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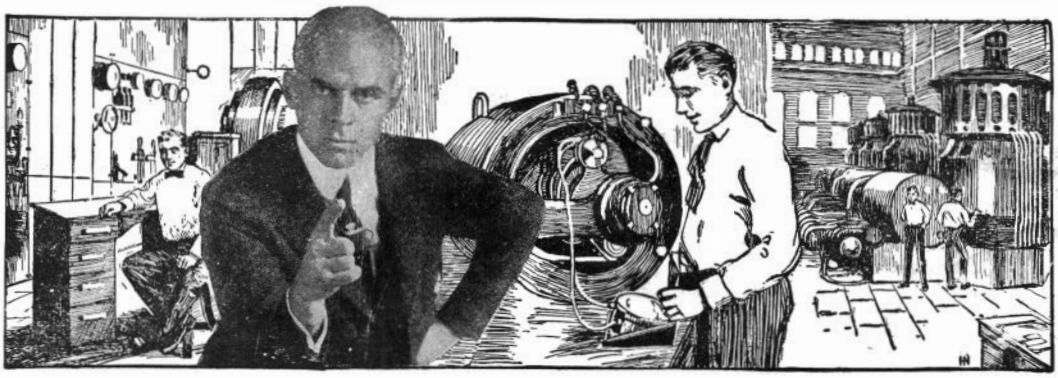
The Popular Magazine

MAY 7 1922



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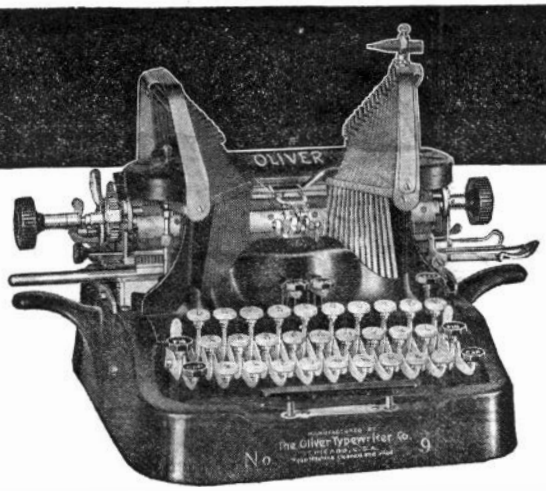

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TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

Vol. LXIV. No. 2 — May 7, 1922

CONTENTS

Twice-a-month publication issued by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. ORMOND G. SMITH, President; GEORGE C. SMITH, Treasurer; GEORGE C. SMITH, JR., Secretary. Entered as Second-class Matter, September 20, 1909, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, $4.72. Foreign, $5.44.

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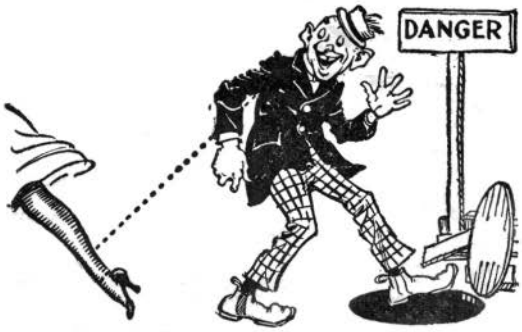

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She was putting on superfluous flesh. But how could she prevent it? It seemed that most men and women, once they became overweight, began naturally to add more and more flesh until they became very stout. Already she had gained flesh until she weighed 168 pounds, 40 pounds more than her normal weight.

Tries in Vain to Reduce Weight

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

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The Red Pirogue

By Theodore Goodridge Roberts

Author of "Musket House," "Standing the Gaff," etc.

Dick Sherwood's besetting sin had clouded his life and at last irrevocable tragedy drew very near. It is good to read of what these sturdy, North-woods folk did about it—Ben O'Dell, Uncle Jim McAllister, plucky Mrs. O'Dell and the others. By no means forgetting Sherwood's little daughter, Marion—little but oh, my! As always, Mr. Roberts has written a clean, virile tale of his own Northland.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

A QUEER FISH.

YOUNG Ben O'Dell emerged from the woodshed into the dew and the dawning day with a paddle in his hand, crossed a strip of orchard, passed through a thicket of alders and choke cherries and between two great willows and descended a steep bank to a beach of sand and pebbles. Thin mist still crawled in wisps on the sliding surface of the river. Eastward, downstream, sky and hills and water were awash and afire with the pink and gold and burnished silver of the new day.

Ben was as agreeably conscious of the scents of the place and hour as of the beloved sights and sounds. He sniffed the faint fragrance of running water, the sweeter breath of clover blooms, the sharper scent of pennyroyal. He could even detect and distinguish the mild, dank odors of dew-wet willow bark, of stranded cedar blocks and of the lush-green stems of black rice and duck grass.

He crossed the beach to the gray sixteen-foot pirogue which was used for knocking about between the point and the island and for tending the salmon net. It wasn't much of a craft—just a stick of pine shaped by ax and draw knife and hollowed by ax and fire—but it saved Uncle Jim McAllister's canvas canoe much wear and tear. It was heavy and "crank," but it was tough.

Ben launched the pirogue with a long, grinding shove, stepped aboard and went sliding out across the current toward the stakes and floats of the net. The upper rim of the sun was above the horizon by now and the shine and golden glory of it dazzled his eyes.

It was now that Ben first noticed the other pirogue. He thought it was a log, but only for a moment. Shading his eyes with his hand he made out the man-cut lines and the paint-red glow. It was a pirogue sure enough and the largest one Ben had ever seen. It was fully twenty-five feet long, deep and bulky in proportion and painted red from end to end. It lay motionless on the upper side of the net, caught lengthwise against the stout stakes.

Ben, still standing, dipped his long paddle a dozen times and in a minute he was near enough to the strange pirogue to look into it. The thing which he saw there caused him to step crookedly and violently backward; and before he realized what he had done the crank little dugout had rolled with a snap and he was under water.

He came to the surface beside his own

craft which had righted but was full of water and no more than just afloat. He swam it into shallow water, pushed it aground, threw his paddle ashore and then turned again to the river and the big red pirogue lying motionless against the net stakes.

"Nothing to be scared of," he said. "Don't know why I jumped like that. Fool trick!"

He kicked off his loose brogans one by one, dipped for them and threw them ashore.

The sun was up now and the light was brighter. The last shred of mist was gone from the river.

"It startled me, that was all," he said. "It would startle any man—Uncle Jim himself, even."

He waded until the swift water was halfway between his belt and his shoulders, then plunged forward and swam out and up toward the red pirogue. He hadn't far to go, but now the current was against him. He made it in a few minutes, however. He gripped a gunnel of the big dugout with both hands and hoisted himself high and looked inboard. At the same moment the occupant of the strange craft sat up and stared at him with round eyes. For a few seconds the two gazed in silence.

"Who are you?" asked the occupant of the red pirogue.

"I'm Ben O'Dell," replied the youth in the water, smiling encouragingly and brushing aside a bang of wet hair. "I live on the point when I'm not away downriver at school. I was surprised when I first saw you—so surprised that I upset and had to swim."

"Is that O'Dell's Point?" asked the other.

"Yes. You can't see the house for those big willows on the bank."

"Are you Mrs. O'Dell's boy?"

"Yes, I'm her son. I'm not so small as I look with just my head out of water. I guess I'd better climb in, if you don't mind, and paddle you ashore."

"You may climb in, if you want to—but I can paddle myself all right."

"Is she steady? Can I put all my weight on one side, or must I get in over the end?"

"She's steady as a scow."

Ben pulled himself up and scrambled in. A paddle lay aft. He took it up and stroked for the shore.

"It was a funny place to find you," he ventured.

"Why funny?" she asked gravely.

"Well—queer. A little girl all alone in a big pirogue and caught against the net stakes."

"I'm eleven years old. I caught the pirogue there on purpose because I thought I was getting near to O'Dell's Point and I was afraid to land in the dark."

"Do you know my mother?"

"No-o—not herself—but I have a letter of intr'duction to her."

They stepped ashore and crossed the beach side by side. Ben felt bewildered, despite his eighteen years of life and six feet of loosely jointed height. This small girl astonished and puzzled him with her gravity that verged on the tragic, her assured and superior manners, her shabby attire and her cool talk of "a letter of intr'duction." He possessed a keen sense of humor but he did not smile. Even the letter of introduction struck him as being pathetic rather than funny. He was touched by pity and curiosity and profoundly bewildered.

They climbed the steep, short bank.

"You *are* big," she remarked gravely as they passed between the old apple trees. "Bigger than lots of grown men. I thought you were just a little boy when I couldn't see anything but your head. You must be quite old."

"I'm eighteen; and I'm going to college this fall—if mother makes me. But I'd sooner stop home and work with Uncle Jim," he replied.

At that moment they cleared the orchard and came upon the ell and woodshed of the wide gray house and Mr. James McAllister in the door of the shed. McAllister backed and vanished in the snap of a finger. "He is shy with strangers, but he's a brave man and a good one," said Ben.

Mrs. O'Dell appeared in the doorway just then.

"Mother, here's a little girl who came from somewhere or other in a big red pirogue," said Ben. "I found her out at the net. She has a letter for you."

Mrs. O'Dell was a tall woman of forty, slender and strong, with the blue eyes and warm brown hair of the McAllisters. She wore a cotton dress of one of the changing shades of blue of her eyes, trim and fresh. The dress was open at the throat and the sleeves were rolled up to the elbows. She stepped forward without a moment's hesitation and laid a strong hand lightly on one of the little girl's thin shoulders. She smiled

and the blue of her eyes darkened and softened.

"A letter for me, dear?" she queried.

"Yes, Mrs. O'Dell—from dad," replied the stranger.

"You are Richard Sherwood's little girl?"

"Yes, I'm Marion."

"And you came alone? Not all the way from French River?"

"Most of the way—alone. I—dad——"

Ben became suddenly aware of the fact that the queer little girl was crying. She was still looking steadily up into his mother's face but tears were brimming her eyes and sparkling on her cheeks and her lips were trembling. He turned away in pained confusion. For several minutes he stared fixedly at the foliage and green apples of the orchard; when he ventured to turn again he found himself alone.

Ben passed through the woodshed into the kitchen. There he found his uncle frying pancakes in a fever of distracted effort, spilling batter, scorching cakes and perspiring.

"Where are they?" he asked.

Uncle Jim motioned toward an inner door with the long knife with which he was working so hard and accomplishing so little. Ben took the knife away from him, cleared the griddle of smoking ruins and scraped it clean.

"You didn't grease it," he said. "I'll handle the pork and do the turning and you handle the batter."

This arrangement worked satisfactorily.

"Where'd you find her, Ben?" whispered McAllister.

"In a big pirogue drifted against the stakes of our net," replied the youth. "She was asleep when I first glimpsed her and I thought it was somebody dead. It gave me a start, I can tell you."

"It sure would. Well, I reckon she's as queer a fish as was ever taken in a salmon net on this river."

"It was a queer place to find her, all right. Who's Richard Sherwood, Uncle Jim? Do you know him? How did mother come to guess who she was?"

"I used to know him. All of us did for a few years, a long time ago. He was quality, the same as your pa—but he wasn't steady like your pa."

"Quality? You mean he was a gentleman?"

"That's what he'd ought to been, anyhow —but I reckon the woods up French River, and one thing and another, were too much for his gentility. Ssh! Here they come!"

Mrs. O'Dell and little Marion Sherwood entered the kitchen hand in hand. The eyes of both wore a suggestion of recent tears and hasty bathing with cold water, but both were smiling, though the little girl's smile was tremulous and uncertain.

"Jim, this is Dick Sherwood's daughter," said the woman. "You and Dick were great friends in the old days, weren't you?"

"We sure was," returned McAllister awkwardly but cordially. "He was as smart a man in the water as ever I saw. Could dive and swim like an otter. And a master hand with a gun! He could shoot birds a-flying easier'n I could hit 'em on the ground. John was a good shot, too, but he wasn't a match for your pa, little girl. I hope he keeps in good health."

"Yes, thank you," whispered Marion.

"Marion's pa has left French River for a little while on business, and Marion will make her home with us until he returns," said Mrs. O'Dell.

There was bacon for breakfast as well as buckwheat pancakes, and there were hot biscuits and strawberry preserves and cream to top off with. The elders did most of the talking. Marion sat beside Jim McAllister, on his left. Jim, having taken his cue from his sister, racked his memory for nice things to say of Richard Sherwood. He sang Sherwood's prowess in field and stream. At last, spooning his preserves with his right hand, he let his left hand rest on his knee beneath the edge of the table.

"And brave!" he said. "You couldn't scare him! I never knew any man so brave as Dick Sherwood except only John O'Dell."

Then a queer change of expression came over his face. Young Ben, who was watching his uncle from the other side of the table, noticed it instantly. The blue eyes widened; the drooping mustache twitched; the lower jaw sagged and a vivid flush ascended throat and chin and cheek beneath the tough tan of wind and sun. Ben wondered.

Breakfast over, the man and youth went outside, for there were potatoes to be hilled and turnips to be thinned.

"What was the matter with you, Uncle Jim?" inquired Ben.

"Me? When?" asked McAllister.

"Just a little while ago. Just after you

said how brave Mr. Sherwood was—from that on. You looked sort of dazed and moonstruck."

"Moonstruck, hey? Well, I'll tell you, Ben, seeing as it's you. That little girl took a-holt of my hand when I said that about her pa. And she kept right on a-holding of it."

"Girls must be queer. I knew something was wrong, you looked so foolish. But if her father was such a fine man as you tried to make out at breakfast, what's the matter with him? You told me that the woods had been too much for his gentility, Uncle Jim."

"Sure it was—the woods or something; but he was smart and brave all the same when I knew him. I wasn't lying; but I'll admit I was telling all the good of him I could think up, so's to hearten the poor little girl. It worked, too."

"Do you know why he left French River? And why did he leave her to come all that way alone?"

"I'll ask Flora, first chance I get. I'm just as curious as yerself, Ben."

They were halfway to the potatoes with their earthy hoes on their shoulders when Ben halted suddenly and faced his uncle with an abashed grin.

"I forgot to tend the net," he said. "It may be full of salmon for all I know—and all the salmon full of eels by this time."

McAllister's long, lean frame jerked with laughter.

"That suits me fine, Ben," he exclaimed as soon as he could speak. "We'll go tend it now. I'd sooner be on the river this fine morning than hilling potatoes, anyhow; and maybe we'll find another grilse from French River."

Uncle Jim was impressed by the red pirogue. He had seen bigger ones but not many of them. In the days of his unsettled and adventurous youth, when he was a "white-water boy," chopping in the woods every winter and "stream-driving" logs every spring, he had once helped to shape and dig out a thirty-five-foot pirogue. But that had been close onto fifty miles farther upriver and back in the days of big pine timber.

"She's a sockdolager, all right," he said "Didn't know there was any such pines left on French River. What's underneath the blankets, aft there?"

Ben stepped into the grounded craft, went aft and lifted the blankets, disclosing a lumpy sack tied at the neck with twine, a battered leather gun case and a bundle wrapped in a rubber ground sheet and securely tied about with rope.

"It's her dunnage!" exclaimed Uncle Jim. "Off you walked and left it laying! You're a fine feller to catch a young lady in a net, you ain't! Where was your wits, Ben?"

"I was upset, that's a sure thing," admitted the youth. "And I'm still a good deal puzzled about these Sherwoods," he added.

In the net they found four salmon, three still sound and one already fallen a prey to devouring eels. Several eels had entered the largest fish by way of the gills and mouth and what had been salmon was now more eel. The silver skin was undamaged and the eels were still inside.

What with Marion Sherwood's baggage, the salmon and the skinful of eels, Ben and his uncle had to make two trips from the river to the house. The eels were thrown to the hogs as they were, alive and in their attractive container. The undamaged fish were cleaned, salted and hung in the smokehouse. During that operation and the journey to the potato field and between brisk bouts of hoe work, James McAllister told his nephew most of what he knew of the Sherwoods of French River.

Mr. Richard Sherwood first appeared at O'Dell's Point twenty-six years ago when James McAllister was only twenty years of age. He was direct from England, by way of the big town sixty miles downriver. He arrived with three loaded canoes and six Maliseet canoemen from the reservation near Kingstown and jumped knee-deep into the water before the canoes could make the shore and set up a shout that started the echoes on the far side of the river.

"Jack O'Dell! Guncotton Jack! Tally-ho! Steady the Buffs!"

The Maliseets wondered; the mowers on island and mainland ceased their labors to give ear; and John O'Dell, in the orchard, hooked his scythe into the crotch of an apple tree and started for the beach at top speed with Jim McAllister close at his heels. O'Dell went down the bank in two jumps. The stranger saw him and splashed ashore. They met halfway between the willows and the water and shook hands two-handed. They were certainly glad to see each other.

That was how Richard Sherwood came to O'Dell's Point. He was a fine-looking young

man, red and brown, with a swagger in his shoulders and a laugh in his dark eyes. But all the world was young then. Even Captain John O'Dell was only twenty-six.

Sherwood had been a lieutenant in O'Dell's company of the second battalion of the Buffs. The two young men had served together in a hill war in India; and Sherwood had been present when O'Dell, refusing to accept another volunteer after three had been shot down, had advanced with a cigarette between his lips and lighted the fuse of the charge of guncotton which the first volunteer had placed under the gate of the fort. He had lighted the fuse with the coal of his cigarette, while the entire garrison shot down at him and his men shot up at the garrison and then had turned and walked downhill to the nearest cover with blood flowing down his neck, the top gone from his helmet, the guard of his sheathed sword smashed on his hip and a slug of lead in the calf of his right leg—still smoking the cigarette.

John O'Dell had resigned his commission soon after the death of his father and returned home to Canada and his widowed mother and the wide gray house at O'Dell's Point. That had been just two years before Richard Sherwood's arrival on the river.

Sherwood lived with the O'Dells until December. He was a live wire. He worked on the farm, swam in the river, shot duck and partridge and snipe, hunted moose and made a number of trips upstream in search of land to buy and settle on. He wanted thousands of acres. He had big but somewhat confused ideas of what he wanted. He liked the life. It was brisk and wild. He confided to young Jim McAllister that he wouldn't object to its being even brisker and wilder than he found it in the vicinity of O'Dell's Point. The O'Dells, he said, were just a trifle too conscious of their duty toward, and superiority to, the lesser people of the river.

Jim McAllister admired Sherwood vastly in those days and was with him on the river and in the woods as often as possible. The McAllisters lived in the next house above the point. The family consisted then of Ian and Jim and Agnes and Flora and their parents and a grandfather.

They were not like the O'Dells exactly, those McAllisters, but they were just as good in their own way. Their habitation was less than the O'Dell house by four bedrooms, a gun room, a library and a drawing-room with two fireplaces; and their farm was of one hundred and sixty acres against the square mile of mainland and forty-acre island of the O'Dells. And yet the two families were loyal friends of long standing. The first McAllister to settle on the river one hundred and ten years ago had been a sergeant in the regiment of which the first O'Dell had been the commanding officer.

Jim McAllister took Mr. Richard Sherwood upriver in December, twenty-six years ago, to introduce him to some of the mysteries of trapping fur. Sherwood was restless and traveled fast. After a time they struck French River at a point about ten miles from its mouth and within a few hundred yards of the log house of Louis Balenger. Balenger had Iroquois blood in his veins and was from the big northern province of Quebec. He had come to French River with his family five or six years before, traveling light and fast. When Jim McAllister saw where he was he urged Sherwood to keep right on, for Balenger had the reputation of being a dangerous man.

But Louis sighted them and hailed them, ran to meet them and had them within the log walls of his house as quick as winking. And there was rum on the table and the fire on the hearth burned cheerily and Mrs. Balenger said that dinner would be ready in half an hour. The dinner was plentiful and well cooked, the eyes of the Balenger girls were big and black and bright and the conversation of Louis was pure entertainment though somewhat mixed in language.

That was the beginning of Richard Sherwood's fall from grace in the eyes of the O'Dells and McAllisters and most other people of unmixed white blood on the big river. Jim McAllister returned to O'Dell's Point alone; and even he had turned his back reluctantly on the exciting hospitality of the big log house. Even as it was, he had remained under that fateful roof long enough to lose the price of a good young horse to his merry host at poker. He made all haste down the white path of French River for ten miles and then down the wider white way of the big river for twenty miles and reported to his friend John O'Dell before showing himself to his own family.

Captain O'Dell gave Jim two hours in which to rest, eat and rub the snowshoe cramps out of his legs with hot bear's grease;

and then the two of them headed for French River, backtracking on Jim's trail which had scarcely had time to cool. They reached Balenger's house next day, before noon. Mrs. Balenger opened the door to them and welcomed them in. Jim McAllister followed John O'Dell reluctantly into the big living room. There sat Sherwood and Balenger at a table beside the wide hearth with cards in their hands, just as Jim had last seen them two days before.

Louis Balenger laid down his cards, sprang to his feet and advanced to meet the visitors. He expressed the honor which he felt at this neighborly attention on the part of the distinguished Captain O'Dell. But Richard Sherwood did not move. John O'Dell was very polite and cold as ice and dry as sand. He bowed gravely to Madame Balenger and her daughters, refused a glass of punch from the hand of Louis on the plea that he was already overheated and requested Dick Sherwood to settle for the play and come along. Sherwood refused to budge. He was angry and sulky.

O'Dell's Point saw nothing more of Richard Sherwood for nine long months. He appeared one August evening in a bark canoe, spent the night with the O'Dells and headed upriver again early next morning, swearing more like a river-bred "white-water boy" than an English gentleman. The captain told Jim McAllister something of what had passed between himself and Sherwood. Sherwood, it seems, had lost all his little property—the price of a good farm, at least—to Louis Balenger, and he had wanted a few hundred dollars to set about winning it all back with.

John had refused to lend him money for poker but had offered him land and stock and a home and help if he would cut his acquaintance with Louis Balenger and the entire Balenger tribe. Sherwood refused to consider any such offer, said that Delphine Balenger was worth more than all the other inhabitants of the country rolled together and that he would not lose sight of her even if he had to work his fingers to the bone in the service of Louis, and went away in a raging temper.

Once a year, for eight years, John O'Dell tried to get Sherwood away from the Balengers and French River but always in vain. Sherwood worked for Louis and according to Louis' own methods; and as he was always the goat he was frequently on the run from the wardens of the game laws.

Down at O'Dell's Point life went on evenly and honestly and yet with a fine dash of romance. Captain John O'Dell wooed and wed Flora McAllister and Jim McAllister was jilted by a girl at Hood's Ferry and several elderly people died peacefully. Up on French River, Delphine Balenger ran away with a lumberman from the States after Dick Sherwood had spent ten years in slavery and disgrace for love of her; and Sherwood set out on the lumberman's track with murder in his heart. He lost his way and was found and brought home by Delphine's younger sister. Then Sherwood quarreled with Louis Balenger and Louis shot him twice, left the Englishman for dead and vanished from French River forever. Julie Balenger nursed poor Sherwood back to life and strength and, soon after, married him.

This is what Uncle Jim told young Ben O'Dell of the Sherwoods of French River.

CHAPTER II.

THE DRIFTING FIRE.

When the little Sherwood girl first saw the library she did not believe her eyes. It was not a large room, and there were not more than six hundred volumes on the shelves; but Marion had to pull out and examine a score of the books before she believed that the rest were real. She had not known that there was so much printed paper in the whole world. She had seen only three books before this discovery of the O'Dell library, the three from which her father had taught her to read. He had told her of others and she had pictured the book wealth of the world on one shelf three feet long.

Ben O'Dell looked into the library through one of the open windows.

"Have you read 'Coral Island?'" he asked.

Marion shook her head.

"It's good," continued Ben. "But 'Treasure Island' is better. They are both on my shelves, farther along. 'Midshipman Easy' is fine, too—but perhaps it's too old for you. Have you read many books?"

"I've read three," she replied. "Dad taught me to read them. He taught Julie and me to read at the same time, and he said we were very clever. He could read as easy as anything."

"Who is Julie?" he asked.

"She is my mother," replied the little girl, with averted face. "They taught me to call her Julie when I was a baby and they used to laugh. She—she was ill two years ago—and I haven't seen her since—because she's in Heaven."

Ben's face grew red with pity and embarrassment; for a minute both were silent. He found his voice first.

"What books have you read?" he asked.

" 'Rob Roy,' by Sir Walter Scott," she answered in a tremulous whisper which scarcely reached him. "It was quite a big book, in green covers—and I liked it best of all. And 'Infantry Training.' It was a little red book. Julie and I didn't find it very interesting. The third was 'The Army List.' It had dad's name in it and *your* father's, too, and hundreds and hundreds of names of other officers of the king."

"But—you read those—'Infantry Training' and 'The Army List?' "

"Yes—plenty of times."

"And only one story like 'Rob Roy?' "

"We hadn't any more."

Ben O'Dell leaned his hoe against the side of the house and hoisted himself through the open window. The little girl looked at him; but, knowing that there were tears in her eyes he did not meet her glance. Instead, he took her by a hand and led her across the room to his own particular shelves of books.

"Here's what I used to read when I was your age," he said. "I read them even now, sometimes. 'Treasure Island'—you'll like that." He drew it out and laid it on the floor. " 'From Powder Monkey to Admiral,' 'My Friend Smith,' 'The Lady or the Tiger,' 'Red Fox,' 'The Gold Bug,' 'The Black Arrow,' 'Robbery Under Arms,' 'Davy and the Goblin'—you'll like all these."

The little girl stared speechless at the pile of books on the floor. Ben recrossed the room, climbed through the window and reshouldered his hoe. He met Uncle Jim at the near edge of the potato patch.

"I've been waiting for you," said McAllister. "I don't want to take any advantage of you by starting in at these spuds ahead of you."

"I stopped a minute to show the little Sherwood girl some good books to read," explained the youth.

"Can she read?" asked Uncle Jim. "How would she learn to read, way up there on French River?"

"Her father taught her. He taught her and her mother to read both at the same time. And her mother's dead. I'm sorry for that kid, Uncle Jim. Mighty tough, it seems to me—no mother—and to be left all alone in a big pirogue by her father. I'd like to know why he did that."

"So would I," returned McAllister. "I asked your ma and she didn't seem to know exactly. Couldn't make out anything particular from the letter nor from what the little girl told her—but it's something real serious, I guess. He had to run, anyhow. He is fond of the little girl, no doubt about it. His letter to Flora told that much. And he was mighty fond of his wife too, I reckon; and I wouldn't wonder if there wasn't more good in him than what we figgered on, after all. He had wild blood in him, I guess; and Louis Balenger was sure a bad feller to get mixed up with."

They worked in silence for half an hour, hilling the potatoes side by side.

"I'd like to know why he left her in the pirogue? Why he didn't bring her all the way?" said Ben, pausing and leaning on his hoe.

"How far down did he bring her?" returned McAllister.

"I don't know."

"Likely he was scared. Maybe the wardens were close onto his heels. It looks like he figgered on just coming part way with her, by his having the letter to your ma already written."

Again they fell to work and for ten minutes the hoes were busy. Then McAllister straightened his back.

"It's years since I was last on French River," he said. "I'd like fine to take another look at that country. We'd maybe learn something we don't know if we got right on the ground. We wouldn't have to be gone for long. Two days up, one day for scouting 'round and one day for the run home—four or five days would be plenty."

"When can we go?"

"Not before haying, that's a sure thing. Between haying and harvest is the best time, I reckon. I feel real curious about Dick Sherwood's affairs now—more curious than I've felt for years."

"He sounds mighty interesting to me; and I shouldn't be surprised to learn that you

were wrong when you said the woods had been too much for his gentility, Uncle Jim."

"Neither would I, myself. But how d'ye figger it, Ben?"

"Well, the little girl has good manners."

"She sure has! I never saw a little girl with better manners. I'm hoping her pa hasn't done something they can jail him for—or if he has, that they can't catch 'im. I'm all for keeping the laws—even the game laws—but maybe if I'd lived on French River along with Louis Balenger instead of at O'Dell's Point alongside O'Dells all my life, I'd be busy this minute keeping a jump ahead of the wardens instead of hilling potatoes. You never can tell. There's more to shootin' a moose in close season nor the twitch of the finger. There's many an outlaw running the woods who would have been an honest farmer like yer Uncle Jim if only he'd been born a McAllister and been bred alongside the O'Dells."

"I've been thinking that myself," returned Ben gravely. "Environment, that's it! The influence of environment."

"It sure sounds right to me, all right," said McAllister. "We'll call it that, anyhow; and we won't forget that Dick Sherwood taught his little girl good manners and how to read."

The thought of getting away from the duties of the farm for a few days was a pleasant one to both the honest farmer and his big nephew. Jim McAllister was not an enthusiastic agriculturalist. He loved the country and he didn't object to an occasional bout of strenuous toil; but the unadventurous round of milking and weeding and hoeing day after day bored him extremely even now in his forty-sixth year. But for the mild excitement of the salmon net in the river and his love for his widowed sister and his nephew and his respect for the memory of the late Captain John O'Dell he would long ago have turned his back on the implements of husbandry and taken to the woods.

Young Ben, on the other hand, was keen about farm work. He preferred it to school work. He was young enough to find excitement where none was perceptible to his uncle. He loved all growing things, but he loved cattle more than crops, horses more than cows. The practical side of farm life was dear to him and he took pleasure in the duties which seemed humdrum to his uncle; but the side issues, the sporting features, were even dearer. He loved the river better than the meadow and he saw eye to eye with McAllister in the matter of the salmon net. A flying duck set his blood flying and the reek of burned powder on the air of a frosty morning was the most delicious scent he knew. He loved wood smoke under trees and the click of an iron-shod canoe pole on pebbles, and the tracks of wild animals in mud and snow. The prospect of a visit to French River was far from unwelcome to him.

That was an unusually warm night, without a breath of air on O'Dell's Point. Ben went to bed at ten o'clock and somehow let three mosquitoes into his room with him. He undressed, extinguished his lamp and lay sweltering in his pajamas on the outside of his bed. Then the mosquitoes tuned their horns and sounded the charge. They lasted nearly half an hour; by the time they were dead Ben was wider awake than he had been at any time during the day. He went to the window and looked out at the sky of faint stars and the vague dark of the curving river. His glance was straight ahead at first, then eastward downstream.

Ben saw a light, a red light, drifting on the black river. His first thought was that it might be some one with a lantern, but in a moment he saw that the light could not be that of a lantern, for it grew and sparks began to fly from it. A torch, perhaps. The torch of a salmon spearer? Not likely! For years it had been unlawful to kill salmon or bass with the spear and there was no lawbreaker on the river possessed of sufficient hardihood to light his torch within sight of O'Dell's Point. More than this, the light was running with the current; and it was increasing every moment in height and length far beyond the dimensions of any torch.

Ben groped for his shoes and picked them up, felt his way cautiously out of the room and down the back stairs. In the woodshed he put on his shoes and equipped himself with paddle and pole. Then he ran for the river, ducking under the boughs of the old apple trees and descending the bank in a jump and a slide. Dim as the light was he saw that the big pirogue was gone before he reached the edge of the water. The sixteen-footer was there but nothing was to be seen of the giant from French River. He looked downstream and saw the light which had attracted him from his window vanishing

behind the head of the island, out in the channel. It was like a floating camp fire by this time.

Ben threw pole and paddle into the sixteen-footer, ran her into the water and leaped aboard. He shot her straight across the current for a distance of several hundred yards, until he was clear of the head of the island, then swung down on the track of the drifting fire. He paddled hard, urged by a very natural curiosity. This and the disappearance of the red pirogue from the point and the fact that he was out on the dark river in his pajamas instead of tossing on his hot bed, thrilled him pleasantly.

He drew steadily down upon the fire which was now leaping high and tossing up showers of sparks and trailing blood-red reflections on the black water. As he drew yet nearer he heard the crackle of its burning and the hiss of embers in the water. He heard a dog barking off on the southern shore. He heard the roaring breath of the fire and felt its heat. He swerved slightly and drew abreast of it.

He saw that the fire was in a boat of some sort, that the vessel was full of flame and crowned with flame, that it was heaped high from bow to stern with blazing driftwood and dry brush. The lines of the craft showed black and clear-cut between the leaping red and yellow of the flames above and the sliding red of the water below. He looked more intently and recognized the lines and bulk of the big red pirogue.

The red pirogue, the property of his mother's guest, adrift and afire in the middle of the river! Who had dared to do this thing? No neighbor, that was certain. Canoes, nets, all sorts of gear, were as safe on the beach at O'Dell's Point as in the house itself. This must be the work of a stranger and of an insane one, at that.

Ben continued to drift abreast of the red pirogue and watch it burn. He kept just out of range of the showering sparks and the scorching heat. He felt indignant and puzzled. But for the assurance of his own eyes he could not have believed that any inhabitant of the valley possessed sufficient temerity thus to remove property from O'Dell land and destroy it. If he should ever discover the identity of the offender he would make him regret the action, by thunder! He would show him that the O'Dells were not all dead. No other theft of such importance as this had been made on the O'Dell front in a hundred years. But could this be properly classed as a theft? It seemed to Ben more like an act inspired by insolence than the performance of a person driven by greed or necessity.

"Hello! Hello!" hailed a voice from the gloom on the right.

"Hello," answered Ben, turning his face toward the sound.

A small sturgeon boat appeared in the circle of fierce light, paddled by a square-shouldered old man with square whiskers whom Ben recognized as Tim Hood of Hood's Ferry.

"Hold hard there!" cried Hood. "What pranks be ye up to now?"

"Pranks? What are you talking about?" returned the youth.

The old man drew alongside and peered at Ben, shading his eyes with a hand against the glare of the fire.

"Oh, it's yerself!" he exclaimed. "Well, what d'ye know about this here? What be the joke an' who be the joker?"

"That's what I'd like to know," replied Ben, turning again to contemplate the drifting fire.

The mass of wood had settled considerably by this time and was now a mound of hot crimson and orange with low flames running over it. The gunnels of the pirogue were burning swiftly, edging the long mass of glowing embers with a hedge of livelier flame. The big pirogue hissed from end to end and was girdled by misty puffs of steam.

"Looks to me like a pirogue," said old Tim Hood. "A big one, like the ones we uster make afore all the big pine was cut off hereabouts."

Ben was about to tell what he knew but he checked himself. Pride and perhaps something else prompted him to keep quiet. Why should he admit to this old ferryman that some one on the river had dared to take a pirogue from the O'Dell front? Very likely it would amuse Hood to believe that the influence of this distinguished family for honesty and order was waning, for the ferryman was the only person within ten miles of O'Dell's Point who had ever openly denied the virtue of the things for which the O'Dells of the point had stood for more than a hundred years. During Captain John's term of occupation, and even in the days of Ben's grandfather, Tim Hood had openly derided the elegant condescension of the O'Dell manners and the purity of the O'Dell

speech and made light of learning, military rank and romantic traditions. So Ben did not tell the old man that the pirogue had been set adrift from O'Dell's Point.

"I saw it from my bedroom window and couldn't make out what it was," he said.

"Same here," replied Hood. "An' whatever it was, it won't be even that much longer."

He swung the sturgeon boat around and paddled away into the gloom.

Ben also deserted the fated pirogue which was now shrouded in a cloud of steam. He backed and headed his sluggish craft for the bulky darkness of the left shore.

"I'm glad I didn't tell him," he reflected. "He'd have laughed and sneered, the way he does about everything he doesn't know anything about. And I'm mighty glad I didn't say anything about the little girl—about her coming to the point all alone and me finding her drifted against the net stakes. He'd have made the worst of that—would have said Sherwood had run away and deserted her and sneered at both of them."

When he got into shallow water he headed upstream and exchanged the paddle for the pole. He had paddled and drifted far below the tail of the little island. The water was not swift and the bottom was firm. He poled easily, keeping close inshore. He searched his knowledge of his neighbors and his somewhat limited experience of life and human nature for a solution of the puzzle and for a reason for the removal and destruction of the red pirogue. But he failed to see light. The more he thought of it, the more utterly unreasonable it seemed to him. It was a mystery; and he had inherited a taste for the mysterious with his McAllister blood.

Upon reaching the tail of the island Ben kept to his course and entered the thoroughfare between the island and the left shore. Here the shallow water ran swiftly over sand and bright pebbles in a narrow passage. In some places the water was so shoal that Ben had to heave straight down on the pole to scrape over and in other places it eddied in deep pits in which water-logged driftwood lay rotting and big eels squirmed. Both the island shore and the mainland shore were grown thick and tall with willows, water maples and elms. Under the faint stars the thoroughfare was black as the inside of your hat.

Ben was almost through the dark passage, almost abreast of the head of the island, when he thrust the pole vigorously into seven feet of water instead of into seven inches and lost his balance. The crank little pirogue did the rest and Ben went into the hole with a mighty splash. He came to the surface in a second, overtook the drifting craft in a few strokes and herded it into shallow water under the wooded bank. He waded hurriedly toward the stranded bow and collided with something alive—something large and alive.

Ben was staggered, physically and in other ways, for several seconds. Then he pulled himself together, shook his O'Dell courage to the fore and jumped straight with extended arms. But the thing was gone. He stumbled, recovered his balance and listened breathlessly. Thing? It was a man! He had felt clothing and smelled tobacco. He heard a rustle at the top of the bank and instantly dashed for the sound. But the bank was steep and tangled with willows. He ripped his pajamas, he scratched his skin and finally he lost his footing and rolled back to the stranded dugout. He stepped aboard, pushed off and completed his journey.

Uncle Jim smote Ben's door with his knuckles next morning, as usual, and passed on his way down the back stairs. Ben sighed in his sleep and slept on. Mrs. O'Dell came to the door twenty minutes later and was surprised to find it still closed. She knocked and received no answer. She opened the door and looked into the little room. There was Ben sound asleep, his face a picture of health and contentment. The mother smiled with love and maternal pride.

"He is so big and young, he needs a great deal of sleep," she murmured.

Her loving glance moved from his face and she saw the front of his sleeping jacket above the edge of the sheet and her eyes widened. The breast of the jacket was ripped in three places and stained in spots and splashes with brown and green. And on one of his long arms a red scratch ran from wrist to elbow.

"Ben!" she cried.

He opened his eyes, smiled and sat up.

"Look at your arm!" she exclaimed. "And your jacket is torn! What has happened to you, Ben dear?"

Then he remembered and told her all about his midnight adventure. She sat on the edge of his bed and listened gravely. The more she heard, the graver she became.

"I bet the man I bumped into is the one who did it," concluded Ben.

"Yes—but I can't think what to make of it," she said. "Something queer is going on. Perhaps an enemy of poor Mr. Sherwood's is lurking around. I shall tell Jim, but nobody else."

"The little girl will ask about her red pirogue some day," said Ben. "It was a fine pirogue—the best I ever saw."

"We must try not to let her know that it was willfully burned," replied his mother. "The poor child has suffered quite enough without knowing that her father has an enemy mean enough to do a thing like that. We must see that no harm comes to her, Ben."

CHAPTER III.

THE STRANGE BEHAVIOR OF DOGS AND MEN.

Five days after the burning of the red pirogue, another queer thing happened at O'Dell's Point. It happened between three and five o'clock of the afternoon.

Jim McAllister had driven off downstream early that morning with two horses and a heavy wagon to buy provisions at the town of Woodstock. The round trip was an all-day job. Ben O'Dell shouldered an ax after dinner and, accompanied by the youngest of the three O'Dell dogs, went back to mend a brush fence and see if the highest hay field was ripe for the scythe. Mrs. O'Dell and little Marion Sherwood washed and dried the dinner dishes and Mrs. O'Dell took a great ham from the oven and set it to cool in the pantry. At three o'clock she and the little girl took an armful of books to the old orchard between the house and the river. Red Lily went with them; Red Chief, the oldest of the O'Dell setters, remained asleep in the kitchen.

Mrs. O'Dell and the little girl from French River returned to the house at five o'clock, having finished "Treasure Island." Red Chief arose from his slumbers and welcomed them with sweeps of his plumed tail. Mrs. O'Dell went to the pantry to see how the ham looked—and the ham wasn't there!

Some one had been in the pantry, had come and gone by way of the kitchen, and yet Red Chief had not barked. Mrs. O'Dell was not only puzzled but alarmed. A thief had visited the house of the O'Dells, a thing that had not happened for generations; and, worse still, a dog of the famous old red strain had failed in his duty. And yet Red Chief had many times proved himself as good a dog as any of his ancestors had been. Red Chief, the wise and true and fearless, had permitted a thief to enter and leave the house without so much as giving tongue. It was a puzzling and disturbing thought to the woman who held the honor of her dead husband's family so high that even the honor of the O'Dell red dogs was dear to her.

She said nothing about the stolen ham to her little guest but she took the old setter by his silken ears and gazed searchingly into his unwavering eyes. But there was neither guile nor shame in those eyes. Devotion, courage, vision and entire self-satisfaction were there. The old dog's conscience was clear.

Mrs. O'Dell went through the pantry. Two loaves of bread had gone with the ham. She searched here and there through the rest of the house but could not see that anything else had been taken. Nothing of value was gone, that was certain, and she felt less insecure though as deeply puzzled. She decided not to mention the vanished food and the old dog's strange passivity to her son or her brother.

A week passed over O'Dell's Point without an unusual incident. Ben and Uncle Jim commenced haying in the early upland fields; and then O'Dell's Point received its first official visit from the law. Ben brought the horses in at noon, watered them and followed them into the cool and shadowy stable; and there he found Mel Lunt and a stranger smoking cigars. Ben was startled, for he knew Mel Lunt to be the local constable; and the consciousness of being startled drove away his natural shyness and added to his indignation at the glowing cigars. His eyes brightened and his cheeks reddened.

"Young man, what do you know about Richard Sherwood?" asked the stranger, stepping forward and knocking the ash from his cigar.

"We don't smoke in here, if you don't mind," said the overgrown youth. "It isn't safe."

"This here's Mr. Brown from Woodstock, Ben," said Lunt hastily. "He's depity sheriff of the county."

"Mel's said it. Don't you worry about the cigars, young man, but tell me what you know, an' all you know, about Richard Sherwood."

Ben's face grew redder and his throat dry.

"I must ask you—again—not to smoke—in this stable," he replied, in cracked and jerky tones.

"Yer stalling, young feller!" exclaimed the stranger. "Tell me what I'm asking you an' tell it straight. Yer trying to hide something."

Jim McAllister stepped into the stable at that moment.

"Sure he's trying to hide something, Dave Brown," said McAllister. "He's trying to hide what he thinks of you for a deputy sheriff—that you're as ignorant as you are fresh. He's remembering his manners and trying to hide your want of them. He's half O'Dell an' half McAllister; so if you two want to talk in this stable about Richard Sherwood or anything else, I guess you'd better go out first and douse those cigars in a puddle or something."

"I'm here in the name of the law, Jim McAllister," said Mr. Brown, uncertainly.

"Same here, only more so," returned Uncle Jim pleasantly.

"He's in the right of it, Mr. Brown," said Mel Lunt.

The officials left the stable, ground their cigars to extinction with the heels of their boots and came back.

"Yer darned particular," remarked the deputy sheriff.

"Nothing out of the way," returned McAllister.

"Well, we're looking for Richard Sherwood from French River," said the other. "He cleared out a couple of weeks ago an' took his little girl with him. She's gone too, anyhow. I heard he used to be a friend of the folks living here, so I come to ask if you'd seen him in the last two weeks. I didn't come to set yer darned stable afire."

"No, we haven't seen Sherwood," replied McAllister. "What's the trouble? Has he taken to poaching again?"

"It's worse than poaching, this time. I was up on French River ten days ago, taking a look over the salmon pools and one thing an' another, to see if the game wardens were onto their job, an' darn it all if I didn't trip over a bran'-new grave in a little clearing. There's an old Injun who calls himself Noel Sabattis lives there, an' he told me he'd buried a dead man there a few days ago. I asked questions and he answered them; and then he helped me dig—and there was a man who'd been shot through the heart!"

"You don't say!" exclaimed McAllister. "Who was he?"

"Louis Balenger."

"Balenger? What would bring him back, I wonder? What else did you find out?"

"Nothing. We're looking for Richard Sherwood."

"What has he ever done that would lead you to suspect him of a thing like that? I used to know him and he was no more the kind to kill a man than I am. Did the old Injun say Sherwood did it?"

"No, not him. He wouldn't say a word against Sherwood. But he don't matter much, one way or the other, old Noel Sabattis! He ain't all there, I guess. He says he found Balenger in Sherwood's pirogue, dead, when Sherwood and the little girl were off trout fishing. When Sherwood come back he helped Noel dig the grave; and next day he lit out and took the girl with him—so that Injun says."

"Why don't you blame it on the Injun?"

"He didn't run away."

"That's so. Well, we haven't seen Richard Sherwood around here."

"Nor anything belonging to him, I suppose?"

Jim McAllister scratched his chin.

"We have seen his daughter," said Ben O'Dell, with dignity. "She is our guest. She's in the house now, with my mother. She's only a little girl—only eleven years old—and I hope you don't intend to question her about Balenger's death."

"That's what I heard. She's stopping here, you say, but you ain't seen her father. That's queer. How'd she come?"

Ben told of his discovery of the pirogue and the girl against the stakes of the salmon net, but he did not mention the letter which the little voyager had brought to his mother. That letter, whatever it contained, seemed to him entirely too private and purely social a matter to be handed over to the inspection of a deputy sheriff.

"Did she come down all the way from French River alone, a little girl of eleven?" asked Brown. "Is that what ye're trying to stuff into me?"

"You can't talk to Ben like that," interrupted McAllister. "He's a quiet lad but he's an O'Dell—and if you'd been born and bred on this river you'd know what I mean. Ask Lunt."

"That's right," said Lunt. "The O'Dells hev always been like that. If they tell any-

thing, it's true—but I ain't sayin' as they always tell all that they know. Now Ben here says the girl was alone when he found her, but he ain't said that he knows she come all the way from French River alone by herself. How about that, Ben?"

"She told me that her father came part way with her," said Ben.

"How far?" asked the deputy sheriff.

"She didn't tell me."

"Well, maybe she'll tell *me*."

"No she won't—because you won't ask her that or anything like it," said young O'Dell.

"What d'ye mean, I won't ask her?"

"There you go again!" interrupted Jim McAllister. "Didn't I tell you that Ben here's an O'Dell?"

"Well, what about it? I'm the deputy sheriff of this county and O'Dells are nothing to me when I'm in the performance of my duty."

"Let me try to explain," said Ben, crimson with embarrassment and the agitation of his fighting blood. "I respect the laws, Mr. Brown, and I observe them. I was taught to respect them. But I was also taught to respect other laws—kinds that you have nothing to do with—officially. Laws of hospitality—that sort of thing. My father was a good citizen—and a good soldier—and I try to do what I think he would do under the same circumstances. So if you attempt to question that—that little girl—my mother's guest—about her father—whom you're hunting for a murderer—I'll consider it my—unpleasant duty to knock the stuffing out of you!"

The deputy sheriff stared in amazement.

"Say, that would take some knocking!" he retorted. "How old are you, young feller?"

"I'm going on eighteen," replied Ben quietly.

"And you think you can best me in a fight?"

"Yes, I think I can. I'm bigger than you and longer in the reach—and I'm pretty good."

"But yer sappy. And yer all joints. I'm no giant but I'm weathered. The milk's out of my bones."

"My joints are all right, Mr. Brown. You won't find anything wrong with them if you start in questioning that little Sherwood girl about her father."

"I wasn't born on this river," said the deputy sheriff, "and I'm a peaceful citizen with a wife an' children in Woodstock, but I consider myself as good a sportsman as any O'Dell who ever waved a sword or a pitchfork. There's more man in me than deputy sheriff. I'll fight you, Ben, for I like yer crazy ideas; and if you trim me I'll go away without asking the girl a single question about her father. But if I trim you I'll question her."

Ben looked at his uncle and the lids of McAllister's left eye fluttered swiftly.

"That wouldn't be fair," said Ben, turning again to Brown. "And I can't make it fair, for I'm determined that you shall not worry my mother's guest, whatever happens. If you did manage to beat me, there'd still be Uncle Jim. So you wouldn't get a square deal."

Brown looked at McAllister.

"Does he mean that *you* would object to me asking the girl a few civil questions?" he inquired.

"Sure I'd object," said McAllister.

"But you ain't one of these O'Dells!"

"I'm a McAllister—the same kind even if not exactly the same quality."

Mr. Brown looked puzzled.

"I'm a little above the average myself," he said thoughtfully. "Tell me why you two've got to bellyaching so about me wanting to ask that little girl a few questions, will you? Maybe I'm stupid."

"Suppose some fool of a sheriff found a dead man and thought you'd killed him and found out where you'd run to from one of your own kids," said McAllister. "The kid loves you, wouldn't hurt you for a fortune, but in her innocence she tells what the sheriff wants to know and he catches you. And we'll suppose you did it and they prove it on you. Nice game to play on your little daughter, wouldn't it be?"

The deputy sheriff turned to Mel Lunt.

"How does it strike you, Mel?" he asked.

"It's a highfalutin' notion, all right for O'Dells an' sich, but no good for ordinary folks like us," replied the constable.

"Is *that* so!" exclaimed Mr. Brown. "You guess again, blast yer cheek! If you can't see why a little girl hadn't ought to be set to catch her own father an' maybe send him to jail or worse, I can. Yes, I can see it, by thunder! Any gentleman could, once it was explained to him. So you don't have to worry about that, Ben."

At that moment a gong sounded.

"That's for dinner," said Ben, "and I know my mother will be delighted if you'll

dine with us. Uncle Jim, will you take them to the house while I feed the horses?"

McAllister said a few words in his sister's ear which at once enlightened and reassured her. There were fresh salmon and green peas for dinner, and custard pies. The meal was eaten in the dining room. Badly painted and sadly cracked pictures of O'Dells, male and female, wonderfully uniformed and gowned, looked out from the low walls.

The deputy sheriff rose to the portraits and the old table silver. His manners were almost too good to be true and his conversation was elegant in tone and matter. He amused Ben O'Dell and McAllister and quite dazzled little Marion Sherwood; but it was impossible to know, by looking at her, whether Mrs. O'Dell was dazzled or amused. Her attitude toward her unexpected guests left nothing to be desired. A bishop and a dean could not have expected more; two old Maliseets at her table would not have received less.

Only Mel Lunt of the whole company did not play the game. He opened his mouth only to eat. He raised his eyes from his plate only to glance swiftly from one painted and sword-girt gentleman on the wall to another and then at the brow and nose of young Ben O'Dell which were the brow and nose of the portraits; and all his thought was that a deputy sheriff was pretty small potatoes after all and that a rural constable was simply nothing and none to a hill.

A little later Mel Lunt's mare was hitched to the buggy and Mel had the reins in his hands when Mr. Brown paused suddenly with one foot on the step.

"Guess I might's well take a look at the pirogue," he said, with his face turned over his shoulder toward Ben and McAllister.

"She's gone," replied Ben. "She was taken off our beach one night nearly two weeks ago."

The deputy sheriff lowered his foot and turned around.

"Taken?" he asked. "Who took her?"

Ben said that he didn't know and explained that he believed she had been taken, because she would have run aground on the head of the island if she'd simply drifted off.

"That sounds reasonable," returned Brown. "Heard anything of her being picked up below here?"

"Not a word," said Ben.

The deputy sheriff climbed to the seat beside the constable then and the pair drove away.

Ben and Jim McAllister returned to the haying and worked in the high fields until after sundown. Little Marion Sherwood went to bed immediately after supper. Uncle Jim went next, yawning, and was soon followed by Ben. The moment Ben sank his head on his pillow he discovered that he wasn't nearly so sleepy as he had thought. For a few minutes he lay and pictured the fight between himself and the deputy sheriff which had not taken place. He was sorry it had not materalized, though he felt no bitterness toward Mr. Brown. He rather liked Mr. Brown now, in fact. But what a fine fight it would have been. The thought suggested to him the great fight in "Rodney Stone," which he tried to remember, only to find that the details had become obscure in his mind. He left his bed and went downstairs with the intention of fetching the book from the library. He was surprised to find his mother busily engaged in locking and double bolting the front door.

"What's the idea, mother?" he asked. "Why lock that old door now for the first time since it was hung on its hinges?"

She told him of the disappearance of the ham and bread.

"But wasn't one of the dogs in the house?" he asked.

"Yes, Red Chief was in the kitchen; and he didn't make a sound," she answered. "He must have mistaken the thief for a friend, for you know how he is about strangers. It has made me nervous, Ben."

"And nothing was taken except the ham and bread?"

"I haven't missed anything else."

"It can't be much of an enemy, whoever it is, to let us off as easy as that. It sounds more like a hungry friend to me."

"You are thinking of Richard Sherwood, Ben."

"Yes, mother. He might be hanging 'round and not want even us to suspect it. It's an old trick I guess, from what I've read—not going as far away as the police expect you to."

"But Red Chief doesn't know Richard Sherwood. It was Red Chief's grandfather, I think, that Mr. Sherwood used to take out when he went shooting. I believe he trained several of the red dogs to the gun. He had a wonderful way with animals."

"Do you think that any of our neighbors are hungry enough to steal from us, mother? It never happened before. They always came and asked for anything they wanted."

"I am sure it was not a neighbor. I can't understand it. I am afraid, Ben."

Ben felt no anxiety concerning their safety or that of their property but he was puzzled. He could not think of any explanation of Red Chief's behavior. He did not draw his mother's attention to the fact that any one wishing to enter the old house could still do so by any one of the many windows on the ground floor, none of which had a fastening.

They entered the library together and Mrs. O'Dell held the lamp while Ben searched along his own shelves for "Rodney Stone." He found the book but he missed several others.

"Has the little girl any books upstairs?" he asked.

"No, she puts every one back in its place before supper, always."

"I wonder if Uncle Jim has 'Charles O'Malley' and 'Vanity Fair' up in his room."

"I'm sure that he hasn't—but shall we go and see?"

They went. Uncle Jim was sound asleep. The missing books were not in his room. They searched every inhabited corner of the house but failed to find either "Charles O'Malley" or "Vanity Fair."

"They were in their places yesterday," said Ben.

"They must have been taken last night," said his mother.

"And it was Red Lily who was in the house last night; the old dog and the pup were loose outside."

"Yes."

"Well, let's go to bed, mother. Who's afraid of a burglar who steals books?"

CHAPTER IV.

OBSTRUCTING THE LAW.

Mrs. O'Dell ceased to worry about the mysterious thefts and the red setters' failures in duty when her son presently told her what he had heard from the deputy sheriff of the tragedy on French River. Now all her anxiety was for the little girl who had come to her so trustingly in the big pirogue, the little girl whose mother was dead and whose father was a fugitive from the police. She pitied Sherwood, too, but her mental attitude toward him was more confused than her son's.

Ben refused to believe for a moment that Dick Sherwood had shot his enemy Louis Balenger or any other unarmed man. His reasoning was simple almost to childishness. Balenger had evidently been shot from cover and when in no position to defend himself; and that, and the fact that Sherwood had been John O'Dell's friend for years, were proof enough for Ben that Sherwood was innocent of Louis Balenger's death.

Jim McAllister wasn't so sure, but he suspected that the old Indian, Sabattis, had put something over on Sherwood as well as on the deputy sheriff and constable. Jim had known Dick Sherwood as a good sportsman; had seen him laugh at fatigue and danger; had watched him work with young dogs and young horses, training them to the gun and the bit, gentle and understanding. Jim admitted that there was wild blood in Sherwood, but no mean blood. A man like Sherwood might be fooled by a clever rascal like Balenger into forgetting some of the social duties and niceties of his kind—yes, even to the extent of breaking a game law occasionally under pressure. But it would be dead against his nature to draw trigger on an unarmed man. Jim maintained that Sherwood had been nobody's enemy but his own. But to the question of why he had run away, if innocent, he could find no answer.

Ben had an answer—but it was so vague and obscure that he had not yet found words in which to express it.

Mrs. O'Dell did not try to weaken her son's and brother's belief in the fugitive's innocence. But her knowledge of human nature was deeper than theirs both by instinct and experience. She did not judge Sherwood in her heart, however, or voice her thought that he was probably guilty. He had been guilty of lesser crimes, lesser madnesses. He had forgotten his traditions and turned his back on his old friends. He had followed his wild whims at the expense of his duty to life and in the knowledge of better things; and she suspected that such a course might, in time, lead even a gentleman to worse offenses than infringements of the game laws. But she knew that he loved his child and had loved the child's mother. And so she felt nothing for him but pity.

In the short note which little Marion had brought from her father Sherwood stated

his innocence of Balenger's death far more emphatically than he wrote of his love for his daughter and her mother. And yet Flora O'Dell believed in his love for the little girl and the dead woman and was not at all sure of his innocence.

The deputy sheriff and the local constable returned to O'Dell's Point within two days of their first visit. They confronted Ben and Uncle Jim as the two farmers descended to the barn floor from the top of a load of hay.

"Look a here, young feller, why didn't you tell me all you knew about that pirogue?" demanded Mr. Brown in a nasty voice, with a nasty glint in his eyes. "You went an' made yerself out the champion man of honor an' truth teller in the world an' then you went an' lied to me!"

"What was the lie?" asked Ben.

"You said somebody stole Sherwood's pirogue."

"Took it off our front, that's what I said."

"No use arguing. The pirogue was filled up with dry wood and set afire, and you know it! And you know who set her afire! Out with it—an' save yerself from jail. I'm listening."

"Old Tim Hood has been talking to you, I suppose."

"Yes, he has."

"Then you know as much about it as I do—and maybe more. Yes, and maybe more, if you know all he knows—for he's the only person I can think of around here who'd have the cheek to take anything off our front and destroy it."

"Cheek! Come off the roof! I got yer measure now, young man; so tell me why you set that pirogue afire, and be quick about it."

"I didn't set it afire, I tell you! I saw it burning from my bedroom window and paddled down after it and took a look at it. Tim Hood came out in a sturgeon boat to take a look, too. That's all I know about it."

"Say, d'ye see any green in my eye?"

"Easy there, Dave Brown!" cautioned McAllister. "You know all Ben knows about the burning of that blasted pirogue now—and now you go asking him about yer eye. What's the sense in that? That's not the way to handle a lad like Ben."

"Cut it out, Jim McAllister! You can't put any more of that high-an'-mighty, too-good-to-sneeze O'Dell slush over on me. I fell for it once, but once was enough. O'Dell! Save it to fool Injuns with!"

Ben's face was as colorless as his shirt.

"You've done it now," said McAllister grimly.

"I reckon ye've went a mite too far, Mr. Brown," said Mel Lunt.

"Come into the next barn, where there's more room," said young Ben O'Dell in a cracked voice.

"I'm not fighting to-day, I'm arresting," replied Brown.

"Arresting any one in particular?" asked Uncle Jim.

"This young man."

"What for?"

"I suspect him of burning Sherwood's pirogue with the intention of destroying evidence."

Mel Lunt shook his head. McAllister laughed. Ben stood straight and grim, waiting.

"You are a deputy sheriff, Dave Brown, but you ain't the law," said McAllister. "You don't know the law—nor you don't know this river—and somebody's been filling you up with hot air. What you need is a licking to kind of clear yer brain. After that, you can tell Judge Smith down at Woodstock all about it—and see what happens. Ben's the doctor. Will you take your treatment here or in the other barn where there's more room?"

Mr. Brown lost his temper then, turned and hurled himself at Ben. Ben sent him back with a left to the chest and a right to the ribs.

"Yer in the wrong of it, Mr. Brown," complained the constable. "I warned ye that Tim Hood was sartain to git ye in wrong."

The deputy sheriff paid no attention to Lunt but made a backward pass with his right hand. Ben jumped at the same instant. There was a brief, wrenching struggle; and then the youth leaped back and dropped an automatic pistol at his uncle's feet. McAllister placed a foot on the weapon. Again Brown rushed upon Ben and again he staggered back. There was no room for circling or side-stepping in the narrow space between the load of hay and the hay-filled bays. It had to be action front or quit.

The deputy sheriff was shaken but not hurt, for young O'Dell had spared his face. He lowered his head and charged like a ram. Ben gave ground before that un-

sportsmanlike onset; and, alas for Mr. Brown's nose and upper lip, he gave more than ground.

"Ye'd best quit right now," wailed Mel Lunt. "Yer gittin' all messed up an' ye ain't in yer rights an' folks'll maybe think as I was mixed up in it too."

Brown made a fourth attack and tried to obtain a wrestler's hold low down on the overgrown youth; but Ben, cool as a butter firkin in a cellar, hooked him off. Brown charged yet again, and then once more, and then sat down on the floor.

They bathed his face and held cold water for him to drink. Ben fetched sticking plaster from the house, covertly, and applied strips of it here and there to his late antagonist's damaged face.

"Never see such a hammerin' since Alec Todd fit Mike Kane up to Kane's Lake twenty year ago," said Mel Lunt, extracting crushed cigars from his superior's vest pockets. "But them two fit with feet an' everything, an' Ben here didn't use nothin' but his hands. I reckon they larn ye more'n joggofy where ye've been to school. Dang me if even his watch ain't stopped!"

The deputy sheriff and the constable drove away fifteen minutes later, the deputy sheriff sagging heavily against his companion's shoulder.

"Now they'll maybe let us get along with the haying," remarked McAllister.

"And perhaps he will get along with his own job of hunting for the man who shot Balenger, instead of wasting his time talking about that pirogue," said Ben. "How would the pirogue help him? What did he mean by speaking of it as evidence?"

"Old Tim Hood's put that crazy notion into his head, where there's plenty of room for crazy notions," replied the uncle. "Old Tim's a trouble hunter and always was—a master hand at hunting trouble for other people. And he don't like the O'Dells and never did. Yer gran'pa gave him a caning once, a regular dusting, for starving an old horse to death."

"Do you think I'll have to go to jail for fighting Brown?" asked Ben with ill-concealed anxiety. "It would be a blow to mother—but I don't see what else I could do but fight him, after the things he said."

"Now don't you worry about that," said McAllister, smiling "Brown hasn't much sense but he's got a lot of vanity—and a little ordinary horse sense too, of course. He and Mel Lunt are busy this very minute making up as likely sounding a story as they can manage between them all about how he fell down on his face."

Nothing more was seen or heard of the deputy sheriff at O'Dell's Point. He evidently carried his investigations farther afield. No further inquiries were made concerning the fate of the big, red pirogue. Nothing more was heard of Louis Balenger or Richard Sherwood.

But more bread vanished from the pantry and again the red dogs failed to give the alarm. And the stolen books reappeared in their exact places on the library shelves.

The little girl was kept in ignorance of the suspicions against her absent father and also of the thefts of food and the mysterious borrowing of the books. The others discussed the situation frequently, but always after she had gone to bed. Ben was of the opinion that Richard Sherwood was in hiding somewhere within a few miles of the house and that it was he who had helped himself from the pantry and library. He held to this opinion in spite of the behavior of the dogs.

His mother and uncle believed otherwise. They maintained that Sherwood, innocent or guilty, would go farther than to O'Dell's Point for a place in which to hide from the police. Otherwise, why run at all? they argued. He had started well ahead of the chase, judging by what they had heard, with plenty of time to get clear out of the province. Jim believed that the food and books had been taken by an Indian. He knew several Indians in the neighborhood who could read and more who were sometimes hungry because they were too lazy to work; and they were all on friendly terms with the dogs. A sick Indian would ask for food, but a well one wouldn't for fear that a little job of work might be offered him. Haying was the last time in the year to expect one of those fellows to come around asking for anything. As for the books, an Indian who was queer enough to want to read would be queer enough to take the books on the quiet and return them on the sly. That's how James McAllister figured it out.

The last load of hay was hauled in and Ben told his mother of the contemplated trip up to French River. She replied that she was afraid to be left alone with little Marion Sherwood in a house which neither

doors nor dogs seemed able to guard. Ben had not thought of this, for he felt no suggestion of violence, of any sort of menace, in the mild depredations of the mysterious visitor.

"I'm sorry that I'm not as brave as I used to be," said Mrs. O'Dell. "I want you to have your trip. Perhaps your Uncle Ian will sleep here while you two are away. He is sometimes very reasonable and unselfish, you know, and this may be one of the times."

Ben crossed lots to the old McAllister homestead two miles above the point, where Ian McAllister, a fifty-year-old bachelor, lived in manly discomfort and an atmosphere of argument, hard work and scorched victuals with his old friend and hired man Archie Douglas. Both Ian and Archie were known as "characters" on the river. Both were bachelors. In their earlier years, before Ian had acquired the farm of his fathers, they had been brisk fellows, champion choppers in the woods, reckless log cuffers and jam busters on the drives, noted performers of intricate steps at barn dances and plowing frolics and foolish spenders of their wages—white-water boys of the first quality, in short.

But time and the farm had changed them for better and for worse. They never left the farm now except to go to Woodstock on business and to pay the O'Dells two brief visits every month. They worked in rain and shine. They read a few heavy theological volumes and argued over them. They played chess and the bagpipes in a spirit of grim rivalry. They did the cooking week and week about and week and week about they likewise condemned the cooking.

The McAllister hay of this year had been a heavier crop than usual and the price of beef promised to be high next Easter, so Ben O'Dell found his Uncle Ian in an obliging humor. Ian promised to sleep at the O'Dell house every night while his nephew and brother were away from home.

"It be Archie's week for the cookin'," he said, "so I reckon a decent breakfast an' human supper every day for a while won't do me no harm. But what's the matter with yer ma? What's come over her? It ain't like Flora to be scairt. What's she scairt of?"

In justice to his mother Ben had to tell Ian something of the recent strange happenings at the point. He told of little Marion Sherwood's arrival, of her father's flight from French River and the suspicions of the deputy sheriff and of the elaborate destruction of the red pirogue, but he did not mention the thefts. He feared that Ian McAllister's attitude toward a thief, even a hungry and harmless thief, would not be as charitable as his own or his mother's or his Uncle Jim's.

"Mother's more afraid for the little girl than for herself," he said. "Coming to us like that, all alone in the pirogue, mother wouldn't have anything happen to her for the world. She doesn't want her to be frightened, even. Whatever Richard Sherwood may have done, the poor little girl is innocent."

"Well, I ain't surprised to hear that Sherwood's shot that feller Balenger," said Ian. "Sherwood's been headin' for destruction a long time now, what with one foolishness an' another—an' Balenger needed shootin'. But Sherwood hadn't ought to of done it, for all that! That's what comes of bein' wild an' keepin' it up."

"I don't believe Sherwood did it," said Ben. "He was my father's friend once and Uncle Jim says he was a good sportsman, so I don't believe he would ever be coward enough to shoot an unarmed man."

"Ye never can tell," returned Ian, wagging his head. "Louis Balenger led him a dog's life for years, so I've heard tell, an' I reckon his spirit was jist about broke by the time Louis shot a hole in him an' beat it. He lived quiet enough an' law-abidin' all the years Balenger was away, I guess; an' now it looks like Balenger had come back to French River to start some more divilment an' Sherwood had up an' shot 'im. Sure it was cowardly—but once ye break a man's spirit, no matter how brave he was once, ye make a coward of him. If he didn't do it, why did he run away?"

"That's what I can't figure out, Uncle Ian—but it seems to me a good sportsman might be broken down to some kinds of cowardice and not others. His nerves might get so's they'd fail him without his—well, without his soul turning coward—or even his heart. There's many a good horse that shies at a bit of paper on the road that has the heart to pull on a load till it drops."

"Mighty deep reasonin'," said Ian McAllister. "That's what comes of schoolin'. We'll chaw it over, me an' Archie; but whatever kind of coward Richard Sherwood may

be, I'll look after yer ma an' the little girl while yer away."

Ben and Uncle Jim set out for French River next morning at an early hour in the canvas canoe. They made ten miles by noon, poling close inshore all the way. They boiled the teakettle, ate the plentiful cold luncheon with which Mrs. O'Dell had supplied them and rested for an hour and a half. Six miles farther up they came to heavy rapids around which they were forced to carry their dunnage and canoe.

"Here's where he left her and the pirogue, I wouldn't wonder," said McAllister. "Once clear of the rapids, she'd be safe to make the point. But if she was my daughter, I'd take her all the way to wherever she was going, no matter what was chasing me! He ain't the man he was when I first knew him, I guess."

"Why didn't you stick to him then?" asked Ben. "What did you all drop him for, just because he got mixed up with a bad crowd? That was no way to treat a friend."

"John kept after him eight or nine years. Once a year, year after year, yer father made the trip to French River and tried to get him to break with the Balengers and offered him land and a house down to the point."

"But what did you do? You didn't do anything, Uncle Jim."

"I was leery about visiting French River, in those days. I'd seen just enough of that outfit to guess how easy it would be to get mixed up with them. And Sherwood wasn't encouraging. All he'd do would be to cuss John out for a prig and a busybody. And it's a long way between his clearing and O'Dell's Point."

"Well, he's hiding for his life now like a wounded snipe; and I guess he wouldn't be if you hadn't been so scared about your own respectability, Uncle Jim."

McAllister scratched his chin at that but said nothing.

They reached the mouth of French River before sundown and made camp there for the night. They were early astir next morning, breakfasted before the mist was off the water and then launched into the black, deep tide of the tributary stream. The fall of the banks was sheer down to and beneath the water's edge. Poling was out of the question, so the paddles were used. Ben occupied the stern of the canoe, being a few pounds heavier than his uncle and a glutton for work. Wood duck and whistlers flew up and off before their approach. A mink swam across their bows. They passed old cuttings where the stumps of giant pines were hidden by a second growth of tall young spruces and firs.

They paddled for two hours before they marked any sign of present human habitation. They saw a film of smoke then, frail blue against the dark green of the forest. Ben swung into the left bank, which was considerably lower and less abrupt here than farther down, and edged the canoe against a narrow strip of muddy shore. Here was a path, deep-worn and narrow, leading up through the tangled brush; and in the shallow water lay a few rusty tins.

They ascended the path up and over the bank and through a screen of underbrush and water birches into a little clearing. At the back of the clearing stood a small log cabin with an open door and a chimney of sticks and clay. From this chimney ascended the smoke that had attracted them. When they were halfway across the clearing, a short figure appeared in the black doorway.

"Injun," said Uncle Jim over his shoulder.

The man of the clearing came a short way from his threshold and sat down on a convenient chopping block. He had a pipe in his mouth and in his right fist a fork with a piece of pork rind impaled on its prongs. Odors of frying buckwheat cakes and Black Jack tobacco drifted forward and met the visitors. The visitors halted within a few yards of the old Maliseet.

"Good morning, Noel Sabattis," said McAllister.

"Good day," returned Noel, regarding the two with expressionless and unwinking eyes.

"I'm afraid your pancakes are burning," said Ben.

The Maliseet ignored this.

"You police?" he asked.

"Not on yer life!" replied Uncle Jim. "I'm Jim McAllister and this is Ben O'Dell and we're both from O'Dell's Point down on the main river."

"Come in," said Noel, getting quickly to his feet and slipping nimbly through the doorway ahead of them.

He was stooping over the griddle on the rusty little stove when the others entered

the cabin. He invited them to share his meal, but they explained that they had already breakfasted. So he broke his fast alone with amazing swiftness while they sat on the edge of his bunk and watched him. A dozen or more pancakes generously doused with molasses and three mugs of boiled tea presented no difficulties to old Noel Sabattis. When the last pancake was gone and the mug was empty for the third time, he relit his rank pipe and returned his attention to the visitors. He regarded them searchingly, first McAllister and then young Ben, for a minute or two in silence.

"Li'l' girl git to yer place a'right?" he asked.

"Yes, she made it, and she's safe and well," answered Jim.

"Police git Sherwood yet? You see Sherwood, hey?"

"Not that I've heard of. And we haven't set eyes on him. But Dave Brown and Mel Lunt gave us a couple of calls. They said they'd been up here and seen you."

"Dat right," returned Noel. "You t'ink Sherwood shoot dat Balenger feller maybe?"

"I don't!" exclaimed Ben.

"I hope he didn't," said Jim. "We're his friends."

"Friends? Dat good," returned the Maliseet slowly. "Didn't know he had none nowadays 'cept old Noel Sabattis."

CHAPTER V.

VISITORS TO FRENCH RIVER.

Old Noel Sabattis talked more like a Frenchman than the kind of Indian you read about. He wasn't reticent. Perhaps he had a thin strain of French blood in him, from away back, long ago forgotten. He called himself pure Maliseet. His vocabulary was limited but he made it cover the ground. Sometimes he grunted in the approved Indian manner but he could say as much with a grunt as most men can with six words. His heart was in it; and with grunts and blinks of the eye and his limited vocabulary he told Ben O'Dell and Jim McAllister all that he knew about poor Sherwood.

