwelling—snow-covered laurels and rhododendrons with one or two bigger trees—and just

on the water edge stood the house itself, called the Pink Châlet.

I wheeled Peter past the entrance on the crackling snow of the highway. Seen through the gaps of the trees the front looked new, but the back part seemed to be of some age, for I could see high walls broken by few windows, hanging over the water. The place was no more a châlet than a donjon, but I suppose the name was given in honor of a wooden gallery above the front door. The whole thing was washed in an ugly pink. There were outhouses—garage or stables among the trees—and at the entrance there were fairly recent tracks of an automobile.

On our way back we had some very bad beer in a café and made friends with the woman who kept it. Peter had to tell her his story, and I trotted out my aunt in Zurich, and in the end we heard her grievances. She was a true Swiss, angry at all the belligerents who had spoiled her livelihood, hating Germany most, but also fearing her most. Coffee, tea, fuel, bread, even milk and cheese were hard to get and cost a ransom. It would take the land years to recover, and there would be no tourists, for there was no money left in the world. I dropped a question about the Pink Châlet, and was told that it belonged to one Schweigler, a professor of Berne, an old man who came sometimes for a few days in the summer. It was often let, but not now. Asked if it was occupied, she remarked that some friends of the Schweiglers—rich people from Basle—had been there for the winter.

"They come and go in great cars," she said bitterly, "and they bring their food from the cities. They spend no money in this poor place."

Presently Peter and I fell into a routine of life, as if we had always kept house together. In the morning he went abroad in his chair, in the afternoon I would hobble about on my own errands. We sank into the background and took its color, and a less conspicuous pair never faced the eye of suspicion. Once a week a young Swiss officer, whose business it was to look after British wounded, paid us a hurried visit. I used to get letters from my aunt in Zurich, sometimes with the postmark of Arosa, and now and then these letters would contain curiously worded advice or instructions from him whom my aunt called "the kind patron." I used to go down to the village in the afternoon and sit in an out-of-the-way café, talk-

ing slow German with peasants and hotel porters, but there was little to learn. I knew all there was to hear about the Pink Châlet, and that was nothing. A young man who skied stayed for three nights and spent his days on the Alps above the fir woods. A party of four including two women, was reported to have been there for a night—all ramifications of the rich family of Basle. I studied the house from the lake, which should have been nicely swept into ice rinks, but from lack of visitors was a heap of blown snow. The high old walls of the back part were built straight from the water's edge. I remember I tried a short cut through the grounds to the highroad and was given "Good afternoon" by a smiling German manservant. One way and another, I gathered there were a good many serving men about the place—too many for the infrequent guests. But beyond this I discovered nothing.

Not that I was bored, for I had always Peter to turn to. He was thinking a lot about South Africa, and the thing he liked best was to go over with me every detail of our old expeditions. They belonged to a life which he could think about without pain, whereas the war was too near and bitter for him. He liked to hobble out of doors after the darkness came and look at his old friends, the stars. He called them by the words they use on the veld, and the first star of morning he called the *voorlooper*—the little boy who inspanns the oxen—a name I had not heard for twenty years. Many a great yarn we spun in the long evenings, but I always went to bed with a sore heart. The longing in his eyes was too urgent, longing not for old days or far countries, but for the health and strength which had once been his pride.

One night I told him about Mary.

He shook his head. "You are a true friend, Dick, but your pretty *mysie* won't want an ugly old fellow like me hobbling about her house. I do not think I will go back to Africa, for I should be sad there in the sun. I will find a little place in England, and some day I will visit you, old friend."

That night his stoicism seemed for the first time to fail him. He was silent for a long time and went early to bed, where I can vouch for it he did not sleep. But he must have thought a lot in the nighttime, for in the morning he had got himself in hand and was as cheerful as a sandboy.

Another thing was that he had found religion. I doubt if that is the right way to put it, for he had always had it. Men who live in the wilds know they are in the hands of God. But his old kind had been a tattered thing, more like heathen superstition, though it had always kept him humble. But now he had taken to reading the Bible and to thinking in his lonely nights, and he had got a creed of his own.

Once, when I said something about his patience, he said he had got to try to live up to Mr. Standfast. He had fixed on that character to follow, though he would have preferred Mr. Valiant-for-Truth if he had thought himself good enough. He used to talk about Mr. Standfast in his queer old way as if he were a friend of us both, like Blenkiron. I tell you, I was humbled out of all my pride by the sight of Peter, so uncomplaining and gentle and wise. The Almighty couldn't have made a prig out of him, and he never would have thought of preaching. Only once did he give me advice. I had always a liking for short cuts, and I was getting a bit restive under the long inaction. One day when I expressed my feelings on the matter, Peter upped and quoted from the "Pilgrim's Progress:"

"Some also have wished that the next way to their Father's house were here, that they might be troubled no more with either hills or mountains to go over, but the Way is the Way, and there is an end."

All the same, when we had got into March and nothing happened I grew pretty anxious. Blenkiron had said we were fighting against time, and here were the weeks slipping away. His letters came occasionally, always in the shape of communications from my aunt. One told me that I would soon be out of a job, for Peter's repatriation was just about through, and he might get his movement order any day. Another spoke of my little cousin over the hills, and said that she hoped soon to be going to a place called Santa Chiara in the Val Saluzana. I got out a map in a hurry and measured the distance from there to St. Anton and pored over the two roads thither—the short one by the Staub Pass and the long one by the Marjolana. These letters made me think that things were nearing a climax, but still no instructions came. I had nothing to report in my own messages, I had discovered nothing in the Pink Châlet but idle servants, I was not even sure if the Pink

Château was not a harmless villa and I hadn't come within a thousand miles of finding Chelius. All my desire to imitate Peter's stoicism couldn't prevent me from getting occasionally rattled and despondent.

The one thing I could do was to keep fit, for I had a notion I might soon want all my bodily strength. I had to keep up my pretense of lameness in the daytime, so I used to take my exercise at night. I would sleep in the afternoon, when Peter had his siesta, and then about ten in the evening, after putting him to bed, I would slip out of doors and go for a four or five hours' tramp. Nothing could have been more wonderful than these midnight wanderings. I pushed up through the snow-laden pines to the ridges where the snow lay in great wreaths and scallops till I stood on a crest with a frozen world at my feet and above a host of glittering stars. Once on a night of full moon I reached the glacier at the valley head, scrambled up the moraine to where the ice began, and peered fearfully into the great spectral crevasses. At such hours I had the earth to myself, for there was not a sound except the slipping of a burden of snow from the trees or the crack and rustle which reminded me that a glacier was a moving river. The war seemed very far away, and I felt the littleness of our human struggles, till I thought of Peter turning from side to side to find ease in the cottage far below me. Then I realized that in the spirit of man there was something greater than in the inanimate world. I would get back about three or four, have a bath in the water which had been warming in my absence, and creep into bed, almost ashamed of having two sound legs, when a better man a yard away had but one.

Oddly enough, at these hours there seemed more life in the Pink Châlet than by day. Once tramping across the lake long after midnight I saw lights in the lake front in windows which for ordinary were blank and shuttered. Several times I cut across the grounds, when the moon was dark. On one such occasion a great car with no lights swept up the drive, and I heard low voices at the door. Another time a man ran hastily past me, and entered the house by a little door on the eastern side, which I had not before noticed. Slowly the conviction began to grow on me that we were not wrong in marking down this place, that things went on within it which it deeply concerned us to

discover. But I was puzzled to think of a way. I might butt inside, but for all I knew, it would be upsetting Blenkiron's plans, for he had given me no instructions about housebreaking. All this unsettled me worse than ever. I began to lie awake planning some means of entrance. I would be a peasant from the next valley who had twisted his ankle; I would go seeking an imaginary cousin among the servants; I would start a fire in the place and have the door flung open to zealous neighbors—

And then suddenly I got instructions in a letter from Blenkiron.

It came inside a parcel of warm socks that arrived from my kind aunt. But the letter for me was not from her. It was in Blenkiron's large, sprawling hand, and the style of it was all his own. He told me that he had about finished his job. He had got his line on Chelius, who was the bird he expected, and that bird would soon wing its way southward across the mountains for the reason I knew of. He wrote:

"We've got an almighty move on, and please God you're going to bustle some in the next week. It's going better than I ever hoped."

But something was still to be done. He had struck a countryman, one Clarence Donne, a journalist of Kansas City whom he had taken into the business. Him he described as a "crackajack" and commended to my esteem. He was coming to St. Anton, for there was a game afoot at the Pinck Châlet, which he would give me news of. I was to meet him next evening at nine-fifteen at the little door in the east end of the house. He concluded:

"For the love of Mike, Dick, be on time and do everything Clarence tells you as if he was me. It's a mighty complex stunt, but you and he have sand enough to pull it through. Don't worry about your little cousin. She's safe and out of the job now."

My first feeling was one of immense relief, especially at the last words. I read the letter a dozen times to make sure I had its meaning. A flash of suspicion crossed my mind that it might be a fake, principally because there was no mention of Peter who had figured large in the other missives. But why should Peter be mentioned when he wasn't on in this piece? The signature convinced me. Ordinarily Blenkiron signed

himself in full with a fine commercial flourish. But when I was at the front he had got into the habit of making a kind of hieroglyphic of his surname to me and sticking J. S. after it in a bracket. That was how this letter was signed, and it was sure proof it was all right.

I spent that day and the next in wild spirits. Peter spotted what was on, though I did not tell him for fear of making him envious. I had to be extra kind to him for I could see that he ached to have a hand in the business. Indeed he asked shyly if I couldn't fit him in, and I had to lie about it and say it was only another of my aimless circumnavigations of the Pink Châlet.

"Try and find something where I can help," he pleaded. "I'm pretty strong still, though I'm lame, and I can shoot a bit."

I declared that he would be used in time, that Blenkiron had promised he would be used, but for the life of me I couldn't see how.

At nine o'clock on the evening appointed I was on the lake opposite the house, close in under the shore, making my way to the rendezvous. It was a coal-black night, for though the air was clear the stars were shining with little light. With a premonition that I might be long away from food, I had brought some slabs of chocolate and my pistol was in my pocket. It was bitter cold, but I had ceased to mind weather and I wore my one suit and no overcoat.

The house was like a tomb for silence. There was no crack of light anywhere, and none of those smells of smoke and food which proclaim habitation. It was an eerie job scrambling up the steep bank east of the place, to where the flat of the garden started, in a darkness so great that I had to grope my way like a blind man.

I found the little door by feeling along the edge of the building. Then I stepped into an adjacent clump of laurels to wait on my companion. He was there before me.

"Say," I heard a rich, Middle-West voice whisper, "are you Joseph Zimmer? I'm not mentioning any names, but I guess you're the guy I was told to meet here."

"Mr. Donne?" I whispered back.

"The same," he replied. "Shake."

I gripped a gloved and mittened hand which drew me toward the door.

Made—Not Born

By E. M. Wickes

Something of the difficulties surrounding the making of popular song hits. Tin Pan Alley needs genius and goes to great lengths to get it. The yarn will amuse you

THE bird that chirped that he'd sooner write the songs of a nation than frame up the laws might change his tune if he was kickin' around Tin Pan Alley to-day and had to get a regular job on account of the anti-loafin' law. I got an idea he'd want to frame up the laws first so they wouldn't butt in on his song graft.

I suppose he thought he was tearin' off something wonderful when he pulled that stuff. Maybe he was, but I can't see it, for if I had a dollar for every bird in this country who'd like to write the songs for the U. S. and the Hawaiian Islands, I could keep the American army supplied with smokes, post cards, and steamer chairs, and still live like a movie star from the interest on the leavin's. And if I only could have sicked this race of aspirin' and perspirin' song writers on the kaiser and his bunch of baby killers and have let them yodle for a few hours, I'll bet the only thing left for the Yanks to kill would have been time. Statistics will back this up. The best gun ever turned out can't wing them beyond a hundred miles, while some songs shot out from New York have knocked a whole audience dead in San Francisco. Ask any small-time performer.

When you figure out the law-and-song gag you suddenly get hep to the fact that the bird who originated it was lookin' for a snap—something that any boob can do—a job that leaves no crystal beads on the brow, pays a bank president's salary, and makes the Jane that gave you the raspberry long to be back in your arms when you get a hit. And if song writin' is something that any yap can do, it can't be very useful in war times and oughta be left to shepherds and lunatics, for time means nothin' in their young lives.

Now while it's history that any human can write songs, yet it takes a genius plus a few rare birds known as "pluggers" to produce hits. All the genius has to know is nothin' about the laws and constitution of

music and poetry, and when he don't know anything he can murder them at leisure, mutilate the English language, and get away with it. And any one with a fat bank roll and nothin' on his mind can publish songs, but he can't stick very long unless he gets hits. If there's a war goin' on he's gotta keep after war hits, and as they don't grow wild in Palisade Park, like some song writers do, he's gotta have a genius hangin' close to the office.

When the war broke out I was workin' for Fred Hummick. He had a healthy bank account and a fool notion that he could pick hits, but he wasn't on friendly terms with any genius. From the beginnin' of the row until the Yanks signed up for a finish fight, Fred had plucked two lemons for every one that grows in California, and if the wife hadn't threatened him with divorce if he didn't lay off for a while, he'd had a new war song for every soldier in the American army, plus a few for the Blue Devils to translate when the Huns refused to battle.

I knew that if Hummick didn't land a hit pretty soon I'd have to apply for a porter's job in some ammunition factory, so I used to buzz him to let me do a little pickin', but he couldn't see the joke. I had been in the game longer than him, and I knew if he ever gave me a chance I'd show him something.

After the row with the wife Fred quit buyin' for a time, but when he saw the other houses puttin' over hit after hit, he went at it again, sayin' he'd land a winner if he had to start a Chinese revolution in Hoboken to get a new idea. Every mornin' when he'd blow into the office he'd sing out:

"We've got to get a war hit—another 'Hot Time in the Old Town!'"

And like as if his words were an order from a general, the "pluggers" and piano wreckers would grab professional copies and orchestrations for weapons, come to attention, and chorus:

"Mr. Hummick, you said a mouthful!"

One mornin' he waltzed in without doin' his little monologue and gave me the high sign to follow him into his private office.

"Filbert," he opened up as I hit the piano stool, "I'm going to give you a chance to earn some of the money you've been getting out of me under false pretenses. I met Dan Mooney last night and he gave me the name and address of a fellow up near Buffalo who has a war song that has it all over 'Tipperary' and should be good for a million copies."

"But I thought Mooney was sore on you for not payin' him for singin' that Irish ballad you put out last season."

"He's all over that now and wants to do me a good turn for the money I gave him to sing songs he didn't. Here's the name and address of the fellow and a check to cover all expenses. If you need more, wire. Get an express to Buffalo and then a train to this fellow's home town. Have him sing the song to you, and if you feel sure it's a hit, leave it there; but if you think it's no good, don't come back without it. If you can't come back with a hit, stay there and help him hoe potatoes. Don't bring the song without the author, and stay there unless you can show up with a hit."

After gettin' this much off his chest Hummick slid out of his chair and went out, and there was nothin' for me to do but get busy.

I cashed the check and phoned to my own Jane that I was goin' out of town on a secret mission for the good of the country. She wanted to see me off at the train, but as I didn't want any melodrama with weeps as the climax, I told her I was goin' with secret-service men.

I landed in Buffalo late in the afternoon, and the first thing I discovered was that I had lost the slip with the hick's name and address. I couldn't wire to Hummick for it, for if I had he'd 'a' sent some one else out and handed me the absent treatment. I had an idea that the name of the town sounded like snooze, and when I tackled a station agent he told me there was a Scanooza on a branch line.

But even with this dope I was still up a tree, for I had been too polite or too brainless to ask Hummick for the title. With the title as a start I could have paid some room-rent song writer ten dollars to write a set of words and a melody, and then lugged some hick back to Hummick as the author. I didn't care what the boss had said about

stickin' to the tall timbers, I was gonna give him a run for his coin and bring back something.

After dopin' it out for a time, I figured the best bet would be to take a peep at Scanooza. They might have a musical genius there. Every town has one. It's an institution like the socialists and the measles.

I introduced myself to Scanooza the next mornin' at ten, because no one was around to do it for me. The station was twice as large as a rubberneck wagon and about as lively as a Broadway gamblin' joint half an hour after the district attorney has paid his respects. Away back from the station the town had climbed to the hills for safety from floods and freight trains run by movin'-picture directors, and seemed like an island in an ocean of wavin' corn. What got me was that not even a dog had come to meet the train.

I sat on a bench until the deadness of the burg got on my nerves. Then I laughed out loud, as I thought of the bird who said he'd sooner make the songs than munitions. And the more I thought of how song writers pick just such a tank town with hummin' bees and honeysuckles for songs, the more I was sure that song writin' oughta be left to squirrels and nuts.

My brayin' must have started life somewhere in America, for a nice-lookin' country Jane shot out from behind the left wing of the stage. She wasn't a bad-lookin' dame, had the kind of red cheeks you can't buy in a drug store, and carried her chorus girl and country gowned shape like a girl on the title-page of a love ballad. I knew she was musical or foolish, because she was hummin' the chorus of "You Made Me Love." I got about as much attention from her as if I had been the back of the bench, and she would have slipped me the cold mitt hadn't I jumped up and blocked her path, just like they do in the movies.

"Miss," I said, tippin' the straw lid, "have you anything in this wonderful city that looks like a music composer?"

She stopped short, gave me the once over twice, and then smiled.

"Maybe you mean Hector Hunter," she said.

"Maybe it's Hector at that. Where does he hang out?"

"Hector *thinks* he's a great composer, but the folks around here don't think he'll ever amount to shucks, and they don't care to

listen to his crazy music. But he's the best farmer for miles. If you want to see him you'll find him in the eighth house on the right. Once you hear one of his crazy tunes you'll be glad to run away."

"I've heard some awful stuff in my time, miss, and if he can beat it he must be a genius, at that. I'm gonna look him over anyway, and I'll give him your regards."

The Jane's head flew back as she handed me a frappé look. "You'll do nothing of the kind," she snapped, and then left me flat-footed.

I didn't know why she should pan Hector and I didn't care. A Jane's knock with me is always as good as a boost, so I started for the eighth from the end. And believe me the town had picked out some hill for the rubes to climb. Going up felt like walkin' up Mount Beacon backward. The houses seemed to be so near one another that you could build a bunch of shacks around each one and call it a town. Halfway between the fifth and sixth I came across a yap sittin' on a tree stump with a fiddle over his knees.

"I'm gonna call you Hector Hunter, the music composer," I said. "Am I right?"

He nodded, and looked at me like I was the chairman of a firin' squad. He wanted to know how I got his pedigree, and when I told him about the Jane at the station his face became so red and puffed I thought he must be breathin' through his ears.

"What brought you up here?" he asked.

When I looked at his beefy frame and healthy color I felt like tellin' him I was from the draft board.

"I'm a New York music publisher," I told him, "and I travel about the country lookin' for new composers."

He stood up, and I forgave him for not bein' in the army. He was lame.

"And you want to listen to my music?"

"Sure! Why not?"

"You're the only one I ever heard say it, so you haven't any idea how grateful I feel. Every one in this place thinks I'm crazy because I want to compose and play. The girl you met at the station liked me once, but she gave me up because people laughed at her for being my friend."

"And you should worry about one little Jane! Why, if you ever write a hit and hit Broadway you can start a squab farm."

"Until this morning I was living with my uncle and working like a horse for my board

and clothes," he went on, not seemin' to get the drift of my Broadway squab farm, "but he turned me out this morning, saying I was making a laughingstock of him. If I work from sunrise till sunset and then compose and play in my spare moments, I don't see why others should complain and call me crazy."

"Don't worry about that, Mr. Hunter, for I never knew of a genius from Columbus down to the bird who discovered that ham can be fried with eggs, who wasn't called a nut. Never mind what these other dubs think, just let me hear one of your own tunes."

"And you won't laugh at me?"

I swore I wouldn't, and he started to tune up. Before he had played half the tune I knew that bird had a hit—Hummick's future opinion bein' null and void.

"That's a pippin, boy! Where'd you get it?"

"Out of my head. Do you really like it?"

"Almost as much as I like myself, and if you don't lose your head like most of them do after the first hit, you'll clean up a fortune in New York."

"I have a lot of others," he said.

"Don't bother about the others now. If you played another as good as that I might go mad with joy and lose my way back."

Although I was sure he had a hit, I knew it wasn't a war song, and it wasn't any kind of a song because it had no words. I was pretty certain that he was not the bird that Hummick had sent me to bag, and if I took him back and told Hummick he had a hit we would get the gate. It mightn't worry him, for he had already been introduced to it that mornin', but I had a Jane who was tryin' to guess just how much cheaper two can live than one. So accordin' to Hoyle and my knowledge of the boss, Hector should drift into the office by chance and play the melody for Hummick. And if my dope ran true to form, Hummick would think he had discovered a genius and go after the number.

"How would you like to take a trip with me to New York?" I asked.

He opened his mouth and gazed at me like he was lookin' at the fountain of youth.

"But you're only teasing me," he smiled weakly. "I've been dreaming of that for years, but I never could get the car fare."

"If you think I'm stallin' just grab your grip and fiddle and follow me."

He did, and we started for the station at the next town. After we had traveled for a while at a slow pace, he stopped, put down his grip and fiddle and grabbed me by the hand and squeezed it.

"Mr. Filbert," he said, havin' gotten my name from the card I had flashed on him, "I don't know if you believe in a God, but whether you do or not, some day He will reward you for giving a poor boy a chance. For years I have prayed to Him, and I know now that my prayer has been answered."

That little monologue and the tears startin' to the bird's eyes got me in the throat, and for the first time in years, after grippin' the mitts of big and small-time acts, I gave him a real handshake. It's funny how all your bluff and wise stuff melts before a little bit of simple sincerity.

"They say the devil invented popular songs, Mr. Hunter, so if God has had any hand in sendin' me out to you, it must be something more than an ordinary hit you have up your sleeve. And I'm gonna see you through."

When we started on our way again I made him let me carry the grip and fiddle. I couldn't see a lame man tote a load after that little speech. And I never knew of a man so anxious to get out of a town except some jailbird goin' out at night without tellin' the warden. Hector's blue eyes and round cheeks seemed to be alive with thoughts of a new life.

"What's the name of your tune?" I asked, when we hit the station.

"Virginia Waltz."

"And why Virginia?"

"That's the name of the girl you met at the station."

"But why stick to a Jane that's tied a can to you?"

"But she did me a good turn in sending you up."

"And what about the part God played in it?"

"She's a child of God, and maybe He used her to deliver His message."

While we waited for the train I had him play the tune again, and before he was half through he had a dozen people gapin' at him like as if they were listenin' to an opera. They clapped him and made him play it again. Gettin' the reception he did, I figured he should have been happy, but he showed me that I was all wrong just as we were gettin' on the train.

"If Virginia could only have seen how those people enjoyed my music," he said. "They didn't seem to think I am crazy."

"Never mind about Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia," I said, and then remembered I wasn't in school. "I didn't mean that, Hector. What I meant to say is that some day Virginia is gonna hear a big band play that tune, and when she does she's gonna have a funny feelin' round the heart. They all do."

"But Virginia is proud," he put in.

"So was Texas before she gave in to the Union. You just leave this thing to me."

And Hector did.

In New York I got him a room in one of those Babylon roomin' houses on West Forty-fifth Street and told him to rest up for a night. After we had something to eat I put him wise to the whole thing from beginnin' to end and then told him I was gonna use him as a ringer.

"You go into Hummick's place," I coached, "and tell him that you lost the war song Mooney heard and that you can't remember it, but that you have a great waltz. After you have gone I'll phone him and say you've got the greatest waltz I ever heard."

"But maybe he won't pay any attention to me."

"Now, Hector, me lad, I've forgotten more about Hummick than he knows about himself."

Toward noon I started him on his trip to Hummick's office. Then I called up Hummick on the wire and said:

"I dug up that bird you sent me after, but he lost the song Mooney heard him sing. When I told him I was from a New York music publisher he pulled a waltz on me and refused to break away. He followed me to New York and refuses to lay off me until I get a publisher to listen to his junk. So I sent him up to you. When you hear it I know you'll agree with me that it's a piece of cheese, but listen to it so I can get rid of him."

Hummick promised he would, but not without tellin' me to get back on the job and earn some of the coin I had squandered on the trip.

To square myself I hung around the Galaxy thinkin' I might get hold of a big-time act to take to the office with me, but when two o'clock came and I had none in tow I made for the office, and ran into Dan

Mooney, who should have been trainin' to fight Willard instead of singin' love ballads.

"Well, I guess I evened up things with Hummick," he chirped.

"Nothin' like payin' back honest people money you get outa them under false pretenses, Dan."

"Can the comedy. I've got a cracked lip. I'm going to hand you a laugh. You know Hummick put one over on me when he failed to come across after I had used his punk ballad in my act for two months."

"I don't know. I'm not the bookkeeper."

"Well, be a messenger boy and tell him the name and address of the hick song writer near Buffalo was a phony. Maybe he found it out when he made the trip. He said he was going off that same day."

"But he didn't make the trip, Daniel, and I lose a laugh."

Mooney grabbed his coat lapels like as if he wanted to pose for that "Tell it to the Marines" poster.

"What stopped him?" he gulped.

"I dunno. Maybe he got lost tryin' to find his way to the Grand Central through the new subway."

"Hummick is impossible, Filbert."

"I know. He hasn't even brains enough to make a fool of himself."

It went over Mooney's head, and when he saw a Jane comin' along he made for her, leavin' me perfectly happy.

I stood there for a moment wonderin' what kind of an alibi I could frame up for the boss. If I had only known what he knew I could have got started. Maybe Hummick had got wise that Mooney's tip was a false alarm, and maybe he hadn't. After dopin' it out, I figured the best bet was to play out the hand just as I had started it. If Mooney or some one else tipped off the boss I would simply have to look for a new job.

Hummick and Hector were comin' out of the office as I pulled up at the door, and the way they kept buzzin' at each other you would have thought they were lost brothers reunited.

"I've just given Mr. Hunter a contract for three cents a copy royalty on his waltz," Hummick said, "and we're going to have something to eat. I'm so sure it will be a hit that I advanced him five hundred. It's a wonder, but we've decided to change the title."

On hearin' that from the boss I felt that

life was really worth livin', and I didn't care if Hummick did get wise to Mooney's trick, for when he did he'd have to give me credit for something, even if he should can me for tryin' to put one over on him.

As fast as presses could turn out the copies Hummick had twenty thousand printed, but when he called to see the jobbers and dealers they told him it was a lemon and refused to buy. It didn't faze Hummick.

"Maybe it is a lemon," he said, "but even lemons come high sometimes, and I'm going to make the dear old public buy a million copies of it at thirty cents a copy or go broke in the attempt."

And you didn't have to take a second look at the fire in his gray eyes to know that he meant every word.

For the next ten days business went along as usual, with the boss keepin' to his private office most of the time. I had been out every day and night seein' the orchestra leaders, but every one said it was punk. When Hector wasn't playin' his fiddle he was in one of the piano rooms writin' letters. I was beginnin' to think that Hummick had quit on the waltz until one mornin' he came to me and said:

"I've just pulled a brand-new one in the music game. I had two thousand orchestrations made and mailed to all the best leaders in the country. They went out first class and in every envelope I stuck a dollar bill with a note telling the leaders it was to pay for their time in trying it out."

While I was strong for anything he did to push the number, for I still had faith in it regardless of what the jobbers and some of our "pluggers" had said, yet it looked to me like another fool way of sendin' out good money after bad. A leader would have to fall for the number and play it because he felt it was a regular melody or he wouldn't play it on a bet. It was a funny piece of music. The birds that took to it just raved about it, and the clams that didn't care for it seemed to get a regular holiday enjoyment from pannin' it.

About ten days after the boss had floated his little scheme the first mail brought an order for ten copies, and when Hummick's secretary made the discovery and passed the word to the others, the three piano wreckers jumped to stools and began poundin' away at Hector's waltz. As soon as the boss learned of the important event, he had

the order framed and then offered to buy everybody a bottle of wine. Beginnin' with the followin' day, orders for five, ten, and twenty-five copies arrived in every mail. Then they jumped to the hundreds. A week later when three telegrams came from San Francisco, each orderin' two thousand copies, Hummick thought it was a joke and wired back for confirmation.

"Looks like I'm some picker after all," I said, as he finished readin' the confirmations.

He jammed his chin against his chest and looked at me like he was huntin' trouble. Then he swung around and headed for the stock room.

The three gifts from the Golden Gate put a lot more of pep into the "pluggers" and they began to take the number seriously. Before the boss had filled the Frisco orders he had others from various parts of the country amountin' to ten thousand copies. The tune was beginnin' to get some real play in the cabaret and motion-picture houses and several phonograph companies had sent in contracts for it. Durin' this time Hummick had little to say, but he was puttin' in a lot of overtime on it.

"I was around to see the jobbers," he said one afternoon, "and I got orders for one hundred thousand copies. They say it's selling faster than anything on the market. And I'm glad for Hunter's sake. What's become of him? I haven't seen him around for several days."

I had been so busy that I didn't even know he was missin'. I called up his boardin' house and the woman told me he had paid up and cleared out. I told Hummick about Hector's little romance and he ordered me to chase up to Scanooza and see what I could do to patch up the row and get Hector workin' on new numbers.

When I hit Scanooza the second time I ran into the village band playin' Hector's waltz. Countin' the blue notes that the band pulled, it must have gotten twice as much out of it as Hector had put in.

By bribin' the owner of one of those movin'-picture comedy rigs I managed to reach Hector's old home in fairly good shape. He met me at the door. Virginia was by his side.

"Looks pretty soft for you, Heck," I said, after he had given me an official introduction to Virginia. "We've sold almost two

hundred thousand copies of the waltz. Looks like you oughta clean up about fifty thousand on the deal."

Virginia stared at me like she was seein' the man who gave old John D. his first dollar.

"I'll never be able to use all that money if I live to be a hundred," Hector put in.

"Maybe not now; but wait until this town gets wise that you're gettin' all the money in New York that don't go for Liberty Bonds and you'll soon find that you won't have half enough to build the fool things the citizens will want. Mr. Hummick sent me up to see if you had made 'up your mind about what you're gonna do in the future."

"I'm going to stay right here with the best little girl in the world. And we're going to take care of my uncle. I wouldn't be happy anywhere else. Give me Virginia, my violin, and the farm, and I'll ask for nothing more. Every piece of music I compose from now until I die will be Mr. Hummick's, if he wants it. Virginia will always be my inspiration."

I didn't try to talk him out of that scheme, for I figured he would be better off up there out of the reach of other publishers. And Hummick felt the same way when I told him about Hector's idea of livin' and workin'.

"I had an order for another hundred thousand copies this morning," he said, after I had turned in my report.

"Then you gotta give me credit for doin' one job right," I crowed. "Maybe I'm not some hit picker?"

"As a hit picker you're a wonderful magician," he grinned.

"Whaddaya mean by magician? Didn't you send me out to get this bird Mooney told you about, and didn't I bring him back with a hit?"

"I don't know what you did," Hummick said. "I gave you the name and address of a leader up in that part of the country by mistake, and didn't find it out until after you had left. What I've been trying to figure out is just where you did dig up Hunter."

"Before I give you that dope I wanna know if I get a raise?"

"Yes; I know about what you were banking on, so I'll double it."

"It's enough," I said. "Let's have a smile, and I'll tell you what happened to me and Hector from the start, and why you want to pass up Dan Mooney as a friend."

Interlocking Chance

By H. P. Downes

Author of "Sleazy and the Malmarte," Etc.

Even the wife of Judge Sturdvant was in the plot against him, apparently, and his enemies were going to have everything their own way; but he laughs best whose laugh lasts

ONE again, by Judas Priest!" Scowling at his reflection in the glass of his dressing stand, his honor, Judge H. van Armatage Sturdvant, of the superior court, gave vent to his favorite swear word. He had inherited the expression, together with many wide-flung acres, long since improved by towering apartments and many-storied office buildings, from his father, and used it constantly when provoked. And provoked now he certainly was. For the second time in as many days his razors did not come to hand; and of late such occurrences were common in his household, leading to many disagreements between himself and Mrs. Sturdvant as to the cause.