Noel was a lonely man. He had been a widower for close upon thirty years. His children had grown up and gone to the settlements a lifetime ago. But he had refused to go to any settlement. He had left his old trapping and hunting grounds on the Tobigue and come onto French River about ten years ago. He found Sherwood and Julie and their baby on the river in the big log house that had been Louis Balenger's. They were the only regular settlers on the stream but there was a big camp belonging to a fishing club five miles farther up.

Julie Sherwood was a fine little woman though she was Balenger's daughter, and prettier than you had any right to expect to see anywhere. Sherwood was quite a man when she was close to him; but even then Noel thought that he wasn't all he might have been. He had a weak eye—honest enough, but weak; and whenever his wife was out of his sight he was like a scared buck, ready to jump at a shadow. But he was kind and generous and Noel liked him. Julie was generous and friendly, too. They offered Noel as much room as he needed in their house and a place at their table; but Noel was an independent fellow and said that he'd have a roof of his own. He set to work at chopping out a clearing within a few hundred yards of Sherwood's clearing, and Sherwood helped him.

It wasn't long before Noel Sabattis knew a great deal about Dick Sherwood and, naturally, about the Balengers. Both the man and the woman talked to him as if they trusted him; but she was the more confiding of the two. It was she who told of Sherwood's treatment at the hands of her father and her older sister. She was bitter against both her father and her sister, but she made the bitterest accusations when her husband was not within earshot, for they would have humiliated him. And he was already too humble and she was giving all her thought and love to awakening his old self-respect in his heart.

She told Noel that her father had impoverished Sherwood years ago, when she was a child of ten or eleven, by cheating at cards, and then had tricked him into his debt and his power by further cheating—and all under the guise of friendship and good-fellowship. Her mother had told her so in a deathbed confession. Then her father had tried to make a rogue of Sherwood. He had succeeded temporarily, but with such difficulty and by means of such cruel efforts that he had made a coward of him. Yes, a coward—and that was worse than all the rest, it had seemed to Julie. She told the Maliseet that he, Richard Sherwood, who had been a soldier, had no courage now except what he got from her.

Noel used to advise them to leave French River. He put it strong, in spite of the fact that he would have been desolate if they had gone. Julie said they were planning to go to the settlements as soon as the baby was big enough to travel and Sherwood agreed with her. Noel suggested that Louis Balenger might come back and pump two more bullets into Sherwood. At that the big, broken Englishman paled under his tan but the woman didn't flinch. She said that her father would never return but that she was not afraid of him anyway.

Noel and the Sherwoods lived peacefully in their adjoining clearings year after year. Noel and Sherwood trapped fur together; but Sherwood never went very far afield. His mind and nerves went "jumpy" whenever he got more than a few miles away from his wife and child. As the years passed he seemed normal enough when with them, more nearly a sound man each year; but once out of sight of them his eyes showed fear.

Noel often tried to argue him out of his fear. When a young man and a soldier he had not been afraid of hurts or life or death, so why be a coward now? Noel argued. His old enemy Balenger was gone, so what was he afraid of? He had broken game laws and stolen furs from other men's traps and even acted as Balenger's tool once in the matter of a "rigged" game of poker down in Woodstock—but he was living as honestly now as any man and had the best wife and daughter in the province. So why continue to be ashamed and afraid? He was his own master now. He had education and strong muscles. Why didn't he go away to the settlements with Julie and the child and forget all about French River? He owed it to himself and those two, Noel argued; and if he'd only forget Louis Balenger he'd be as good a man as he'd ever been.

Strange to say, Julie did not back Noel Sabattis as strongly as she should have in his efforts to get her husband to leave the scene of his disgrace. She, brave as a tiger in her attitude toward every known peril and ready to give her life for either her husband or child, was afraid of the unknown. She was afraid of the world of cities and men beyond the wilderness. Her parents had brought her to French River when she was scarcely more than a baby but she had fragmentary memories of streets of high houses and wet pavements shining under yellow lamps and her mother in tears and a stealthy flight. Even her father, clever and daring and wicked, had been forced to flee in fear from a city! How then would Dick Sherwood fare among men? Her fear of cities haunted her like a half-remembered nightmare.

Julie said that they would leave French River in a year or two—and always it was put off another year or two.

Julie died very suddenly of a deadly cold. She was ill for only two days. It shook old Noel Sabattis even now to think of it. Sherwood was like a man without a mind for weeks. He moved about, sometimes he ate food that was placed before him, but he seemed to be without life. He didn't understand. He couldn't believe his wife was gone. Realization of his loss came to him suddenly; and Noel had to strike him, club him, to save him from self-destruction.

Sherwood's courage was all gone after that. Without Julie he knew that he was good for nothing and afraid of everything. Because he was worthless and a coward Julie had died. A doctor could have saved her and if he had lived in the settlements she could have had a doctor.

A year passed and Noel tried to arouse Sherwood. There was still the little girl to think of. Why didn't Sherwood get out with the girl and work among men and make a home for her? What right had he to keep her in the woods on French River? But Sherwood was hopeless. He knew himself for a failure. He had failed in the woods in the best years of his life, and he knew that he would fail in the settlements. He had thought it over a thousand times. Failure outside, among strangers, would make the future terrible for the child. What could he do in towns or cities now, he who clung to an old Indian and a little girl for courage to live from day to day?

Strangers? He would not dare look a stranger in the face!

But Marion might sicken suddenly as her mother had and die for the need of a doctor! Then he would be guilty of her death, as he was already guilty of Julie's death—because he was weak as water and a coward! Noel was right. He would take the girl away. He would take her downriver. He would forget the few poor shreds of pride left to him and ask the O'Dells to help her and him. He would go soon, some time

during the summer, before winter at the latest.

Then Louis Balenger came back to French River, all alone, and gave Sherwood the glad hand and Noel a cigar and little Marion a gold ring from his finger. He and Sherwood talked for hours that night after Noel had returned to his own cabin. Sherwood told Noel about it in the morning, early, while Balenger still slept. Balenger had offered Sherwood a job in a big city, a job in his own business, a partnership—and comfort and education and security for the little girl. But Sherwood knew that Balenger was lying—that there would be no security with him—that the business was trickery of some sort and that a weak and cowardly tool was required in it. And Noel, who had looked keenly into Balenger's eyes at the moment of their meeting, knew that Sherwood was right.

Sherwood took his daughter fishing up Kettle Brook and told Noel not to let Balenger know where he was. He was pitifully shaken. Noel kept away from the other clearing all morning. He went away back with his ax, hunting for bark with which to patch his canoe. He was in no hurry to see more of Balenger; but he went to face him at noon. There was no sign of the visitor in or around the house. He went to the top of the bank and saw the red pirogue grounded on the narrow lip of mud, half hidden from him by the overhanging brush. But he saw that there was something in the pirogue. He went down the narrow path and looked closer—and there lay Louis Balenger in the pirogue, dead! He had a bullet hole in him. He had been shot through the heart.

Sherwood and the little girl came home before sundown with a fine string of trout. Noel met them at their own door, cleaned the trout, then led the father away while the daughter set to work to fry the fish for supper. He told Sherwood what had happened and Sherwood was dumfounded. He could see that Sherwood had not done the shooting. For that matter, the distracted fellow had not taken his rifle up the brook with him.

Noel showed the body—where he had hidden it in the bushes. He took Sherwood to the pirogue and showed him faint stains in it. He had tried to wash away the stains but with only partial success.

Sherwood spoke then in a whisper, trembling all over. He said that he didn't do it but that he had planned to tell Balenger to get out that night and shoot him if he refused to go. Then he grabbed Noel by the arm and accused him of killing Balenger. His eyes were wild. But old Noel kept cool. Old Noel said that he knew nothing of the shooting, that neither of them had done the thing and that the woods were wide open. Sherwood didn't care who had pulled the trigger. It was all up with him, whoever the murderer was! His only chance was to run and run quick. Every one knew what was between him and Louis Balenger and he would be hanged for a murderer if he was caught. And what would become of Marion then?

Noel had a difficult time with Sherwood, who was mad with terror for a few minutes, but he calmed him at last sufficiently to take him back to the house. Sherwood ate his supper in a quivering silence. When the little girl kissed him he burst into tears. As soon as Marion was asleep Noel and Sherwood dug a grave and buried Balenger. Sherwood worked like a tiger. His mood had changed. He was defiant. The law would never catch him to misjudge him! Fate and the world were all against him now but he would fool them! Nothing would hurt his little daughter while he was alive—and he intended to live!

He would take Marion to the O'Dells and make his way into the States and get work where no one knew he was a failure or had ever been a coward. For he was not a coward now, by Heaven! He feared nothing but the hangman. Fate had hit him just once too often, kicked him when he was down and tried to crush his little girl. But he would outwit fate!

They returned to the cabin. Sherwood's eyes gleamed in the lamplight and his face was flushed. He wrote a note, telling Noel it was for Mrs. O'Dell, the widow of his old friend. He packed a bag, his gun and a bed roll, muttering to himself all the while. Then he went outside and looked up at the summer stars and laughed. Noel was frightened. Sherwood walked about the clearing for a few minutes, stumbling over stones and bumping against stumps and muttering like a crazy man. He quieted down and Noel got him into the house and onto his bed. He was limp as a rag by that time. Noel brewed tea for him, which he drank. He fell asleep; but he didn't get much rest, for

he twitched and muttered and jumped in his sleep all night. Noel spent the night on the floor beside Sherwood's bed, wide awake.

Sherwood looked much as usual next morning, except for his eyes. There was something more than fear in his eyes, something Noel couldn't find a name for. And he wouldn't talk, beyond telling the little girl that they were going away and what she was to do with the letter which he gave her. She kissed him and asked no questions but her eyes filled with tears. Noel tried to turn him, to change his mind about running away, pointing out that if he left French River now the law would be sure that he was guilty of his enemy's death.

It was useless, even dangerous, to argue, for he turned on the old Maliseet for an instant with a look in his eyes that shook even that tough heart. Noel was wise enough to understand that misfortune had at last goaded Sherwood beyond endurance, that it was useless to reason now, that all control was gone with one who had never listened to reasoning even under the most favorable circumstances.

Sherwood put his dunnage into the pirogue. The faint stains were well forward and he covered them with ferns and stowed the dunnage over all. He placed the little girl amidships, tenderly. She was an expert canoeman but he placed her as carefully as if she were still a babe in arms. Then he paddled downstream in the big pirogue without so much as a backward glance at his friend, old Noel Sabattis.

Noel gave the pirogue a start to the first bend in the stream, then launched his old bark canoe and gave cautious chase. He was afraid of that poor, broken, weak, cowardly, crazy Dick Sherwood. Crazy, that was right! That's why he suddenly felt afraid of him.

Noel had to paddle hard to catch sight of the pirogue before it turned into the main river. He kept close inshore, glimpsing the pirogue every now and again without showing himself in return. He saw Sherwood and the child disembark at the head of the rapids and make a line fast to the stern of the big dugout and drop it slowly down through the white and black water. That eased his anxiety considerably, for he saw that Sherwood was sane in his care of little Marion, at least. Had he been mad in every respect he would have run the rapids or made a try at it.

Noel carried his canoe around to the pool below; when he next caught sight of the big pirogue he was astonished to see that the little girl was in the stern, paddling steadily and easily and that Sherwood had vanished. Perhaps Sherwood had taken to the woods in a spasm of terror or perhaps he was still in the pirogue, lying low. Noel continued to follow cautiously. He saw nothing more of Sherwood. He saw Marion rest and drift. He saw her eat. Once she ran the bow of the pirogue against the beach and remained there for more than an hour, seated motionless, save for slow turning of her head, as if she listened and watched for something or some one. At last she continued her journey and Noel followed again. He felt quite sure that Sherwood had taken to the woods. Mad!

When within five or six miles of O'Dell's Point Noel turned and headed upstream for home. He knew that there was no dangerous water between Marion and the point and that she would reach that safe landing soon after sundown. He got back to French River next day.

That was his story. It was the story he had told to the deputy sheriff and Mel Lunt, though he had not given those worthies so detailed a version of it.

"Are you the only settler on the river?" asked Ben.

"Only one left," replied Noel.

"But don't strangers come here sometimes, sportsmen and that sort of thing?"

"Yes—but the sports who fish dis river don't come dis summer. But I see one stranger. I tell Sherwood 'bout dat feller, but he don't care. He too crazy. I tell Lunt 'bout 'im too an' Lunt call me a liar."

"What about the stranger?" asked McAllister. "Suspicious-looking character was he, or what?"

"Dat right. He come onto dis clearin' one day, sudden, an' look t'rough dat door at me an' say 'Hullo, frien', you know good feller 'round here somewheres name of Louis Balenger, hey, what?' 'Nope, don't never see Balenger,' I tell dat man. 'Balenger go off dis river ten twelve year ago an' don't come back. You his brodder, maybe, hey?' 'Brodder be tam!' dat stranger say. 'Do bizness wid him one time. Got somet'ing for him, but it don't matter. Good day.' Den he walk off quick, dat stranger, an' I don't foller him, no. He smile kinder nasty at me, wid two-t'ree gold tooth, so I t'ink

maybe Noel Sabattis may's well go right on wid cookin' his little dinner. Don't see dat stranger no more."

"When was that?" asked Ben.

"When dat feller come 'round? Four five day afore Louis Balenger come back, maybe."

"*Before* he came back? Did you tell him about it?"

"Tell Balenger? Nope. Don't tell Balenger not'ing. Don't like dat feller Balenger, me."

"And the stranger went away? He didn't wait for Balenger?"

"Dat right. Don't see 'im, anyhow. Don't see no canoe, don't smell no smoke."

"Perhaps he hid and waited for him. Perhaps he did the shooting!"

"P'r'aps. Dat what I tell Sherwood—but he don't listen. He don't care. He don't git it, Sherwood. Too scairt. Too crazy. Tell Lunt 'bout how maybe dat stranger shoot Balenger, too. Dat when he call me a liar."

Noel showed his visitors the exact spot in which the big pirogue had lain when Balenger had been found dead in it and explained its position and that of Balenger's body.

Ben took a stroll by himself, leaving his uncle and the old Maliseet smoking and yarning. He walked up and down the river along the narrow strip of shore under the bank, a few hundred yards each way, trying to picture the shooting of Louis Balenger. Then he walked up and down along the top of the bank, sometimes at the edge of the tangle of trees and brush and sometimes in it, still trying to make a picture in his mind. He busied himself in this way until supper time.

Ben took to his blankets early that night and was up with the first silver lift of dawn. He left the cabin without waking the others, hurried down to the edge of the river, got out of his shirt and trousers and moccasins almost as quickly as it can be said and plunged into the cool, dark water. He swam down with the current a short way, out in midstream, then turned and breasted the smooth, strong river. There was gold in the east now but the shadows were deep under the wooded banks. Fish rose, breaking the surface of the water into flowing circles that widened and vanished. Birds chirped in the trees. Crows cawed from high roosts. Rose tinged the silver and gold in the east and the river gleamed. Ben swam slowly, with long strokes, thrilled with the wonder of the magic of water and wood and the new day.

Ben landed on the other side of the river in a level wash of sunshine and flapped his arms and hopped about on a flat rock. In a minute his blood raced warm again and his skin glowed. He was about to plunge in again for the swim down and across to Noel's front when his attention was attracted to the bank behind and above him by a swishing and rustling in the brush.

CHAPTER VI.

HOT SCENT AND WET TRAIL.

Ben turned and looked upward. He saw dew-wet branches shaking, as if some one or something of considerable bulk was moving in the thick underbrush at the top of the bank. A red deer most likely, perhaps a moose, possibly a bear, he reflected. He felt thrilled. Moose and deer were not uncommon things in his experience but they always gave his heart a fine tingle. The thought of a bear was yet more thrilling.

The shaking of the brush continued. The movement was progressive. Whatever the animal was, it was descending the heavily screened bank directly toward the young man. Ben realized that if it was anything as tall as a full-grown moose it would be showing a head, or ears at least, by this time. The disturbance of stems, branches and foliage descended to within five yards of him. Then the round black head of a big bear emerged from the green covert.

Ben knew that bears were not dangerous except under unusual conditions and that they were never more willing to attend to their own peaceful affairs and avoid unpleasant encounters than in the late summer of a good year for berries; and yet he felt embarrassingly defenseless as he regarded the round mask and pointed muzzle. One may derive a slight feeling of preparedness in emergency from even so little as the knowledge of being strongly shod for flight or kicking or the knowledge of being toughly garbed in flannel and homespun against minor scratches. But Ben wore neither flannel, leather nor homespun to support his morale. He decided that deep water would be the only place for him if the bear should take a fancy to the flat rock upon which he stood.

The bear was evidently puzzled and some-

what discouraged by Ben's appearance. It stared at him for half a minute or more and Ben returned the stare. Then it withdrew its head from view and again the alders and birches and wide-boughed young spruces shook and tossed to its passage through them. But now the disturbance receded. It moved up the steep pitch of the bank and was lost to Ben's sight in the dusk of the forest.

"There's the power of the human eye for you!" exclaimed Ben.

But he was wrong. The human eye had nothing to do with it. The impulse necessary for the bear's retreat was derived from bruin's own optic nerves rather than from the masterful glare of Ben's orbs. In short, that particular bear had never before encountered an undressed human being, had been puzzled for a minute to know just what species of the animal world he belonged to and had then quite naturally jumped to the shocking conclusion that some one had skinned the poor man without killing him. So the bear had turned and retired.

Instead of plunging immediately into the brown water and swimming back to Noel's front and breakfast, Ben stepped ashore. He was interested in the bear. He was curious to know just how far he had chased it with his masterful glance. Had the big berry eater only retreated to the top of the bank or had he kept right on? If he hadn't kept right on another glance would set him going again, that was a sure thing.

Ben moved cautiously, not on account of the bear but in consideration of his own skin. Wild raspberries flourished among the tough and rasping bushes and saplings and perhaps poison ivy lurked among the groundlings. So Ben moved cautiously and slowly up the bank, parting the brush before him with his hands and looking twice before every step. But despite his care he received a few scratches. When halfway up the steep slope he paused, stood straight and glanced around him over and through the tops of the tangle. He saw the bow of his uncle's canoe outthrust from its slanting bed in the bushes on Noel's front. He saw the spot, the edge of moist dark soil, where the big pirogue and its grim freight had been discovered by Noel Sabattis.

Ben continued his cautious ascent of the bank, still with curiosity concerning the bear in the front of his mind but with the mystery of Louis Balenger's death looming largely behind it. He gained the level ground at the top of the bank, still with his gaze on his feet. He was about to stand upright again and survey his surroundings when a glitter in the moss a few inches from his forward foot caught his eye.

Ben stooped lower and picked up a sliver of white metal. It was a part of a clip for keeping a fountain pen in a pocket and he instantly recognized it as such. He stooped again and examined the moss; and, a second later, he found the pen itself. He was on his knees by this time, searching the moss with eager eyes and all his fingers. And here was something more—a little pocket comb in a sheath of soft leather.

Ben forgot all about the bear and was seized by an inspiration. He turned around and lay down flat on the moss, braving prickles and scratches. He placed his chest on the very spot where he had found the broken clasp, the pen and the comb, then raised himself on his elbows and looked to his front, his right and his left. He was now in the prone position of firing, the steadiest position for straight shooting.

Ben turned his face in the direction of the tree-screened clearings downstream on the other shore. He looked through a rift between stems and trunks and foliage, clear through and away on a slant across the narrow river to the spot of moist shore against which the big pirogue had lain with the dead body of Balenger aboard. His view was unobstructed.

"Not much under three hundred yards," he said. "Pretty shooting!"

Then he discarded his imaginary rifle, marked his position by uprooting a wad of moss, gripped the broken clasp, the pen and the comb securely in his left hand and got to his feet. His blood was racing and his brain was flashing. The bear was forgotten as if it had never been.

He descended the bank with considerably less caution than he had exerted in the ascent, but with more speed, and he paid for his haste with his skin. But the price didn't bother him. He didn't notice it. He regained the flat rock, glanced down and across over the sunlit surface of the brown water, then dived. He swam swiftly, though he kept his left hand clasped tight. When he landed and opened his hand he found the water had scarcely touched the leather case of the little comb. He donned his clothes in about six months and leaped up the path.

Ben found McAllister and the old Maliseet busy at the little rusty stove, frying bacon and pancakes as if for a prize.

"Hullo, you were up early," said Uncle Jim. "Did you catch the first worm?"

"I guess I did something like that," answered Ben breathlessly. "Look at these."

He stepped over to the table and laid the sliver of silver, the pen and the comb in a row beside one of the tin plates. He turned to old Noel Sabattis.

"Did you ever see these before?" he asked.

"Yep, sure I see 'em afore," replied Noel. "Where you git 'em dis mornin', hey? Where you been at, Ben? What else you got?"

"A fountain pen," said McAllister. "And a slick little comb in a leather case. Where've you been shopping so early, Ben?"

Ben paid no attention to his uncle. His eyes were on Noel's wrinkled face.

"Do they belong to you?" he asked.

"Nope. What you t'ink I want wid a comb, hey?"

"Were they Sherwood's?"

"Nope. Never see t'ings like dat on Sherwood. See 'em on dat stranger I tell you about."

"I thought so!" cried Ben. "I thought so! We've got him on toast! And Sherwood's clear!"

He took up the comb.

"Look at this," he said, pointing at gilt lettering stamped into the soft leather of the case. "Read it, Uncle Jim. *'Bonnard Frères, Quebec, P. Q.'* How's that for a morning's work on an empty stomach?"

Uncle Jim was bewildered.

"The stranger came from Quebec," he said. "Sure, I get that. Noel saw these things on him, and now you've found them somewheres. It proves he was here; but Noel told us that yesterday. I can't see how it proves he shot any one—Balenger nor any one else. If you'd found his rifle, now that would be something. But a fountain pen?"

"You meet him dis mornin', hey, an' rob 'im, hey?" queried Noel.

"Nothing like it!" exclaimed Ben. "I found these things in the moss at the top of the bank on the other side of the river. That's the very spot where he lay when he fired at Balenger. He broke the snap—the clasp there—when he was wriggling about for a clear shot through the brush, I guess, and the pen and the comb fell out of his pocket. He was in such a hurry to get away after he'd fired, when he saw he'd hit, that he didn't notice the pen and comb. They were pressed into the moss. I know that's what happened; and we know he came from Quebec; and Noel knows what he looks like. That's enough, I guess—enough to save Sherwood, anyhow."

"Yer figuring quite a ways ahead, Ben," said Uncle Jim.

"He shoot Balenger a'right, sure 'nough," said Noel. "But how you show dem police he do it wid one little pen an' one little comb?"

"It's simple. You'll understand about the shooting when you see the place. It's simple as a picture in a book. And for the rest of it, he must have been a friend of Balenger's before he became his enemy. Perhaps he and Balenger were partners of some sort. Then he was a bad character, like Balenger—and dangerous. He was dangerous, right enough—and a dead shot. So the police would know something about him, wouldn't they—the Quebec police? That stands to reason. Didn't he look like a bad character, Noel?"

"Yep, mighty bad. Nasty grin on him an' bad eye, too. Dat feller scare me worse nor Balenger scare me. When he look at me, den I can't look at his eye an' I look lower down an' see dat comb an' dat pen a-stickin' outer de pocket on his breast."

"There you are," said Ben to McAllister. "Very likely the Quebec police have his photograph and thumb prints; and I guess they have more brains than Mel Lunt. I'll write down Noel's description of him and all the other particulars I know, and go to Quebec and fix it."

Ben was in high spirits, gobbled his dinner and then had to wait impatiently for the others to finish and light their pipes. The tin dishes were left unwashed, the frying pan and griddle unscoured and the three embarked in old Noel's leaky bark and went up and across the river to the flat rock. On the way Ben told of his experience with the bear, saying that but for the peculiar behavior of bruin he would not have gone ashore and climbed the bank and found the clew that was to clear Sherwood's name in the eyes of the law.

"Just chance," he said. "But for that bear, I might have hunted a week and never happened on those things."

Uncle Jim and Noel were deeply impressed by the story of the bear.

"That was more than chance," said McAllister, voicing a whisper of his old Highland blood. "I've heard of happenings like that from old Gran'pa McAllister when I was a boy. Nature won't hide murder, he used to say. I guess yer right, Ben, after all. I reckon it'll work out the way you figure it—but it sure did look kinder mixed up to me when you first told it."

They climbed the bank above the flat rock, found the spot and there each lay down in his turn, set his elbows in the correct position and looked through and over the sights of an imaginary rifle at the spot three hundred yards away where the bad heart of Louis Balenger had suddenly ceased to function.

"Dat's right," said Noel Sabattis.

"Guess we've got him, Ben," said Uncle Jim.

The visitors set out on their homeward journey within an hour of Ben's demonstration of how the shot had been fired by the owner of the fountain pen and pocket comb. But before packing their dunnage they marked the murderer's position with a peg in the ground and blazes on several young spruces and they measured the distance in paddle lengths from that point to the point where the bullet had done its work. Then they went, in spite of old Noel's protests and Uncle Jim's willingness to remain until next morning. But Ben was in a fever of impatience. Now was not the time to humor Noel's love of talk or his uncle's instinctive objections to unseemly haste. Now was the time to follow the clew, to jump onto the trail and keep going, to hammer out the iron while it was hot. This was no time for talk. They had talked enough, reckoned enough, told enough and heard enough. Now was the time for action, for speed. Ben was right, and he had his way as far as McAllister and Noel Sabattis were concerned.

Ben took the stern of the fine canvas canoe and humped all his weight onto the paddle. Not only that, but he requested a little more weight from Uncle Jim in the bow; and the canoe boiled down French River like a destroyer.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon when they approached the thrashing, flashing head of the big rapids on the main river. Uncle Jim waved his paddle toward the landing place above the first untidy rank of jumping, jostling white and black water. The imposing shout and hum of the rapids came threateningly to their ears.

"We'll run her," cried Ben.

"D'ye know the channel?" shouted McAllister, glancing back over his shoulder.

"I asked Noel. It's close along this shore. He's often run it."

"But it ain't easy at low water. We'd best land and carry around."

"You can't miss it, Noel says. And we're in a hurry. Sit tight and keep your eye skinned, Uncle Jim. Here we go!"

They went. McAllister was an old riverman and had been down these rapids many times in past years, but never before when the river was low. In high water it was a simple matter for any good canoeman to shoot Big Rapids, but in dry seasons it was only attempted by the most skilled or most daring and not always successfully. Uncle Jim was seasoned, but he got a lot of thrills in a short time at five o'clock by the sun of this particular afternoon.

As usual, it seemed to him that the jouncing, curling, black "ripples" with their fronts shot with green and amber and their tops crested with white lather, rushed up to the canoe. That is the way with strong black and white water. The canoe seemed to be stationary, trembling slightly from bow to stern as if gathering herself to spring at the last moment to meet the shock, but otherwise as motionless as if held by ropes. Up came the raging waters, up and past the jumping, squirming canoe. Big black rocks bared themselves suddenly from white veils of froth and green vails of smooth water, shouldered at the canoe, roared at her, then vanished to the rear.

Uncle Jim felt a strong impulse, an impulse of curiosity, to look back at young Ben O'Dell. But he did not obey it. He kept his half-shut eyes to the front and now made a dig with his paddle to the right and now a slash to the left. Spray flew. The canoe jounced, shivered and jumped and yet seemed to hang unprogressing amid the furious upward and backward stream of water and rock and rocky shore. Thin films of water slipped in over the gleaming gunnels and heavy lumps of water jumped aboard and flopped aboard, now from the right and now from the left. Uncle Jim received a tubful of it smash in the chest.

Uncle Jim enjoyed it, but he did not approve of it. It was too darned reckless;

and he still believed that the very least that would happen to them before they reached smooth water would be the destruction of the canoe. But he wondered at Ben. He had taught Ben to handle a canoe in rough water and smooth, but never in such rough and tricky water as this. And here was the young fellow twisting and shooting and steadying her down in a manner which McAllister had never seen surpassed in his whole life on the river. His anxiety for Ben was almost topped by his pride in Ben.

And it looked as if they'd make it, by thunder! Here was the last ripple roaring up at them, baring its black teeth between white lips. And here was the slobbering black channel, shaking with bubbles and fringed with froth, and here was the canoe fair in it. The shouldering rocks sloshed past. Through!

Uncle Jim heard a sharp *crack* clear above the tumult of the rapids. He knew what had happened without looking. Ben's paddle had snapped. He shot his own paddle backward over his shoulder. But he was too late, though he could not possibly have been quicker. The canoe swerved like a maddened horse and struck the last ledge of Big Rapids with a bump and a rip. Then she spun around and rolled over and off.

Uncle Jim and Ben swam ashore from the pool below the rapids, Ben with his uncle's paddle gripped firmly in one hand.

"We were through," said Ben. "If my paddle had lasted another ten seconds we'd have made it."

McAllister grasped his hand.

"Sure thing we were through!" he cried. "Ben, I'm proud of you! I couldn't of done it, not for my life! Never saw a prettier bit of work in a nastier bit of water in all my born days!"

Ben beamed and blushed.

"It was great, wasn't it?" he returned. "But I'm sorry about the canoe, Uncle Jim. She badly ripped, I'm afraid. There she is, still afloat. I'll go out and fetch her in."

"But what about those things—the pen and comb?" asked Uncle Jim with sudden anxiety. "Were they with the dunnage?"

"They're safe in my pocket here, sewn in and pinned in," replied Ben. "I thought something like this might possibly happen and I wasn't taking any chances."

McAllister smiled gravely and tenderly.

"I guess you were taking more chances than you knew about, lad," he said. "But it was a fine shoot, so why worry?"

Ben took off his wet coat, jumped into the pool, swam out to the wounded canoe and brought it ashore. Together they emptied her and lifted her out of the water. Her strong, smooth canvas was torn through and ripped back for a distance of two feet and five of her tough, flat ribs were cracked and telescoped.

"We had a barrel of fun, Ben, but I reckon we didn't save much time," said Uncle Jim.

They hid the canoe where she would be safe until they could return for her, and continued their journey on foot. They walked along the edge of the river, on pebbles and smooth ledges of rock, until long after sunset. Then they climbed the high bank and hunted about for a road of some sort that might lead them to a house and food. They were on the wrong side of the river to find the highroad; and after half an hour of searching they decided that they were on the wrong side of the river for finding anything. McAllister had matches in a watertight box, so they built a big fire, made beds of ferns and dry moss and fell asleep hungry but hopeful.

CHAPTER VII.

A TRAP FOR THE HUNGRY.

Ben O'Dell and Jim McAllister reached home soon after dinner time next day, canoeless, baggageless and empty but very well pleased with themselves. They found Mrs. O'Dell and little Marion Sherwood drying the last spoon.

Mrs. O'Dell gave the returned voyagers just one look before replacing the chicken stew on the stove to reheat and the baked pudding in the oven. Then she looked again and welcomed them affectionately.

"I hope you had a good time," she said. "We didn't expect you home so soon. Why didn't you bring your blankets and things up with you?"

"We didn't fetch them home with us," said Uncle Jim. "Left them a long ways upriver, Flora. There wasn't much to fetch back—a few old blankets and a teakettle and a mite of grub. But we had a good time. For a little while there I was having more fun than I've had in twenty years, thanks to Ben."

"I ran Big Rapids, mother," said Ben, with a mixed expression of face and voice-

"I was paddling stern, you know, and we were in a hurry, and I let her go. The water was at its lowest and worst, but we got through—all but."

"Sure we got through!" exclaimed McAllister. "It was the prettiest bit of work I ever saw! We were clean through, and we'd of been home earlier, blankets an' all, if Ben's paddle hadn't bust."

"Jim McAllister! You let Ben shoot Big Rapids at low water?—that boy? What were you thinking of, Jim?"

"Let nothing, Flora! He was aft, because he's a bigger man than I am and a better one—though a mite reckless, I must say. I warned him, but not extra strong. And he did it! If there's another man on the river could do it any better, show him to me!"

"You are old enough to have more sense, Jim. And if you did it, where's your dunnage? Why did you leave it all upriver?"

"Did you run a canoe through those rapids, Ben?" asked the little Sherwood girl. "Right down those rapids between here and French River—those rapids all full of rocks and black waves and whirlpools?"

"Yes—just about," answered Ben.

"You are very strong and courageous," she said.

Ben's blush deepened and spread.

"Oh, it wasn't much. Nothing like as bad as it looks. And we didn't quite make it, anyhow. My paddle broke off clean just above the blade just before we struck smooth water—and so we struck something else instead!"

"You are very courageous. Dad wouldn't do it, even in our big pirogue. We let it through on a rope."

"And he did right," said Uncle Jim. "Yer dad showed his sense that time. I ain't blaming Ben, you understand, for I don't. It was different with Ben. He didn't have any little girl in the canoe with him, but only a tough old uncle who was seasoned to falling into white water and black before Ben here was ever born. I enjoyed it. Ben was right, sure—but Dick Sherwood was righter, Marion. He came down those rapids with you just the way any other real good father would of done it."

The little girl said nothing to that, but she went over and stood close to Uncle Jim and held his hand. Flora O'Dell grasped her son's big right hand in both of hers. Her blue eyes filmed with tears.

"Ben, you upset in Big Rapids?" she whispered faintly.

"We were clear through, mother, and upset into the pool," he said.

"I want you to be brave," she continued, her voice very low in his ear. "But I want you to remember, dear, that you are the only O'Dell on this river now—on this earth—and that life would be very terrible for me without—an O'Dell."

Ben was deeply touched. Pity and pride both pierced his young heart. Now he fully realized for the first time the wonder and beauty of his mother, of the thing that brightened and softened in her brave eyes, her love, her loneliness, her love for him. And now she called him an O'Dell; and he knew that she thought of all O'Dells as men possessed of the qualities of his heroic father. His heart glowed with pride.

"I'll remember, dear—but we were really in a hurry, mother," he answered.

For fully ten minutes he felt twenty years older than his age.

After Ben and Uncle Jim had eaten and the little girl had gone out to the orchard with a book Ben told his mother all they had learned from old Noel Sabattis and of the clew he had discovered to the identity of Balenger's murderer. He showed her the pen and comb. She felt remorse for having doubted poor Sherwood's innocence.

"Then he must be crazy—and that is almost as unfortunate," she said. "It is almost as bad for both of them."

"I don't believe he's really insane," said Ben. "He acted like it part of the time, by Noel's account, but not all the time. He was sane enough when he dropped the pirogue down the rapids on a rope instead of trying to run them. His nerves are bad and I guess he's sick. What Noel said sounded to me as if he was sick with fever—and he's afraid—afraid of all sorts of things. But I guess he'd soon be all right if he knew he was safe from the law and was decently treated. He hasn't got Balenger to worry about now. Was any more food taken while we were away, mother?"

"You still think it is Richard Sherwood who takes the food?" she asked nervously.

"I think so more than ever now, since Noel told us about him. He hadn't the nerve to go far away from his daughter."

"I wouldn't wonder if Ben's right," said McAllister.

"I hope he isn't!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Dell in a distressed voice. "A cruel thing happened last night and it was my fault. I—I told Ian about the thefts when he asked me why I was afraid to sleep without a man in the house. I didn't want him to think me just a—an unreasoning coward. And he set a trap in the bread box last night, a steel fox trap. I didn't know anything about it. I would have taken it away if I had known."

"A trap!" cried Ben, his face flushing and then swiftly paling and his eyes darkling. "A trap in this house! To hurt some one in need of bread! If he wasn't your brother I'd—I'd——"

'Same here!" muttered Uncle Jim.

"I didn't know until this morning," continued Mrs. O'Dell, glancing from her son to her brother with horrified eyes. "I found it outside, with an ax lying beside it. He had pried it open with the ax. There was blood on it. I—I went over to see Ian then—he'd gone home early—and I saw him and told him what—how I felt. I think he understood—but that won't help the—the person who was hurt."

She was on the verge of tears but Ben comforted her.

Ben and Jim McAllister spent the remainder of the afternoon in searching the woods for the poor fellow who had put his hand into the trap. Ben was sure that the person whom they sought was Sherwood and Uncle Jim agreed with him; but whoever the unfortunate thief might be, Ben felt that he was entitled to apologies and surgical aid and an explanation. These things were due to the sufferer and also to the good name of O'Dell. In setting a trap to catch a hungry thief in the O'Dell house Ian McAllister had flouted a great tradition of kindness and smudged the honor of an honorable family.

The woods were wide, the ground was dry and showed no tracks, the underbrush was thick. Their search was in vain. They shouted words of encouragement a score of times, at the top of their voices, but received no reply.

The three talked late that night after the little girl had gone to bed. Ben was determined to follow up the clew which he had obtained on French River immediately and personally, to save the poor fellow who had once been his father's friend from the blundering of the law and from destruction by his own fears. And not entirely for the sake of the old friendship, perhaps. There was their guest to consider, the brave child upstairs. His mother and uncle saw the justice of his reasoning, but without enthusiasm. His mother felt uneasy for him, afraid to have him go to a big city on such a mission. He had been away from home for months at a time during the past six or seven years, but that had been very different. He had been at school in a quiet town on the river, among people she knew. And she feared that his efforts in Sherwood's behalf would interrupt his education. She said very little of all this, however, for she knew that in this matter her son's vision was clearer and braver and less selfish than her own. Uncle Jim felt no anxiety concerning Ben, for his faith in that youth had grown mightily of late, but he wanted to know what was to become of the harvest.

It was decided that a good Indian or two should be hired to help McAllister with the harvesting of the oats, barley and buckwheat, and that Ben should go to Woodstock next day and discuss Richard Sherwood's unhappy situation with Judge Smith and return to O'Dell's Point for a night at least before going farther. Mrs. O'Dell and Uncle Jim would do everything they could to find Sherwood and reassure him. All three were convinced by now that Sherwood and the unfortunate thief were one, in spite of the fact that the red dogs had behaved as if the thief were an old and trusted friend.

Ben set out for Woodstock after an early breakfast. The long drive was uneventful. The road was in excellent condition for a road of its kind, the mare was the best of her kind on the upper river, the sun shone and the miles rolled steadily and peacefully back under the rubber tires of the light buggy.

Ben stabled the mare at the Aberdeen House stables, saw her rubbed dry and watered and fed, then sat down to his own dinner. He was well along with his meal when Deputy Sheriff Brown walked into the hotel dining room, turned around twice as a dog does before it lies down, then advanced upon Ben's table. Ben felt slightly embarrassed. He saw that Mr. Brown's face still showed something of the effects of their last meeting. The deputy sheriff held out his hand and Ben arose and took it.

"I'll eat here too, if you don't mind," said Mr. Brown.

Ben was relieved to see that, despite the

faint discoloration around the other's eyes, the expression of the eyes was friendly.

"You gave me a good one, Ben," said the arm of the law, speaking between spoonfuls of soup. "I've been thinkin' it over ever since and the more I think on it the clearer I see why you did it. I was danged mad for a spell, but I ain't mad now. Yer a smart lad, Ben, if you'll excuse me for sayin' so; and jist pig-headed enough to be steady and dependable, if you don't mind me expressin' it that way."

"It is very kind of you to think so," replied Ben.

"Oh, I'm like that. No meanness in Dave Brown. If he's wrong he's willin' to admit it once he's been shown it—that's me! I guess you were right that time in yer barn, Ben. I know darn well that you acted as if right was on yer side, anyhow."

Ben looked him steadily but politely in the eye for several seconds, then leaned forward halfway across the narrow table.

"I came down to-day to tell something important to Judge Smith and perhaps to ask his advice about it, but I think I'll tell it to you instead," he said in guarded tones.

The deputy sheriff's eyes brightened and he too leaned forward.

"Something about French River?" he whispered.

"You've guessed it, Mr. Brown. Uncle Jim and I went up there and saw old Noel Sabattis and heard all he had to tell. Among other things, we heard about that stranger Noel saw once a few days before Louis Balenger showed up again."

"There was nothin' to that, Ben. The old man said he didn't see hair nor track of him after that one minute. It wasn't even a good lie. It was jist the commencement of one—an' then Noel got wise to the fact that he couldn't git it across even if he took the trouble to invent it."

Ben smiled and sat back. The waitress was at his elbow. He ordered peach pie with cream and coffee. Mr. Brown ordered apple pie with cheese on the side and tea, and the waitress retired. Again Ben leaned forward.

"That wasn't a lie, and that stranger shot Balenger," he said.

"Shoot. I'm listenin'."

"He shot him from the top of the bank on the other side of the river, upstream, exactly two hundred and eighty-six yards away."

"Was yours apple or mince?" asked the waitress, suddenly reappearing with both arms full of pieces of pie and brimming cups.

The deputy sheriff turned the face of the law on her.

"Leave it an' beat it an' don't come back to-day!" he cried.

"He came from the city of Quebec," continued Ben, "and I wouldn't be surprised to learn that the police there know something about him."

Mr. Brown looked at once suspicious and impressed.

"It wouldn't surprise you much to learn anything, Ben," he said. "Have you got him tied under yer chair? Introduce me, will you?"

Ben laughed good-naturedly, produced the pen, the comb and the broken clip and told all that he knew about them, including old Noel's searching description of the stranger's appearance.

"Ben, I hand it to you," said the deputy sheriff. "I give you best—for the second time. Yer smart and yer steady—and yer lucky! What's yer next move?"

"What would you suggest, Mr. Brown?"

"Me suggest? That's polite of you, Ben, but I'd sooner listen to you. I got a high opinion of the way you work yer brains—*and* yer luck, if you don't object to me mentionin' yer luck."

"I was thinking that you might make a special constable of me or if I'm too young for that you might engage me as a private detective, and we'll go to Quebec and find out what the chief of police there knows about an acquaintance of Louis Balenger's with three gold teeth and a scar just below his right ear."

"Exactly what I was goin' to suggest!" exclaimed Mr. Brown. "Shake on it! I'll fix it—an' the sooner the quicker. What about the day after to-morrow? If you get here as early as you did to-day we can take the two-o'clock train."

Ben spent hours of the next day searching in the upland woods and the island thickets for Richard Sherwood. The incident of the trap had increased his pity for and his sense of responsibility toward the broken fugitive. Again his efforts were unsuccessful. He found nothing—no ashes of a screened fire, no makeshift shelter, no furtive shape vanishing in the underbrush. He left a message in the woods and down among the willows, repeated on half a dozen pages torn

from his notebook and impaled on twigs. Here is the message:

> You are safe and we are your friends. The trap was a mistake. Please come to the house.
> BEN O'DELL.

He told his mother and Uncle Jim what he had done and they approved of it. He and Uncle Jim drove away next morning; and he and the deputy sheriff caught the two-o'clock train for Quebec.

O'Dell's Point experienced busier days than usual after Ben O'Dell's departure on the trail of the marksman from Quebec. The harvest was heavy, and Jim McAllister was the busiest man on the river. By the application of a few plugs of tobacco as advances on wages he procured the services of Sol Bear and Gabe Sacobie, two good Indians. They were good Indians, honest and well-intentioned and hardy, but they were not good farm hands. If McAllister had hired them to take him to the head of the river they would have toiled early and late, bent paddles and poles and backs, made the portages at a jog trot and grinned at fatigue. That would have been an engagement worthy of a Maliseet's serious consideration and effort. But the harvesting of oats and barley was quite a different matter. Sol and Gabe could see nothing in the laborious pursuit of the dull oats but the wages. Squaws' work, this. So Uncle Jim had to keep right at their heels and elbows to keep them going.

Jim McAllister kept the sad case of Sherwood in his mind. After the day's work and the milking and feeding, when the Maliseets were smoking by the woodshed door and his sister and little Marion were sewing and reading in the sitting room, he wandered abroad with a stable lantern. He showed his light in the high pastures, along brush fences and through the fringes of the forest. Sometimes he whistled. Sometimes he shouted the name of the man who had tried to teach him to shoot duck and snipe on the wing half a lifetime ago. He did these things five nights running but without any perceptible result. And no food had been missed since the night the trap had been set and sprung. It looked to Jim as if his brother's cruel and stupid act had driven Sherwood away, had shattered his last thread of courage, dispelled the last glimmer of his sense of self-preservation and his last ray of hope.

Jim McAllister believed that misfortune, grief and fear had been too much for Dick Sherwood's sanity even at the time of Balenger's death. He believed him to have been temporarily insane even then—partially and temporarily insane. His caution at Big Rapids showed that he had then possessed at least a glimmer of reasoning power and nervous control. Friendship, companionship, assurance of his own and Marion's safety might have saved him then, Jim reflected. But now Jim couldn't see any hope for him. The trap had finished what Louis Balenger's cruelty and Julie's death had begun. Sherwood had undoubtedly taken to the limitless wilderness behind O'Dell's Point, sick, hungry, wounded and crazy with fear. He was probably dead by now.

Sunday came, a day of rest from hauling oats and barley. Sol and Gabe and Gabe's squaw breakfasted in the kitchen. Mrs. O'Dell and Uncle Jim and the little Sherwood girl breakfasted in the dining room. Uncle Jim was at his third cup of coffee and already dipping into a pocket for his pipe when his sister startled him by an exclamation.

"Hark! Who's that?"

He pricked up his ears.

"It's only the Injuns talking, Flora," he said.

"No, I heard a strange voice."

The door between the kitchen and dining room opened and old Noel Sabattis entered. He closed the door behind him with a backward kick.

"How do," he said.

His shapeless hat of weather-beaten felt was on his head, a dark pipe with a rank aroma protruded from his mouth, he held a paddle in one hand and an ancient double-barreled duck gun, a muzzle loader, in the other. Marion Sherwood stared at him wide-eyed for a moment. Then she shot from her chair, flew to him and embraced him.

"Mind yerself!" he exclaimed. "Look out for dat gun!"

"Why have you come, Noel?" she cried, pulling at his belt. "Why didn't you come to see me before? Has dad come home?"

"Nope, not yet. Two-t'ree day he come. How you feel, hey?"

"I am very well, thank you," she replied, "but worried about dad—and I've missed you. Now you must take off your hat and speak to Mrs. O'Dell, who is very kind."

McAllister and the little girl relieved the old Maliseet of his gun, paddle and hat and

Mrs. O'Dell brought a chair to the table for him and fetched more eggs and bacon from the kitchen.

Noel inquired about Sherwood at the first opportunity.

"He's gone, I guess," said Jim. "I'm afraid he's done for. One night when Ben and I were away, the last night we were away, a darned nasty thing happened. My brother Ian McAllister set a fox trap in the pantry. Whoever has been taking the food got a hand into it and had to pry himself clear of the jaws with an ax—and nothing's been taken since. It was dirty work! If Sherwood was the man, then I guess there's no chance of ever finding him—not alive, anyhow. I've hunted for him, night and day, but ain't seen track nor hair of him. He's kept right on running till he dropped, I guess. That would jist about finish him, that trap. He'd think the whole world was against him for sure."

"Yer brodder do dat, hey?" cried old Noel, angry and distressed. "You got one fool for brodder, hey? Go trappin' on de pantry for to catch dat poor hungry feller Sherwood! You better keep 'im 'way from me, Ma-callister; or maybe he don't last long!"

"He thought it was a local thief, I guess," answered Jim.

"Maybe Sherwood don't run far," said Noel. "But he lay mighty low. You hunt 'im wid dem red huntin' dogs, hey?"

"No, I didn't take the dogs in with me. They're bird dogs. They don't follow deer tracks nor man tracks. The only scent they heed is partridge and snipe and woodcock."

Noel shook his head.

"No dog ain't dat much of a fool," he said.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RED DOGS AT WORK.

Jim McAllister and old Noel Sabattis set out for the woods back of the point within an hour of Noel's arrival. They took uncooked food and a kettle and a frying pan in a bag, a cold lunch and a flask of brandy in their pockets, four blankets, two waterproof ground sheets, an ax and Noel's old duck gun. They took Red Chief and Red Lily, the oldest and next older of the three red dogs. They moved inland along a thin screen of alders and choke cherries and goldenrod until they reached a point of dense second-growth spruce and fir—this to avoid attracting the attention of Sol Bear, Gabe Sacobie and Molly Sacobie. The red dogs moved obediently "to heel" until the cover of the wood was gained.

The point of woods soon widened and merged into the unpeopled forest which lay unbroken behind the river farms for scores of miles to the right and left and spread northward for scores of unbroken miles. An eighty-rod by ten-mile strip of this forest belonged to the O'Dell property. This strip of wilderness had supplied generations of O'Dells with timber and fuel and fencing without showing a scar—nothing but a few stumps here and there about the forward fringe of it and a mossy logging road meandering in green and amber shadows. Generations of O'Dells and McAllisters had shot and hunted here without leaving a mark. Maliseets had taken toll of it in bark for their canoes, maple wood for their paddles and ash wood for the frames of their snowshoes for hundreds of years; and yet to any but the expert eye it was a wilderness that had never been discovered by man.

Jim and Noel and the dogs quartered the ground as they moved gradually northward, a man and a dog to the right, a man and a dog to left, out for five hundred yards each way and in and out again, expanding and contracting tirelessly through brush and hollow. The men kept direction by the sunlight on the high treetops and touch with each other by an occasional shrill whistle. Red Chief, the oldest dog, worked with Noel, and Red Lily with Jim.

The fact that Jim did not carry a gun puzzled Red Lily, and the fact that Noel Sabattis carried a gun and did not use it puzzled Red Chief even more. Red Lily caught the scent of partridge on leaf and moss, stood to the scent until McAllister called her off or ran forward impatiently and flushed the birds. She did these things half a dozen times and the man always failed to produce a gun or show any interest in the birds. Then she decided that he wasn't looking for birds, so she hunted hares; but he recalled her from that pursuit in discouraging tones. She smelled around for something else after that. And it was the same with Red Chief. That great dog, the present head of that distinguished old family of red sportsmen, gave Noel Sabattis five chances at partridge and two at cock without getting so much as an acknowledgment out of the ancient Maliseet. The fellow didn't shoot. He didn't even make a motion

with the duck gun. And yet he looked to Red Chief like a man who was after something and knew exactly what it was; so Red Chief ignored the familiar scents and tried to smell out the thing Noel was looking for.

At noon the men and dogs met and sat down beside a tiny spring in a ferny hollow. McAllister made a small fire and boiled the kettle. The cold lunch was devoured by the four and the men drank tea and smoked pipes. Then the fire was trodden out and the last spark of it drenched with wet tea leaves. The search was resumed.

The sun was down and though the sky was still bright above the treetops a brown twilight filled the forest when the efforts of the searchers were at last crowned with success. The honor fell to the lot of Red Chief. Noel was about to turn and close on the center with the intention of rejoining Jim and making camp for the night when he heard the dog yelp excitedly again and again. He hurried toward the sound. He forced his way straight through tangled brush and over mossy rocks and rotting tree trunks, straight into the heart of a tree-choked hollow. The dusk was almost as deep as night in there but he saw the red dog yelping over something on the ground. He joined the dog and looked close. The thing on the ground was a man. It was Richard Sherwood, unconscious, perhaps dead.

Noel's tough old heart failed him for a moment. It seemed to turn over against his ribs and he withdrew his glance from his friend and, for a moment, put an arm over the red dog's shoulder for support. Then he laid his gun down and produced the flask from his hip. He forced a few drops of brandy between Sherwood's colorless lips. His hand shook and some of the liquor spilled and ran into the wild, gray-shot beard. He felt unnerved—far too unnerved to go on with this thing alone. He believed that Sherwood was dead; and though he was glad of the red dog's presence he wanted human companionship too.

He moved away a few yards and discharged the right barrel of the old gun into the tops of the gloomy forest. The report thumped and thundered through the crowding, listening forest. Reserving the left barrel for a second signal, he returned to the body, raised the inert head again and forced a little more of the brandy between the cold lips. Red Chief whined and thrust his muzzle into Sherwood's face. Noel drew back a little, gathered dry twigs and moss together blindly and set a match to them. The red and yellow flames shot up. The light steadied his nerves but did not ease his heart. He fed a few sticks to the fire, moved off hurriedly and fired the second barrel of the big gun. When the echoes of the report had thumped to silence he heard the shrill, faint whistle of Jim's reply.

Noel became aware of a new note in the dog's whines and yelps. He stooped close and saw that Sherwood's eyes were open and alive.

"I've fooled you," whispered Sherwood. "I'm as good as dead—and the little girl is safe."

Then he closed his eyes. Red Chief ceased his whining, moved back a yard and lay down. Noel built up the fire.

Red Lily came leaping to the fire, followed by Jim McAllister. She yapped with delight and anxiety at sight of Sherwood, nosed his beard, flashed a red tongue at his pale forehead. Again he opened his eyes for a few seconds.

McAllister and Noel Sabattis worked over Sherwood for hours. The poor fellow was delirious, exhausted, burning with fever and suffering intense pain. They managed to get a little brandy and about a gill of water down his throat. He did not know them. He thought Louis Balenger was there.

"I've fooled you this time," he said. "Marion is safe. Safe with people you can't scare or trick. Safe from me—and safe from you. Leave her alone—or you'll get caught in a trap—and die of it—like me."

Later, he said, "You can't touch her, Balenger. Even the red dogs would kill you. They're my friends."

His right hand and arm were in a terrible state. The hand had been crushed straight across and torn by the steel teeth of the trap which Ian McAllister, in unthinking cruelty, had set in the O'Dell pantry. Hand and wrist were dark and swollen. The arm was swollen to the shoulder. Jim bathed it with warm water, then with hot water. They applied wads of hot, wet moss to the arm; but they had no bandages and nothing of which to make bandages for the wounded hand. And in their haste they had come without medicines—without quinine or iodine.

Sherwood was still alive at dawn. He even seemed to be a little stronger and in less

suffering. His arm was no worse, that was certain. They gave him a little more stimulant and a few spoonfuls of condensed milk diluted in warm water. It was evident from his appearance that he had been without nourishment of any sort for days and yet he seemed unconscious of hunger. He was far too ill and weak to feel anything but the pain of his hand and arm.

Jim set out for home after breakfast, on a straight line, to fetch in bandages and quinine and to get his sister's advice as to the wisdom of using iodine. He believed that nourishment and simple remedies would revive Sherwood so that they could safely remove him to the house in the course of a day or two. Then he would get a doctor from Woodstock, Doctor Scott whom he knew, to deal with the injured hand. He believed that the inflammation of the hand and arm could be reduced in the meantime by simple treatment. He left both dogs and the gun with Noel Sabattis and the sick man.

The searchers must have covered close upon thirty miles of ground in their hunt for Sherwood but they had not gone more than eight miles straight to the northward. McAllister traveled a bee line, pausing now and then to look up at the sun from an open glade. He reached the house within two hours and twenty minutes of leaving the camp in the secluded hollow.

Back in the heart of the tree-choked hollow old Noel Sabattis bathed Sherwood's hand and arm and applied wads of steaming moss to the arm and shoulder just as Jim McAllister had done. Sherwood and the dogs slept. Noel felt sleepy, too. He had been awake through most of last night and through half of the night before and during the past two days he had exerted himself more than usual. He blinked and blinked. His eyelids wouldn't stay up. He looked at his sleeping friend and the sleeping dogs. His eyes closed and he made no effort to open them. Instead, he sank back slowly until his head and shoulders touched the soft moss.

Old Noel Sabattis slept deep and long. The moss was soft and dry. The sun climbed and warmed the still air and sifted shafts of warm light through the crowding boughs. Sherwood lay with closed eyes, motionless, muttering now and again. Red Chief arose, shook himself, hunted through the woods for a few minutes, circled the hollow, then returned to the fallen fire and sleep. The other dog awoke a little later, scouted around for ten minutes, drank at the ferny spring and returned to sleep. The hours passed. Red Chief awoke again, sniffed the still air and got purposefully to his feet. He entered and vanished into the heavy underbrush with a single bound. Red Lily awoke in a flash and flashed after him. They were both back in less than a minute. They awoke Noel Sabattis by licking his face violently. They were in too great a hurry to be particular.

Noel awoke spluttering and sat up. The big dogs jumped on him and over him a few times, then turned and disappeared in the underbrush. The old man wiped his face with the back of his hand and reached for the duck gun. He had reloaded it before breakfast. He raised the hammers, produced two copper percussion caps from a pocket of his rag of a vest, capped each nipple and lowered the hammers to half cock. Then he crawled after the dogs. He found them awaiting him impatiently at the outer edge of the hollow. They jumped about him, nosed him and made eager, choky noises deep in their throats. They moved forward slowly and steadily then, with Noel crawling after. But they did not advance far; suddenly they lay down.

Noel listened. He heard something. He set his best ear close to ground while one dog watched him with intent approval and the other gazed straight ahead. He raised himself to his knees, lifted his head cautiously and looked to his front through a screen of tall brakes. He saw two men approaching, one of whom he recognized as Mel Lunt; and though he could see only their heads and shoulders he knew that they were placing their feet for each step with the utmost care. Also, he saw that each had a rifle on his shoulder.

Noel's round eyes glinted dangerously. Man hunters, hey! Sneaks! Sneaks sneaking around to jail poor Sherwood, hunting him down by tracking his friends. He stooped for a moment and patted each dog on the head.

"Lay close," he whispered.

He stood straight, advanced two paces and halted. He brought the old gun up so that the muzzles of the two barrels were in line with the heads of the intruders and in plain sight and the butt was within a few inches of the business position in the hollow of his right shoulder.

"How do. Fine day," he said.

Old Tim Hood of Hood's Ferry and Mel Lunt the local constable stopped dead in their tracks as if they were already shot. They didn't even lower their rifles from their shoulders. Their startled brains worked just sufficiently to warn them that a move of that kind might not be safe. For a few seconds they stared at Noel in silence. Then Tim Hood spoke in a formidable voice that matched his square-cut whiskers.

"What d'ye mean by p'intin' that there gun at us?" he asked.

"What it look like it mean?" returned Noel.

"That's all right, Tim," said Mel Lunt. "He's a friend of mine."

"T'ell ye say!" retorted Noel.

"Well, ye know me, I guess. I was up to yer place on French River. I'm the constable, don't ye mind? Me an' Sheriff Brown was up there."

"Sure t'ing, Lunt. What you want now?"

"Ye can't talk to me like that!" exclaimed Hood. "I don't take sass from no Injun nor from no danged O'Dell! Where's this here Sherwood the law be after? Take us to 'im!"

"Keep dat rifle steady, Lunt," cautioned Noel. "An' you too, old feller. I got jerks on de finger when I was little papoose an' mighty sick one time—an' maybe still got 'em, I dunno. Got hair trigger on dis old gun, anyhow."

"Don't ye be a fool, Noel Sabattis," said Lunt. "I'm a constable. I want this man Richard Sherwood, who's suspicioned of the murder of the late Louis Balenger, an' I know ye've got him somewheres 'round here. I'm talkin' to ye official now, Noel, as the arm o' the law ye might say. Drop yer gun an' lead us to him."

"Sherwood? Ain't I told you he don't shoot dat feller Balenger? He don't shoot nobody. You ask Brown. You ask Ben O'Dell. Ask anybody. Pretty near anybody tell you whole lot you don't know, Lunt!"

"'Zat so? I'll ask Mr. Brown when I see 'im, don't ye fret! I reckon we kin stand here's long as ye kin hold up that old gun; and then—but we'll show ye all about that later."

"Maybe," said Noel. "Hold 'im good long time, anyhow."

He glanced down and behind him, under his left elbow, for an instant. Red Lily still lay flat among the ferns but Red Chief was not there. He wondered at that but he did not worry. His admiration for the red dogs was great, though his acquaintance with them had been short.

In the meantime, Jim McAllister was returning on a bee line through the woods, with iodine and quinine and bandages and boric powder in his pockets and a basket containing a bottle of milk and a dozen fresh eggs in his right hand. When he was within half a mile of poor Sherwood's retreat he was met by Red Chief. The old dog leaped about him, squirmed and wriggled, ran forward and back and forward again. Jim knew that he was needed for something and quickened his pace. Red Chief led him straight. Soon the dog slackened his pace and glanced back with a new expression in his eyes. It was as if he had laid a finger on his lips for caution. Jim understood and obeyed, anxious and puzzled. He stooped, looked keenly to his front and set his feet down with care.

Jim heard voices. A few seconds later, he glimpsed the shoulders of two men among the brown boles of the forest, topping the underbrush. He saw rifles slanted on their shoulders. He set the basket of eggs and milk securely in a ferny nook and continued to advance with increased caution. He recognized the voice of Mel Lunt. Then he heard Noel's voice. He heard the old Maliseet say, "I kin hold her annoder hour yet. Den maybe git so tired me finger jerk, hey? Maybe. Dunno."

He saw Noel facing the others, standing with his back square to the dense growth of Sherwood's retreat. He saw the duck gun. In a flash he understood it all; and in another flash of time indignation flared up in him like white fire. Lunt, that brainless sneak! And old Tim Hood, whose only pleasure was derived from the troubles of others! So they had spied on him, had they? Tracked him on his errand of mercy!

McAllister ran forward. Noel saw him coming, grinned and steadied the big gun. McAllister seized a rifle with each hand and yanked them both backward over their owners' shoulders. He moved swiftly around and confronted the intruders. The glare of his gray eyes was hard and hot. He tossed one rifle behind him and held the other in readiness after a jerk on the bolt and a glance at the breech.

"Guess I go bile de kettle now," said Noel

Sabattis; and he lowered the duck gun and retired. His old arms trembled with fatigue, but his old heart was high and strong.

"What have you two got to say for yerselves?" asked McAllister, turning his unnerving gaze from Lunt to Hood and back to Lunt. "Ain't you read the game laws for this year? Hunting season opens October first, as usual. Or maybe you forgot I'm a game warden."

"Cut it out, Jim McAllister!" retorted Lunt. "I'm a constable. Ye ain't forgot that, I guess."

"Sure, I know that. And as you won't be one much longer, I'll use you now. Arrest Tim Hood an' take him down to Woodstock to the sheriff—an' hand yerself over too while ye're about it. The charge is carrying loaded rifles in these woods in close season."

"None o' that," said old Tim Hood. "Ye can't fool me, Jim. Me an' Mel ain't here to kill moose or deer—an' well ye know it. We be here to take a man the law wants for murder. So back out an' set down, Mr. Jim McAllister. This ain't no job for a game warden."

"I'll be as easy on you as I can," returned Jim. "Ye're out for Sherwood, I know. Well, Sherwood didn't murder anybody. The shooting was done by a stranger from Quebec and Dave Brown and young Ben O'Dell are looking for him now in Quebec."

"I ain't been officially notified o' that," said Lunt. "As a private citizen I reckon it's a lie—an' as an officer of the law I couldn't believe it anyhow. I'm here to do my duty."

"Did you call me a liar, Mel?"

"I ain't here to pick over my words with you nor no man. I'm here to do my duty."

"Toting a rifle in close season. Show me yer warrant for Richard Sherwood's arrest."

"Show nothin'," snarled old Tim Hood.

Jim moved backward until he reached the discarded rifle. He laid the second rifle beside it. Red Lily had joined him and Red Chief at the moment of their arrival on the scene.

"Guard 'em, pups," he said.

The big red dogs stood across the rifles. McAllister walked close up to the intruders, unarmed, his hands hanging by his sides.

"Hood, ye're an old man and a spiteful one, and because of yer age I'm only telling you to get off O'Dell land as quick as you know how," he said. "I'll keep yer rifle till you pay yer fine for carrying it in close season. Beat it! But ye're not too old to kick, Mel Lunt. Ye're my own age and heft and it ain't my fault ye're not as good a man. You had ought to thought of that before you called me a liar."

He swung his right hand, wide open, and delivered a resounding smack on the constable's left ear. Lunt staggered, cursing. Jim stepped in and placed a smart left on the nose and upper lip. Lunt made a furious but blind onslaught and was met by a thump on the chest that shook his hat from his head and his socks down about his ankles. Jim was unskilled as a boxer; but he was powerful and in good condition; the Highland blood of the McAllisters and the pride of the O'Dells were raging in him and he had picked up a few notions from young Ben. He biffed Mel again, but not in a vital spot.

Old Tim Hood, that bitter soul, was not idle. He dashed toward the rifles on the ground, his square-cut white whiskers fairly bristling with rage. Murder was in his heart —but there was no courage back of it. He beheld the masks of the red dogs—wrinkled noses, curled lips, white fangs and blazing eyes. His dash stopped suddenly within a yard of the rifles. He heard throaty gurgles. The bristle went out of his whiskers. He turned and jumped away in a cold panic. But rage still shook in his heart. He stooped and fumbled in the moss and ferns for a stone with which to smash Jim McAllister on the back of the head. It was a style of attack with which he had been familiar in his younger days. He found the thing he wanted, conveniently shaped for the hand and about seven pounds in weight.

Hood straightened himself, stone in hand, just in time to glimpse a red flash. Then something struck him all over and down he went, flat on his back, and the stone went rolling. For half a second he kept his eyes open. Half a second was long enough. He saw white fangs within an inch of his face, crimson gums, a black throat, eyes of green fire. His heart felt as if it would explode with terror. He screamed as he waited for the glistening fangs to crunch into his face. He waited and waited.

Mel Lunt was glad to run as soon as he realized that McAllister was too good for him. He saw that the thing to do was to

run while he could and get to Woodstock as soon as possible and interview the high sheriff of the county. There might be something in the story about the man from Quebec, though he doubted it. He needed a warrant for Sherwood's arrest, anyway; and after that he would settle with McAllister and old Noel Sabattis. So he staggered southward; and Jim sped him with a kick.

Then Jim turned and whistled Red Chief off Tim Hood's chest. The old dog came trotting, waving his red plume. Red Lily continued to stand guard over the rifles. Jim walked over to where Hood lay motionless with closed eyes.

"Get up," he said. "You ain't hurt. No one touched you."

Mr. Hood opened his eyes, sat up and looked around him.

"Lunt has gone south," said Jim. "I reckon you can overhaul him if you hurry. Beat it!"

The bitter old ferryman got to his feet without a word and headed south at a very creditable rate of speed.

In the city of Quebec, in the midst of excitements and novelties, Deputy Sheriff Brown and young Ben O'Dell went earnestly and successfully about their business. Mr. Brown's mind and heart were set on catching a murderer, Ben's thoughts and efforts were all bent upon clearing and saving the innocent. The success of either meant the success of both, so they worked in perfect accord.

Ben was the superior in imagination and intelligence but Brown knew the ways of the police and of cities. Brown obtained audience with the chief of police and Ben's manner of telling the story of the French River shooting did the fine work. The stranger who had dropped his pen and comb on French River was soon identified as one Norman Havre, alias "Black" McFay, alias Joe Hatte, known to the police. Louis Balenger's record was also known to them.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SICK MAN.

Jim McAllister and Noel fed Sherwood with milk, dosed him with quinine, bathed his hand with a hot solution of boric powder and touched it with iodine, placed hot compresses on his arm and bandaged him generously if not scientifically. He responded encouragingly to the treatment. It was easy to see that the pain in his arm had lessened. For a few hours of the afternoon he appeared to be cooler and felt cooler, lay awake without gabbling and slept without muttering and tossing. Once he recognized Noel Sabattis and spoke to him by name; and Noel patted his head and told him not to worry about anything for everything was going fine.

Sherwood was delirious during the night but not to the extent of the night before. In the morning he showed marked improvement, took his bitter dose of quinine as if he knew that it was good for him, drank an egg beaten up in milk, spoke affectionately to the red dogs and then to Jim McAllister, in puzzled tones, with something of recognition and more of fear and suspicion in his eyes.

"What are you going to do with me?" he asked.

"Take you home, Dick, and get a doctor for you," replied Jim.

"What's the idea?"

"I'm Jim McAllister. I live with my sister and young Ben O'Dell and your little girl—all one family—at O'Dell's Point. And that's where Noel and I mean to take you to. That's the idea. So there's nothing for you to worry about."

"Where's Louis Balenger?"

"You don't have to worry about him any more. He's dead."

"Yes, I remember that. Noel and I buried him. You remember that, Noel? He was dead, wasn't he?"

"Yep, he won't never move no more," replied the Maliseet.

"Did I shoot him?" asked the sick man.

"No, you didn't," said Jim sternly. "You weren't anywheres near him when he was shot; and if you hadn't been sickening with fever you wouldn't of run away. Balenger was shot by a man from Quebec and Ben O'Dell is hunting him this very minute."

"Who's Ben O'Dell?"

"He's John's son. Now you quit talking and take a rest."

"I was at John's funeral. You didn't know it but I was there. No one knew it, for I was ashamed to show myself. He was my friend. He was my company commander once."

"I know all about that, Dick. But you mustn't talk any more now. Yer a sick man."

Sherwood fell asleep. Jim and Noel made a stretcher of two poles, crosspieces and a pair of blankets; at ten o'clock they broke camp. They made a mile in slow time, then set the stretcher down and fed their patient. They marched again, walking with the utmost care, but Sherwood soon became excited and they had to halt, make a fire and bathe and dress his hand and arm. Again they dosed him and fed him. They rested until long past noon. They thought him to be asleep when they raised the stretcher for the third time, but he awoke instantly.

"Leave me alone!" he cried. "You can't fool me! I know you. You set a trap for me."

They kept on.

"That trap wasn't set for you, Dick," said McAllister over his shoulder. "That was a mistake."

"I didn't shoot Balenger, honest I didn't!" pleaded Sherwood. "I was going to—if I had the nerve—but I didn't do it. I was scared—afraid they'd hang me and Marion would starve—that's why I ran. But you set a trap for me—and caught me—and now you've got me."

"Nobody catch you!" cried Noel. "You all safe now. Jim an' me take you to Marion. You sick an' crazy, dat's all. Go to sleep. Shut up!"

He was quiet for a time but again broke out in terrified ravings before they had gone far. They had to set him down to quiet him. Again they built a fire, boiled the kettle, applied hot compresses to his arm. They fed him a hot drink and he went to sleep. But Jim saw that it would be dangerous to try to carry him farther that day, that all the traveling must be done in the morning when the fever was at its lowest. They had already covered about four of the eight miles. Old Noel rubbed his arms and said he had never before traveled such hard miles.

Jim was tired and anxious, but more anxious than tired. His anxiety was for the farm and his sister and the little girl almost as much as for the sick man. He was afraid of old Tim Hood, though he didn't admit it frankly even to himself. But Hood had always been a tricky character as well as a spiteful one and he had held a grudge against the O'Dells for many years; yesterday, when the old fellow's eyes had met his for an instant after the humiliating adventure with Red Chief, Jim had seen danger there. So after drinking a mug of tea he continued on his way, promising to return some time during the night. He took one of the rifles and Red Lily with him.

Jim reached home in time for supper. The last load of grain was in, but Bear and Sacobie and Mrs. Sacobie had not yet taken their departure. He asked all three to remain until after breakfast next morning, which they gladly agreed to do; and then, without his sister's knowledge, he arranged with the men that one should stand guard on the barns all night and one on the house. He told them that he had caught Tim Hood in the woods with a loaded rifle and disarmed him and that the old man was mad enough for anything. Hood was not popular with the Indians or any other poor and needy folk on the river, so Jim knew that the watch would be well kept.

He didn't say a word about Mel Lunt. He wasn't worrying about the constable, knowing that his worst faults were stupidity and professional vanity. That Lunt would try to get even with him was very likely, but by means and methods within the law—to the best of Mel's knowledge and belief, at least. He would probably make another effort to arrest Sherwood if he was able to obtain a warrant through the blundering of his superiors at Woodstock; and he was sure to try to get a warrant for Jim's arrest. But Jim didn't worry about anything Mel Lunt might do. Old Hood was the man he feared.

Jim managed a few minutes of private conversation with his sister, and they decided that if Sherwood should reach the house next day the little girl should be kept in ignorance of his identity—at least until medical care had cured him of his wild delirium. They believed that Doctor Scott and good nursing would accomplish this in a day or two. Little Marion was not of a prying disposition. To tell her that the sick man in the big spare room was not to be disturbed would be enough. The big spare room was so far from Mrs. O'Dell's room, in one corner of which Marion occupied a small bed, that there would be no danger of poor Sherwood's humiliating and pitiful and cruelly illuminating fever talk reaching the child's ears.