Well beyond middle age, of commanding stature, fine breadth of shoulders, and features both full and refined, set off by merry twinkling eyes, his honor was a breezy, two-fisted man with a pronounced fondness for the good things of life. A devotee of all sports, the theater, the opera, he was a regular fellow "off and on"—the sort of person whose advent in any company was signalized by a fanning out of individuals in generic welcome.

Tossing his effects right and left in impatient impatience, he ran through several drawers. He desisted, finally, to drum on the glass with a thoughtful frown, darting sidelong glances through the open door of his wife's room. A winsome, fluffy-haired woman, some fifteen years her husband's junior, Mrs. Sturdvant was propped up in bed by pillows, reading the morning's paper.

"Miriam," he called out evenly, "it seems to be my shaving things again this morning." Then he added, with an ironical twist: "I presume I must have mislaid them as usual."

His wife did not remove her eyes from the paper.

"It is most likely, Van," she rejoined pa-

tiently. "The last place you use anything is usually where it is to be found. Why not try the lavatory shelf? You know you are quite liable to do such things—lately."

The judge did not answer. It seemed to him the "lately" was separated from and swung above the rest of his wife's sentence. Frowning again, he sought the place suggested. Apparently uncleaned from the previous day's use, he found the razor he felt certain he had placed away resting upon the box containing the others. He returned to the dressing stand and proceeded to shave, pausing to gaze out the window abstractedly from time to time. Then, with something akin to a sigh, he went leisurely below stairs to breakfast.

As he left the room his wife's eyes followed him. She smiled knowingly to herself, teeth pressing firmly her nether lip. It was all too bad on Van's account, of course; but time was pressing on and the orbit in which she moved was much too circumscribed. Of what advantage was it to be married to a man, no matter how wealthy and distinguished, whose notion of a vacation was a fishing trip to some impossible place or other?

Why, she was actually stifling in her present surroundings. If Van wouldn't listen to reason and leave the hateful bench voluntarily, he must be brought to his senses in some other way. One thing was certain: Leave he must; he must! She was lost in thought for a time, tapping with her fingers on her cheek. Then, smiling grimly, she rang for her maid and made ready to join the judge before he should leave for downtown.

Presently, on the landing outside the dining room, Mrs. Sturdvant encountered the servant Jules, who had officiated at her husband's breakfast. She paused to engage in a whispered colloquy with him, giving

several commands to which the other bowed in deference. He in particular of all the servants was attached to his mistress, having come to her on the breaking up of her mother's establishment.

The judge had finished breakfasting when Mrs. Sturdvant entered. With glasses perched high on his nose, he was skimming through his newspaper. His wife silently took her place, and Jules served the coffee and rolls. Nibbling at her food, crunching it into small bits, she started to offer a remark, but on second thought refrained. She sensed hostile emanations flowing from behind her husband's newspaper which completely hid his face.

At length his honor folded the paper formally and placed it carefully beside his plate. Removing his glasses, he tapped negligently with them on the board as a premise to what he was about to say. The custom was habitual with him, and his wife stiffened in her chair to eye him coldly.

"My dear," he observed slowly, "regarding our conversation of last evening and, I may add, of many nights before concerning my retirement from the bench, I wish to say that I have come to a definite and—er—final conclusion. It is my fixed and irrevocable purpose to occupy my position until my term of office shall have expired; and I am frank to add that, aside from my own predilection in the matter, I feel my course to be a duty I owe to the people who elected me."

Mrs. Sturdvant laughed shortly with a note of anger.

"And what about your duty to me?" she inquired. "Don't you feel you owe me some consideration also? From October until May, while court is in session, I go absolutely no place where people of standing are accustomed to sojourn. Why, Palm Beach is only a name to me! And in the summer"—she paused to arch an eyebrow—"some terrible lake in Maine. Besides—" she broke off while Jules removed some dishes.

The judge raised a protesting hand.

"I know what you are going to say, dear," he supplied. "You were going to remark that I am—er—losing my grip, that people are commencing to notice it and to whisper it behind my back. Such talk is arrant nonsense; nothing, in fact, could be further from the truth."

"Let me ask you something, Van: You will admit of course that you can't see to read without your glasses; tell me, then,

why you were pretending to peruse the paper as I came in?"

"Of course I was reading," chortled the judge. "Why, the *Times* among other things was commenting on my masterly handling of the case now before me—the State vs. Antonio Capelli, alias 'The Chigger;' I had my glasses, that goes without saying. They are—" He stopped to grope with his fingers along the napery. With an exclamation of anger he pushed back his chair to search the floor, and then one pocket after the other without result.

"Hang it all, Miriam!" he burst out, "I can't understand this at all. I had them a moment ago, and I did read the *Times* with them."

Mrs. Sturdvant made a gently clucking noise with her mouth, shaking her head from side to side the while.

"That is the *Herald* you have there, Van," she advised. "You left the *Times* upstairs and, doubtless, your glasses with it. Oh, Van, can't you see it is the same old story? You have been, well, forgetting again; and I know it was the *Times* that commented on the case you mention, for I read it myself."

Her husband unfolded the paper beside him. Sure enough, it was the *Herald*.

"This is preposterous," he asserted. But he said hopefully: "Perhaps Jules removed both the glasses and the *Times*. I'll ask him and see."

"Please don't, Van; it will only make a bad matter worse. Certainly it would never occur to Jules to substitute the *Herald* for the *Times* unless you requested him to do so. It will be best, I think, to let the matter pass."

She pursed her lips in thought for a moment, glancing alternately toward and away from the judge, as if undecided whether to speak further on a delicate and embarrassing subject. Then, half apologetically, she ventured:

"It really doesn't concern me at all, Van, but there is something else: I had occasion to go to the vault yesterday to get my necklace for the cleaner's. Evidently you had forgotten to close the door of your compartment, for it was swinging wide when I entered. I happened to glance inside and saw literally dozens of diamonds, cut and uncut, together with rings and jewelry of all sort. While I know—"

"I am positive the door was locked," interjected the judge.

"While I know you have sufficient means to gratify almost any taste, stumbling on that hoard quite took my breath away; but isn't it"—she cast about for the proper expression—"a rather curious bent for a man in your position? I say nothing," she added, "concerning your reticence as regards the treasure-trove all these years."

Her spouse flushed; he had the appearance of being caught in a clandestine act. He arose and took a turn around the room before he declared:

"I presume it is useless, in the first place, to reiterate that when I last had occasion to visit the vault I left the door securely locked. You will say I have been forgetting, so I will not take the trouble. And, as regards the jewels, I wish to observe only that the accumulation of such gems is a foible of mine. Surely there can be nothing reprehensible in indulging myself in this respect?"

"No, dear; certainly not," agreed his wife. "But that is scarcely the question. Can't you understand that, if it becomes generally known, the miserly hoarding away of precious stones, taken in conjunction with your inability to remember the proper sequence of events, will occasion a deal of unpleasant talk? Honestly, Van," she pleaded, "you are in need of a long vacation. Promise me you will go away for a long rest."

"Judas Priest, no, Miriam!" shouted the irate judge. He strove to collect himself with an effort. Then he said more calmly: "I fear I am rather late this morning, dear. Will you oblige me by having the car called? And—er—if I did leave my glasses behind, as you say, will you kindly send a servant for them?"

As Mrs. Sturdvant dutifully complied with his requests, he stamped out into the hall, deep concern showing in his face. While he was donning his coat Jules appeared with the missing things.

"Your newspaper was in your room, also," he offered. "Will you wish to take it along with you, sir?"

But the judge did not hear. He was entirely preoccupied with his mental processes. Forgetting to say good-by to his wife, he walked heavily down the steps to the limousine, and climbed in. When the liveried chauffeur had swung the door to behind him, he touched his cap and inquired:

"Through the park as usual, sir?"

There was no answer; and with eyes uplifted in surprise, the chauffeur mounted the seat and drove off.

Reclining well down in the cushions, the judge was in a brown study. Was it true, he mused, that his powers were waning? A whole series of untoward events swam before his mind's eye, which, if true, would seem to show that his wife's contention was correct. That's it, if true; but were they? Positively not. But then how explain the incident that had just transpired? Jules, perhaps; he had never liked the fellow at all, but refrained from saying so to keep peace in the family. And yet his was the time of life when men of large affairs were inclined to break up.

Another thought, meteorlike, flashed across his mental vision; and though the morning was more than ordinarily cool for the season of the year, he removed his hat and mopped his forehead with his handkerchief. The alienists—he had heard them so testify a hundred times—were accustomed to say that no one, for instance, afflicted with senile dementia was ever known to recognize his condition; in fact, quite the contrary was true. Was he like that? Was it possible that one who had long enjoyed the reputation of being without a peer as an astute cross-examiner could, as it were, disintegrate in this manner without becoming aware of the change? Well, he must subject himself to every test to make certain; he must know the truth.

He was awakened from his reverie by the car scraping along the curb in front of the courthouse. He got out quickly, with a spring that brought a twinge of pain, and had crossed the flagging when he stopped, hesitated a moment, and retraced his steps to the car. The chauffeur had resumed his seat and was adjusting a lever.

"I neglected to ask you to try my new brand of cigars, John," began the judge craftily. "Smoke this and see if you like it better than the one I gave you Saturday."

The chauffeur came as near a grin as his dignity would permit. He slipped the cigar in his hat.

"Thank you, sir," he bowed, "but it wasn't Saturday, sir, you gave me the last one; it was the day before."

"That so, John? Well, it doesn't matter. I forgot, most likely."

Then, striving to speak lightly, he asked:

"By the way, John, have you noticed that I am apt to be—er—forgetful of late?"

"Now that you ask me, sir, I have," asserted John earnestly. "It was on last Saturday. I remember the day, because you didn't give me a cigar as usual, sir. You directed me to drive you 'round to Fiebold's jewelry store on Sixth Avenue three times, and every time we came there you ordered me to drive on again without going in."

The judge laughed heartily, with a feeling of relief. At any rate, he recalled that incident perfectly. He had wished to see Fiebold personally on a business matter, but there were too many customers in the store at the time to suit his purpose. Still chuckling, he observed:

"And you, John, I remember, were anxious to get home to pore over the 'Racing Index.' I saw it nestling down in the cushions behind your seat. By the way, whom do you like in the Handicap to-morrow?"

A ghost of a smile illumined the corners of John's mouth.

"Grayfinch, sir," he returned solemnly. "He should win easily at the weights."

The judge snorted.

"Never, John!" he asseverated. "Grayfinch has a weak strain on his dam's side. Spun Gold will win the Handicap easily. There's a race horse for you! She can go a route and carry her speed like her grand-sire Damon. I am surprised at you, John!"

"But Grayfinch beat her with five more pounds up when they met at Saratoga, sir," rejoined the chauffeur argumentatively, "and——"

"On a wet track, John; on a wet track. And to-morrow, according to the papers, will be bone dry. Spun Gold is built along horse lines, not web-footed like a duck. Let's see; I imagine the case I am sitting on will end to-day. Suppose you and I run out to the track to-morrow and see this race well and truly run. Mrs. Sturdvant will be going to a meeting of the Suffragist Society, and we will have the day to ourselves."

John smiled in elation and touched his cap.

"And, John, on the way home," added the judge, "stop into my tailor's and get one of my new overcoats for the occasion—the one on the new military shade with patch pockets." He shook his head sadly for a moment to observe: "I thought I was going to have something quite exclusive when I

ordered that coat, but now I see the same model being shown in the ready-made stores."

"There should be a law placed on the statute books stopping that sort of thing," returned John, his face expressionless.

"Drive on, John," laughed his honor, "and if you meant what I think you mean, I'd borrow back that cigar I gave you."

II.

When his honor, having donned his gown, mounted the bench, the trial of the case, the *People vs. Antonio Capelli, alias "Chigger Anse,"* was in its fifth day. It had attracted some little attention in the newspapers on account of the prisoner's reputation. He was known in the underworld and to the police as a vicious, maladroitness, "strong-arm" man, the leader of a band of thugs, confidence men, and highbinders called, euphemistically enough, "The Seekers."

Thus far the Chigger had evaded the meshes of the law. Various members of his gang, however, had been arrested from time to time and put away. The police were naturally anxious to do the same with him, but, until the present instance, when he had been taken in close proximity to a burglarized house, on fire when the police arrived, their efforts had been of no avail. The Chigger had always slipped through like the eel that he was; nor, as a matter of fact, was the evidence any too strong against him now.

A private house, owned by a Mr. Livimore, on West Seventy-fourth Street, overlooking in the rear a vacant lot used by a contractor for storage purposes, had been entered in the absence of the owner; his safe, cleverly concealed by the wainscoting of the dining room, had been opened by expert manipulation of the combination lock and jewelry to the amount of many thousands of dollars removed.

Mr. Livimore's housekeeper, an elderly lady, on returning to the house after a visit to a dentist around the corner had heard a suspicious noise emanating from this room as she entered the door, and had gone at once to investigate. At the door she was seized from behind, felled to the floor, and afterward bound and gagged. She knew no more till the arrival of the firemen, who had released her; nor had she seen her assailant.

The firemen, who had been accompanied to the house by the police officer on post at Seventy-fourth Street, had extinguished the fire; and the officer, making a hurried trip through the premises, had seen no one. The police reserves, having arrived by this time, threw a cordon around the block, and in the vacant lot in the rear the Chigger had been taken. He was warming his hands at the time over a small fire which, he stated, he had kindled. No jewels were found in his possession, and he had denied vociferously that he knew aught of the burglary or the fire.

Shortly before the Chigger's arrest, however, a butcher's boy, going his rounds on Seventy-third Street, had happened to glance in the vacant lot as he passed. Clambering over the fence from the Livimore backyard, he testified, a man had been seen who strongly resembled the prisoner; but he would not swear positively that Capelli was the same person.

The police were unable to discover who had turned in the fire alarm. On cross-examination, also, they were forced to admit that the finger prints taken by them from the surface of the safe, did not correspond with those of the prisoner. No other facts of moment, germane to the action were brought out, save that the attorney for the defendant had, for some mysterious reason of his own, elicited from Mr. Livimore and the housekeeper that there were no matches in the house at the time of the fire.

By one of those singular coincidences that are constantly cropping up in criminal trials, it appeared that on the morning of the robbery, Mr. Livimore had requested the housekeeper to see to it that the match container in his room be replenished and she had stated that there was not one in the house. She had given the order for a supply to the grocer boy a few minutes before, and he had not yet made the daily delivery.

Capelli in his defense called two witnesses, a carpenter and a café proprietor.

The carpenter gave testimony that on the day of the burglary he was employed on the construction of an apartment house in the neighborhood; that, as he was going to lunch at the noon hour to a saloon where he was accustomed to eat, he had met Capelli, whom he had known years before when the prisoner was working at his trade—that of bricklayer; and, after they had exchanged greetings, he invited the prisoner to come to

the saloon with him. But Capelli had refused, giving as an excuse that he was "broke" and consequently could not "buy" in return.

He went on to say that he had prevailed on Capelli to join him and, after doing the honors of the occasion, he had bought two cigars at the bar, giving one to the prisoner; that Capelli had searched his pockets for a match but could find none, and that the café proprietor, at the prisoner's request, had fetched a box from the other end of the bar, the sort that would light only when struck on the package.

Afterward, taking leave of Capelli at the door, he had returned to his work, a walk from the café of not more than three minutes. He judged he had not been at his task more than ten minutes at the outside when, attracted by the clanging of a bell, he had looked out the window to see a fire engine drawing up to a hydrant near the Livimore house.

The café proprietor was brought to the stand to corroborate the carpenter's testimony as to the match incident. He remembered Capelli well on account of the distinguishing scar on his face.

The young district attorney was unable to shake either of the Chigger's witnesses on cross-examination. Making heavy going of it for a considerable time, he finally sat down in disgust. It was as evident to him as it must be to the jury that if Capelli had no matches he could not have set the fire; and the necessary inference was that the Livimore residence was buglarized by the same hand that ignited the premises.