Jim spent a few minutes with the little girl before she went to bed. She took him to the library, set the lamp on the floor, sat down beside it and pulled a portfolio of old

colored prints out from under one of the bookcases. She had discovered it a few days ago. The prints were of hunting scenes —of men in red coats and white breeches riding tall horses after red foxes, flying over green hedges, tumbling into blue brooks, but always streaming after the black and liver and white dogs who streamed after the fox.

"My dad once told me about that," said Marion. "He used to do it before he came out to this country, whenever he wasn't soldiering."

"Rough on the fox," said Uncle Jim. "Worse than trapping him, I guess. Why didn't they shoot him and be done with it?"

"That's what I said to dad," replied Marion. "But he said it wasn't so, for as soon as the fox felt tired he jumped into a hole in the ground and then the hunt was finished. They must have chased foxes a great many years in England, for I am sure these pictures are a great deal older than dad."

"Sure thing, much older," agreed Jim. "Those pictures were bought in London by Ben's great-grandfather."

The little girl returned the portfolio to its place and drew forth a shallow box of polished mahogany.

"Have you seen these, Uncle Jim?" she asked.

McAllister smiled. He had seen the contents of the box, but he also saw what she was up to. She was entertaining him in the hope that by so doing she might be allowed to sit up a few minutes past her usual bedtime.

"I don't mind seeing them again," he said.

She raised the lid of the box and disclosed to view two short brown pistols beautifully inlaid with silver about the grip and lock, a little metal flask, a cluster of bullets, a little ramrod, a lot of paper wads and dozens of tiny metal caps. All these curious articles lay on dark-green felt, the pistols in a central position, each of the different sorts of munitions in its own little compartment. The barrels of the pistols were short but large of bore.

"Ben showed me these," she said. "He told me all about how to load them. They are very, very old. You don't just put a cartridge in, like you do with a rifle or shotgun, but you ram the bullets and powder and wads down the muzzles, with that little stick and then put those little caps on, the same way Noel Sabattis does with his duck gun. I've seen Noel put the caps on his gun, but dad's was like a rifle. Noel's duck gun must be very old."

"Yes, but it's still of more use than those pistols ever were," replied Jim, thinking of the good work the Maliseet's great weapon had done only yesterday and of the purpose for which the little dueling pistols had been so beautifully and carefully made in the ignorant days of the gay youth of one of Ben O'Dell's kind but conventional ancestors.

"What were the little pistols used for, Uncle Jim?" asked Marion.

"Well, you see, in the old days it wasn't all clover being a man of high family," he said. "It had its drawbacks. You were a man of mark, for sure. If a man is sassy to you nowadays, calls you names or anything like that, all you got to do is sass him back or kick him if you can; and all he can do is kick back—and that's all there is to it, no matter who you are or who yer grandfather used to be. But in the old days when these pistols were made it was different. If a man was rude to you then—said he didn't like the way yer nose stuck out of yer face or that the soldiers in yer regiment all had flat feet or maybe got real nasty and called you a liar—you had to throw a glassful of port wine or sherry wine into his face. Then it was up to him to ask you, as polite as pie, to fight a duel with him. And you had to do it or yer friends would say you weren't a gentleman—and that was considered a rough thing to say about a man in those days. So you had to do it, even if the law was against it. That's what those little pistols were for."

"To shoot gentlemen with?" asked the little girl in an awe-struck whisper.

"Yes—but they'd hit almost any kind of man if they were aimed right."

"And have these ones done that—shot people, Uncle Jim?"

"I guess they never shot anybody very seriously, dear. The O'Dell who owned them was a kind man, like all the O'Dells before and since, and brave as a lion and steady as a rock and a dead-sure shot. So whenever he was fussed and tricked into proving he was a gentleman—which everybody knew already—by fighting with a fool, he'd shoot the other lad in the hand that held the pistol—or the elbow or maybe the shoulder. It wasn't long before folks quit being rude to him."

Just then Mrs. O'Dell entered the library. Marion closed the box, shoved it back beneath the bookcase and kissed McAllister good night.

Jim posted Sol Bear and Gabe Sacobie, charged them to keep a sharp lookout and armed them with sled stakes. Enthusiastic Indians were not to be trusted with explosive weapons on such a job as this at night. And he left Red Lily with them. With two good Indians and a red dog outside and a squaw and another red dog in the kitchen he felt that old Tim Hood would not accomplish any very serious damage no matter how spiteful and reckless he might be feeling. Then he set out for the spot in the wilderness, due north and four miles away, where he had left the sick man and Noel Sabattis and Red Chief.

Jim might have spared himself these elaborate precautions had he known that Tim Hood's cowardice was still in excess of his rage. The old fellow still agreed with Mel Lunt, the thrice foiled but ever hopeful, that the safest and quickest way of getting in the first return blow at Jim McAllister was through the unfortunate Sherwood. So he continued to work with Lunt, to support the might and majesty of the law as interpreted by that persistent local constable. The O'Dell barns were not threatened that night. Sol and Gabe twirled their sled stakes in vain and at last fell asleep at their posts.

Jim found the camp without much difficulty. Sherwood was sleeping then but Noel said that he had been awake and raving for hours. Jim slept for an hour, then bathed and dressed the sick man's hand and arm, with Noel's assistance, dosed him with quinine and a full mug of cold water. All was quiet after that until about three o'clock, when Sherwood's restlessness again awoke the others. Again they applied hot compresses to his arm and gave him water to drink and tucked his blankets securely around him.

Sherwood awoke again shortly after dawn, hungry, clear of eye and as sane as you please. He drank fresh milk, a bottle of which Jim had brought in last night. He recognized Jim and of course he knew Noel Sabattis. He thanked them for all the trouble they were taking for him and said that he wasn't worth it.

"When I made sure Marion was safe and would soon be happy enough to forget me I didn't care how soon I pegged out," he said. "I was ill, very ill. The sickness had been in me for weeks, I think—I don't know how long. I was delirious even in the daytime and my nights were wide-awake nightmares. All my past haunted me. If I had ever been unkind to Julie or the baby I'd of gone mad and killed myself. But I'd never been unkind to them—not intentionally—just weak and a coward."

"You a'right now, anyhow," interrupted Noel. "Marion a'right too. Take annoder drink."

Sherwood drank obediently.

"The last night I crawled in," he continued, "and got my hand in that trap—well, that finished me! I don't know how I got the trap clear of my hand. I don't know how I got into the woods."

"My brother Ian set that trap and no one else knew anything about it," said Jim. "I guess he didn't stop to think what he was doing. Ben and I were away. But Doctor Scott'll fix yer hand, don't you worry."

"But will I be safe, Jim? From the law?"

"Sure thing! There's nothing you need fear the law about. I reckon Ben and Dave Brown know exactly who shot Balenger by this time and like enough they've caught him. But that don't matter one way or the other. The police know you didn't do it. But why didn't you tell us you wanted food? Why didn't you come right in and eat with us?"

"I was ashamed. And I was crazy with fear. I was sick, too—sick with fever, I suppose. I thought every one was hunting me to hang me and half the time I thought I'd really shot Balenger. I had a picture in my mind of just how I did it. But I cculdn't go far away from the little girl."

"How was it the dogs never tackled you?" asked Jim.

"Never mind dat!" exclaimed Noel. "Shut up an' lay quiet! You shut up too, McAllister! You start him talkin' crazy ag'in, maybe."

"Dogs know me, and that red breed better than any," said Sherwood. "I think that the red dogs inherited a friendship for me."

"Maybe so, Dick; but Noel is right. Rest now. Don't try to think any more or yer fever'll be up again. We've got four miles to carry you yet."

They started after breakfast with Sherwood in the stretcher. They made the four miles by noon. They set the stretcher down behind a clump of bushes at the back

of the barnyard and Jim went ahead to warn his sister and get little Marion out of the way. Marion was given lessons to learn in the library.

Sherwood was unconscious, murmuring, dry of hand and lip and flushed of brow by the time Jim laid him on the bed in the big spare room. His appearance shocked Mrs. O'Dell and at sight of his right hand she turned away to hide her tears. But she dried her tears and set to work as soon as the men had cut and pulled away Sherwood's tattered clothing and placed him between the cool sheets. She gave the torn hand and swollen arm the most thorough and tender treatment it had yet received.

The little girl was told of the sick man in the spare room whom Uncle Jim and Noel Sabattis had found in the woods. She was cautioned not to play in the hall outside his door or make a noise in the garden under his windows, for he was very weak and needed sleep. She was impressed. She questioned old Noel.

"Where did you find him in the woods, Noel?" she asked.

"Way off nort', layin' on de moss," replied Noel. "Red Chief find 'im first."

"Do you often find sick men lying in the woods?"

"Nope. Some time."

"It is a good thing the bears didn't find him and eat him up."

"B'ars don't eat men up."

"I hope dad isn't in the woods still. I saw him go into the woods, away upriver, but he said he would come here for me in a few weeks."

"Sure, he come here for you. Come in two t'ree days now, maybe."

"If he was sick and got lost in the woods like the man in the big spare room, what would happen to him, Noel?"

"What happen to him if he get lost in de woods, hey? Same what happen to dis feller—me an' Jim McAllister an' dese here dogs find 'im. Nobody git lost 'round here widout we find 'im quick an' fetch 'im home."

Jim drove away soon after dinner, headed for Woodstock and Doctor Scott. He reached the town in two hours. He drove to the doctor's house, only to learn that the doctor was out in the country, downriver, and wasn't expected home for an hour or two. Jim stabled the mare, treated himself to a big cigar and strolled along Front Street. He was greeted by several people he knew. Soon he was greeted by a man he didn't know but who evidently knew him.

"Yer Jim McAllister, ain't you?" inquired the stranger, halting squarely in his path.

The stranger wore the uniform of a policeman. Jim didn't like his looks or his voice.

"Christened James," said Jim, dryly, "and with a handle in front of it when I'm smoking a fifteen-cent cigar."

"Yer wanted, Mister James McAllister," returned the other. "Come along, cigar an' all."

"Who wants me?"

"Sheriff Corker."

"Lead me to him, sonny. I can do some business with the sheriff myself. But I'm in a hurry."

They walked along side by side. The sheriff was not at home.

"We'll wait," said the policeman to the sheriff's cook.

Jim McAllister looked at his watch.

"I guess not," he said. "We'll call again, some other day."

"Guess again," returned the young man in blue.

"My second guess is the same," retorted Jim.

"I've heard about you, Mr. McAllister. Yer smart, but you ain't the only one. I know yer a game warden an' a big man upriver, but all that don't cut no ice to-day. There's a warrant out for you."

"You don't say! Sworn out by Mel Lunt and old Tim Hood, hey? Where is it, chief?"

"I ain't the chief. And I ain't got the warrant. But the sheriff will know what to do next."

"If he don't I can tell him. Mel got two, didn't he—two warrants? One was for Richard Sherwood, wasn't it?"

"That's right."

"Suppose we take a scout around for Sheriff Corker. I'm in a hurry."

"Guess we best set right here an' wait for him."

"What's yer name?"

"My name? Bill Simpson."

"Jerry Simpson's son, from down on Bent Brook."

"That's right, Mr. McAllister."

"I know yer father well. Smart man, Jerry Simpson. You look like him. Now about the hurry I'm in. There's a sick man out at the O'Dell house and I've got to get

out to him with Doctor Scott. He's the man poor Mel Lunt's got the warrant out for. Mel's crazy. I've got Mel cold—and old Hood too—for toting rifles and ball ca'tridges through the woods in close season. There's nothing against Sherwood and Dave Brown is up in Quebec now, looking for the man who did the thing they're chasing poor Sherwood for. Mel Lunt is making a fool of Sheriff Corker. You come along with me, Bill, and save the sheriff's face—and maybe an innocent man's life, too. Mel's fool enough to drag Sherwood right out of bed, sick an' all."

"I'd sure like to do it, Mr. McAllister, but I dassint. I'm on duty in town all day. If I went with you I'd lose my job."

"Now that's too bad, but if you can't, you can't. The sheriff will wish you did when Dave Brown gets back from Quebec. I'll have to go by myself, then."

"Sorry, Mr. McAllister, but I got to keep you right here till the sheriff comes home. Rules is rules."

"And reason is reason, Bill—and when a man can't see reason it's time to operate on his eyes."

There was a brief, sharp scuffle in the sheriff's front hall. Young Bill Simpson proved too quick for Jim McAllister. He didn't hit any harder than he had to with his official baton—but it was too hard for Uncle Jim.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

By four o'clock, Richard Sherwood seemed to be as ill as when his friends had found him in the forest—as hot and dry with fever, as grievously tortured with pain, as blackly tormented of mind. That he was much stronger than he had been and that the mangled hand and inflamed arm looked better were just now the only indications of improvement.

Mrs. O'Dell and Noel Sabattis did everything they could think of for his relief. Mrs. O'Dell feared for his life, but old Noel was hopeful.

"Tough feller, Sherwood," he said. "Dat four-mile trip to-day fuss 'im up some, but he ain't so bad like when we find 'im. T'ink he dead man for sure dat time, me an' Jim. Doctor fix 'im a'right."

Mrs. O'Dell left the sick room for a little while. Marion saw tears on her cheeks.

"Won't the man from the woods get well, Aunt Flora?" she asked.

"He is very ill, dear—and in great pain—with a wounded hand," replied the woman, kissing her.

"Does Noel think he will have to be put in the ground—like Julie was—my mother Julie?"

The woman held the little girl tight for a moment.

"Noel thinks he will get well," she whispered.

At six o'clock Sherwood was sleeping quietly, heavy with fever and evidently unconscious of his hand. By seven he was tossing and talking wildly again. There was no sign of Jim McAllister or the doctor.

Eight o'clock came, and still there was no word or sign of Jim or Doctor Scott. The sick man was bathed in perspiration by this time.

"Dat fix 'em," said Noel to Flora O'Dell. "Dat sweat out de fever off his blood, a'right."

Marion went to bed at eight-thirty. Five minutes later wheels rumbled, the red dogs barked and a knock sounded on the kitchen door. Mrs. O'Dell heard the dogs and wheels and came hurrying down the back stairs. Noel, who was already in the kitchen, hastened to the door. The lamp was on the table behind him. He pulled the door wide open, and in the instant of recognizing Mel Lunt and old Hood on the threshold he also saw and recognized the muzzle of a shotgun within six inches of his chin.

Noel stepped back a few paces and the visitors followed him sharply. Hood kicked the door shut behind him just in time to keep out the red dogs. While Lunt kept Noel covered, Hood snapped the steel bracelets into place.

"Yer arrested," said Hood. "Where's McAllister?"

At that moment, both intruders saw Mrs. O'Dell standing near the foot of the back staircase, gazing at them with amazement and growing apprehension in her blue eyes.

"I don't want to p'int no weepon at a lady, but you come away from there an' set down an' keep quiet," said Lunt.

Mrs. O'Dell sat down on the nearest chair, which was only a few feet away from the narrow staircase.

"Where's yer brother Jim, ma'am?" asked Lunt.

"He went to Woodstock for a doctor," she replied.

"None o' yer lies, mind!" cried Hood.

The expression of Flora O'Dell's eyes changed, but she did not speak.

"Then he's in jail by this time," said Lunt.

"I don't understand," said Mrs. O'Dell, turning her darkling glance from Hood to Lunt. "He went to town for Doctor Scott. Why should he go to jail? And why have you put handcuffs on Noel Sabattis?"

"It be for us to ask questions an' for ye to answer 'em," cried old Hood in his worst manner. "Ye got a sick man here in the house, ain't ye? Come now, speak up sharp. Ain't no use yer lyin' to us."

"Yes, he is very sick," Mrs. O'Dell replied, her voice low and shaken. "He is dangerously ill. My brother has gone to get a doctor for him."

"He kin be doctored in jail," said Hood.

"That's right, ma'am," said Lunt. "The doctor can 'tend him in jail. We gotter take him now. Where is he?"

"It would kill him to move him to-night!"

"Well, what of it? He'll likely be hung anyhow," retorted the bitter old ferryman.

"That is not true and you know it!" cried Mrs. O'Dell. "You are persecuting him in wicked spite. You are a spiteful, hateful old man! And you, Melchar Lunt—you must be crazy to enter this house, armed, and threaten me and my guests!"

Hood uttered a jeering laugh.

"We got the warrants all straight and proper," said Lunt. "I'm in my rights, performin' my duty under the law, whatever ye may think. We wouldn't be so ha'sh if we wasn't in a hurry."

"You are in a hurry because you know that you haven't much time for your dirty, cruel, cowardly work, and you are afraid!"

"Misnamin' us won't help ye none, nor the murderer upstairs neither," sneered Hood, moving toward her.

She sprang to her feet and stood with her back to the narrow foot of the staircase. Noel Sabattis made a jump at Hood, but Lunt seized him and flung him down and threatened him with the gun. Hood advanced upon Mrs. O'Dell and suddenly clutched at her, grabbing her roughly by both arms. He gripped with all the strength of his short, hard fingers and tried to wrench her away from the staircase. She twisted, freed a hand and struck him in the face, twisted again, freed the other hand and struck him again. He staggered back with one eye closed, then rushed forward and struck furiously with his big fists, blind with rage and the sting in his right eye. Several blows reached her but again she sent him staggering back.

"Quit that!" cried Lunt. "Ye can't do that, ye old fool!"

He grabbed Hood by the collar, yanked him back and shook him.

"Are ye crazy?" he continued. "Young O'Dell would tear ye to bits for that! Go tie the Injun's legs. Then we'll move her out of the way both together, gentle an' proper, an' go git the prisoner."

Hood obeyed sullenly. He bound Noel's feet together with a piece of clothesline and tied him, seated on the floor, to a leg of the heavy kitchen table.

Little Marion Sherwood had heard the dogs and the wheels and immediately slipped out of bed. Perhaps it was Ben, she had thought. That would be fine, for she missed Ben. Or it was Uncle Jim and the doctor from Woodstock to make the sick man well. She had gone to the top of the back stairs and stood there for a long time, listening, wondering at what she heard. She had been puzzled at first, then frightened, then angered. She had fled along the upper halls to the head of the front stairs and down the stairs. She had felt her way into the library and to a certain bookcase and from beneath the bookcase she had drawn the shallow, mahogany box which contained the little pistols with which gentlemen had proved themselves gentlemen in ancient days.

She had opened the box and worked with frantic haste—with more haste than speed. She had worked by the sense of touch alone and fumbled things and spilled things. Bullets had rolled on the floor, powder had spilled everywhere, wads and caps and the little ramrod had escaped from her fingers again and again; but she had retained enough powder, enough wads, two bullets and two caps. She had returned up the front stairs and along the narrow halls.

Now that Noel was tied down, Lunt stood his gun against the wall and gave all his attention to Mrs. O'Dell.

"I don't want to hurt ye," he said. "An' I ain't goin' to hurt ye. But I gotter go upstairs, me an' Tim Hood, an' fetch down

the prisoner ye've got hid up there. I'm sorry Tim mussed ye up, ma'am, but ye hadn't ought to obstruct the law. Will ye kindly step aside, Mrs. O'Dell?"

"I won't! If you force your way past me and carry that man off to-night you'll be murderers, for he'll die on the road. If you try, I'll fight you from here every step of the way."

"We're in our rights, ma'am. I'm a constable an' here's the warrant. It ain't my fault he's sick—even if that's true. You grab her left arm, Tim, an' I'll take her right, an' we'll move her aside an' nip upstairs. But no rough stuff, Tim!"

A voice spoke in a whisper behind Mrs. O'Dell, from the darkness of the narrow staircase.

"Put your right hand back and take this pistol."

The woman recognized the voice but failed to grasp the meaning of the words. The little girl was frightened, naturally. That thought increased her unswerving hot rage against the men in front of her. She did not move or say a word in reply.

She felt something touch her right hand, which was gripped at her side. Again she heard the whisper.

"Take it, quick. It's all loaded, the way Ben told me. I have the other. Point it at them, quick!"

The men moved toward her. She opened her fingers and closed them on the butt of a pistol. She felt a weight on her shoulder and saw a thin arm and small hand and the other old dueling pistol extended past her ear. She raised her own right hand and cocked the hammer with a click.

"They are loaded!" cried the little girl shrilly. "And the caps are on, and everything. Ben showed me how to load them. And I'll pull the trigger if you come another step, you old man with the queer whiskers! The bullets are big. And I put two in each pistol and plenty of powder."

"Stand close together, you two, and move to the left," said Mrs. O'Dell. "Do you hear me, Lunt? Do as I tell you, or I'll shoot—and so will the little girl. These are real pistols. That's right. That's far enough. Stand there and stand steady."

"This is a serious matter, Mrs. O'Dell," exclaimed Lunt. "You are guilty of threatenin' the law with deadly weepons—of resistin' it with firearms."

Mrs. O'Dell put up her left hand and relieved the child of the other pistol, at the same time speaking a few words in a low voice but without taking her glance or her aim off the intruders. Marion slipped past her, ran over and took Lunt's gun from where he had stood it against the wall.

"Steady, both of you," warned the woman. "Keep your eyes on me. You will notice that I am not aiming at your heads. I'm aiming at your stomachs—large targets for so short a range."

Marion carried the shotgun over to the table and placed it on the floor beside old Noel Sabattis. Then, moving swiftly and with precision, she opened a drawer in the table, drew out a knife and cut the thin rope which bound the Maliseet's legs together and to the table.

Noel seized the gun at the breech with his manacled hands and got quickly to his feet. With both hands close together on the grip of the stock, he pushed the lever aside with a thumb. The breech fell open, disclosing the metal base of a cartridge. He closed the breech by knocking the muzzle smartly on the edge of the table. His hands had only an inch of play, but that was enough. They overlapped around the slender grip, with the hammer within easy reach of a thumb and the trigger in the crook of a finger.

"Dat a'right," he said, glancing over the intruders. "Good gun, hey? Light on de trigger, hey?"

"Sure she's light on the trigger!" cried Lunt. "Mind what ye're about, Noel! A joke's a joke—but ye'll hang for this if ye ain't careful!"

Noel smiled and told them to sit down on the floor. They obeyed reluctantly, protesting with oaths. Then he asked the little girl to open the door and admit the dogs, which she did. The red dogs bounded into the kitchen, took in the situation at a glance and surrounded the two seated on the floor. Red Chief and Red Lily showed their gleaming fangs, whereupon old Tim Hood became as silent and still as a man of wood.

"I think you have them safe, Noel," said Mrs. O'Dell.

Noel nodded.

"Then I'll go up and give him his quinine," she said, handing the pistols over to the enthusiastic little girl.

Noel and Marion sat down on chairs in front of the constable and the ferryman. The three dogs stood. Everything pointed at the two on the floor—five pairs of eyes,

the muzzles of firearms and the muzzles of dogs.

"Forgit it, Noel," said Mr. Lunt. "Cut it out. What's the use? I'm willin' to let bygones be bygones. Call off yer dogs an' swing that there gun o' mine off a p'int or two an' Tim an' me will clear out. Careful with them pistols, little girl, for Heaven's sake! Noel, ain't she too young to be handlin' pistols? She might shoot herself."

Noel smiled and so did Marion.

"I'll give ye the warrants, Noel, an' say no more about it," continued the constable. "We got three warrants here—an' the charges agin' ye are real serious—but I'm willin' to forgit it. So there ain't no sense in keepin' us here, clutterin' up Mrs. O'Dell's kitchen."

"She don't care," replied Noel. "An' Marion don't care. You like it fine, Marion, hey? 'Tain't every night you git a chance for to set up so late like dis, hey?"

"Yes, thank you, I enjoy it," said the little girl. "It is great fun. It is like a story in a book, isn't it, Noel?"

"Hell!" snorted old Tim Hood.

Noel cocked an eye at the ferryman and he cocked the gun at the same time.

"Lemme unlock yer handcuffs for ye," offered Lunt. "Ye'll feel more comfortable without 'em, Noel."

"Guess not," returned Noel. "Feel plenty comfortable a'ready."

Wheels sounded outside, and voices; and the youngest of the red dogs barked and turned tail to his duty and frisked to the door. The others stood firm and kept their teeth bared at the men on the floor, but their plumed tails began to wag. Old Noel's glance did not waver, but Marion's eyes turned toward the door.

The door opened and men crowded into the kitchen and halted in a bunch and stared at the unusual scene before them. There was Doctor Scott, with a black bag in his hand. There was Uncle Jim, with a white bandage on his head which made his hat too small for him. And there was Sheriff Corker fixing a cold glare on the two men seated on the floor. And over all showed the smiling face of young Ben O'Dell.

Jim McAllister was the first to speak.

"Where's Flora?" he asked.

"Upstairs," answered Noel. "Everyt'ing a'right an' waitin' for de doctor."

He stood up, lowered the hammer of the gun and placed the weapon on the table.

"Now you take dis handcuffs off darn quick, Mel Lunt," he said.

The constable scrambled heavily to his feet and obeyed.

Doctor Scott crossed the room and vanished up the narrow stairs. Sheriff Corker found his voice then and addressed Lunt and old Tim Hood at considerable length and with both force and eloquence. His words and gestures seemed to make a deep and painful impression on them, but the rest of the company paid no attention. Ben kissed the little girl, shook hands with Noel Sabattis, grabbed the leaping dogs in his arms, told fragments of his Quebec adventures to any one who chose to listen and asked question after question without waiting for the answers.

Uncle Jim seated himself beside the table and lit a cigar, cool as a cucumber, smiling around. Sheriff Corker marched Lunt and Hood out of the kitchen and out of the woodshed, still talking, still gesticulating violently with both hands. Those in the kitchen heard wheels start and recede a minute later. Marion went to Uncle Jim and asked him what he had done to his head. He told her of his difficulty with the young policeman which had caused all the delay, of the home-coming of the sheriff when Doctor Scott was bandaging his head, and of the arrival of Ben and Mr. Brown at the sheriff's house a few minutes later.

"But what are you doing with those old pistols?" he asked.

"Those two men came to take the sick man away," she said. "They tied Noel to the table and fought with Aunt Flora. I heard them; so I loaded the pistols—and then they were at our mercy."

Mrs. O'Dell appeared and ran into her son's arms. She backed out presently, and they both moved over to where Uncle Jim and the little Sherwood girl sat side by side, hand in hand. Noel Sabattis and the dogs followed them.

"The doctor says it is slow fever, but that the worst is over with," said Mrs. O'Dell. "He must have had it for weeks and weeks. And the arm can be saved. The crisis of the fever came to-night—and a drive into town to-night would have killed him." She slid an arm around the little girl. "But for Marion, they would have taken him," she continued. "Noel was tied to the table and I couldn't have kept them off much longer—and she loaded the dueling pistols in the

dark and brought them to me—just in the nick of time."

"She saved his life, sure enough," said Jim McAllister.

"Flora done mighty good too," spoke up old Noel Sabattis. "She fit 'em off two-t'ree time an' bung Hood on de eye."

Mrs. O'Dell laughed and blushed.

"I did my best—but you and the old pistols saved him, dear," she whispered in Marion's ear. "And by to-morrow, perhaps, or next day, he will be well enough to thank you."

The child looked intently into the woman's eyes and the lights in her own eyes changed gradually. Her thin shoulders trembled.

"Who—is—he?" she whispered in a shaken thread of voice.

"Your very own dad," replied Mrs. O'Dell, kissing her.

Jim McAllister made coffee. The doctor joined the men in the kitchen, for his patient was sleeping. Ben told of his and Mr. Brown's successful search for the man who had shot Louis Balenger on French River. He admitted that the actual capture of Balenger's old enemy had been made by the police of Quebec—but he and Dave had been very busy. While he talked he toyed with the pistols which Marion had left on the table. He removed the caps. He looked into one barrel and saw that it was loaded to within a fraction of an inch of the muzzle. He produced a tool box in the shape of a knife from his pocket and opened a blade that looked like a small ice pick. With this he picked a few paper wads out of the barrel. With the last wad came a stream of black powder.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed, forgetting his adventures in Quebec.

He thumped the muzzle of the pistol on the table until another wad came out, followed by two bullets. The others, watching intently, exchanged glances in silence. Ben withdrew the charge from the other pistol.

"She put the bullets in first!—in both of them!" he cried.

"But it worked," said Uncle Jim. "It turned the trick. She saved her pa's life—so I guess *that's* all right!"

The next issue will open with a complete novel by Francis Lynde.

BARNUM IN POLITICS

PHINEAS T. BARNUM, often called the greatest showman of them all, was at one time a member of the Connecticut legislature, and his first speech there failed to hold the attention of his hearers.

"Why do you suppose," a friend inquired of the witty E. F. Whipple, "that Mr. Barnum could not obtain the ear of the house?"

"That's simple enough," replied Whipple. "They were afraid he would exhibit it in a museum."

A FRIGHTFUL ALTERNATIVE

WHEN Doctor J. Blair Spencer, of Philadelphia, was a navy surgeon on the battleship *Pennsylvania,* he won in some mysterious and unaccountable way the dog-like devotion of Sam, one of the colored cabin boys. After leaving port on a home-bound voyage, Sam showed up one morning sporting a ring set with a diamond half as big as a dinner plate. The other cabin boys envied him, and, noting their admiration, he swelled all the more with pride.

After watching the boy's childlike joy in the trinket, Doctor Spencer asked him one day:

"Sam, is that a real diamond?"

"Whut, boss!" replied Sam. "Well, ef it ain't, I done been skun out of half a dollar."

Kidnaped

By Thomas McMorrow

Author of "The Circus of Senhor Ribeiro," "In the Matter of Silas Lodewyk," Etc.

In which we learn that while a good cigar is a smoke, a woman is always a woman

"MY love," said I, "may I go into the smoking car?"

"I should say not, Archibald!" replied my wife with that rapidity of decision which has made "General" Lemmon widely loved and admired. "I hope and trust that you weren't contemplating *smoking?*"

"Don't, my angel," I said, raising my hand. "I merely wished to buy a newspaper and the newsboy has gone into the smoker."

"I will not have you debauching your mind with the vicious sensationalism of the popular press," she said, diving into her valise. "I read the newspaper this morning and if there is anything you wish to know you may ask me. Here is the Agenda of the Conclave to which we are going. Occupy your mind with that!"

"Yes, my love," I said, taking the pamphlet with proper joy.

Two ruffians sat at penny ante on a suit case across the aisle. The nearer of them put his hairy hand over his mouth and choked audibly. They had been covertly watching us and had made me uneasy, as any respectable citizen well might be under the furtive and sinister regard of persons in slouch hats and boots and black mustaches and knotted red handkerchiefs.

He stopped choking when Mrs. Lemmon looked at him.

My wife is a small woman physically but she has a giant intellect. It has been a precious and unforgetable experience to live with that remarkable woman; it has changed my whole life. Before I met her I was no better than other men; I used to smoke and play cards for money and shoot pool for drinks and dance and stay out at night. I was an Odd Fish and a brother Caribou—I admit it, friends. But since my marriage my domestic virtues have won me, in open competition with all the married men of Sundalia, a certificate from the local branch of the Women's Fireside League. My photograph is upon it, steadfast, austere, in a white choker, holding a blooming lily in my hand; beneath it is written "Archibald Lemmon, Our Champion!"

It is a beautiful thing. It stands in our attic, behind a trunk. It is not in the place of honor over our mantelshelf as formerly, but is in the attic, because some one hurled a gravy boat through it one dark night while Mrs. Lemmon was out to an uplifting and I was washing up the dinner things. I could cry when I think of what my wife has meant to me. Gracious drops! And still she is a devilishly pretty woman.

"Get me a glass of water, Archibald," she said, looking over the tops of her spectacles.

"Yes, my angel!" I said, rising hastily.

"Ouch!" groaned the nearer ruffian, pulling in his barked shin.

"I beg your pardon, I am sure, merry sir," I said. "It was very clumsy of me to kick you so and I hope and trust you will forgive me. Much obliged. Don't mention it."

"There is no water here, my love," I said to my wife from the end of the car. "With your permission I will now step in to the tank in the smoker. I thank you."

I ducked through the doorway quickly.

I am ashamed to say that the reeking air of the smoking car was grateful to my lungs; I have been an inveterate user of tobacco and I sometimes think that the sudden stoppage of the evil habit on the afternoon of my marriage day was too violent a rupture. It was a striking display of will power to stop so abruptly and I mention it with legitimate pride to such unfortunate addicts as confess themselves unable to abandon the baneful weed; but I will admit that at times twinges of longing for the false cheer of nicotine come back to me.

Facing me in the smoker sat a worldly looking person with beefy face and twinkling eyes of faded blue. A large and fine Havana was in his mouth and he was inhaling

through the cigar and exhaling through his fleshy nose, in a regular cadence, like a man who is digesting a large and fine meal. He wore featherweight flannels of loud check and cut, hose of yellow silk and tan pumps of a smooth and expensive sheen. A Panama, fine as cloth in texture, straddled between the back of the seat and the back of his bald head.

"Well, I'll be a son of a gun!" he exclaimed in a full and husky voice. And he rose up and rolled down on me and clapped me on the back and grasped my hand away from the water cooler. "If it isn't old 'Baldy Sours' himself! Well, well, Baldy, and how is every little thing?"

"Archibald," I said stiffly. "Not Baldy. And the name is not Sours, but Lemmon. You have the advantage of me. I am pleased to meet you. Good day."

"Come," he cried, wringing my hand and beaming into my face. "You don't mean to say you don't know old 'Parson' Murphy? Sit down here! Well, well, Baldy, it brings old times back to look into your sin-seared mush."

"Avaunt," I protested, trying to pull away from him. "Beat it! I don't know you!"

"Oh, come off," he said, pulling me down beside him. "I'll refresh your memory, Baldy. You used to be a whisky salesman; Donnybrook was your brand. Many's the saloon I've seen you in, Baldy—smoking your black cigar in that calculating way and chinning with the proprietor and grinning at Parson Murphy. You remember me—saloon hanger-on, whisky soak, ragamuffin and preacher when I had the shakes and couldn't bum the price! Well, well, that's over, and I'm just as well pleased. I couldn't afford the new prices, so I took a brace and cut the stuff out—and here I am on top of the world! What are you doing, Baldy? Peddling bootleg?"

"Not so loud, please!" I said, looking around nervously. "I beg to insist that you are mistaken in my identity, for I have nothing whatever to do with liquor. I have not been in New York for years and I am going now as a delegate from Sundalia to the Conclave of the Fireside Leagues of America. Mrs. Lemmon, who is in the coach behind, is the head of our delegation. I have enjoyed your acquaintance immensely and trust and hope that we will meet again under happier auspices. Meanwhile, if you care to pour the tale of your life into the ear of an utter stranger, you may go to it, while I am holding the Agenda of the Conclave up before us so that I may be seen to be explaining it to you if we are suddenly interrupted by the dearest and best of women. Blow your smoke in my face. Dang your buttons, Parson Murphy, how did you do it?"

He told me. We had quite a talk. I cried a little on his shoulder and felt better for it. He treated me to a package of Clove Gum and I chewed it stealthily. Ah, dear and familiar flavor!

"You are a coward," he said.

"I know it," I agreed.

"You should assert yourself, tear around, smash things and make yourself master in your own house! You should make your wife respect you. Convince her that you have an ungovernable temper and that you stop at nothing when once you are aroused."

"I did," I said, "in the beginning. I sold myself to my wife in good style. I told her that I ate glass and drank poison, bathed in boiling oil and rubbed myself down with a roll of barbed wire! She thought that when I ran the earth shook and when I sneezed it brought down rain. She was delighted and thought she was living with a fiend in human form. And then, one night I——"

"Yes?"

"There was a strange noise in the pantry and she made me get up and investigate, although I pleaded for the burglars' lives. But she said they'd brought it on themselves and she pushed me downstairs and into the pantry. They sprang upon me, the whole nine of them, and there was a terrific struggle in the dark. I fought them with tooth and nail; three times they had me down under our best dishes. The unequal battle was terminated when my wife came to my aid with the mop."

"Yes—yes!"

"It was Tiger, our cat. I had killed eight of him; the pantry was a wreck, I was a sight and Tiger was enjoying his ninth life on top of the ice box. That was my finish."

"Don't you believe it, Baldy," said Parson. "You can take a fresh hold and begin again, only you'll have to show something this time for a starter. Why, look at me! You remember what a no-good guy I was before they put the eighteenth crimp in the grand old scrap of paper?"

He was a director of moving pictures. He was the main squeeze in the Painted Lily Films Inc.—he said so. He was going to New York to superintend the opening of a six-reeler that was the money! A *scream* anl a ***knock-out!*** The italics are his.

"If we could only get a little of the advertising your blamed hen party is getting!" he said wistfully. "Look at that newspaper—'Conclave of Fireside Leagues of America'—across the top of the front page! And you're not paying a cent for it. Say, Baldy, you couldn't manage to get a resolution through the Conclave denouncing my picture as one of the most shocking and immoral monstrosities of the age, could you? It would be a great help, Baldy. I always spoke well of you, Baldy."

"Quite out of the question," I said, scandalized. "Do you insinuate that the slimy trail of commercialized amusement can pass over a symposium of the eternal principles of right and wrong? No, no, my misguided chance acquaintance. Never mention the matter to me again without telling me what it is worth to place a chip over your bug!"

We talked and talked. He discovered to me a peculiar delusion of the commercial mind, to the effect that shining merit can pass unnoticed unless it be blatantly ballyhooed. He wanted me to slip a scathing denunciation of his picture into a newspaper report of Mrs. Lemmon's address to the Conclave.

"She is the most notorious of them all!" he asserted.

"Not for a million in gold," said I, lifting a quelling hand, "would I be party to a fraud or deceit upon that dear woman while she has her health and strength! Avaunt! That means you! Gold can never buy me."

"What do you suggest?" he queried.

I suggested.

"And do you know who is on this train?" he asked.

"I do," I said. "Don't mention it."

"No, I mean who else," he said. "Pat Hawke and Jake Hanscom, the famous kidnapers are back there. You might have seen them—two plug-uglies playing penny ante?"

"I met one of them—halfway," I said, smiling at my toe.

And then I glanced at the door of the smoker and took a fresh grip on the Agenda of the Conclave and began to read aloud:

"Address by Sister Hepsibah Lemmon of Sundalia on the 'Moving-Picture Industry of the United States!' Sister Lemmon will hold up to Public Indignation many Shocking Details of Life in the Studios never before made public and will display on a special screen scenes from Films which pander to a depraved taste, released by the Interstate Censors for this Address only!

"Ah, my new acquaintance," I said, grasping Parson Murphy by the arm and giving him the glassy eye, "I envy you the pleasure which is yours in never having heard before that gifted woman, who lays at the feet of the eternal principles of right and wrong the touching tribute of her youth and beauty and sparkling intelligence! Ah, my friend, if you——"

"Lay off me, Baldy," protested Parson. "Don't crowd me so. What is biting you?"

I looked up and saw with a start of surprise that my wife was standing beside me.

"I do hope and trust that I have not kept you waiting, my love," I said. "This strange man, who is a sincere admirer of yours, accosted me and begged me to divulge to him something of our great work, assuring me with tears in his eyes that he was interested in things worth while. I have taken the liberty to invite him to our Conclave to hearken.

"He is profoundly moved by this meeting and has no words to express his esteem and gratitude and wishes for the furtherance of our movement. I have thanked him for you, my love, and examined him as to his personal affairs and extracted from him a promise to be a nobler and a better man, so that there is really nothing more to say on either side. Good day, sir. Good day. Sweetness and light. Don't mention it."

With which words I walked quickly from the smoker, followed by my wife, whose mouth was set but who held her fire until we were at close quarters again in our seat.

The reporters met Mrs. Lemmon at the Grand Central Station. Three of them walked beside her through the terminal; one came back to me where I struggled with the baggage and the tributes from admirers; he asked me how it felt to be the husband of a publican—I think that was the word. I asked him to carry the baggage and try for himself. He thanked me and chose a basket of fruit and hurried off to telephone his paper.

Soon we were a moving throng, as admiring crowds pressed to behold the dear woman. An elderly person in black silk and a wig threw flowers; a middle-aged gen-

tleman hit me with a half-eaten apple and walked quickly away. I do not think he was a friend but I had to admire the military wisdom of attacking the line of transport. Fortunately for us, who might have been pressed to death, a notorious murderer was brought into the station at this time and the crowd ran off to admire him and crush him to its bosom.

"Shall I call a cab, my love?" I asked as I stood on Forty-second Street with aching shoulders. The passing throng was spinning me, now this way and now that as it collided with my impedimenta and I was growing dizzy.

"Certainly not," said my wife. "The walk will do me good."

"Yes, my love," I agreed, being spun toward her at the moment luckily.

I set to pressing after her but I made slow going, as my tributes were engaging people's clothing and forcing them to come along. Hence I was not at her side when the dastardly assault was made upon her.

"How dare you!" I heard her cry. "Archibald!"

I looked and saw the light of my life in the grasp of two burly brutes. I knew them at once; they were the ruffians who had sat across from us in the train and busied themselves with a pretense of penny ante! Mrs. Lemmon is an ethereal little creature, one whom you might think the pressure of a finger would crush, but she had stirred so nimbly in their grip that blood was trickling from one stout ruffian's nostril, while the other was taking time out to caress his eye. I dared not drop her luggage and I could not get to her encumbered as I was, but I shouted lustily for assistance.

"Help!" I shouted. "They are kidnapers!"

The throng faced about and pressed in on the center of activity. When the people were in good positions to observe the struggle they ceased pressing and confined themselves to shouting over their shoulders to those in the rear to stop shoving. No one made an offer to interfere with the burly ruffians.

"Are you men," I cried from the rear, "and will you stand by supinely while this lady is being kidnaped?"

My appeal to their better natures did not pass entirely unheeded. Those immediately about me were unable to see with any satisfaction, so they gave over the attempt and turned to me for information.

"What's up, Jack?"

"What is being pulled off here?"

"Kidnaped!" I shouted. "Kidnaped!"

"Yeah?" My interlocutor drew out a package of cheap cigarettes, fished one out, tapped it on the box and proceeded to feel himself all over for a match. "Got a light?"

"Aw, come ahead," grumbled a friend. "You can't see nothing."

"Wait up, will you? Here's a guy knows all about it. Now, about this kidnaping thing, mister: what is the idea?"

"What difference does it make?" I yelled, at my wit's end at such stupid indifference. "A lady is being kidnaped—isn't that enough to arouse your chivalry? Help her!"

"Me?" He placed his index finger on his bosom with an air of astonishment. "Why, I don't even know her!"

"Aw, come on," pleaded his friend. "You can't see nothing!"

He went away very unwillingly, glowering over his shoulder at me. "What do you know about that stiff?" he growled. "Wanting me to crash in there, and get my face in trouble. I got an awful good mind to smack that guy. I never had such a mind to smack anybody before. I think I am going to smack him!"

"Aw, come on," protested his friend, out of patience. "That big guy could lick a row of you."

"He could, could he?" The man with the cigarette broke away and started for me and I took advantage of the sudden dissolution of the crowd to hurry away. All was over. I saw a large private car nose out into the stream of vehicles; through its window I saw my unfortunate wife sitting between the two ruffians. A few idlers stood on the curb and gazed after the ravishers with slackening interest. People newly issuing from the station snatched out their handkerchiefs and waved them with a faint cheer, wishing to be in on the thing whatever it was.

Fortunately I saw Parson Murphy getting into a taxicab and I went to him, whereupon the person to whose manhood I had appealed gave over his pursuit.

"My wife has been kidnaped!" I cried.

"Kidnaped?" he repeated, pulling his leg from the cab. "Why, this is a serious matter. Kidnaped, eh?"

"Kidnaped," I repeated. "What do you suggest?"

"We must go at once to the police station!"

"Do you think they are taking her there?" I asked.

"Of course not!"

"Very well, then; we will go there," I agreed. And I piled into the cab and we rode around to the local precinct.

"Have you a photograph of Mrs. Lemmon?" asked the sergeant on the desk.

"Yes," I said, handing him one.

"Pretty woman, I'll say," he commented admiringly. "Pardon me, Mr. Lemmon, but had your wife any friends whom you have reason to suspect?"

"No," I said, after thought. "I cannot imagine that any one who knew my wife would contemplate such a dastardly deed. I am inclined to suspect absolute strangers!"

"What about *your* friends?"

"That would be more likely," I assented. "But I would like to explain that since I am married I have had no friends."

"Then the rascals intend to hold Mrs. Lemmon to ransom," said the sergeant. "You will be approached soon and asked to fork over a round sum."

"That is a reason why I believe these heartless wretches are strangers to me," I said. "All I have in the world I will gladly give for the return of my dear wife, but I have nothing. But, stay! I have tickets to Sundalia! One I will give if they restore my wife to my bosom—and two if they don't!"

"You confuse me," said the official. "Has your wife any enemies?"

"I cannot bring myself to think so. She has devoted herself of late entirely to uplifting and I hear that her efforts have earned her universal esteem and gratitude."

"Ah! She was the famous 'General' Lemmon?"

"I thank you," I said modestly.

"I am very sorry for you, Mr. Lemmon," said the sergeant; and he shook me by the hand. "I am a married man myself."

"If you will permit me," said Parson Murphy, "I will say that I saw on the train the notorious kidnaper Pat Hawke, and his confederate Jake Hanscom!"

"I believe that I see in this mysterious affair the slimy trail of commercialized amusement," I said with a stiff upper lip. "Mrs. Lemmon enjoys the resentment of the motion-picture interests, the baseball owners, the merry-go-rounders, the bowling alleys and all that dark and devious crew. When we return to Sundalia we are going to shut up house and move to a hotel where Mrs. Lemmon will not be distracted by household cares from her fight for the American fireside. I firmly believe that the forces of commercialized amusement have hired bravos to kidnap her!"

"We will send out a general alarm," said the sergeant. "Have you another photo? We have the mugs of Hawke and Hanscom in our gallery."

"I have only these five more with me," I apologized, giving them to him. "I will have more made for general distribution. You may tell idle sensation seekers and the morbid minded and the reporters that they can find me at the Philadelphia Hotel, if they wish to intrude on my grief. Don't forget the address. I thank you."

When we got to the hotel I retired at once to my humble parlor, bedroom and bath, sixteen dollars per day, and lay off on the bed to smoke one of Parson Murphy's cigars and to mourn. He attended to everything as became a true friend. He sent for the hotel stenographer and dictated an account of the lamentable affair, one dozen copies, rush. When the reporters came he gave to each of them a copy and a photograph of my lost one and a good cigar and pushed them from the room after indicating my stricken form. I buried my face in the pillows and sobbed aloud.

When they had tiptoed from the room I pulled myself together and sat up. I could not remain inactive.

"I must be up and doing," I pleaded. "Time is precious! Let us go somewhere!"

"What do you suggest?" he asked.

"How about searching the grisly haunts of frivolity and dissipation? Perhaps we may catch an incautious word, or a meaning glance which will put us on the right trail!"

"You're on," he said. And he telephoned for a cab.

The shades of day were being lifted from Broadway as we wheeled into it. Thousands of gay cosmopolites from Summit, New Jersey, and points west, were promenading beneath the white lights and reading the signs of the heavens for tips on silk sox and sundries and lending to the thoroughfare that rich and reckless air which keeps the native New Yorker in Bay Ridge and on One Hun-

dred and Twenty-fifth Street where he gets a show for his white alley.

"I would suggest that we try some notorious cabaret," I said anxiously. "I have never pursued kidnapers before but from what I have read I understand that it is the habit of such miscreants to discuss such matters at a table immediately in the rear, so that the detectives may catch unguarded words while they watch the sardonic faces of the rascals in a large mirror at the other end of the room."

"If that's the dope," said Parson Murphy, "this place is notorious enough." And he signaled to the chauffeur to halt.

We alighted in a side street and walked to a small and inconspicuous entrance; the entrance was framed in twelve rows of electric lights and a burglar alarm was ringing above it.

"This place is on the strict Q. T.!" shouted Parson Murphy. "You see, if any attempt at secrecy was made the authorities would become suspicious, and would close the place up at once, as they will not stand for this kind of thing for a moment!"

We entered; the lobby was hung with satin, in stripes of orange and black. A person in a red costume, with horns and hoofs and tail, stepped into our path and looked sharply at my Sunday suit. "Sorry," he said. "The tables are all taken for this evening. Have you a reservation?"

"Sure," said Parson Murphy, exhibiting a five-dollar bill. "This creature is with me!"

The devil collected our reservation and waved us on.

We entered the den, whose ceiling was hung with a silken canopy and whose walls were draped with the striped satin. A gentleman in evening dress escorted us to a tiny table beside the dancing floor. An orchestra somewhere was making noises like a barrel of scrap iron rolling downhill.

"I could eat the leg of a table," said Parson Murphy, picking up the bill of fare.

"Make it two," I said.

He ordered Blue Points, minestrone soup, Long Island duckling, hearts of lettuce with Russian dressing, apple pie with Gruyere, and coffee. I felt quite stuffed.

The waiter put it all down. "If I may make a suggestion about the Blue Points, sir," he said courteously, "I'm not positively sure they're fresh. They weren't last week, I know, and we haven't got any in for a month."

"Thanks for the tip," said Parson Murphy. "Rush the duck!"

"We had a heavy play on that duck yesterday," said the waiter. "How about throwing the soup and roast together? I think I could maybe get you up some duck soup, if you don't mind waiting half an hour. I could certainly recommend that apple pie, if we had it."

"Where's the proprietor?" asked Parson Murphy angrily.

"In jail. Sorry, sir!"

"I'm not," said Parson. "He ought to be in jail for calling this place a restaurant!"

"He didn't, sir," said the waiter patiently. "That's why he is in jail."

"What do you think we came here for?" I demanded.

"Yes, sir—immediately, sir," said the waiter. And he hurried away, and returned with a bottle of ginger ale and a flagon of seltzer and two glasses.

"Shall I fill them, sir?" he asked.

"Yes," said Parson, slipping him a pocket flask. He returned with the flask filled.

"I don't drink whisky," I demurred.

"You won't, if you drink this stuff," said Parson. "Don't you read the papers?"

I trusted him, and took a stiff hooker. Immediately my eyesight was seriously impaired and I began to see things.

The lights in the room turned green. A South Sea islander skidded out onto the dancing floor. He planted a pot-bellied idol in each of the four corners and then laid himself down in the center of the open space. Four islandresses wriggled toward him from the idols; each islandress was attired in a peach basket. I took one horrified look at them—well, I will confess to four horrified looks—and then I fastened my shimmying gaze on the silken canopy above and strove to come to. The orchestra had ceased to rattle and crash and had taken to groaning like a colored man with the colic.

The lights turned yellow again and I thought I had overcome my distemper and lowered my eyes to the dancing floor again. But I beheld a young lady attired in a string of beads—simply that and nothing more. She quivered all over with embarrassment under my glance and I reddened and looked quickly back to the canopy. I was thoroughly ashamed to think that I was capable of conjuring up such phantoms.

"It's the supper show," said Parson.

"It's wood alcohol on an empty stomach," I said. "You don't need to tell me that there are such sights in New York! I may be from the country but I know better than that!"

And then I heard an unguarded phrase dropped by a couple seated immediately in my rear.

"Hist!" I said to Parson, laying a finger on my lips. "Can you see them?"

"Lady and gentleman," said Parson, with motionless lips.

"What do you know about this kidnaping case?" asked the gentleman. "Seems like somebody run off with that old cat that was coming here to yowl at this Conclave thing. Here is all about it, in the paper!"

"Old pill!" said the lady. "What is the big idea?"

"Search me. It says her husband is prostrated with grief."

"Like Kelly is. He probably ain't got a good grieve left in him, after being married to a sketch like that. If he was a regular fellow he'd prostrate her and then maybe she might stay home and mind her own blamed business!"

"Yeah—but what do you mean, old pill?" objected the gentleman. "Have you saw her picture? Look at it! If that is an old pill I will take two boxes for what ails me. Some doll baby, I call her. She can sit by my fireside any cold night, I'll say!"

"She ain't so worse," said the lady critically. "Though of course you can never tell by a picture in a newspaper. You remember when I got my picture in as one of the season's brides and it was so smudgy it looked like I was pulled through a coal chute!"

"We are on the trail at last!" I hissed to Parson Murphy.

"Let's have another powder," he suggested, cool as a cucumber. Good old Parson!

Unfortunately, I could not restrain my ardor and I turned for a look at the lady. She raised her delicate eyebrows in a frosty stare and spoke to the gentleman, who glared at me with distinct hostility. Thereupon they artfully changed the subject and spoke no more of the kidnaping and seized the first opportunity to rise and pass out onto the dancing floor and they jazzed away and we saw them no more.

I have often been curious as to the nature of the toxic fluid which Parson poured from his flask; it occasioned the queerest disorders of the senses.

For instance, I have a vivid memory of entering seven different saloons and of being solicited by conventional bartenders to name my poison as in old days. Parson Murphy spoke to each of these phantoms familiarly, calling them Bill and George and Freddy, and I dreamed that we drank high balls and cocktails—this in face of the fact that the old-fashioned saloon has gone forever, as everybody knows. It seems to me that we attended a burlesque show, and a Midnight Frolic and went then to "Honest Mark" Card's on Sixth Avenue. Parson Murphy even says that I borrowed a hundred dollars from him in the last-mentioned place, but I do not remember that.

I even remember snatches of impossible conversations. Here is one such, between me and Honest Mark Card in the doorway of his gambling hell:

"Well, Mr. Lemmon," he inquired, "how did they run for you to-night?"

"Rotten. They didn't leave me car fare."

"Come again. Philip! Bring my friend, Mr. Lemmon, a good cigar!"

The sidewalk was very rough that night but by skillful seamanship and mutual support we tacked back to the hotel. When I awoke again it was broad daylight, and some one was shaking me vigorously.

"Yes, my love!" I groaned and scrambled from my couch and made for the door to get the breakfast. I had always made the breakfast in Sundalia, as I was a lover of solitude and dearly enjoyed the peace of those early-morning hours.

Then I sat down on the bed and caught my head between my hot palms and groaned again.

"Drink this," said Parson Murphy, fresh as a daisy.

We had breakfast.

"I'm going over to see the theater people," he said. "Wait for me there in the lobby."

I chose an easy wicker chair and sent for a pail of ice water and read the morning papers.

They brought my loss back on me afresh. They all featured the mysterious kidnaping of the celebrated lady publican, General Hepsibah Lemmon. They printed the dear lady's picture, and those of Pat Hawke and Jake Hanscom and raked up the lore of kid-

naping and ran interviews with such prominent kidnapers as could be reached last night.

Now that she was gone from me, perhaps forever, remorse fastened on me for the way in which I had treated her. I had never made her a happy home or she would never have sought distraction and forgetfulness in uplifting. I remembered the little golden-haired girl whom I had wed in Sundalia, that sweet flower of womanhood whom I had not known how to cherish. It was I who had pressed the fatal cup of domesticity to her lips. I had been a gay dog in my time—more from business necessity than from inclination—and I was tired of it all; and when I married I settled down to hug my own fireside.

I refused to stir out to theater or dance or party and ceaselessly preached the joys of home. After about a year the black fit passed off and I was ready to resume the natural existence of a man of the world; but the mischief had been done. Ah, me! My wife's young spirits, denied their normal outlet of innocent social pleasures, had turned in upon themselves and she had gone in for the home and fireside with a vengeance. It was a sad case but I had only myself to blame.

I sat sunk in gloomy thoughts.

"Telegram for Mr. Lemmon!"

I took the slip from the call boy and read it with astonishment. It said:

> Time expires at three o'clock to-day. Must have five hundred dollars or will turn her loose.

"Where did you get this?" I asked the messenger boy, noticing that the writing was in pencil.

"Gent handed it to me out on the sidewalk," said the boy.

When Parson Murphy returned I showed him the missive.

"It's from the kidnapers," he said, with a frown. "It's a blackmailing scheme and I don't propose to stand for it. Let them turn her loose!"

"That may suit you, Parson," I said, "but it's not my way of doing business! I've been thinking things over and it seems to me that I haven't treated the little woman right. I am going to rescue her!"

"That is not a bad scheme," he agreed. "And it would serve them right. They certainly have some crust to make a play for five hundred dollars! Wait here until I make arrangements."

He entered a telephone booth.

"All set, Baldy," he called ten minutes later. "Come ahead!"

We hurried out into Broadway, and hailed a taxicab. We drove around to Sixth Avenue to a pawnshop and purchased two pistols.

"Won't one do you?" said Parson.

"No," I said grimly. "I'm a two-gun man! I'm going to jump in on those fellows all spread out and spitting lead from each bunch of fives!"

We leaped into the cab again and whirled up Sixth Avenue and then over to Central Park West and north again.

"Everything's ready for the *première* of our picture next Monday," said Parson, making conversation. "We release the advertising this afternoon, and——"

"Curse your picture!" I cried, shaking with excitement.

He relapsed into silence and we hung onto the sides of the rocking cab. Vacant lots were now intervening between the houses. I had a glimpse of a whizzing lamp-post and saw that we were crossing One Hundred and Eighty-first Street. And still we fled toward the howling wilderness which lies beyond the corporate limits of the city of New York. Ask dad—he knows, if he was born in New York.

Parson signaled to the chauffeur.

"Stop!" he cried.

We descended. About us lay green fields decorated with real estate advertisements. Below us shone the silver line of Spuyten Duyvil Creek. Above us towered a mountain with a mane of virgin forest on its crest.

"In there!" said Parson tensely, pointing toward a path which wound in between the hills.

He sat down on the step of the cab and bit the end from a cigar. It is strange how in moments such as that the habits of commonplace hours persist. For instance, it did not occur to him to offer me the mate of that cigar to cheer me on my perilous way. Such is habit.

I strode forward along the path; it turned between the hills; I waved a hand at Parson and plunged into the unknown.

I saw the house which was the end of my journey. Cautiously I crept up to the gray and tumble-down shack which leaned drunkenly against the hillside.

I stole quietly and carefully to a window and pressed my face to the cobwebbed pane. I could see nothing of the dark interior but I heard a glad cry which caused the hot blood to pulse through my veins.

"Archy!"

The dear girl had not called me Archibald, but Archy!

I sprang to the battered door, burst it open with a powerful thrust of my shoulder and leaped into the room. As I entered I whipped both pistols from my side pockets and let go with both barrels. In that confined space the explosions were quite impressive.

The two ruffians were in the room and crouching behind the chimney piece was Mrs. Lemmon. The sight of that pale and frightened face aroused me to prodigies of valor. I leveled my irons at an advancing ruffian and let him have my fire point-blank. With a disconcerted cry he sank to the ground and straightened out.

The other fellow rushed upon me with uplifted chair. I caught it by its rungs and we struggled hither and thither. My strength was ebbing fast when I resorted to my irons again and gave him his quietus. He sank beside his confederate.

I hurled the pistols from me—they were only cap pistols anyway and not much loss—and sprang to the dear lady's side. I raised her to her feet and assisted her in a fainting condition into the open air. I put my strong arm about her waist and helped her down the path. She let her fair head recline on my shoulder and I kissed her for the first time in twelve months. The ruffians peered from their doorway and waved me their best wishes. It was a general love feast.

"I have decided that you are not in a proper condition to attend the Conclave this afternoon," I said to her later when we were alone at last in the Philadelphia Hotel.

"Yes, Archy, love," she agreed, watching me with shining eyes. I make no apologies; it is proper that a lady should admire her husband and most of them don't deserve it either.

"I have concluded that we will see the sights and let the Conclave go hang," I continued. "Mr. Parson, whom you met this morning, has paid me the five hundred dollars which he has owed me for the last five years and we are going to have a honeymoon."

"Yes, Archy, dear," she said softly.

"My angel," I said, kissing her for the first time in twelve minutes, "I want to tell you how sorry I am for the beastly way in which I have treated you. I know that I have been a perfect brute. You are young and beautiful and I know you yearn for pleasure and freedom and that you are sick and tired of the cranky old maids with whom I have compelled you to associate. I have decided that we will start in again where we left off on our wedding day—to give and to take and to bear with each other, instead of striving to make each other nobler and better. We will also let the rest of the world go to the devil in its own sweet way, for which it will thank us. And we will not move to a hotel but will have a regular old fireside of our own!"

"My hero!" she sighed. "How can you be so strong and brave?"

"I shall stay out every Saturday night," I said, sitting close to her side and holding her little hand in mine and looking with wide eyes into a pleasant land. "You shall stay out any other night you please. I will take you to a show or a dance at least once a week. We will make home-brew for our friends and buy our own, as regular people do."

And so I poetized until a knock sounded on the door. It was a reporter.

"Avaunt!" I said. "On your way! No story!"

"What have you to say about this?" he inquired, tendering me the evening edition.

"I thank you," I said, kicking his toe away and closing the door.

He had directed my attention to a full-page advertisement. The upper quarter of the page was taken up by a single word.

Another knock sounded on the door. I opened it again.

"Police," said the hard-eyed young man in civilian clothes who stood without. And he showed me a shield.

I stepped into the hall, and carefully closed the door behind me.

"I see the lady is in again," said he. "That closes the case, unless she can aid us to land the culprits."

"Mrs. Lemmon is in a highly nervous state," I protested, raising a hand. "The harrowing experience which she has undergone has her all harrowed up. She prefers to forget about the entire affair. She refuses to appear against anybody and makes no

complaint. I beg of you to drop the case with a dull thud."

"There is something mighty fishy about this," he said. "If you ask me, the whole business is just a dodge to advertise this darned movie they are putting on at the Capitoline theater! It is mighty queer they should break out all over in advertising this very afternoon when the front page is took up with the kidnaping of your wife!"

"That's an idea!" I exclaimed. "Is it your opinion that the slimy trail of commercialized amusement——"

"You go to thunder," he grumbled, moving off.

"You go to the Capitoline," I retorted, handing him two tickets. "I hear it's a knock-out. Good day and thank you for your kind attention."

"Archy!"

I entered to her.

"Have you seen this?" she queried, holding out the afternoon edition with which the reporter had supplied me.

"What an extraordinary coincidence!" I exclaimed. I read it with natural interest:

KIDNAPED!

Laughs — Thrills — Tears — Painted Lily Films, Inc. Present In Gorgeous Screen Drama R. L. Stevenson's World-Famous Classic, Revised and Improved by our Own Corps of Authors. Real Kidnapers —Pat Hawke and His Notorious Confederate Jake Hanscom on the Screen. Opening at the Capitoline Next Monday Night. Vera de Vere, England's First Actrienne.

And so on and so forth. It was a double-page spread.

"How odd!" I commented.

"Look at the picture of Vera de Vere," said Mrs. Lemmon.

I did so, with pleasure.

"I cannot understand why the picture of this person should be given as mine on the front page," she said.

I turned the pages over, and compared the pictures. They were indeed the same.

"I am beginning to suspect something," I said with a cunning leer. "I suspect that somebody interested in this motion picture must have supplied the press with photos of this actrienne, under the pretense that they were yours! I cannot say that I am sorry at this sorry trick, my angel, as it spares you much unpleasant notoriety. And now that you have definitely decided to abandon the public platform—you have so decided, my love, have you not?"

"If you wish it, Archy," she said submissively.

"I do, dear heart," I said, "though I rejoice that the suggestion comes from you."

"I am also impressed by the fact," said Mrs. Lemmon, "that the two men who held me prisoner in that lonely house were named Pat and Jake. I must say they behaved like perfect gentlemen, but if I thought that they were these same men——"

"Now there your suspicions are utterly baseless, I am sure," I said confidently. "If they were named Shem and Arphaxed, or Salah and Eber, or Peleg and Reu, or Serug and Nahor, or Terah and Haran, the likeness might well beget suspicion; but the last name of men called Jake and Pat is legion! And besides, dear heart, we will not forget that we owe to these unfortunate men a debt of genuine gratitude for having brought us again together. And indeed, my precious, if we have been exploited by a callous press agent, we have the better of the joke, and we can say with the immortal bard, 'Great are the uses of Advertisement!'"

With which excellent quotation from I know not whom I buttoned my wife's back and led her proudly forth to a matinée.

In the next number appears "Out on Bail," by Mr. McMorrow.

AN EXTRAORDINARY FEAT

WOMEN'S fashions now are atrocious," said the snappy-looking young girl; "girls' clothes have no pockets, no places that they can keep things in."

"From what I see of their clothes," her grandfather replied, "the girls accomplish a whole lot keeping themselves in them."

The Scalp Lock

By Dane Coolidge

Author of "From Bitter Creek," "Lost Wagons," Etc.

A man who was interested in the sort of scalp locks that Lovelady collected was not a man you cared to strike hands with. But he needed a lot of dealing with, for all that. And doing so and facing the menace of the cattle rustlers who threatened his ranch's existence gave Hawks all he cared to attend to for one while. Little need to tell you that Mr. Coolidge knows the West of which he writes.

(A Four-Part Story—Part I.)

CHAPTER I.

POWDER SPRINGS.

NIGHT had laid a velvet hand over the bleak shacks of Powder Springs, endowing them with an illusion of beauty. The half moon, up at midnight, cast long shadows across the street from the false fronts of stores and saloons.

Swinging doors leaped open and closed, letting out winks of yellow light; the dance hall down the line was ablaze; but except for one man and the horses at the rack the straggling street was empty. He came strolling down the walk from the dim hotel, humming a song to the clump of his boots, but as he passed the row of horses he stopped in his stride and the song died on his lips. A ray of light, like the sudden stab of lightning, had swept the gaunt hip of a horse and in that moment of illumination he had seen his own horse brand, burned into the buckskin hide.

He glanced at the swinging doors of the Cowboys' Rest, whence the telltale light had come, and stepped out into the street. A match flared up as he passed down the line, reading the brand on each roisterer's horse, and as it bit his fingers he threw it down with an oath and started back toward the saloon. But at the doorway he stopped short, pushing the gate ajar while he peered in at the noisy crowd.

"Rolling 'em high, eh!" he observed, closing the door on them grimly. "No wonder the Lazy B has gone to hell."

He racked off up the street at a stiff-legged gait that did not go with his city-made clothes, but as his boots woke the echoes of his old home town the song he had been singing came back:

> While you are all so frisky
> I will sing you a song.
> I will take a horn of whisky
> To help the song along.
> It is all about a top screw
> When he is busted flat
> Sitting around town
> In his Mexicano hat.

There was more to the song, which was not without its point, but as he neared the hotel he saw a woman in its shadow—a woman cloaked in white who turned and faced him defiantly.

"Why—Penny!" he exclaimed after a moment of startled silence. "Why, what are *you* doing, out here?"

"What are you doing?" she returned with a touch of annoyance. "I was going out to see the town."

He walked over closer and stood staring at her blankly. She was small and graceful with exquisitely formed hands that fluttered and poised like butterflies; and in the pale light her face had an elfin look, as if she had come down on a moonbeam. Her eyes were big and blue with a suggestion of wondering innocence; but there had been something in her voice that was neither elfin nor innocent and he towered above her accusingly.

"It's past midnight," he said, "and there's

a bunch of cowboys in town. Does your mother know you're out?"

"She's asleep," she defended, "so what difference does it make? You won't tell her you saw me, will you?"

"Certainly not," he promised, putting a protecting arm about her, "but you mustn't go out alone."

"Why not?" she pouted, pushing his hand away petulantly. "Oh, Clayton, can't I *ever* do *any*thing? It seems as if all my life, every time I start to do anything, somebody always drags me back and says: 'Don't!'"

"I don't doubt it," he replied, "but you've struck a new country where women are mighty scarce. Those cowboys are drunk and they wouldn't understand it if they saw you on the street after midnight."

"Well, *you* take me," she pleaded, laying hold of his coat lapels and turning up her eyes appealingly. "You used to live here, Clay, and the cowboys would all know you."

"It's a funny thing," he said, "I just looked into that saloon and there wasn't a man I knew. It's my own outfit, too—they're riding Lazy B horses——"

"Oh, let's go down, then!" she cried, "and when you tell them you're their boss——"

"They'll make me dance!" he grumbled. "I know 'em."

"Make *you* dance?" she exclaimed. "Why, I wouldn't think they'd dare to!"

"They'll do anything," he said, "when they're drunk."

She stopped and seemed to ponder some plan of her own, then she drew down his head and kissed him.

"Do you love me?" she coaxed. "Then take me down past there. I'm—oh, I'm perfectly fascinated! And I know, with you with me, I'll be perfectly safe! Won't you do it, Clayton, for me?"

"Well, all right, Penny," he yielded as she gave him another kiss, "but don't blame me if something awful comes off."

"I won't!" she agreed, skipping along beside him. "Didn't you ever feel the call of the wild? That's what's come over me—or maybe it's the altitude—but out here I just want to be free. I sat there in that stuffy room while mother was going to sleep and oh, Clay, I couldn't stand it! I just had to get out and look up at the stars and feel that I was free."

"It's the altitude," observed Clay, "and this sagebrush smell. But don't overdo it, at first."

They passed down the silent street where the row of horses stood and where the light shone out beneath the door; and then from the Cowboys' Rest there rose a savage yell like the howl of a pack of wolves.

"Let's be going," muttered Clay but she held him against his will.

"It's the call of the wild!" she whispered.

"They're drunk!" he answered shortly. "Come on, I'm going back." And he drew her resolutely away. But as they passed the row of horses she saw a bronk with head erect, rolling his eyes at the sound of the yells.

"Isn't it wonderful!" she sighed, stopping to watch him in the moonlight. "Oh, Clayton, I *can't* go back. What's that place down there," she burst out eagerly, "that house that's all lit up?"

"That's the hog ranch," he said. "Not a very nice place. In fact, it's not respectable."

"I'm tired of being respectable," she burst out impatiently. "If there's anything I hate it's that word. Come on, I'm going down there."

"You are not!" he declared. "It's a house of prostitution!"

"I don't care what it is," she panted recklessly, "I'm going down there, that's all."

"Very well," he said after a moment of tense silence. "If you're going, I'll go along with you."

She hesitated, then started down the road. He followed along behind her, waiting for her mad mood to pass, arguing angrily with her in his mind; but she stepped out boldly, now that the die was cast, until the red light of the entrance rose before them. It had a look of its own, this house all windows and doors, a tawdry, dissolute look; but some devil of contrariness made her linger even then; and when she started back it was too late.

There was a yell from uptown and the patter of horses' hoofs; women's faces appeared at the doors; and then with a whoop a band of cowboys came rushing upon them, swinging their ropes and racing for the house. In the lead a tall man was shaking out his loop, leaning forward as if marking down his prey; and with a cast incredibly swift he snapped the rope over Penny's head and jerked it up tight about her waist.

"That little white heifer is mine!" he yelled and set his horse up with a flourish. The air was full of ropes, of hurtling forms and plunging mounts as the tall man rode back through the dust; but as he was showing his big teeth in a triumphant laugh, Clay Hawks laid hold of the rope.

"Just a moment," he said. "There's a slight mistake. This lady was just seeing the sights."

"You drop that rope," cursed the rider, "or I'll bust your head open. I'll show her a good time, myself."

"Throw that loop off!" directed Clay, speaking over his shoulder to Penny as he set back to give her the slack; but she let the moment pass and the rope bit into her flesh as the cowboy spurred back his mount.

"Drop that rope!" he warned, but Clay had whipped out his jackknife and suddenly the taut reata snapped.

"There's mah honey!" grinned a huge negro, flipping a deft loop at Penny's head the moment he saw the rope part; but Clay had seen his cast and he plucked Penny away even before the tall cowboy could act.

"You black rascal!" he shouted as he knocked the negro from his horse, "you keep out of the affairs of your betters. By grab, back in Texas we'd skin you alive for that. What do you mean, butting in among white folks?"

"I don't mean nuthin', suh, Mistah Loveleddy," answered the negro apologetically. "Jest havin' a little fun."

"Well, keep out of this, understand?" ordered the cowboy arrogantly and wheeled his horse on Hawks.

"What do *you* mean," he demanded, "cutting my hogging strings like that? You limber-legged dude you—git!"

He swung back the frayed end of his severed reata but Clay ducked its sweep and made a spring at him.

"You get down off of that horse and I'll show you what I mean!" he answered as the crowd began to shout, and the tall man stepped down willingly. They put up their fists but as he faced his antagonist the cowboy stepped back a pace.

"Say, who are you, anyway?" he demanded uneasily. "Your face seems kinder familiar."

"I'm Clay Hawks!" answered Clay, "but don't let that make any difference. Step to it, if you think you can whip me."

"Why—Clay!" exclaimed the cowboy, suddenly sweeping off his hat and bowing to him and the lady. "My Gawd, why didn't you tell me who you was? I wouldn't have had this happen for anything in the world; and I certainly beg your pardon, ma'am!"

He bowed once more to wide-eyed Penny but Hawks stood looking at him dourly.