Indeed, this was the State's contention, and he felt that his case was lost. Of course, there was yet to be explained how the prisoner had lighted the fire at which he was standing when arrested if he had no matches. But this could only be brought out from the Chigger himself—if he were foolish enough to take the stand.

The whispered conference between Capelli and his attorney had been of some little duration. Judge Sturdvant, waiting patiently for it to cease, was, almost subconsciously, reviewing the events of the morning. But now the elation he had felt on leaving John was giving way again to harrowing doubt. He was, as it were, keeping mental tabs on himself; if it were humanly possible, he meant to set at rest, once for all, his mistrust of his condition. But how?

Let's see—— This Chigger's demeanor did not appeal overmuch to him. Maybe——

Pulling himself together, he tapped sharply with his gavel.

"Has the defense any more witnesses?" he inquired.

Capelli's attorney looked appealingly at the prisoner, negation in his eyes. The Chigger bent toward him to say:

"Dey's got nothin' on me. I'll take de stand and tell dem de whole trut'."

Making the most of it, the attorney flashed a triumphant glance on the jury and cleared his throat.

"Your honor," he said, "the defendant himself will take the stand."

In order to gain the witness chair the Chigger was compelled to make a detour around the jury box from the rear. In passing he was momentarily out of sight of both court and jury. He utilized the occasion to deliver a fleeting wink of combined recognition and assurance to a spectator on the nearest settee, who caught it on the fly and passed it back.

When Capelli's back was toward him the recipient of his wink suffered a smile of derision to flash across his countenance. He was one Longer, surnamed "The Kid," who was not unknown in certain circles where Times Square splits to form Seventh Avenue and Broadway. He and the Chigger had had business relations in the past, "loaning" each other men at times when the exigencies of business demanded; and, since Capelli's incarceration, he had set on foot momentous plans, the successful conclusion of which were dependent upon the continued durance of the Chigger. Hence the smile.

Once on the stand, the Chigger seated himself in an easy position and ran swimmingly through his direct examination. He had, he said, gone to the neighborhood where he was afterward arrested in search of employment. The objective of his journey would be found in the address book which the police had taken from him. After he left his friend, the carpenter, he had gone along the street to the vacant lot; feeling chilly at the time, he had entered and kindled a fire; he had not been near the Livimore house at all.

Smiling complacently, Capelli's attorney turned to the district attorney with a flourish of his arm.

"Your witness, sir," he declared.

The official wasted no time attacking the

Chigger along lines on which he knew the latter was invulnerable. Coming directly to the point he asked:

"Capelli, if you had no matches in your possession, how did you come to light the fire?"

"From the cigar the carpenter gave me," responded the witness. "It was only half smoked when I came to the lot."

Removing his glasses, the court tapped with them on the bench, and was in the act of placing them on his nose when he detected a speck on one of the lenses. He drew his handkerchief to remove it. By association of ideas his thoughts reverted to the breakfast table that morning. For he recalled he had done precisely the same thing then. And, by Jove! it was the *Times* he was reading at the moment.

Instantly the proof came to him. The article he had been perusing had to do with the untimely death of an associate editor. He was even able to visualize the heavy black lines of demarcation at the top and bottom of the editorial. So, after all, he was being camouflaged in his own household; and he made a mental note to have an interview with Jules. As for Mrs. Sturdvant, well——

With a grim smile, he addressed the witness.

"Capelli," he began easily, "as I recall the testimony, the day on which you were arrested was quite cool with a rather high wind blowing. Is that correct?"

The Chigger nodded assent.

"Then, under those circumstances, do you wish the jury to understand that you were able to ignite the fire, which you say you made, directly from your cigar?"

"I wasn't asked dat question before, judge. De trut' is, I lit a bit of paper from de cigar, and de litter from de paper."

"I see. A newspaper, I presume?"

"No; from a sheet of my little book."

The court evinced deep interest. Moving his head up and down slightly as if understanding the plausibility of the last statement, he asked:

"Was the paper you speak off rolled or unrolled at the time?"

"Rolled." This, hesitatingly.

The court directed the memorandum book be handed to the prisoner.

"Capelli," he urged, "show the jury the precise way the paper was arranged to light the fire."

The Chigger removed a page and turned it uncertainly in his hand. He gazed furiously at the jury and then at his counsel. The latter sprang to his feet objecting to the relevancy of the line of questioning. He was overruled.

As the prisoner still hesitated, his honor added:

"What I am particularly interested in knowing is"—he paused to incline further toward the witness as if the question was of the utmost importance—"whether you rolled the paper the long or the short way?"

Relief shone in Capelli's face. He had feared a trap of some sort. What difference did it make how the paper was arranged? The judge was silly, "playin' to de gallery," that was all. But which was the natural way? Why, the length of the sheet of course. That was the way cigarettes were rolled. So, with a gesture of finality, he quickly convoluted the page in that manner and held it up by one end for the jury's inspection.

Judge Sturdvant smilingly inquired:

"You are quite certain as to the method?"

"Sure; dis is it."

"Capelli, you will show the jury how it is possible to bring a paper into flame from a cigar," he commanded sternly.

There was a buzz in the courtroom and the nervous shuffle of many feet. The prisoner's attorney sprang to his feet objecting volubly. The jurymen craned their necks forward. After the court had ruled, adversely, on the attorney's contentions, Capelli was instructed to proceed with his demonstration.

The Chigger puffed the cigar into a glow. Then, as if anxious to have done with a disagreeable task, he brought the coiled paper into contact with the red ash. With a transient, almost imperceptible, incandescence, the edge smoldered for a moment and grew black.

Frantically, now, realizing the significance of the test, Capelli repeated his effort, thrusting the taper again and again into the glowing mass. His endeavors were useless; the paper would not ignite.

"Possibly you were mistaken in thinking you rolled the sheet," suggested the court. "Try it flattened out."

Catching at the proverbial straw, the Chigger adopted the hint. Again his efforts were abortive. Twisting uneasily on the chair, the paper slipped from his nerveless

fingers to the floor. From afar off came the words:

"That is all; you may step down."

As the Chigger, cursing himself for his stupidity in taking the stand, was groping his way to his seat, the court turned to the jury.

"As you have just seen, gentlemen," he said slowly, "it is impossible to ignite paper from a lighted cigar." Then he added: "The defense will proceed to sum up."

In another hour the jury walked out; and, in what seemed to Capelli to be an incredibly short time, they filed solemnly back again. The pompous court clerk, McGovern, standing in his place, put the ages-old formula:

"What say you, gentlemen of the jury, is the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty," responded the foreman.

Judge Sturdvant stated that the prisoner would be remanded for sentence. The jury was dismissed to join the throng milling around the door. Soon the room was deserted save for the Chigger, the officer guarding him, his attorney and Kid Longer.

A moment's conversation between the attorney and the police officer led them aside to smoke a cigar. Capelli beckoned with his forefinger for Longer to approach.

The latter advanced. In appearance, in manner and in dress he was everything the Chigger was not. A thin fellow, possibly thirty years old, of refined carriage and patrician cast of features, he would pass easily for a professional man. Capelli had heard rumors, coming from nobody knew whence, that he sprang from a good family and was college bred; but these were rumors alone and never verified. True, the Chigger had in mind to do so often, but when the opportunity presented itself he could not. For Longer was that kind of person.

"It's hard lines, Chigger," said his vis-à-vis sympathetically, "but——" He shrugged his shoulders with a world of meaning. Had he been in Capelli's shoes no power on earth would have dragged him on the witness stand; and therein lay the difference in temperament between the two.

The Chigger laughed bitterly.

"It was my own fault, Kid," he vouchsafed, "but, at dat, if his nibs on the bench had kept out of de t'ing, I'd be on my way back to de square by now. But listen!" He bent to the other's ear. "All de time de judge was askin' me dose questions it

was runnin' through me mind dat I'd seen him some place before where, maybe, he hadn't ought to have been; and when he stood up de answer came to me: He's been doin' business wid Benny Fiebold on Sixth Avenue off and on for de last year or so, for I've seen him dere many times meself. What do you know about dat?"

Longer pursed his lips in a silent whistle. He also had had many business transactions with Fiebold, and, consequently, was well aware that the latter's commercial enterprises ran in two somewhat divergent lines. While in his store on the street level Fiebold did a legitimate jewelry business, yet upstairs in his apartment, known to persons of Longer's ilk as "The Cell," Benny examined and purchased, at a price of course, such articles of personal adornment as were presented to him without inquiry as to the identity of the real owner.

With a smile then of perfect understanding, Longer observed lightly:

"You interest me strangely, Chigger. But carry on."

"You will have to do 'dat," returned Capelli dryly, "as me time is not my own. But let me ax you somet'ing, Kid: If you was hidin' out on de bulls, where would be de safest place you could get?"

Longer shook his head in doubt.

"In the attic of a station house; an' so an' likewise, as de lawyers say, de easiest place in de country to pull off a trick ought to be a judge's house. You put de screws on Benny an' find out if his nibs is on de level. If he is, go get what he got from Fiebold, an' if he ain't"—he rolled his tongue unctuously—"it hadn't ought to take long to 'spring' me out of here."

Longer laughed; then he looked thoughtful.

"It sounds well, Chigger," he admitted, "but some difficulties present themselves. In the first place, the only man I've got who can thumb a lock is out of town at present and——"

"You can use one of mine," broke in the Chigger. "Get 'Fingers' Falcony; he can do any box, widout a time combo, in de dark wid one arm tied behind his back. Though," he snapped vindictively, "he ain't been near me since I was pinched."

Longer shifted uneasily on his chair for a moment, eying the other diffidently. Finally, he said slowly:

"That is what brings me here, Chigger.

Falcony reported to your people that, while he was 'taking care' of the housekeeper at Livimore's you made off with the loot without saying a word; in fact, they think you intended to give them the slip entirely. By the way, it was Falcony who turned in the fire alarm, thinking perhaps you were still in the house. That is why no one has been to see you, and they wanted me to tell you that if you expected any help, in case you went up the river, you had better come across with the goods."

"So dat's it? I thought dey didn't come for anoder reason, an' I made up my mind not to tell dem where de stuff was on dat account. But I sees how it is now; dey thought I passed it to some one else. An' it was Fingers who brought de cops on me? Well, I'll 'see' him when I come out an' when I do——" He left the sentence unfinished, but the weal on his face seemed to stand out above the surrounding flesh.

Longer could not conceal the surprise he felt. He had all along been certain that the estimate placed upon Capelli's odd action by his own men was correct; but here was a new angle. Was it possible that the Chigger was on the level after all?

Capelli read what was passing in his companion's mind. With a wry smile of comprehension, he suddenly shot back his coat sleeve to disclose an arm covered with innumerable marks of the hypodermic needle.

"It's a funny t'ing, Kid," he said, "but I never wanted de gang to know about dis. It was de hop dat did for me. When Falcony an' me was inside de house an' the excitement was goin' on I didn't mind, but when I got out wid de stuff I was overdue an' reached for me bulb; but it got lost somewheres in de shuffle. Then de 'trembles' came on me an' I couldn't move a foot farther to save me life. And dat's why I built de fire; dat an' anoder reason."

He raised his hand as Longer was about to speak and continued:

"As long as de gang t'inks what they do about me, I'm off dem for good. Kid, you will find de stuff in de corner of de lot in a piece of upended sewer pipe, just below where de fire was. Get it an' turn it into money at Benny's an', for de love of Heaven, see dat I gets de dope when I needs it. For all de money I could muster is gone now an'"—he shivered visibly—"I've got to have de hop; I tells you, Kid, I've just got to have de hop."

The officer scraped with his chair to indicate he was becoming impatient. Longer, taking the hint, arose and shook hands with the Chigger. With an indefinite promise to do "what he could" for the prisoner, he walked thoughtfully out of the room and down the courthouse steps.

III.

Going directly uptown, Longer left the subway at Forty-second Street and strolled toward Sixth Avenue. Walking north for several blocks he stopped in front of Fiebold's store and glued his face to the window for a moment. Making certain that Benny was within, he passed around to the adjoining street, climbed the stairs to Fiebold's apartment, for one room of which—the Cell—he had a key, and sent a peremptory summons hurtling from the press button behind a coat rack. The jeweler, a diminutive fellow with a bulbous nose, appeared forthwith panting from the swiftness of the ascent.

"Benny," said the Kid pleasantly and glibly, "it's a fine day, and I know you are glad to see me, and you can't do me for anything just now, so we will pass the preliminaries and get down to cases. Tell me, in as few words as possible, all you know about one Judge Sturdvant, and imagine, Benny, a little ictus being thrown on the 'all.'"

"What Judge Sturdvant?" asked Benny in assumed surprise.

"I thought it would be like this," affirmed the Kid, "but the trouble is I'm short on time just now. A word for your information and guidance, Benny! The jury came in on Chigger Capelli a short time ago, and they pasted a big G on him. This Judge Sturdvant was responsible for it all and Capelli, with nothing further to lose, sent me up to tell you that if you didn't tell me all you knew about the judge, he would tell somebody all he knows about you. This last statement is somewhat involved, I know, but I am certain a man of your innate intelligence will catch the drift of it at once. So tee off, Benjamin, and make the first hole in one!"

Fiebold, thus admonished, told what he knew; which was, in substance, that he had sold the judge a great deal of jewelry over a period of years, forming his acquaintance while he was clerking for a large store on Fifth Avenue a long time before.

Did Benny know where the judge was accustomed to keep his hoard? Certainly he did, for he had recently been to the jurist's residence to advise with him concerning the setting of several antique pieces. They were in a vault, fitted with an ordinary combination lock, which opened off the library.

"Very good, Benny," commended Longer. "I wonder now if you couldn't give me a general plan of the library floor?"

Fiebold drew a wallet from his pocket and removed a roughly drawn floor plan.

"It should be something like this," he grinned, extending the paper to the Kid. "I didn't do this myself," he hastened to explain. "It came to me in the way of business."

"Who were you going to turn this over to eventually," inquired the other shrewdly, "and when?"

"I don't know. Maybe to you; perhaps to Capelli if he was around at the time."

"What time, Benny?"

"That depends," returned the jeweler enigmatically. "You see it's this way: His honor, the judge, has been in the habit of calling here mostly by appointment—that is lately—and so I've had time to get ready; and, accordingly, while some of the diamonds he bought were blue-white at the time he bought them, nevertheless they are liable to turn back to their original color, which is yellow, without giving me fair warning.

"When he finds out that has happened will be the time, I imagine. You see I have a friend working there, a fellow named Jules. He has promised to let me know."

Longer nodded understandingly as he asked:

"I wonder if your friend could advise you as to the most favorable opportunity to make a call on the judge—for a consideration, of course?"

"If you knew Jules you wouldn't need to tuck the last part on," returned Benny dryly. "He wouldn't give you the time of day without being paid for it. However, wait a moment and I'll see about the other part."

Fiebold disappeared beyond the darkened recesses of the door by which he had entered. Longer heard him call a telephone number and then the sound of a sliding panel being clamped shut. He reappeared shortly.

"The judge and his chauffeur will be away all day to-morrow," he advised. "Mrs. Sturdvant also goes to a meeting of the

Suffragist Society at two o'clock, and the servants, including Jules, to the movies as soon as she leaves the house. The rear basement door will be locked, but a key will be found under the doormat."

"To-morrow night, then, when you hear the old one-two of the bell be ready to stand by with your little eyeglass. And for Heaven's sake, Benny, if you can possibly bring yourself to do it, try to make me a reasonably reasonable offer offhand. Till then, adios."

Without the formality of shaking hands, Longer turned on his heel and, whistling melodiously, made his way out of the place and thence toward Broadway. Glancing at his watch, he stood on the corner in front of a cigar store, and looked expectantly up and down the street as one who has arranged an appointment. Presently he smiled as a taxi swung around the turn and drew up at the curb. The driver honked his horn, brought his hand to the visor of his cap in an overemphasized military salute, and grinned broadly.

"Yours to command, Kid," he jerked out. "What news do you bring from de regions below?"

"Below what, Terry?" laughed Longer.

"Where no gentleman should be found accordin' to somethin' I read—Twenty-thoid Street."