"What are you doing in town?" he asked, ignoring the apology. "You're supposed to be out riding the range. No wonder you lose eight hundred out of fourteen hundred steers—the Old Man sent me out here to see about it."

"That is a matter of business, seh," returned the Texan politely, "that we can talk over better to-morrow; but I have made a great mistake in my treatment of this young lady and I'd like to present my apologies."

"That can wait till to-morrow, too," replied Clayton Hawks curtly. "Come, Penny, are you ready to go?"

"I'll give him back his rope first," replied Penny smiling bravely and handed the bowing cowboy his loop.

Clay glanced at her sharply, then reached out his hand and jerked the rope away.

"Haven't you got any sense?" he burst out angrily, and Penny seemed to shrink before him.

"Just a moment, seh," pleaded the Texan gallantly. "The fault was my own—I hope you'll not blame the young lady. And now if you'll kindly introduce me, I'll present my apologies properly."

Clay looked him over coldly and shook his head.

"You'll never be introduced by me," he stated.

"Beg pardon, but I will," returned the cowboy stubbornly. "That's my right, as one gentleman to another."

"You damned drunken sot!" exploded Hawks contemptuously, "where'd you get the idea you were a gentleman? I've got no business here myself, so I can't say too much, but is this the place you'd go to find a gentleman? This young lady is my fiancée and she came out here under my protection—and I'll be damned if I'll introduce you!"

"Then I'll introduce myself!" spoke up Penny impulsively and advanced with her hand outstretched. "I'm Charlotte Pennyman," she said, "and it's all right about the rope. Can I keep this for myself?"

She held up the loop, which Clay had

cast aside, and the cowboy bowed to the ground:

"My name is Loveleddy," he said, "and I ask a thousand pardons for my rough and discourteous treatment. Clay is right—I can hardly claim to be a gentleman."

He bowed again and, taking her dainty hand, raised it twice to his lips and was gone.

CHAPTER II.

THE LOOP.

"Give me that rope!" commanded Hawks as the red lights faded behind them. "And Penny, what in the world has come over you?"

"I don't know," she faltered; but she held fast to the rope and he knew that the madness still held her. If he pressed his demands she would fight for her trophy, and yet what a shameful thing it was! In a normal mood she must recognize her error, but now she clung to the rope. It was the loop with which a man who had taken her for a prostitute had snatched her from the door of the hog ranch; and yet—it was the rope of a dashing Texas cowboy, the first real cowboy she had seen. They walked on in silence and as Clay wrestled with this problem his anger leaped from Penny to Lovelady.

Times had changed indeed when a man like that was superintendent of the Lazy B Ranch; yet that was the name of his father's new wagon boss; and Lovelady had remembered him instantly. Now that he had seen him, Clay remembered Lovelady as well—he was the first Texas cowboy to come to the Lazy B; and he had tried to live up to his name. But to demand an introduction to Penny! In a place where any gentleman would have hung his head for shame, to stand forth and brazenly ask that! Clay's fist closed again and he cursed the turn of fate which had made Lovelady remember him. And then, to make things worse, Penny had given the scoundrel her hand and Lovelady had pressed it to his lips. The whole world seemed mad and unreal.

"Please throw away that rope," he ordered.

She glanced up at him quickly and clutched it to her tighter.

"It's my rope," she said. "He gave it to me."

"It's my rope," he returned. "Don't we own the Lazy B? Well, we supply all our cowboys with ropes."

"You can't have it," she replied, still watching him. "All my life," she went on slowly, as he made no move to seize it, "I've been treated like a little child. From now on I'm going to be free."

"It's a free country," he observed grimly. "A little too free. But I'll tame that bunch down, about to-morrow."

"But, Clay," she protested, suddenly sensing his meaning. "You aren't going to discharge him—them?"

"That is my business," he stated. "There's something rotten in Denmark or they wouldn't have lost eight hundred steers. I'll get to the bottom of this, yet. And if you've decided to be free I can see from to-night's experience that Wyoming is no place for *you*."

"Why, what do you mean?" she cried in alarm. "Oh, Clayton, you promised! Please, dear, you aren't going to tell mother?"

"I won't need to," he said, "if you carry back that rope. She'll naturally want to know where you got it."

"Oh, you're hateful," she wailed; "you're just trying to intimidate me. Can't I have my own way about anything?"

"Sure, but listen," he entreated. "This is a pretty tough country to bring a girl into anyway—and you know you came along against my will—but now that you are here and under my protection you'll have to accept my judgment, that's all. If I tell you it isn't safe to go on the streets at night you'll have to just take my word for it—that is, of course, if you don't desire to be humiliated and treated like a common prostitute."

"Why, *I* haven't been humiliated!" she answered lightly. "I wouldn't have missed it for anything! Can't you understand, Clayton—it's all so new to me, and Mr. Loveleddy wouldn't hurt me!"

"Love-lady," corrected Clay. "These Texans can't talk plain—and don't you be too sure he won't hurt you."

"Don't you worry," she laughed. "I'll look out for him."

"Yes, and if that isn't being humiliated," went on Clay with rising wrath, "I'd like to know what you call it. I'm dead sure *I* was humiliated, and if your mother ever hears about it——"

"Oh, but, Clay, you promised not to tell!"

"She'll take you back to Boston," he ended.

"I won't go!" she declared defiantly. "I guess I'm of age. But Clay, you won't tell her, will you?"

"I won't need to," he reminded her, "if she sees you with that rope. Won't you please throw it away and be sensible?"

"Oh—well, *there* then!" she sobbed, slamming it down in the dust. "You—I can't have my way about *any*thing!"

Thinking it over later Clay decided he had been hard-hearted; but when he got up in the morning and walked down to the store the rope in the dust was gone. Two gaunt Lazy B horses, still at the rack of the Cowboys' Rest, swept away the last of his repentance; and when he came to the office of his father's resident manager there was a fighting light in his eye. William Bones might be honest and a good friend of the family but he had sadly mismanaged the Lazy B. Not only had their calf-tally shrunk twenty per cent at a time when neighbors' tallies were increasing, but fourteen hundred steers, after two years on the range, had shipped out only six hundred head. That had made even his father sit up.

The office of William Bones was a shabby old building, leaning up against one side of the bank, and the bank itself looked more like a powder house than the repository of Custer County's wealth. It was small and solidly built, with no pretentious plaster pillars to break the squat ugliness of its front, and there were those who said that the real business of the bank was transacted in Bones' back office. Certainly he was a director of the bank; and the sign on his window read "Loans and Investments" as well as "The Forty-four Cattle Company."

Bones was sitting at a table behind his roll-top desk, pecking impatiently away at a typewriter, and as he looked up from his work his projecting gray eyebrows were oddly suggestive of two bunches of sagebrush. His face was long and bony with a thick stand of bristling hair and the stubble showed white on his chin.

"Well, mister?" he challenged in a voice that made Clay start and then he rose up grimly. "W'y, hello, Clay," he said, "come out to investigate me? You're welcome, that's all I can say!"

He shook hands perfunctorily and dropped back in his chair again.

"Sit down," he said. "When'd you get in? Is your father still back there in Boston? Well, what's the difference if your mother did die—he don't need to leave here for good! Don't you know, the greatest mistake Sam Hawks ever made was when he left that ranch. I've tried to look after it and neglected my own business to keep things running smooth; but you just can't run another man's ranch and attend to your own affairs too. My Snake River outfit has been giving me no end of trouble—they're wasting and stealing everything; and honestly, Clay, I don't know what I'd have done if it hadn't been for Lovelady."

"I see he's in town," spoke up Clay. "What's going on—been shipping some steers?"

"Why, no," replied Bones rubbing his chin indecisively, "but, well anyhow, he's a danged good man. Good cowman and a hard worker—out riding day and night—and he keeps the same men the year around. That's always a good sign with a boss; it shows his men are satisfied."

"It's a good sign," corrected Clay, "if his men are good men and if he keeps them out on the job; but that's the hardest-looking bunch I ever encountered—don't look like the old hands at all. And drunk and raising hell all over town. I brought two ladies out with me—Mrs. Pennyman and her daughter—and the first thing we saw, tied up at the Cowboys' Rest, was eight of my Lazy B horses."

"You're not satisfied, then?" demanded Bones, screwing his mouth down and frowning. "You don't like the way I've conducted things? Well, all right, Mister Hawks, if you think you can do any better you're welcome to try your hand!"

"I'll begin," nodded Clay, "by firing Lovelady. How'd you ever come to get such a man?"

"You'll begin," retorted Bones, "by making one grand mistake. Things have changed since you left the ranch. You fire that man and the whole outfit will quit you right when you need men the worst. What will your father have to say to that?"

"Well——" began Clay and, as he stopped to consider, the move seemed a little ill-advised. Good cowboys were hard to get and the summer work was on—but his mind was made up about Lovelady. He would fire him the first chance he got. "I'll look around," he conceded, "before I do anything

radical. But what about those eight hundred steers?"

"Well, *what* about them?" demanded Bones, his harsh voice growing louder as he gloated over his initial victory. "Do you think that you can find them? If you can, young man, I want to give you a gold medal, because I've had detectives on the job and they failed. You may think that I've been negligent and let things go to rack and ruin, but you go out to that ranch and look around a while before you jump to any rash conclusions. I've got troubles of my own, and if it wasn't for your father I'd never have undertaken the job; but I want to tell you right now that when William Bones accepts a trust he lives up to the spirit of the agreement.

"This country has changed, I say, since you were out on the ranch; all the old men have got up and gone; and the hardest gang of cow thieves you ever saw in your life have moved in and settled in our midst. Right down in Coon Hole is the toughest bunch of citizens that was ever run out of the South; and the head and front of the gang is old Telford Payne, a rabid Secessionist even yet. He's a traitor to our government and he's harboring a nest of outlaws just because they *are* against the government. There's the answer to your eight hundred lost steers!"

"Aha!" nodded Clay, "I didn't know about that. Has anything been done to get rid of him?"

"There's lots you don't know," observed Bones significantly. "I knowed that the minute you opened your mouth. But since you're willing to listen I'll tell you a few things more, now you're asking about those eight hundred steers. This country has gone to hell till you'd hardly believe it and train robbers and horse thieves are passing back and forth as common as Injuns used to be. They've got a regular Robbers' Trail from the Hole in the Wall, up north, right down through Coon Hole and on south, and this rattlesnake Secesh is engaged in the business of buying and selling stolen stock. You can go down there yourself—I'm not asking you to take my word for it—but that man don't give a damn for the whole United States government—and he's crowded right in on my range!"

"On *your* range!" repeated Clay. "Why I thought the Forty-four was way over there on Snake River."

"It is," said Bones dryly, "but I'm spreading out, understand—always did have a liking for Coon Hole. It's a fine winter range, sheltered and warm at all seasons; and there's Green River in times of drought. Lots of meadows to put up hay on and except for the mosquitoes I don't know a thing against it—the mosquitoes and Telford Payne. But I want you to go down there and look that outfit over—they got those eight hundred steers, all right."

"I'll go," Clay promised him, "but if you're so positive they got them——"

"Now there you go again!" burst out Bones. "Why don't I get 'em back, eh? I'll tell you why I don't get 'em back. That's in Bear County, Colorado, and the sheriff over at Cody is a man that's got no business in office. He's afraid to go in there and arrest that gang of rustlers—what can you do in a case like that? I've been trying all spring to slip a detective into Coon Hole and build up an ironclad case; but those cedar-snappers are too slick for me, they always run him out—and the last man they put a bullet through his pants. I'm glad you came back, Clay, because conditions are getting desperate; and they're pulling your cattle, right along."

"They are, eh?" flared up Clay; and Bones beamed triumphantly, but his smile vanished as Clay went on. He had hoped for some oath of vengeance against the cedar-snappers of Coon Hole, but the Hawkses were always jumping some other way.

"Well, what's to prevent 'em?" Clay burst out indignantly, "with Lovelady and his whole outfit here in town? I don't like that man, Bones—I had a little run-in with him last night and he's too damned polite to suit *me*—and what I want to know is: where does he get all this money that he's spending by the bootful across the bar? Did you pay him when they came in last night?"

"No—I didn't!" acknowledged Bones, running his fingers through his hair while his eyes became fixed and grim. "He's overdrawn his account, already. Now it's strange—I never thought of that before."

"Well, I did, the first time I saw those horses at the rack. And here's another thing I thought of. It suddenly occurred to me in the watches of the night that they might be spending our steer money!"

"A-ah, no!" dissented Bones, shaking his shaggy head vigorously; "you're too suspicious, you're prejudiced against him. But

now you mention the subject I don't mind telling you in strictest confidence that I had the same idee myself once. Never tempt a man too far—and never trust a man too far—those have always been my favorite mottoes; so last fall, after that shortage in the steer shipment came up, I sent an old trapper out to Lovelady. No harm, you understand, to find out what's going on, and this old wolfer could kinder keep an eye out; but no, by Gawd, Lovelady wouldn't have him around—said he'd kill more beef than the varmints. And now ain't that the truth? I decided right there that Mr. Lovelady savvied his business."

"He savvied trappers, all right," conceded Clay, still unconvinced; "but maybe he was protecting himself."

"Oh, if you go as far as that," growled Bones impatiently, "they ain't any of his cowboys you can trust. They'll all steal and lie and sit up all night playing poker and come to town and go on a drunk; but out on the ranch, I tell ye, this Lovelady is an A-1 boss; he runs that wagon to perfection. Every one of his men is an experienced puncher that can write his name with a running iron; and I'll bet you'll find your calves branded up clean and slick, so what more can you ask and expect?"

"You may be right," responded Clay after a long and thoughtful silence, "but at the same time I'm against keeping Lovelady. I don't like him, and never will, so why not give him his time and get some man we can trust? Say! What's become of 'Rooster' Raslem? There's a man that I'd trust anywhere—a good hand and absolutely honest. And never drank a drop—I used to run with him myself when we came to town with the boys and I know he was sober as a judge."

"All the same," returned Bones with a broken-toothed smile, "you'd better leave well enough alone."

"Ah, but Rooster was a prince!" went on Hawks enthusiastically. "And a natural born cowman, too. He taught me all I know about handling cattle and he was always getting off some joke. Say, what became of him, anyway?"

"We-ell," evaded Bones, "he worked for the B's a while and then he had a run-in with Lovelady; and then he came over and rode for me a while—I had to give him his time. So you think he was absolutely honest?"

"I know it!" pronounced Clay. "There's a man I'd trust anywhere!"

"Well, that shows how much you know about picking a wagon boss. Rooster Raslem is a fugitive from justice."

"I don't believe it!" exclaimed Hawks. "There must be some mistake. You can't tell me Rooster's gone wrong!"

"Oh, I can't, hey?" returned Bones beginning to fumble in his disordered desk. "Well, just cast your eye on that!"

He flipped over a crumpled circular with Raslem's photograph smiling out from it and looked up at Clay through his eyebrows.

"'Five thousand dollars reward,'" he quoted oracularly, "'for Horace Plunkett, alias Rooster Raslem; wanted for train robbery. On the night of April third, in company with "Sundance" Thorp——'"

"I don't believe it," Hawks answered sullenly.

"All right," returned Bones, "you don't haf to believe it—but what about making him our wagon boss?"

"That's impossible, of course," returned Clayton Hawks curtly. "Is there anybody you'd like to suggest?"

"I suggest Mr. Lovelady—and I suggest further, Mr. Hawks, that you keep your hands off of this business. Those boys are working for me and they come to me for orders——"

"Well, order them out of town, then," snarled Hawks.

He rose up, his eyes glowing, and after a mocking smile William Bones reached over for his hat. They passed out into the bright sunlight, Bones hustling along in the lead while Clay followed glumly behind, and the search for Lovelady began. At the Cowboys' Rest the barkeeper hadn't seen him and a drunken puncher said he was over at the hog ranch; at that unsavory spot they were informed that he had been there but had gone back to town.

"Down at the corral," suggested Bones at a black look from Hawks, and strode off faster than ever. He was a big, long-legged man, clad in rusty-brown clothes and with a meager, boy-size hat on his head; and instead of the trim boots that his cow-punchers wore he was shod in broad-toed shoes. As he hurried through the sand Clay was gradually left behind and when he reached Main Street he met Bones coming back, but without any signs of Lovelady.

"Now, here," began Hawks, "let's end

this farce, right now. That rounder is not fit——"

"He's the best man in these parts," defended Bones irascibly, "if you can keep the danged fool out of town. But I know where he's at; there's a married woman down below here——"

He ground his teeth with rage and paced off faster than ever, but as he passed by the hotel he stopped short. Clay came up behind him and gazed in through the window—there sat Lovelady, talking to Penny. Mrs. Pennyman sat beside them, smiling blandly at what he was saying; and across Penny's lap lay—the loop.

CHAPTER III.

THE WOMAN OF IT.

A man meets trouble in one way and a woman in another. Charlotte Pennyman looked out and beckoned radiantly. Lovelady flinched and glanced behind him, Mrs. Pennyman still sat beaming; out in the street Hawks and Bones stood staring.

"Who's that woman?" demanded Bones with instant suspicion. "Dog-gone that cuss, Lovelady, I could kill him!"

"He'll get killed," predicted Clay, "if he carries this much further. Mr. Bones, that young lady is my fiancée."

"Your which?" scowled Bones, but before Clay could explain Penny leaped up and flung open the door.

"Come on in, Clay!" she called, "we've been looking for you everywhere. We're going right out to the ranch! Oh, it's all arranged," she laughed as he gazed at her blankly. "Is this Mr. Bones, the manager?"

She shot out a hand and Bones crushed it in sheer amazement.

"What did you say the name was?" he cried harshly.

"Charlotte Pennyman," she smiled twisting one hand in her dress and glancing up at him shyly. "Mr. Lovelady has been telling us all about you!"

"Oh, he has, hey?" spoke up Bones, suddenly coming out of his trance and assuming a rough good nature. "Well, if I'd tell you what I know about Mr. Lovelady——"

"You'd be ashamed to be caught dead with him," finished Clay; and he meant it, every word. Penny knew that he meant it but she had the game in hand and could afford to ignore his spite.

"Come in," she invited Bones, "and say it to his face. Mr. Loveleddy has been saying *nice* things about you. Meet my mother, Mr. Bones—you know Mr. Loveleddy——"

"What was the name?" broke in Bones, stopping awkwardly in front of Mrs. Pennyman, and that lady placed him at a glance.

"Mrs. Pennyman," she repeated with gracious distinctness and turned to the courtly Lovelady. "Won't you go on, please," she beamed, "what you were saying was very interesting. Please sit down, Penny—and *stop* picking on Clay."

Penny bowed her head obediently, then sank back into a chair and turned adoring eyes upon Lovelady. The marks of last night's excesses showed all too plainly on his heavy face and his eyes were puffed and bloodshot; but the hand in which he held a slender, beaded glove was as white and well-groomed as a lady's. His dark hair was oiled and brushed, his mustache tightly waxed, his clothes of the best cloth and cut; and his boots and spurs were all that money could buy. He was an exquisite, right off the range. Clay Hawks gazed at him contemptuously, yet noted the powerful arms and the set of his shoulders and neck; in a rough-and-tumble fight he would be a hard man to deal with in spite of his dandified airs. But it was his voice and his masterful smile, his perfect self-possession, which held the women to the end of the tale.

"Now here," broke in Bones, the moment the story was ended, "I came up on a matter of business. Mr. Lovelady, you round up your men and get out of town—there's work for you to do on the range."

"Very well," bowed Lovelady, rising to his feet on the instant, "I hope the ladies will excuse me."

"Oh, but he was going to drive us to the ranch!" protested Penny, flying at Bones reproachfully. "I don't think it's fair——"

"Another time, Miss Penny," consoled Lovelady from the doorway. "I've got to round up my cowboys now."

He stepped out swiftly, striding off down the street to the clank of his silver-mounted spurs and Penny turned tearfully to her mother.

"Oh, mother!" she cried. "*Why* can't he drive us himself?"

"My dear," acknowledged Mrs. Pennyman smilingly, "I'm sure it will all come out right. We mustn't let our enthusiasm over

the newly discovered West interfere with the plans of our host."

She glanced at Clay, standing straight as an Indian with his mouth closed grimly shut and then at the staring Mr. Bones. He was sitting on the table, nervously scratching his stubbly jaw as he tried to catch the drift of their remarks, but the subtle inversions went over his head and he dropped his feet to the floor.

"Well, guess I'll haf to go," he announced to Clay. "Anything more that I can do?"

"Just a moment," called Clay as Bones slammed out the door, but Penny rushed in before him.

"Mr. Bones," she said, "you have charge of the ranch, haven't you? Mr. Loveleddy said that you did. Well, wouldn't it be all right if mother and I went out there? He said we could live in the rooms back of the cook house, if old Uncle Jimmy would move out."

Bones glanced at Clay and then at Mrs. Pennyman who was beaming upon him amiably.

"Why, yes—yes," he stammered, "you're friends of Clay's, ain't ye? Then of course it's all right, with *me!*"

He glanced at Clay again, for he still stood grim and silent and ventured an inept joke.

"What's the matter, Clay?" he smirked. "'Fraid Lovelady will cut you out? Well, if he does, you know what you can do—you can fire him!"

"I can fire him right now," returned Hawks and something told them he intended to do it.

"Why, Clay!" exclaimed Mrs. Pennyman in shocked surprise, "we thought he was perfectly lovely."

"He is!" broke in Bones with a loud guffaw and Hawks whirled upon him angrily.

"Mr. Bones," he said, "you're not called in on this at all. I'll talk the matter over with Mrs. Pennyman."

"Heh! Techy this morning," commented Bones sarcastically and Penny met his eye and smiled. He winked at her knowingly as he scuttled out the door and Penny turned back with a sigh.

"Oh, Clay!" she scolded, "what's the matter with you? Don't you want anybody to have a good time?"

"I'll just take that rope," he said; and she stepped back, one hand behind her. Her eyes, which had been so round and innocently appealing, suddenly took on a wild, startled look, and then they changed again. It brought back to Clay's mind the vision of a horse that once had slipped its halter on the plains—the horse had not moved but a new look had come into its eyes; it knew that it was free. And now Penny did not move, only her eyes lighted up, and she gazed at him demurely. Clay wondered why he had ever loved her.

"Why, Clayton!" soothed Mrs. Pennyman, "what is the matter this morning? Have you been having a quarrel with Penny?"

"Not yet," he said, "but I want that rope. Did she tell you how she got it?"

"Why, yes," she exclaimed. "It was rather unusual, but I see nothing for you to be angry about. Don't you like her acquaintance with Mr. Lovelady?"

"No, I do not," he answered and Penny drew back a step. Then with the swiftness of a whirlwind she flung up the stairs and slammed the door of her room.

Mrs. Pennyman looked at Clay and motioned him to a chair.

"What is the matter? I don't understand."

Hawks sat down absently and remained gazing into space.

"Neither do I," he said at length. "What did she tell you about the rope?"

"Why, this rope, as I understand, was given to her last night after she had met Mr. Lovelady at the dance hall. It seems that he and his cowboys came charging down upon the place just as the girls came out of the hall; and Mr. Lovelady, seeing Penny, naturally thought that she was one of them and lassooed her to be his partner. But when it was explained that she was just an Eastern visitor of course he was greatly chagrined; so, taking out his knife, he cut his rope in two, as a penance, you might say, for his rudeness. I thought it was really quite romantic."

"Yes," he grunted and sat silent. "Was that all?" he asked at last.

"Why, no," she went on; "she told about meeting you, and of your objection to her being out at night; but really, Clayton, you mustn't judge her too harshly—Penny must have her fling, I suppose. It's all so strange to me. But tell me, Clay—I didn't know that cowboys danced."

"Danced!" repeated Clay rousing up from his black thoughts.

"Why, yes. At the dance hall, you know."

"Oh," he said in bitter jest. "Yes, they dance, all right. But of course it's all carefully supervised—they have a madame in charge."

"What a strange country," she mused, entirely missing his irony. "So lawless and yet so chivalrous!"

"Mrs. Pennyman," he burst out hoarsely, "don't let me or anybody fool you—this country is no place for a woman. I had no business to ever bring you out here. But my advice to you now is to take Penny and go back—and for God's sake, don't come out to that ranch!"

"Now, mother!" cried Penny, coming flying down the stairway from where she had been listening over the banister, "don't you believe a word he says. He's just doing this out of spite, because Mr. Loveleddy was nice to us; but I'm going out—to—that —ranch!"

She beat her hands on the table in childish passion and her mother smiled at her mildly.

"Penny, dear," she said, "you shouldn't be so insistent. It's Clay's ranch, and he hasn't even asked us."

"Well, if he's as mean as all that——" She clutched the engagement ring that Clay had so recently given her, drew it off and then thrust it back. "I don't care," she sobbed, "I'm going."

"You can go," spoke up Clay after a minute of heavy silence, "if——"

"No ifs!" she exulted, reaching his side at a bound and kissing his uncompromising lips. "You're a Yankee, through and through, Clayton Hawks. But we're out West, now, where the winds of freedom blow. Don't you think you can trust your lucky Penny?"

She ruffled up his hair until she made him laugh and the "if" was lost in the scuffle; but when he stepped out and saw Lovelady up the street Clayton Hawks suddenly wondered if he could. Could he trust his lucky Penny? And would she bring him luck?

As he stood in meditation, heavy footsteps came hurrying toward him and Bones' voice rasped in his ear.

"Say," he demanded, "who air them womenfolks anyway?"

"They belong," replied Clay formally, "to one of the best families of Boston. Mrs. Pennyman is an old friend of my father."

"Yes, but the girl," persisted Bones, "what was that French word you called her?"

"Oh, my fiancée—that means we're engaged."

"You don't say!" exclaimed Bones, slapping his leg hilariously. "Well, why didn't you tell me in the first place? Is that what your father took you back there to Boston fur? Or was it to learn this here French? How'd you come out—is she going to the ranch?"

"Yes, she's going," Clay nodded as Bones burst into a guffaw; "but please try to restrain yourself, Mr. Bones. Because if you don't," he flared up, "I'm liable to bust you over the head and take charge of this outfit myself."

"Oh, you air, hey?" responded Bones, suddenly straightening his face out. "Well, what can I do for you, *Mister* Hawks?"

"You can call up that man Lovelady," Clay answered evenly, "and give him his orders in my presence. Otherwise I'll do it myself. You tell him to take his wagon and go ahead with his range branding and if I catch him around that ranch house I'll fire him so damned quick——"

"Hey! Steve!" shouted Bones. "Come over here!"

Lovelady cantered over briskly, riding a beautiful, glossy bay that fought its head yet yielded to his mastery.

"Mr. Lovelady!" began Bones. "I want you to understand right now that Mr. Hawks is going to be your boss. His father has sent him out here to look into the loss of those steers, so the ranch will still remain in my charge; but whatever he says, goes, as far as you are concerned—or me too, for the matter of that."

"Very well, seh," returned Lovelady, "I shall endeavor to please you both; but any time, Mr. Bones, that my services ain't satisfactory——"

"Aw, no, no!" broke in Bones impatiently, "you're all right, as long as you stay out of town; but this carousing around will have to stop, and I want you to keep in your place. You're not employed, Mr. Lovelady, as a professional entertainer or to make up to Mr. Hawks' private guests; you're hired, and don't you forget it, to run that wagon and brand up them Lazy B calves. Mr. Hawks naturally asked, when he had seen your men in town, what was to prevent them Coon Hole rustlers from stealing him blind; and I had to tell him, Steve. Not a dog-

goned thing! You ain't been treating me right."

Lovelady shifted in his saddle and looked up the street, where one of his punchers had just fallen off his horse.

"Maybe not, seh," he admitted, but without remorse. "Anything more, before I go?"

"Now about them steers!" charged Bones, raising his voice to a fighting pitch, "they've jest got to be found, that's all. I want you to do everything in your power to help Mr. Hawks find that stuff. Eight hundred big steers, worth twenty dollars a head at least, out of fourteen hundred head shipped in! We jest can't stand it, that's all! It don't pay—it's ruinous. We'll be bankrupt. And it shows some negligence, somewhere."

"Well now, Mr. Bones," began Lovelady argumentatively, "I beg leave to differ with you there. It shows no negligence on my part. I've rode down a mount of horses trying to locate them steers and I can't find hide nor hair of 'em."

"No negligence!" stormed Bones. "You're here in town, ain't you? What business have *you* got in Powder Springs? And what's to prevent Tel Payne and that bunch of Coon Hole cow thieves from stealing every critter we've got?"

"I've got two men, seh!" defended Lovelady, "in my line camps down on the Alkali, throwing the stuff back toward the ranch; but when it comes to Coon Hole, that's one place I decline to go into—not for no hundred dollars a month!"

His eyes flashed with sudden fire and then became set as Bones thrust out his jaw and began to rant.

"Not for no hundred dollars," repeated Lovelady with finality. "When a sheriff and two deputies say that outfit is too hard for 'em and decide they ain't lost any rustlers and that——"

"That sheriff is a coward!" Bones shouted furiously. "He ought to be kicked out of office! And he will be, the next election! And when he is, mind ye, I'll have the law on them cedar-snappers—I'll put old Tel Payne in prison. I'll put a ring in his nose, the Secesh son of a goat, if it costs me every dollar I've got—he's stealing my Forty-four cows!"

"Jest a moment, seh," said Lovelady, "them boys are trying to kill my colored fellow." He spurred over to the Cowboys' Rest, where a fight was in progress, and Bones rolled his eyes on Clay.

"Now, you see!" he nodded. "That's jest what we're up against. Them steers have disappeared into Coon Hole."

"I'll get 'em," promised Clay, "if they're there."

"You'll get killed," predicted Bones, smiling approvingly.

CHAPTER IV.

A FREE COUNTRY.

A great change came over Penny as they drove briskly out of town and headed across the prairie to the south. She sighed and settled down by her mother's side like a naughty child after a tantrum; and after brief, ecstatic intervals she would sigh again and gaze out across the boundless plains. In the distance there rose dim ranges whose names she would not ask but which reminded her of mountains seen in dreams. They held clouds upon their shoulders and their ramparts were huge and square like fortresses hewn from solid rock. Behind the eastern horizon snow-capped peaks thrust up their heads, long mesas stretched away into the heat and across the soft gray flats the shadows of drifting clouds floated silently in from the west.

"I like it," she said at last.

Mrs. Pennyman glanced at Clay and smiled down indulgently. She was a large, placid woman with yellowed white hair and an expression of Buddhalike calm.

"Yes, dear," she responded, "*I* like it."

"I mean, I love it," returned Penny quickly and at that her mother said nothing. "It's so big," she went on, "and free."

Clay roused up at the word as if he had been struck—where was it leading to, all this talk about being free? Did she plan, at the ranch, to get a horse and run wild as so many Eastern tourists did, making friends with all the cowboys, committing unheard of indiscretions, while he stood by and looked on like a fool?

"Yes," he spoke up, "it's a free country, all right; but even that has certain disadvantages. Lots of men out here would be making hair bridles in the penitentiary if the officers were half onto their jobs."

"I am surprised," observed Mrs. Pennyman, following her own line of thought, "that your father should ever have settled here. Such a wild, desolate country, without a sin-

gle tree in sight. How far is it, Clayton, to the ranch?"

"Twenty miles by the road. We go clear out to that point and then back when we get up on top—the boys ride right straight across."

He pointed due south where a line of tiny dots marked the galloping flight of his cow hands; and once more Penny sighed.

"Will they be there when we arrive?" she asked at last, and he shrugged his shoulders gloomily.

"Very likely," he said. "Drunk, tough, and disorderly; whooping and hollering and raising Hades all night. Either that or they'll hook up and go out on the mesa to sleep it off away from the house. All depends on which way they jump."

"Will it be perfectly safe?" asked Mrs. Pennyman doubtfully and Penny burst out laughing, almost recklessly.

"I hope they stay," she said. "I want to see them ride some broncos. Did you notice that big negro, mother? Well, Mr. Loveleddy tells me that he's the best broncho rider in the West. And Mr. Bones told me that Mr. Loveleddy is a horse *tamer*—he can make any of them perfectly gentle!"

"Isn't that wonderful!" beamed Mrs. Pennyman. "Are you a good rider, too, Clayton? I should think you'd be afraid of them. But I noticed that Mr. Lovelady has a very gentle way about him and I suppose that even horses understand."

"Yes, they understand," said Clay and let the subject drop for it brought up ugly thoughts. Perhaps he had been stubborn and in a way unreasonable in his objections to Penny's conduct with Lovelady, but he felt even yet an angry resentment at the way she had flouted his judgment. She had taken advantage of his absence to meet Lovelady a second time and get herself invited to the ranch and then she had arrayed Bones and her mother against him until he had had no choice but to yield. And now that she had her wish and was on her way to the ranch she was suddenly quiescent again.

He glanced over at her curiously, as if looking at a stranger, and wondered if he really knew her. Men had lived, so he had heard, the full span of their lives with women whose minds they never fathomed, until, in some crisis, the truth had come out and they discovered some greater love—or hate. It was something Bones had said which had summoned up these uneasy thoughts—had his father taken him East for a purpose? Did he have in his mind this alliance with Charlotte Pennyman when he had insisted upon taking his son to Boston?

Clayton had not missed that movement when Penny had snatched off her ring and he had been surprised to find that he had steeled his heart to accept it if, to gratify some whim, she threw their engagement token at his feet. He was a New Englander after all, as she had said, and such things were not to be held lightly. He looked at her again, her childish face rapt and smiling as she gazed across the plain, and the grim lines relaxed as he watched. She was a child—and he was a Hawks.

The Hawkses were a stern breed and, where women were concerned, perhaps a little exacting and hard. His father had been that way; but, given their own way, they had not proved impossible—it was only when they were crossed that they grew stubborn. Clayton cursed his hard heart as he glanced again at the yellow hair, the drooping eyelashes, the blue, brooding eyes; such women were to be petted and wooed away from their caprices, for at heart she was still a child.

Out across the rolling prairie they proceeded at a brisk trot, their trunks lashed securely behind, and as the long line of Hawks Mesa rose up before them the road swung off to the west. Under the brow of a high point where a break in the sandstone capping made way for a gradual ascent the grade wound laboriously up until at last, winning the summit, they looked out over the broad table-land beyond. Surrounded on every side by its high wall of sandstone it was a stronghold easily kept; and Sam Hawks had been a man to hold his own in any country, whether his enemies were many or few.

No sheep had ever grazed on this ocean of waving grass, no predatory cattlemen had invaded his domain; and over the edge of the cup—for the mesa was bowl-shaped—his winter range extended on to the south. It was an empire, almost, taken and held by one man; and like all empires subject to decay. Once his strong grip was slackened disintegration would set in—already they were stealing his steers—but the time had not arrived when the kingdom could be divided, for the heir apparent still lived. Clayton Hawks sat silent as his eyes swept the familiar plain, seeking out each water

hole and branding ground, and then he turned to his guests.

"This is the ranch," he said, "as far as you can see. Headquarters is down there where you'll notice those white spots—we'll be there now in two hours."

"How far everything is!" exclaimed Mrs. Pennyman in dismay. "Really, Clayton, it almost frightens me. And to think that your father should shut himself up here and waste the best years of his life!"

"Shut himself up!" repeated Clay. "Seems to me this is outdoors. I felt shut up back in Boston."

"I mean isolate himself," defended Mrs. Pennyman stoutly. "All this land—and only one house!"

"And a bum house at that," observed Clay. "You'll wish yourself back at the hotel."

"Not that hotel!" began Mrs. Pennyman, but Penny spoke up louder.

"*I* won't!" she said. "I want to live here always." But she did not meet Clay's answering smile. Did she mean then, live there with him?

They drove on down the long slope to where the upheaval of the rim had cracked the solid formation of the sandstone, forming a series of water holes and springs. Round-bellied cattle stood by the water, lazily fighting the flies; a band of rangy horses ran off; and after toiling on and on through sand and bog and sagebrush, they came within sight of the ranch. It was a group of log buildings placed about a huge spring hole whose waters, running off, formed a pond; and in the dirt of the mud roofs grass and gnarly cactus grew as if to typify the meagerness of their life. Huge corrals and feeding racks and stables roofed high with hay intervened between the houses and the gate; and it seemed as if in that place cattle and horses were everything and human beings little or nothing. A hump-backed old man stepped out of the cook house and, wiping his hands on his apron, regarded them apathetically.

"They're gone!" mourned Penny, looking around for the cowboys; and then she leaped to the ground. "But we're here!" she added cheerily. "Good afternoon, Uncle Jimmy; do you think you can take us in?"

Uncle Jimmy looked at her a trifle longer than was necessary and spat out a quid of tobacco.

"Boss' orders," he answered in a thin, discontented whine. "He left a horse for you, out in the corral."

"Oh, did he!" she exclaimed. "I'm going out to see it!" And she dashed back to the high, pole corral.

"I'm Mr. Hawks," said Clay formally. "Let me introduce you to Mrs. Pennyman. Mr. Lovelady didn't mention your name."

"No matter," mumbled the cook, "let it go for Uncle Jimmy. Glad to meet you, ma'am," and he bowed to Mrs. Pennyman.

She responded a trifle stiffly, for her eyes had strayed past him into the house that was to be their Western home. The entrance was through the kitchen, there being no door at the north end on account of the winter blizzards, and from what she could see of Uncle Jimmy and his abode she did not imagine she would like it.

"Jest step in, ma'am," he invited, a trace of hostility in his voice, "and I'll show you to your room. We ain't no ways fixed, of course, to entertain womenfolks——"

"Oh, it's all right, I'm sure," she said hopefully.

"But it's the best we've got," he ended.

They passed through the dining room, with its oilclothed table and long benches, into what had all too evidently been Uncle Jimmy's den; as Clay looked around at the crude and dirty bedroom he glanced at Mrs. Pennyman expectantly. She would know now what he had meant when he had advised her in Powder Springs to wait until quarters could be prepared for her; but after a quick glance about she said it would do nicely, at which Uncle Jimmy disappeared.

He had been compelled by their advent to move out to the bunk house, where his tobacco would be at the mercy of thieving cowboys; but his expression as he fumbled about, throwing together a belated supper, indicated a gloomy resignation to his fate. Clay moved to the bunk house too, for this room which the Pennymans now shared had been his and his father's as well. The cook had moved in since they left.

It required only a glance to indicate to Clay the depredations which his absence had invited. The door to this room had been left solidly padlocked, since it housed their papers and effects; but now the lock was gone and prying hands had soiled and desecrated the keepsakes and books along the wall. The bed was broken down, the floor hacked and filthy, with old magazines thrown

carelessly about; and the whole Lazy B outfit did not afford a single sheet to cover up the greasy bedding. It was shocking, but Clay had warned them and he left them to fight it out. Complaisant mothers must expect such dilemmas when they indulge their daughters too far.

Breakfast was served at daylight at th Lazy B Ranch and Uncle Jimmy saw no reason to make a change. He routed them out promptly at a quarter after four and breakfast consisted of coffee, bacon and flapjacks. Clay had discovered in the cook the evening before that same aloofness he had noted in Lovelady, and he saw in this contrariness an overweening determination to smoke the ladies out of his room. The fact that he, Clay, was the son of the owner did not deter the cook any more than it did Lovelady, and he detected in both a surly antagonism —an eagerness, almost, to get fired. But the time had not yet come to make a change of cooks and Clay accepted things as a matter of course, nor would Penny or her mother admit the slightest discomfort from their night on the broken-down bed. Penny came to her breakfast in riding boots and spurs, talking of nothing but the horse Lovelady had left; and immediately after the meal she unpacked her Western saddle and gave Clay no peace till she was mounted. Then she galloped off down the road, just as he had expected from the first, leaving her mother gazing helplessly after her.

An ecstasy that was almost madness seemed to lay hold upon Penny as she spurred her flying pony across the plain, but after the first burst she reined him in to a walk and at last she rode back to the ranch.

"Where are the cowboys?" she asked as she found Clay rigging his own saddle. "Come on, let's go out where they are!"

The impulse to refuse, to oppose her in everything, rose up as he met her eager eyes; but something about their appeal suddenly smote his heart with pity and he fought down his jealousy of Lovelady. They had come to a new world and Penny was entitled to her fling, provided it did not take her too far; and besides, something told him that this Penny was a different woman from the sheltered and petted child he had known. That wild look had come back, the daring, resolute gleam that he had noted the day before; and he knew if he opposed her she would start off by herself like the horse that had slipped its halter on the plains. She was free and it went to her head.

"All right," he said and half an hour afterward they were following the deep tracks of the wagon wheels.

"Let's gallop!" she cried, giving her horse his head, and once more he gave her her way. She rode well on the swift sorrel that Lovelady had left for her—so well that she left Clay behind; and when he spurred over a roll he saw her below him, trotting up to the Lazy B wagon. It was parked in a swale and, though the morning was half gone, the cowboys were just roping out their mounts. Tied to two wheels of the wagon the long cavvy ropes stretched out, making a corral to hold the rope-shy horse herd; and while two men guarded the stakes that held up the outside corners the tall Texans flipped their loops into the rout. At every lash of the rope there was a rush and a thunder of feet, then a hush as the noose found its mark; and as Clay rode up unnoticed he saw Lovelady coming out, leading a horse that fought its head and stepped high. Penny was looking on admiringly, her eyes big with delight, and all the rough Texans were grinning.

"Will he *buck?*" repeated Lovelady as she shot out an eager question. "Why, yes, I reckon he will."

"Well, make him!" she urged. "I just want to see him—that is, if he won't buck too hard."

"Hard or easy," laughed Lovelady, "it's all the same to me. I allow I can ride most any of 'em."

"Please ride him then!" she said and he glanced up at her teasingly.

"I'll ride one if you will," he challenged.

"All right!" she answered gayly and Lovelady nodded at Hawks, who had ridden up beside his affianced.

"Shall I ride one for the lady?" he inquired, and at the word he threw on his saddle and mounted. The horse stood rigid, his head held high, waiting the touch of the reins to be gone, and Lovelady smiled as he took off his hat.

"This is going to surprise him some," he observed to Penny and slapped the horse full in the face. At the smash of the hat the horse whirled and shook his head and the Texans let out a yell.

"Hook 'im!" they shouted and Lovelady threw forward a gleaming spur and raked

him from neck to flank. Down went the horse's head and in a series of writhing jumps he bucked across the flat and stopped. Lovelady sat him like a statue, swaying his body to meet each lunge, balanced as nicely as a manikin on a pivot.

"Oh, ride him some more!" called Penny in a frenzy but he shook his head and came back.

"We're a little late," he apologized. "Have to be starting now, I reckon. Come out again some time and we'll ride a real bronk!"

"Then it's my turn," she said, dropping down from her horse. "I'll bet I can ride him, all right."

"I don't doubt it, ma'am," he smiled as the cowboys all shouted, "but you might git hurt, you know."

"No! I mean it!" she declared, struggling to strip off her saddle and Lovelady glanced inquiringly at Hawks.

"Let her ride him," Clay said quietly and Penny whirled about and faced him.

"I didn't ask your permission," she said.

"I was speaking to Mr. Lovelady," he answered, still quietly. "I know there's no use talking to you, Penny."

She gave him another look and turned to the waiting Lovelady.

"You'd better not ride him," he suggested. "He's a worse horse than he looks, ma'am, and when he gets excited he's got a dirty way of falling over backward. Some other time, Miss Penny, when you've had a little more practice—not that I doubt you can ride him," he added. "You certainly have got the nerve."

"Well," began Penny, looking the bronk over doubtfully, "perhaps you're right, Mr. Loveleddy. I won't."

She stood gazing after them as they rode off on the circle and then she turned on Clay.

"Don't you think I dared to ride him?" she demanded furiously.

"I don't know, Penny," he answered. "You certainly are acting very strangely. All I knew was you wouldn't listen to *me*."

"I don't have to listen to you," she flared back resentfully. "Mr. Loveleddy must think that you own me!"

"Oh, I see," he said; and then, after a silence. "In that case you can give me back our ring."

His voice broke a little but he held out his hand and Penny looked up at him, frightened.

"What ring?" she faltered. "Oh, Clay, you don't mean——"

"Yes, Penny," he said. "You're free."

She twisted the ring on her finger and drew it off slowly.

"You must think I care," she sulked.

"No, you don't care," he replied; "that's just what's the matter with you. You're running wild—you don't care what you do. Just a word of objection and you'd have been up on that bronk to show me that you were free. I asked you as a favor to keep away from this man Lovelady——"

"Well, take your old ring!" she snapped.

He accepted the token gravely and put it into his pocket.

"Very well," he said, "you're free."

"It's a free country," she quoted and was laughing recklessly when she caught the glint in his eye.

"I wonder," he said, "if you realize that *I* have not been free?"

It was the way he said it, more than what he said, that made Penny go suddenly pale.

"What is it?" she demanded. "What do you mean?"

"I mean," he said, "I'm going to take you back to town. There's such a thing as being too free."

CHAPTER V.

HE THAT DIGGETH A PIT——

The castles in the air, the long days of life and freedom which she had counted as good as won, fell away before his words like a mirage. Where before she had glimpsed freedom and wild gallops across the plains she saw the gray streets of Boston with the people plodding decorously to church. The dream broke and left her staring, then the bitter tears came and she leaned against her horse and sobbed.

"I won't go!" she cried rebelliously; but when she met his steady eye she knew she had tried him too far. He knew all her pretty tricks, her sudden tears and childish endearments, and his mind was firmly set on one thing—he would take her away from Lovelady. Merely to win the form of freedom she had cast away its reality—she was to be sent home like a schoolgirl.

She swung up on her pony and galloped back toward the ranch, but the glory had gone out of the morning that at dawn had seemed the fairest in her life. This man whom she had twisted like a ring about her finger had ruined it all with a word. A

hundred desperate expedients rose up in her mind to escape from this pit she had dug and then with a stifled sob she reined in her horse and waited to make her peace. She knew now that she was not free.

Clay rode up slowly, his keen eyes fixed upon her, sitting his horse as imperturbably as any cowboy; and it came over her suddenly that this mesa was his old home, these wild cowboys the only companions he had known. All the ephemeral polish which he had picked up in Boston had been sloughed as a snake sheds its skin and now in chaps and jumper he had taken the color of his surroundings and was as rough and unmanageable as any of them. She even noted, and for the first time, a pistol in his chaps, its ivory handle half concealed behind a flap; and underneath his broad hat his eyes peered out warily as if seeing an enemy even in her.

"You look like a real cowboy," she said with a half smile. "Will—will you be sorry, when I'm gone?"

He shrugged his shoulders and smiled back enigmatically; but she saw he was not wholly displeased.

"I am a real cowboy," he answered. "What gave you the idea I wasn't?"

"Oh, something about you," she replied, motioning vaguely with one exquisitely gloved hand. "You aren't quite as rough as—some."

"You don't know me," he said as if brushing aside her flattery. "Come on, I'll race you back to the house."

"No! Now, Clay!" she entreated, "don't treat me so rudely. Isn't it enough to break our engagement? And all over nothing—I'm sure I can't remember what it was that gave you the excuse."

"It was Lovelady," he said, "and you know it as well as I do. You've been hypnotized by that unprincipled hound. But I've got too much respect for your mother and you to allow it to go any farther. We're going to hook up and start back for Powder Springs just as soon as you can pack your trunk."

"And won't I ever come back—or see you again?" she asked as the tears filled her eyes. And his heart gave a sudden wrench.

"No, Penny," he said gently, "I don't think so."

"Oh, but, Clay!" she appealed, laying a hand on his arm, "have you thought what it means to me? I've been dreaming for months of this prairie and the mountains; and now—the first day—I have to go!"

"There are other mountains," he returned, "and the prairie is everywhere—I'm doing this to protect you from yourself."

"You are not!" she contradicted, "you're just doing it out of spite. And I'll never forgive you, Clay Hawks!"

"You don't have to," he answered stubbornly. "Didn't I warn you, time and again? Well, you brought it all on yourself."

"What's come over you, Clay?" she pleaded. "You didn't used to be this way. You were always so gentle and kind. I can't understand it, and when you asked for my ring I thought—I thought you'd gone mad."

"You took that ring off yesterday," he burst out accusingly, "when I wouldn't let you come to the ranch. And if I hadn't given in and let you have your own way you'd have thrown it in my face."

"I would not!" she cried; but he had cut the ground from under her and she fell back upon silence, and tears.

"You'll have to tell mother," she sobbed. "And then—she'll think—I'm to blame."

"Well, tell her yourself—I don't care. Tell her you broke the engagement yourself."

"I—I did!" she wailed. "Didn't I give you back the ring? But she thinks so much of you, Clay, and when I tell her it's all over——"

"Don't tell her, then," he broke in hastily.

"And—and will you give me back my ring? Oh, Clay, if you only will I'll never be so thoughtless again. Something has come over me out here, I don't know what it is; but I didn't think you cared—that much."

"Well, I did," he grumbled and put his hand into his pocket; and then he took it out. "Penny," he said, "I've got to be honest with you—I'm afraid of that man Lovelady."

"I'll never see him again!" she promised impulsively. "And mother will be so glad!"

"You can't help seeing him," he insisted, "if you stay here at the ranch—and I'll tell you, Penny, I've got some riding to do. You heard about those cattle that the rustlers are stealing?"

"Oh, are you going out to find them?" she cried.

"I've got to," he said; "that's what the Old Man sent me out here for."

"We'll wait," she sighed contentedly, "until you're back."

"No," he said, "I'm going to take you back to town. Be reasonable, Penny, and consider your mother. That hog wallow she's living in——"

"Oh, we fixed it up, last night. It's all clean, now; and I've thought of lots of things I can do. We can make some flour paste and put new paper on the walls and—oh, there are lots of things to do. And while you are away you can always think of me helping mother fix up your room."

He rode on in silence, staring anxiously ahead at the motherly figure by the door.

"Well, all right," he said at last; "I'll talk it over with her and——"

"And will you give me back our ring?" she asked.

He glanced at her whimsically and reached into his pocket.

"Sure," he said and handed it back.

Mrs. Pennyman stood waiting with a broom in one hand, an apologetic smile on her flushed face.

"I'll have to confess," she said. "The house is thoroughly cleaned, but unfortunately the cook has quit. He resented my sweeping out the kitchen."

"Oh, then I can learn to cook!" cried Penny joyously. "We'll cook for him, won't we, mother?"

"I had planned to do the cooking myself for the few days we're here."

"But we're going to stay, mother!" corrected Penny.

"We'll have to talk about that," Clay qualified hastily. "Has the cook gone back to town?"

"No, he's out at the bunk house, sulking. It seems it's his regular duty to go out with the cowboys, but, knowing that we were coming, Mr. ovelady very kindly told him to——"

"I'll send him to the wagon," said Clay.

"I think it will be just as well," she agreed, her eyes twinkling; "he hasn't a very attractive personality."

"I didn't like his pancakes," confided Penny under her breath. "Don't you think I could learn to make them, mother?"

"Why, of course, child," she answered, "if you'll only give your mind to it. But I will cook, for the few days we're here."

"No, now, mother!" protested Penny. "Why do you always talk that way?"

"I'll have to be going away, Mrs. Pennyman," began Clay apologetically, "to hunt up those steers that we've lost. If you prefer, I can take you to town first; but if you'd like to stay a few days——"

"Yes, we'll stay," sighed Mrs. Pennyman, "until Penny has had her fling. But don't let us keep you, Clayton."

"He wanted to go right away," whispered Penny significantly. "Don't you think we could stay here alone?"

"Why, I suppose so," she answered dubiously. "I presume Mr. Lovelady——"

"He won't be back," Penny cut in hastily.

"Well, really, Clay," smiled Mrs. Pennyman, "I've taken quite a pleasure in cleaning up this dirty old house. I was considered a good housekeeper when I was young. So if it isn't an imposition I'd like to remain three or four days, if only to finish up what I've begun. Of course if you and Penny——"

"I told him he could go," stated Penny. "I'd just love to live out here, alone."

"No, I'll stay," said Clay and despite their protestations he lingered on day after day.

First he drove into town to bring back supplies for their comfort; then he placed bolts and padlocks on the doors; but all the time he was watching Penny, trying to read what was going on in her mind. All her wild ways had left her; she helped about the house and rode out with Clay every day; but always when he was not looking she gazed away to the east where the wagon had disappeared in the distance. And when he was talking she listened with a smile but with a far-away look in her eyes. She was dreaming of something else—she did not hear what he was trying to say. And she avoided the touch of his hand.

Always before she had been elusive, putting a barrier up between them which her lover could never cross of himself; but she herself had moments when she crossed it like a whirlwind and overwhelmed him with passionate kisses. He had never become quite accustomed to her love-making. But ever since their quarrel she had watched him without seeming to and when he reached out his hand she was gone.

The first week of their visit passed and Clay made no mention of the task which had brought him to the ranch, but every day he rode farther and farther to the south until at last he looked over the rim. There beneath the brooding sunshine lay the broad sweep of their winter range, with ookout

Mountain a black patch against the sky; the Bear's Ear rose to greet him behind the chalk cliffs of Vermilion Wash where the Bad Lands and Dobe Town began; but his eyes came to rest on the deep gash of Irish Cañon, where the road went through to Coon Hole. His duty lay there. But he must wait.

As the second week began he assembled his pack outfit and slung a scabbard for his rifle on his saddle; but though they urged him not to wait the uneasiness still haunted him and at last he ventured to speak to Mrs. Pennyman.

"If I go," he suggested, "who's going to look after Penny?"

"Why, I will!" cried Mrs. Pennyman, surprised.

"Ride out with her everywhere and see that she keeps out of trouble? That's a pretty big contract, Mrs. Pennyman."

"No, I can't ride, of course, but Penny has been so obedient—I can ask her to stay at home while you're gone."

"She won't do it. She's just waiting for me to go, I'm afraid, and then she'll go to that wagon."

"Why, Clay! What do you mean? And why shouldn't she go?"

"Because," he declared heatedly, "I don't trust that man Lovelady. He's capable of most anything with a woman."

"Well, I must say, Clayton, I think you're entirely unfair in treating Mr. Lovelady as you do. When we met him in town he seemed a perfect gentleman and he certainly hasn't intruded. Or have you given him orders not to come to the house as long as my daughter remains?"

"He got his orders from Bones," answered Clay.

"And do I understand you to imply that my daughter must be watched to keep her from some affair with Mr. Lovelady?"

Mrs. Pennyman's calm eyes were beginning to blaze but Clay kept resolutely on.

"If you knew what I know about your daughter and Mr. Lovelady——"

"There's nothing disgraceful, I hope!"

"No," he sulked, "there's nothing disgraceful."

"Then, I think," she stated, "you are going pretty far and I'm surprised that Penny has submitted to it. I knew your father, Clayton Hawks, and you're as alike as two peas; and I must say, when he was jealous he was the most unreasonable human being that——"

"That's enough," said Clay. "I'll be going."

"And as far as I am concerned," went on Mrs. Pennyman very distinctly, "Mr. Lovelady is welcome here any time."

CHAPTER VI.

COON HOLE.

It was sixty miles to Coon Hole and Clay had covered a good ten of it when he reined in his horse with a jerk—he had come off without his six-shooter. Since his saddle gun was in the house where Penny and her mother were he had not even tried to get it; in fact, he had forgotten all about it. All he had done was to throw on the pack he had prepared for the trip and spur off without saying good-by. He had forgotten his coffee-pot, too.

"Well, you *are* a damned fool," he burst out vindictively and spurred on again at a high trot. This encounter with Mrs. Pennyman was merely the culmination of a series of irritating circumstances, not the least of which was the calm assumption of the Pennymans that he had nothing on his mind but them. As a matter of fact he had neglected his own business to putter around the house and ride with Penny; and if his father knew about it he *would* be the most unreasonable human being! And so he was jealous, like the Old Man! A pretty good Old Man too, if he was unreasonable when some woman tried to bend him to her whims; but it was no use for a Hawks to match his will against a Pennyman—they had lost at it, father and son. For the present Mrs. Pennyman was the same unbending maiden who had driven his father to the wilds. And they had both married somebody else.

There was a moral to the story of their warped and tangled destinies if one cared to take the trouble to find it, but his Hawks blood was up and Clay put them from his mind to consider the case of Coon Hole. Here was a problem that he felt perfectly capable of handling, since no women were even remotely involved; and if the sheriff and two deputies had found their guns insufficient, he wouldn't need his six-shooter, anyway. Probably better off without it—might get him into trouble and give them an excuse to shoot him.

He rode up over the rim without looking back and dipped down onto the headwaters of the Alkali. Here, according to Lovelady, there was a Lazy B line camp to push their cattle away from the Hole; but look as he would he could find no sign of smoke nor tent—nor of cattle, for the matter of that. The wide plain was deserted, not a horse or cow on it, so the line rider had evidently done his duty. Either that or the rustlers had cleaned them.

The grim lines about Clay's jaw drew in a little deeper; he spurred faster toward the cedar brakes beyond and as the sun was setting he came out through the foothills onto the flats around Irish Lake. Here, under the brow of the jagged range that cut them off from Coon Hole, a bunch of cattle were knee-deep in the blue joint, and as he rode down past them Clay saw the swallow fork in each left ear and knew them for Lazy B cows. So this was the way the line rider pushed them back from the divide—they were bunched up at the very entrance of Irish Cañon! Clay circled them inquisitively, working nearer to read the brands, and suddenly as they turned he spied a fresh-burned brand; it was a heart, on a big yearling calf.

He stopped his horse and watched, then, throwing his pack animal loose, he shook out his rope and charged. The cattle scattered before him, heading at a gallop for the cedar brakes, but he caught the yearling on the edge of the brush.

It was running with a cow that had a younger calf beside her, but as the yearling lanced and bawled at the end of the rope the cow turned back and ran to him. She was his mother, and a Lazy B. Her calf was a Lazy B, but the yearling had a freshly seared heart.

"Something rotten here, somewhere," muttered Clay and turned the fighting creature loose. They were across the line, in the State of Colorado, but he had never heard of a heart brand, even there. Then it came to him—it was "Old Man" Payne's! This was the work of the Coon Hole cedar snappers.

"It's about time I came down here!" he grumbled truculently. "These jaspers have been stealing us blind."

He rode on down to the lake and watered his horses just at sundown; but after a hasty supper the fever to push on came back on him and he saddled up and plunged into the cañon. It was a deep gash through the mountains and dark as a pocket; his horses shied at the echoes of their own hoofs and as he spurred them unwillingly on Clay remembered how in the old days the cattle had been afraid of Irish Cañon. Its reverberating echoes had been considered protection enough to keep them from drifting south into Coon Hole; but perhaps now they had had some rustlers at their tails. He had a vision in his mind of eight hundred Lazy B steers being forced down this black and eerie cañon; and then of a sudden he fell to cursing Lovelady for leaving such a gateway unwatched.

There he was, up on the mesa where the cattle were perfectly safe, range branding in the track of his spring round-up; while down on the lower range, with not a cowboy in sight, yearling mavericks were being stolen and branded heart. And old Bones had had the nerve to defend him! He had put up a big fight to keep Clay from discharging Lovelady when it was apparent that he was neglecting his duty.

Could it be—Clay stopped, but the thought forced itself upon him—could it be that Bones was standing in with Lovelady? He had a hard name among the cowboys of the country on account of his penurious ways and he certainly had stood up for Lovelady. Right or wrong, he would not hear of Clay's discharging him, and there had seemed to be some understanding between them. When Bones was giving his orders and raving his loudest, Lovelady had sat there and listened to him calmly; and right in the midst of it he had begged to be excused before the cowboys killed his pet colored boy.

Clay jabbed the spurs into his horse as it shied and flew back, and cursed the echoes—and Bones. There was indeed something rotten in Denmark. He even began to doubt whether Old Man Payne was so bad—Bones was evidently prejudiced against him—and Clay remembered again the peculiar, crooked smile with which Bones had sent him forth on this quest. All he could talk about was Payne and his being a Secessionist and the tough gang of rustlers he had around him; and when Clay had announced that he would go down and get his steers old Bones had grinned like a cat. Perhaps few tears would be shed by him if he, Clay, should get killed; because then Bones could take over their ranch.

The dark labyrinth of the cañon took on a gloom that was sepulchral, his horses were in a lather from fright and after miles of tortuous turnings the huge chasm still stretched before them, echoing and resounding to every hoof clack. It was well along toward midnight when, wrung and exhausted, he fought his way out the lower end; and by then he seriously doubted if, even in broad noonday, a herd of cattle could be forced through that vent. The old-time cowboys had said well—those echoes were better than a drift fence.

He had come out into a broad and starlit valley, sloping off into mysterious distances on every side; after rounding an islandlike rock he camped against its base, tying his horses to prevent them from bolting. Dawn found them drawn and miserable, chaffing irritably at their tie ropes as they strained to reach the grass all about; but he hobbled out only one of them, keeping the other on a rope, for they seemed to sense the presence of some enemy.

Seen in daylight, Coon Hole was a beautiful natural park, covered with sagebrush and clumps of verdant cedar; green meadows lay below them, dotted with horses and cattle, and the mountains to the south were snow-capped. To the east it stretched off endlessly, a level floor of grass and sagebrush, flanked with a rimrock of pine-clad ridges; but the trail led off west and there, down a swale, Clay could see the winding willows of a stream. The mountains at the north were rough and covered with cedars, now black in patches like the shadows of angry clouds, now white and barren of brush; and at the west, where they met the line of the invisible river, they rose up in a grim, blank wall. That was the effect of it all, of a place shut in and sinister, green and smiling but steeped in evil.

Now that his berserk rage had passed Hawks began to miss his six-shooter and wonder if he had not been a little rash; but he had come into the rustlers' retreat and if he turned back now it might appear that he was afraid. And if he were found in hiding, or even riding across the valley, he might be mistaken for a detective. According to the etiquette of the country he was due to ride past the Payne ranch and make himself known at the house. He boiled some coffee in a tomato can and, after letting his horses graze, rode off down the trail to the west. It was a well-traveled trail and the predominance of shod-horse tracks indicated the presence of quite a number of men; but, except for cattle and horses and a scourge of mosquitoes, Coon Hole seemed absolutely deserted.

Without seeming to notice them Clay read the horse brands as he passed along and some of the best were in the heart iron; but that they were stolen seemed almost certain as they were all vented from other brands, most of which were unknown in those parts. Some Montana brands he knew and there were others which he had heard of as coming from Colorado and Utah; but as he rode past a herd of cattle he saw the heart brand on two big steers, old brands that had long ago peeled. He reined in his horse to make absolutely certain and rode off down the trail. Whoever owned that brand was stealing his cattle; and who could it be but Payne?

The valley pinched in until it was less than a mile wide, with a bluff on the farther side, and as the formation changed from blood-red sandstone to white lime a series of springs burst forth. A round corral, for breaking horses, appeared on the flat and a horseman galloped off up a draw; and as Clay rounded the point he came suddenly upon the ranch house, tucked away in a pocket of the hills. It was a long log cabin, with a spring house and cold cellar and stables and pole corrals out behind; but the thing he noticed most as he rode up toward the gate was a row of flaunting hollyhocks standing along the front-yard fence. Somehow they did not fit in with his preconceived notions of what a rustlers' holdout was like.

A dog rushed out furiously, barking and leaping against the gate, and a man glanced out the door; then, as he stepped out deliberately, the doorway behind him was filled with staring faces. Clay barely noticed them, except that two were women's and the third that of a tough-looking boy; the old man who stood before him commanded all his attention, besides making his heart miss a beat. He was tall and white-bearded, with a high, war-eagle nose and eyes as fiercely penetrating as an Indian's; and after a long look at Clay and a longer one at his horse brands he spoke to the raving dog.

"Good morning," greeted Clay as the dog was quieted. "I was looking for that trail that goes south. Can you tell me where it cuts through the rim?"

"There is no such trail," the old man

stated distinctly and waited for Clay to call him a liar.

"Can't you get through south at all?" inquired Clay.

"No, sir," replied Payne. . "You cannot."

Clay shrugged his shoulder and said nothing. Perhaps Mr. Bones was correct in his estimate of Telford Payne.

"All right," he said and reined his horse away. But the moment the conversation had started the woman in the doorway had stepped out and at each question and answer she had edged a little nearer until now she stood beside her husband. She was a big, handsome woman, in the full prime of life, and her eyes had been fixed on Clay with a careful appraisal which he felt was not missing a point. His boots, his hat, his chaps and cowboy's jumper, his pack and the brand on his horse, all had undergone minute inspection and now she turned her eyes on him. They were large brown eyes, showing too much of the whites, and as he reined away she spoke.

"Are you working for Bones?" she asked.

"No, ma'am," he said a trifle defiantly.

"You're riding a Lazy B horse," she said. "Oh—maybe you're riding for Lovelady?"

"Nope. I'm riding for myself."

"What? You aren't that Mr. Hawks that has just come back from the East and is staying up at the Lazy B Ranch?"

"That's my name," he admitted. "Well, good day."

He started off again but she halted him once more.

"What's your business down here?" she demanded.

"Oh, just riding through," he said. "Down looking for some cattle and horses."

"Did you find them?" she flashed back.

"Not yet."

"I suppose," she taunted, as her husband turned away, "I suppose you think we stole them!"

"I don't think anything," he answered. "Just looking around. And by the way, who runs this heart brand?"

Her eyes opened up wider as he fired this Parthian shot and she turned to glance at her husband; but he, as if intolerant of her woman's tongue, had gone back into the house. In his place now stood his son, a lanky, hatchet-faced boy, and a girl even more handsome than her mother; but in spite of her buxom figure and the doll-like beauty of her face Clay did not respond to her coquettish smile. It reminded him somehow of Penny.

"The heart brand?" repeated Mrs. Payne, "I don't believe I ever heard of it. Our brand is TP, united."

"Yes—all right," he nodded, determined not to be drawn into a controversy, but the lady had not finished with him yet.

"I'm Mrs. Payne," she smiled. "We've been down here two years. How does Miss Penny like the country out here?"

"Very much," he answered formally. "If you're coming by our way I'm sure she'd be glad to have you call."

She blinked and looked at him sharply to make sure there was no mistake; and then a rosy blush suffused her face, for they had not even asked him to dismount.

"Get down," she invited, "I thought you were some detective that old Bones had sent down to insult us. Charley, go out and help him tie his horses."

"Well—thanks," Clay responded, "I won't come in. But I would like a drink of cold water."

He swung down from his horse and stepped inside the gate and again the row of hollyhocks caught his eye. They were protected from within by an ornamental fence made of cedar posts wattled with willow twigs; and up toward the spring house there was an old-fashioned garden, full of verbenas and petunias and pansies. His opinion of Mrs. Payne suddenly rose, though she had lied about the brand; but a woman who loved flowers enough to raise them in Coon Hole was far from being abandoned.

He noted also that she wore a freshly ironed house dress which brought out the trim lines of her figure; and the mass of soft brown hair coiled about her shapely head gave an added effect of neatness. There was an air of grace and of breeding about both herself and her daughter, but Payne made a very churlish host. He had retired inside the cabin and Mrs. Payne seemed relieved when Clay merely asked for a drink.

"Come out to the spring house," she said. "And so you're not working for Bones? Mr. Payne is so enraged at the way Bones has been sending officers down here that he can hardly be civil to any one. I don't doubt Bones told you some story about our stealing his cows—and he's always sending officers down to search—and yet his Forty-four cowboys have stole more of our calves than he even claims to have lost. Of course he

has had losses, we don't deny that; but what he's trying to do is to run us out of the Hole so he can have it for his winter range. But Mr. Payne won't be intimidated, that's all!"

"You have a very pretty garden," spoke up Clay admiringly. "I don't know when I've seen one more beautiful. And these wild flowers, here—the sego lilies and columbines—I suppose they've been transplanted from the hills?"

"Yes, they're transplanted," she answered, "but Mary Blossom does that. I think it's all foolishness, myself, with vegetables and garden truck so scarce."

"Oh, then it isn't the young lady that I met at the gate?"

"No, that's Pearl. Mary Blossom is younger, but she's shy. Oh, dear, somebody has carried off that cup!"

She started back impatiently toward the house and Clay looked at the garden again.

All the wild flowers that grew in that section of the country were represented in this sheltered nook; and there was a childish profusion, like a baby's bouquet, that gave it a charm of its own. Sego lilies and mariposas, their petals sun-spotted like butterflies' wings, rose up as thick as they could stand in the open; and in the shade of the spring house blue and white mountain columbines peeped out from a tangle of wild clematis.

He reached down impulsively to pluck one of the nodding flower heads, then stayed his hand in time—the child who had brought these plants from the hills would remember every flower. He was turning away when there was a rustle among the clematis and Mary Blossom stepped out of her hiding place.

She was like a flower herself with her golden hair and shy blue eyes; and as he met her gaze she picked the tallest columbine and pressed it into his hand with a smile.

CHAPTER VII.

ROOSTER RASLEM.

From a man named Bones, and engaged in the cow business, one would expect little of poetry or sentiment, but Hawks wondered as he rode away why some mention had not been made of the family of Telford Payne. The fact that he was a cow thief had been repeated and made much of—and the fact that he was the head of a tough gang; but Mrs. Payne and her two daughters might never have existed, as far as Bones was concerned.

Clay had expected Payne to be about what he was, a surly, misanthropic old man—but he had certainly not expected him to keep a wife and family at the holdout of a gang of rustlers. Women and children do not belong in a social formation of that kind, and especially girls like Mary Blossom.

She was shy, of course, and after giving him the flower she had retreated around the corner of the spring house; but he could see at a glance that she was like her dainty columbines, transplanted from a happier clime. In the sordid surroundings of Coon Hole she had planted this garden in response to something fine within her; and Clay treasured in his jumper the flower she had given him as a reward for withholding his hand. She had known when he spared her columbine that he was thinking of her and, forgetting her shyness, she had thrust it into his hand to repay him for his kindness.

Such things happen now and then to the grimmest of men engaged on the grimmest of errands, just as chance flowers look up from the wayside; but as he jogged off down the wash Clay wondered on her life there and what would be her ultimate fate.

He had expected, when he rode up, to find Payne's house full of rustlers, foul-mouthed and more than ready to start a fight; but the rustlers, if there were any, were conspicuous by their absence, though the shod-horse tracks still continued as he went west. What kind of a dog's trick was Bones trying to play on him when he represented this as a hell hole of iniquity?

Mrs. Payne had come close to expressing what he himself had in mind when she claimed that old Bones was trying to oust them; but still Coon Hole must have its rustlers because some man, he knew, had branded his yearling calf with the heart. All the rest might be moonshine and malicious exaggeration, to stir up adverse sentiment against the Paynes, but eight hundred head of steers had disappeared around there somewhere—and one calf had been branded out of his iron.

The trail that he was following brought him in sight of a rich river bottom with a forest of bright green cottonwoods; but, turning to the south, the trail kept well away from it, crossing the creek and mounting a long ridge. Once more the river appeared and as he circled a high point he beheld it in

all its beauty. In great, lazy curves it threaded its way among the cottonwoods toward the mouth of a shadowy cañon and there it was swallowed up as if the earth had engulfed it or the mountains sucked it into their maw. Cliffs three thousand feet high marked the beginning of its passage and for hundreds of miles it crept through sunless chasms on its way to the Grand Cañon of the Colorado.

Surely where this river barred the way there could be no Robbers' Trail, nor yet down the boxed-in cañon; and the mountains through which it cut were so rugged and steep that a trail to the south seemed impossible. But Bones had insisted, and others had borne him out, that the rustlers had a trail leading south; and since the shod tracks still led on Clay spurred down the bank to the edge of the silent stream. At the first melting of snow it had overflowed its banks, filling the lagoons that lay behind the numerous sand bars, and even yet the green water boiled and sucked in treacherous whirlpools that made crossing it out of the question. The trail struck into mud and quicksand and as he passed through the willows the mosquitoes gathered about them in clouds. Assailed from every side his animals thrashed and fought their heads until he was glad to let them run away and when they had gained the windy summit of the bluff Clay gave up and turned back east.

The high mountains of the rim rose like a wall before him as he rode along through a wilderness of sage, and after skirting it for ten miles he turned north on some old cow tracks that seemed to lead down from his range. Coon Hole lay below him at the base of the black mountain—he had circled almost completely around it—but these tracks seemed to come from the mouth of Vermilion Cañon, where Vermilion Wash broke through the barrier of the hills. He spurred forward through the cedars and suddenly the steer tracks thickened, all coming from the cañon and heading south; but as he swung around the point that barred the mouth of the cañon he stopped short and sniffed the air. On the wind that sucked down through the dark chasm before him he caught the tang of smoke.