"As good as need be. Capelli is on his way. His men had him wrong at that, but it's all the better for us; and what they don't know can't hurt them. But listen!" And placing his foot on the running board, Longer talked earnestly for some time. When he had concluded the chauffeur, after a thoughtful pause, remarked:

"That should bring Falcony and de others over, Kid. Where will I find you when I get back?"

"Meet me downstairs under the hall at eight o'clock, and we will go up together. Off with you now!"

As the chauffeur touched his cap again in mock deference, he laughed and pointed down the street. A ruddy-faced, broad-shouldered policeman was approaching idly twirling his stick. Seeing Longer he waved a hand in salutation and made toward him.

"More of the farm in Jersey, I suppose," grunted Terry. "What was you an' Toohey up to de last conference?"

"Eggs."

"Dat's good! An' you wouldn't know

one when you met it unless it was scrambled. It's time for me to go to de gas. So long, Kid."

When the officer was within hailing distance he called out:

"How many this morning, Mr. Longer?"

"Fourteen, Toohey; I brought 'em all in to Fiker-Rageman's soda counter bright and early and they gave me nine cents apiece for them."

The officer shook his head more in sorrow than anger.

"Fourteen eggs from twenty-eight hens at this season of the year—it can't be done," he said argumentatively. "I've got five more than you, and to-day I only got nine eggs. Mr. Longer, it can't be done."

"It can, Toohey, for I'm doing it. You're a good fellow and I don't mind letting you in on the secret. It's grasshoppers—dried grasshoppers. I baled eleven million of 'em like hay last summer and they do the work. Try it next fall."

The officer made a clucking noise half understanding and half chagrin.

"I read about that," he said throatily, "but took no stock in it. Well, well!"

Longer passed him a cigar.

"That is part of the proof," he chuckled, "and I'm going to smoke the other in a short time. They are 'Runefactories Londres' formerly ten but now eleven cents per. Living conditions are becoming terrible. And the balance, a dollar four, I'm going to squander in a square meal across the street. Good-by, Toohey; and, remember, despise not book lar-r-ning in the future!"

The officer grinned and walked on; and when the Kid had dined with discriminating taste and to his complete satisfaction, his gratuity to the waiter was approximately the sum he had mentioned.

IV.

When Longer emerged from the restaurant his watch marked a quarter to eight. Pausing to light a perfecto he walked downtown along Broadway, glancing negligently in the store windows as he passed. At Forty-third Street he stopped to look cautiously about and then, turning abruptly to the right, he quickened his pace toward the river front. A smart push of five minutes brought him to his destination, a dingy, low-ceilinged café, cobwebs festooning the corners of the room, and, over all, dank,

closed-in odors. The chauffeur was waiting his arrival.

Longer nodded familiarly to the shirt-sleeved servitor behind the mahogany, who threw up a hand in greeting, and passed an arm over Terry's shoulders.

"What luck?" he inquired.

For answer his companion drew a paper bag from his pocket and handed it over. Twisting around to hide the package from prying eyes, Longer glanced in. His eyes fell on a miscellaneous assortment of jewels taken from the Livimore house by Capelli. The Chigger was a man of his word after all.

"Nice work, Terry," commended the Kid briefly. "Let's get upstairs now."

Going to the rear room, they passed through a door marked "Private" and mounted several tortuous flights of stairs to the top floor. Here Longer, striking a match, separated a key from his ring and inserted it in a door lock. A moment's manipulation, and the door creaked on rusty hinges to permit them to enter a barnlike hall with shuttered windows, illumined by a solitary flickering gas jet.

Lounging around in two sharply defined groups were perhaps thirty men, a nondescript crowd. Caputs and Montagues, Hatfields and McCoys, the followers of Longer and of Capelli were met in solemn conclave for the first time; and, until Longer's arrival, they had been as oil and water, each faction treating the other with an elaborate, stilted politeness that was painful.

The Kid passed rapidly among them with a word here and a pat on the back there, and mounted a platform which had served at some time as a stand for musicians. Without more ado he came at once to the business at hand. Then he smilingly proceeded in a decisive way to outline the plans which he formed for the "work" at Judge Sturdvant's residence on the morrow, not neglecting to produce Fiebold's floor plan, and saying that he had taken steps to have the place clear of interference.

To-morrow also, he continued, as they were well aware was Handicap day at the track. Those whose names he would presently mention would repair thither severally. They need expect no difficulty in entering as heretofore, as he had made the necessary arrangements at a particular gate. Owing to the increased patronage on account of the Handicap, they should reap a rich harvest.

On the lawn, at the center entrance of the grand stand, would be stationed the "receiver." They were not under any pretext to speak to this man—merely to pass the garnered spoil into the pocket of his coat as surreptitiously as need be—and then proceed again to the work in hand.

There was no objection on the part of his own men; the ex-Capellis, however, went into conference. The proposition was a novel one to them—not according to Hoyle. After considerable argument which waxed warm at times, Falcony arose.

"In the main it's all right with us, Kid," he said hesitatingly, "but some of the fellows is thinking that the stall may have too many trinkets on him for his own good. He might forget to turn them all in. Who was you thinking of telling off for that job?"

Longer's eyes narrowed slightly, but he returned pleasantly:

"I'll leave the selection of this man to you fellows inasmuch as you have trusted me with the sale of your jewels. The principal thing of course is to have some one who does not look the part. Whom would you suggest?"

Falcony hung his head in thought for an appreciable time. Struck with a pregnant idea, he turned to whisper with his friends. Finally he suggested:

"How would Wally Clayborn do? He is a flossy guy when he is dolled up, and could easily pass for a United States senator. He just arrived in town from Chi, and I happen to know he needs work. Then he has been away so long none of our fellows knows him except me—and I've got so much on him he wouldn't dare to run out on us."

"All right, Falcony; Clayborn will do nicely. But it is understood, of course, that you hold yourself responsible for him. He will report here with the stuff at eight o'clock to-morrow night. By the way, how does he happen to be fixed just now?"

"Well, it's like this," laughed Falcony: "When Wally hit Broadway he put all he had left in a swagger overcoat; and so, from his chin to his hair and with his coat on, he can pass the doorman at Rector's, but below that he is very much to the Seventh Avenue hand-me-downs. I told him that if he would take the trouble to have the pockets cut off his coat he could get cloth enough out of them for a new suit, but he only grinned. He's a funny fellow that way."

Longer took a roll of money from his

pocket and, without counting it, tossed it to Falcony.

"Let Clayborn stint himself on nothing," he commanded. "The field glasses may be hired for the occasion of course, but as for the rest, he may consult his own taste. I suggest that he charter a car for the afternoon and stay—let him keep the glasses swung over his shoulders after he takes his place. That sign and the coat you speak of should be sufficient identification for the men. That is settled then?"

Terry, who had been bobbing around in impatience during the conversation, sprang to his feet.

"That may be settled, Kid," he said truculently, "but there is something else that isn't! If Falcony won't trust us to name the receiver, I don't see why we should trust him with the stuff from the job he is going on. What's he going to do with that when he gets it? For all we know he may pull a Capelli on us and make off with it."

This notion seemed to have occurred to others of the Longers also for, from out the dimness, came several: "That's right." Before Longer could interpose Falcony was on his feet again. It seemed that Terry's dictum provoked no resentment on his part, for he said heartily:

"There is something in that, all right. The fact is that I'd kinda like to get down to the track myself to-morrow too. I've got an interest in a book there, and I'd like to be where I can watch it when the Handicap money is coming in. With a fellow I know driving I can easily make it from the judge's house to the track in time for the big race; and the others can come along also. So, while I'm around back of the stand helping to keep an eye on my own money, one of your fellows can take the stuff and dump it in on Clayborn. Then he can deliver the whole thing here in one bunch."

This suggestion found a ready acceptance, and it was so agreed. After a few minutes spent in discussing further details, in which Longer stated that he would remain in the city to be accessible by telephone in the event that there should be any hitch in their plans, the meeting adjourned. One by one the gangsters slunk down the stairs and out into the night to seek their respective lairs. Longer himself was the last man out.

Retracing his steps, the Kid crossed Broadway again and entered the portals of

a sedate, bachelor hotel. Carried by an obsequious elevator boy to the fourth floor, he emerged and sought his own apartments—sacred to himself.

The rich carpet gave forth no sound as he approached the table and switched on the current of his ornate reading lamp. The soft glow diffused itself to reveal on the walls rich tapestries, and on the floor, in front of the fireplace, a magnificent lion skin with paws outstretched and mouth open to accentuate the glare of immense eyes; between the windows a sectional library running to the very ceiling filled with beautifully bound books, and surmounting this, a few trophies showing that the possessor had at some time been something of a sprinter.

Longer removed his shoes and donned slippers. Ensnoring himself in the depths of a leather rocking-chair placed near the light, he heaved a sigh of anticipated pleasure and reached from a form at his elbow a volume of an encyclopedia, India paper and morocco bound, "Hag to Irsh." Then, resting his feet on the andirons, he lit his pipe and lost himself. The marker was on "Hens," and the Kid had read every volume down to there, neither skipping nor glossing over anything.

For, as Falcony had said about Clayborn, the Kid was a funny fellow that way.

V.

Resplendent in his new overcoat, of the new military shade, the judge roamed through the paddocks for a time, stopping to exchange greetings with a friend here and there. Consulting his program, he penciled an entry for the initial contest, and, beckoning to a commissioner, he wagered on his choice.

Eyes sparkling with keen enjoyment, he was occupied in viewing the return of the foam-flecked racers to the officials' stand, the jockeys with uplifted whips, asking permission to dismount, when a hand was laid on his arm. He turned to recognize the smiling visage of McGovern, his court clerk.

"Were you aboard the Stabilizer, judge?" laughed the clerk. "He was a cinch, and they were laying four to one against him around the corner."

The judge shook his head sorrowfully.

"John told me that Clockwork couldn't lose, and he finished absolutely last," he said in disgust.

"Nobody should pay any attention to tips," rejoined McGovern dogmatically. "Why I had Stabilizer for the past week from a friend of mine with stable connections, and the same fellow gave me Grayfinch in the Handicap."

"Huh!" ejaculated his honor, "John likes that horse too. But you are both wrong. There is too much class in the race for him. Now to my mind Spun Gold should win easily. Her grandsire——"

"If you will step out of this mob a minute, judge," declared the clerk firmly, "I'll show you why that nag hasn't a chance in the world."

He passed an arm through the jurist's and led him slowly up the slope of the lawn to be joined by John at the top. They three put their heads together in animated discussion, McGovern producing what he termed documentary evidence to support his contention.

"Now it's this way, and as plain as a pike-staff," he explained. "At Aqueduct Grimshaw, the first time out, took Cosgrove's measure, didn't he? And Cosgrove the following week ran second to Spun Gold, losing by a scant head. Good. But subsequently Grimshaw and Grayfinch hooked up in the Merchants' stake and what happened? Why Grimshaw was beaten four lengths and the Finch had five pounds more up than he is carrying to-day. Now then——"

Finally John, who had ably supported McGovern, brought an end to the conference by saying:

"If we don't move out of here shortly, we'll be too late for anything else but talk. I see the badge holders are on the way to the paddock to see the horses saddled."

Turning abruptly he made off and McGovern with a parting thrust followed. The judge was having a word with a passing commissioner when he was rudely jostled by a furtive-eyed fellow, cap drawn low on his forehead, who, at his honor's expression of annoyance, leered at him a moment as he jerked out:

"I'll say you believes in camel-flaging yourself in good shape, don't you? Every time I gets anywheres near you I almost has to blast."

With this cryptic remark, he winked fleetingly and dodged into the press. The judge, astounded at the fellow's insolence, could only stare after him. He recognized the type, and felt solicitously for his stick pin

and watch; and it was with a feeling of relief he found both in place.

"There must be a board or two off the fence, judge," smiled the commissioner understandingly. Then he added, business-like:

"I have you booked for the usual wager on Spun Gold. That is correct?"

The judge nodded absent-mindedly. His attention was directed to the parade of the Handicap horses to the track. He ascended the grand stand and, standing on a seat, saw Spun Gold break in front, rush with a dazzling burst of speed to the rail, never to be once headed during the course of the race.

In high feather at the outcome, he invited the crestfallen McGovern to ride home with him, whiling the journey with a dissertation on blood lines as applied to horseracing. He set the court clerk down at his apartments and arrived at his own residence to find the place in a turmoil.

Before he could remove his coat Mrs. Sturdvant seized his arm to usher him into the library. She had been crying, and even then was dabbing at her eyes with her handkerchief. Sinking into a chair, she informed him in a breath that the safe had been broken into and robbed; that not a vestige of her own or his hoard of jewels remained.

"Have you sent for the police?" inquired her spouse practically.

She shook her head slowly in negation.

"Why not?"

"Because I thought that perhaps——" She desisted to fasten the sort of look on him which she had affected much of late. Now, however, there was the faint hope aborning that that which she had all along pretended to believe of him as true, might possibly be so. In her wild emotions she had mothered the conviction that the judge, for some reason, had removed the gems; she was, after all, only a weak, conniving woman.

With folded arms her husband sternly returned her gaze.

"I presume, Miriam," he measured off, "that you saw in the newspapers this morning what happened to one Chigger Capelli when he attempted to—er—shall I say, dissimulate? It was," he emphasized, "in the *Times* and the *Herald*, both!"

Wifely pride was contending in Mrs. Sturdvant with pretense. The former triumphed for the nonce.

"Oh, Van!" she exclaimed, getting up to fondle his arm, "that was wonderful of you." Then, perversely enough, she ventured what she had intended to say under other circumstances:

"But that was in an affair of moment; it was only in the little, possibly inconsequential, affairs that I noticed——"

The judge marked the "was" and smiled.

"Like robbing my own safe I suppose," he asserted. "My dear, I—— What on earth is the matter, Miriam?" he inquired hastily as she withdrew her hand from his side with an "ouch!" of pain.

For answer his wife glanced downward again and then stood before him with an outstretched finger leveled like a gun at his chest.

"Van Armatage Sturdvant, what have you in your overcoat pocket?" she asked tensely, triumph in her voice.

In patent surprise the judge hastily thrust a hand into his pocket, and withdrew it as hastily. The color flamed in his face, as his wife, now entirely self-possessed, commanded:

"Pull it all out, Van!"

Weakly, half stubbornly, he complied. At the first cast he brought forth her necklace flanked by several other smaller pieces; at the next, a miscellaneous collection of jewels which at a single glance he knew to be his own. He felt he was undone.

"They must all have been put in my pocket since I came up the steps," he evaded lamely. Then recovering himself in a measure he asked suspiciously: "Is that fellow, Jules, about?"

Mrs. Sturdvant started, but after a moment's thought laughed.

"Nobody except myself has been near you since your arrival," she said grimly, "and, Van, the other pocket has a suspicious bulge also. Suppose you try that side for a change."

Like one hypnotized, obeying the "control," his honor had no thought of refusing. His left hand brought up a fistful of stick pins with a watch or two spilling over the corners; another dip yielded a similar result. Then in close formation, as it were, came a wonderful assortment of exquisite pearls and rubies. To his poignant horror, the judge saw that these fitted beyond

peradventure the description of the gems stolen from the Livimore residence.

A thousand wild surmises as to the manner in which the booty came into his pockets flashed through his mind, but he rejected one after the other as impossible. He could not hurdle the obstacle of the pearls and rubies. So he sat down limply and mopped his face over and over.

Now that Mrs. Sturdvant's first feeling of exultation had passed, she was commencing to be afraid. In stony-eyed silence she contemplated the pathetic figure of the judge, thinking deeply. Finally she said in a troubled way:

"Van, this must always remain a secret between us; and I must say that, for an honest man, appearances are very much against you. I presume there will be no particular difficulty in getting all that into the hands of the police—and surreptitiously?"

"I think I may be trusted to that extent," gasped her husband, "and, Miriam, I—I am grateful to you indeed. I fear my position has become too exacting for me. I was telling John to-day"—he achieved a wan smile—"that I am going to resign—and forthwith, Miriam; forthwith. We shall take a long trip together."

And Mrs. Sturdvant smiled.

At eight o'clock the confederated forces of the Longers and the Capellis were gathered in their rendezvous awaiting the coming of Clayborn with the spoil. A half hour later a knock came on the door and, through the dim light, a figure dragged his way to the center of the room. His head was swathed in bandages, his clothing torn and disheveled, and his person reeked with the odor of iodiform.

"Better late than never, Clayborn," called out Falcony tritely. Then: "What's the matter with you, man? Where is the stuff?"

"Stuff?" echoed Clayborn bitterly. "What stuff? My taxi got smashed up on the way to the track, and I'm just out of the hospital. It's a wonder I wasn't killed outright. A big touring car smashed——"

But no one was listening to him. The next day's papers reported another gang fight on the river front, three blocks distant from where it actually occurred.

The Mines of Rawhide Jones

By E. Albert Apple

Author of "Big Bill—Salmon Trout," Etc.

Relating a queer freak of natural history, which took place at a moment when the fortunes of two men were at stake. One of the oddest events in the Yukon country annals

WHEN "Pop" Kearns first went into the Yukon country, he certainly was seventeen kinds of an ass under one hat. He started his career in the boom mining town of Gopher by announcing modestly but firmly to the clerk of the New York Hotel, that he desired to purchase "a five-cent see-gar." The clerk had known men to ask for a copy of the *London Times* and even for the baseball returns, but Pop's request floored him. He moved a hand dazedly across his eyes, gripped his pulse with a furtive thumb, swallowed hard and whispered hoarsely:

"Come again on that."

"I said, I desire to purchase a five-cent see-gar."

"Friend," declared the clerk mournfully, extending an ink-bespattered paw, "I'm with you. So do I. However, due to yesterday's stock market or the Japanese rice famine of 1892, flour in the Yukon is selling for a hundred and twenty a fifty-pound sack and other prices are in proportion. May I recommend a cob pipe and small bag of alfalfa?—cheap at four dollars complete."

A score of prominent citizens ranging from fame to notoriety were tilted back against the building in split cane-bottomed chairs when Pop stalked to the dirt walk out front. They recognized him at once as a personage, but the old fellow exuded such a soft glow of kindness that no one ventured to banter him. An emphatic silence occurred coincident with his appearance. It evidently was up to Pop to break the conversational ice.

"Gentlemen," he greeted solemnly, "as the great Cardinal Wolsey said when he alighted at Abbotsford, I am come to lay my weary bones among you. My, I'm a heap tired."

"Might I rise to a point of order?" responded "Judge" Parsons who, as recognized highbrow of the community, always

took charge of state occasions. "Yonder you see the harvest fields of the richest farming country in the world. This day have the sons of toil reaped a mighty crop. This day, also, a stranger died of sunstroke in front of the Cripple Creek gaming house. Therefore it is incumbent on me to interrogate you as to your motive in coming among us clad in furs that would roast you in the arctic circle."

Pop Kearns removed his musk-ox coat and viciously spanked the dusty ground with it. He sat down.

"I will put it in a few chosen words," he promised. "Gentlemen, I have been buffaloeed for the first time in my fifty-four years. I though you-all lived in ice houses up in these parts. I'm Kearns—Pop Kearns—from Madison, Indiana. You may have heard of the place. Used to be the pork-packing center of the world. Jenny Lind sang there in a tobacco warehouse years ago. I owned a farm just outside corporation limits, up Auntie Beevilhimer's way, along the County House Road. Well, sir, I've been a bachelor all my life and always wanted to wander, so, when I read in the papers about this gold rush I just naturally sold out bag and baggage and started north with a hundred and eighty-six head of cattle. I had to charter a boat in Seattle and 'fore I get well under way I'm up to my ears in bank obligations down home. I come up the river from the coast on a stern-paddle boat, which was a new one on me, what with their hauling us up over falls with a rope. I arrive an hour ago with a hundred and sixty-three of the original herd; the rest died on my hands between here and the States."

The Judge briskly rubbed gleeful hands.

"Aha!" he muttered with relief. "Aha! we have delectable fresh beef in our midst again. Aha!"

"Not much Aha as far as I'm concerned."

mourned Pop. "I'll explain—in a few chosen words. Feed's cost me thirty cents a pound and one cattle will eat thirty to forty pounds at a feed. I've still got my bull punchers to pay off and the notes at Russ Bowman's bank down home. I hear I'll get fifteen hundred a head for my stock here, but I'll lose money at that. I figure I've got about enough capital left in this world to buy two Yukon see-gars, a plug hat and a last year's almanac. It's a big world, too—bigger'n I thought. Lordy, seemed like we never would get here. Gentlemen, all my life I've worked like the devil beating tan-bark, and I'm right back where I started."

"Chuck the gloom, friend!" advised a gruff prospector. "This ain't no place to be without money, but we all go broke now and then. You'll find your luck assaying twenty thousand to the ton before long, with the leads holding up in depth. Don't take it too hard."

"To put it in a few chosen words," Pop retorted warmly, "I'm that relieved to find I don't have to sleep on a slab of ice up here, that I can easy forget the money end. Gosh, but I did worry about this climate. I have chilblains something awful when winter breaks up. Why, say! this is a heap like Indiana—if it wasn't for those big snow-top mountains yonder. I'd be obliged if one of you gentlemen would grant me the loan of a pair of overalls for the evening. I want to get these here fur pants off. Do any of you play cribbage?"

Judge Parsons again rose to the occasion.

The pegs moved swiftly on the cribbage board. Pop glanced apprehensively at the Judge between plays; he was sure his opponent was purring like a huge tomcat. Pop had found a friend; he stroked his ginger whiskers, patted his bald spot and dealt the cards. The Judge had found not only a kindred soul but a treasure; the gods again were smiling on him—they had sent this second cribbage fiend into the North; he twisted his long pointed white mustache with trembling fingers and tapered his white Tennessee goatee.

An irritating rumble and rattling and pounding of hoofs jerked Pop's attention away from the game.

"What-for kind of team you call that?" he gasped in amazement, turning and looking backward down the street.

The Judge noted that Pop's cards had

fluttered to his feet, and frowned at the sacrilege.

"You are witnessing," he informed, "the arrival of Cock-eyed Darby, the mule skinner. He is handling a string of twenty mules. If you were close, you would observe that Darby can swing his lash and nip any mule he picks out, on the ear—and either ear, at that. The implement they are hauling is an ore wagon."

"What-for kind of a party is this Darby?"

The Judge's eyes narrowed. He put brakes on his voice to indicate caution and judgment after long deliberation.

"Darby is a bad customer," he advised, "an evil man. He's a fuzzick. An analysis of his blood would show ninety-eight per cent alcohol. He is cock-eyed not only in the optics but in the brain, soul and moral stamina. You will understand, once you see him up close. Often, as I have looked at him and reflected on the ramifications of the visible world, I have been inclined to suspect that the Creator has a keen sense of humor. Darby is certainly a caricature. But, for protection, he has been endowed with temperament, features and physique so tough and fierce that nobody dares laugh at him—even behind his back."

"Is he a man with—with a record?" Pop was sitting bolt upright. Desperadoes in Madison existed only in newspaper headlines.

Judge Parsons nodded.

"I've looked him up. He ran amuck with the breeds in the Louis Riel Rebellion back in the eighties. He's as tough as the tendons that run through boarding-house beef. When 'Almighty Voice' broke out of the Regina jail, he was running neck and neck with Cock-eyed Darby for evil reputation. The Royal Mounted think Darby belonged to the Soapy Smith Gang and came past the international flag into the Yukon after Soapy was shot on the wharf at Skagway, but they can't prove it. Bad as he is, he has his good points. I took him prospecting with me once, but had to get rid of him; he insisted on carrying his dynamite in his boots, and it made me nervous when we hit the rock country. He's hammer and tongs at anything he starts and he goes after it as if it was the last act of his career. There's nothing in the world quite like a mule skinner. Nobody else knows how to curse. Nobody else is so passionately fond of caressing a mule or a cayuse with a claw hammer when the

beast is tied up against an ore wagon and doesn't favor being shod."

The mule skinner hitched across the street from the hotel. After temporarily stifling his thirst with nine whiskies, he hustled toward the hotel. Pop noticed that his legs were stubby, that he waddled, though swiftly; also that his body bent forward and his arms hung loosely like an ape's. One side of his face was splashed with a purple berry-stain birthmark.

"Cock Eye's heard about your fur suit," whispered the Judge swiftly. "He's coming over. Cuss right back at him and you'll be all right."

The mule skinner was aggressively talkative.

"I hear," he sneered, "that some hill billy from the States come in to-night and skunk fur was sprouting all over him."

"You'd better look him up and get friendly," suggested Pop calmly. "*You* look like a fur-bearing animal yourself. If you don't know what 'verify' means, I've a pocket dictionary in my vest."

Cock Eye glared. It was one of those rare instances where two men despise each other at first sight.

"Oho! So you're one of the cute little rubes from the country towns, eh? We'll break you a-plenty afore we get through with you. This is a man's country, you hear? No place for corn farmers."

"I'll put it in a few chosen words," was Pop's crisp retort, a dangerous gleam in his slate eyes. "Folks as don't like my style, don't swing on my gate."

Cock Eye's mules had become tangled up. They began squealing. He rushed over to restore order. Then he disappeared into the never-closing Lost Key Saloon, to return no more.

The loungers drifted away. It was an all-night town, but the street crowds thinned out. Pop's watch was broken, but, although he felt very tired and kept yawning, he made no move to go to bed, for there was no sign of approaching twilight. He sat on and on, talking to the Judge. They had wearied of cribbage. Gradually they got talked out and each fell to meditating. The hotel clerk strolled restlessly to the door.

"My!" ejaculated Pop with a show of irritation. "It certainly has been a long day."

The Judge chuckled and the clerk grinned. "Don't it ever get night here?" Pop persisted.

"I'm afraid the Judge is working his usual joke on you," suggested the clerk. "It's three a. m. now. Yes, night'll come—if you sit here another month. The last night we had was four months ago. We only get one day and one night a year up here in the Yukon."

Pop snorted and hustled off to bed. The Judge smiled genially at the far-off foothills of the Canadian Rockies.

Pop certainly was seventeen kinds of an ass under one hat when he first hit the Yukon—but not for long.

Now it came to pass in the course of inhuman events that there was a full-blooded Yukon Indian by the name of Rawhide Jones. The tribe over which Jones presided as chief thrived like rabbit families south of Dalton Cache where they were known as Moosehides, Siwashes, Salishes or Flatheads. They were a filthy, degenerate pack, dirty as a smoked lamp chimney, lazy, suspicious, vengeful, thieving, living on government pension.

But Rawhide Jones was the kaiser of the Far North, even more powerful than the renowned Chiefs Isaac and Joseph just below Dawson. While the Alaska Commercial Company had exclusive fur privileges of all Alaska, the gathering of the fur crop depended largely on the Indians' attitude toward the trappers. Hence the power of Rawhide Jones.

Now, to cinch the good will of the tribes, the fur trust periodically collected fifty to a hundred chiefs and shipped them down the coast for a whirl in San Francisco, all expenses paid. On one of these trips, Rawhide Jones returned with an exceptional high-powered rifle, the gift of a lady admirer residing in the Frisco cribs.

Underestimating the power of this implement, Rawhide had tested it out by firing at a knot hole in a tree trunk. Maybe the tree was hollow; at any rate, the bullet treated it as so much butter, passed through and plugged a deputy of Marshal Bell of Skagway in the leg.

Wherefore, Rawhide Jones headed north and crossed into the territory of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police. He drifted on into the Yukon, following the river.

The orbits of Rawhide Jones and Pop Kearns did not intersect until Pop had been in Gopher two months. Rawhide had been a town pest for some time.

"He has royal blood in his veins," the

Judge told Pop. "He's a chief back in his own country, you know. Let the rest of the boys have their fun with him. You and I, sir, will accept him at his true aristocratic worth. Besides," added the Judge thoughtfully, "we may be able to utilize this Mr. Rawhide, Esquire. He's rich as chocolate cake—got a perfect whale of a mine. His ancestors lived somewhere around these parts before they crossed into the lower Alaska country. Rawhide knows this section thoroughly, every square inch of it."

Pop was living frugally and working extravagantly, but his bank roll was vanishing fast. He picked up the prospecting game rapidly—it seemed to come second nature with him. Within sixty days after his arrival, he could read geological maps and knew rock formations and minerals at first glance—the whole gamut from placer stuff to conglomerate. He made long trips, far up into the foothills, sampling for a pay streak, but the days mounted up and it still was a case of all going out and nothing coming in. All he needed was a run of luck. Rawhide Jones brought the luck.

It was on one of his prospecting trips that Pop encountered Rawhide's ancestors—what was left of them.

"I'll put it in a few choice words," was the way Pop told the story to the Judge. "I'm hitting a trail along the Yukon through the Green Cliff Pass. You know how these Indians build their graves by a river, close up to a bluff as they can get them, with a flag over the grave and a little hut over the flag. Well, sir, as I round a corner in the Pass, I come onto where the waters have worn the banks away and exposed old Indian bones. There they are, sticking out like white sticks—shin bones and ribs, with here and there a skull. It's along about noon, so I camp and start a fire and rustle up some grub. I'm just taking a squint into the can to see how my tea's coming along, when around the corner, from the other direction and toward me, come two strangers. The trail's washed away that close to the cliff, there's no getting across. We all got to go back and make a detour. Well, sir, we say hello and looks like the first snow is close at hand, when one of the strangers sees the Indian bones and whistles. 'Here's some souvenirs,' he says."

The Judge uncrossed his legs and spat in excitement.

"Gad!" he exclaimed. "They must have

been tenderfeet. Why, these Moosehide Indians are as reverential to their ancestors' bones as the Chinese. You touch one of their graves and they'll follow you till they get you. And once they get you, they kill without asking questions. I've known them to track men as far as away down into B. C.—and one man halfway to James Bay. What happened then?"

"It so happened," Pop continued, "that I was leaning on the butt of my new four-fifty-one rifle and the magazine was crammed, so I rose to the occasion and said a few chosen words. 'Gentlemen,' says I, 'those are the bones of grandpas and mammas and uncles of people still living. They may be only Indians, but they're human beings the same as us, and they respect those graves as much as I do the ones in my family lot in the Madison, Indiana, cemetery down home. If either of you so much as touch one of those bones, I'll bury you on top of them.' That was all, Judge. We cussed back and forth a lot, but they went their way and I went mine—and the Injun bones are still there if the river hasn't washed them out."

Judge Parson was behaving peculiarly. He grunted and sighed deliciously, like a glutton sniffing odors of a feast to come.

"The Green Pass!" he gloated. "Why, that's the family cemetery of Chief Rawhide Jones. Pop, I'll lay you two hundred to one that his life is yours from now on. Just wait till I break this news to Rawhide. I'll do the talking. You sit back and look innocent."

Immediately upon hearing the news, Rawhide started for the hills to inspect the family graveyard. He was gone six days. Then he returned, sought out Pop Kearns and said he wanted to see him alone. Pop led the way to his room on the second floor of the hotel.

Rawhide produced a chunk of igneous rock the size of his fist. Pop did not have to look at the ribbons of gold splashed through the quartz, to know that the sample excelled anything so far discovered in the Gopher district. The slimy-green hue of the rock was evidence enough.

"You protect bones, my father, his father," droned Rawhide unemotionally. "This piece rock, it first from Meestair Pop Kearns Mine. I show you where. You stake. How you like?"

Pop recalled afterward that at this stage

of the game there occurred a bang in the next room, on the other side of the partition of one-inch unmatched boards, much as if some one tilted back in a chair had brought the front legs down in a hurry. Pop paid no attention at the time, did not even give the happening a passing thought; he was too excited over Rawhide's disclosure.

"Shades of Jenny Lind!" he muttered, half breathless. "Why, that stuff will assay *thousands* to the ton."

Rawhide nodded. He motioned for Pop to come to the window, and pointed out into the night—and still it was not night, only a dusk, the faint twilight that begins after the close of the Yukon day that lasts five months.

"You follow river one day—two day," he chanted. "Then you come foothill. You pass one foothill—two—t'ree. You climb fourt' hill. You look for Five Fingers—five big cliff. Middle cliff, you climb. That where I got him, this ore. You find mine—big gold mine."

Dazed, happy, Pop turned from the window. He dropped onto a chair with a flop, stared at the ore sample, turning it over and over.