Visions of camp fires and hard-eyed rustlers rose up before his eyes as he dropped off and crept forward through the rocks; but the cañon mouth was deserted, even the smell of smoke was gone and at last he returned to his horse. In the days when he had ridden the range Vermilion Cañon was impassable on account of the quicksands and waterfalls; but if these cattle had been driven through it was time that he knew about it, because others must have gone through before. The mystery of the lost steers was a mystery no longer if he could believe the story of these tracks.

Here was the hole that Bones was raving about, the leak that must be stopped, the secret of eight hundred lost steers. He mounted and rode in slowly, scanning the shelves of the shattered cliffs, keeping a wary eye ahead; but though his horses snorted and snuffed the wind the gloomy cañon was deserted.

A brawling stream of water, milky with alkali from the Bad Lands, flowed down over the sandstone reefs; and soon, as the cañon pinched in, it occupied the whole creek bed except for the narrow margin cleared by floods. Above the portals of the gateway the stream bed became more level, with quicksand between the low waterfalls; but the cattle had found it passable and Clay spurred his frightened horse until he plunged from one bog hole to another. The pack horse, tied head to tail, pulled back and refused to follow. Clay forced them up ledges breast high, until at last, muddy and sweating, he stood below a waterfall that he knew could never be scaled. Vermilion Cañon was passable, but only one way, for this jump-off was ten feet high; and in the quicksand at its base he saw the tips of cedar limbs that had been thrown in to support the leaping steers. They had been rushed through pell-mell, across quicksands and over waterfalls, but Hawks would have to back out.

The long day was nearing its close when Clay came out into the open and as he turned to look back he thought he heard his own name shouted out above the brawling of the stream. He looked up and down the cañon, then up at the high cliffs, and his name was called again.

"Hello, Clay!"

He searched the side of the cliff from which the sound had come and caught a sudden movement among the rocks. High up among the ledges a face stared out of a crevice, a face as wild and ferocious as a cave man's; but as he gazed at it, dumfounded, the man burst into laughter, as familiar as the face was alien. It was a white face, ghastly white, half covered with

a bristling beard, and hair as black and thick as an Indian's.

"Hello!" responded Clay, "who are you, anyway?"

"It's Rooster!" laughed the cave man, "Rooster Haslem!"

There was a minute of dead silence as Clay stared at him doubtfully and then he threw up his hand.

"Hello, Rooster, old boy!" he shouted joyfully. "Come on down! I'm glad to see you!"

The cave man hesitated, reached back into his cavern and came down, carrying a gun. As he stepped from rock to rock he paused warily, like a squirrel, fixing Clay with beady black eyes; but when he reached the stony slope that extended down to the stream bed he straightened up with a jovial grin. He was a short man, but quick and active as a chipmunk, and as he looked at Clay, he cocked his head to one side in the movement that had given him his name.

"Seen you go up," he explained and the grin suddenly vanished as Clay stepped down from his horse. Quick as a flash the rifle leaped up to his hip, only to drop back again as Clay smiled.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Clay, "you're the first man I asked for when I got back home last week!"

" 'S that so?" murmured Rooster. "I suppose you heard?"

"Yes, I heard," returned Clay, now suddenly grave, "but I wouldn't believe it until Bones showed me the advertisement."

"Five thousand dollars reward, eh?" suggested Rooster.

"That's what it said; but I don't believe it yet. I've known you too well, Rooster—you wouldn't do a thing like that—but it sure got me in wrong with old Bones. I'm not so stuck on this new wagon boss he's got—he was drunk when I came into town—but when I put up a talk to have him fired Bones asked who I could get that was any better. 'Why, Rooster!' I said; and when I'd put myself on record Bones pulled this sheriff's circular and gave me the horse laugh. I told him I *knew* you were honest."

Rooster smiled, a trifle sadly and shuffled his feet.

"You're the first man I've talked to," he said. And then, after a silence, he spoke up defiantly. "I suppose I can trust you, Clay? I'm worth five thousand dollars, you know, to any man that will turn me up, and——"

"Don't you worry," nodded Clay; "you're safe. I don't need the money that bad."

"Well, gimme a smoke, then," begged Rooster. He rolled a cigarette and inhaled luxuriously, cocking his head as he looked up at Clay. "I was expecting you'd come back," he said.

"About time," observed Clay; "they're stealing us blind. Been bringing 'em down through here, I reckon."

He glanced knowingly at Rooster, who feigned not to hear him.

"I was dying for a smoke," he puffed, "or I'd never've showed my head. Let you go up, all right, but when you came back—say, is this all the makings you've got?"

Clay turned to his pack and threw off the lashings.

"How're you fixed for grub?" he asked.

"Bum!" grumbled Rooster; "been living on straight beef for two weeks."

Hawks opened up his pack sacks and, measuring out some coffee and bacon, emptied the rest of his provisions into a bag.

"I'll be home by to-morrow noon," he explained.

"Is that all for me?" spoke up Rooster and when Clay nodded he held out his hand.

"You're all right, Clay," he said. "Come on up to the cave—I'm dying to have a talk."

TO BE CONTINUED.

UNPROFITABLE OIL

LITT MALLORY, the Virginia philosopher, was lecturing the drug-store loafers on the subject of fake oil-well companies.

"About all the oil you get with a lot of these shares of stock that are hawked about," he said, "is on the salesman's tongue."

Beyond the Law

By Frederick Moore

Author of "Nerve," "A Hero by Brevet," Etc.

She saw no escape from being marooned on a deserted South Seas island with the man whose unscrupulousness she had just discovered. And then on that island's shore appeared the figure of another man and—the rest is for you to find out.

SUDDENLY Bardsley threw down his book and rose from the steamer chair on the veranda of his bungalow. Growing up to his front steps was a garden patch, riotous with the flowers that fed the brown bees whose hives were set along the near-by edge of the jungle. Beyond the garden and closer to the snug bay where was anchored Bardsley's schooner was a palm grove. To either side of the house were papaw trees, bulbous fruited and occupied by chattering birds. Sharing the fragrant, sunlit air with birds and bees were butterflies—great gorgeous ones.

Slowly Bardsley looked about him, as if half puzzled and troubled.

"What's the matter with me?" he exclaimed. "Is it possible that what I want is *people?*" Then, realizing that he was speaking aloud, he smiled ruefully. "Worse than that," he declared; "for I've started talking to myself and that's a bad sign!"

He had anything but the aspect of a man who for three years had been a voluntary exile from civilization; in fact, he might have just stepped ashore that morning from the deck of a smart liner. For he was wearing a fresh white suit, a pongee silk shirt, tied with a small black necktie, and white shoes and socks. Set squarely on his head was a soft straw hat.

He was not more than thirty—a tall, slender, lean-jawed, well-tanned, smooth-shaven young man of the type of the student and the investigator. And about his good-natured gray eyes were tiny lines, all of which had not been caused by a tropical sun; some had come through much reading at night under poor lamps. His eyes indicated, also, that whatever he might begin, he was the kind of man who would carry it through.

As Bardsley's look traveled from his island to the shimmering water of his bay, he saw suddenly cutting its way into view, just astern of the schooner, the triangular fin of a shark.

"Hello!" he said. "There's the collector of the port looking for his lunch! I'll see if I can get him a bite of turtle meat."

Turning to go through the living room to the rear veranda, where were the kitchen and the provision pantry, he heard his native cook break out into a jabber of native dialect, as if greeting a newcomer.

"Who is it, Cæsar Augustus?" Bardsley called.

The black, wrapped in a gingham apron, hurried in from his kitchen. "Two boy him come. One hab got sick legs; number two him got shakes," he announced.

"All right, I'll bring some medicine," said Bardsley; and stopping in at the nearest of the three small rooms which occupied the whole rear side of the house he picked up a tin medicine chest.

This he took to the rear veranda from where he saw two strange natives who were squatting on the sun-baked expanse of the back yard while they waited for treatment. Except for breechclouts they were naked. Beside each was his hunting basket. The pair were members of a small tribe which lived some miles away, beyond the mountains which divided the island. They had brought an offering of wild fruits to Bardsley—mangoes and choice pineapples as well as a liberal portion of a freshly killed pig. These gifts were ranged along the edge of the veranda in crude rattan baskets.

One of the men had jungle ulcers and Bardsley treated these with a salve and bound them; the second black was suffering from swamp fever, and though the sun was shining on him his teeth were chattering almost tunefully. A capsule of quinine was

given him. Then Bardsley turned over to the man all the quinine which the tin chest held. The visitors grinned gratefully, voiced their thanks volubly and trotted away into the jungle.

"There's lunch for the collector of the port!" declared Bardsley as he surveyed the present of pork. He chose a portion of the meat, dropped it into a carrying basket and went round the house and down the slope. At the beach he pushed his canoe into the water and paddled leisurely toward the schooner.

Bardsley's island was well to the south of the Philippines but so far to the eastward of the Molucca Passage that it was off the track of vessels trading to the Dutch Indies. Also it was far enough to the north of the Spice Islands to be outside the boundary of Dutch possessions in those waters. Thus it was so isolated that the crew which manned the schooner when Bardsley arrived had been compelled to wait five months before a vagrant trader had come in close enough to see and respond to a code signal which asked that the men be taken off the island.

That crew had built Bardsley's splendid bungalow and cleaned away the jungle before it. But they regarded Bardsley as a mild lunatic for wishing to live such a lonely life—for deliberately choosing to be the only white man on the island. They told him that in six months he would be counting the pebbles on the beach or talking to the trees—if before that time he had not hanged himself out of sheer loneliness.

"I've done a little better than they expected," remarked Bardsley to himself as his canoe came alongside the schooner. "But I'd like to have somebody drop in for a few weeks, just the same. Still, I suppose this bit of homesickness will slip away from me and I'll be satisfied again."

He hung his basket over an arm, caught at the sea ladder which dropped from the vessel's bulwarks, pulled himself aboard and made fast the canoe with a light line. Then he stepped to the quarter-deck.

A few yards astern of the schooner that shark fin was now standing out of the still, blue water like the small, dark sail of a submerged boat. The collector of the port was lying close to the surface of the bay, in order to bask in the sun. Formerly, when sunning himself, he had stayed nearer in to the jungled shore. But for several months past Bardsley had taken to throwing titbits to the man-eater daily from the deck of the schooner and the shark was getting into the habit of lurking about for his dainties.

Presently the fin stirred gently, making tiny ripples all about it. The collector had seen Bardsley. Then, as Bardsley leaned over the taffrail, the fin moved slowly toward the schooner and Bardsley saw eighteen feet of fish—a bluish-gray shadow—come alongside lazily and stop, outlined against the colorful coral bottom of the bay with its swaying garden of kelp and weeds.

Bardsley hove the meat over. At that, the monster, with a swift turn that showed the white of his belly, shot from the water at an angle of forty-five degrees like a living torpedo. The pork disappeared. Then the shark wheeled from Bardsley's sight into the shadow of the vessel.

The scuttle of the companionway was fastened securely against the weather. So in order to enter the schooner's cabin Bardsley returned to the foredeck and opened a heavy teakwood door. At the center of the cabin was a small table covered with a musty red cloth. The stools which belonged about it were missing, being in use at the bungalow. He opened several doors which led to small sleeping cabins. The interiors of these had been converted into storerooms and were lined with shelves which held his supplies—in tins and boxes and packages. Or the shelves were piled with books and bolts of cloth.

From one room he took a shaving stick and some tooth powder, from another a packet of books, from a third a can of cigarettes and a bottle of liniment. It was hot in the main cabin. After driving a startled bat out by way of the door he hastened on deck again and paddled ashore.

"Forgot a new supply of quinine!" he remarked as he landed. "But I'll be out to feed the collector again to-morrow and I'll restock the medicine chest then." Picking up his basket of goods he sauntered toward the house.

It was then that he was startled by a cry. He stopped, puzzled for a minute over the sound. It was not the cry of a native, though it seemed to come from the hills behind the bungalow. He turned to the opening of the bay to look to seaward; he saw, heading in through the narrow channel between headland and sandy point, a boat!

He felt himself tremble. Tears of joy

filled his eyes. "Thank God!" he exclaimed. "White men! I must have felt it in my bones!"

There were two figures in the boat but only one was pulling steadily at the oars. Presently the rower stopped his work. Then once more Bardsley caught the sound of a voice pitched high. Next, he saw the farther figure stand up. And now he knew that this one of the two was a woman.

"Shipwrecked!" he exclaimed. "And not far enough in to see the bungalow—or the schooner! I'd better hail 'em or they'll row along the coast looking for a settlement."

But he held back his shout of welcome—filled his lungs to call and then forbore. Three years of life on his lonely island had made him cautious. "Take your time," he told himself in a whisper.

Then once more he heard the voice. It was the woman's and to Bardsley it seemed that she was in terror or distress. Now the boat, its oars idle, was lying broadside to the rounded swells and lifting under them.

Next over the water sounded the man's voice. His words were indistinct but calming in tone—reassuring.

Bardsley was taken with a sudden fear that the boat would not enter the bay. He threw up his arms and waved them.

"Hel-lo the boat! Hello the boat! Hel-lo the bo-at!" he called; and without waiting for an answer he began to laugh deliriously.

Just before noon the schooner *Jessica* of Singapore was a mile from the island to which two passengers—a man and a woman—were bound. The baggage of these two was already in the longboat and when the boat was swung overside the passengers entered it by a sea ladder, the man going first and helping the young woman to take her seat in the stern sheets.

She was probably not more than twenty-five. The fairness of her skin proved that she was not accustomed to the tropics. She had light-brown hair, blue eyes and a resolute chin. There was a look of sadness on her face and about her left arm was a black band sewn to the sleeve of her brown pongee-silk waist. Her hat was of white canvas, such as sailors wear. It was skewered to her heavy hair with a couple of hatpins. As she sat down she drew her feet inward, for the boat leaked a trifle and there was already some sea water sloshing between the thwarts.

The skipper leaned over the rail, watching his passengers disembark. He was a fat, red-faced man, with a cap that was too small for his head. He had a genial smile. "Good-by and good luck," he called. "I hope you'll find everything all right, Mr. Hatch. They stung you in Manila for that boat—it's sun dried and looks pretty wet."

The man called Hatch looked up and waved his hand. "So long, Cap'n Lattimer," he said. "If you're ever down this way again, drop in on us."

"Small chance of that," said the captain, "but thank you just the same. I guess you and the lady won't have no trouble makin' your landin' inside the bay."

"No trouble at all," said Hatch; and taking up an oar he pushed off from the side of the *Jessica*.

As Hatch rowed away over the smooth, swelly water the young woman in the stern sheets waved her hand to the captain and he responded by a courteous lift of his cap. At a word from him the native crew put the schooner before the wind again and she filled away.

Though Hatch rowed well there was nothing about his appearance to indicate that he was a sailor; and his heavy breathing under his exertions proved that he was not accustomed to labor. He was a stockily built man of about forty, with a red streak across the top of his nose which indicated that he habitually wore glasses, though they were not in use now. He wore a dirty canvas cap on his tousled and perspiration-laden black hair, which ran down over his forehead. His eyes were black and were squinting against the light of the sun. They had a slight bulging appearance, as if he suffered from high blood pressure.

There was a surly look about his face and it required an effort on his part to make his personality attractive. So he constantly affected a sort of grin that gave him a false look of agreeableness. His soiled, white trousers were rolled up to his knees and his ankles and feet were bare. He had removed his shoes and stockings before entering the boat and they lay on top of a pile of baggage between him and the young woman in the stern seat. His white coat was there, too, and he rowed in a white silk shirt with an attached collar, open at the neck. The fabric was damp and clung round his shoulders. His heavily fleshed jaws glistened with moisture.

"Captain Lattimer is a queer man," said

the young woman. "Did you notice, that all the time we were in the schooner, coming down from Manila, he never called me 'Miss Drummond,' but always said 'lady?' "

"Yes, he's an odd fish," agreed Hatch. "What does it matter? We won't see him again, most likely. I hope you're comfortable." He didn't look at her as he spoke but gazed after the receding schooner which was scudding south under a brisk breeze.

"Oh, I'm comfortable, thank you," she replied. "But I'll be glad enough to get to the plantation and meet the Mannings—and the children."

"Yes, you'll find it pleasant on the island," he returned. "The Mannings'll make it as homelike as possible for you. You'll be a member of the family and the life's easy. Besides, the bay is restful—awfully pretty place. Why, you won't think of wanting to go back to the States when you've been at the plantation a few weeks."

She scanned the island with interest. "Perhaps not," she said. "Anyway, you've been very kind to me, Mr. Hatch. I don't know what I'd have done there in Manila, after father's death, if it hadn't been for you. To get a good position at a time when I was alone among strangers—and without money—was providential!"

"And I was lucky to find a young woman like you for this job with my employers. I like to please my boss and his wife—they're fine people. You know, most of the white women in Manila are married—and the others wouldn't make good governesses. I know that Mr. and Mrs. Manning will be glad to have you to take care of their youngsters. And you'll like Bobbie and Fannie. They're cute kids!"

"I hope I'll give satisfaction," she said simply, her eyes still fixed on the island.

By a turn of the head Hatch found that he was not making directly for the place along the shore at which he wished to arrive. "If you'll keep looking at that point I'm heading for, Miss Drummond," he suggested, "I'll be able to row straight to it by watching your eyes."

"Certainly," she answered and concentrated her attention upon the spot he had indicated. He changed the course of the boat slightly until her steady gaze was directed over his left shoulder. She moved uneasily under the fixity of his return gaze but continued to stare ahead.

The boat rose and fell over the rounded swells for more than half an hour, making good progress. But the sun was almost directly overhead now and its heat, reflected by the smooth water, became all but unbearable to Hatch, who stopped rowing to wipe his dripping face with a shirt sleeve. "Do you see a little bay yet?" he asked.

"There's an opening on this side of the point, in between some palm trees," she answered.

He turned to look. "That's it," he said.

"I suppose we'll be able to see the plantation house soon," she went on eagerly.

"In a few minutes."

"Mr. Manning's island looks wonderfully peaceful," she observed, but as if to herself.

Without replying he shipped the oars over the gunwales, reached for his shoes and socks and put them on. Then he moved some of the top bundles of the baggage until he came to a canvas bag. This he opened and took from it a pair of pistols. The butts of the weapons stuck out of polished russet leather holsters. Disregarding the startled look on Miss Drummond's face he snicked open the buckle of his belt and snapped the loops of the holsters over it so that a pistol hung at each hip.

"Why, Mr. Hatch!" she exclaimed. "Do you have to go armed on the island?"

"Oh, yes," he replied carelessly. Now he resumed his rowing and added, "We carry a gun whenever we're a good distance from the plantation. Nothing's ever bothered us but it's just as well to be safe."

"You told me in Manila that there were no dangerous natives on the island," she persisted.

"Well, suppose I did!" he returned irritably. Then, as she flushed, showing not only resentment but concern at his tone, he went on less gruffly: "The natives are friendly, all right. Only I'm the kind of a man that never takes chances."

"I—see." But there was doubt in her voice.

"Please watch the entrance to the bay," he urged curtly, "so we can get in out of the sun."

Again she concentrated her look upon the point, now just ahead. "I'm sorry you didn't let Captain Lattimer come in with us closer as he wanted to," she said. "It would have saved you all this hard work rowing."

"It's a long pull," he agreed and rowed on.

Suddenly Miss Drummond straightened

excitedly. "I can see into the bay!" she declared. Then as he turned to follow her look, her face lit with joy and relief. "And, oh, I can see a man dressed in white!"

"Wha—what?" Lifting his oars from the water, Hatch swung round in his seat. The next moment, catching sight of the figure waiting on the shore, he began to curse vehemently under his breath.

"What's wrong?" demanded Miss Drummond. "Isn't it all right? Isn't that Mr. Manning standing looking at us?"

He faced about, ruffling his brows as if puzzled himself and very much out of temper. "No!" he snapped. "That isn't Manning."

"Then who is it?" she asked, bewildered and a little frightened by his expression, which now had in it something of dismay—or alarm.

"I don't know *who* it is!" he answered. Once more he turned to look over the bows of the boat, the water running down the uplifted oars to his hands and dripping off into the pool about his feet between the thwarts.

"Is there any danger? Have we come to the wrong island? Please, Mr. Hatch!"

"And a schooner in there!" he went on, but as if he were talking to himself rather than to her.

"What does *that* matter?" she cried. Then in sudden fear of both Hatch and all that he plainly feared she twisted about in her seat and looked after the *Jessica,* now well upon the horizon, and impossibly out of hail. "Oh, I wish I were back in Manila!" she mourned. "Or back on board the *Jessica!*"

"That man has seen us," said Hatch quietly. "So we might as well go in now and chance it." He paused, studying her intently.

"I don't know what to make of this—or of you!" she told him. "Of course we'll go in! Oh, what are you talking about? And why are you surprised to see a white man here? And why *don't* you know who that man is? And what's wrong about that ship in there?"

"Aw, cut out your questions!" he ordered gruffly. Deliberately he thrust the handles of the oars under his knees, letting the blades remain tilted upward. Then he leaned forward, a peculiar leering smile uncovering his teeth.

"Where are the Mannings?" The question rose almost to a scream.

He answered her quietly: "Now listen to me, and no yelling——"

"Well?"

"There are no Mannings—and no kids."

"Oh!" She paled and gripped the boat on either side with fingers that trembled.

"Fact is," he went on calmly, "I picked out this island because I thought there weren't any white people on it."

"Thank God there are!" she answered fervently.

"M'mm. But that won't make any difference—far as I'm concerned," he declared. "Because when we row in you're going to tell that man, whoever he is"—Hatch jerked his head toward the waiting figure on the beach—"that you're my wife."

"Wife!" Terror-stricken, she made as if to rise.

"Sit still!"

She sank back. "Oh, what's happened to me?" she exclaimed wildly. "You've been telling me lies—lies! That's why Captain Lattimer never called me 'Miss Drummond!' "

By now the boat had swung broadside to the swells and was headed parallel to the coast of the island. But Hatch paid no attention to this, only peered at his companion. "Be reasonable," he advised. "You've got to face things as they are. I'll admit I misled you in Manila. That's because I'm madly in love with you and——"

"In *love* with me!" she repeated angrily. "In love! You scoundrel!"

"I wouldn't talk that way if I was you," he warned, but still quietly. "And believe me, little girl——"

"Don't call me little girl!" she blazed out, not pale any longer, but reddening with anger.

"Well, Lottie, then. I can call you Lottie, can't I?"

"You take me to shore!" she commanded.

He was silent for a moment, his jaws set and his eyes narrowed. "I know you're mad," he said presently; "that's to be expected. But! I'll tell you something straight. You'll be a lot better off if you do as I say."

"Are you threatening me?" Now the tears came chasing down her cheeks.

"Maybe. But anyhow, it's the truth. Because if you tell anybody that you're not my wife, well, I've got something up my sleeve."

"I don't care what you've got up your sleeve!" she answered and rose to her feet

in the swaying boat. "I *won't* tell anybody I'm your wife! I'd rather be dead!"

A diabolical light flashed into those prominent eyes. "All right," he agreed smoothly. "I'll drop you overside."

At that she sank quickly to her seat—just as the voice of the man on the beach came over the water in a long-drawn, thrice-repeated hail: "Hell-o the boat! Hello the boat! Hel-lo the bo-at!"

Hatch resumed speaking almost kindly. "You're broke," he argued. "I've got plenty of money. Why not stick to me? If we go in and find white women on this island and they suspect we're not married, they'll be against you sure—and they'll write scandal to Manila. And they won't believe your story—not if *I* tell 'em we've run away together—from your husband. And that's what I'll say. So why make a fuss? It will be easier all round simply to pretend you're my wife. And we'll say we're on a little vacation."

She had ceased to cry and had listened to him, her head bent submissively. "Perhaps you're right," she said. "Go in to shore. I—I don't know what to do." She covered her face with both hands.

Hatch grinned at these signs of capitulation, stood up in the boat and waved his hand to the man on the beach; then seated himself and began to row sturdily for the inner shore.

"I thought you'd be a sensible girl," he told her. "You'll be a lot better off here with me than if you'd stayed in Manila, a stranger and broke. And we'll marry the first chance we get and go back to the States—travel in style, too, and live in style. There are lots of things I can't tell you right now, Lottie, but I will later on. If the people here think you're Mrs. Hatch, everything'll go smooth. So just calm down and take things easy—and leave the explanations to me."

As Bardsley waited for the oncoming boat he noted the bowed figure of the woman passenger. Her companion, whose words Bardsley could not hear, seemed to be arguing with her gently.

"Hello! You can beach here where I stand!" called Bardsley.

At that Hatch stopped rowing and faced round. Miss Drummond uncovered her face and sat up, fixing anxious eyes on Bardsley.

"Well! You people seem to have fallen from the sky," went on Bardsley, heartily. "Or is it a case of shipwreck?"—this because he could see that the young woman had been crying.

"Neither one," responded Hatch, noncommittal. "We've just dropped off a schooner to do a little exploring."

Bardsley swung off his hat. "You're welcome as the flowers in spring!" he said, smiling. "And I hope your schooner won't come looking for you right away!"

"She won't," said Hatch. "She's gone on to Singapore—came way off her course to drop us here. We're on our own—camping kit and everything for a stay of several weeks."

"Fine!" exclaimed Bardsley. "Just this morning I was wishing somebody'd turn up, but I didn't expect such luck. I've been here a long time—and you probably will be, too, because no boats come in sight here oftener than once in six months or so."

"Six *months!*" It was Miss Drummond, her face white once more, her voice shaking.

Hatch shot at her a glance of warning. "I'm glad it's as lonesome as that if it makes us welcome," he said. "You seem to be well settled—good house and a schooner out there. What do you raise? Copra? And where's your settlement?"

"My bungalow is the only settlement," said Bardsley with a laugh. "My name is John Bardsley and I'm the only white man on the island. I don't raise anything, except a few bees—and my own contentment. Plenty to eat on land and in the water and I've got some civilized supplies out in that schooner. So I can make you both comfortable while you're here. There's room enough in my bungalow—you won't have to camp unless you want to."

"That's neighborly," said Hatch. "My name is Hatch—George Hatch. My wife and I won't be any trouble to you, we hope."

At the word "wife," Miss Drummond gave an involuntary start and her lips parted as if she were about to speak. She remained silent, however, and continued to watch Bardsley.

The boat had been slowly drifting shoreward. "Back water a little with your left," suggested Bardsley, "and I'll draw you up sidewise, Mr. Hatch. That's it! Now pull hard!"

Without glancing at Miss Drummond, Hatch once more bent at his oars and drove

forward with all his strength. And a minute later his boat sliced into the sand at Bardsley's feet and was seized by the latter and dragged well up on the hot, dry shingle.

Hatch rose and jumped ashore. His anxiety to make a good impression upon the other man was apparent. As he extended his right hand he lifted his cap. "Mighty glad to meet you!" he declared.

As Bardsley took Hatch's hand, he gave a quick glance at the pistols worn by the latter. "And won't you come out of the boat, madam?" he said to Miss Drummond who had not moved from her seat. Again he lifted his hat and bowed.

"Oh, yes! Yes!" She stood up, wavering unsteadily, for the boat tipped a trifle.

Hatch stepped toward her and held out his hand. "Come on, Lottie," he said.

She ignored his help. Stepping upon the luggage and the camping gear, she sprang to the ground. Then, going beyond Bardsley, so that he was between her and Hatch, she turned to the former. She was trembling, yet determined and defiant.

"I am not this man's wife!" she cried.

Bardsley stared at her in amazement, fell back a step as he turned toward Hatch, his look full of inquiry, and waited for the latter to speak.

Hatch shrugged, and spread out his hands in a gesture of helplessness. "Mrs. Hatch needs rest and quiet," he said significantly.

Miss Drummond was calmer now. "I am not his wife," she repeated. "When my father died on the steamer, just before I arrived in Manila from the United States, I was out of money. This man helped me—advanced money on my future earnings. He told me I could be governess to the two children of a planter named Manning who lived on an island down here. He said he was Mr. Manning's superintendent. I believed him. I came on the schooner *Jessica* with him. We left the ship an hour or more ago."

Again Bardsley turned to Hatch, who was standing quietly, his look sympathetic, yet bored, as if he had just listened to a many-times-told story. As the eyes of the two men met, Hatch smiled ruefully. "Do you want to—to explain this situation, Mr. Hatch?" asked Bardsley.

Hatch did not answer him. "I wish you'd try and be calm, Lottie," he said kindly. "We mustn't make things embarrassing for Mr. Bardsley. You know we're his guests here."

Miss Drummond caught Bardsley's arm appealingly.

"Oh, please don't believe him!" she begged. "And protect me from him! My name is Charlotte Drummond. I've known this man only a month. I didn't know he'd been lying to me until just half an hour ago—when we came round the point and saw you. He thought this island was uninhabited. But thank God, you were here!"

"Poor little wife!" said Hatch. He turned to the boat and began to sort out the canvas bundles.

Bardsley watched him, saying nothing, but not drawing away from Miss Drummond.

"This man has laid a trap for me," she went on tremulously, "and if you don't believe me, if you don't protect me, there's just one thing left for me to do—kill myself."

At that Hatch again shook his head sadly. But he did not even look up from his work of sorting the luggage. "Have it your own way, my dear," he said soothingly; and then with sudden irritation, "but we want to get out of this blistering sun, you know! If we don't, you'll be having another of your bad spells!"

Miss Drummond gasped. "My—my *spells!*" she cried. And in sudden panic she started away, as if about to run into the jungle; but halted uncertainly, and stood staring wildly at the two men.

"That's what I said," returned Hatch carelessly. Picking up his coat he felt in an inside pocket of it, chose a paper from among several in a wallet, opened the paper and handed it to Bardsley. "Just read that, please," he said.

Now Miss Drummond returned resolutely; and as Bardsley took the paper and began to read, she also read, leaning toward him half timidly.

The document was a typewritten sheet, bearing the printed heading of the Manila Board of Health, and addressed "To Whom it May Concern." It read:

> Mr. George Hatch, of Freeport, Long Island, New York, U. S. A., has been in consultation with me regarding the health of his wife. This is to certify that at present writing, Mrs. Hatch is suffering from delusions——

Miss Drummond read no further.

"Oh!" she cried, appalled. "Oh, this—

this wretch! Delusions! He's using this to prove I'm his wife and that I'm crazy! Oh, Mr. Bardsley! Surely, you won't believe him!"

"Read to the end," suggested Hatch.

But as without comment Bardsley started to do so, with a cry of, "It isn't true! It isn't true!" Miss Drummond caught the paper from Bardsley's hold and tore it in two, then tore it a second time and a third, finally scattering the bits on the sand.

Hatch looked grave. "Suppose we take her up to your bungalow," he said to Bardsley as if in considerable concern, "so she can be in the shade."

"Come," was all Bardsley said.

She caught at his arm. "Don't let him get behind us!" she warned. "He'll kill you to get you out of the way!"

Hatch laughed wearily. "Oh, Lottie!" he protested. "Don't talk so wild!" And to Bardsley, "I'll humor her. Doctor Santlin, who wrote that letter, told me it was always best to do that. So I'll lead the way, if you don't mind." He started off briskly.

But Miss Drummond held back. "My suit case!" she said to Bardsley. "There are letters in it addressed to me. They'll prove I've told the truth!" She sprang into the boat again, dragged the suit case from under the seat of the bows, laid it flat and opened it.

For a moment she hunted hurriedly, opening the large flap in the cover of the case and looking under and through the various articles which the main compartment contained. Meanwhile, Bardsley waited, turned half toward Hatch, who had halted a rod or more away in the palm grove.

When Miss Drummond stood up, her hands were empty.

"Every letter is gone!" she said hoarsely. "Every one! Even my father's will, made on board the steamer! Oh, what can I do? What can I do?"

"Come up to the house," said Bardsley gently.

"Yes, Lottie," Hatch urged.

As Miss Drummond joined Bardsley once more, Hatch strode on before them.

"I've told you the truth," she said to Bardsley as she walked beside him. "You must believe me! Oh, tell me that you do! Of course I sound wild! Can you blame me?" Then, breaking down, "Oh, I wish I were with father! Oh, daddy, what'll I do without you!"

Bardsley halted, deeply touched. "Trust me," he said, speaking low.

"I will! I do!"

He spoke lower. "Even when I seem to side with *him*," he added hastily.

"I understand." Then angrily again, "*Now* I see why Captain Lattimer acted so queer toward me. *He* thought I was that man's wife! And he had been told I suffered from delusions!"

"I'll tell you something that will make you feel easier," he returned. "The date on that letter—it had been changed lately. Very carefully. But I noticed it at once. It was so much fresher than the rest of the typewriting."

"And you think——"

"There was a Mrs. Hatch with delusions."

"Ah!"

They walked on in silence for a little. Presently Miss Drummond spoke again: "Oh, he's a dangerous man! I'm sorry you're the only white man here—and I'm terrified."

"I'm sorry he knows I'm alone," agreed Bardsley gravely. "But—I've got plenty of weapons."

"*I* want a revolver," she said quickly.

"There's a stone water cooler in the little passage that leads out to my kitchen," he replied. "I'll put one under that tonight. You can use an automatic?"

"I never have yet, but I can learn," she declared.

"Practice would mean shooting," he pointed out. "He'd hear you. And we mustn't walk too slow or he'll think you're telling me too much." Taking a gentle hold of her arm he urged her forward along the uneven path of coral. "I must treat you as if I think you're a sick woman," he explained.

"Yes. All right."

Hatch had not halted a second time; and when Bardsley and Miss Drummond climbed the steps of the bungalow Hatch was standing on the veranda, waiting for them.

"You've a nice place here, Mr. Bardsley," he said cordially, fanning himself with his cap.

"And you'll see that it's large enough for all of us," answered Bardsley. "And a tent isn't any place for a sick woman. Besides, the mosquitoes would eat you up."

"You're mighty kind!" Then to Miss

Drummond, "Isn't the view of the bay grand, Lottie?"

She did not answer. And she did not take the chair Hatch shoved forward for her. "If I'm not troubling you too much," she said to Bardsley, "I'd like to be shown my room."

"Certainly." He clapped his hands smartly.

"You have servants?" asked Hatch. There was surprise—even a trace of dismay—in his voice.

"Oh, plenty of them!" rejoined Bardsley.

Miss Drummond advanced toward him eagerly. "Then will it be possible for me to have a woman with me?" she asked. "All the time, I mean. I haven't any money, but I've got two or three pretty ornaments. I can pay with those. Oh, I hope you can arrange it!"

The black boy came running round the house. He had evidently been asleep, for he had a piece of mosquito netting about his head. He stopped abruptly at the sight of strangers and stood open-eyed and open-mouthed, shrinking back behind the lattice of the veranda. Bardsley addressed the boy in his native dialect and the latter sped away.

"His wife is in a hut up on the hill," explained Bardsley. "I've told him to fetch her. Sally is a good soul. Not very neat, Mrs. Hatch, but teachable and kind."

"Good!" pronounced Hatch heartily, as if the arrangement pleased him. "Good!" And his glance at Bardsley was approving. He had not failed to note the latter's use of "Mrs. Hatch."

Again Bardsley turned to Miss Drummond. "There's a hammock on the coolest part of the veranda," he said, "just around the corner. Sally will bring you a cold drink there, when she comes, and some sandwiches."

"Thank you. And if I may have my suit case——"

"Sally and Cæsar Augustus will fetch it up after we've had some chow."

When Miss Drummond was gone the men sat smoking and at once Bardsley took up the matter which was foremost in the mind of each—and with a simulated frankness which he hoped would mislead Hatch.

"From my talk with your wife on the way up from the beach," he began, "I realize that her delusion that you are not her husband is very fixed."

"I should say so!" exclaimed Hatch. "Why, on the way down here, the captain of the *Jessica* didn't dare to call her Mrs. Hatch, or I believe she'd have pitched herself overside."

"It's sad!" declared Bardsley. "Such a young woman, too. And you think this trip the best for her, I suppose?"

"Well, you see, it's like this," said Hatch. He spoke low and his manner was confidential. "As Doctor Santlin's letter explained—the part you didn't read—Mrs. Hatch needs rest and quiet for a long time, away from everybody. That's the only thing, the doctor said, that could bring her reason back to normal. Well, I had to do one of two things—take her to some lonely spot like this or send her to a sanitarium. I figured that if she could walk around as she pleased on an island she'd be better off than if she was shut up in a room. Am I right?"

"I should judge so," agreed Bardsley.

"Anyhow, I decided on the island, and here we are. It looks like we're going to be a lot of trouble to you, Mr. Bardsley."

"Not a bit! Not a bit!"

"It will make things easier for you if you pretend to believe her," went on Hatch. "People with queer ideas never like to be contradicted, you know."

"So I've heard."

"And nothing matters as long as Lottie's where she's likely to improve." Hatch's tone was sincere, his look earnest and concerned.

"I agree absolutely," asserted Bardsley. "And now if you'll excuse me I won't wait for Cæsar to get back, but fetch you something cool to drink."

He went inside. But before preparing a pineapple cup he secured a small pistol, loaded it and slipped it into the hiding place agreed upon. With the pistol, he left a note:

> Occupy the room to the north—the one just inside the window where your hammock is. Sally will sleep at your door and Cæsar under your window on the veranda. If you will keep awake till midnight, I'll stay up after that. If necessary, wake me by pulling the old punkah cord that hangs down your inner wall. Don't worry.

Then he returned to Hatch with a pitcher and glasses. Through the afternoon they talked and smoked, Bardsley telling about his life on the island and Hatch recounting some of the more recent happenings of the outside world.

When the sun was nearly down Cæsar

Augustus went with them to the beach. Here the three men pulled Hatch's boat out of the water and turned it upside down. Then the black portered the heaviest of the bundles to the bungalow and placed them in the room which was to be occupied by Hatch.

In the meantime Sally was looking after Miss Drummond. The former was not only proud as a peacock over her new duties but interested beyond measure in the first white woman she had ever seen.

Before dark the men had supper together on the veranda. Soon after, Bardsley, on a plea of weariness, went to his room, after helping Cæsar set up Hatch's camp cot. But Hatch remained on the veranda, smoking. However, within an hour Bardsley heard the other man enter the house and go to bed. Except for the croaking of the tree toads outside, the occasional rustling of a palm head and the breathing of the two men and the blacks, all was silence.

The night passed without incident.

Hatch spent the whole of the next day on the veranda, lolling in a chair, fanning himself, watching the bay and drinking prodigious quantities of pineapple water prepared by Cæsar Augustus. Miss Drummond kept to her room, where she ate the meals that Sally carried to her. As for Bardsley, since the pistol and note were gone from under the water cooler, he knew Miss Drummond had them.

He sat at his rude desk in the spacious living room and carefully wrote out the whole account of Hatch's coming, in order that, should anything happen to himself in the clash which was surely ahead, Cæsar Augustus might have something to hand to the first captain who touched at the island. Over the top of his desk Bardsley could see Hatch's thick neck and disheveled head. Now and again the latter would half turn, and call in some comment or question. He did not venture near the desk. If he was curious as to what Bardsley was putting down on paper, he carefully concealed it.

Toward late afternoon he made off for the beach, whistling as he went. He was rested, he announced, and wanted to have a look about and amuse himself "combing the beach." From a chair on the veranda Bardsley watched him—and talked to Miss Drummond, who stayed out of sight behind the basketlike closed shutter, which formed the front door of the living room.

"I thought he'd never go!" she declared. "There's so much I want to say to you. And I'm so glad he doesn't mind leaving us!"

Bardsley did not turn his head. "I'm not," he said with conviction. "I don't want to fret you, but it's his sudden willingness to leave us together that troubles me most."

"I don't understand!" Her voice showed renewed fear.

"Don't you see? He doesn't care what you tell me or what I believe. Because nothing of the kind will matter to him—if he can put me out of the way."

"I'm relieved that you realize, as I do, how terrible he is."

"Do you know the conclusion I've come to, as I've watched the back of his fat neck out there on the veranda all day while he twisted and peered about? He's a criminal—probably a murderer. At least a fugitive from justice. These waters—and islands—have quite a few of such chaps. And his smoothness, and his poise! Yes, our Mr Hatch has all the earmarks of a man who has come here hunting cover. He wanted to hide himself on an island, and he brought you along as a blind. Oh, I don't say he isn't very much attracted to you. He is. But you see, if the authorities are trying to trace a lone criminal, he has a better chance as a man who is traveling with a wife to throw the police off his track."

Miss Drummond began to walk to and fro nervously, still keeping out of sight. "I'm sure you're right," she said when she halted. "He's using me as a blind. I don't believe he really likes me very much—why, he threatened to throw me out of the boat as we were coming into your bay! Yes, I meant security for him—on board the *Jessica.* I heard him talk to the captain, two or three times about 'the little wife.' Of course, I thought he was talking about his wife, though he must have been fooling the captain about me. But what can we do?"

"Keep on our guard every instant! It's a monstrous thing that he's done to you and I'm sure he'll kill me—or will try to—when he's ready. I'd be a danger to him, if a ship ever did pop in here for water or some trader came nosing around. And in the meantime, I'm—in his way."

"I blame myself for ever believing him! For coming! Think of the position I've put you in! You are——" Her voice failed her.

"That's all right!" Bardsley gave a quick

smile round at the hidden girl. "I'm getting a taste of excitement on my lonely island for a change. And, by golly, I like it! I've been vegetating down here; and now I've got a chance to use my wits. And against a crafty gentleman! For if we're right in our surmises—*if* he had to get out of Manila and get out quick—think how clever he was in his arrangements! He didn't have time to win you by fair means—even if there was any chance of that. So he worked out this scheme. By it he succeeded in both directions: Got away and was able to take you with him!"

"Tell me how I can help—what you want me to do."

"Whenever you hear me say that I'm going to leave the house, you leave it ahead of me—*always.* Take Sally and go down through the palm grove to the north end of the sand strip. Wait there on the edge of the jungle. If anything should go wrong with me, take to the jungle with Sally. She'll lead you straight to her people on the other side of the island. They're primitive but they're safe. They'll care for you till help comes."

"Thank you. But what about *you?* I should never forgive myself if harm came to you! And, oh, I'm afraid of that!"

"Then here's something that may cheer you up," he went on. "In my little drug store in the schooner, I've got something that'll put Mr. Hatch to sleep."

"And then we could tie him up!"

"Exactly. In the forecastle. I would have gone for the stuff to-day, only he was very much on the alert and I didn't even dare get a note to you. And of course I couldn't go and leave you in the house with him. But now you know that you and Sally must always leave ahead of me, so I'll give warning by some casual remark before I'm going to row out for the stuff. Sally!"

The girl came on a run from the rear veranda. Bardsley spoke a few words in native to her as she stood at the corner of the veranda, grinning. She sobered at once, bobbed her head in assent and sped back to her work.

"She understands," Bardsley told Miss Drummond. "And you can depend on her. But I shan't row out to-night. Dark comes so quickly here. I don't want you to have to make your way home with Sally after nightfall, though a native can travel the black jungle like a ferret; and I don't want to come back in the dark myself. We'll have a late moon now. Hatch could hide and get me from ambush. So I'll go out in the morning, if possible, while Hatch is here at the bungalow. Now cheer up! For we'll have him nicely asleep before he knows it. And when he wakes——"

"I pray it'll work out all right!" she answered.

"Of course, I could kill him without warning," he continued. "But as long as I feel we're safe, I don't want to do that—unless he makes a hostile move. Though, of course, he's got everything to gain by killing me. Here's a tight little island, a stout, comfortable bungalow and enough supplies of different kinds, and luxuries, on board my schooner to last him a long time—and he must guess from what he's seen here in the house that I have them."

"I'm so anxious!" she exclaimed. "Last night was a week long. I didn't sleep at all."

"You must sleep all of to-night," he declared. "I shan't turn in at all. And I know what a strain you're under. So I won't delay my plan a second longer than I have to. Twenty-four hours will settle everything. He may take his time about what he plans to do, because there isn't any danger of a ship's showing up here for months. On the other hand, he may work fast. Well, so shall I. I'll get the drug and divide it into doses. The minute I get back here to the house, I'll have Cæsar put a powder into each glass of pineapple for lunch, so that if Hatch is suspicious for any reason and changes the glasses, he'll get his medicine anyhow."

"But don't forget and drink your own," she warned, and laughed nervously.

Now Bardsley reached into a table drawer and took out a pair of binoculars. He looked through them at Hatch who was sitting down near his boat. "He's fussing with a box," he told Miss Drummond. "Whittling something, as near as I can make out—he's sitting between me and what he's working on. While he's so busy, I think I'd like to have a peep into his room. He's likely too clever to leave anything around that would incriminate him; still, you never can tell."

'If you disappear into the house, he'll know we're conferring."

"Then suppose you and Sally go out into the open, where Hatch can see you. Over by that mangrove will do—and take your

pistol with you. If you see him come this way, cough, and I'll understand."

Bardsley found nothing of special interest in the room Hatch was occupying. There were several large canvas bundles that were plainly tentage and Bardsley did not disturb them. When he came out upon the veranda again Hatch was still on the beach. Miss Drummond was strolling about with the black woman, enjoying the fragrant coolness which heralded the approaching night. She did not glance toward Bardsley and he held up a book before him, as if reading.

But half an hour later when Hatch joined him on the front veranda Bardsley took occasion to mention Miss Drummond. "Mrs. Hatch ventures out for little walks," he told the other man.

"Yes, I saw her," answered Hatch. "That's why I dug out from the house. You see, one of her pet ideas, when she's sick this way, is that I'm going to hurt her—beat her or shoot her or drown her. She's got what that Manila doctor called a 'persecution complex'—and I'm the goat."

"I've heard of such cases," returned Bardsley. "Sick minds invariably turn against those who are nearest and dearest."

"Right you are! But, say! You know, I believe she'll get better here. Rest and quiet will straighten out her nerves. And then we can set up our own camp near by somewhere and not be so much trouble to you."

"Don't worry on that score," replied Bardsley. "I'm glad to have you both here, though it's pathetic to see a woman like Mrs. Hatch—so young and refined—in such a condition mentally."

"It's awful!" agreed Hatch feelingly. "And I must say that you've been mighty decent about the whole thing. I felt like a dog when she put me in such a rotten light to you. Among our friends, you see, her talk doesn't matter. But you're a stranger."

"Still, I knew she wasn't well," declared Bardsley. "My common sense told me that your ship's captain, and others, knew Mrs. Hatch was your wife—not some girl coming to teach children on an island where a white child has never been."

"She was pretty well on the *Jessica,*" Hatch went on. "It was that open boat and the hot sun that made her so much worse. She seemed to get a sudden turn for the bad then—and maybe it was the bobbing of the small boat in the swells."

"When she went out to the mangrove just now," said Bardsley, "she asked me about the birds on the island—and the flowers."

"That shows!" exclaimed Hatch as if greatly relieved. "Yes, she's more calm and getting lucid. But I've felt a little light-headed all to-day. The sun isn't any too good for me, neither. I'm too full-blooded, I guess. Hope I'm not going to come down with the fever."

"If you do, I'll dose you," returned Bardsley, cheerfully.

When supper was served, Hatch, for the first time, made mention of the schooner. "That's a neat boat you've got out there," he said. "Do you ever go anywhere in her?"

"She's not seaworthy," Bardsley lied easily. "The borers have got into her timbers. And she was pretty rotten when I came in her. Besides, the lazy fools of a crew I had stowed her sails while the canvas was damp and I found a few weeks back that it was all moldy and rotten."

Though dark was not yet come, supper over, Hatch stood up and announced his intention of going to bed. "I feel shivery," he complained; "and my legs ache. I wonder if it's a touch of that confounded dengue fever."

Bardsley had also risen. But not as if he was on the alert; rather as if he were showing the other the attention of a courteous host. "Sleep'll fix you up," he asserted.

Hatch mumbled some reply and shuffled his way to his room; and presently, as he lit his lamp, the *swale* wall between him and Bardsley was pricked out with thousands of pin points of luminosity. A moment and he pulled off a shoe and threw it on the floor. After a proper interval, he followed that shoe with its mate. Then he rolled into his camp cot, making it creak.

But when he heard Bardsley retire and presently marked the latter's steady breathing, Hatch very cautiously rose. From the largest of his luggage rolls he noiselessly drew a heavy, canvas-covered package, out of which he took a dismounted shotgun. The double barrels he fastened to his belt in such a way that they hung down inside his right trousers leg. The stock he concealed under his shirt, keeping it in place by a strap hitched over his shoulder, under his coat. Next, he pocketed some loaded shells and a ball of heavy cord. Then, cautiously

as a cat, he went through the open hole in his wall under the bamboo shutter, crossed the veranda by feeling his way through the darkness to the lattice surrounding the veranda and stole away through the heavy blackness that wrapped land and water—a blackness relieved only by myriads of swooping fireflies.

He headed toward the beach. A short rod away from the house he stopped to put on his shoes. Then once more he proceeded, but still softly, and keeping, when possible, in the coral and sandy path through the palms.

At the water's edge he hunted his own boat, took from behind it the box he had whittled at during the day, carried this to Bardsley's canoe, pushed the canoe from the shore and climbed into it with the box. He cautiously paddled out to the schooner.

Aboard her he hunted the door to the main cabin, found it, and entered, for it was not locked. Now he did not have to fear making a noise. Also, and boldly, he used his pocket flash light. He examined the scuttle of the after companion and found it secured from the inside. So he knew now that the door of the main cabin was the only entrance which Bardsley used to gain access to the supplies kept in the cabin.

Placing the flash light where it threw a beam downward Hatch began to work swiftly and methodically. He jointed the shotgun, loaded it with buckshot shells, placed the box opposite to the door, set the gun into the freshly cut notches on either end of the box and secured the weapon in place with cord.

Next, he fastened another cord in such a way, in connection with the door and his contrivance inside, that any one who opened the door and attempted to enter the main cabin would get from the gun a double charge of shot point-blank.

In less than ten minutes he was done. He quit the schooner, paddled back noiselessly and beached the canoe. But once more on the path to the bungalow he did not trouble to be secretive. Instead, as he climbed the slope slowly, he lit a cigarette and smoked.

On reëntering his room he pretended to be as noiseless as possible, but he deliberately kicked over a stool. "Did that wake you, Mr. Bardsley?" he said cautiously. "I don't want to disturb you."

Bardsley was seated in the blackness of his own room, his automatic on his knee. He pretended to rouse. "Wh-what was that?" he asked sleepily. "That you, Mr. Hatch?"

"For some reason I'm as nervous as a fool," complained Hatch dolefully. "Perspiring hard, too. And hot. So I went down and took a salt-water rub. Feel better for it and I'll sleep all right now, I guess."

He slept soundly, and early morning found him looking alert and rested. Nevertheless, when he had put on his clothes he again lay down on his cot; and though the air was soft and warm, he covered himself with heavy blankets—until his face was redder than usual and his shirt wet with perspiration.

Then he threw off all covering save a sheet and called out to Bardsley, "Would you mind coming in and taking a look at me?"

Expecting mischief, Bardsley did not at first go farther than the sill of Hatch's room. From there he noted that Hatch's pistols were lying on the floor beyond the reach of their owner. Hatch's hands were lying, open and limp, upon the damp sheet.

"Look at me!" he said weakly. "What do you think?"

"Jungle fever," pronounced his host laconically. "That means quinine—and lots of it. I'll go out to the schooner for it the minute I've had my coffee."

"Sorry to be such a nuisance!" declared Hatch. "And would you mind hanging up my pistols?"

Bardsley gathered the weapons. "I'll lock them in my desk," he returned. "If I can help it I never let the natives get hold of a shooting iron."

Hatch seemed indifferent. "Yes, lock 'em up," he answered wearily. "I've worn 'em here, because I didn't want to leave 'em hanging around. Oh, but I've got a head!"

As Bardsley left Hatch's room Miss Drummond was already out of the bungalow; and, with Sally at her side, sauntering away through the palm grove. So that—his quick breakfast over—when Bardsley reached his canoe, she was there before him, her blue eyes anxious, her face pathetically pale.

"He's pretending sick!" she told Bardsley. "Oh, I know he's up to something!"

"Of course, he's shamming," agreed Bardsley. "But perhaps only because he

wanted to have a word alone with you. And what he *will* get"—Bardsley smiled—"is some medicine he hasn't figured on. Don't worry, Miss Drummond. I'll have him shut up tight by noon. In the meantime, keep over by the edge of the jungle and don't come back until I stand here again."

"Why did he let you take his pistols?" she asked.

"Probably so I wouldn't be afraid to leave the house. But of course"—with another amused smile—"he's got a third gun tucked away somewhere. However, he'll drink what he thinks is medicine, won't he? And then for a little while he'll be past using guns."

"It all means that he's got some plan," she declared. "He's throwing us off our guard. It makes me very anxious—very."

"I'm anxious, too," he admitted. "But also, I'm hopeful—in fact, I'm sure. Did you know he sneaked out last night?"

"Out? He left the house?"

"I don't know how far he went. Nor does Cæsar. Hatch said he came to the beach for a bath. What he probably aimed to do was draw me out after him—make me follow, you see. And then shoot me."

She shuddered. "I feel terrible when I think what danger I've put you in," she said.

"Try to think of me as you'd think of the policeman on the corner," he suggested as he pushed his canoe into the water and took his seat in it. "I mustn't delay going for the medicine or he'll think I'm indifferent about his condition."

"Thank you for all you've done for me," she said as she turned away.

He saw there were tears in her eyes. "What I've done has been a pleasure," he answered. "And don't worry because I'm leaving the land. I can get back in short order. And be sure of one thing—when it comes to your safety, it's his life or mine."

He paddled slowly until she was a safe distance along the sand. Then working faster, he gained the schooner, fastened his canoe to the sea ladder, and went over the bulwarks toward the main cabin door.

As he reached it his ear caught a faint sound from within—a gentle scratching, followed by a flutter.

"Another bat has gone in through the galley smokestack," he said aloud. And as he seized the ring knob of the door, he stepped aside from the opening to escape being struck in the face by any freedom-seeking bats.

As the heavy teak door swung out, from inside the cabin came an explosion—resounding, terrific. At the same instant, the air was cut by swishing, whistling missiles.

Though unhurt, Bardsley dropped to the deck. Then with all speed, hidden by the bulwark, he crawled into the cabin, now filled with powder smoke, sprang to his feet and ran to the box which supported the gun. Both hammers were down. And the cord told its own tale. He ran to a porthole which commanded a view of the bungalow. As he drew aside the curtain to look, he saw Hatch, fully dressed, running swiftly down the path to his beached boat.

Above the schooner, startled birds were wheeling—gulls and terns—calling to one another in fear at the boom of the gun. Miss Drummond, watching with the black girl, at the edge of the dense growth along the beach, had heard the roar and now saw the wheeling birds. In terror she came running back a rod or more. "Mr. Bardsley!" she called. "Mr. Bardsley!"

As Hatch heard her, he stopped short and, like her, listened intently for a reply from the schooner.

"Mr. Bardsley!" she cried again, entreatingly and despairingly.

Again there was no reply. And Hatch, taking his time, launched his boat, hopped into it lightly and rowed off. Now there was nothing of the sick man about him. At his belt was a single pistol, worn well forward.

From the porthole, through a little rift in the curtain, Bardsley watched Hatch come. "I could shoot you down," he said aloud, "as you deserve to be shot. But I won't. I'll take you prisoner, smart Mr. Hatch!"

He had Hatch's cord in his hands, doubled, and at one end, he formed a loop. When Hatch's boat was so near that it was close under the bulwarks at the sea ladder, Bardsley darted out of the main cabin and, stooping, swiftly gained that point of the foredeck at which Hatch would come over the side.

Hatch tied his boat to Bardsley's canoe; then having listened a few moments he also called to Bardsley: "Hey, up there! What's happened? You all right?"

Crouched under the ladder's top, Bardsley held his breath. And a moment later, heard Hatch begin his climb. Above the schooner the birds were still wheeling, but quietly

now. Hatch did not let his look stray to them. He watched the top of the ladder.

Bardsley also watched the ladder's top. And when, a moment later, a large, reddened hand closed on the upper edge of the bulwark, swiftly Bardsley straightened and with Miss Drummond's cry of joy in his ears he dropped the looped cord over Hatch's head.

A gurgle of dismay—as the loop tightened. Then Hatch caught at the cord with his free hand, striving to wrest it from Bardsley's hold. But Bardsley held on. At the same time he whipped the ends of the cord about a belaying pin in the pin rack just under the rim of the bulwark.

"Cæsar!" he called at the top of his voice. "Cæsar! Get Cæsar, Miss Drummond!"

For now she was halted on the beach at the point nearest to the schooner.

Cursing, Hatch struggled. He found himself helpless—unable to go higher or free his throat from the encircling cord, though he had got the fingers of his free hand under it. Suddenly, as Bardsley began attempting to tie the wrist of that hand of Hatch's which was gripped on the bulwark, Hatch jerked his body backward and let himself fall, snapping both cords.

The tide had swung his boat astern, where it was scraping against Bardsley's canoe. As Hatch's feet struck the gunwale, the impact drove the boat out from under him and it heeled sharply. Hatch fell backward into the water and sank toward the swaying weeds and kelp on the coral bottom of the bay.

Bardsley leaned to watch. And that same instant he saw from under the schooner's counter a long, blue-gray shadow.

"Look *out!*" Instinctively Bardsley screamed his warning to ears that could not hear. He was too horror-stricken to think of his revolver—of trying to wound the shark.

Hatch touched the bottom, then, arms waving and legs kicking, he began to rise. And as he came up, with a turn that was too swift for the eye to follow the collector of the port shot forward to his victim. There was a hissing sound. Beside the boats the water churned to foam and Bardsley had a flash of a white belly.

When the water quieted and he could again see to the coral garden on the bottom, the shark and his prey were gone.

"When I left New York," Bardsley told Miss Drummond as they sat in the shade on the beach that afternoon, "I was—well, you might say—disappointed in humankind generally, but especially in several women. I think now I made the mistake of judging most women by a few."

She smiled at that. "Just as I might judge all men by Hatch," she said.

"Exactly. But my disappointment explains my willingness to come down here and stay alone."

"It's a lovely spot," she declared. "I hadn't noticed the beauty before—I was too worried for that. But, now, with danger past, I can easily see why you've loved it here."

"I shall stay on," he said. "Of course, first of all, I'll put the schooner in shape to——"

"To take me back to Manila," she interrupted. There was a shade of regret in her voice.

"No." He was looking across the bay to a dark spot on the horizon, a spot in line with the tip of that point which inclosed the bay. "To take you to Barumba Island, that bit of cloud effect you see across there."

She followed his look. "To Barumba Island?" she asked, puzzled.

"From there you can get a boat to Manila easily," he explained.

"I see."

Early that same afternoon there came trotting out of the jungle to the bungalow in the clearing a long line of blacks, both men and women. Each of the men carried a small bundle tied up in cloth or matting. The women balanced on their heads rattan baskets filled with fruit and dried fish. All had been summoned by Cæsar Augustus from the farthest coast for a voyage in Bardsley's schooner.

Among the lot were some Maley fishermen who were accustomed to the sea and were to act as crew boys. These went aboard at once and worked at bending the sails. A half dozen natives loaded the provision baskets and filled the water butts of the vessel. And others scrubbed the linoleum and the paint work of the main cabin and swabbed down the decks. The women, with a great rattling of pots and pans, under the direction of Cæsar, transferred the cooking utensils of the bungalow to the schooner's galley.

Under a hastily stretched awning over

the freshly washed quarter-deck Miss Drummond sat in a steamer chair and watched the preparations. "I feel very lazy," she declared to Bardsley when he stopped for a moment on one of his trips aft. "And I wish you'd let me do something to help."

He was not the immaculately clad Bardsley who had gone out to the schooner that morning. Many descents into the hold had soiled the white of his suit. And he was hot from his work of overseeing in the sun.

"Please rest," he returned. "Already you're looking better than you have these last two days. You've got color. Why, you're like a different girl!"

She flushed under his praise and the admiration in his eyes. "You say that to bribe me into staying here in the shade," she answered, "while you wear yourself out."

"Oh, I'm acclimated and a little exercise will do me good," he protested. "Besides, the biggest share of our labor is over now." He leaned against the taffrail and lighted a cigarette.

"How soon shall we start?" she asked—but not as if she felt any eagerness or enthusiasm for their departure; rather the contrary, for the look that she fixed on Bardsley had in it something of wistfulness.

Despite the fortunate turn of affairs, earlier in the day he had been showing no sign of high spirits or of triumph. And now of a sudden he became grave. "We'll be off the land before sundown," he answered.

Later he came past again, this time in the wake of a boy who was bearing a great bunch of bananas. "Look at that gorgeous bunch of fruit!" he exclaimed as the boy hung the bananas from the awning whipping. "You won't see anything like that when you get back to your civilization!"

"No," she agreed.

He lingered with a hand on the corner of the cabin trunk, his face averted. "Don't I sound like a real-estate agent selling lots?" he asked.

She laughed outright.

It was the first time she had laughed since her coming. He turned and stared at her.

"I wish I could think of something else to say that would make you laugh like that again," he declared. "I—I think I'd forgotten what a woman's laugh could mean to a lonely man."

"Lonely?" Then very earnestly. "But you love your island! And I can understand that. The first two days I was here I didn't have a chance to notice how beautiful it was—I was too worried. But now, with no danger to think about, I can see that here you have beauty and peace."

"I lost my mother a little more than three years ago," explained Bardsley. "So there was nothing left to keep me from coming and I fitted out the schooner. I was looking for something a little more important than—well, say, the superiority of tropical fruit. Quiet and rest! I was particularly fitted to appreciate them after two years spent in Flanders."

"You were a soldier! That's why you were so steady during those forty-eight hours."

He smiled at her whimsically. "You were *not* a soldier," he returned, "but you were steady. I felt as if I were watching a woman who was being very brave under fire."

"And—and you will stay on?"

"The day you came," he replied, "I felt as if I'd had enough of being 'monarch of all I survey.' I was thinking of getting away. But now"—he hesitated, turning away his head—"I think I'd like to stay on. That is, under certain conditions."

In his voice was a trace of what he meant. She sensed it and the moment was an embarrassed one. Then, "Do you ever get mail down here?" she asked. "How am I to reach you with my bread-and-butter letter?"

He faced eastward to point. "Can you see that bit of cloud effect across there on the horizon?" he asked. "That's Barumba Island. On it is a missionary station and once in a while the padre comes over here to talk to my natives—Father O'Reilly. He's brought mail to me several times since I've been here. There wasn't much, except newspapers and magazines. You see, my family has dwindled. And so there isn't anybody to speak of who writes me." Then with a quick look down at her, "Would you send me more than the bread-and-butter letter, Miss Drummond?" he asked.

"Of course!—if you wish it."

"I do wish it. And will you forgive me if I say that I've wondered a little on the score of your future? You see, you told me about being short of funds and needing a position; and——"

"It'll be all right," she declared earnestly.

"I've got most of the money that Hatch advanced me. And as I shan't be able to return it to his people, whoever they are, I suppose I might as well keep it."

"I should say so! But, Miss Drummond, will that be enough? I have plenty—more than I need. Won't you let me help you?"

"You've helped me too much already," she answered. "No, I shall manage nicely. But I'm so grateful for your concern. Really."

The sun was touching the highest tops of the island's mountain peaks when the anchor came up. Those blacks who were remaining behind tumbled into the small boats and paid out a light hawser. Hatch's boat, filled with paddlers, led the way. Next in file came the boats belonging to the schooner, with Bardsley's canoe bringing up the rear. Scores of dark hands caught at the hawser and swung it toward the entrance to the bay. Then to give themselves a working melody, the men struck up a wild chant, in which joined those men and women who were to be left behind, and who had been sent back to the beach. And so to a barbaric song the schooner moved slowly; and with all her sails up she made a wide circle under her tow and headed for the open sea.

When she was well out beyond the line of breakers that reached from point to point of the land which nearly encircled the bay, the paddlers came clambering aboard and swung the boats after them to the schooner's deck. Bardsley gave orders for the hauling of the sheets. Now the vessel lay wing and wing. But as the sun went out of sight, the canvas caught a puff of air and the sails were trimmed to put her on the starboard tack. Then her owner relinquished the wheel to a fisherman, and gave a course which would be the first traverse for Manila.

Miss Drummond was standing at the stern. There Bardsley joined her. The tropic night was already settling. As the schooner filled away, slipping slowly over the smooth swells, the two looked back through the quick-gathering shadows at the island, and at the tiny spot which was the bungalow. For a long while neither spoke. But Bardsley smoked cigarette after cigarette, consigning each, half burned, to the water boiling under the stern.

It was he who spoke first, his voice low and deep with earnestness. "Are you glad to leave my island?" he asked.

Taken off her guard, she looked down shyly and replied evasively. "I'm sorry to be taking you away from it," she returned, "even for a short time."

"Yes, for me it's home," he said. "And it's when I'm going away from it that I find out just how much I love it." Then, persisting, "But you didn't tell me what I want to know. *Are* you glad?"

"No," she answered and her voice trembled. "In just these two days, I think I—I've learned to love it."

Her hand was laid on the rail. Suddenly he covered it with his own. "I wish I were not taking you to Manila," he confessed. "I wish we were making for Barumba. You know why, don't you? In three hours we could be there! Tell me! Won't you come to Barumba with me?"

She looked down, flushing happily. "Yes," she answered. "Because somehow I can't bear to think of going away and—and leaving you."

He drew closer, bending down to her. "When you belong to me," he told her, "we'll sail straight home. See!"—he pointed back to the island, now scarcely more than a dark spot against a lighter sky. "That little bit of paradise, Charlotte Drummond, it needs just one thing more to make it absolutely perfect. And that's—a sweet woman like you!"

More of Mr. Moore's work will follow soon.

A WOODEN WEDDING

DOWN in Washington, North Carolina, Miss Ada Oakes and Mr. Walter Pine decided to get married. Assisted by Miss Anna Lee Laurel as bridesmaid, and Mr. Robert Birch as best man, they did—the knot being tied by the Reverend Oscar T. Wood. A honeymoon in keeping with the wedding being in order, the couple went to Hickory, North Carolina, to spend it with Mr. Pine's aunt, Mrs. Shingle.

A Change from the Day's Work

By Burges Johnson

One of the requisites for citizenship in the little Mexican town of Del Norte was being able to take a joke as well as play one

THE Piedad Ranch lies about seventy miles south of the Rio Grande, with a horizon guarded by purple, table-topped mountains, and the vast undulating plain within that circumference is clothed here and there with groves of mesquite and splattered everywhere with cactus; over near one boundary, where the river flows refreshingly, there are green grass and trees of a richer color and cooler shade.

Larry Doyle was foreman of Piedad Ranch in the days gone by and he may be there to-day, rounding up the steers in their season and the burros in theirs and branding and shipping as the year rounds out, if the tragic times that have lately fallen upon that stricken land have not driven him away. But assuredly the purple, table-topped mountains are there and the mournful-voiced coyotes and those indescribable Mexican dawns with the smell of the dry earth and the sound of the herd pounding and lowing —and above it all, as a motif that never fades from memory, the song of the vaqueros with their minor harmonies, now joyous, now infinitely plaintive.

One may be certain, too, of this; that if there be groups of white men still there in that land's great open spaces, drawn together for the business of laying tracks or operating trains or handling cattle or for any other purpose, they are drawn very closely together indeed. Hearts react quickly one upon another for good or ill will. Shy or curt phrases convey big meanings; and truest of all, small pranks are excuse for Gargantuan, back-slapping mirth.

On a certain day, so it is told, the Piedad Ranch ran out of supplies—six new saddles in particular were needed for the men—and Larry Doyle had been three months without a sight of his ladylove and without a drink. The administrador said "of course" when his foreman, mentioning all but the thirst and the ladylove, asked permission to go to town. As an afterthought, Doyle petitioned that Burke, the new fence rider, be allowed to accompany him.

The little Mexican city of Del Norte lay only seventy miles to the north, on the Rio Grande. Three railroad stations, if signal posts may be dignified by such a title, lay within the vast territory of the ranch. Larry and Burke made their way in a buckboard to the nearest just in time to fling certain personal luggage aboard the caboose of the morning up-freight, hoist in a small crate more carefully and swing themselves in after it. There, with belts loosened and pipes lit, lying luxuriously in opposite bunks, with members of the train crew looking in upon them sociably now and then, they felt the routine of life falling away with the rattling, monotonous clank-clank of the wheels.

The two men differed greatly in appearance. Larry, lank and lean with high cheek bones, light, innocent blue eyes and a multitude of freckles, was a good six inches taller than his companion, whose look and fashion of speech gave him a certain dignity in spite of evident seediness of dress.

The foreman sprawled his length across the berth with his feet somewhere on the floor beyond while he smoked contentedly, growing more talkative as the comfort got into his bones.

"I can't see how a man who's hoboed himself all the way from Zacatecas can be as green as you make out to be," said he suddenly, after a slight pause in a conversation which had related to stock.

"That's easy," said Burke quietly. It was the first time in their month's relationship that he had gone into details of personal history; possibly because of natural reticence, possibly because this was Doyle's first searching inquiry. "You've heard of the prodigal son? I got my share at home there in England and came over by way of Vera Cruz; before I had been ashore a week I struck a clever Yankee promoter and a salted mine—and then decided to try walk-

ing to the States—where I heard work was steady and folks didn't try to get rich quite so quick. I was on my way when you gave me the job," and Burke puffed again at his pipe.

"All in five months," commented Larry thoughtfully. "Did you run through much of a roll? Not that it's any of my business."

Burke nodded confession.

"When I was a kid in Sunday school," said Larry pleasantly, "I used to hear the story about that 'prod' you mentioned. You'd remind me more of another character in the story if you was fattened up a little."

Burke grinned acknowledgment and, after a moment, Larry continued:

"Being a tenderfoot as to habits along the border I reckon you-all have never hunted snipe?"

"Why, no, not snipe. I'm used to pheasant," said Burke with some interest.

"The difference in the snipe hunts of these parts," said Larry with solemn emphasis, "is that you are the game the boys are after. I'm telling you this," he added, uncurling his lank six feet from the bunk and seeking a tobacco plug in the pocket of his coat, "for your own good and for reasons of my own. If some of my acquaintances up to Norte say you resemble a hunter," he said slowly, looking quizzically down on his companion, "you might buy the drinks first and omit the hunting." Larry paused to bite a corner from the square of tobacco and to stretch out again. "Of course they ain't so liable to try it on you unless I suggest it, seeing as you are along with me. But y' can't tell.

"There's a young man up there named Hilton—'Snipe' Hilton they call him nowadays—and he's generally eager to try a game on everybody that comes along, to square up with the world. You see he sort of got it good when he first came over the border himself and he has one of these so-called Southern tempers. He was out all night the time the boys put up that hunt on him, trying to find his way home in the dark through a strange country. Some mean-spirited cuss, they say, followed him and made noises like a wild animal and showed up a sort of a yellow streak in him. He's got the idea that man was me."

Burke grunted.

"A badger fight is another favorite sport," Larry continued after they had smoked for a time in silence. "Ever hear tell of one?"

"Go ahead," said Burke.

"Well, I reckon maybe you'd ought to take whatever's coming to you. They don't mean you any harm."

"They seem to take a lot of trouble over their jokes," suggested Burke.

Larry was silent for some time.

"You went to theaters in England?" he inquired eventually, with apparent change of subject.

"Sometimes."

"Horse races—picnics—churches—and all that?"

"Perhaps—now and then."

"You didn't expect to find none of those things here in Mex?" he suggested.

"Wanted a change," said Burke shortly.

"Humans is glad of a change from the day's work," said Larry, italicizing his words by expectorating twice in rapid succession through a far window of the car, "even if it's a mighty small one."

For an hour or more they talked and dozed; then, as the increased speed of the train indicated the down grade of the Rio Grande Valley, they ate their snack of lunch. Later they slipped on their coats as the car rattled and lurched over the frogs of the freight-yard sidings of Del Norte and, calling instructions to the train conductor to leave a box in the corner of the caboose until called for, they jumped to a grade crossing.

"It's an odd thing," said Larry with a manner of enormous surprise as he stood between the rails, "this street here leads right past the *Internacional.* And it's the only place that serves a decent drink in Norte." He looked at his watch. "Four P. M. It's early, but there might be some of the boys there now. You could be getting acquainted while I chase out for those saddles. I want to get my shopping done. They's a dance over the river to-night," he added with exaggerated casualness. "We might want to take it in."

"How did you know?" said Burke with mild curiosity.

"Friend of mine that was down looking over cattle last week gave me all the latest gossip of the metropolis."

They were walking up a business street. Store fronts one story high of brightly tinted stucco walled the narrow thoroughfare.

"This must be a good-sized town," said Burke with a question in his tone. There

was no answer. Looking up he followed Doyle's angle of intent gazing and noted a young woman, obviously American, making her way in and out among the sidewalk obstructions and the sauntering Mexicans on the other side of the way.

"Excuse me a minute," said Doyle and he crossed the street so as to intercept her. Burke watched them as they met. She was mildly pretty, he thought, and he noted her coquettish start of surprise as the lank foreman stood before her, his hat twisting awkwardly in his hands, his face a brick red.

A few moments later Doyle was back again. "Come on," he said shortly. "Got a gun?"

"No," said Burke, surprised.

"Well, get one—at the Monte de Piedad. This ain't a shooting country," he added in answer to the look of surprise. "Folks don't stand for it. But most any man is allowed to shoot once—under provocation."

After three minutes' further walking they came to an adobe corner structure, painted an inviting bright blue, and much belabeled. *Cantina Internacional* ran full across the front in green letters several feet high, while over the front door was elegantly engrossed in English "The Road to Ruin."

Burke paused, his wondering eyes fixed on this smaller sign. Larry grinned appreciatively.

"Stubby did that," he explained. "These border barkeeps like an English label to their places; and Juan Maria here, not being familiar with United States, persuaded Stubby to paint him a name. Stubby took his pay out in trade."

The appearance of the pair within the door was the signal for a chorus of cordial yells of greeting to Larry from a little group of loungers in a corner of the low-ceiled room. Only one of the group, a slender young fellow, somewhat gayer of apparel than the others, finished a drink hastily and sauntered out, followed by a solemn-looking hound dog. He nodded curtly to Larry as he passed.

To the crowd Larry remarked, "It don't look like Snipe Hilton and his hunting dog was sociable with me," and to the smiling little host he said, "Two of the usual."

There was a scattered fire of more specific greetings as the two found places at one of the several small tables.

"We was just gettin' round to speakin' of you when you come in, Larry," called a round-faced, bow-legged little man across the room—an eager-faced little man with an evident yearning for leadership in repartee. "'Whopper' here was tellin' of a trick monkey he seen somewheres."

"How's grazin' on Piedad?" asked a leather-visaged, broad-shouldered individual. "Wasn't you tryin' that business of burnin' the thorns off prickly pear down there?"

"Gave it up, Whopper," said Larry.

"Larry's trying to invent a breed of burros with leather insides," said the little man. "By the way, how's them long-legged jacks you imported?"

"They're doing well, Stubby," drawled Larry. "We had to do it. You-all's got a monopoly of short-legged ones here in Norte."

"That's all right," retorted Stubby amid the general laugh, "but some of 'em's cuttin' out a long-legged duffer what don't know enough to stay here and watch his property."

There was a noticeably awkward silence throughout the group, following this remark.

"'Tain't none of my business," continued Stubby in a friendly, confidential tone, hitching his chair nearer, "but Snipe Hilton's dog—a frowzy hound still at his the last *baile* and I didn't see much of any one else dancin' with her."

"I knew that," said Larry quietly.

"Oh, if you did, it's different," said Stubby with evident surprise and a tone of disappointment. "An' I reckon then you know he bragged he was takin' her to-night—an' he's totin' a gun?"

"I hear how he's hoping to take her," said Larry briefly. It was plain to see as he turned to Burke that he did not care for the trend of the conversation. "If you don't mind waiting I'll have a word down the street about those saddles and get my stuff out of that caboose. Back in a shake," he said as he sauntered out.

A dirty assistant to Juan Maria was gathering up the glasses.

"Hilton's in fer trouble," said one of the men thoughtfully.

"Naw!" said another. "Larry don't pick no fights. Though they is like tew be suthin' doin'," he added, and many of the group grinned reminiscently, as it seemed.

"Some hard feeling, is there?" Burke asked Stubby, who sat near him.

"Nawthin' much," said Stubby, turning and looking the Englishman over. "Yer

may hev noticed how th' best way ter git a man agin' yer is ter let 'im treat yer mean. Hilton's been tryin' ter cut under while Larry was away. We ain't sayin' th' girl's good enough fer him, but sence he's cut her out of th' bunch, it ain't fer us ter go foolin' with her. An'," he added, "they ain't a man in town 'cept Hilton that woulda tried it."

"They say," broke in another, "Snipe ain't never got over a early blow to his pride in——" He stopped at a faint sign from the leather-faced individual, who had been eying Burke appraisingly for a moment or two.

"You workin' down to Hacienda Piedad?" he inquired.

"Since the first of the month," Burke answered.

"From the States?"

"England."

"Suthin' doin' in th' way of entertainment up heah," his questioner, who went by the name of Whooper, continued cordially. "*Baile* t'-night, an' afterward us boys was plannin' for a kind uv moonlight snipe hunt, ef the weather holds." Burke could feel the corners of some dozen eyes upon him.

"I rec'lect we was," said Stubby.

Burke smiled deprecatingly. "Mr. Doyle was telling me something about a snipe hunt," he said.

Whopper had his chair tilted back against a pillar, facing Burke. His thumbs were hooked under his suspenders and his eyes were fixed placidly upon the ceiling. He seemed not to have noticed Burke's reply.

"They was a new man at Piedad this time last yeah," he went on; the snipe hunt had apparently not even been mentioned. "He come up with ol' man Perry. I rec'lect he come to this very bah. You was heah, Stubby?"

"I were," said Stubby.

"He hed the ways of a bohn gentleman. I rec'lect he stood up heah an' waved his han' at uslike, an' then he says, '*Kay desean, señores?*' He'd been studyin' Spanish, I expect."

There was a pregnant stillness about Burke, broken by a sigh or two. He looked at the group of faces. Nearly all were gazing abstractedly at the ceiling and the solemnity of them was preternatural.

"What will you have, gentlemen?" said the new fence rider, yielding to the pressure of their silence.

At five o'clock Doyle was back again but only for a moment. "No, thank y' just the same," he said in reply to the universal inquiry. "I got a little more buying to do and I'll just show Burke here the way to the Waldorf Hysteria. We'll see you boys there later."

The Englishman, to whom Mexican sights were not yet commonplace, followed Doyle's guidance again along the narrow streets of the party-colored adobe town, in and out of shops, buying odds and ends that met his fancy from his own advance of wages—not forgetting a pawnshop revolver—while he marveled anew at a medieval life guarded from modernism only by the width of the Rio Grande.

It was nearly six when they reached the hotel, distinguished in the level town by its towering dingy clapboarded height of two stories.

"Catch 'em dlinneh fo' two, John?" Doyle called to the landlord.

"Light alay, Mlister Lally! How do, how do?" and John came out smiling broadly, to shake hands.

"This here is my friend, Mister Burke, John. By the way, how's Chinese politics?"

John shook hands with Burke. "Belly bad," he said seriously as he turned away.

"Notice he's nearly bald?" said Larry. "Several years ago when the reform party started in China all the chinks hereabouts cut off their pigtails, but John here hadn't none to cut off. Calls himself the original reformer. I used to have sort of long hair myself in the ol' days," he continued, sitting down and tipping back his chair, "an' one day when I pulled into town with my head sheared, I'm jiggered if John didn't meet me solemn as a judge an' welcome me to the Chinese reform party. Pleased the other boys a heap," and Larry grinned reminiscently as he rested his feet on the gallery railing.

Burke laughed. "Fix up your social engagements?" he queried carelessly. He wished to avoid even the appearance of probing into Larry's gentler affairs and the question was one of courtesy merely.

"Gave a little time to it," said Larry. "Gives a man a mixture of feelings to find some one's lying about him during his absence. But I think it will all come out in

the wash," he added, with an embarrassed smile. "There's something connected with that I want to talk to you about," he added, "and now's about the only time we'll get."

For a while he talked earnestly, illustrating now and then by pencil marks on the chair arm; Burke listened in silence with an occasional nod for answer. At length the consultation was interrupted by the loud clanging of the supper bell and the approach of groups of men from the railroad shops, most of whom nodded to Larry or greeted him more noisily. As the Piedad men rose to go in Larry remarked in a lower tone, "I guess you can hold up your end of the job. I made it plain enough?"

Burke nodded, grinning. "But I can't handle more'n ten of 'em at once in a fight," he added.

"You look like you were a fast runner," said Larry, leading the way to the dining room.

After dinner a group of the men straggled over to the *Internacional.* Doyle retired to his room, whence he appeared shortly after, his face and hair shiny with soap and his dress greatly refurbished. Then he and Burke followed.

At the cantina much the same crowd was in evidence. Stubby was there looking highly uncomfortable in a stiff white collar, while Whopper, who seemed the natural antithesis of his short friend, displayed, if that were possible, increased shabbiness and dirt. At the moment of Doyle's arrival with his fence rider Whopper was delivering a loud harangue on the effeminizing effect of dancing. The object of this attack was receiving it with surprising good nature. Burke recognized him at once as Hilton. He was elegantly arrayed for the evening's social event and he greeted Larry in a superior fashion evidently meant to be irritating. But Doyle's reply was unruffled—in fact so pleasant as to indicate an intention of letting bygones be bygones. At this, Stubby, who had evidently been waiting close by for a sight of the fireworks, snorted in obvious disgust.

"Looks like you was totin' a gun," he said to Hilton in one final effort at disturbance. "Makes a mighty mean hump in yer coat. You ain't lookin' fer trouble at no such dance as this?"

"I'm carryin' it fo' to prevent trouble, not to make it," said Hilton distinctly.

No one added a word to this and Stubby snorted again.

The dance was to begin at nine-thirty, across the river, and every one who attended either rode or drove the long and dusty distance. It formed the main topic of conversation throughout the room, save in Larry's corner where the Piedad foreman was telling a joke on himself to an enlarging circle of friends.

"The only thing," he concluded amid the laughter of his hearers, "was having Burke do it—and him a green man. But I don't bear malice," he continued in a louder tone as Burke approached from another group. "And I was just going to say," turning to the Englishman, "that maybe my friends here would help show you some border sport. If they can ante up a fighting dawg I reckon I've got a game enough badger for their money."

In an instant Larry had the entire company for an attentive audience.

"Bought him of a San Miguel Indian," continued Larry, "and got him in a box down back of the customhouse. Special fo'tunate, boys, 'cause my friend Burke here was admitting tew some int'rest in real sport just the other day."

Immediately from every quarter of the room came comments of interest or encouragement. Several men gathered about Burke, anxious to learn of the sports of England, while an Englishman inquired respectfully of his birthplace.

"Santa Maria!" exclaimed Whopper in a low tone to his neighbor, "always said Larry was a sly one! Went an' tole his man all about snipe huntin' jes' to get his confidence. I'm his friend fer keeps," and he began cracking his knuckles violently in the excess of his suppressed joy. The gathering was outwardly solemn in its acceptance of the event. A man standing behind Burke winked over the Englishman's shoulder at Larry as he asked, "This yer badger a young one?"

"Old enough tew fight," said Larry briefly, "an' special strong." Two men in the corner doubled up in silent glee over this reply and held their noses suggestively.

"I'd like to suggest," said Whopper, at once assuming the mastership of ceremonies, as was evidently his wont, "thet Mr. Burke bein' a kind of guest as yo' might say, an' also bein' as he's up in spohtin' matteh, gets

made referee with the honoh of pullin' this yeah badgeh."

"Don't want no green man," said Stubby doubtfully.

This started a heated discussion, with the necessity of calling upon Burke to prove his experience in similar events and the putting of questions which he answered with a touch of braggadocio that had been concealed before, either by his strange surroundings or his natural tendency to silence.

Two or three claimants for the honor of furnishing the dog stepped forward clamorously. They had hurried out at the first mention of a badger fight and now returned dragging mongrels of various pedigree, each loudly enumerating his champion's good points. To the secret delight of all Burke began to assume a certain authority—"puttin' on chest" as one described it. He went over all the dogs carefully, looking into their mouths or feeling the tops of their heads. His final choice caused Whopper to slap his knee violently and then choke in an effort to appear gravely approving. It was Hilton's dog—a frowzy hound still at his heel.

Hilton was doubtfully enthusiastic. "I'm fo' seein' this through," he said, "but a lot of us haven't time. Cayn't yo' put it off?"

Burke was in the full pride of managership. "Can't have the badger boxed all night, spoiling his spirit," he said definitely. "I'll call the fight now and you can get away in time."

"Men that are goin' to the *baile* can go get their horses or rigs now an' take in the fight on the way," remarked Larry and most of the group hurried off at once.

"Now, gentlemen, I'd like to get a look at the badger," said Burke.

Similar requests by the dupes of previous fights had accustomed the men to such an emergency.

"All right," acquiesced Stubby promptly, "let's all have a look at 'er."

"She's a him," corrected Larry gently.

"That's lucky," commented another. "Don't believe Hilton's pup'd fight a lady."

" 'Tain't politeness in 'im then," said a third, eying the dog sourly; "it's 'is nerve. 'E wouldn't fight a flea, male *or* female."

"Hilton tells a lot about him," said the first speaker defendingly.

"Hah! So 'e does about 'Ilton," was the scathing reply.

"Oh, well, any dorg'll fight in a corner," said Stubby encouragingly, "come on, boys."

"Hold up, Stubby," said Whopper slowly. It was probable that not more than two or three in the room, certainly not Whopper, had ever known a live badger; and the animal they conjured up in their minds for use on such occasions as this had a rarely sensitive temperament. " 'Member the first fight last yeah," he continued detainingly. "We took all th' spunk aout of her by disturbin' of her all th' time to peek in. I bet they fights betteh if yo' lets 'em sleep till th' very minute befo' an' then surprises 'em with th' dawg."

"You're right," said Burke; "we'll keep away from him till it's time."

The intense relief of his companions at this decision was not manifest on their faces.

"Burke," said Larry, "the Chinaman has a stop watch. We always like to keep accurate record of these events and you might go get it. You'll find us waitin' here."

On his departure there was a rush for Larry. Nearly every man present wished to slap him on the back.

"Hold on," said Doyle, "you can form in line on the right and take turns kissing my hand, only they isn't time for ceremony. I want to fix this badger up myself for sentiment's sake. But if any of you-all has some decayed eggs at your happy homes I'd be obliged."

Stubby, with a companion, was gone and back in a moment, bringing a large, flat, square, very rusty tin pan, which he placed carefully in Doyle's hands. "Here's the badger from last time," he grinned. "I've been savin' it an' I dished up a bit of hotel garbage in it just now."

It was quite evident that the pan contained a malodorous concoction. About six feet of light hempen cord dangled from a hole bored in the rim. Doyle tested this carefully.

"It's a new piece of rope," said Stubby. "An' here's some lard to grease the bottom of the pan with, so she'll pull easy."

Just then another breathless conspirator appeared and gingerly handed Doyle a bulging paper bag. "Robbins had all this ol' hen fruit in his store," he said delightedly. "It was bein' saved up fer trouble."

Larry cheerfully accepted the offering and started off immediately, but paused with strict injunctions to the boys to wait for Burke and bring him along with the dog.

To one who wished to accompany him he pleaded that the affair had a personal significance and he wished the satisfaction of sole workmanship. This was satisfactory. The crowd's confidence in Larry was implicit.

In the clearing back of the customhouse, at the edge of the town, Doyle worked for a few moments alone. Back of him was the darkened building, on his right a freight platform and train sheds and on his left the street. No other buildings were near. It was an excellent arena and electric lights over the railroad sidings made the place as light as day. One by one those who were going to the dance rode or drove up. A number of horses were tethered to the neighboring freight platform and three or four buggies stood in the background by the time the crowd with Burke at its head came in sight. Whopper and Stubby had each a leash upon the dog and advanced with various muscular contortions, as though with effort holding in check the fiery fighter which walked meekly between them. Every one was intensely serious.

A barrel was brought forward and placed in the center of the arena and Larry himself, going to a near-by shed, returned bearing a closed box in his arms. This he placed on the barrel. About six feet of light hempen cord dangled from the box.

"Ten dollahs on th' badger!" said Larry, breaking the impressive silence.

"Take yer!" called a man from a buggy. "Yer needn't put up."

"Put up your cash," cried Larry. "Stake in on th' box," and he laid a handful of silver on the badger's prison house.

Several met the challenge with a ten-dollar pool. Then began a carnival of betting. Cash enough had appeared to satisfy appearances. Now men began to stake cigars, then watches and pocketknives. One man bet his eyeglasses to another's hat. Imaginary sums began to be cried through the air, increasing steadily in amount. Two men bet their saddle horses. Etiquette required that no solemn-faced plunger in this absurd comedy should fail of a taker. The well-feigned excitement waxed high. The men's minds were fertile in extravagance.

"Bet my shirt on th' dawg," yelled Stubby.

"Fudge, Stubby, yo' ain't got none. I'll take them boots."

"They's up against Robbins' false teeth," said Stubby seriously. "I'm hedgin'," he said confidingly to Burke. "Ef th' dawg wins I stan' ter lose my belt an' pants an' boots, but I'm in three hats an' some teeth."

"You're goin' to git cold in yer feet, Stubby," called a bystander. "Three chaws ter one on th' dog—Blackjack terbacca."

"My quirt to your buggy whip, on the dog, Hilton," said another.

"You fellows is quitters," cried Larry Doyle. "He's an all right badger. Six new saddles on him 'gainst your horse an' buggy, Mister Hilton."

"Done!" said Hilton.

"They *is* quittehs," said Whopper mournfully. "Ah offehed ma wife an' ten small children on th' dawg an' no takehs."

Stubby looked uneasy. The extravagance of it all might alarm Burke. "Why not call the game?" he asked.

"Couldn't I put up a little bet myself?" said Burke, "just for interest?"

"Sure thing—go at it," said Whopper. "It's all right if you bets on the badger."

"I'm out of cash"—Burke felt in his pockets—"but here's a good gun," and he laid his recent purchase on the box.

"Take him up, Hilton," called several; "it's your dog an' you've got a gun."

Hilton drew a shiny six-shooter from his side pocket and placed it beside the other stakes.

Burke brushed money and gun into a little heap. "Ready, gentlemen!" he cried sharply.

The dog was in position. Larry removed a wooden cover from the side of the box, revealing a gunny-sack curtain that concealed the opening.

"Pull thet rope right toward you over the dog, Misteh Burke, an' pull et mighty shahp," cautioned Whopper anxiously, "so she cayn't claw tew th' box!"

"Ready!" said Burke again, taking the rope.

The circle widened. Men on the inside got their hands near their noses. There was a short, hard jerk on the rope—a brown bundle was seen to fly through the air, and where the dog had stood was a cloud of dust and a wonderful crescendo of yelps, merging into a long shrill wail as a lane opened by magic through the crowd. There was a gasp of silence, then one voice was heard.

"By gum," murmured Whopper, "I ain't nevah saw one, but I bet thet was a real badgeh!"

For a moment the crowd on tiptoe and in silence watched the swiftly receding picture of a terrified dog with a furry animal clinging to its rearward portions. Then a distant street corner hid it from sight. One or two found words to echo Whopper.

"By gum!—bet thet were a badger!"

Then in an instant the full realization came and they turned with one accord toward Hilton who had hurried to the edge of the crowd to gaze in the direction the dog had taken.

"Hi-yi! That were a sudden elopement!" roared one, beating his knees.

"Why don't 'e buck 'im or rub 'im orf against a 'ouse?" cried another.

"Whoopee! Reckon they decided ter be pardners fer th' dance, an' jus' moseyed along!"

"He were headed fo' the Rio Grande. Th' guard'll stop 'im. They's a duty on furs."

"Did yo' fine huntin' dawg tell yo' goodby, Hilton?" called another.

"He's a fightin' dawg," said Whopper scornfully, "he's seekin' a quieteh spot fo' the final raound."

Men rolled on the ground in their exuberance. Some would peer into the empty box, sniff, and say, "I don't smell no ol' eggs," throw their arms about and howl delightedly.

Only Larry's calmness was unruffled. He gazed across the crowd to where Hilton was looking up the street, surrounded by two or three of Job's comforters. Then he walked over to a buggy, unhitched the horse and prepared to get in.

"Boys," he said, turning to the crowd of now awed and admiring followers. "The referee has declared for the badger. I caught that animal on Piedad. He was a good badger an' I hate to lose him. Hilton, I've collected this horse an' buggy fo' the evening on our little bet. I couldn't wait, 'cause a lady must be expecting it."

Hilton turned. The crowd separated him from Doyle but the empty badger box was but a step or two away, still bearing its little heap of stakes. In a second the shining gun was in his hand and the crowd as one man squatted low upon the ground.

Six sharp clicks in rapid succession and then the silence was broken by Burke's quiet voice.

"I just emptied that gun. I thought it was mine, seeing as I won it."

Hilton's free hand went to his pocket but Whopper's large palm fell on his shoulder.

"I ain't no sheriff," he said slowly, "but a feller takes a joke or gits out of town—ain't that so, boys?"

"That's so," agreed a chorus and there was a new and noticeable depth of tone to their voices.

"An' boys," Larry Doyle called cheerily as he gathered up the reins, "Burke is holding twenty dollars in stakes; you might follow him over to the *Internacional*. It's on me for the crowd."

INTRODUCING HIMSELF

MR. A. E. ACEE, the real-estate man of Asheville, N. C., had had a trying, tough and tempestuous day. He was weary, worn and bedraggled. The electric fan was out of commission; the flies were in fine fettle; the bores had come in droves. The minutes dragged; patience died.

The telephone rang, the voice at the other end of the wire asking: "Who's this?"

"Acee," responded the man who was weary, worn and bedraggled.

"A. C.?" came back the other, obviously surprised. "A. C. what?"

"Acee." This with even more weariness.

"I know. I know!" exclaimed the other, with petulance. "But I ask you: A. C. what?"

"Acee. I'm Acee, A. E. A——"

"But you just said A. C.! Now it's A. E.!"

"It's both!" roared Acee. "I'm Acee——"

"But how the thunder can you have two——"

"It's Acee, I tell you! A. E. Acee!"

"All right," assented the caller, his voice indicating hopefulness. "Those are your initials. Now, let's have the rest of your name."

"His Man"— or the Klan?

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "The Game at Polly's," "Fate and a Florida Fish," Etc.

There is more than power in this tale that carries through the years and around the earth—it tells the story of one of the greatest things in the world.

TWO elderly Southern men, boyhood friends who had not chanced to meet for many years, came face to face in the smoking compartment of a chair car attached to a train which just then was passing from Florida into Georgia. Both were highly regarded men in their respective States and both were the sons of generals who had distinguished themselves in the Confederate service.

After an hour of reminiscence and the comparison of notes—"Whatever became of Joe So-and-So?" and "Did you hear about the death of Jim This-and-That?"—they fell to discussing the activities of the revived Ku Klux Klan, the train for some hours having been filled with rumors of an extraordinary occurrence, generally recognized as an operation of "The Invisible Empire," that had taken place in a Florida winter-resort city on the previous night.

"I don't like it," emphatically pronounced one of the elderly Southerners.

"Why?" asked the other.

Thus simply did they record themselves. The first speaker had no use for the Ku Klux Klan. His boyhood friend probably had taken the Klan oath.

"There's law in the South," was the reply. "The Klan overrides the law. That isn't American. It's supergovernment."

"But the law often is inoperative. The Klan—unfailingly!—takes action only when the law is ignored by the guilty and unenforced by the responsible."

"The South is not the only section of this country where certain laws are inoperative. The nonenforcement of the law in the United States is not a sectional but a national evil and disgrace. But no organization like the Ku Klux Klan ever will correct this condition in the South or anywhere else. Its correction abides solely in the conscience—following the better education—of the people themselves. And the operations of an outfit like the Klan furnish our friends—our critics!—in the North a cherished chance to call Southerners a lawless people."

"But sensible men up there, I happen to know, understand perfectly that the Klan's job down here is to clean up where cleaning up is imperatively needed. They're in as bad—worse!—need of such a cleaning up as we are. You'll hear yet—just watch!—of the operations of the Klan as far North as the Canadian line—yes, and maybe beyond that line!"

At a deadlock as to the pros and cons of the subject the two old friends, each knowing the other to be undislodgable from his opposite pole, relapsed for a while into reflective silence. But when, ready to return to their womenfolks in the body of the car, they tossed away their cigars, the anti-Klan oldtimer gave utterance to an afterthought which he coupled with an inquiry.

" 'Unfailingly'—I think that was the word you used, John," he said. "Now I wonder if the Klan really is as thorough as all that? If, that is, it always gets the man or men it goes after?"

John's answering smile was interwoven with an expression of the profoundest assurance.

"My understanding is," he replied complacently yet guardedly, "that the Klan hasn't failed yet—not once!—in getting the man it has marked for pun—well, for correction."

Saying which, he trailed his old friend out of the smoking compartment.

The one remaining smoker in the compartment, who from his place by the window on the long leather settee had allowed his face of iron to show no sign that he had listened to the conversation, smiled at the final words of the Klan defender. The smile, warm and winning, was in curious contrast with the hardness of the physiognomical mask which he had worn while the other men were present in the compartment.

He was a remarkably well-preserved man of fifty, deep-chested and heavy-armed, with a big, bronzed face hirsutely marred only by a small close-clipped white mustache and with a pair of brownish-yellow eyes which, when he turned them from the car window to gaze with his agreeable smile after the two departing elderly Southerners, had in their depths a certain topaz gleam as of a tiger's in a reverie. A lip reader could easily have interpreted the unspoken words which his mouth formed.

"'Not once!' Well——"

He transferred a heavy automatic pistol from the breast pocket of his coat to the Gladstone bag at his feet; after doing which, as if in involuntary obedience to a habit, he passed the tips of his left-hand fingers over the edges of a deep, whitish groove about an inch long, above his left eye and exactly paralleling the lines of his forehead: a groove which most patently could only have been carved by a bullet. Again, as the sole occupant of the smoking compartment traced this striking scar with his finger tips, could a lip reader have translated the unuttered words which his mouth formed.

"'Not once!' But perhaps if it had not been for this——"

Other men entered the compartment and his face instantly resumed its impenetrable mask.

II.

The twentieth century still was in swaddling clothes when a thirteen-year-old boy living in Norfolk, Virginia, decided flatly that God never had intended that he should be ruled by a red-haired stepmother. The boy leaped to this decision on the day when his father, a locomotive engineer, told him that he was going to marry the red-haired woman. He expressed no opinion nor entered any protest when this purpose was unfolded to him. But for the first time in his life he considered his father a fool.

The boy was positive that he knew his presumptive stepmother better than his father knew or ever would know her. His father saw only her smiles; but the boy, because she reserved them for him when there was nobody by to observe, knew her scowls and the hostile glint of her hard, greenish eyes and the sudden tightening of the lines about her thin bluey-pink lips and the drawing together of the two vertical creases in her pasty-white forehead above her nose. And the boy made his own guesses from various baleful remarks which she permitted herself to rap at him when they chanced to be alone—the gist of which was that some day—perhaps no distant one!—a certain vicious-natured and devil-beset youngster of her acquaintance who had been allowed to run wild and to do as he pleased would find out what it meant to be disciplined by a firm hand—yes, and a hand that would not weakly spare the rod!

Oh, *would* he! The boy swore in his heart that if ever he found all this out he would not find it out from the parroty-haired woman who fawned upon his father and flared into flame at *him!*

The world was at its wintriest, with the harbor of Norfolk, for a rare occurrence, sheeted over by ice, when the boy, penniless and with nothing but the clothes he stood in, headed south by freight. Somewhere he had seen a picture of palms bending over a stream and alligators basking on the bank—Florida! This picture had lingered in his imagination. Florida, he had been told, was always warm; and Norfolk, bitter cold now, soon would be colder still for him in the polaric propinquity of that red-haired woman. Well, since he must go somewhere, why not go to Florida? Palms, alligators, perpetual comforting warmth! Being the son of a railroad man he knew how and where to pick out a freight that was pointed Floridaward.

Thus, at the age of thirteen, this Norfolk boy began his tussle with the complexities of life.

For weeks of a wearisome broken journey, but pointing ever southward, he lived under the grim guidance of hobos from whom he learned what it meant to be impervious to mischance. Thrown often from moving trains, sometimes after having been mauled by trainmen; tramping the ties, interminable leagues of them, between rides; footsore always, ceaselessly hungry, half frozen as the normal thing, tormented by bruises from head to heels, he kept on. Every turn of a wheel, every step, took him so much farther from the inconceivable ægis of the red-haired woman who was going to "discipline" him, and took him so much nearer the bending palms, the basking alligators, the glowy, wrapping warmth!

His mind was not too young nor yet too troubled to respond to an exotic spell, so that the Florida of December—when he got

to the far south of it—burst upon him like a great rainbow. But an exotic spell, alone and of itself, is not the sole needed nourishment for a constantly hungry and fast-growing boy of thirteen. Having tightened his belt by no less than six holes on his journey southward, this Florida-enchanted boy sensibly concluded to permit the exotic spell to simmer as best it might while he hunted for a job—that he might eat.

Somebody at Fort Lauderdale, when he was booted off the rear end of a caboose there, told him that a grower of winter tomatoes on a truck ranch fifteen miles to the westward was in need of tomato-picking hands. Chub—the hobos' nickname for him, which the boy liked and adopted—trudged the fifteen miles and was put to work as a tomato picker with the negroes. This job—twelve hours a day in the broiling sun—was good, so far as the work itself was concerned, for two weeks. Then, on a beautiful evening at dusk, the tomato grower, having reached the homicidal stage of delirium tremens, strolled to the pickers' quarters carrying a shotgun.

The pickers, supposing the quiet-seeming boss to be out after quail or wild turkey or something, lounged at ease in front of their huts. The maniac shot four of them dead before some of the neighboring tomato ranchers, chancing along then in a wagon, beat him into unconsciousness with their pistol butts. Chub went away from there in the moonlight. He had caught up on three of the belt holes but remained as minus as ever as to pelf, having been paid nothing whatever for his blistering fortnight's labor in the tomato patch.

Walking all night in the moonlight—the exotic spell, by now, not working excessively hard within him—Chub came, by morning, to a place where a large number of eucalyptus trees were in process of being planted for decorative purposes around the borders of a new golf links. The man supervising this job looked Chub over shrewdly, questioned him, then put him to work watering the newly set-out eucalyptus trees, the wages mentioned being seventy-five cents a day and eats at the workers' camp. For a week Chub—again in the baking December sun of far-southern Florida—toted, for twelve hours each day, heavy buckets of sulphur water, two at a time, to and from a surface well half a mile distant from the new golf links.

On pay day, modestly waiting until all of the men—he was the only boy—had been paid off, Chub approached the man who had hired him and respectfully requested his week's wages, four dollars and fifty cents. The man seized Chub by the shoulders, pointed him toward the road, kicked him vivaciously, once with each heavy-broganed foot, and told him that if he wasn't entirely clear of that neighborhood within fifteen minutes there wouldn't be enough left of him to make a feed for a sand fly. Having worked conscientiously at his water-carrying job, Chub headed away from there at a slightly limping lope. He could only conclude that this heavy-hoofed man had meant all the time to donate the four and a half to himself.

The boy, thus at grips with life and its bedevilments, grew a bit hard around the mouth. So this was the way of things, was it? Heavy labor all day, dog weariness at sundown, scant and repulsive fare and, at the end, instead of the agreed wage, kicks, and threats of worse to come!

His next job, which he found early in January, was grinding work for a thirteen-year-old. Mr. Flagler, the modern Merlin, was just then beginning to create the incredibly sumptuous subtropical Camelot that is now called Palm Beach. At that time the roads in and out of and all around Palm Beach—roads that are now asphaltum through the very heart of the conquered jungle—were mere sand ruts. A beginning was made by hard-surfacing these ruts with a sprinkling of crushed coquina rock as a top dressing.

Chub's job required that he drive his tough-mouthed span of mules, hitched to a heavy wagon, to the railway siding for loads of the crushed coquina rock, which material in one-hundred-pound bags was heaped high in the box cars. A one-hundred-pound bag of powdered rock, when it has to be lifted or dragged from a box car and piled just so with many other bags in a wagon, is a package for a man who has got his full growth. But hundreds upon hundreds of these stubbornly inert bags, hour after hour, under a blazing sun, for a boy of only thirteen——

Chub nevertheless, despite the touch of sun fever which he felt coming on without knowing what it was, plugged away at this job with all his inadequate might. He needed the money. He hadn't made anything—that is, *got* anything—since his ar-

rival in Florida. He would juggle bags of coquina rock and drive his mules for a week anyhow. With a week's wages in his pocket he'd have a chance to look around for some kind of a job that—well, that didn't make his heart pound so hard against his ribs.

His heart was beating pretty hard against his ribs on the afternoon of the fourth day—thumping so hard that, standing in the box car with the ears of one of the gunny bags clutched in his hands, he felt compelled to stop for breath. A choking cloud of coquina dust rising from the floor of the box car made breathing difficult anyhow. The boy's face was scarlet from exertion and fever. His eyes were inflamed from the dust. His finger ends, from tugging at the rough bags, were blood raw. His clothes were rags. His shoes, worn over bare feet, were disreputably broken with the soles flapping. He was dizzy from the hot blood swirl in his head. Chub, weak on his pins, felt himself slipping.

So this was the way of life for home-quitting boys! The home in old Norfolk—Norfolk, now a million years away!—had been a comfortable home; an old black woman had managed it well for the locomotive engineer from the time of his wife's death in Chub's infancy. Chub reflected bitterly that he'd have been in that home yet and going to school—he hated to grow up an ignoramus, as now he'd have to!—if that red-headed woman with the hostile green eyes hadn't come along and made a fool of his father—dag-gone her! Oh, worse than that—she that was not going to "spare the rod," that was going to "discipline" him—*damn* her!

"Warm work, son—eh?"

Practically all automobiles were red at that time and they were called Red Devils. One of them, headed westward from Palm Beach, was pulled up close to Chub's box car in the sand-rut road that crossed the track into the jungle. The man at the wheel, riding alone—a big man of thirty-odd with a downright picture-book face and a brown mustache—was smiling up at Chub. It was the first smile Chub remembered having seen in Florida. There was something genuine, something *meant*, about it. The weary boy vaguely considered the kindly looking kindlings of the wide-open brown eyes—like big brown jewels, weren't they? But *were* they brown? Weren't they really a sort of dark molten yellow? The man wore a white silk shirt and a maroon bow tie and no coat and a wide-brimmed Panama hat with a maroon band. Chub considered the man who had addressed him the finest-looking male human being he had ever seen.

"Little warm—yes, sir, it is," Chub replied.

"Are you up to that kind of work, boy?"

"Only going to work a week at it, sir. Going to hunt another job when I'm paid off."

"What's your wages?"

"Dollar and a quarter a day, sir—if I get it."

"How d'you mean—if you get it?"

Chub briefly sketched his experiences as a workman in Florida. The big man's queer-looking eyes—queer looking, but kind for a certainty—were screwed together as he listened.

"Raw deal, son. But there isn't much law in southern Florida—yet. There will be, later. From Norfolk, you say? Perhaps you'd like to get back there? If you would, maybe I could—well, stake you——"

"No, sir! No! I don't ever want to go back to Norfolk! I'm never going back there!"

So the big man in the Red Devil heard about the red-haired woman. He laughed softly.

"Can't blame you. Had a stepmother myself. She wasn't red-headed but she was a turn-down—well——" He let it go at that but Chub knew what he meant.

Chub, out of the tail of his eye, saw a man on horseback, with a heavy pistol in a holster strapped about his waist, coming along the sand trail that paralleled the track. So he tugged at the ears of his bag of coquina.

"Foreman's coming, sir," said Chub to the man in the car. "I'd better be——"

"Probably you had," said the big man. "When your week's up," he added, groping with his foot for the clutch, "come into Palm Beach and ask for me—George Ridley's the name—maybe I could find you a job that isn't so——" The shattering roar of the few-cylindered Red Devil of its primitive automobile era broke up his sentence and he drove over the track and into the jungle.

"Hey, y' dam' soldierin' pup, you're through! Come out o' that!"

Chub, dragging a bag over the box-car floor, was now being addressed by the teak-

faced foreman on horseback. He looked at the man inquiringly.

"Out o' that, I said! You're fired! I seen you chewin' the rag for a half hour runnin' with that feller in the devil wagon. And you ain't no good, nohow. Got no grit. Pantin' and gaspin' around! Come out o' that car and hit the road! You're fired, didn't ye hear me tell yuh?"

Chub climbed down from the box car to the track.

"All right. I heard you. But I've been working three days and a half. I want my money."

"Money! For what? *Soldierin'* for three days and a half, y' mean! On your way, y' young hobo! There's no money comin' to you!"

"I've hauled dozens of loads—hundreds of bags—of rock to the camp. Maybe I haven't hauled so many bags as the men, but I haven't loafed. I've got to have my money, mister. I've been cheated twice already——"

The heavy pistol flashed out of the holster.

"You've got three minutes to be out o' sight down that road, pup! And if I hear of you lettin' one blat out o' you about money that you ain't earned——"

Chub limped down the road that twisted eastward, swept by a great deal more blackness than should ever overwhelm the soul and consume the heart of a boy of thirteen. Three times! And he was nearly naked and his feet all but on the ground! In years he was not yet past the blubbering stage, though not once since leaving home had he capitulated to the boohooing weakness of the boy in adversity. Now the canker at his heart was too corroding to allow the admittance within him even of the temptation to tears. The bestial injustice of it—after the way he'd worked! Not a cent, only kicks, curses, threats! And what to do, where to go, now? Oh, damn *her!*

Then, as he trudged between the sand ruts, with his shoe soles flapping an ever-reminding rhythm, the memory of the upward-slanting smile of the man in the Red Devil shot through the murk of his mind like a rocket against a black and starless sky. He stopped to take his bearings. Which way was he going, anyhow? He found that he was on the trail to Lake Worth, whence Palm Beach could be gained by the primitive ferry. But *could* it, seeing that he lacked the price of a ferry ride?

Oh, well, he'd get across Lake Worth somehow, next morning, if he had to swim it! Now, though, he was hound-fagged, aching all over, fit to drop in his tracks; terribly thirsty, too: not a bit hungry but with a consuming craving for something—anything—wet. What was this, to the left of the road, girded in by a four-stranded wire fence? A tangerine grove! The sun had gone, the dusk was gathering, the dew was beginning to fall. The tangerines—dead ripe, such countless thousands of them!—hung motionless on the still, squat trees against the faint, dark glister of the lustrous emerald leaves. A picture for a fever-aflame boy swept by a thirst as of one in the Pit!

He crawled through the wire fence. Then, standing straight, the fever caused him to laugh a little wildly. Which tree to start on? Such an embarrassment of thirst quenchers! The cool-looking, soft-skinned globes looked like red-gold sequins spangling the dusky world! He plucked half a dozen of them from the first tree he reached, then squatted on the powdery sandy-clayey soil to eat them—to gobble them—to tear at them with loving teeth! The skins of them, sweating chill crystal drops of subtropical dew, were deliciously soothing to the touch of his raw fingers. And they were so much more easily peeled than oranges!

Just three or four downward rips from the stem end, and off dropped the cool globe's garment of gold, and then you pressed it, screwed it, against your teeth, and the tangy fragrant juice, ineffably cool and comforting, squirted over your hot tongue and throat and then you thrust the entire mass of it, that left no seeds and scarcely any pulp after mastication, into your fevered throbbing mouth—oh, ecstasy supernal!

The first six gone, he rose to pluck more. There would be no end to this. He felt better but his thirst hadn't even begun to be assuaged. Maybe, after a dozen or so more—a little sleepy now—he'd rest his back against one of the tangerine trees and——

Bang-bang!

Chub heard the swish of the buckshot from both barrels—the discharge was virtually simultaneous—through the waxy leaves of the tree to the left of him. He leaped behind the slim trunk of the tree from which he had been plucking the glorious little red-gold globes. The trunk was not much of a protection but it was something. His heart surged with a terrible fear. Only a

few weeks before he had seen four men shot to death. There ensued a moment or two of intense silence, broken only by the far-overhead croakings of a flock of pelicans making back for the sea. Then the approaching clump of heavy boots.

"So, damn you, you're the thief that's been shredding my——"

An enormously tall but stooped and gangling man loomed over the boy—a blue-overalled man with a blotched skin stretched drum tight over a face that seemed to have been fashioned solely from protruding bones. The barrel of his sawed-off shotgun rested in the hollow of his left arm. The boy, out of his great fear, spoke.

"No sir! This is the first time! I've been hauling coquina, but to-day the——"

"Don't lie to me, whelp! There's no grown man around here, white or black, that would dare to——"

He reached out a huge hand, clutched the loose lay-over collar of Chub's hickory shirt and, with a cruelly powerful and sudden jerk, yanked the boy toward him.

"I've a damned good mind to shoot you and bury you right here! You'd make fertilizer, anyhow, for the trees you've robbed and——"

"You don't need a boy for fertilizer. Not that boy anyhow. Turn him loose. Let go of his shirt."

A quiet voice, pitched low and matter-of-factly, coming from the wire fence side of the grove—but how the boy's heart staggered almost to a stop at the sound of it! His man—the man with the smile! He had been plunged in too deep a fear and his captor too preoccupied to hear the Red Devil coming to a halt on the road alongside. But now the throb of its unstopped motor could be heard from where its lights bored through the darkness of the sand trail. Chub's man, as tall as this bone-faced one who still gripped him by the collar of his shirt—quite as tall but straight all the way up and with no stoop at his wide shoulders—stood inside the wire fence, his white silk shirt and white drill trousers picking him out cleanly against the darkening jungle across the way.

"'Turn him loose?' And who the devil are you to tell me——" The bone-faced man was beginning to bawl and he clutched Chub's shirt collar harder than ever.

"It's unimportant who I am. Turn him loose is what I said. You heard me. Do it!"

The same quiet voice, not raised by the slightest fraction of a tone. But Chub, who had done most of his sleeping in Florida in the open and who several times had raced for shelter from the eyes of panthers that he had seen in the night, now thought of those hot-eyed prowlers. This man's—*his* man's!—eyes, even in the dimness of the tangerine grove and at his distance of fifteen feet, seemed to send out a sort of yellow glow as if there had been a light back of them when all the rest of the man was a white silhouette against the somber jungle across the road.

The boy was suddenly released and sent spinning. He heard as he picked himself up the sound of a shell being thrust into the shotgun.

"Drop that gun on the ground," said the quiet voice.

Then Chub, on his feet again, caught the picture. The bone-faced man, his hand partly drawn back for the second shell, stood paralyzed, as rigid as a figure carved out of stone, mouth wide open, jaw hanging. The white silhouette had an easy, practiced bead on this figure of stone, the big gleaming pistol being held low with a certain confident limpness.

A short pause, a sharp discharge of breath from the stone man, and the shotgun thudded butt first on the ground.

"Now the shells. All the shells you've got. On the ground beside the gun."

The big bony hands went into the front pockets of the overalls. Six shells, brought forth in twos, fell to the soil beside the gun.

"That all you've got?"

"Yes—damn you!"

"Son, pick up that gun and those shells. We'll leave them on the road beside the car when we go."

When "*we*" go! The heart of a ragged boy raged with love and honor for this man with the subdued voice and the panther eyes! He picked up the gun and the shells.

"This boy"—the quiet voice now was addressing the man in overalls who was grinding his teeth—"is a hard-working boy. I've seen him work. He's not a thief. If he has taken some of your fruit to eat, this'll pay for it."

His left hand came forth from his trousers pocket and a gold coin fell upon the ground at the feet of the gaunt-faced man who was cursing hoarsely in his throat.

"Into the car, boy. Leave that shotgun

and the shells on the ground before you get in."

Chub obeyed. His man backed slowly to the fence and through the fence to the road, his pistol held at ease—backed, because although the overalled man no longer was in possession of a firearm there were men in Florida in those days who knew how to fling a knife fast and far and true! But this one, knifeless, only followed his coverer to the wire fence.

"I'll get ye, by God, if it takes me——"

"All right. Name's Ridley—George Ridley. Palm Beach. I'll be there to be got till the middle of March. All set, son? Did you leave the gun and shells by the road? Good!"

The red car throbbed into the marrow-vibrating life of the automobile of its epoch, the lights heightened their glare along the rutted trail of sand and Chub and his rescuer shot through the fast-closing subtropic night.

Chub's job at the gambling establishment in Palm Beach—of which George Ridley was the silent partner—was a rest for him after his weeks of hard labor. He did not go to work until a week in bed in the Ridley home on the ocean side of Palm Beach—a week of the right food working in unison with the right medicines—had brought his temperature from its fever notch down to the normal. There were five white women servants in that house besides the blacks; but Chub always remembered the beautiful, soft-voiced, chestnut-haired woman, Mrs. Ridley herself, who brought him his food and medicines.

His job at the gambling place, an ornate and lavishly appointed establishment surrounded by wonderful grounds, did not bring him into contact with the games at all. He helped the two gardeners at their work—mowing the lawn, trimming vines and shrubs, resurfacing the crushed-shell paths and so on; and, handy around machinery, he was requisitioned to help the stationary engineer who attended to the pumping plant: repacking rods, reseating valves and the like.

All of which was a mere playing-at-work snap for a convalescing boy who had been living a tomato-picking and water-toting and coquina-juggling life in the blazing Florida sun! He was paid fifteen dollars a week for this dawdling around blossomy grounds and he ate with the Ridley chauffeur and slept on one of the many Ridley sleeping porches. It was a taste of luxury which never entirely left his mind through all of the hardships that came later.

One evening early in March his big man strolled down the lawn to where Chub was watering some shrubs.

"Well, the season's over, son," he said to the boy. "Closing here three nights from now. How about you? Made up your mind what you're going to do?"

Chub replied that he was going to Jacksonville and get a job there. He liked Florida.

"Better get in touch with your dad, don't you think—live in Norfolk, I mean, near him? Even if you don't go home where the stepmother is. Your dad'll look out for you, put you on the right road, no matter what she says."

But Chub, who had correctly gauged the extent of his father's infatuation for and control by the red-haired woman, couldn't see it.

"I've written three times to my dad," he said, "and he hasn't replied. So you see, sir! He's all through with me. I'll go to Jacksonville. I can get a job there."

"Saved any money?"

"Yes, sir—nearly all my pay."

But on the morning of his departure for the North the big man pressed five double eagles into Chub's hand.

"You'll need it," he said. "So long, Chub. Be a square kid and a square man. It's worth while."

He shook hands with the boy, and was gone—leaving Chub in tears for the first time since he had left home.

Jobs with a living wage for boys of his age Chub found simply were not to be had at that time in Jacksonville. So when all of his money was gone, with still no job in sight, he shipped on board a British tramp with a cargo of resin and turpentine for Glasgow as an extra engine-room hand—filling the oilers' cans, serving out cotton waste, cleaning the engine and fireroom bilges and the like.

But when he saw the last of the St. Johns River over the coaming of an engine-room hatch he promised himself that some day, somehow, he would again see and maybe live in the Florida of the exotic spell that had burst upon him like a great rainbow.

III.

Water fronts are pretty much the same, in appearance and atmosphere, the world over. So likewise are water-front affrays.

This water-front affray happened on a hot October night in Hongkong when the twentieth century was in its eleventh year. A steamy drizzle, disagreeable precursor of the torrential rain that would begin to fall about midnight, emphasized the heat's strangling oppressiveness. Mere sitting or standing still in Hongkong on such a night —even if in a mat-strewn room in one of those fine homes up yonder on the hill with a fan and a cold drink at your hand—is burdensome by reason of the humidity's drag upon the lungs and the prickly heat which no amount of fanning can obviate and the weighted feeling in the head which seems to forebode imminent damnation even to the calm-minded.

Luckily for them, the dungareed walkers on the Hongkong water front—weaving ever back and forth on cobbles as well as on narrow pavement, lounging in doorways—their nerves are not screwed to so tingling an adjustment as those of the pajama-clad sybarites in the homes on the hill. But they feel the soggy heat in their own way all the same. You know that from the way they bark at each other on the slightest occasion. A mere brush of elbows on the dark, narrow pavement in the fitful light and teeth are drawn away wickedly from cursing lips and it is well then if knives do not flash!

Men of the sea, patient beyond the understanding of landsmen when huddled on shipboard, more than revert to their terra-firma type when they feel the soil under their feet. The drink, of course, has a great deal to do with their swiftness to anger ashore; the drink first and for the next thing the unbalancing effect of their shiftings from climate to climate.

A tall, trim-built young fellow, very powerful looking at the shoulders, in engine-room faded-blue dungarees and an engine-room peaked cap thrust far back from thick brown hair, came to the door from the bar of Patsy Shugrue's American ship-hands' groggery about ten o'clock on this steamy night in Hongkong. He was steady enough on his feet but his eyes were slightly bleared. They were such very good eyes that you might have called this a shame, no matter what your views as to the drink. A certain amount of practice at such work in the world's ports would have enabled you to pick this young man as an American, even had you not caught him emerging from Patsy's American place. An American ship-hand, even in the disguise of dungarees, somehow proclaims himself no matter how hemmed in he may be by dungareed men of all other seagoing races. There is nearly always a certain upward tilt of the chin, a swing of the arms, a way of planting the feet, a damn-your-eyes look out of *his* eyes that——

Before venturing forth he stood for a moment in the dimness of Patsy's doorway, darting rather wary glances up and down the dark water front, the hot drizzle of which was shot through only at intervals by pale, yellowish glows from the squalid rummeries of all nations. Then he stepped to the pavement, gazed for a moment at the pitilessly hot and dripping sky, chose a way to go and fared loungingly to the left. Loungingly—but he had the American way of striding from the hips and he kept his shoulders back; besides which he appeared deliberately to favor the edge of the pavement and to peer searchingly into dark doorways when he passed them.

Out of the flare from the window of "Hog" Hounslow's British "pub"—ten doors to the left of Patsy's American place—came a burly figure directly in the path of the watchful American in dungarees.

"I sye, h'aren't you the Hamerican hoiler that jumped the *Suffolk Queen?*"

The question was ingratiatingly put. But the burly one—heavily paunched yet enormously wide and strong looking—wore a very purposeful look as he blocked the younger man's path. His hugely jowled face —John Bull's to the life—was topped by close-clinging curls of an almost crimson redness—a good enough subsidiary reason to gain for him the instant dislike of the young man he confronted! But the main reason for that dislike was far better based; the young man knew that in this Hongkong, under its British ægis, he was fair game legally for the burly one.

"What's that to you?" inquired the American, stepping back a pace.

"Steady 'as it, Yank," said the crimp, still essaying a hollow, soothing tone but watching the young man's hands. "You cawn't do this sort of thing, y' knaw. You signed harticles for the ship's charter—from

Liverpool to 'ere and from 'ere back to Liverpool. You cawn't, y'knaw, jump your harticles like that, not, hanny'ow, hin a British port—and 'Ongkong's British, y'knaw."

"Can't, eh? Well, I've jumped 'em, you seem to know."

It was the reckless reply of a young man with slightly bleared eyes. It was the more reckless because the young American knew perfectly well that this British crimp, one of the most notorious of his kind in the port of Hongkong, would take any kind of a chance to collect the five pounds reward that was offered for the return of the American oiler to the *Suffolk Queen;* for it was a time of ship-hands' strikes everywhere in the world and men were scarce.

"But you'll never get awye with it—not by 'alf, 'ere hin 'Ongkong, me good lad," argued the gorilla-strong crimp with the huge, greasy face, still determinedly ingratiating. "You'll be tyken hup has sure has punting hon a bank 'oliday. So you'd better tyke a stroll with me back to your ship—you cawn't 'ide hout much longer 'ere hin British 'Ongkong, y'knaw."

The American spat and laughed carelessly.

"You're wasting breath," he said coolly—but somehow the blearedness had cleared from his eyes and there was a gleam in them! "I'm not going back to that hell ship."

" 'Ell ship? Strong words, me lad, for a honest British ship——"

"Honest! Hell! A starvation ship, you mean! Honest! With seven of us of the engine and fireroom gang in irons in a dirty rats' hold the whole length of the Indian Ocean—for complaining of rotten food—and damned little even of that!"

"The chawnces of seafaring, me young lad. I've known Yank ships to serve hout grub that the ship's dog would——"

"Well, I've had my fill of seafaring, as you call it. Ten years of it, mostly with lime-juicer crews—never mind glaring—I can't help it if you're a lime-juicer yourself—has fed me up on 'seafaring.' Now—from *here!*—I'm for the old U. S. The homeland for mine—for decency—to settle down—to be somebody!"

The young man was aroused. His words came evenly and full spoken; but the tone was vaguely tinctured by something that seemed to well from the deeps.

"But you cawn't, y'knaw! Not hafter the harticles you signed. The harm of British sea law is a long harm, and right 'ere hin 'Ongkong British law——"

The American thrust up a staying hand. His cleared eyes had narrowed.

"You're blocking my way, mate," he said subduedly. "Is it your idea that you're going to keep on blocking it?"

"I've tyken the pynes to warn you, me fine lad, that hour British sea law——"

"Oh, damn your British sea law!"

"I sye, ye Yankee scut, I'm British——"

"Names, eh? Out of my way, crimp, or I'll——"

So the knives flashed—both at once—in the steamy saffron glow of groggery lights.

Death, for one or both, stood poised for the fraction of a second on the pair of upraised knife-gripping hands; the dark gleam of death for that broken fragment of time glittered in the two men's eyes. Then destiny, ceaselessly thwarting the ancient enemy, lashed death back to the shadows.

There came the soft screechy swish of silk in the thick, still air, followed swiftly by a thud as of something blunt and hard striking against flesh. The just-closed umbrella, clutched by its covered end, had a heavy curved handle of gold. This handle had crashed with enormous power against the crimp's great corded forearm at the peak of its upward swing when its tendons were tightening to drive the knife to its mark. The blade rang musically on the cobbles and the arm flopped limply, uselessly at the crimp's side. The American, at this apparition of the umbrella-wielding big man dressed in snowy drill with white shoes and a pith helmet, lowered his knife and stepped back, the pale saffron glow from Hog Hounslow's "pub" etching his profile clearly.

"Right-o, as I thought at a distance! Chub!"

Chub's heart leaped. His man! His man again—and again at a pitch of peril! How, for these ten long years, he had wondered about this man! Dreamed of him awake and sleeping, longed impossibly once more to cut his trail, to clap eyes on him again! And now—here—a specter out of a steamy south China night—always in white: *was* he a specter after all?—here again stood his magnificent boyhood hero—resourceful, swift-acting, quiet-voiced as back there in the Florida jungle! Specter? No! No specter, but a man among men! For that one great instant the ear of Chub's

spirit seemed to hear the very rumblings of the gear of destiny.

"'Og! I sye—'Og! Come out, 'Og! D'ye 'ear?"

The furious crimp, feeling of his numbed and useless right forearm with his left hand, was bawling for Hog Hounslow. Hog, an evil-visaged man with black, broken teeth but nimble on his feet and with the hard-as-nails look of the graduate from fo'c's'le to beach-front groggery, came running out of his pub door through the yellow flare of light.

"Me bloody heye!—what's all this?" he was demanding as he shot toward the group.

The disabled crimp began to whine his grievance.

"These blitherin' Yanks, right 'ere on British soil——"

George Ridley stooped, picked up the wicked-looking knife, swung it back of his shoulder by the end of the blade between thumb and forefinger and threw it far into the darkness across the cobbled street—and the knife became the cherished prize of the nearly naked coolie who, watching the white men's affray from behind his vantage of heaped bales, instantly picked it up and scuttered into the deeper darkness with it as silently as a rat.

"Put your knife away, Chub," the big man directed, speaking as if the two others had not been present. Chub sheathed the knife beneath his dungaree blouse. "That victoria at the corner," Ridley, pointing, went on, "is mine. Get into it. The coolie driver understands English. Tell him I want him to drive the victoria down this way."

Chub hesitated.

"But," he began, "these fellows——"

"I'll hold them. Bring the carriage past here."

Chub trudged reluctantly toward the corner where the vehicle, halted in the middle of the traffic-deserted, water-front street, was dimly outlined by the luster points of its varnish.

"Ow, *you'll* 'old us, d'ye sye!"

The pub keeper, plainly sure that he was unobserved, had slinkily worked his way around back of the big man in white and his knife had started its downward thrust as he uttered his sneer. But he had been observed! Before the words were out of his mouth Ridley had whirled. Again the swish of the umbrella silk sounded like a sudden whisper on the still air. The gold handle, brought around like a streak of light, caught the back knifer fairly on the left temple. His weapon clattered on the cobbles, the blade giving out a ring as of a distant silver bell in a sanctuary, and the man who but an instant before had meant murder with the knife crumpled unconscious to the stones.

The white-clad man, swinging his umbrella now by the handle, strolled in the direction whence the two-horse victoria, with Chub on the seat beside its Chinese driver, was coming toward him.

"Look out!" Chub, from his perch, suddenly shouted. "That crimp's got a——"

The shot, from a pistol of heavy caliber, shattered the murky silence before he could finish. What he had been going to say was that the crimp, bending over the unconscious body of Hog Hounslow, had got hold of the latter's pistol with his still highly useful left hand. Ridley, heeding Chub's warning cry, had half turned to glance back a fraction of a second before the shot broke crashingly through the quietude. His knees bent under him and he slipped down slowly on his right side, where he lay prone, the right side of his head and face resting on his fully extended right arm. Had it not been for the blood that gushed steadily from the wound above his left eye, the limp, shocking picture he presented on the cobbles might easily have been made by some huge white-clad, drunken gentleman tourist overcome by his potations in the middle of a water-front street.

Chub, bounding from the carriage seat regardless of other shots that he had no doubt would follow this first one, knelt beside his man. He had not spent ten years at sea, taking the chances of lawless water fronts, without having learned how to appraise a bullet wound. Seeing that this was a superficial hit—a clean-cut bone groove over the left eye—he grabbed the pith helmet which lay to his hand beside the prone man and with fierce solicitude ripped the draped band from it and began to stanch the blood.

Two Sikh policemen, as he did this, loomed over him—tall, turbaned, heavily bearded men, with all of the immemorial mournfulness of India in their liquid black eyes, but —incongruously, with such eyes—with also the courage of leopards in their hearts.

"Your man—the man who did this," Chub said to them, "is that red-headed crimp

who hangs about Hog Hounslow's. I just saw him dash in there."

The two Sikhs, without a word, leaped from cobbles to pavement and disappeared within the dark doorway of Hounslow's pub. Already the crimp had turned out the lights.

Scarcely had they gone when Ridley, who simply had been stunned into insensibility as by a blow from a club, stirred, muttered and sat up, supporting his weight in this posture by resting his palms on the cobbles back of him. His great strength, conserved by clean living, was serving him in fine stead.

"Steady does it, chief," Chub said to him. "You've a groove—middling deep—over the left eye."

"Didn't plow deep enough to hold me here, though," said Ridley, trying to struggle to his feet. "You and Hoon Goy each lend me an arm, eh?"

Chub beckoned the Chinese driver from the victoria box. They lifted Ridley to his feet and into the rear seat of the vehicle.

"Whip up, Goy—speed!—before we're detained by inquisitive people with shields." He smiled through the caked blood, the old smile that Chub never had forgotten. "We'll be safe from questions on board the *Alhambra,*" he said to the oiler in dungarees, who again sat beside the coolie driver.

The horses at a gallop, the steamship pier, a mile distant, was gained in brief time. The great transpacific liner was wrapped in quiet, all of her passengers having turned in. The quartermaster at the head of the gangway stared at the blood when Ridley, now walking without aid, stepped on board, followed by Chub.

"My ear, Mr. Ridley, but you're a sight!" exclaimed the quartermaster.

"Nothing to matter—bit of a fall," replied Ridley. "I see we're making steam. How come? So early as this?"

"Good thing you're back aboard, Mr. Ridley," said the quartermaster. "The typhoon warning's up. We're going to ride 'er, of course—leaving an hour from now instead of at seven in the morning."

"Then Kennedy can't have turned in," said Ridley.

"Leave it to that old chief not to turn in when steam's making!" laughed the quartermaster. Then he turned to Chub. "Is this young——"

"With me, yes—old friend—boy I knew in the States," Ridley answered the question. "Kennedy will be in need of an oiler, I think—he generally is." Then, to Chub, "Care for a greaser's billet aboard the *Alhambra,* son?" he asked him. "The *Alhambra's* for San Francisco by way of Shanghai—where I leave her—Yokohama, and Honolulu."

Chub laughed outright—*would* he care for such a billet! His man—Chub boyishly found it hard to think of Ridley except as "his man"—took him below to Chief Engineer Kennedy, who was plain "Aleck" to Ridley. The chief, badly short-handed of oilers, was glad to ship Chub for the cruise eastward.

"Must rout out the surgeon now and have this scratch dressed," said Ridley then. "See you some time to-morrow, Chub—if the typhoon permits."

But the typhoon—which came on schedule time, as unfailingly it does in those waters atop of the barometer's warning—did not permit. The *Alhambra,* with her nose to it and on her beam ends, labored terrifically for three days in the demoniacal tumult of sea and sky before she could point for Shanghai, her first port of call.

Shanghai had been sighted when George Ridley, finding Chub seated on the edge of his bunk, off watch in the black gang's quarters, appeared below to say good-by.

Chub meantime had learned from crew mates something about the activities of his man in China. For seven years Ridley had conducted a great gambling concession at Macao, the "Chinese city without law" in the Portuguese "sphere" that lies southeast of Hongkong on the far side of the huge river mouth. Also Ridley was the silent partner in a famous gambling establishment in Shanghai for Americans and Europeans and for the elect and the most unflinching of Chinese mandarin and merchant high rollers. In all the great city ports of China, it appeared, Ridley was a respected and a deferred-to man; and in Shanghai, where Mrs. Ridley lived, that lady had achieved a great name for her charities.

"Well, old lad—come to think of it, you *are* old now—about twenty-three, aren't you, Chub?—here's where we say good-by again. Queer little old meetings, ours, eh?"

The big man, again in spotless white but with a heavy bandage taped over his left eye, sat down on the edge of the bunk alongside

Chub. They talked for an hour. His man, Chub saw, showed the ten years that had gone. The gray was creeping into his hair and mustache, fine lines had appeared at the corners of the eyes. But the eyes themselves still had the old bright topaz gleam; the figure of power still was lance straight; the flash of the face still smooth and ruddy and wholesome: the man, altogether, still the finest-looking male human being Chub, with all his ranging, had ever seen.

Finally their talk veered back to Florida.

"I'm going there," said Chub.

"Strange, the drag Florida has for a man that once has lived there," said Ridley. "I'm going back there too—some time."

"But I'm going there *now*—straight as a train'll haul me there from San Francisco," said Chub.

"What with, Chub? You can't have been saving for this?" said Ridley, smiling.

"More than two thousand in savings, chief," laughed Chub. "I'm going to try to buy into some little old business somewhere in Florida. The hardware business, maybe. I know something about tools and parts and metal gear."

"You'll win, son," said Ridley, rising from the bunk. "You've the chin and the look out of the eyes to win—and you've the *guts!* Good-by, lad. I told you once, I think, to be a square man. Well, I don't have to tell you that again. You'll do."

"Chief," said Chub, holding down the knob in his throat by main strength, "you've been pretty good to me—always! If ever the time comes—and God! sir, I'd *like* that time to come!—when I can do something—anything—to show you how I appre——"

"Never mind, old kid—I understand—God bless you!" and Chub's man was gone.

And Chub, a ship's oiler in dungarees and a man six feet high, for the second time in his life brushed at his eyes with the back of his hand on parting with George Ridley.

IV.

The Ku Klux Klan, revived in Georgia after a dormancy extending back to the Reconstruction period, crossed the Florida line almost immediately after its recrudescence. In every important Florida community local Klans, all under the direction of the parent body, sprang quickly into existence. Ku Klux incidents soon began to be reported everywhere in Florida.

It was early in the twentieth year of the twentieth century when a Klan was organized in the beautiful Florida town of—well, the town of Halcyona. It is not fashionable to be too precise in writing or speaking about the Ku Klux Klan.

Two or three tragic occurrences, rightly or wrongly attributed to the Klan, soon followed in Halcyona. These occurrences had a bearing upon the way of life, the personal conduct, of the Klan's victims. Halcyona quickly became known as an unhealthy place for men who flagrantly violated accepted canons of decency. The neutral minded duly noticed that in no instance was a Halcyona victim of the Klan a worthy or even a passably decent individual.

But the most purposeful bent of the Halcyona Klan seemed to be political. The leading merchants and the leading professional men of Halcyona were known absolutely to belong to the Ku Klux Klan. Halcyona for many years had been relentlessly ruled by a sinister political gang. This gang could not be ousted because at every trial of elective strength it had the votes. They were not white votes. But there were enough of them, every time, to outcount the white votes.

So Halcyona, gang-ruled, lagged behind other Florida winter-resort towns possessed of far fewer attractions for tourists. The business and professional men of Halcyona, all-the-year-round residents, the men with a stake in the community and with ambitions for their town, could get nothing done. When they bonded the town to the tune of hundreds of thousands for decent street paving, they could not get the gang to make even a start toward improving the streets. When they demanded free bridges instead of toll bridges they were fed upon legal jugglery that kept the preying bridge companies—working with the gang—always in control of Halcyona's access to the sea. No matter what Halcyona wanted and felt itself rightly entitled to, it could not get it if the gang ruled contrariwise, as the gang nearly always did.

Halcyona's branch of the Ku Klux Klan decided to change all this. And it changed it!

One of the earliest accomplishments of the Halcyona Klan was to rid the town of the swarms of criminals of the "wireless wire-tapper" species who for years had invaded the place from the North each win-

ter to fatten upon the almost equally reprehensible get-something-for-nothing cupidity of moneyed "sucker" tourists who would fall by dozens, year after year, for the alluring "wireless wire-tapper" game. These criminals could not have operated in Halcyona without the hand-in-glove connivance and protection of the Halcyona political gang. They disappeared suddenly and absolutely from Halcyona very soon after the coming into being of the Halcyona Klan.

There remained on Halcyona's outskirts a noted gambling establishment. This was a place of splendor which, in the twentieth year of the twentieth century, had been in operation for three years—exclusively for heavy players among the sophisticated and very wealthy men from the great Northern cities who spent their winters in Halcyona.

Its proprietor, a reserved man, lived without ostentation in a fine Halcyona home during the winter months. Halcyona was well aware that his gambling establishment attracted heavy players who also were big spenders to Halcyona—highflyers who certainly would throw their riches about lavishly at other Florida resorts where they could find gambling on a big scale if anything should happen to the gambling establishment in Halcyona.

But it was a gambling establishment! As such it was considered in the councils of "The Invisible Empire." And whatever might be the private individual views of Halcyona Klan members as to this particular gambling establishment, the Halcyona Klan, like Klans everywhere, invariably acted as a unit.

The proprietor of this Halcyona gambling establishment was George Ridley.

In the middle of a warmish afternoon in January, 1921, the owner of a prosperous-looking hardware and automobile-accessories store on the main business street of Halcyona surprised his head salesman by announcing that he was going home for the day.

"Not feeling just so," said the boss. "Look after things, will you?" and he left the store.

He was a tall, erect, rather carefully dressed business man, heavy-shouldered and lean-faced—a man somewhere in the neighborhood of thirty-five. Many people, men and women, spoke or nodded to him as he passed quickly from the business to the residence section.

In a little park, gay with poinsettia blossoms, close to his home, he came upon a snowy-aproned coal-black mammy watching the play of two sturdy children, a girl of seven and a boy of four. His children raced to him when he saw them and he stopped for a while to listen to their prattle. Then he passed quickly along the wide oak-and-palmetto-bordered street and through the gate of his home—a substantial house of coquina rock set well back on a yard ariot with the winter-blooming plants and vines and shrubs of Florida.

He found his wife engaged in sorting over the music on a piano in the living room. She was a pretty woman, all in white; and, for an ironic fact, her hair was of a rich auburn hue. She looked perplexed, then a little alarmed, when she saw him. It was an hour of the day when he never was at home except on Sundays and holidays.

"There's nothing the matter?" she asked him, scrutinizing his face, womanwise.

"With me? Not a thing! But there's something. Suppose we go upstairs, eh? I'm glad the children are out. Gives us a chance for a little—well, talk about a thing that——"

"There *is* something the matter, Chub!" she declared.

They went upstairs to the dressing room adjoining their bedroom.

"Now tell me!" she demanded. "Why, Chub, you're pale! What in the wide——"

"Steady, old girl—I'm just a bit worked up, that's all. In a jam. It's come to the point—I've been expecting it!—where I've had to make a choice between a friend—my *friend!*—and my Klan oath. I'm all clear about it. But a thing like that—well, it takes it out of a man!"

"They're going to—it's Mr. Ridley— –"

"Yes. To-night. But they won't get *him,* by the living Jerry! Not if I live another half hour!"

Chub agitatedly paced the floor. His wife, a woman who knew how to compose herself on occasions of strain, sat tranquilly with her hands in her lap.

"He never failed *me*—for *me,* boy and man, he took his chance—he chucked his life into the hazard—and I'm not going to fail *him*—you know it!"

His wife murmured something, but he did not hear her.

"They're coming to-night. A big crowd. From over in the middle of the State. With-

out a word of warning! None of us here in Halcyona will be asked to have anything to do with it. It's not done that way. Strangers only operate in a place, then disappear. Then, when anything's to be done at *their* places, they call upon the Klans from elsewhere—well, you understand."

"I know. But Mr. Ridley—his place—I thought——"

"It's a gambling establishment! Therefore it's marked for destruction—and all in it. We're a new broom, don't you see? A pretty zealous new broom, if you're asking me! Gambling! Why, every man of us gambles—or has gambled! And every man out in the open is gambling with death and damnation all his life! Even when and if we quit the cards or the dice we go on gambling in some other way! And if there's a man of our crowd who hasn't at some time or another in his life had his crack at a wheel or a faro bank, then I'd——"

"But you're not defending Mr. Ridley on those grounds alone, Chub. It's because he——"

"No! You know I'm not! If it were that alone, I'd go with the Klan; I'd abide by my Klan oath. I don't put my judgment, my opinion, above theirs. They're my associates, my neighbors. I'm for them and for what they want to do—as long—and *only* as long—as they don't use the Klan as an instrument for private revenge. They're my neighbors and my associates, I say. I live among them. I expect to die among them. But, Alice, this man was—*is*—my *friend!* Such a friend as no man ever had before! Why, do you know what he did only a year ago? After all he had done for me before? I didn't say anything about it to you—he asked me not to mention it to a living soul——"

"What was it, Chub?" she asked him when he hesitated.

"Why, this: You know how those people that owned my store building kept on raising my rent every year, five hundred and a thousand at a clip, until, last year, it began to look as if I'd have to move my business into a side street. I can't imagine how George Ridley heard about it. But he did. What did he do? He bought my store building—at an exorbitant price, you can wager!—to make things easier for me. He bought it—the decency of him, always!—in the name of his New York lawyer, who was down here, so that his own name—the name of a professional gambler, do you see?—should not appear in the transaction. And he sent me, by this lawyer, a twenty-year lease on the store, at the rental figure I paid when I first took it—and giving me the option of buying the building practically at the price of the yearly rental!

"With the lease came a note asking me not to mention the matter to anybody. He did this out of pure friendship! I felt mean—cheap—in letting him do it—after all he'd done for me! But his lawyer said the thing for me to do was to sign if I didn't want to offend a good man. Me offend *him!* So I signed.

"Why has he done all these things for me? God knows! But it's because there's something fine flickering in his heart—that's the truth of it! Always doing something for me—never failing me! First, when I was a cub in rags down yonder in south Florida. Then when I was a disreputable, half-drunk ship's greaser in dungarees out there in China—getting himself marked for life for me out there in a water-front brawl! I tell you, Alice, old girl—I can't—I *won't,* oath or no oath——"

Chub sat down.

"I think, Chub," his wife said quietly, "you're absolutely right. I know that if I——"

"*Me*—sitting censor on the neck of George Ridley—a man like that—*me*—after the things I did, the morasses of fool deviltry I waded through—*had* to wade through!—out there!" and Chub with his outspread arms took in all of the Seven Seas with his comprehensive gesture. "And to-night—five or six hours from now without warning!—his place will be riddled by an outfit I belong to. And every man in it will be shot to death—George Ridley himself if he's there!"