"Thanks, chief!" he said simply, his voice husky. "I'll do something for you whenever I can. I'm not as young as I used to be. I'm all tired out—was on the verge of quitting and going home."

He raised beaming, watery eyes—but the eyes riveted on the opposite wall and a frown swept into his face. He was staring at a two-inch knot hole. The knot had been knocked out. An eye was squeezed up close to the opening. It vanished instantly, but Pop was sure it was a cock-eye.

"Come!" he directed shortly, and led the way downstairs. "Who has the room next to mine?" he demanded of the clerk. "The room to the right as you enter."

"Cock-eyed Darby, the mule skinner!"

"I thought so. Rawhide, I've got to start right now, without wasting a minute."

Before paying the ten dollars for recording a claim in the Yukon, it first was necessary to stake the claim. After staking, thirty days were allowed to record. This must be followed by thirty days' continuous work on the claim and then a recording of the work—all precedent to undisputed ownership.

First of all, Pop Kearns must stake Rawhide's find—and from the instant he saw

the eye at the knot hole he knew he was in for a race with the mule skinner. Pop sought out the Judge and laid his cards on the table, face up.

"So I think I'll start to-night," he concluded.

"Good idea!" approved the Judge. "Wait here for me. Be back in five minutes."

He returned leading a small Indian pony so inbred that it had diminished the stature.

"Better take this cayuse of mine," he advised. "A mule's the best packer in the world, but you can't get him over water and you don't know what you'll run into up there. Besides, it'll cost you ten a day to rent a mule and I can loan you this beast as long as you need him. Got all your tools together for channel sampling? Let's see—gouges, hammers and a sample sack. Good! How about supplies? All set? Got plenty of tea? Better have Rawhide load your packs. He's the only man in camp can throw the diamond hitch."

Pop left by a side street to avoid attention. Just outside town, he encountered the mule skinner, striding along beside a mule bearing two perfectly balanced packs. He was swinging his long lash, snapping at the bush growth ahead on the trail—very drunk and boisterous and ugly.

"Oho!" he roared. "So it's the farmer with the ginger whiskers. I said I'd break you—and this trip I'm going to do it. The Five Fingers was what Rawhide said, wasn't it? Better turn back, farmer. I might throw you into the river farther up."

Pop set his teeth grimly, spat the cayuse on the flank and took the lead. They approached the Jack-pine Crossing, where the Yukon River is less than a mile wide. At this point there was a scow ferry run by an old Scotchman named McNutt. The ferry was of the type carried across stream on a slant by the current and guided by an aerial wire. It was hawsered to a tree and the boss evidently was in bed, for his cabin was dark and silent. Pop and his cayuse plodded ahead.

"Hey, farmer!" called the mule skinner presently, as if seized with sudden inspiration. "I'm going back for some drinks and make a night of it in camp. Better come along, No? Awright, catch up with yuh t'-morrow."

Pop never even looked around. But after a few minutes the thud of the mules' hoofs seemed retreating. Pop turned. He stared

in amazement. The mule skinner actually *was* returning to Gopher. Pop couldn't figure it out.

"Funniest thing I ever see!" he declared to the cayuse, shaking his head. "Wonder what he's up to? There's something back of it. He's got some deviltry in mind—sure."

They moved on along the trail through the semitwilight. The river swept past at the left with almost uncanny silence. The stillness was everywhere—absolute, utter. The air hung like a curtain—silent, motionless. It was a dream world of the dead. Pop could have carried a lighted candle without shielding it. The only sounds in the desolation were sudden epidemics of whistling from the ground hogs among the rocks.

He made camp after they had been out four hours, rolled into his blankets and slipped instantly into unconsciousness with a thankful sigh of exhaustion.

Next day they went ahead—and no sign of the mule skinner, though Pop periodically and anxiously turned and swept the trail with his field glasses.

The going was rough. Frequently they encountered thickets of low black alders growing in muskeg. These alders were so close together that even a rabbit would have trouble slipping between them. This necessitated detours—sometimes only thirty feet, again more than a mile; then back to the river to follow the bank. The muskeg was frozen as hard as quartz. On, on, the hills grew larger, nearer, the skeletons of wild cranberry bushes more plentiful.

And then Pop and his cayuse entered the hills.

Still no sign of the mule skinner. Pop wished he could bring the town within range of his powerful field glasses. He would have to wait till he got on higher ground—when he had skirted the first three foothills and was climbing the fourth.

The fourth hill proved to be a freak. It towered among hundreds of surrounding hills like a geographical giant. They started the long climb. And now Pop began to notice things. He had already observed that the farther north one goes the faster the vegetation grows. This tendency of plant life to fight increasingly harder to express itself as the impediments are increased, was manifest on the mountain. The farther up he went, the shorter the tree trunks, for

energy must be conserved for leaves and seed. If he had been there in the summer he would have noticed the same about the grass and flowers—the stems grew shorter and shorter and the colors more vivid, distinct and beautiful. At timber line, which in the Yukon lies at ten thousand feet, the trees gradually become dwarfs—merge into bushes; the grass and flowers blend into a green-black moss that fades out into white moss, the food of the mountain sheep.

The mountain that Pop was toiling up by no means towered to the timber line. The atmosphere was in excellent condition—clear as a bell, no humidity. Still a great distance from the summit, Pop turned, clapped his field glasses to his eyes and—

"Shades of Jenny Lind!" he gasped.

He turned swiftly and stared up at the rocky expanse that stretched barrenly onward, heaps of rock where no plant life could take root. Then he swung his glasses and swept the low hill far below and on the other side of the miles-wide river. He cursed. Tears came to his eyes. He panted. In the rarified atmosphere, his heart danced and his nostrils felt about to bleed.

He swung the glasses again and picked up the town. For an instant his agony was forgotten. There it was—Gopher—a blotch on the narrow valley in the far distance. But something had taken place. Great expanses of mouse gray surrounded the town for miles out in every direction, even up into the hills. It might be the shadows of the semitwilight, but somehow the gray mass seemed to move like so many millions of worms. The trail had been along the river bank and the Yukon winds like a corkscrew; so, although Pop had traveled forty miles, Gopher was only half that distance away in a straight line.

"No wonder the mule skinner turned back and let me go on alone after I passed the ferry!" Pop groaned. "I've come forty miles and I'm on the wrong side of the river. There's the Five Fingers bluffs on the other side. And look at the rapids between! I'd have to go all the way back to the ferry crossing and come forty miles again on the other side. Cock-eyed Darby has beaten me to it!"

Far up in the Northwest Territories, westward of Hudson Bay, where the snowbirds circle and scream the death song of the everlasting snows, roamed a great herd of cari-

bou, all females. Hundreds of miles farther west, swarmed a mighty multitude of males. Now, it is a law of nature that the female and male herds seek each other once a year, to mate over a period of three weeks, after which they separate until the next yarding season.

Late in the autumn, at the approach of the first snow in the Yukon, the males in a certain herd up close to where the glaciers occasionally shove mountains before them and move the Alaskan border a matter of ten miles, sniffed the air and looked inquiringly to the east; and in the east a herd of females sniffed and gazed to the west. Far separated, the biological wireless connected them. Both herds restlessly pawed the ground—then, as a unit, wheeled and galloped off, straight as the compass, in the direction of the opposite sex.

They met at the boom mining town of Gopher.

When Cock-eyed Darby, the mule skinner, saw Pop Kearns pass the ferry crossing and start up the wrong side of the Yukon River, he figured that the best card to play was to drop out with a boast that he would overtake the old man on the morrow. He could have a fling in town and get to the mines first on a slow walk. No rush. He returned to Gopher, unpacked the mule, bedded it for the night in a corral, and sought the Lost Key Saloon, where he became gloriously and record-breakingly drunk. At three bells in the morning he was carried upstairs to a storeroom, deposited on the floor close to the log wall and left to sleep it off.

Two hours later there rose simultaneously from the east and west a faint murmur which swiftly developed into a thunder whose reverberations shook the earth. Like the two clouds of a cyclone, the male and female caribou herds came together and stopped. Swiftly they commingled, rubbing noses, pawing.

The mule skinner slept through it all. He awoke to the consciousness that something unusual had taken place. The streets rang with oaths, shouts, strange noises and much excited running about. Rifles barked by the scores, and repeatedly. Darby rushed downstairs.

"Moosehides shooting us up?" he called out excitedly.

"Worse'n that," growled the proprietor. "Go take a look. Male an' female herds of

caribou've met here to yard. They're swarming around town by the millions. You can't get out without flying. Worst of it is, they'll stick around about three weeks."

The mule skinner hurried outside. The building was on a corner. He looked all four ways, out beyond city limits. A gigantic mass of mouse-gray animals locked the town in, more effectively than a flood. He had seen similar herds before—there were thousands upon tens of thousands of them. They extended far into the distance and up onto the low hills, where he knew they were browsing on the bitter white moss. Scores of them, with the fierce and defiant fearlessness of wild animals in the mating season, boldly stalked the streets of the town. Hundreds had been shot; their shaggy bodies lay in heaps. The men of Gopher soon wearied of the kill. It was like attacking a swarm of Kansas locusts with a fly swatter. They grouped on corners and cursed the caribou, the town, the North and all that went with it.

"This ties us up for three weeks or a month, till they move on," the Judge commented philosophically, "and no one in town will be able to get out on a prospecting trip. It's an ill wind, though, that blows nobody good—and this time the nobody is an Indiana farmer. Eh, Darby?"

The mule skinner is the mightiest curser of any clime. Darby took a deep breath and started in. A crowd gathered to listen. He cursed for twenty minutes solid, then stopped for breath and more liquor.

Forty miles up the wrong side of the river, Pop Kearns sat with his spyglasses. His fit of depression had not lasted long. He was always getting in wrong; the experiences of the years that had daubed his hair with white had given him that something that makes men come up from defeat like the bounce of a rubber ball. Then, too, the gray mass that swarmed around Gopher puzzled him and awakened a keen curiosity. He was sure it could not be shadows or even the effect of dim light. He invented every possible solution, racking his brain, but nothing fitted. For the life of him, he could not figure out what the gray constituted. He had not been long enough in the Far North to know the ways of the caribou.

"To put it in a few chosen words," he addressed his cayuse, "I think we'll mosey down and look things over. Might as well take in the show, old girl."

While still miles from town, his field glasses told the story. He paused at the ferry crossing, at the outskirts of the yarding herds, and took a long Indiana farmer gape.

"If I didn't see 'em," he declared to the cayuse, "I'd take oath there weren't that many deer in the world. I wonder if the mule skinner—— Say, old girl! if these gray devils came in around here the night we left, the mule skinner's still in town. He can't get out any more'n we can get in. There's a chance and we'll take it."

He roused the ferryman, who explained the situation, damned it from every possible angle, and finally took Pop and the cayuse to the far shore. The water, born of the snows, was chatteringly cold. The air, too, was raw and biting. The first of the Yukon's thirty inches of snowfall was close at hand.

Again they started toward the mountains. This time, Pop knew he was on the right trail. He wondered if he would find the mule skinner at the ore vein revealed by Rawhide Jones.

They made good time. A wind had come up, so when they camped that night Pop built a *wickasee* shelter of birches. Next morning they plodded on. The bitter cold of the Yukon winter descended on them like an unexpected, restraining hand. It came with startling rapidity. Pop was glad he had brought a fur sleeping cap.

And then his bad luck again took charge of his destiny. They had reached the second hill and were picking their way carefully along a narrow ledge when a black bear appeared like a phantom from around a bend. The cayuse squealed, plunged, bolted—and went over the cliff. It dropped a full forty feet. Pop made his way down. The beast was horribly mangled. He shot it; removed the packs.

From then on he was compelled to lug a load of one hundred and sixty pounds on his back. This slowed his speed. He was no longer a young buck and the great weight seemed a ton. Teeth set, eyes determined, he plugged on. Snow fluttered down gently, mockingly, through the uncanny stillness, the great blanket that eventually smothers all life. Still he plugged on. He would, at least, find out whether the mule skinner had by any possibility gotten out through the flood of mating caribou.

And at last, the late afternoon of the third day on the west side of the river, numbed with cold, his back and leg muscles aching and the tendons knotting, he stood at the top of the middle of the Five Fingers bluffs and unshouldered his pack.

"No mule skinner!" he whispered, half unbelieving and forgot his weariness. A hot wave of jubilation, the flush of triumph in a hard fight, gushed through every blood vessel. "No mule skinner!"—this time he shouted it and the words echoed back from the cañons.

Swiftly he set to work. A branch from a jack pine served as a broom to brush away the half inch of snow.

"Gold ore!" he gloated savagely. "A vein nine feet wide and right on the surface!"

Then, with his hammer and gouges, he worked swiftly at the channel sampling. Every few feet, for a distance of sixty yards, he chiseled out pieces of ore the size of a large finger. Finally he was satisfied.

"It's a whale of a mine!" he declared in awe, talking out loud to himself. "Why, you can pick the visible gold out with a knife point. And the quartz is green—that's proof positive that the ore's here in quantities."

He stuffed the pieces of rock into his sample sack. A little farther down he had passed a trail cabin. He decided to camp there for the night. Now, miners always respect a trail cabin. It is never locked, the only home in the world where the latch-key is constantly out for every comer. When a wandering prospector uses one of these shacks, he will—if he be a regular fellow—wash the dishes before leaving, clean up generally and make kindling and firewood for the next fellow, who may arrive at a time and in a condition such that he would freeze to death if he had to stop and rustle up fuel.

The miner who had preceded Pop Kearns had been one of the regular fellows. A fire was all ready to start in the stove. The door had been closed tightly with a soft wooden peg, to keep out thieving gophers and ermines—which will carry off and scatter household utensils, including stove lids, each according to his own strength. High up on a shelf, Pop groped onto a bag of soy beans, half of a small sack of flour and some canned goods. Evidently his predecessor had gone farther on into the hills and had

found his packs too heavy as the climbing became more difficult.

Pop found everything he needed—dishes, skillets and pans. He got out bacon from his own pack and soon had supper under way. The best find was a half dozen black Chinese eggs, packed in straw the shape of a club, the straw drawn tightly with twine between each egg.

Exhausted as he was, he found it difficult to fall asleep that night. The bed was a wonder, too—he had dragged in evergreen boughs for a mattress.

"I'm at the end of my work trail," he told himself happily. "A little development here, then inside three months I can sell out and go back to Madison, Indiana, and be a small-town Rockefeller. I think I'll buy the old Hastings homestead. By gosh! I'll build the town a new library, too, and help put up a new Methodist church. No, I'll pay for the entire works myself. Gosh! won't they say a few chosen words, though, when I troop back into the home town!"

He collapsed into delicious slumber. In the morning he ate a profligate breakfast. He wondered how he would be able to get through the caribou herd and into Gopher, but after a few minutes' puzzling he realized it would be impossible. Probably have to stay with the ferryman till the mating was finished. He shook the problem out of his mind. He was wild to get into town and spread the news. And if he couldn't get in, he wanted to get as near as possible; that would help. On second thought, he would have to keep his mouth shut until he got the claim recorded. Still, he could show the samples and no one need know where he had gotten them. Wouldn't Judge Parsons rise to the occasion with a few chosen words!

He washed the dishes, cleaned the cabin, ladled the ashes out of the stove, made a fire ready to start for the next man, went out with the hand ax and brought in plenty of firewood. Then he left all the provisions he could spare, to make up for what he had used, closed the door, drove the wooden peg into the stable snap lock with a rock and set out for Gopher.

Less than forty feet from the cabin, he slipped up on the surface ice. As he fell, his left leg struck a boulder, something snapped and the leg went numb, dead. Sitting, Pop reached down and felt.

"Just below the knee!" he muttered.

"And I believe it's broken. Feels like it. Maybe the leather top-boot saved it."

He unlaced the boot and pulled it off, growing faint with pain as the movement wrenched the leg. It was broken, all right. One bone had a jagged point sticking clear through the skin. Pop was in a whale of a mess.

Now, back home in Madison, Indiana, Pop had often watched Doc Hines set various fractures, so he knew how to go about his own first aid. He returned to the cabin, hopping on the right foot and steadying his balance with his rifle for a cane. He started the fire up, melted a pan of snow to a boiling point and swathed the break with steaming applications. Then he whittled out some splints, tore his extra shirt into bandages and set the leg.

The light of joy had died into wet, dead ashes in his slate-colored eyes. Pop had been in tight corners before, but never anything like this. It might be weeks before the caribou herds lumbered away and permitted the Judge or Rawhide to come up and look for him. He had no idea how long the confounded beasts would stay, except that the ferryman had prophesied "three weeks' up'ard." Chance of a stray prospector happening along was about one in two thousand. Winter was at hand and he knew, from what he had been told, that its worst would be on him with a rush. There would not be much snow, but any day might see forty-five below zero.

He had food enough to last about a week. And it would be months before a man of his age could walk on that leg. He could not return to Gopher even if he made a crutch—couldn't stand the slow trip, would freeze to death on the way; this was the only trail cabin on the entire forty miles that lay between him and the ferry crossing.

First of all, he must have food. Mines be damned now! By noon he had whittled out a sort of crutch, clumsy, awkward, painful, but it permitted him to get about, though he knew he rightly should be in bed if the leg were to heal without crippling him for life.

Tea was most important of all—a man can stand almost any sort of privation in the Far North if he has hot tea for a bracer. Pop hadn't brought much with him. Ah! Hudson Bay tea—the low bushes were at every turn in the hills. Sure enough, some one had picked a lot of the leaves and left them in a bag, hanging in a corner of the

cabin. He sampled it at once, to allay his apprehensions, and found it almost as good as the imported.

If he could just continue to move around a little, there was no chance of him starving or freezing. Right now, before the leg began to swell and ache as the bones knitted, he would hobble outside and see what was doing in the game line. He carried a crude chair made from branches, outside, and sat down.

Ptarmigans by the millions swarm in the Yukon. A flock chanced by. Their feathers were changing to pure white from the ordinary mottled partridge coat of the summer season. He shot fourteen, took them inside and suspended them from the roof; after five days they would have a ripe game taste. One of them had a black spot on the back of its head, indicating that it was a cock.

If he only were up higher—he could get all the mountain sheep he wanted, and tons of the white moss on which they lived. This moss, he had been told, when rubbed between the palms, yielded a flour that could be turned into a phenomenally nourishing though bitter biscuit.

Outside again. The trees were full of squirrels. He would get only a few of them, for he must be spary of his ammunition. He found one in a tree, pounded on the trunk with a stick to make the squirrel think the tree was being chopped down; it jumped for its life. Pop fired. The bullet tore the rodent to shreds. That was his last try for a squirrel.

Remembering some of the woodcraft he had heard around Gopher, he drove a stake into the ground and affixed a white handkerchief for a flag. Animals, seeing the flag fluttering, would come for miles to satisfy their curiosity. In the days that followed, the flag brought Pop a moose and a blue fox. The moose solved his food problem and the blue-fox pelt would be a great present to take home to Madison.

The flour gave out quickly. He was living on a diet of meat. It grew sickening. Then, too, if he kept exclusively to meat he would get the mange. He recalled the Judge telling of an old Indian trick. He crutch-hobbled out to a jack pine, opened his clasp knife and pared off a piece of cone-shaped bark about eight inches wide and two feet long. The inside bark, according to the Judge, could be scraped off and would yield

enough nourishment to keep a man alive. Not so this time. He reasoned it out. The inner bark was food only in the spring when the sap was rising. So, following the custom of Indians, who never kill a tree, Pop replaced the bark, tied it on tightly with cords and pieces of vine and returned to his moose meat, mange or no mange.

Three weeks of lonesomeness, apprehension and genuine hell passed slowly. Then, one morning when he went to the door and turned his field glasses on Gopher, he saw that the huge gray masses of caribou had broken into two herds and were retreating swiftly from the town in opposite directions. Again would the females go their way alone and the males theirs—until next winter.

Three days later, Pop was awakened early in the morning by the door being slammed open with sudden and violent force.

Cock-eyed Darby, the mule skinner, stood on the threshold.

"Huh-hah!" was Darby's greeting leer as Pop threw his blankets aside, jerked off his fur sleeping cap and sat up shivering on the edge of the bunk. "So that's it! Broken a leg, eh? Wondered why you hadn't showed up. I was hoping you'd tried to get through the caribou herd and been tromped to death. Looky!" He dumped a sack of ore samples on the floor. "How you like these—from the mule skinner mines?"

"Whereupon, without further I, Yes, No, or Howdy-do, Darby gathered his chunks of ore, tossed them into his sample sack, strode out, kicked the door shut and started unconcernedly down the trail.

The little starch that was left in Pop Kearns vanished. He crawled painfully back under the blankets and groaned his despair in every key.

"I quit!" he declared simply. "Oh, well, a man can only die once."

Pop closed his eyes and began tracing his whole life over again. Events passed before him like a parade. He remembered his first reading of "Treasure Island"—and wondered which was the stronger, his boyhood yearning for a treasure hunt or the rainbow chasing after gold that had led him to this trail cabin in the Yukon. He went farther back, began where memory started and took the years one by one. He had gotten to the age of ten when he heard a far-off shot.

Instantly he was up and dressing. If he couldn't have the mine, he could at least

have life. Frantically, he fumbled with his clothes, fearful that the newcomer would be out of sight before he got to the door.

Panting, he grabbed his crutch and hobbled to the trail. The snow was only a few inches deep and no longer falling. Coming toward him, up the hill, was Rawhide Jones, trotting along beside a sledge drawn by four dogs—huge huskies. Rawhide was as stolid, plaster-faced and untalkative as ever. He bundled Pop carefully onto the sledge.

"Mush!" he shouted, and added a few oozy words of Indian.

"Think we can beat the mule skinner to the claim office?" Pop asked excitedly.

Rawhide Jones did not answer for some

moments. His silence was significant, utterly unlike the silence of a man making calculations.

"Mule skinner," he finally informed, thoughtfully, "fall into river. Drown."

"What was that shot—you?"

Rawhide nodded.

"I shoot at blue fox."

"Did you miss?"

The Indian grunted.

"Rawhide never miss."

Pop Kearns felt all around him in the sledge. There was no sign of a blue-fox pelt.

He fell as silent as the Indian. Pop knew *who* the blue fox was.



STRONG FOR HOME PRODUCTS

THE chief of police of a large Western town found himself confronted recently with the difficult job of solving a murder mystery which, apparently, refused to be solved. The chief looked for clues with tireless industry and ran them down with uniformly poor results.

He had not had the benefits of the "higher education" nor had his reading embraced stories recounting the fine work of the detective heroes of fiction. Consequently, while he was long on going after simple and obvious clues, he was short on deduction, induction and logic.

"I'll tell you, chief," one of his friends finally said; "the best chance you have to establish the guilt of the criminal is to make the suspect who is in jail now talk freely. You ought to put him through swift, tricky cross-examinations, a sort of third degree of the mind."

"Oh, I can't do that sort of stuff," objected the chief.

"Well, then, why don't you get one of these psychiatrists to do it?"

"See here!" said the chief hotly. "This is no time for police officials to be hobnobbing with foreigners."

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A Story That Every Good American Ought to Read

A Chat With You

DID you ever wonder when you picked up a book on law, science, or any subject where great exactitude of expression is desired, why the author insisted on using such long words? We have, and it took us years of wondering before we discovered that there was a perfectly sound reason for it, hidden away as are many of the reasons for the phenomena of life.

The shorter a word is the more frequently it is used. An examination of the pages of the *POPULAR* or a study of the daily speech of your friends will prove this in no time. It's easier to say or write the shorter word and so we use it oftener. The more frequently a word is used the more meanings it acquires in the course of time. We overwork it just as we overwork a screw driver, a wrench, or some other handy tool we put to uses for which it was never intended.



A WORD like "æstivation" which, we are glad to say, is very seldom used, has only one meaning. A word like "love," or "life," which is short and handy, may have half a dozen. You love winter sports. You love your sweetheart. You love your mother. And each time the word has an entirely different meaning. A person is full of life. A man leads a religious life. The life is gone from ginger ale when it goes flat. We wonder if there is any life on Mars. We wonder at the night life of Broadway. A handy, useful little word that we can use in a variety of ways. Words are born with only one meaning, but if they don't wear out and come to have no meaning at all, they acquire a lot of new meanings as they grow older.

ONE might think from this, then, that it would be better in writing stories to use the long words which express the meaning so simply that they can mean only one thing. This is not a sound conclusion. The words that are used so seldom are not natural words. They cannot breathe the force, the feeling, the color that the simpler Saxon does. A story is a picture of life, and life cannot be painted through scientific formulas. The short words are like shot silk. They are full of different colors. They suggest so many things by association. Generally speaking they are more musical as well as more forcible. The words are used not only for what they mean but for what they suggest. No matter who the writer is, it is the reader who supplies the half of the story. The words suggest a lot of unspoken things—things difficult or perhaps impossible to put into words. A word like "honor" brings as its aura, all sorts of visions of knighthood and chivalry behind its plain, everyday, literal meaning in the sentence. Besides this the long words are difficult reading—not so much in the matter of understanding them as of pronouncing them. Cadence and music are almost as important in prose as they are in poetry. When you read, you hear the words as well as see them, and the best stories, to our way of thinking, are those which are easily and pleasantly read aloud. Perhaps this is the reason why writers so often instinctively try to have one of their characters relate the tale instead of telling it themselves. The "Arabian Nights," which is perhaps our oldest collection of short stories, is told in this fashion, and so are many of the medieval romances.

We are quite sure that somewhere, in

some library, there is a book in which all this is set forth—much more clearly than we can tell it. For years we have been making discoveries of our own only to find out later that some one else had discovered them long ago and written them all down. It is quite likely, too, that you yourself have thought these things but never put them into words. But, after all, three-quarters of the writing in the world is just expressing for people what they have already thought.



SPEAKING of retold stories, we used to have quite a prejudice against them. So many indifferent writers, especially beginners, have an overpowering temptation to tell their tale through the lips of some illiterate person who speaks an uncouth dialect. As a rule the good stories are told in plain English. Rules, however, are made to be broken now and then. There are two of these retold stories in the next issue of THE POPULAR. They are both excellent examples of the art of telling a good story and they both gain rather than lose, by being told in the first person.



ONE of them is "The Plute and Z-23," by Hugh Kennedy. It is not a dialect yarn, but it is told with a picturesque and humorous exaggeration that is more natural

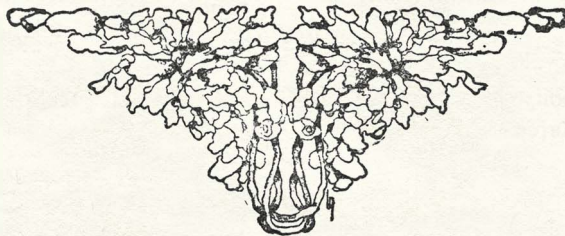
to a man when he talks than when he writes. It is a funny story told by an advertising expert. This man can talk good advertising as well as write it. There are funny stories that make you smile and as the popular song points out there are various sorts of smiles:

There are smiles that make you happy,
There are smiles that make you blue.

This tale, however, stops at nothing so quiet as a smile. It makes you laugh right out loud, which is so excellent a thing to do that they pay Charlie Chaplin untold sums for doing it.



THE other "retold" story is "The Argonauts of the Silver Star." We won't tell you a thing about this. We don't want to spoil in the very least this most original and satisfying saga of the seas. It is a real yarn to be enjoyed on a winter evening, and it won't hurt the tale if you smoke a pipe while you are reading it. The complete novel which opens the next issue of the magazine is by J. Frank Davis. You know already, without our telling you, that it is a good story. It is a novel of one of the big training camps in America to-day. There are a lot of other good things. The serial by Caroline Lockhart gets better as it goes on, and there is an aeroplane story by Gordon McCreagh that will make you want more of his work.



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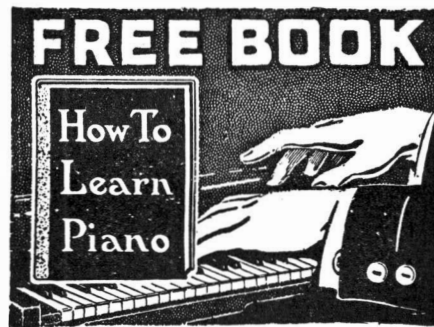
Occasionally I still encounter a man or woman who is hesitant about learning by mail and feels that the methods of fifty years ago are "safer." This feeling is, perhaps, natural enough, but it is due to a misunderstanding as to what are the *real* problems in learning piano. You will learn much more rapidly by my scientific *written* method than by the old-fashioned "spoken" or oral method, which *cannot* be made really *systematic*. My free booklet will fully satisfy your mind in this regard and explain exactly how and why my method produces such truly surprising results.

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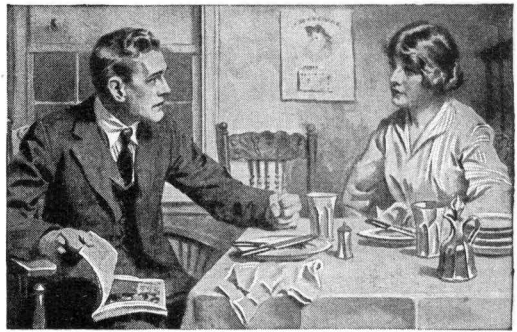


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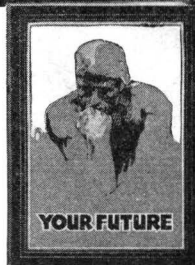
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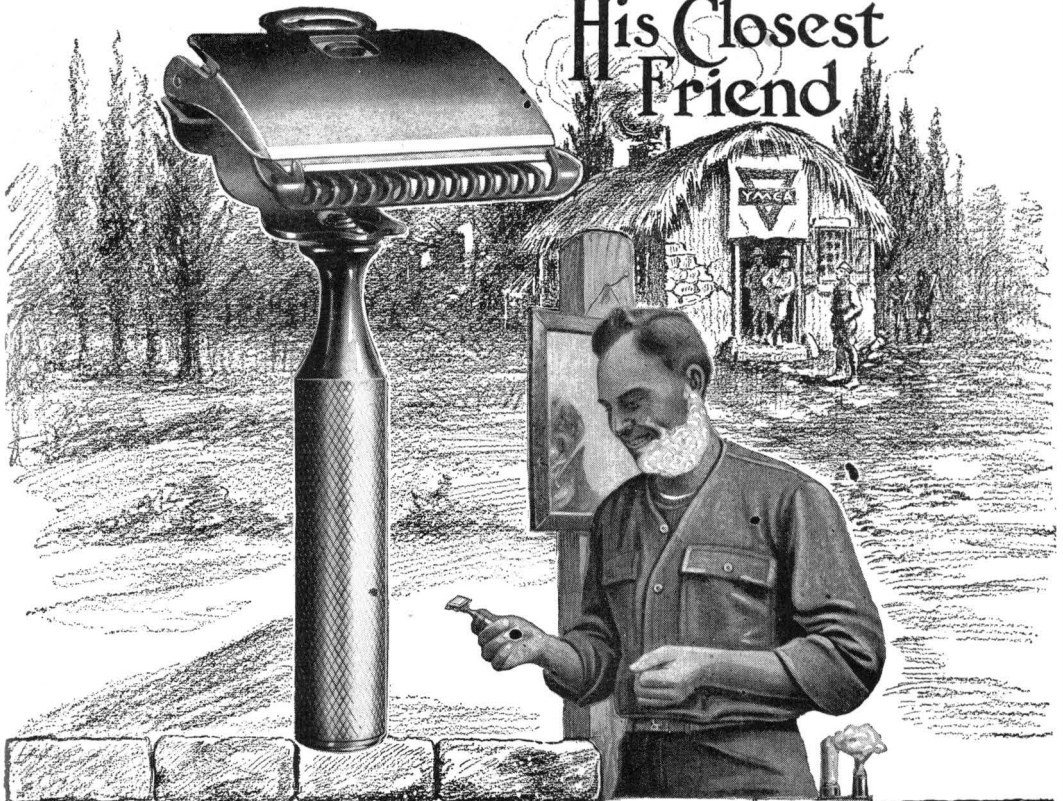


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