Chub started to his feet.

"No skulking about it for me—I'm going *now* to warn him—oath or no oath—right in the sunlight of the middle of the afternoon! I've never stepped foot in his house—he'd never let me, saying it would be bad for me—'a respectable business man'—to be seen at the home of a man in his business. But I'm going there now; and if I'm seen and it's suspected that I was the one to warn him, then, by Heaven, they can come and get *me!*"

"Go, Chub," said his wife, rising and putting her arms about his neck. "You are right—absolutely!"

So Chub, in the warm sunshine of the brilliant January afternoon, got into his automobile and drove to the home of George Ridley.

Thirty automobiles, carrying a force of masked men estimated at a hundred and fifty, surrounded the gambling establishment of George Ridley on the outskirts of Halcyona about ten o'clock that night. The establishment was dark. But when they began firing—every pane of glass in the big house was broken—only one man was seen leaping from one of the rear windows. This man, it was afterward whispered, was a faro-bank dealer who had remained in the building through an inadvertence, or perhaps defiantly, as an effect of drink. Whatever it was that held him there, he gave his life for it—though his body was not found.

After the assault by firearms from the outside the masked men entered the silent gambling house and wrecked it from top to bottom.

When the Florida train pulled into the Pennsylvania Station in New York the big bronzed man with the close-clipped white mustache and with the topaz gleam in his eyes, who thirty-six hours before had transferred the heavy automatic pistol from his breast pocket to the Gladstone bag at his feet in the smoking compartment of a chair car, walked to the vehicle arcade, where a woman with delicate ruddy features, whose chestnut hair was plentifully besprinkled with gray, beckoned to him from a limousine. He got into the car with her and the chauffeur whirled the limousine through the traffic jam.

"If you knew how I've been worrying!" the woman said to the man. "I read about it, of course, in the papers. Then your telegram from Georgia—how relieved I was! I was afraid that even after sacking the place they might have—oh, that dreadful Klan! But how in the world did you hear ahead of the——"

"You remember Chub?"

The blaze of light from the streets illuminated the limousine and she saw her husband's smile, warm and winning. But she looked puzzled.

"Chub!" she repeated. "Of course I remember the name—it was somebody you—we—had something to do with—but it must have been a long time ago, for——"

"Remember the ragged little boy you nursed through a fever—down in Palm Beach, twenty years ago?"

"Oh, that dear little fellow with the enormously long eyelashes and the big gray eyes—of course I remember Chub. And didn't you tell me something—years ago, I think it was in Shanghai—about meeting Chub in Hongkong—when he was a seaman or something?"

"Yes, I met Chub in Hongkong," said George Ridley. "Well, Chub's a business man—a man of substance and parts—in Halcyona now. He's a Klansman too. But somehow Chub seemed to think he was in my debt and so he came to me——"

He fell silent, his voice having become slightly husky. His wife too remained silent. But after the long pause she spoke.

"There's something fine about it, George," she said. "Men are not ingrates. They respond to kindness. And you're safe—through Chub! It's rather beautiful, I think. We 'cast our bread upon the waters——' "

Her voice broke. Her husband silently patted her hand.

In the next issue a story by Austin Hall, "The Love Call."

HARD ON REFORM

SINCE enforcement of the prohibition law is one of the duties of the treasury department, Secretary Mellon is the man to whom everybody interested in the liquor question, for or against, writes letters. His mail is loaded down every day with leaflets, tomes and volumes either showing that prohibition is all right or proving that a return to beer and light wines would be elysium. If Mr. Mellon read them all himself, he would have time for nothing else. A few days ago, however, he got one that he did read. It was a one-line anonymous telegram saying:

"The country has been dried and found wanting."

Bright Roads of Adventure

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "First Down, Kentucky!" "Eyes in the Boat, Number Six!" Etc.

A lonely journey and a strange game of poker on the Pei-ho River

XII.—IN THE CELESTIAL KINGDOM

IT was a rugged, shaggy Manchurian pony with a warped disposition and a rampant antiforeign spirit. After pitching Ralph Paine off on his head in the dust of the Hat-a-men Road of Peking it proceeded to kick him with malice aforethought. The foolish Paine had wagered five dollars that he could stay with this four-legged package of iniquity. He lost. The stone pavement was hard and the pony's heels were high-powered and well-aimed. Consequently there was a bruised correspondent who walked with a limp. The skin had been knocked from one knee. It was a trifling hurt but the infection of the filthy Peking dust made trouble after a little while.

The field hospital of the American army was one of the many buildings of brick and stone in the park of the sacred Temple of Agriculture. The curving roof was gorgeous with green and yellow tiles, the timbers carved and gilded. It was like an immense warehouse with the ornamentation of a temple, standing close by the terraced marble altars where emperors had come to worship beneath the sky. The interior of the building was shadowy and lofty, and a regiment could have been drilled on its marble floor. Huge columns soared in aisles to the roof beams which were ablaze with monstrous dragons, painted in gold and crimson, and they seemed to writhe and twist in the dusky obscurity.

It was in this strange hospital that Ralph Paine had to spend several weeks of the autumn upon a cot among two hundred sick and wounded American soldiers. Three years later he was making his first attempt to write fiction, to break into the magazines with the natural diffidence of a newspaper man. The first short story he wrote was called "The Jade Teapot," and the hero was a homesick lad of the Ninth Infantry wasted by illness and lying in this bizarre field hospital in Peking.

The story was sent to *Scribner's Magazine* and cordially accepted by the editor, Mr. E. L. Burlingame. The background of the plot was true to the facts as I had experienced them, and such bits as these were of the texture of reality:

> Private Saunders was gazing up into the gloom of the distant rafters and trying to count the racing gilded dragons which would not be still and made his head ache intolerably. When lanterns were lighted at the ends of each aisle the shadows danced worse than before and to his fevered eyes the great temple was populous with glittering shapes in terrifying agitation.
>
> Between flights of delirium he heard the groans and restless mutterings of many men and his fancy magnified them into an army. There were neither screens nor walls to divide the wards, only the rows of cots between the pillars which marched across the temple floor, so that all individual suffering and the tenacious struggle of dying became common property. The soldiers who passed away in the night did not trouble their comrades so much as when death came in daylight and the end was a spectacle thrust upon those in surrounding cots.
>
> It happened almost daily that the Ninth Regiment band trailed through the hospital compound, playing a dead march. There was always a halt in front of the great marble staircase outside and after a few moments the dragging music sounded fainter and farther away. A little later those in the temple could barely hear the silvery wail of "taps" floating from a corner of the outer wall where a line of mounds was growing longer week by week. Then the band returned, playing a Sousa march or a ragtime melody.
>
> A little after midnight the tramp of stretcher bearers punctuated a thin and wailing outcry coming from that which they bore between them, and the temple floor awoke with weary curses. Those near the doorway learned that a Chinese coolie, caught in the act of stealing coal from the quartermaster's corral, had been tumbled off a wall by a sentry's shot. The lamentations of the victim rasped sick nerves beyond endurance and the hospital held no sympathy in its smallest crevice. The coolie was an old man

and badly hurt. Opium had made him impervious to customary doses of morphine and after he had been drugged in quantities to kill four men he was no nearer quiet. From a far corner of the temple the wounded coolie wailed an unending:

"Ai, oh—Ai, oh—Ai, oh!"

Soldiers rose in their blankets and made uproar with cries of:

"Kill him!"

"Smother the beast!"

"Wring his damn neck!"

"Give him an overdose, doc!"

"Ain't this an outrage!"

"Hi, there, One Lung, give us a chance to sleep, for cripe's sake."

"Throw him out in the yard!"

Daylight brought to Private Saunders infinitely grateful respite from a world through which he had fled from flaming dragons that shrieked, as though in torture:

"Ai, oh—Ai, oh—Ai, oh!"

This hospital lacked many things to make it adequate and comfortable and when the biting autumn winds swept down from the Mongolian deserts and presaged the North China winter, so hard and clear and cold, the vast barn of a temple chilled those sick soldiers to their very souls, for there was no way to make it warm.

The American forces were ten thousand miles from home and they had been very hurriedly thrown into China. Transportation was slow and difficult and it was a long time before the necessary supplies reached the front. The army hospital system was still crude, at best, and although the campaigning in Cuba and the Philippines had taught the war department something, you would not have called it overcrowded with energy and intelligence.

For instance, after two months of occupation no competently trained nurses had been sent to Peking. The hospital stewards and orderlies were faithful men, bless them, but they were fairly worked off their feet and they could not give the serious cases the proper kind of care. The operating table was in a corner of the temple, behind a screen, and the surgeons were parsimonious in the use of chloroform and ether, either because of a limited supply or because a buck private was presumed to stand the gaff without flinching, unless they were cutting him up in a momentous manner.

It was one of the few diversions which helped pass the time to listen and pass on the merits of a comrade when he went under the knife. If he set his teeth and took it without whimpering, he was a sandy guy. If he yelled, the comments were disparaging. "The trouble with that bird was that he had a streak of yellow."

It therefore befell that when the surgeon decided to use his tools on Ralph Paine and remove a bunch of infected glands, the only thing to do was grin and bear it. The most reluctant coward would have braced himself for the ordeal with this critical audience which surrounded the cot before and after, hairy convalescents wrapped in blankets who were all kindness and affection and sympathy, forgetting their own woes. These were regulars of the old army and sensitive persons of a coddled refinement might have thought them a rough and horrid lot. They gambled and they swore and some of them got drunk every pay day, but when the bugles blew they fought superbly; and through thick and thin they stood by their pals.

Men of this pattern, as I knew and loved them in my youth, afloat and ashore, helped to build an abiding faith in the intrinsic nobility of humanity. The flame may flicker dim and low but it is unquenchable. In the tale of "The Jade Teapot" I tried to offer a glimpse of the goodness of these soldier friends of mine. As follows:

> "Shorty" Blake and "Bat" Jenkins of D Company strove to make Private Saunders take some interest in life and they would have been cheered if he had even sworn at the rations and the lack of hospital comforts. They brought him jam and condensed milk from the commissary sergeant, which he refused to eat; they assembled around his cot the most vivacious convalescents, selecting as entertainers those valiant in poker and campaign stories.

As I lay stretched on the cot, while the days dragged into weeks, my thoughts turned homeward whenever the fever subsided and I was reminded of an experience in my father's career, Samuel Delahaye Paine, a British lad in his teens running away to join the Royal Artillery and serving through the Crimean War against Russia in 1854-5 and winning a medal with the clasps of Inkerman, Sebastopol and Alma. He, too, had been in hospital, as well as in the trenches, and out of his comradeship with the men of the rank and file had come his own unswerving allegiance to the gospel of faith, hope, and charity.

He used to tell me a story, and I thought of it often while ill in that temple in Peking. In his own words, it was like this:

"After the capture of Sebastopol, my siege train went into winter quarters on the

heights of Balaklava, overlooking the Black Sea. There was little diversion, the fighting was over and many young soldiers were gripped by the homesickness which swept the camps like an epidemic. Soon all the hospitals were filled with worn-out men and I was one of them, men whose malady was mostly homesickness. I shall never forget the last night I spent on the Crimean peninsula. In the evening I walked to the ruins of an old Genoese fort and sat down and looked across the Black Sea and wondered if I would ever see the England that lay beyond those waters. A gun boomed the signal to return to the hospital. The bugle called 'lights out,' and the nurses and Sisters of Mercy said good night through the wards. We tried to sleep.

"Some time in that restless night an orderly from the front aroused us with the news that an English steamer had arrived at Balaklava with a momentous message. An armistice had been arranged between Russia and the Allied Powers. The orderly was mauled by frantic invalids in a sheer frenzy of delight. And presently the order came that all the men of the siege train then in hospital who could parade next morning in heavy marching order would be immediately embarked in steamers bound to England. There was no more sleep in the wards. We spent the night singing, shouting, cleaning uniforms and equipment. Mental healing worked miracles. Men who had been given up to die were scrambling from their cots and struggling to get into their boots.

"In the convalescent ward, to which I was assigned, all the patients were able to stand and walk to parade excepting one lad. The surgeon refused to pass him as fit to embark. His name was Joe Benton and he had enlisted with me at Woolwich and we had been chums in the trenches. On the second night of the last great bombardment of Sebastopol he had been hit in the leg by a fragment of shell. It was a bad wound and we had thought he could not live through the night. We had carried him to the ambulance station in a ravine near the trenches, putting him in a chair on the back of a mule while I sat on the other side to balance the weight.

"When Joe was almost cured of his wound he was transferred to the hospital at Balaklava. There he went into a decline with homesickness and a low fever. When the surgeon told him that he could not go with us to England, he turned his face to the wall and cried like a little child.

" 'Don't leave me here, boys,' he quavered. 'I shall die here after you have gone. I'll take my chances. If I must die, I want to die with you fellows.'

"We held a consultation and decided that Joe Benton must go with us. Early in the morning we took the kit out of his knapsack and stuffed it with paper. Then we dressed Joe in his old uniform of the red and blue of the Royal Artillery and got him on his feet. He swayed and could not stand alone; but two of the tallest men in the company stood at his elbows and pressed close and held him up while they moved very slowly to the parade ground. The major of our company, a rough, profane old war dog, was not burdened with sympathy, as a rule, but he wiped his eyes when he saw the pale face of Joe Benton in the rear rank.

"The bands struck up 'The British Grenadier' and 'Cheer, Boys, Cheer, No More of Idle Sorrow,' and we marched downhill to the transport in the harbor of Balaklava while Joe Benton's toes dragged between the tall artillerymen who supported him. We put him in a hammock between decks and did not expect him to live the first week through. When the captain of the ship gave the order to weigh anchor we invalids shoved the sailors aside and manned the capstan bars ourselves. Then we steamed across the Black Sea, through the Bosporus and anchored in the Golden Horn.

"Joe Benton was no worse for the voyage. After coaling, the transport steered down the Dardanelles among the isles of Greece and entered the harbor of Malta. Joe was feeling stronger every day. We went ashore and bought him figs and fresh milk and eggs, and the color began to show in his cheek. Through the Bay of Biscay we passed on up the Thames to Woolwich where we were to go ashore. In the distance we could see the royal standards of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and by this token we knew that the good Queen Victoria was there to welcome the vanguard of her soldiers returning from the Crimea.

"Our band played 'Home, Sweet Home,' the first time we had heard that tune since leaving England, for it was never played in the Crimea, by special order. Veterans of the old Royal Artillery who had fought England's battles in many parts of the world were shedding tears as they massed on deck

at Woolwich and gazed at home once more. We were formed and marched past the royal reviewing stand where the queen stood with the royal family and many of the nobility of England.

"Joe Benton was at my elbow, straight and strong and active. As we tramped abreast of the reviewing stand a little woman in black was in the crowd held back by the troopers of the Household Brigade. Her face was very sad, for she had heard that her boy had been killed in the trenches of Sebastopol and she had come to join the great throng of welcoming people and to try to find some of her boy's comrades and ask them what they could tell her.

"When she caught sight of Joe Benton she broke through the line of troopers and rushed to throw her arms around her boy's neck—he that was dead and alive again and brought safely home to her! The good queen noticed the break in the marching column and inquired the reason. When she was told of the reunion she commanded that Joe and his mother be brought to her. And the queen kissed the cheek of the little woman in black and then pinned upon Joe Benton's faded tunic the Crimean medal with three clasps."

At length Ralph Paine was able to leave the army hospital in Peking but he still limped and felt far from strong. Martin Egan, his best friend among the correspondents, had been ordered to Manila in charge of the Associated Press service in the Philippines and was ready to go down the Pei-ho River in a junk. There was a decent hotel in Tientsin and better hospital facilities, and so Paine went along with Egan to recuperate for a fortnight or so.

When Martin Egan presently sailed from Tientsin for Manila in a transport I felt forlorn. It was in this good chum's mind that the odds were against me, with another stay in hospital necessary. Although he didn't say so his face betrayed the doubt of ever seeing me again.

"You ought to chuck it and go home," said he. "This is no place for a man with a leg that refuses to mend. Go as far as Japan, anyhow, where you can get first-class care."

"Oh, I'll be fit after another operation, Martin. In my place you'd stick it out until spring. You know you would."

It was an unwise decision but any normal young man is slow to admit defeat. The fear of being a quitter haunts him. And I had been fortunate in comrades who never knew when to quit. Such examples could not be ignored. And so I hunted up an American army surgeon in Tientsin and, oh, but he was a rough man with the knife, brutal but thorough. It was his opinion that the patient would get well. If not, come back and he'd saw the leg off. The hospital was small and unexpectedly comfortable, with a fine young contract doctor in charge, and the ten days spent there were like finding a snug haven after stormy weather.

Anxious to return to Peking, I found a junk and a crew of coolies who consented to make the trip after much argument. Winter was setting in and they were afraid of the river freezing and trapping them en route. A servant of some kind was essential and by luck I found a jewel of a portly, middle-aged Chinese who had been cook and number-one boy in a European household of Tientsin. John I called him, for short. He waddled off with a list of supplies and equipment and "squeezed" no more than ten per cent of the bills as his legitimate graft.

What he called his kitchen in the junk was a coop just big enough for him to squat over his earthern fire pot in which he burned balls of coal dust mixed with clay. And while the shivering, ragged coolies pulled the boat upstream John served the lone passenger with dinners of five and six courses, setting a little table upon the sleeping platform in the cabin where the blankets were spread at night. A cheerful figure was John, a smile on his broad face, giggling over small jokes of his own devising, his unfailing doctrine, "*Can-do*," busily moving about in his baggy white breeches and wadded blue coat and singing little Chinese love songs in a high, falsetto key.

It was a cold, cheerless voyage, barring the companionship of John. The correspondent was too lame to walk along the bank and so keep warm, and an earthern fire pot in the flimsy cabin was merely a delusion of comfort. The river was freezing along the edges at night but the channel held open. It was rather humiliating to contemplate, but the only danger of molestation was not from the Chinese but from the riffraff of Christian nations, army deserters and stragglers and camp followers of all races who had flocked from Shanghai, Hongkong, Manila, even from San Francisco, to take their dirty toll of the soldiers with rum, women and cards.

My junk had tied up to the bank at sunset and a few hundred yards ahead of it was another river boat, moored in the mud, which flew an American flag. John was getting dinner ready in his magical and ceremonious fashion which made one feel that he really ought to dress for the event. Along the towpath came tramping a solitary American doughboy in blue, heading toward Tientsin. The lone correspondent hailed this fellow countryman and invited him aboard for dinner. Company was more than welcome.

The soldier was glad to accept. He had no kit on his back and it was disclosed that he belonged to no escort outfit with the river traffic. He was not a prepossessing guest, a long, loose-jointed fellow with a truculent manner, a shifty eye and a bad mouth. He had the marks of a bad hombre. The recruiting net of the regular army sweeps them in now and then, particularly when they are wanted elsewhere. However, any American was good company for the ailing correspondent who was down on his luck and condemned to this voyage with no other conversation than John's very scanty pidgin English.

The dinner passed pleasantly enough. The soldier wolfed it down as if he had not eaten a square meal in days. He was an entertaining rascal but when it came to his army career in China he became taciturn, evasive. It was easy enough to guess that he had been presented with a "bobtail" or dishonorable discharge.

After dinner he proposed a little whirl at two-handed poker. For the correspondent it was anything to pass the time. We sat cross-legged upon the sleeping platform with the low table between us while John kept the candles lighted or squatted watchfully on his haunches like a big Chinese idol in the shadows. He didn't like this stray soldier but with the gambling fervor of his race he was fascinated by the poker game, the pit-pat of the cards on the table, the clink of the Mexican dollars.

Now the correspondent had no desire to win the soldier's money. It was pastime, nothing more, but perhaps John was a mascot. The cards ran in a manner uncanny. Whenever a jack pot justified real action the soldier had to shove more of his silver across the table. He was growing surly and would not listen to stopping the game. It was an awkward situation. And still the luck drifted all one way, until, with an oath, the soldier fished in his tunic and withdrew a rumpled pay check for sixty-odd dollars.

Chinese John must have been invoking the spirits of his ancestors by this time and they were rooting for his American "master." Playing against that pay check, with matches for chips, the correspondent continued to ruin the soldier's finances. The cards were indubitably bewitched.

A crisis was inevitable. The soldier would not hear of quitting. He was talking from a corner of his mouth and his voice had a snarling note. The other player wanted to shove the money and the pay check across the table as a gift and bid this visitor good night. The trouble began when the sullen soldier broke out:

"Playin' with your own deck, hey, bo? I fell for it, all right. Pretty soft, this graft of junkin' it up and down the river all by yourself and layin' for marks with easy money in their jeans!"

He reached over to grab the pay check but the quick movement tilted the table and the slip of paper and the heap of silver coin slid to the floor. The candles slid off at the same time. One of them was extinguished but John snatched up the other and shielded the flame with his coat. It was difficult to see in the dusky little cabin. Ralph Paine hastily concluded that he had added another idiotic episode to a list already lengthy. To be accused of cheating at cards by this tramp of a soldier was provoking. It made it necessary to eject him from the junk, but a man with a lame leg could not move as rapidly as he desired.

It was John, roly-poly, middle-aged, good-humored, who rose to the occasion. He did not understand the language but he grasped the implication. With a spluttering curse in Tientsin Chinese he hurled the heavy brass candlestick at the base vagabond who had insulted his master's hospitality. This left the cabin in darkness but the candlestick had found its target, for the soldier yelped with pain and astonishment. There was a brief scrimmage in which John proved that there was much muscle in his cushioned body.

Somehow the soldier went out of the cabin door. He had acquired momentum which was further assisted on deck in the starlight. The valiant John was close behind him. The soldier leaped for the bank

but missed his footing and tumbled into the mud and water. It was a most undignified departure. John laughed loudly. Then he toddled into the cabin and returned with a rifle but the correspondent forbade using it. Either the soldier was unarmed, after all, or he had lost his pistol during his exit from the junk. He was hailed and told to wait for his pay check. But he stood in the obscurity of the river bank and hurled obscene threats. There was an American junk a little way upriver, said he, and maybe some guys from his regiment were aboard and he'd rouse 'em out and come back to clean up the tinhorn sport that trimmed him and then booted him into the mud.

It was most unpleasant. The correspondent resolved to play no more poker. His intentions had been most harmless, but now look at him! The dinner party was menaced by another sequel. It was conveyed to John, by means of words and signs, that a boarding party might be expected. A grin bisected his round features as he chirruped:

"Can-do, master! *Maskee!* Plenty soldier come, *chop, chop*—me kill um."

We waited. There was nothing else to do. But no sounds of commotion came from the junk moored a little distance up the river. The better part of an hour passed and John still squatted on deck, a rifle in his lap. Then the figure of one man became dimly visible on the bank. It was the bad soldier's voice which called out:

"Hi, there, no rough stuff! I done quit bein' hostile. What about a truce?"

"Sure thing," was the answer. "What happened to you? Come aboard and get that pay check, if you like, but no monkey business."

"It's on the level, pardner," assured the roughneck soldier and his accents were most curiously mild. "The trouble is all off."

Here was a mystery. John was persuaded to lay aside the rifle and the soldier jumped to the deck. There was no false pretense. He was quite a different man. With a kind of sheepish chagrin, he explained:

"That ain't no army boat yonder. I went bustin' into it with a whoop, intendin' to drag out a bunch of fightin' buddies, same as I said. Say, I played the wrong card. Guess what I crashed into—*a Y. M. C. A. boat bound for little old Peking!* There was several men and three women, *ladies,* by glory!

"I stood battin' my eyes and sayin' excuse me. And there they sat, readin' books and sewin' fancywork around a table with a red cloth cover to it, same as we used to have at home. And they asked me, so damn sweet and polite, to set down and what could they do for me? I says will they please let me just be quiet and look at 'em. *Young ladies,* boy, and they had come out from home. Why one of 'em rode through my town in the train not two months ago!"

The soldier had found a perch on the long timber tiller and was swinging his legs as he continued the wonderful tale.

"They sure did talk pretty to me. American soldiers is their one best bet. Call me a liar, but they fished out a stone crock and handed me *three doughnuts.* They aim to cook 'em by the bushel in Peking. Here's a doughnut I saved to show you. Naw, they didn't spiel religion to me—but one young lady, the blond-headed one, she sees I was wet and muddy and she makes me dry off some by the kerosene stove and asks where my outfit is and I can crawl into the junk if I ain't got no place else to go. Now what do you think of that?"

He moved to the cabin door and gravely exhibited the doughnut by the light of a candle.

"I think you had better stay aboard this junk until morning," affirmed the correspondent. "John can rustle you a pair of blankets. And here's your pay check, while I think of it."

"But I lost it fair and square," protested the wanderer and this was an apology handsome enough.

"But the game was more for fun than for money. You'll have to take it or start another ruction."

"No more for me," smiled the soldier. "I might bust the doughnut."

After breakfast he resumed his long tramp to Tientsin and the coast, an army outcast bound he knew not whither. But we shook hands at parting. He was not such a disgraceful guest, after all. I had never written any fiction at the time and had no idea of attempting it, but here was the stuff for a short story, complete from introduction to climax. And wasn't it really better fun living a short story like this than writing it? I think so.

Six days it took to drag that junk to Tung-Chow, and John and I were heartily sick of the Pei-ho in November. On the fourth day the river froze in broad, brittle sheets

of ice which so dismayed the crew of coolies that they talked of turning back. In fact, they decided so to do, and it was only after strenuous coaxing that they laid hold of the towrope and push poles and forced the junk out into the channel which ran free of ice. Some of the coaxing had to be accomplished by means of the butt of a Colt revolver which rapped the crown of the leader of the gang. It did seem unfortunate, this whole trip to Tientsin which had been for purposes of recuperation and rest and quiet. A man with a game leg had bumped into one disturbance after another.

At Tung-Chow we found an American quartermaster's wagon train almost ready to hit the trail for Peking. I bunked overnight with the wagon master and the four-mule teams pulled out at daybreak. It was a slow, hard journey but greatly enlivened by the companionship of these mule skinners and packers who had come straight from the vanishing American frontier, from the desert and the mountains where the isolated army posts, built to protect the settlers against hostile Indians, were still scattered far and wide.

Every other army in China gave these wagon trains a wide berth. The big mules, the massive canvas-covered vehicles went plowing through a jam of traffic like a battleship in a fleet of light cruisers. And these lanky, dusty men with the wide Stetson hats and the lazy drawl were bad medicine. For some reason their particular aversion was the French force of Colonial infantry from Saigon, sloppy little chaps in uniforms a mile too big for them.

"Funny, but whenever these yere boys get a night off," said my friend, the wagon master, "they go lick a few Frenchies. It appears to amuse 'em a whole lot. Seems like us two republics ought to be fraternizin', accordin' to Lafayette and all that stuff. But I find myself gettin' the same hankering as the rest of the boys. I dunno as when I enjoyed myself more than mussin' up a half a dozen of these yere parley-voos about a week ago. One of 'em hit my off lead mule when she stepped on a squad that wouldn't get out of the road. So I had to learn 'em something."

When the wagon train creaked into the quartermaster's corral in the grounds of the Temple of Agriculture Ralph Paine was a weary pilgrim. He had made certain plans concerning living quarters but these seem to have been delayed. All he can find in his diary to cover the three days of November 27-30 is the entry:

Hospital tent in Peking.

Faithful John was in attendance, of this there can be no doubt. Memory clears after that and there was a transfer from the tent to U. S. Peking Hospital No. 2, a smaller building than the vast, chilly temple and made snug and warm for the winter. There was good nursing, competent young women sent out from the United States, and a fortnight was more than endurable. It was even pleasant. Here was a correspondent grateful for any kindly attentions. This was a lull in the struggle. He went out of this hospital able to mount a pony and make the rounds after news, to the American legation, the various army headquarters, the telegraph office, riding through the dusty, windblown streets and camps in bleak, bright weather.

We found a house in the Chinese city where no other foreigners were living, Herbert Jordan and I. He was the personal stenographer of the American minister, Mr. Conger. Our house was in the district ruled by an American provost marshal and the native people had flocked back to crowd the streets and alleys and resume an existence incredibly industrious and noisy. The Chinese children were delightful. For warmth they were bundled in layers of little wadded blue coats, and the colder the weather the more numerous the coats because of the lack of heat in their dwellings. These swarming youngsters were like balls of blue cotton from which came piping shouts and laughter.

They were quick to imitate the ways of the wonderful foreign soldiers and their games in the streets soon took a military turn. The band of infant marauders who made their headquarters outside our gateway organized an army of its own with a tumult like a flock of sparrows. When I first encountered this company at drill it was like running into a miniature Boxer outbreak. The ages of officers and privates averaged about six years, all boys, for they had scorned to allow their little sisters to enlist. A row of shaved heads and sprouting pigtails the size of a lead pencil bobbed excitedly along one side of the street and the blue-cotton puffballs were sufficiently

alike to make it look as though the army was uniformed for the occasion.

Each pair of chubby brown fists grasped a bit of stick, as a gun, and when I rode past, the soldiers presented arms as solemnly as a dress parade. I faced my horse about and saluted with the utmost gravity. The soldiers lost their dignity and broke ranks with shouts of *"Bean Lao Yet—Bean Lao Yet!"* This was to address me by name, *Bean* being as near as they could come to pronouncing *Paine,* while the *Lao Yet* signified plain mister with no honorary titles.

The next time the army turned out for review I was given warning. Reining my pony into the alley in which the troops maneuvered, I saw small scouts scampering ahead and yelling *"Bean Lao Yet."* The company toddled and tumbled out of doorways and courtyards and was formally in line, "guns" at present arms, when I passed and acknowledged the honor with a salute.

I happened to have a pocket full of copper cash and these coins were thrown to the army. This deed won instant promotion, for the customary greeting was changed into an excited clamor of *"Bean Da Rin—Bean Da Rin!"* At a cost of four cents in American money I was now "The Most Honorable and Exalted One." The promotion had placed me on a level with a man-da-rin.

I introduce this army of Chinese tots to your notice in order to correct an error. In matters of biography one cannot be too particular. *The Bookman,* issue of March, 1904, contained an article about various war correspondents. Beneath a snapshot photograph of a tall, heavily built young man in khaki clothes, standing in a Peking doorway, were the words:

RALPH D. PAINE IN CHINA.

It is said that at the time of the invasion of China by the Allies, after the Boxer uprising, Mr. Paine taught the Yale "Boola" football song to the Japanese soldiers and that they sang it as a battle hymn.

It's a pity I never thought of it, for the snappy little Japanese fighting men would have found "Boola" a perfectly corking war chant. The story must have grown out of an experience with the army of Chinese small boys in the teeming alleys where they drilled and paraded. Long after the contest was played, there filtered up the China coast the news that the great Yale eleven of 1900 had trounced fair Harvard to the tune of twenty-eight to nothing. It was a glorious victory for the Blue. It made me homesick. A celebration was in order, but there was no satisfaction in celebrating alone.

Among the foreign armies of occupation I had happened across two Yale men, one a lieutenant of the Ninth Infantry, U. S. A., the other a Japanese officer on the staff of General Yamaguchi. Their camps were five miles apart and I ordered a pony saddled and set forth to find my comrades who had once lived beneath the campus elms. Alas, after riding a dozen miles I was unable to round up either man. It was a disappointment.

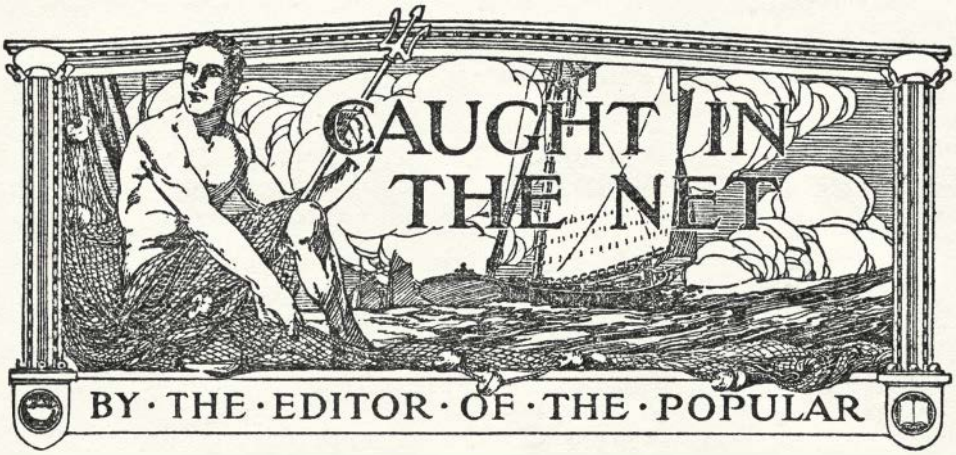
Turning into the street nearest my gateway, the ever vigilant army of Chinese infants rushed out to parade and pipe *"Bean Da Rin!"* Here was my celebration, ready and eager. I beckoned the troops into the courtyard. They obeyed with trepidation but bravely tried to dissemble alarm. It was a novel procedure in their military career. They did not quite know what the friendly foreign devil meant to do with them. Three or four anxious mothers followed timidly but were comforted by a tray of canned peaches and cakes. From the sweetmeat seller's on the corner one of the servants fetched back enough sugar balls to make the army one vast stomach ache.

Then a homesick correspondent in exile forgot his loneliness while he employed the best part of that afternoon in teaching all these jolly puffballs the Yale cheer. They had not the remotest notion of what all the fuss was about but they dutifully yelled until their wadded little selves fairly bounced from the pavement and their black eyes snapped with excitement.

A long session of assiduous coaching produced encouraging results. When the signal was given, twoscore piping voices screamed with frantic enthusiasm and in splendid unison:

"Lah, lah, lah! Lah, lah, lah! Lah, lah, lar! Ylale! Ylale! Ylale! Bean-Da-Rin! Bean-Da-Rin!"

These reminiscences began in THE POPULAR *for November 20, 1921. The next installment, appearing in the following issue, is called "Throw All Regrets Away."*



THE DOUGHBOY WINS

OF late we have heard a deal about the value of machines in war but most of the officers of our army believe exactly what they did before we entered the Great War —that the question of victory or defeat is answered by the infantry soldier. *"L'infanterie, c'est l'armée,"* said a brilliant general of Napoleon's time, and that the infantry still is "the army" is the conclusion drawn by the war department from the answers to a questionnaire sent to all the higher officers of the regular army to determine upon what doctrine of tactics and training our post-war army should be built.

The almost unanimous judgment of these officers was that "battle is normally determined by physical encounter with the bayonet or the fear thereof"—the soldiers' old belief in the value of cold steel. The tremendous value of artillery and of aëroplanes, tanks, machine guns and other modern weapons was realized fully, but according to the opinions of the men best qualified to speak the doughboy still rules the battlefield, for "man remains the fundamental instrument in battle and, as such, cannot be replaced by any imaginable instrument short of one more perfect than the human body, including the mind." The war department thinks it important that every citizen should realize that no machine can ever take the place of the individual soldier who is willing and able to fight. The new weapons can help the infantryman advance, but they can't do his work when he comes to grips with the enemy.

Another conclusion reached by a study of the answers is that the greater portion of the combatant part of the army fights with the most efficiency when on foot and in the open, armed with rifle and bayonet, and armored only by a steel helmet and the ability to take advantage of natural cover.

It seems incongruous that while statesmen at the Washington conference were racking their brains trying to hit upon the diplomatic formula that would keep peace in the world, our war department should have been equally busy determining upon the doctrine according to which our army should be trained to make war. Yet this was quite as it should be, for an army's business is to be prepared to fight; and, while any army at all is necessary, one trained according to unsound principles is likely to prove a costly mistake and a tragic one.

MEDICINE AND THE CHEMISTS

DURING the late war, in the destruction of human life through poison gases, chemistry played a tremendous part. Now is heard an appeal that it may be permitted to play an equally tremendous part in the preservation of human life. Through the American Chemical Society comes a heartfelt summons for increased coöperation to this end between the medical profession in all its branches and the chemists of the land. In the renewed tendency in this direction, finding expression in this summons, we see the swing of the wheel full circle back to those days of centuries ago when the providing of medicinals was chemistry's chief aim. The term "chemistry" itself re-

fers to the land of Chemi, or Egypt, where chemistry originated in the temples where priests of old experimented with chemicals for the preparation of various medicines. After all, the combination seems a natural one when one remembers that the human body itself is one complex laboratory for the transforming of matter—which *is* chemistry—into functional energy—which is chemistry again.

The chemist's value to medicine is clear enough, as a simple instance can illustrate. The chemist determines just what makes up any given entity—down to the last atom. His research soon determined, for example, that cocaine was a complex chemical compound to only certain parts of which was to be ascribed its valuable anæsthetic effect. Other parts of it carried poisons useless and even dangerous to the human system. Having discovered the secret of cocaine's make-up, it was simple enough for him to manufacture synthetically what we know of now as "novocaine," an anæsthetic with the useless poisonous characteristics of cocaine eliminated. In addition to such service as this the chemist is invaluable to medicine by reason of his knowledge of the laws of speed of various chemical reactions. Let him show how the hard-boiled white of an egg, treated in a glass of warm water with pepsin and the proper amount of hydrochloric acid, will "digest" in about an hour. Then let him show how with only one or the other of these agents alone the white of egg will not digest in the glass—or "stomach"—at all. Easy enough then to grasp the value of chemical knowledge to the student of our anatomy and its possible ills and remedies thereof.

Obviously the subject is a vast one but such trifling illustrations serve to make it evident enough that medicine cannot afford to overlook the aid of chemistry. Nor, if chemistry is to accomplish all that it can to alleviate human suffering, can it afford to go without the coöperation of the medicos. It is to be noted that ether was known to chemists in the thirteenth century, but they had no knowledge of its anæsthetic value until a physician happened to investigate it in 1846.

By all means let medicine and chemistry heed the growing call to work together in continued and intelligent partnership. Doctor and chemist are each aware that they ought to and are increasingly willing to. Every encouragement and opportunity to do so, financial and otherwise should be given them.

"THE WOOING O' IT"

"GO West, young man" may possibly still be good advice to hand to a youth in regard to the making of a fortune, but if statistics be any guide the East still holds its own as the most likely place to find a helpmate with whom to make fitting use of one's fortune—if acquired. Being by no means entirely lost to a proper discretion, let us add that when we say the most likely place we speak in terms of quantity only.

Lisping thus in numbers, it seems, according to the report of the bureau of census, that by far the best general neck of woods of all in which to go a-courtin', as far as multiplicity of chances goes, is old New England where, we are told, there are only 98½ mere males to every 100 of the allegedly gentler sex. A half a man supposedly not being much of an attraction for a damsel, we see no reason why the ratio cannot be taken as a flat 98 potential inferior halfs to each hundred ladies. Closely rivaling this section, in this respect, is the group of States comprising Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi and old Alabam'. Here, practically speaking, there would be only one lone male left after every possible pairing-off—the ratio for the four States being 101.1 males to each 100 better halves. But the matrimonially minded youth desiring to take advantage of the one little hunting ground par excellence should apparently hasten himself to the tiny District of Columbia, for, in this paradise, to every 100 of the nonshaving species of the human race there are no more than 87 of the beard-raising sort.

A startling contrast to this halcyon state of affairs, however, is found in Nevada. In this unfortunate State there is practically only 2-3 of a lady for every gentleman. The precise ratio is 148.4 males to 100 of the opposing sex. If Nevada could be taken as strictly representative of the West, one would have little difficulty in comprehending the reason for being told to head in that direction in order to achieve a fortune. It would appear obvious that one would not have much else to do. Happily, though, it is not quite

as bad as all that—although the Western States, in general, do provide the keenest competition for ladies' hands. While there is, east of the Mississippi, only one State in which the proportion of males to females is greater than in the ratio of 110 to 100, there are, of the 22 States west of the great river, 12 which have a greater proportion than this of men to women.

Throughout the land as a whole there would seem to be little danger of "menkind" becoming overconceited through any multiplicity of chances to find a helpmate. In the whole country there are 104 males to every 100 of the better sort.

There have been times and places in the world's history when the ladies did the proposing and all that sort of thing. Should this suddenly come true again, what a greatly increased incentive there would be to get elected to Congress and inhabit the little but oh, my! District of Columbia with its mere 87 of men to every century of ladies. An embarrassment of riches indeed! As for any one resident there who was by any chance unappreciative of this state of affairs—well, at least such a one would always have at hand a concentrated and highly trained corps of diplomats to advise him, if necessary, how to continue in single cussedness gracefully.

NEW FIELD FOR SOAP-BOX ORATORY

FOR many years socialists and often anarchists and other radicals have been in the habit of addressing meetings of workers and others, with soap boxes or trucks as speakers' platforms.

It is now announced that the Constitutional Defense League, an organization of war veterans formed some time ago in the State of Wisconsin to uphold constitutional government and combat socialism, has planned to institute a "Soap-box Campaign" against socialism in other parts of the United States. The leaders of the league, say its speakers, will then be able to meet the socialists on their own ground. They will address the typical audiences which listen to socialist speakers and will uphold our government, State and national.

The extension of the soap-box campaign against socialism is to begin in New York City, shortly, and may be carried to other cities. This kind of campaign has been going on throughout Wisconsin and the Middle West generally for a number of months. Two of its leaders are Robert J. Burns, war veteran and past commander of a post of the American Legion in Racine, Wisconsin, and C. A. Hanson, who was a lieutenant commander of the United States navy during the war. Both will stay in New York for some time arranging for the campaign which will be started in real earnest when the season with weather conditions most favorable for open meetings is on. Among the leaders in the league are a number of once prominent socialists and others with radical ideas at one time, who have renounced their former political views.

It is proposed by the league, during political campaigns, to wage battle against the socialistic candidates "until not a socialist could be elected to any office." It was stated very recently by Mr. Burns that though socialist politicians held scores of offices in the State of Wisconsin in the past, not a single socialist candidate was elected to office in that State in the fall election of 1920.

It was later announced that it was intended by the league to establish a branch in New York of the "Soap-box University," formed a number of months ago in Wisconsin, where people who want to take the soap box against socialism may receive instruction in public speaking. It was also reported by the leaders of the league that within one month this "university" in Wisconsin had sent a correspondence course of twelve lessons to three thousand prospective orators.

LABOR AND CAPITAL AS FRIENDS

IN sections of the United States there have been movements for some time past to restore the coöperation in trade agreements between employers and employees in many large industries which was interrupted by abnormal conditions resulting from the war. Up to thirty or forty years ago or so, before the time of collective bargaining as to wages and working conditions between organized labor and capital, there was a

general feeling of antagonism between labor and capital. They were regarded as natural enemies, and strikes of workers were accompanied by a feeling of bitterness seldom manifested now. Their pay was then so low in some industries in our cities as to barely keep them and their families from starving, especially in some of the needle trades, in which starvation wages were often common.

Then gradually collective bargaining as to wages and conditions between large bodies of employees and employers began and grew until it became general in most of the big industries. It did not prevent strikes, but the old bitter feeling against capital was seldom manifested and State and Federal legislation was passed appointing among other things, official arbitration boards, without compulsory power, whose work resulted in the settlement of many big labor disputes. Capital and labor then began to be regarded, not as enemies, but as necessary to each other. During the war the shortage of labor gave the workers such an advantage that they had their own way in many cases; wages rose to an unprecedented height and the trade unions for a time had the upper hand.

The latest body to take up the question of coöperation between employers and employees since the unemployment wave set in is the chamber of commerce of the State of New Jersey, in the membership of which there are some prominent employers of labor. Very recently its executive committee, in a report approved by its board of trustees, recommended to employers' constructive cöoperation with labor organizations in individual shops as the best solution of the industrial relations problem. In the report the State chamber of commerce is urged to use its influence to have representatives of organized labor appointed to committees which deal with workmen's compensation, unemployment and other questions vitally affecting labor, as well as employers and the public. The report plans for collective bargaining and greater cöoperation. It recommends that the management of the personnel of industry "should be carried on in no less thorough and scientific manner than the management of physical problems of production." Both sides are warned against domineering methods.

It is said that in other parts of the United States, bodies like the New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce are taking up the question of coöperation between employers and employees in the larger industries. It is thought that the present is a suitable time for the purpose.

POPULAR TOPICS

THAT the American public was intensely interested in the conference for the limitation of armaments held in Washington last winter was shown by the volume of mail that reached the advisory committee. Up to January 15th, it was estimated, over thirteen million letters expressing opinions regarding the conference had been received. More than eleven million of them, while favoring coöperative limitation, wanted the American delegates to have a free hand in arranging terms. Ten million letters expressed the hope that our representatives would receive Divine guidance in their task. A million asked for open sessions of the conference and about the same number favored an association of nations. Only thirty thousand demanded complete disarmament. Twelve thousand declared against any limitation of armaments, and eight thousand wanted an increase in our naval strength.

SPEAKING of whisky—and who isn't since the dry law went into effect?—Roy A. Haynes, Federal prohibition commissioner, says that the two last arid years have reduced the number of American drinkers from twenty million to two and one half million. Of these die-hards, he says, a million and a half drink now and then, and the other million whenever they get a chance.

ROADS of France that have known the tread of American soldiers bound on the errands of war will form part of a memorial road modeled after the Lincoln Highway if plans of the American Scenic and Historical Preservation Society are carried out successfully. Where the proposed road crosses battlefields where American troops fought, tablets commemorating the services of our men will be placed. Three routes, all passing through or near the principal American battlefields and the seven permanent cemeteries for American soldiers, are under consideration.

IF figures showing the amount of claims paid by a prominent surety company tell a true story, 1921 was a most dishonest year. Statistics of this company seem to show that for every four men who were dishonest in 1920 there were seven dishonest in 1921.

THE American Legion has recommended that the birthday of Robert E. Lee—January 19th—be observed by all American citizens. This is another manifestation of that fine spirit that on the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg caused the veterans of Pickett's gallant Virginian division to charge up to the line that had been held by the Union troops, to be met with outstretched hands by the survivors of the men who had greeted them very differently fifty years before. The dates of the Battle of Gettysburg and of Lee's surrender at Appomattox also are included in the Legion's calendar of patriotic days.

GERMAN shipyards now are building twice as many ships as they did before the war and Germany ranks second only to England as a shipbuilding nation.

PRESIDENT HARDING, according to the report of a group of tailors who visited him recently, is the best-dressed president we have had for many years.

DEPARTMENT store sales are largest in December and smallest in August, according to a chart prepared by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Other months when the public doesn't seem to be in a buying mood are February, July and September.

WORCESTER Vermont, has a population of 450. Nothing startling about that—but it is remarkable that in this small town there are ten men and women over eighty years old who are earning their daily bread. The dean of them all is Mr. M. P. Wheeler, a man of 90, who conducts an express business and last winter drove ten miles on a day when the mercury showed ten degrees below zero. Joel Richardson, a youngster of eighty-six, earns his way by chopping wood and claims that he can do a better day's work than most of the young fellows.

OUR forest service has found a new helper in the work of fighting forest fires—the carrier pigeon. They were given a thorough trial in the Idaho National Forest last year and were found to be the best means of communication between the ranger on the fire line and headquarters. They will be installed in all the camps of the Idaho district this year.

THINK! Every six minutes a man is killed in an industrial accident somewhere in the United States. Every fourteen seconds a man is injured. Every day three people are killed by falling from ladders. All this means individual suffering and national waste. It pays to be careful!

The Front Runner

By Bozeman Bulger

Author of "Nobody Loves an Umpire!" "Empty Barrels," Etc.

**"Yellow," said the trainer of the Grays, "is yellow!"
But in this case it somehow turned out to be true blue.**

JACK HORLICK was the son of old Joe Horlick, famed as a barehanded catcher back in the days of the old Metropolitans.

Old Joe was uneducated, ignorant. But he was game. Every finger of both hands, at one time or other, had been broken. Until his retirement he spurned the use of a glove, a contraption, according to his way of thinking, designed to give sissies a chance to get in the game.

When Joe's legs got stiff and his good right whip had lost its snap he went back to his trade, a coal heaver on a river barge. The old hero lived in a little shack near the river front, his off time spent in reminiscence. His constant care was an invalid wife and a small boy.

Mrs. Horlick spent her lonely, bedridden hours in the atmosphere of a bundle of newspaper clippings culled from sporting pages covering a period of ten or twelve years. These she kept constantly under her pillow. All related incidents of her husband's greatness and gameness. One in particular described an occasion when old Joe, with two fingers broken and hanging limp, finished a ninth inning and threw two runners out at second. This she often read to the little boy. He grew up to believe that his mission in life was to produce more clippings and to see that no clipping of a Horlick loser ever found a resting place beneath that pillow.

But I am getting a little ahead of the story. All of this came out after that historic game which put young Jack's name in front-page headlines, following a heated discussion as to the proper definition of a front runner.

I had answered a fan's query to the sporting editor like this:

"A front runner is a human athlete, a horse or a dog even, who has extraordinary natural ability as long as he is out in front but who quits when seriously challenged. For instance, take Lee Tobin, the great curve-ball pitcher. He pitched a no-hit game for ten innings only to blow up and go to pieces when his opponents made one run in the eleventh. He was beaten eight to nothing."

"Do you mean to say," the query writer came back two days later, "that 'front runner' is a polite way of calling a man yellow?"

Our sporting department was not to be caught like that. The turf writer had just brought in the story of the fastest horse on the track, that had given up when closely challenged only to turn around at the finish and viciously attack the winner with his teeth. There was no lack of courage in that. Still, that horse was famed as a front runner.

If the answer lies in the sequence of events that I am about to relate all well and good. If not—well, it is still my answer.

None of the sport writers had heard of old Joe Horlick for years. Joe rarely came to the ball park, though he worked within a few blocks of it. This was due, we found out, to an ultrabusinesslike secretary who had done away with the old-time recognition of the profession at the gate.

My surprise can be imagined, therefore, when old Joe showed up at the house one night as we were packing up to go South with the club for spring training.

"I got a boy that's a wonder," he said. "If you baseball writers can influence Manager McGill to take him along you won't pull no boner. The kid's got everything."

The boy, now twenty-one, had been playing with some bush-league outfit under the name of Sullivan and had not signed a contract—that being old Joe's scheme for hav-

ing him come home a free agent—free to make terms with any club he pleased.

The old fellow had carefully saved newspaper clippings, photographs—everything that Jack had sent him. He handed me these in a bundle.

The record was astonishing. The boy had frequently pitched two and three-hit games. But for a lucky scratch he would have got away with one no-hitter. There were very few close games—and no defeats. I remarked on this but old Joe simply smiled smugly.

I got in touch with two of the veteran writers. The upshot of it was we persuaded McGill, for old times' sake, to give the young fellow a chance with the Grays. He did so with the definite understanding that we were to take all the responsibility. If anybody's judgment was to be knocked in the papers it must be our own. Our expert analysis always made Mac tired and I think he thought this might be a chance to show us up.

Old Joe personally brought the young giant to the train. You should have seen McGill's eyes pop open.

"I've never seen Adonis in action," said the manager, "but I'll say this kid could make all those Greek heroes get up and dust on looks!"

Two weeks after the team had been in training and the veterans had got past the Charley-horse stage, McGill had us all up to his room one afternoon.

"Fellows," he said, starting to take off his uniform—he had just come in from the grounds—"I've got to hand it to you. That kid—that young Horlick—is the only ball player I ever saw who had everything, all at one time."

"What's wrong with him?" asked Sam Hall, the dean of the writing corps, suspicious that there was a catch in it somewhere.

"There's nothing wrong—I'm not kidding. That bird has got the physical strength of a Sandow. He's got speed and as good a curve ball as I've looked at for years. What's more he knows how to pitch."

"Oh, come on, I'll bite," said Sam again. "What's the answer?"

"There's no catch in it, I'm really serious. So far you fellows have dug up a phenom, and I'm going to give you credit."

On the exhibition tour Jack Horlick was given his first try-out against a minor-league club. He waded through the outfit without getting up a sweat; didn't even offer his curve. They were swinging a foot late at his fast one and breaking their backs at his slow one. He used nothing but change of pace and perfect control.

This sort of thing kept up day after day, giving us some corking good sporting-page copy for the early spring. The big-town fans were eagerly awaiting the appearance of the new phenom.

Just before getting home the Grays played an exhibition game with a major-league club. That made no difference to Horlick. He was just as effective against them as the bushers. Their alibi was that their eyes were not yet attuned to a curve ball. All of them wanted to know, though, where McGill had dug up this bird.

McGill always gave us due credit. Naturally the sport writers were elated.

Old Joe Horlick was unholdable when we settled in the big town for the regular championship season. He had grown younger, it seemed; he boasted that despite his years he could shovel more coal than any man on the river front.

Despite the cries from the stand and the constant demand in the papers for a sight of the new phenom in action McGill was not to be swept off his feet. He didn't start young Horlick for a month, and when he did, it was against a tail-end club. McGill had waited for a soft spot to break the boy into fast company—and had found it.

Horlick pitched with such precision and skill that even the most casual fan was impressed with his workmanship. He shut out his opponents without having extended himself. For a youngster to shut out a major club—even it be a tail-ender—on his first appearance is going some.

After grooming him for about six weeks against weak clubs and by using him as a relief pitcher—relieving veterans when games had been cinched—McGill thought the boy about right to start against a real contender.

That was a great day for us. We had tipped it off in the papers and every fan in town was on edge. After the warm-up and when the batteries had been announced it developed that Horlick had drawn a tough assignment right off the reel. He was pitted against Leroy, a veteran star known as the "Old Fox." This was a little more than McGill had anticipated—more than young Horlick had ever dreamed of. Leroy was his hero. To be pitted against such a recognized master was a supreme test. But Mc-

Gill did not hesitate to go through with it. The Reds were rushing the Grays for the lead and much depended on each game of the series.

McGill was always a gambler. With a game like this under the boy's belt he could be counted on as a regular member of the pitching staff. In Jack Horlick he had either a valuable piece of baseball property or a bust. He took the chance.

The kid discovered very quickly that he had locked horns with a real master. Leroy usually exerted his muscles in cases of emergency only. In a couple of innings, though, the old master discovered that in this game he had to use both his head and his arm. It was a real duel.

The Grays got a run in the second and there was no more scoring for six innings. Thus bolstered up the boy got better and better. He was using his curve ball and change of pace with deadly effect.

The break that finally came was no fault of Horlick's. An outfielder dropped a fly ball, giving a Red batter three bases and, later, a run that tied the score. An error at short followed. Horlick immediately lost control and gave two bases on balls.

"There he goes! There he goes! Go git 'im, fellows! The old bunny heart is showing!"

These sharp prods came in a chorus of shrieks from the Reds' bench, the players running out in front and tossing their bats in the air. The coaches on third and first, thus encouraged, went after him harder.

"There he goes! The tail's up. Atta boy"—to the batter—"you kin do it! Bust into that yellow streak! Take me out, take me out!" they pleaded ironically, "I'm through!"

The Reds were right. Horlick was through. The boy went straight up in the air—hit the ceiling. He bungled up two plays, lost control of the ball, of himself—everything. Before McGill could yank him out the Reds had six runs. The game, as ball players say, was sewed up in the bat bag and on the way to the clubhouse.

The press box was stunned. Was our find a morning-glory?

"Oh, that's all right—liable to happen any time," McGill said to the young fellow, and later repeated it to us. "Just to show you how I feel," he added. "I'm going to send him in against the Blues next week—and I'll pick no soft spot, either. It's a hundred to one that curve ball of his will beat those fellows."

I don't think McGill really felt that much assurance; but, as I said before, McGill was a gambler. True to his word he stuck young Horlick in against the Blues. The boy's opponent this time happened to be the crack left-hander of the opposition, another crafty veteran.

Exactly the same thing happened, the only variation being the size of the score. I will spare you the details. When pressed in the later innings the kid blew up completely, came off the field as pale as tallow, trembling like a leaf.

To the fans another spring phenom had exploded. The writing monopoly was in sackcloth and ashes.

Old Joe Horlick always was able to explain it as the fault of some other player—explain it to his own satisfaction. The boy, though, never offered an alibi, would leave the clubhouse without so much as a word.

McGill still referred to Horlick as "your find" when speaking to us. It was not so pleasing now, but there was no knock in the papers. The foxy McGill had let us hang ourselves by claiming credit for the discovery of the phenom in our own columns. Fans, though, were beginning to write in letters asking if the club had slipped us something. Just the same not a word appeared in any paper indicating that the busted phenom was yellow—had the heart of a rabbit. Though we did not know it we were adding no clippings to that bundle under the pillow of a frail and wizen old lady up on the river front.

There is rarely a disposition among newspaper men to use their weapons on themselves. We were no exception. McGill got into a disconcerting way of looking at us from the corner of his twinkling eye when we criticized another player. We found it convenient to keep away from him.

The matter came up for open discussion though in the smoking room of a Pullman as we started on the long Western trip, and there was no escape. Mind you, McGill never once had complained to us of having slipped him a lemon.

"Horlick's got more stuff than Leroy and all those fellows put together," he told us, "but I'm afraid the kid's a front runner."

Dick Barrow, a prize fighter of the mixed-ale type, now rubber and trainer for the

Grays, had been leaning against the wash-stand, listening.

"Say, Mac," he suddenly injected himself into the conversation by saying, "there ain't nothin' to that front-runner business except the plain old yellow streak. A fellow was telling me about a front runner out in the bushes named Sullivan. I was goin' to tell you 'bout him. They say he's the best pitcher in the world if he can only stand the gaff. But what good is natural stuff if a guy can't take a punch in the jaw?"

Sam Hall gave me an understanding look. We had never told McGill that Horlick had played under the name of Sullivan. Knowing his disregard for the opinions of sporting writers in general we had never shown him the clippings. Now I began to understand those one-sided scores, the lack of close ones. Had the boy double crossed us?

"That may go with fighters, Dick," McGill said to the trainer, "but not always with ball players. There have been several good pitchers who were front runners."

"But when it comes to a show-down they are yellow, Mac. You never see any of 'em takin' or givin' a punch in the jaw."

Getting away from McGill and comparing notes Sam Hall and I felt pretty sure that our Horlick was the same "Sullivan" mentioned by the old pugilist. The fact that the clippings of bad games had been held out on us left a bad taste in our mouths. My sympathy dwindled. Hall's did, too.

Nothing could make us believe that old Joe had been aware of the bad showings of the boy. He was too honest an old soul to have held out on us. Yes, the boy had not only deceived us but had deceived his father.

Nobody volunteered this information to McGill. We knew him too well to set ourselves up as a target for his biting wit. But here we were in the awkward position of having been made fools of by a bush-league pitcher. And it was our business to write criticisms of baseball management and strategy!

On the rest of the trip the manager made a point of associating with Jack Horlick. Never did he mention to him the humiliating defeats.

On the last day of our stay in St. Louis the Grays got five runs in the first inning and McGill sent Horlick in to finish up the game. He pitched perfectly. At the next stop he was started against a weak club and with good batting behind him was unbeatable.

And so it went.

The Grays wound up that Western trip by tackling the Reds, the contenders, on their own grounds. Our gang arrived with a clear understanding that the outfit was in for a tough fight. According to the routine of the pitching staff Horlick was due to pitch the second game. The night before the boy had a severe attack of indigestion and stayed in bed three days—until time to leave the town.

If McGill recalled that the phenom had not been ill a day in his life before, he let nobody know it. In fact, he had not discussed Horlick with us since that day on the train.

The Grays had a successful trip of it, but by the time they arrived home the Blues also had taken a spurt in the race and were now more to be feared than the Reds. They were to be our first opponents.

We had been informed that Horlick would pitch one of the games but we made no fuss about it in the papers. From the way Caler, manager of the Blues, had been working his pitchers, it seemed pretty certain that he would use his star left-hander—the man who had beaten Horlick before—in the second game.

"I'm going to use the kid against that fellow," McGill told us.

The boy looked at us curiously when we showed no enthusiasm. I think he had sensed our lost confidence, but he said nothing.

Just before the game Horlick was standing with other players in the clubhouse, his back to the half-open door and his right hand resting on the door frame. The last player was just going out with McGill, who started to close the door.

"Watch out, Mac!" yelled the player, reaching over and knocking Horlick's arm aside—just in time. The boy's thumb was in the crack of the door and would have been mashed flat.

"Boy, you had a narrow escape," the manager said to Horlick. "Hereafter you fellows better be careful about standing with your thumb in a door jamb. It isn't healthy. Come on."

He made Horlick precede him out of the door and onto the field.

When I got into the stand Horlick was

at the practice plate, warming up. It was difficult to believe that McGill really meant to start him against the crack southpaw. The kid was noticeably pale.

Just before game time the bat boy—the clubhouse mascot—came running across the field to the bench. We saw him talk to the manager earnestly. In his hand he held a small package which he handed to McGill.

"Boss," he said, as we afterward learned, "the fellows in the clubhouse has got it right—you know how they are talking. That big Horlick is yellow!"

"What's that you say, young man?"

"Don't blame me, Mr. Mac. I want the club to win. Yes, sir, Horlick is afraid to pitch that game. He's a big bum. He was tryin' to git his hand mashed in that door—on purpose! I know he was."

"Just a moment, my boy. You say you know he tried to mash his hand?"

"Yes, sir. I told Mr. Grady, the catcher, what I seen and he said I'd better tell you. I ain't no tattletale, Mr. Mac. The players has had me watching Horlick for two or three days. I seen Horlick when he put his thumb in that crack, thinking he would be the last in the clubhouse, and I seen him lay something on the bench right near him. He acted funnylike and I watched him from Grady's locker. What he laid on the bench was a roll of bandage, some iodine and some of that salve that Mr. Barrow uses to put on cuts. Yes, sir, he was gettin' ready to mash his own thumb and had everything ready to wrap it up. I kin prove it, too."

"What do you mean—you can prove it?"

"Mr. Dick—Mr. Barrow—kin tell you 'bout Horlick gettin' the stuff out of his medicine kit. The ball players was on, and so was Mr. Barrow."

A few minutes later we saw McGill call Horlick in to the bench and send one of the old-timers out to warm up.

If we had known all that, that afternoon, my, what a story we would have had for the papers!

It was some weeks, though, before McGill told us about the incident. He did it then on the promise that we would never use it. Probably he would never have told us at all had not Horlick actually thrown his finger out of joint in the first inning of a game with the Reds—a prospective duel with Leroy. The club doctor made it clear that such a dislocation was impossible by either a batted or a pitched ball. Unquestionably, he said, the injury was self-inflicted.

"Now," said McGill, "there's a little study for you. I'll admit that a front runner may be plain yellow, but, tell me, which requires the most nerve—to deliberately mash your own thumb and dislocate a finger or go out and pitch a ball game?"

"I give it up," I admitted. "What's he afraid of?"

"Well," mused McGill, "one would get in the paper and the other wouldn't. Now perhaps——"

"You don't think——"

"I don't know what it is, but I'm going to find out. There's nothing sneaky about that boy. He simply says he went to pieces and that's all I can get out of him."

"Why don't you trade him off?" I suggested. "Lot of managers would jump at a chance to grab that boy. They know he's got the stuff."

"Trade him?" McGill looked at me in surprise. "Then I'd be a quitter myself. I'll either make that boy a star or I'll bust him for good."

"Even so," said Sam Hall, "he'll never be any good with a lot of players who think him yellow. They are all on to the stuff he's been pulling. Am I right?"

"Maybe so—maybe," mused McGill. "But wait—give me a little more time. I'm not quite through yet."

During all these days, you may have noted, Jack Horlick had never said a word. It was difficult to get more than a monosyllable out of him. Though courteous at all times to the other players he never ran around with them at night. In fact, nobody ever saw him from the time he left the clubhouse in the afternoon until he showed up for batting practice the next day.

That very night, though, I ran into the boy in a drug store which was also the headquarters of a circulating library. He was looking over some books when I first caught sight of him.

"I was trying to pick out a book to read to my mother," he said. "She is very old and feeble, but she always likes something exciting."

"Do you read to her often?" I asked, going over the books with him.

"Oh, yes. Every night that I'm home. She read to me from the time I was a little boy—that's all the education I got—and

I would like to pay her back as much as I could."

"If she likes lively stuff, why don't you read her the sporting news?"

"No, no—not now," he replied in a tone that seemed to carry a hint of apprehension. Then he smiled. "Better wait till I get a chance to win one."

I looked at him curiously. His expression was enigmatic. To save my life I couldn't make out the thought behind it.

"How's your arm, Jack?" I asked apropos of nothing.

"Great. I was never better in my life. By the way I want to thank you for the nice way you let me down after that last beating I got."

"Pretty rough beating—that."

"I'll say it was. I guess that Leroy has got my goat. Funny thing, I could see the headlines in the next day's papers before I even started."

"Tell me something, Jack," I asked, determined to have the thing out now that he had started talking. "How is it that you never told us anything about those bad wallopings you got while playing under the name of Sullivan?"

"Why, I've never had a chance. Didn't think you'd be interested."

"You know," I reminded him pointedly, "there wasn't a mention of those bad defeats in those clippings your father showed us."

"I should say not!" He looked me squarely in the eye. "I wouldn't have him know that for anything in the world. You are not going to print that?"

"Why, no. I hadn't intended to—but I'd——"

"I'd jump the league if he ever found that out. I don't believe the old man ever believed it possible for anybody to beat me until the Reds popped me that day. He still thinks it an accident. By the way," he added as we walked down the street, "some day—I am afraid my old mother won't live very long—I'm going to give you gentlemen the material for a very interesting article. Did you ever see any of the sporting news written back in the old Metropolitan days?"

I had never had a chance to dig it up, I told him.

"I know all the clippings by heart," he said, smiling. "Some day—well, I'm turning off here. Good night."

I hurried to the ball grounds next day, hoping to catch McGill in the clubhouse before the players arrived. I was fortunate. The manager was in his little office, next to the lockers, talking to Dick Barrow, the trainer. Nobody else had reported.

"I've got the answer, I think," I told McGill. Then I related in detail the incident of the night before, every word of the conversation and my impressions.

"Hu-m-ph," he grunted reflectively. "And what's your idea?"

"He's supersensitive—got too much imagination. He'd rather suffer personal humiliation than take a chance on his old man being humiliated at his public defeat. He is making himself a martyr to save old Joe's feelings."

"Just a yellow dog—that's what you mean," cut in Dick Barrow, sticking out his bulldog jaw. "I don't know what that other stuff means, but the way I get it is that he's doggin' it."

"Wait a moment, Dick," ordered McGill. "He hasn't a natural yellow streak, but he's no good because he fears that somebody might think him yellow—old Joe in particular."

"That's it," I agreed.

"Pretty high psychology, that," said McGill.

"Psy—psy—whatever you call it—my big red eye!" snapped Dick, the trainer, forgetting his position. "That's a lotta bunk! A guy is yellow or he ain't. The only way to tell is a punch in the jaw—give or take. Leave it to me. I'll make old Joe show him where he gets off."

"Old Joe'd kill anybody that called that boy yellow," I declared, and I believed it.

"Well, he's goin' to git a chance," said Dick. "This pennant ain't goin' to be lost by that highfalutin' talk if I kin help it. Let me alone, Mr. Mac, and I'll bring it down to cases. I'm on to these birds."

The manager smiled at this. He tolerated Dick's outburst because of its loyalty.

"Think you can work it, do you, Dick?" he asked, winking at me.

"Just leave me alone, is all I ask."

As I left, McGill was still mischievously prodding the old fighter into renewed outbursts, the keynote of which was always "Yellow is yellow!"

"Fellows," announced McGill through the screen as he strolled over to the press box during the first game of the deciding series

with the Reds, "if it will help you any I'm going to pitch Horlick to-morrow."

Sam Hall almost swallowed a cigar he'd been chewing.

"Not against Leroy?" Sam knew the old master to be due that day.

"I don't know who they're going to pitch," explained McGill, "but I'm going to pitch Horlick. He knows it, too."

"Well, you'd better put a guard over him to-night," Sam advised, "or he'll accidentally break both legs—maybe his neck."

"Announce it as you please, Sam. Pan him if you like—pan me if you like—but that's the program and I'm going through with it."

We knew McGill, being a big-stake gambler, would risk all on one shake of the dice, but this was a little strong. Already he'd gambled twice—and lost.

"Say, Mac," I said to him as he passed me, "this isn't on the level?"

"Sure it is. It's a gamble but I've got the dice and am going to make one more roll. How far do you think the boy'd go if he thought old Joe had a doubt of his courage —was sitting in judgment, eh? Suppose, for instance, the kid stacked his nerve against that of his old dad—who'd win? I'm going to find out."

With that sharp, odd look out the corner of his eye he walked on to the Grays' bench, leaving me with my mouth open. I didn't get it at all.

At practice time next day Horlick had not shown up at the clubhouse. He had not reported sick, but made no excuse whatever. He simply wasn't there. McGill himself was puzzled. He had asked the boy to bring his father and had made special provision for a box for the old man immediately back of the players' bench. Whatever it was McGill had in mind something had slipped.

When it became possible to wait no longer McGill sent a second-string pitcher to the box and started the game.

Old Joe Horlick was intensely disappointed when he and Jack finally did reach the deserted entrance gate to find that they were very late. He did not know that the boy, as a last nervous resort, had set his watch back twenty minutes before leaving home.

The only person the couple saw in the neighborhood of the club quarters was Dick Barrow. He nodded surlily as the father and son arrived at the entrance to the private walkway and halted.

"Well, so long, pop. See you later."

Jack walked around the end of the railing, separating the clubhouse steps from the runway into the grand stand. He assumed that old Joe would go on to his seat. The young fellow turned at the noise of a scuffle on the walkway.

"I'm tellin' you, it's the——"

"Don't tell me my boy's yellow! You damn——"

For the flash of a second the kid could not believe what he saw. Yes—it was—Dick Barrow, the big, mixed-ale fighter was arguing with his father. His own courage was the issue!

The dumfounded young fellow caught a glimpse of old Joe leading with a seventy-year-old punch for the jaw of the pugilist. And it landed! Barrow took a backward step, shaking off the weak blow. There was a look in his eye, indicating that he had forgotten the age of his adversary. A wallop on the jaw to Dick was simply a wallop on the jaw. It awakened his old fighting instinct.

In a maddened rush Jack Horlick vaulted the four-foot railing, landing almost between the two men, just as Barrow straightened up and had drawn back his fist. He would have struck the old man. And he would have been sorry. But he didn't get the chance.

Having landed on his right foot the boy was off his balance, but there was no time to shift. He struck out with a straight left, the force of his pivoting body going with it. The punch landed squarely on Barrow's jaw, knocking him cold as a wedge. The big bruiser crumpled as if hit with a maul.

"You've killed him, Jack," said the father. "You shouldn't—it was my fight. I'd 'er got 'im."

"Just knocked out, dad. I heard what he said. Suppose I had killed him—good riddance!"

The boy stopped to examine the trainer, shaking him roughly. Barrow was out for fair. Jack called one of the gate policemen. Together they picked the man up and carried him to the clubhouse. For fifteen minutes Jack worked faithfully trying to bring him around, finally succeeding.

"Look after him," he said to the policeman. "I've got to get out on the grounds."

"I hope you don't get in trouble for this," said the father.

"Don't care if I do, dad. I heard him tell you I was yellow. I'd er killed——"

"I know he said it, Jack. Maybe he thought I'd——"

The kid turned on his father, eyes blazing.

"You don't mean you'd have believed it?"

"No, but——"

"Dad, if I thought—I'm beginning to think—— No, no! I won't say that! Get out in that seat," he ordered in a tone strange to his father. "I'll show! Go on, get out there!"

Before Dick Barrow realized fully what had struck him Jack Horlick was in uniform and on the field. In the kid's mind there was no remorse for what he had done. His brain burned with the thought that some one had tried to shake his father's faith. The wound, he knew, had gone deep.

"What's the idea?" demanded McGill as Horlick neared the bench. "You're a half hour late. What the——"

A queer expression in the boy's face tempered the call-down.

"Couldn't be helped," said the kid. "Will explain later."

"Well, you see what's happening, don't you? Look at that score board. They're murdering Simmons—three runs in and three on bases now."

The manager's attention was suddenly turned to the diamond.

"Come out of there!" McGill motioned to the pitcher, at the same time signaling the umpire for time.

There was a hurried conference on the bench.

"I can beat those fellows, Mr. McGill."

The manager looked at young Horlick, astonished. Never before had he volunteered to tackle anybody—and now the Grays were in the hole! No place for a front runner, was that!

"Just give me a chance at them!" begged Jack. He had just seen his father take his seat back of the bench and knew that he was listening.

"All right, if that's the way you feel, go to it. Are you warmed up?"

"Don't need any warming up."

The gang on the bench heard this with mouths agape. Speech had left the manager. He handed the boy a ball and motioned him away to the diamond.

I have seen a lot of pitching in my time, but nothing like Jack Horlick showed that day. After getting rid of the first batter and winding up the disastrous inning he settled into his stride. He worked the corners of the plate, studying the batters and changing pace with an uncanny skill. The boy was so cold and deliberate that it hurt! His veins ran ice water, it seemed!

"Darned if the boy hasn't changed his style completely," McGill remarked to me as he leaned against the screen to get a more direct view during one of the critical moments. "Look, he's starting that one from his shoe strings and isn't even covering up the ball."

That's just what the boy was doing. He would deliberately take the ball in his right hand, show it to the batter, draw back and let go. Not once did he try to conceal his delivery by covering the ball with his gloved hand as he wound up. Most of the time the gloved hand hung loosely at his side.

It was plain that the kid was putting every ounce of strength he had into every toss. Despite this he seemed to get stronger as he went.

"I think he's actually trying to kid them—to show them up," decided McGill. "He's telegraphing them what he's going to pitch. At that, they can't hit it! He acts like he's off his nut—watch him. Yes, he's pulling the old Rube Waddell stuff and getting away with it."

As this nerve in deliberately kidding a club like the Reds became apparent to everybody, the Grays began riding them with verbal jabs from the bench. They lost their goats, grew angry, helpless.

A break finally came and the Grays got in the lead. Horlick did not let up for a moment. Again and again, using that peculiar new motion, he popped the ball over like a bullet, often as straight as a long, white string.

In the ninth, when it seemed certain that the Grays had won, the Reds got a runner on first. The next man up swung up at a fast one and cracked the ball back at the pitcher. It should have been an easy out. Horlick made a dive for the ball with his outstretched gloved hand and deflected it, the ball bounding away toward first base. The first baseman gathered it in and beat the runner to the bag by a hair. He was out.

Interest having centered on the play at

first base no one, for the moment, noticed Horlick sprawled out on the turf. He had fallen on his face. McGill and some of the players ran to him.

The boy was out, cold. He had fainted. The corners of his mouth and eyes twitched as if in unconscious pain. They could not revive him. The club doctor was called. With two players to assist him they carried him to the clubhouse.

It was the dramatic finish to a hectic afternoon. I say finish, because McGill put in another pitcher who quickly retired the remaining batter and the game was over. Leroy had been beaten in the toughest pitching duel of his career.

All of the baseball writers hurried over to the clubhouse to find out what had happened to Horlick. In our minds was the thought that at the last moment the old yellow streak had shown up. This was not a popular thought to voice, though. We kept quiet.

When we got there Horlick was still unconscious. The doctor was working over him.

"Here," he called to one of the players, "keep fanning him with this newspaper while I get some spirits of ammonia. Where's the bag? And say," he ordered, "take that glove off his hand."

The player tugged at the glove without success.

"It won't come off, doctor. Hand must be swollen."

The doctor came over and with a sharp knife cut away the glove.

Almost immediately Horlick showed signs of resuscitation.

"Humph!" grunted the doctor, examining the knuckles and two stiffened fingers, swollen double their natural size.

"I'll say that bird hit some smash back at him," observed one of the players, "to break them fingers like that with a grounder!"

"Grounder?" repeated the doctor. "That hand's been broken for two hours, at least! The grounder had nothing to do with it."

For a moment there was silence, players and writers looking at each other puzzled.

"Yes," spoke up Dick Barrow, wryly rubbing his jaw, "and I'm the guy he broke it on. I'll say that bird packs a wallop!"

"Mr. Mac," he added, looking down at the outstretched young Horlick, "you win. Yellow ain't yellow!"

"Pitched Two Hours with a Broken Hand," was the only headline I could think of that night to chronicle the story of the front runner.

When old Mrs. Horlick finally passed away that was one of the clippings found under her pillow.

A FALSE INDICTMENT

EVERY time a cartoonist or a paragrapher goes bankrupt in ideas he gets off something to show how lazy a congressman is. There never was a bigger mistake. Call him a fool, if you must, or a bore or a bonehead or a hick; but if you respect truth never call him lazy. Leaving out of account his speeches on the floor, his attendance at committee meetings and his keeping up with routine legislation, his labor in looking after his constituents is more than the work done by the average business man.

By the time he has answered his mail, secured a rare flower bulb for Mrs. White, had Mr. Brown's son released from his army enlistment, had Mr. Green's son given a commission in navy service, got Jones a government publication on the care of bees, found out from the agricultural department what grain will make Smith's cow give more milk in November, informed Jackson that the bureau of standards will not test his cider, put over an appointment for Johnson's daughter in the census office and got a promotion for Miss Lavinia Sykes whose grandfather was a friend of his grandmother—by the time he has attended to fifteen or twenty of these charming little commissions every day, he can feel perfectly free to recline upon a richly upholstered sofa, have his secretary fan him with peacock's feathers and peacefully slumber through the rest of the evening.

The Red Redmaynes

By Eden Phillpotts

Author of "The Gray Room," "Children of the Mist," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Mark Brendon of Scotland Yard, on vacation on Dartmoor, was appealed to by Jenny Pendean, whom he had seen and admired, to solve the mystery of the disappearance of her husband, Michael. Her uncle, Robert Redmayne, whom Brendon had met casually, was suspected of murdering him in a half-built bungalow in a lonely district near Princetown. From Jenny, Mark learned that Robert and his two brothers, Albert, a bookworm who lived in Italy, and Bendigo, a retired sea captain, had objected to her marrying Pendean because he had not wanted to fight in the war, and also learned that she would inherit the fortunes of her three uncles. Shortly before her husband's disappearance she had met her uncle Robert, who had suffered shell shock in the war, and as Michael had done good civilian service Robert had seemed to forget his bitterness and had invited them both to meet his fiancée, Flora Reed, who was staying at a near-by resort. Upon investigating Michael's disappearance Brendon found a pool of blood in the bungalow, and the police reported that a man answering to the description of Robert Redmayne had been seen riding a motor cycle with a large sack strapped behind the saddle. Brendon did his best but failed—Pendean's body could not be found and Redmayne, mad or sane, had eluded the police and probably escaped from England. Some months later Brendon visited Jenny at her uncle Bendigo's house, Crow's Nest, near Dartmouth, and the old sailor showed him a letter from Robert confessing that the latter had "done in" Pendean. More than the mystery was bothering Brendon when he left Crow's Nest—he loved Jenny and she seemed to be interested in Doria, a handsome Italian boatman employed by her uncle. Then, as he passed through the woods near the house, Brendon saw Robert Redmayne leaning on a gate. A meeting of the brothers in Robert's hiding place, a cave by the sea, was arranged by Jenny—a meeting from which Bendigo never returned. Doria had taken him to the cave in a launch and left the brothers together. Later he told Brendon that when he had returned for Bendigo he had found the cave empty. Brendon and the police investigated; in the cave they found a blot of blood and marks of a struggle, and in a rough passageway traces of a heavy body having been dragged to the cliffs above. But neither Robert Redmayne nor the body of his brother could be found. Albert Redmayne arrived from Italy but could throw no light on the mystery—he could only regret that his friend Peter Ganns, an American detective, was not on the scene. Brendon returned to London and a few months later learned that Jenny and Doria had been married.

(A Five-Part Story—Part III.)

CHAPTER X.

ON GRIANTE.

DAWN had broken over Italy and morning, in honeysuckle colors, burned upon the mountain mists. Far below a lofty hillside the world still slumbered and the Larian lake, a jewel of gold and turquoise, shone amid her flowery margins. The hour was very silent; the little towns and hamlets scattered beside Como, like clusters of shells—white and rosy and lemon—drowsed and dreamed until thin music broke from their campaniles. Bell answered bell and made a girdle of harmony about the lake, floating along the water and ascending aloft until no louder than the song of birds.

Two women climbed together up the great acclivity of Griante. One was brown and elderly, clad in black with an orange rag wrapped about her brow—a sturdy, muscular creature who carried a great, empty wicker basket upon her shoulders; the other was clad in a rosy jumper of silk that flashed in the morning fires and brought an added beauty to that beautiful scene.

Jenny ascended the mountain as lightly as a butterfly. She was lovelier than ever in the morning light, yet a misty doubt, a watchful sadness seemed to hover upon her forehead. Her wonderful eyes looked ahead up the precipitous track that she and the Italian woman climbed together. She moderated her pace to the slower gait of the elder and presently they both stopped before

a little gray chapel perched beside the hill path.

Mr. Albert Redmayne's silkworms, in the great airy shed behind his villa, had nearly all spun their cocoons now, for it was June again and the annual crop of mulberry leaves in the valleys beneath were well-nigh exhausted.

Therefore Assunta Marzelli, the old bibliophile's housekeeper, made holiday with his niece, now upon a visit to him, and together the women climbed where food might be procured for the last tardy caterpillars to change their state.

They had started in gray dawn, passed up a dry watercourse and proceeded where the vine was queen and there fell a scented filigree of dead blossom from flowering olives. They had seen a million clusters of tiny grapes already rounding and had passed through wedges and squares of cultivated earth where sprang alternate patches of corn yellowing to harvest and the lush green of growing maize. Figs and almonds and rows of red and white mulberries, with naked branches stripped of foliage, broke the lines of the crops. Here the hedges sparkled in a harvest of scarlet cherries; and here sheep and goats nibbled over little, bright tracts of sweet grass. Higher yet shone out groves of chestnut trees, all shining with the light of their tassels and very bright by contrast with the gloom of the mountain pines.

And then, where two tall cypresses stood upon either side, Jenny and Assunta found the shrine and stayed a while. Jenny set down the basket which she carried with their midday meal, and her companion dropped the great bin destined to hold mulberry leaves.

The lake below was now reduced to a cup of liquid jade over which shot streamers of light into the mountain shadows at its brink; but there were vessels floating on the waters that held the watchers' eyes.

They looked like twin, toy torpedo boats —mere streaks of red and black upon the water, with Italy's flag at the taffrail. But the little ships were no toys and Assunta hated them, for the strange craft told of the ceaseless battle waged by authority against the mountain smugglers and reminded the widow of her own lawless husband's death ten years before. Cæsar Marzelli had taken his cup to the well once too often and had lost his life in a pitched battle with the officers of the customs.

Long shafts of glory shot between the mountains and drenched the lake; the shoulders of the lesser hills flamed; the waters beneath them flashed; and far away, among the table-lands of the morning mist, against a sapphire sky, there gleamed the last patches of snow.

A cross of rusty iron surmounted the little sanctuary they had found and the roof was of old tiles scorched a mellow tint of brown. To Maris Stella was the shrine dedicated; and within, under the altar, white bones gleamed—skulls and thighs and ribs of men and women who had perished of the plague in far-off time.

"*Morti della peste,*" read Jenny, on the front of the altar, and Assunta, in gloomy mood before the recollection of the past, spoke to her young mistress and shook her head.

"I almost envy them sometimes, signora. Their troubles are ended. Those heads that have ached and wept will never ache and weep again."

She spoke in Italian and Jenny but partially understood. Yet she joined Assunta on her knees and together they made their morning prayer to Mary, Star of the Sea, and asked for what their souls most desired.

Presently they rose, Assunta the calmer for her petitions, and together they proceeded upward. The elder tried to explain what a base and abominable thing it was that her husband, an honest free trader between Italy and Switzerland, should have been destroyed by the slaves in the government vessels beneath, and Jenny nodded and strove to understand. She was making progress in Italian, but Assunta's swift tongue and local patois were as yet beyond her comprehension. But she knew that the dead smuggler husband was the subject on Assunta's lips and nodded her sympathy.

"Sons of dogs!" cried the widow; then a steep section of their road reduced her to silence.

The great event of that day, which brought Jenny Doria so violently back into the tragedy of the past, had yet to happen, and many hours elapsed before she was confronted with it. The women climbed presently to a little field of meadow grass that sparkled with tiny flowers and spread its alpine sward among thickets of mulberry. Here their work awaited them; but first they ate the eggs and wheaten bread, walnuts and dried figs that they had brought and shared

a little flask of red wine. They finished with a handful of cherries and then Assunta began to pluck leaves for her great basket while Jenny loitered a while and smoked a cigarette. It was a new habit only acquired since her marriage.

Presently she set to work and assisted her companion until they had gathered a full load of the leaves. Then the younger plucked one or two great golden orange lilies that grew in this little glen, and soon the women started upon their homeward way. They had descended about a mile and at a shoulder of Griante sat down to rest in welcome shadow. Beneath, to the northward, lay their home beside the water and, gazing down upon the scattered and clustered habitations of Menaggio, Jenny declared that she saw the red roof of Villa Pianezzo and the brown and lofty shed behind, where dwelt her uncle's silkworms.

Opposite on its promontory, stood the little township of Belaggio and behind it flashed the glassy face of Lecco in the cloudless sunshine. And then, suddenly, as if it had been some apparition limned upon the air, there stood upon the path the figure of a tall man. His red hair was bare and from the face beneath shone a pair of wild and haggard eyes. They saw the stranger's great, tawny mustache, his tweed garments and knickerbockers, his red waistcoat, and the cap he carried in his hand.

It was Robert Redmayne. Assunta, who gazed upon him without understanding, suddenly felt Jenny's hand tighten hard upon her arm. Jenny uttered one loud cry of terror and then relaxed and fell unconscious upon the ground. The widow leaped to her aid, cried comfortable words and prayed the young wife to fear nothing; but it was some time before Jenny came to her senses and when she did so her nerve appeared to have deserted her.

"Did you see him?" she gasped, clinging to Assunta and gazing fearfully where her uncle had stood.

"Yes, yes—a big, red man; but he meant us no harm. When you cried out, he was more frightened than we. He leaped down, like a red fox, into the wood and disappeared. He was not an Italian. A German or Englishman, I think. Perhaps a smuggler planning to fetch tea and cigars and coffee and salt from Switzerland. If he leaves enough for the doganieri, they will wink at him. If he does not, they will shoot him."

"Remember what you saw!" said Jenny tremulously. "Remember exactly what he looked like, that you may be able to tell Uncle Albert just how it was, Assunta. He is Uncle Albert's brother—Robert Redmayne!"

Assunta Marzelli knew something of the mystery and understood that her master's brother was being hunted for great crimes.

She crossed herself.

"Merciful God! The evil man. And so red! Let us fly, signora."

"Which way did he go?"

"Straight down through the wood beneath us."

"Did he recognize me, Assunta? Did he seem to know me? I dared not look a second time."

Assunta partially followed the question.

"No. He did not look either. He stared out over the lake and his face was like a lost soul's face. Then you cried out and still he did not look, but disappeared. He was not angry."

"Why is he here? How has he come and where from?"

"Who shall say? Perhaps the master will know."

"I am in great fear for the master, Assunta. We must go home as quickly as possible."

"Is there danger to the signor from his brother?"

"I do not know. I think there may be."

Jenny helped Assunta with her great basket, lifted it on her shoulders and then set off beside her. But the rate of progress proved too slow for her impatience.

"I have a horrible dread," she said. "Something tells me that we ought to be going faster. Would you be frightened if I were to leave you, Assunta, and make greater haste?"

The other managed to understand and declared that she felt no fear.

"I have no quarrel with the red man," she said. "Why should he hurt me? Perhaps he was not a man but a spirit, signora."

"I wish he were," declared Jenny. "But it was not a ghost you heard leap into the wood, Assunta. I will run as fast as I can and take the short cuts."

They parted and Jenny made haste, risked her neck sometimes and sped forward with the energy of youth and on the wings of fear. Assunta saw her stop and turn and listen

once or twice; then the crags and hanging thickets hid her from view.

Jenny saw and heard no more of the being who had thus so unexpectedly returned into her life. Her thoughts were wholly with Albert Redmayne and, as she told him when she met him, it remained for him to consider the significance of this event and determine what steps should be taken for his own safety. He was at Bellagio when she reached home, his manservant, Assunta's brother, Ernesto, explained that Mr. Redmayne had crossed after luncheon to visit his dearest friend, the bibliophile, Virgilio Poggi.

"A book came by the postman, signora, and the master must needs hire boat and cross at once," explained Ernesto who spoke good English and was proud of his accomplishment.

Jenny waited impatiently and she was at the landing stage when Albert returned. He smiled to see her and took off his great slouch hat.

"My beloved Virgilio was overjoyed that I should have found the famous book—the veritable Italian edition of Sir Thomas Browne—his 'Pseudodoxia Epidemica.' A red letter day for us both! But—but——" He looked at Jenny's frightened eyes and felt her hand upon his sleeve. "Why, what is wrong? You are alarmed. No ill news of Giuseppe?"

"Come home quickly," she answered, "and I will explain. A very terrible thing has happened. I cannot think what we should do. Only this I know: I am not going to leave you again until it is cleared up."

At home Albert took off his great hat and cloak. Then he sat in his study—an amazing chamber, lined with books to the lofty ceiling and dark in tone by reason of the prevalent rich but somber bindings of five thousand volumes. Jenny told him that she had seen Robert Redmayne, whereupon her uncle considered for five minutes, then declared himself as both puzzled and alarmed. He showed no fear, however, and his large, luminous eyes shone out of his little, withered face unshadowed. None the less he was quick to read danger into this extraordinary incident.

"You are positive?" he asked. "Everything depends on that. If you have seen my unfortunate, vanished brother again here, so near to me, it is exceedingly amazing, Jenny. Can you say positively, without a shadow of doubt, that the melancholy figure was not a figment of your imagination, or some stranger who resembled Robert?"

"I wish to Heaven I could, Uncle Albert. But I am positive."

"The very fact that he appeared exactly as you last saw him—in the big, tweed suit and red waistcoat—would support an argument in favor of hallucination," declared her uncle. "For how on earth can the poor creature, if he be really still alive, have remained in those clothes for a year and traveled half across Europe in them?"

"It is monstrous. And yet there he stood and I saw him as clearly as I see you. He was certainly not in my thoughts. I was thinking of nothing and talking to Assunta about the silkworms when suddenly he stood there, not twenty yards away."

"What did you do?"

"I made a fool of myself," confessed Jenny. "Assunta says that I cried out very loud and then toppled over and fainted. When I came round there was nothing to be seen."

"The point is then: did Assunta see him also?"

"That was the first thing I found out. I hoped she had not. That would have saved the situation in a way and proved it was only some picture of the mind as you suggest. But she saw him clearly enough—so clearly that she declared he was a red man and not Italian, but English or German. She heard him too. When I cried out he leaped away into the woods."

"Did he see and recognize you?"

"That I do not know. Probably he did."

Mr Redmayne lighted a cigar which he took from a box on a little table by the open hearth. He drew several deep breaths before he spoke again.

"This is a very disquieting circumstance and I greatly wish it had not happened," he said. "There may be no cause for alarm; but, on the other hand, when we consider the disappearance of my brother Bendigo, I have a right to feel fear. By some miracle Robert, for the last six months has continued to evade capture and conceal the fact of his insanity. That means that I am now faced with a most formidable danger, Jenny, and it behooves me to exercise the greatest possible care of my person. You, too, for all we can say, may be in peril."

"I feel very acutely that I am," she said. "But you matter more. We must do some-

thing swiftly, uncle—to-day—this very hour."

"Yes," he admitted. "We are painfully challenged by Providence, my child. Heaven helps those who help themselves, however. I have never before, to my knowledge, been in any physical danger and the sensation is exceedingly unpleasant. We will drink some strong tea and then determine our course of action. I confess that I feel a good deal perturbed."

His words were at variance with his quiet and restrained expression, but Mr. Redmayne had never told a falsehood in his life and Jenny knew that he felt indeed alarmed.

"You must not stop here to-night," she said. "You must at least cross to Belaggio and stay with Signor Poggi until we know more."

"We shall see as to that. Prepare the tea and leave me for half an hour to reflect."

"But—but—Uncle Albert—he—he might come at any moment!"

"Do not think so. He is now, poor soul, a creature of the night. We need not fear that he will intrude in honest sunshine upon the haunts of men. Leave me and tell Ernesto to admit nobody who is not familiar to him. But I repeat, we need fear nothing until after dark."

In half an hour Jenny returned with Mr. Redmayne's tea.

"Assunta has just returned. She has seen nothing of—of Uncle Robert."

For a time Albert said nothing. He drank, and ate a large macaroon biscuit. Then he told his niece the plans he was prepared to follow.

"Providence is, I think, upon our side, pretty one," he began, "for my amazing friend, Peter Ganns, who designed to visit me in September, has already arrived in England; and when he hears of this ugly sequel to the story I confided to his ears last winter, I am bold to believe that he will hasten to me immediately and not hesitate to modify his plans. He is a methodical creature and hates to change; but circumstances alter cases and I feel justified in telling you that he will come as soon as he conveniently can do so. This I say because he loves me."

"I'm sure he will," declared Jenny.

"Write two letters," continued Albert. "One to Mr. Mark Brendon, the young detective of Scotland Yard of whom I entertained a high opinion; and write also to your husband. Direct Brendon to approach Peter Ganns and beg them both to come to me as quickly as their affairs allow. Also bid Giuseppe to return to you immediately. He will serve to protect us, for he is fearless and resolute."

But Jenny showed no joy at this suggestion.

"I was to have had a peaceful month with you," she pouted.

"So indeed I hoped; but it can hardly be peaceful now and I confess that the presence of Doria would go some way to compose my nerves. He is powerful, cheerful and full of resource. He is also brave. He remembers the past and he knows poor Robert by sight. If, therefore, my brother is indeed near at hand and to be expected at any moment, then I should be glad of some capable person to stand between us. Should my brother presently indicate, through you or some other person, that he wants to see me alone by night, as in the case of Bendigo, then I must absolutely decline any such adventure. We meet in the presence of armed men, or not at all."

Jenny had left Doria for a time and apparently felt no desire to see him again until her promised visit to her uncle should be ended.

"I heard from Giuseppe three days ago," she said. "He has left Ventimiglia and gone to Turin where he used to work and where he has many friends. He has a project."

"I shall speak with him seriously when next we meet," declared the old man. "I entertain great admiration for your attractive spouse, as you know. He is a delightful person; but it is time we considered the future of your twenty thousand pounds and yourself, Jenny. In the course of nature all that is mine will also be yours, and when the estate of poor Bendigo is wound up my present income must be nearly doubled. Leave to presume death, however, may be delayed. But the fact remains that you will enjoy the Redmayne money sooner or later and I want to come to grips with Giuseppe and explain to him that he must understand his responsibilities."

Jenny sighed.

"Nobody will make him understand them, uncle."

"Do not say so. He is intelligent and has, I am sure, a sense of honor as well as a deep and devoted affection for you. But he must not spend your money. I will not allow that. Write to him at Turin and entreat him

from me to abandon anything that he may have in hand and join us instantly here. We need not keep him long; but he can look after us for a while until we learn when Ganns and Brendon are to be expected."

Jenny promised, without much enthusiasm, to call her husband to the rescue.

"He will laugh and perhaps refuse to come," she said. "But since you think it wise I will beg him to hasten and tell him what has happened. Meanwhile what of to-night and to-morrow night?"

"To-night I go across the water to Belaggio and you come with me. It is impossible that Robert should know we are there. Virgilio Poggi will take care of us and be very jealous for me if I hint that I am in any danger."

"I'm sure he will. And should you not warn the police about Uncle Robert and give them a description of him?"

"I'm not sure as to that. We will consider to-morrow. I little like the ways of the Italian police."

"You might have watchers here to-night, ready to take him if he appears," suggested Jenny.

But Albert finally decided against giving any information.

"For the moment I shall do nothing. We will see what another morning may bring forth. To feel this awful presence suddenly so close is very distressing and I do not want to think of him any more until to-morrow. Write the letters and then we will put a few things together and cross the lake before it is dark."

"You do not fear for your books, Uncle Albert?"

"No, I have no fear for my books. If there is a homicidal being here intent upon my life, he will not look to the right or the left. Even when he was sane, poor Robert never knew anything about books or their value. He will not seek them—nor could he reach them if he did."

"Did he ever visit you here in the past? Does he know Italy?" she asked.

"So far as I am aware he was never here in his life. Certainly he never visited me. It is, in fact, so many years since I have seen him that I might have met him and failed to recognize the man."

Jenny wrote her letters and posted them; then she packed for her uncle and herself and presently, having warned Assunta and Ernesto that no stranger must be admitted until his return on the following day, Albert Redmayne prepared to cross the lake. First, however, he locked and barred his library and transferred half a dozen volumes more than commonly precious to a steel safe aloft in his bedroom.

A boatman quickly rowed them to the landing stage of Belaggio and they soon reached the dwelling of Albert's friend who welcomed them with an equal measure of surprise and delight.

Signor Poggi, a small, fat man with a bald head, broad brow and twinkling eyes, grasped their hands and listened with wonder to the reason for their arrival. He knew English and always delighted to practice that language when opportunity offered.

"But this is beyond belief!" he said. "An enemy for Alberto! Who should be his enemy—he who is the friend of every man? What romance is this, Signora Jenny, that throws danger into the path of your dear uncle?"

"It is the sudden threat and terror of my vanished brother," explained Mr. Redmayne. "You are familiar, Virgilio, with the terrible facts concerning Robert's appearance and Bendigo's disappearance. Now, suddenly, when I have long come to believe that my younger brother's lurid career was ended and that he had ceased to be, he leaps upon the mountains and reappears in his habit as he lived! Nor can we doubt that he lives indeed. He is no ghost, my friend, but a solid, shadow-casting man, who may be seeking my life by reason of his distempered mind."

"It is romance," declared Virgilio, "but romance of a very grim and painful description. You are, however, safe enough with me, for I would gladly shed my blood to save yours."

"Well I know it, rare Virgilio," declared the other. "But we shall not long impose ourselves upon your courage and generosity. We have written to England for Peter Ganns who, by God's providence, is now in that country and meant to visit me in a few months. We have also called upon Giuseppe Doria to return at once to us. When he does so I am content to sleep at home again; but not sooner."

Signor Poggi hastened to order a meal worthy of the occasion, while his wife, who was also a devoted admirer of the Englishman, prepared apartments. Nothing but delight filled Poggi's mind at the opportunity

to serve his dearest companion. An ample meal was planned and Jenny helped her hostess in its preparation.

Poggi drank to the temporal and eternal welfare of his first friend and Albert returned the compliment. They enjoyed a pleasant meal and then sat through the June twilight in Virgilio's rose garden, smelled the fragrance of oleanders and myrtles in the evening breeze, saw the fireflies flash their little lamps over dim olive and dark cypress and heard the summer thunder growling genially over the mountain crowns of Campione and Croce.

Mr. Redmayne's niece retired early and Maria Poggi with her, but Virgilio and Albert talked far into the night and smoked many cigars before they slept.

At nine o'clock next morning Mr. Redmayne and Jenny were rowed home again, only to hear that no intruder had broken upon the nightly peace of Villa Pianezzo. Nor did the day bring any news. Once more they repaired to Belaggio before dark, and for three days lived thus. Then there came a telegram from Turin to say that Doria was returning immediately to Como and might soon be expected via Milan; while on the morning that actually brought him to Menaggio his wife received a brief letter from Mark Brendon. He had found Mr. Ganns and the two would set forth for Italy within a few days.

"It is impossible that we can receive both here," declared Albert; "but we will engage pleasant apartments with dear Signor Bullo at the Hotel Victoria. They are full or nearly so; but he will find a corner for any friends of mine."

CHAPTER XI.

MR. PETER GANNS.

Mark Brendon received with mingled emotions the long letter from Jenny Doria. It awaited him at New Scotland Yard and, as he took it from the rack, his heart leaped before the well-remembered handwriting. The past very seldom arose to shadow Mark's strenuous present; but now, once more, it seemed that Robert Redmayne was coming between him and his annual holiday. He told himself that he had lived down his greatest disappointment and believed that he could now permit his mind to dwell on Jenny without feeling much more than the ache of an old wound. Her letter came a week before the recipient proposed to start upon his vacation. He had proposed going to Scotland, having no mind to Dartmoor again at present; but it was not his failure, so complete and bewildering, that had barred a return to familiar haunts. Memory made the thought too painful and poignant, so he had intended to break new ground and receive fresh impressions.

Then came this unexpected challenge and he hesitated before accepting it. Yet a second reading of the woman's appeal determined him, for Jenny wrote for herself as well as her uncle. She reminded Brendon of his good will and declared how personally she should welcome him and feel safer and more sanguine for his companionship. She also contrived to let him know that she was not particularly happy. The fact seemed implicitly woven into her long letter, though another, less vitally interested in the writer, might have failed to observe it.

Regretting only that Albert Redmayne's friend must be approached and hoping that Mr. Peter Ganns would at least allow him a few days' start, Brendon sought the famous American and found him without difficulty. He had already visited New Scotland Yard, where he numbered several acquaintances, and Mark learned that he was stopping at the Grand Hotel in Trafalgar Square. On sending in his name at the hotel a messenger boy bade Brendon follow to the smoking room.

His first glance, however, failed to indicate the great man. The smoking room was nearly empty on this June morning and Mark observed nobody but a young soldier writing letters and a white-haired, somewhat corpulent gentleman sitting with his back to the light reading the *Times*. He was clean shaved, with a heavy face modeled to suggest a rhinoceros. The features were large; the nose swollen and a little veined with purple, the eyes hidden behind owl-like spectacles with tortoise-shell rims and the brow very broad, but not high. From it abundant white hair was brushed straight back.

Brendon extended his glance elsewhere, but the messenger stopped, turned and departed, while the stout man rose, revealing a massive frame, wide shoulders and sturdy legs.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Brendon," he said in a genial voice; then he shook hands, took off his spectacles and sat down again.

"This is a pleasure I had meant to give myself before I quitted the city," declared the big man. "I've heard about you and I've taken off my hat to you more than once during the war. You might know me, too."

"Everybody in our business knows you, Mr. Ganns. But I've not come hero-worshiping to waste your time. I'm proud you're pleased to see me and it's a great privilege to see you; but I've looked in this morning about something that won't wait; and your name is the big noise in a letter I received from Italy to-day."

"Is that so? I'm bound for Italy in the fall."

"The question is whether this letter may change your plans and send you there sooner."

The elder stared, took a golden box out of his waistcoat pocket, opened it, tapped it and helped himself to a pinch of snuff. The habit explained his somewhat misshapen nose. It was tobacco, not alcohol, that lent its exaggerated luster and hypertrophied outline to that organ.

"I hate changing my itinerary, once made," replied Mr. Ganns. "I'm the most orderly cuss on earth. So far as I know, there's but one man in all Italy is likely to knock my arrangments on the head; and I'll see him, if all's well, in September next."

Brendon produced Jenny's letter.

"The writer is niece of that man," he said and handed the communication to Mr. Ganns.

Peter put on his spectacles again and read slowly. Indeed Mark had never seen a letter read so slowly before. It might have been in some cryptic tongue which Mr. Ganns could only with difficulty translate. Having finished he handed the communication back to Brendon and indicated a desire for silence. Mark lit a cigarette and sat surveying the other from the corner of his eye.

At last the American spoke.

"What about you? Can you go?"

"Yes; I've appealed to my chief and got permission to pick this up again. My holiday's due and I'll go to Italy instead of Scotland. I was in it from the first, you know."

"I do know—I know all about it, from my old pal, Albert Redmayne. He wrote me the most lucid dispatch that ever I read."

"You can go, Mr. Ganns?"

"I must go, boy. Albert wants me."

"Could you get off in a week?"

"A week! To-night."

"To-night, sir! Do you reckon that Mr. Redmayne is in any danger?"

"Don't you?"

"He's forewarned and you see he's taking great precautions."

"Brendon," said Mr. Ganns, "run round and find when the night boat sails from Dover or Folkestone. We'll reach Paris to-morrow morning I guess, catch the 'Rapide' for Milan and be at the Lakes next day. You'll find we can do so. Then telegraph to this dame that we start *a week hence.* You take me?"

"You want to get there before we're expected?"

"Exactly."

"Then you do think Mr. Albert Redmayne is in danger?"

"I don't think about it. I know he is. But as this mystery is only just let loose on him and he's got his weather eye lifting, it will be all right for a few hours. Meantime we arrive."

He took another pinch of snuff and picked up the *Times.* "Will you lunch with me here in the grillroom at two o'clock?"

"With pleasure, Mr. Ganns."

"Right. And telegraph, right now, that we hope to get off in a week."

Some hours later they met again and over grilled ham and green peas Brendon reported that the boat train left Victoria at eleven and that the "Rapide" would start from Paris on the following morning at half past six.

"We reach Bevano some time after noon next day," he said, "and can either go on to Milan and then come back to Como and travel by boat to Menaggio, where Mr. Redmayne lives, or else leave the train at Bevano, take steamer on Maggiore, cross to Lugano and cross again to Como. That way we land at Menaggio. There's not much in it for time."

"We'll go that way then and I'll see the Lakes."

Peter Ganns spoke little while he partook of a light meal. He picked a fried sole and drank two glasses of white wine. Then he ate a dish of green peas and compared their virtues with green corn. He enjoyed the spectacle of Brendon's hearty appetite and bewailed his inability to join him in red meat and a pint of Burton.

"Lucky dog," he said. "When I was

young I did the like. I love food. You need never fear any rough stuff in business as long as you can eat beef and drink beer. But nowadays, I don't go into the rough stuff —too old and fat."

"Of course not, sir. You've done your bit. Nobody on your side has been at closer quarters with the big crooks or heard their guns oftener."

"That's true."

Mr. Ganns held up his left hand, which was deformed and had lost the third and little fingers.

"The last shot that Billy Benyon ever fired. A great man—Billy. I'll never see his like again."

"The Boston murderer? A genius!"

"He was. A marvelous brain. When I sent him to the chair it was like a Bushman killing an elephant."

"You're sorry for the under dog sometimes, I expect?"

"Not always; but now and again I like the bull to get the toreador; and the savage to eat the missionary."

They entered the smoking room presently and then Brendon, very much to his surprise, heard an astonishing lecture which left him with the emotions of a fourth-form schoolboy after an interview with his head master.

Mr. Ganns ordered coffee, took snuff and bade Mark listen and not interrupt.

"We're going into this thing together and I want you to get a clear hunch on it," he began, "because at present you have not. I don't say we shall see it through; but I do say that if we do the credit's going to be yours, not mine. We'll come to the Redmayne case in a minute. But first let us have a look at Mr. Mark Brendon, if it won't bore you stiff."

The other laughed.

"He's not a very impressive object, so far as this matter's concerned, Mr. Ganns."

"He is not," admitted Peter genially. "Quite the reverse in fact. And his poor showing has puzzled Mr. Brendon a good bit, and some of his superior officers also. So let us examine the situation from that angle before we get up against the case itself."

He stirred his coffee, poured a thimbleful of cognac into it, sipped it and then slid into a comfortable position in his armchair, put his big hands into his trousers pockets and regarded Mark with steady and unblinking eyes. His eyes were pale blue, deeply set and small, but still of a keen brilliancy.

"You're a detective inspector of Scotland Yard," continued Ganns, "and Scotland Yard is still the high-water mark of police organization in the world. The Central Bureau in New York is pretty close up and I've nothing but admiration for the French and Italian Secret Services; but the fact remains: The Yard is first; and you've won, and fairly won, your place there. That's a big thing and you didn't get it without some show, Brandon. But now—this Redmayne racket. You were right on the spot, hit the trail before it was cold, had everything to help you that heart of man could wish for; yet a guy who had joined the force only a week before could have done no worse. In a word, your conduct of the affair don't square with your reputation. Your dope never cut any ice from the start. And why? Because, without a doubt, you had a theory and got lost in it."

"Don't think that. I never had a theory."

"Is that so? Then failure lies somewhere else. The hopeless way you mucked this thing interests me quite a lot. Remember that I know the case inside out and I'm not talking through my hat. So now let's see how and why you barked your shins so bad.

"Now, Mark, take a cinema show and consider it. Perhaps it's going to throw some light for you. A cinema film presents two entirely different achievements. It presents ten for that matter; but we'll take just two. It shows you a white sheet with a light thrown on it; it passes that light through a series of stains and shadows and the stains are magnified by lenses before they reach the screen. A most elaborate mechanism, you see, but the spectator never thinks about all that, because the machine produces an appeal to another part of his mind altogether. He forgets sheet, lantern, film and all they are doing, in the illusion which they create.

"We accept the convention of the moving picture, the light and darkness, the tones and half tones, because these moving stains and shadows take the shape of familiar objects and tell a coherent story, showing life in action. But we know, subconsciously, all the time that it is merely an imitation of reality, as in the case of a picture, a novel or a stage play. Certain ingenious applications of science and art combined have created the

appearance of truth and told a story. Well, in the Redmayne case, certain ingenious operations have combined to tell you a story; and you have found yourself so interested in the yarn that you have quite overlooked the mechanism. But the mechanism was the first consideration and the conjurers, by distracting your attention from it, did just what they were out to do. Let us take a look at the mechanism, my son, and see where the arch crooks behind this thing bluffed you."

Brendon did not hide his emotion, but kept silence, while Mr. Ganns helped himself to a pinch of snuff.

"Now the little I've done in the world," he continued, "is thanks not so much to the deductive mind we hear such a lot about but to the synthetic mind. The linking up of facts has been my strong suit. That's the backbone of success; and where facts can't be linked up, then failure is usually the result. I never waste one moment on a theory until I've got a tough skeleton of facts back of it. It was up to you to hunt facts, Mark; and you didn't hunt facts."

"I had an encyclopedia of facts."

"Granted. But your encyclopedia began at the letter 'B,' instead of the letter 'A.' We'll return to that in a minute."

"My facts, such as they were, cannot be denied," argued Brendon a little aggrieved. "They are cast iron. My eyes and observation are trained to be exact and jealous of facts. No amount of synthesis can prevent two and one from being three, Ganns."

"On the contrary, two and one may be twenty-one, or twelve, or a half. Why jump to any conclusion? You had facts; but you did not have all the available facts—or anything like all. You tried to put on the roof before the walls were up; and, what's more, a great many of your 'cast-iron facts' were no facts at all."

"What are they then?"

"Elaborate and deliberate fictions, Mark."

At this challenge Brendon felt a hot wave of color mount his cheek; but the other was far too generous and genial a spirit ever to seek any triumph over a younger man. Neither did Brendon feel anger with Mr. Ganns even though his remarks were provocative enough. He was angry with himself. But Peter knew his power. He read the detective's mind like a book and knew that, both by his position and rank, Mark must be far too good a man to chafe at the criticism of a better than himself. He explained.

"Where I've got the pull on you, for the minute, is merely because I've been in the world a few years longer. A time's coming when you'll talk to your juniors as I talk to you; and they'll listen, with all proper respect and attention, as you are listening. When you are my age, you'll command that perfect confidence which I command. Folks can't trust youth all the way; but you'll win to it; and, believe me, in our business, there's no greater asset than the power to command absolute trust. You can't pretend to it if you haven't got it. Human nature damn soon sees through you, if you're pretending what you don't feel. But I'm playing straight across the board, Mark, as my custom is, and I know you are too sane and ambitious a lad to let false pride or self-assurance resent my calling you an ass over this thing."

"Prove it, Ganns, and I'll be the first to climb down. I know I've been an ass for that matter—knew it long ago," confessed Brendon.

"Yes, I'll prove it—that's easy. But what's going to be harder is to find out why you've been an ass. You've no right to be an ass. It's unlike your record and unlike your looks and your general make-up of mind. I mostly read a strange man's brain through his eyes; and your eyes do you justice. So perhaps you'll tell me presently where you went off your rocker. Or perhaps you don't know and I shall have to tell you—when I find out. Now take a look round, and it's dollars to doughnuts you'll begin to see the light."

He paused again, applied himself to his gold box and then proceeded.

"To put it bluntly and drop everybody else but you out of it, for the minute, you went on a false assumption from the kick-off, Brendon. To start wrong was not strange. I should have done exactly the same and nobody outside a detective story would have done differently; but to go on wrong—to pile false assumption on false assumption in face of your own reasoning powers and native wits—that strikes me as a very curious catastrophe."

"But you can't get away from facts."

"Nothing easier, surely. You said good-by to facts when you left Princetown. You don't know the facts any more than I do—or anybody but those responsible for the ap-

pearances. You have assumed that the phenomena observed by yourself and reported by other professionals and various members of the public were facts, whereas a little solid thinking must have convinced you that they couldn't be. You didn't give your reason a chance, Mark.

"Now follow me and be honest. You say certain things have happened. I say they didn't, for the very sound reason that they couldn't. I am not going to tell you the truth, because I am a long way from that myself, and I dare say you'll strike it yet before I do; but I am going to prove that a good few things you think are true, can't be —that events you take for granted never happened at all. We've got but few senses and they are easily deluded. In fact a man's a darned clumsy box of tricks at his best and I wouldn't swap a hill of beans for what my senses can assure me; but, as Nietzsche says, 'Art is with us to save us from too much truth,' so I say Reason is with us to save us from too much evidence of our senses —often false.

"Now see how reason bears on the evidence of Robert Redmayne and his trick acts since first he disappeared. A thing occurs and there are only certain ways—very limited in number—to explain it. Either Robert Redmayne killed Michael Pendean or else he did not. And if he did, he was sane or insane at the time. That much can't be denied and is granted. If he was sane, he committed the murder with a motive; and pretty careful inquiry proves that no known motive existed. I attach no importance to words, no matter who may utter them, and the fact that Mrs. Pendean herself said that her husband and her uncle were the best of friends don't weigh; but the fact that Robert Redmayne stopped at Princetown with the Pendeans for over a week in friendship and asked them to Paignton, is of some weight. I'm inclined to believe that Redmayne was perfectly friendly with Michael Pendean up to the time of the latter's disappearance and that there was no shadow of motive to explain why Redmayne did in his niece's husband. Then, assuming him to be sane, he would not have committed such a murder. The alternative is that he was mad at the time and did homicide on Pendean while out of his mind.

"But what happens to a madman after a crime of this sort? Does he get off and run over Europe as a free man for a year? Granted the resources of maniacal cunning and all the rest of it, was it ever heard that a lunatic went at large as this man did and laughed at Scotland Yard's attempts to run him down and capture him? Is it reasonable that he gets away with a corpse, disposes of it safely, returns to his lodgings, makes a meal and then, in broad daylight, vanishes off the face of the earth for six months, presently to reappear, hoodwink fresh people and commit another crime? Once more he scorns law and order, vanishes for another six months and now flaunts his red waistcoat and red mustache in Italy at his remaining brother's door. No, Mark, the man responsible for these impossible things isn't mad. And that brings me back to my preliminary alternative.

"I said just now, 'Either Robert Redmayne killed Michael Pendean or else he did not.' And we may add that either Robert Redmayne killed Bendigo Redmayne or else he did not. But we'll stick to the first proposition for the moment. And the next question, you must ask yourself is this. 'Did Robert Redmayne kill Michael Pendean?' That's where your 'facts,' as you call them, begin to sag a bit, my son. There's only one sure and certain way of knowing that a man is dead; and that is by seeing his body and convincing the law by the testimony of those who knew the man in life that the corpse belongs to him and nobody else."

"Good God! You think——"

"I think nothing. I want you to think. This is your funeral—so far; but I want you to come out like the sun from behind a cloud and surprise us yet. Just grasp that matters couldn't have happened as you supposed; and go on from there. Remember, incidentally that you are quite unable to swear that either Pendean or Bendigo Redmayne is dead at all. Chew it over. This is a very pretty thing and I believe we're up against some great rascals; but I don't even know that yet for sure. I can see many points that are vital and you are more likely to clear them than I. You've been badly handicapped, for reasons I have yet to find out; but if you think over what I told you and look into your brain pan without prejudice, maybe you'll begin to see them yourself."

"It's sporting of you to suggest that, but I can't offer any such excuse," answered Brendon thoughtfully. "Never did a man go into a case with less handicap. I even

had peculiar incentives to make good. I came into it on the top of the tide with everything under my hands. No—what you've said throws rather too bright a light on the truth. Everything looked so straightforward that I never thought the appearances hid an utterly different reality. Now I know they probably do."

"That's what I guess. Somebody palmed a marked card on you, Brendon; and you took it like a lamb. We all have in our time—even the smartest of us. Gaboriau says somewhere, 'Above all, regard with supreme suspicion that which seems probable and begin always by believing what seems incredible.' French exaggeration, of course; but there's truth in it. The obvious always makes me uncomfortable. If a thing is jumping just the way that suits you, distrust it at once. That holds of life as well as business."

They chatted for half an hour and Mr. Ganns attained his object, which was to fling his companion back to the beginning of the whole problem that had brought them together. He desired that Mark should travel the ground again with an open mind and all preconceptions put behind him.

"To-night, in the train," said Peter, "I shall ask you to give me your version of the case from the moment that Mrs. Pendean invited you to take it up—or from earlier still, if you had to do with any of the people before the catastrophe. I want the whole yarn again from your angle; and after what I've told you, it may be that as you retrace every incident, light may flash that wasn't there before."

"It is very probable indeed," admitted Mark. Then his generous nature prompted him to praise the elder.

"You're a big man, Peter Ganns, and you've said things to-day that no doubt were elementary to you, but mean a lot to me. You've made me feel mighty small—which I wouldn't own to anybody else; but you know that much without my telling you. I only differ from you on one point and that is the sequel. If this thing is ever cleared, you'll be responsible for clearing it, and I shall see you get the credit."

The other laughed and flung snuff into his purple nostrils.

"Nonsense, nonsense! I'm a back number—almost out of the game now—virtually retired to take my ease and follow my hobbies. This has nothing to do with me. I'm only going to watch you."

"A detective's hobby is generally his old business," said Mark, and Mr. Ganns admitted it. "Literature and crime, nice food, snuff and acrostics—these serve to fill my leisure and represent my vices and virtues," he confessed. "Each has its appointed place in my life; and now I'm adding travel. I've wanted to see Europe once again before I went into my shell for good; and to enjoy the society of my dear friend, Albert Redmayne, visit his home and hear his bland and childlike wisdom once more.

"The only shadow thrown by any devoted friendship, Brendon, is the knowledge that it must some day come to an end. And when I say good-by to the old bookworm I shall know that we are little likely to meet again. Yet who would deny himself the glory of friendship before the menace that it must sooner or later come to an end? A close amity and understanding, a discovery of kindred spirits, is among the most precious experiences within the reach of mankind. Love, no doubt, proves a more glorious adventure still; but lightning lurks near the rosy chariot of love, my lad, and we who win that ineffable gift must not whine if the full price has to be paid. For me cool friendship!"

He chattered amiably and Mark guessed that on his simple and human side Mr. Ganns found himself much at one with his friend the book lover. Peter's philosophy seemed to Brendon of a very mild quality and he wondered how a man who looked at human nature in a spirit so hopeful, if not credulous, should yet own those extraordinary gifts the American possessed. Upon these, surely, and not his genial and elemental faith, was his fame founded.

CHAPTER XII.

PETER TAKES THE HELM.

As the detectives traveled through night-hidden Kent and presently boarded the packet for Boulogne Mark Brendon told his story with every detail for the benefit of Mr. Ganns. Before doing so he reread his own notes and was able to set each incident of the case very clearly and copiously before the elder man. Peter never once interrupted him and at the conclusion of the narrative, complimented Mark on the recital.

"The moving picture is bright but not

comprehensive," he said, returning to a former analogy. "In fact I'm beginning to see already that no matter what we get at the end of the reel there are still a few preliminary scenes that should come in at the beginning."

"I've begun at the beginning, Mr. Ganns." But Peter shook his head.

"Half the battle is to know the beginning of a case. I'll almost go so far as to say that, given the real beginning, the end should be assured. You've not begun at the beginning of the Redmayne tangle, Mark. If you had, the clew to this labyrinth might be in your hands to-day. The more I hear and the more I think, the more firmly am I convinced that the truth we are out to find can only be discovered by a deal of hard digging in past times. There is a lot of spade work demanded and you, or I, may have to return to England to do it—unless we can get the information without the labor. But I've no reason to count on any luck of that sort."

"I should like to know the nature of the ground I failed to cover," said Brendon; but Peter was not disposed to enlighten him at present.

"Needn't bother yet," he said. "Now talk about yourself and give the case a rest."

They chatted until the dawn, by which time their train had reached Paris, and an hour or two later were on their way to Italy.

Mr. Ganns had determined to cross the Lakes and arrive unexpectedly at Menaggio. He had now turned his mind once more to the problem before him and spoke but little. He sat with his notebook open and made an occasional entry as he pursued his thoughts. Mark read newspapers and presently handed a page to Mr. Ganns.

"What you said about acrostics interested me," he began. "Here's one and I've been trying to guess it for an hour. No doubt it ought to be easy; but I expect there's a catch. Wonder if it will puzzle you."

Peter smiled and dropped his notebook.

"Acrostics are a habit of mind," he said. "You grow to think acrostically and be up to all the tricks of the trade. You soon get wise to the way that people think, who make them; and then you'll find they all think alike and all try to hoodwink you along the same lines. If you tempt me on to acrostics, you'll soon wish you had not."

Mark pointed to the puzzle.

"Try that," he said. "I can't make head or tail of it; yet I dare say you'll thrash it out if you've got the acrostic mind."

Mr. Ganns cast his eye over the puzzle. It ran thus:

When to the North you go,
The folk shall greet you so.
.....

1. Upright and light and Source of Light
2. And Source of Light, reversed, are plain.
3. A term of scorn comes into sight
   And Source of Light, reversed again.

The American regarded the problem for a minute in silence, then smiled and handed the paper back to Brendon.

"Quite neat, in its little conventional way," he said. "It's on the regular English pattern. Our acrostics are a trifle smarter, but all run into one form. The great acrostic writer isn't born. If acrostics were as big a thing as chess, then we should have masters who would produce masterpieces."

"But this one—d'you see it?"

"Milk for babes, Mark."

Mr. Ganns turned to his notebook, wrote swiftly in it, tore out the page and handed the solution to his companion.

Brendon read:

G	O	D
Omega	Alph	A
D	O	G

"If you know Knut Hamsun's stories, then you guess it instantly. If not, you might possibly be bothered," he said, while Brendon stared.

"There are two ways with acrostics," continued Peter, full of animation. "The first to make lights so difficult that they turn your hair gray till you've got them, the second—just traps—perhaps three perfectly sound answers to the same light, but the second just a shade sounder than the first, and the third a shade sounder than either of the others."

"Who makes acrostics like that?"

"Nobody. Life's too short; but if I devoted a year to a perfect acrostic, you bet your life it would take my fellow creatures a year to guess it. The same with cryptography, which we've both run up against, no doubt, in course of business. Ciphers are mostly crude; but I've often thought what a right down beauty it might be possible to make, given a little thought. The detective-story writers make very good ones sometimes; but then the smart man, who wipes everybody's eyes, always gets 'em—by pull-

ing down just the right book from the villain's library. My cryptograph won't depend on books."

Peter chattered on; then he suddenly stopped and turned to his notes again.

He looked up presently.

"The hard thing before us is this," he said, "to get into touch with Robert Redmayne, or his ghost. There are two sorts of ghosts, Mark; the real thing—in which you don't believe and concerning which I hold a watching brief; and the manufactured article. Now the manufactured article can be quite as useful to the bulls as the crooks."

"You believe in ghosts!"

"I didn't say so. But I keep an open mind. I've heard some funny things from men whose word could be relied upon."

"If this is a ghost, that's a way out, of course; but in that case why are you frightened for Albert Redmayne's life?"

"I don't say he's a ghost and of course I don't think he's a ghost; but——"

He broke off and changed the subject.

"What I'm doing now is to compare your verbal statement with Mr. Redmayne's written communication," he said, patting his book. "My old friend goes back a long way farther than you would, because he knows a lot more than you did. It's all here. I've got a value for my eyes so I had it typed. You'd better read it, however. You'll find the story of Robert Redmayne from childhood and the story of the girl, his niece, and of her dead father. Mrs. Doria's father was a rough customer—scorpions to Robert's whips apparently—a man a bit out of the common; yet he never came to open clash with the law. You never thought of Robert's dead brother, Henry, did you? But you'd be surprised how we can get at character and explain contradictions by studying the different members of a family."

"I shall like to read the report."

"It's valuable to us, because written without prejudice. That's where it beats your very lucid account, Mark. There was something running through your story, like a thread of silk in cotton, that you won't find here. It challenged me from the jump, my boy, and I'm inclined to think that in that thread of silk, I shall just find the reason of your failure, before I've wound it up."

"I don't understand you, Ganns."

"You wouldn't—not yet. But we'll change the metaphor. We'll say there was a red herring drawn across the trail, and that you took the bait and, having started right enough, presently forsook the right scent for the wrong."

"Puzzle—to find the red herring," said Mark.

Mr. Ganns smiled.

"I think I've found it," he replied. "But on the other hand, perhaps I haven't. In twenty-four hours I shall know. I hope I'm right—for your sake. If I am, then you are discharged without a stain on your character; if I'm not, then the case is black against you."

Brendon made no reply. Neither his conscience nor his wit threw any light on the point. Then Peter, turning to his notes, touched on a minor incident and showed the other that it admitted of a doubt.

"D'you remember the night you left Crow's Nest after your first visit? On the way back to Dartmouth you suddenly saw Robert Redmayne standing by a gate; and when the moonlight revealed you to him he leaped away and disappeared into the trees. Why?"

"He knew me."

"How?"

"We had met at Princetown and spoken together for some minutes by the pool in Foggintor Quarry, where I was fishing."

"That's right. But he didn't know who you were then. Even if he'd remembered meeting you six months before in the dusk at Foggintor, why should he think you were a man who was hunting him?"

Mark reflected.

"That's true," he said. "Probably he'd have leaped away from anybody that night, not wishing to be seen."

"I only raise the question. Of course it is easily explained on a general assumption that Redmayne knew every man's hand was against him. He would naturally in his hunted state fly the near approach of a man."

"Probably he didn't remember me."

"Probably; but there are possibilities about the action. He might have been warned against you."

"There was nobody to warn him. He had not yet seen Jenny or spoken with her. Who else could have warned him—except Bendigo Redmayne himself?"

Peter did not pursue the subject. He shut his book, yawned, took snuff and declared

himself ready for a meal. The long day passed and both men turned in early and slept till daybreak.

Before noon they had left Baveno on a steamer and were crossing the blue depths of Maggiore. Brendon had never seen the Italian lakes before and he fell silent in the presence of such beauty; nor did Mr. Ganns desire to talk. They sat together and watched the panorama unfold, the hills and gorges, the glory of the light over earth and water, the presence of man, his little homes upon the mountains, his little barks upon the lake.

At Luino they left the steamer and proceeded to Tresa. Beside the railroad, on this brief installment of the journey, there stood lofty palisades of close wire netting hung with bells. Peter, who had traveled here twenty years earlier, explained that they were erected as a safeguard against the eternal smuggling between Switzerland and Italy.

" 'Only man is vile' in fact," he concluded and woke a passing wave of bitterness in his companion's spirit.

"And our life is concerned with his vileness," Mark answered. "I hate myself sometimes and wish I was a grocer or a linen draper or even a soldier or sailor. It's degrading to let your life's work depend on the wickedness of your fellow creatures, Ganns. I hope a time is coming when our craft will be as obsolete as bows and arrows."

The elder laughed.

"What does Goethe say somewhere?" he asked. "That if inan endures for a million years, he'll never lack for obstacles to give him trouble or the pressure of need to make him conquer them. Then there's Montaigne —you ought to read Montaigne—wisest of men. He'll tell you that human wisdom has never reached the perfection of conduct that itself prescribes; and could it arrive there, it would still dictate to itself others beyond. In a word, the world will never be short of crooks while human nature lasts, nor yet of men trained to lay them by the heels. Crime will last, in some form or other, as long as men do; and as the criminal gets cleverer, so must we."

"I think better of human nature," answered Mark and his friend applauded him.

"Quite right, my boy—at your age," he said.

They wound over Lugano and came in evening light to its northern shore. Then once more they took train, climbed aloft and fell at last to Menaggio on Como's brink.

"Now," said Peter, "I guess we'll leave our traps here and beat it to Villa Pianezzo right away. We'll scare the old boy a bit, but can say things all fell right and so we found that we could jog along a week before we thought to do so. Not a word that I think him to be in danger."

Within twenty minutes their one-horse vehicle had reached Mr. Redmayne's modest home and they found three persons just about to take an evening meal. Simultaneously there appeared Mr. Redmayne, his niece and Giuseppe Doria; and while Albert, Italian fashion, embraced Mr. Ganns and planted a kiss upon his cheek, Jenny greeted Mark Brendon and he looked once more into her eyes.

There had come new experiences to her and they did not fail of the man's observation. She smiled indeed and flushed and proclaimed her wonder and admiration at the speed which had brought him across Europe to her uncle's succor; but even in her animation and excitement the new expression persisted. It set Mark's heart throbbing vigorously and told him that perchance he might yet be useful to her. For there hung a shadow of melancholy on Jenny's face that even smiles could not dispel.

Doria held back a little while his wife welcomed her uncle's friend; then he came forward, declared his pleasure at meeting Mark again and his belief that time would soon reveal the truth and set a period to the sinister story of the wanderer.

Mr. Redmayne was overjoyed at seeing Ganns and quite forgot the object of his visit in the pleasure of receiving him.

"It has been my last and abiding ambition to introduce you to Virgilio Poggi, dear Peter, so that you, he and I may sit together, hear each other's voices and look into each other's eyes. And now this will happen. Thus the unhappy spirit who wanders upon the hills has unconsciously accomplished a beautiful thing."

Jenny and Assunta had hastily prepared for the visitors and now all sat at supper and Brendon learned how rooms were already taken for him and Mr. Ganns at the Hotel Victoria.

"That's as may be," he declared to Doria's wife. "You may find that Mr. Ganns will prefer to stop here. He takes the lead in this affair. Indeed there was no great rea-

son why I should have intruded again, where I have failed so often."

Jenny looked at him softly.

"I am very thankful you have come," she said—in a whisper for his ear alone.

"Then I am very thankful too," he replied.

After a cheerful meal Peter absolutely declined to cross Como and visit Signor Poggi on the instant.

"I've had enough of your lakes for one day, Albert," he announced, "and I want to talk business and get a rough, general idea of what more is known than Mark and I already know. Now what has happened since you wrote, Mrs. Doria?"

"Tell them, Giuseppe," directed Mr. Redmayne.

"Your gift—the gold box—take a pinch," said Peter holding out his snuff to the old bookworm; but the master of Villa Pianezzo refused and lighted a cigar.

"I will have smoke rather than dust, my precious Peter," he said.

"The man has been seen twice since you heard from Jenny," began Doria. "Once I met him face to face on the hill, where I walked alone to reflect upon the situation; and once—the night before last—he came here. Happily Mr. Redmayne's room overlooks the lake and the garden walls are high, so he could not reach it; but the bedroom of Mr. Redmayne's man, Ernesto Marzelli, is upon the side that stands up to the road.

"Robert Redmayne came at two o'clock, flung pebbles at the window, wakened Ernesto and demanded to be let in to see his brother. But the Italian had been warned exactly what to say and do if such a thing happened. He speaks English well and told the unfortunate man that he must appear by day. He mentioned a certain place, a mile from here in a secluded valley—a little bridge that spans a stream—and directed Robert to await his brother at that spot on the following day at noon.

"Having heard this, the red man departed without more words and Mr. Redmayne, greatly courageous, kept the appointment that he had made, taking only me with him. We were there before midday and waited until after two o'clock. But nobody came to us and we saw neither man nor woman.

"For my own part I feel very certain that Robert Redmayne was hidden near at hand, and that he would have come out quickly enough had his brother been alone; but of course Uncle Alberto would not go alone and we would not have allowed him to do so in any case."

Peter listened intently to these words and his eyes were fixed upon Doria while the Italian spoke.

"And what of your meeting with him?" he asked.

"That was clearly an accident on Robert Redmayne's part. I happened to be walking, deep in thought near the spot where my wife first saw him and, rounding a corner, I suddenly confronted the man sitting on a rock by the path. He started at my footfall, looked up, clearly recognized me, hesitated and then leaped into the bushes. I endeavored to follow but he distanced me. He is harboring aloft there and may be in touch with some charcoal burner above in the mountains. He was strong and agile and moved swiftly."

"How was he dressed?"

"Exactly as I saw him dressed at Crow's Nest when Mr. Bendigo Redmayne disappeared."

"I should like to know his tailor," said Mr. Ganns dryly. "That's a useful suit he wears."

Then he asked a question that seemed to bear but little on the subject.

"Plenty of smugglers in the mountains I suppose?"

"Plenty," answered Giuseppe, "and my heart is with them."

"They dodge the customs officers and get across the frontier by night sometimes I dare say."

"If I stop here long enough, I shall be better in a position to know," replied the other cheerfully. "My heart, Signor Ganns, is with these boys. They are a brave and valiant people and their lives are very dangerous and thrilling and interesting. They are heroes and not villains at all. Our woman, Assunta, is the widow of a free trader. She has good friends among them."

"Now, Peter, tell us all that is in your mind," urged Mr. Redmayne as he poured out five little glasses of golden liqueur. "You hold that I go in some peril from this unhappy man?"

"I do think so, Albert. And as to my mind, it is not by any means made up. You say, 'catch Robert Redmayne first and decide afterward.' Yes; but I will tell you an interesting thing. We are not going to catch Robert Redmayne."

He looked, not at his friend, but at Giuseppe Doria as he spoke and the Italian returned a blank stare and shrugged his shoulders.

"You throw up the sponge, signor?"

"Surely you have caught everybody you ever tried to catch, Peter?" asked Redmayne.

"There is a reason why I shall not catch him," replied Ganns, sipping from his little Venetian glass.

"Can it be that you think him not a man at all but a ghost, Mr. Ganns?" asked Jenny, round-eyed.

"He has already suggested a ghost," said Mark, "but there are different sorts of ghosts, Jenny. I see that, too. There are ghosts of flesh and blood."

"If he is a ghost, he is a very solid one indeed," declared Doria.

"He is," admitted Peter. "And yet none the less a ghost in my opinion. Now let us generalize. It needn't be a sound maxim to seek the person who benefits by a crime —not always—for often enough the actual legatee of a murdered man may have had nothing whatever to do with his death. Mr. Redmayne, for example, will inherit Mr. Bendigo Redmayne's estate when leave to assume his death is granted by the law; and Mrs. Doria will inherit her late husband's estate in due course. But it isn't suggested that your wife killed Mr. Pendean, Signor Doria; and it isn't suggested that my friend here killed his brother.

"None the less, it's a safe question to ask what a suspected man gains by his crime. And, if we put that question, we find that Robert Radmayne gained nothing whatever by killing Michael Pendean—nothing, that is, but the satisfaction of a sudden, overpowering lust to do so. Pendean's murder made Redmayne a vagabond, deprived him of his income and resources, set every man's hand against him and left him a wanderer haunted by the gallows. Yet, while he evaded the law in a manner that can only be called miraculous he made no attempt to avert suspicion from himself. On the contrary he courted suspicion, took his victim to Berry Head on a motor bicycle and did a thousand things which defiantly proclaim him a lunatic—but for one overmastering fact. A lunatic must have been caught: he was not.

"He vanishes from Paignton, to reappear at Crow's Nest; he takes another life; he commits another senseless murder on the person of his own brother and once more disappears, leaving not a clew. Now in face of these absurdities we have a right to brush aside the apparent facts and ask ourselves a very vital question. What is that question, Signor Doria?"

"It is one I have already asked myself," replied Giuseppe. "It is one I have asked my wife. It is a question, however, which I cannot answer, because I do not know enough. There is nobody in the world who knows enough—unless it be Robert Redmayne himself."

Ganns nodded and took snuff.

"Good," he said.

"But what is the question?" asked Albert Redmayne. "What is the question Giuseppe puts to himself and you put to yourself, Peter? We, who are not so clever, do not see the question."

"The question, my friend, is this. Did Robert Redmayne murder Michael Pendean and Bendigo Redmayne? And you can ask yourself a still more vital question. Are these two men dead at all?"

Jenny shivered violently. She put out her hand instinctively and it clutched Mark Brendon's arm where he sat next to her. He looked at her and saw that her eyes were fixed with strange doubt and horror upon Doria; while the Italian himself showed a considerable amount of surprise at Peter's conclusion.

"Corpo di Bacco! Then——" he asked.

"Then we may be said to enlarge the scope of the inquiry a good deal," answered Mr. Ganns mildly. He turned to Jenny.

"This is calculated to flutter you, young lady, when you think of your second marriage," he said. "But we're not asserting anything; we're only just having a friendly chat. Facts are what we want; and if the fact is that Robert Redmayne didn't kill Michael Pendean, that doesn't mean for a moment that Mr. Pendean isn't dead. You must not let theories frighten you now, since you certainly did not allow them to do so in the past."

"More than ever is it necessary that my poor brother should be secured," declared Albert. "It is interesting to remember," he added, "that my brother, Bendigo, first thought he had to do with a ghost when the arrival of his brother was reported to him. He was very superstitious, as sailors often are, and not until Jenny had seen and spoken

with her uncle did Bendigo believe that a living man wanted to see him."

"The fact that it was actually Robert Redmayne and no ghost is proved by that incident, Ganns," added Mark Brendon. "That the man who came to Crow's Nest was in truth Robert Redmayne we can rest assured through Mrs. Doria, who knew her uncle exceedingly well. It only remains to prove with equal certainty that the wanderer here is Redmayne and one can feel very little question that he is. It is of course marvelous that he escaped discovery and arrest; but it may not be as marvelous as it seems. Stranger things have happened. And who else could it be in any case?"

"That reminds me," replied Ganns. "There has been mention made of Mr. Bendigo's log. He kept a careful diary—so it was reported. I should like to have that book, Albert, for in your statement you tell me that you preserved it."

"I did and it is here," replied his friend. "That and dear Bendigo's 'Bible,' as I call it—a copy of 'Moby Dick'—I brought away. As yet I have not consulted the diary—it was too intimate and distressed me. But I was looking forward to doing so."

"The parcel containing both books is in a drawer in the library. I'll get them," said Jenny. She left the apartment where they sat overlooking the lake and returned immediately with a parcel wrapped in paper.

"Why do you need this, Peter?" asked Albert, and while he was satisfied with the reply, Brendon was not.

"It's always interesting to get a thing from every angle," answered Mr. Ganns. "Your brother may have something to tell us."

But whether Bendigo's diary might have proved valuable remained a matter of doubt, for when Jenny opened the parcel it was not there. A blank book and the famous novel were all the parcel contained.

"But I packed it myself," said Mr. Redmayne. "The diary was bound exactly as this volume is bound, yet it is certain that I made no mistake, for I opened my brother's log and read a page or two before completing the parcel."

"He had bought a new diary only the last time he was in Dartmouth," said Doria. "I remember the incident. I asked him what he was going to put into the book and he said that his log was just running out and he needed a new volume."

"You are sure that you did not mistake the old, full book for the new, empty one, Albert?" asked his friend.

"I cannot be positive, of course, but I feel no shadow of doubt in my own mind."

"Then the one has been substituted for the other by somebody else. That is a very interesting fact, if true."

"Impossible," declared Jenny. "There was nobody to do such a thing. Who could have felt any interest in poor Uncle Bendigo's diary, but ourselves?"

Mr. Ganns considered.

"The answer to that question might save us a very great deal of trouble," he said. "But there may be no answer. Your uncle may be mistaken. On the other hand I have never known him to be mistaken over any question involving a book."

He took up the empty volume and turned its pages; then Brendon declared they must be going.

"I'm afraid we're keeping Mr. Redmayne out of bed, Ganns," he hinted. "Our kits have already been sent to the hotel and as we've got a mile to walk we'd better be moving. Are you never sleepy?"

He turned to Jenny.

"I don't believe he has closed his eyes since we left England, Mrs. Doria."

But Peter did not laugh: he appeared to be deep in thought. Suddenly he spoke and surprised them.

"I'm afraid you're going to find me the sort of friend that sticketh closer than a brother, Albert. In a word, somebody must go to the hotel and bring back my traveling bag, for I'm not going to lose sight of you again till we've got this thing straightened out."

Mr. Redmayne was delighted.

"How like you, Peter—how typical of your attitude! You shall not leave me, dear friend. You shall sleep in the apartment next my own. It contains many books, but there shall be my great couch moved from my own bedroom and set up there in half an hour. It is as comfortable as a bed."

He turned to his niece.

"Seek Assunta and Ernesto and set the apartment in order for Mr. Ganns, Jenny; and you, Giuseppe, will take Mr. Brendon to the Hotel Victoria and bring back Peter's luggage."

Jenny, expressing her delight at this arrangement, hastened to do her uncle's bidding, while Brendon made his farewell and

promised to return at an early hour on the following morning.

"My plans for to-morrow," said Peter, "subject to Mark's approval, are these. I suggest that Signor Doria should take Brendon to the scene in the hills where Robert Redmayne appeared; while, by her leave, I have a talk with Mrs. Jenny here. I'm going to take her over a bit of the past and she must be brave and give me all her attention."

He started and listened, his ear cocked toward the lake.

"What's that shindy?" he asked. "Sounds like distant cannon."

Doria laughed.

"Only the summer thunder on the mountains, signor," he answered.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SUDDEN RETURN TO ENGLAND.

A successful detective needs above all the power to see both sides of any problem, as it affects those involved in it. Nine times out of ten there is but one side, yet men have often gone to the chair or gallows because their fellow men failed in this particular—followed the line of least resistance and pursued the obvious and patent conclusions to an end only logical upon a false premise.

Peter Ganns did not lack this perspicuity. It was visible in his big face to any student of physiognomy. He smiled with his mouth, but his eyes were grave—never ironical, never satirical, but always set in a stern, not unkindly expression. They were watchful yet tolerant—the eyes of one versed in the weakness as well as the nobility of human nature. He could measure the average, modest intelligence of his fellow creatures as well as the heights of genius to which man's intellect might sometimes attain. His own rare powers, centered in an extraordinary judgment of character and wide experience of the human comedy, had set the seal upon his eyes while graving something like a smile within his full, Egyptian lips.

He sat next day and spoke to Albert Redmayne on a little gallery that extended from the dining room of the villa and overhung the lake. Here, for half an hour, he talked and listened until Jenny should be ready for him.

The elder expounded his simple philosophy.

"I was long out of heart with God, while striving to keep my faith in man, Peter," he declared. "But now I see more clearly and believe that it is only by faith in our Maker we can understand ourselves. 'Better' is ever the enemy of 'good,' and 'best' is a golden word only to be used for martyrs and heroes."

"Men do their best for two things, Albert," replied Mr. Ganns. "For love and for hate; and without these tremendous incitements not the least or greatest among us can reach the limit of his powers."

"True, and perhaps that explains the present European attitude. The war has left us incapable of any supreme activity. Enthusiasm is dead; consequently the enthusiasm of good will lacks from our councils and we drift without any great guiding hand upon the tiller of destiny. One sees no great men. There are, of course, leaders, great by contrast with those they lead; but history will declare us a generation of dwarfs and show how, for once, man stood at a crisis of his destiny when those mighty enough to face it failed to appear. Now that is a situation unparalleled in my knowledge of the past. Until now, the hour has always brought the men."

"We drift, as you say," answered Ganns, dusting his white waistcoat. "We are suffering from a sort of universal shell shock, Albert; and from my angle of observation I perceive how closely crime depends upon nerves. Indifference in the educated takes the shape of lawlessness in the masses; and the breakdown of our economical laws provokes to fury and despair. Our equilibrium is gone in every direction. For example the balance between work and recreation has been destroyed. This restless condition will take a decade of years to control and the present craving for that excitement to which we were painfully accustomed during the years of war is leaving a marked and dangerous brand on the minds of the rising generation. From this restlessness to criminal methods of satisfying it is but a step.

"We are sick; our state is pathological. What we need is a renewal of the discipline that enabled us to confront and conquer in the past struggle. We must drill our nerves, Albert, and strive to restore a balanced and healthy outlook for those destined to run the world in future. Men are not by nature lawless. They are rational beings in the lump; but civilization, depending as it does

on creed and greed, has made no steps as yet, through education, to arrest our superstition and selfishness."

"Once let the light of good will in upon this chaos and we should see order beginning to return," declared Mr. Redmayne. "The problem is how to promote good will, my dear friend. This should be the great and primal concern of religion; for what, after all, is the basis of all morality? Surely to love our neighbor as ourself."

They set the world right together and their thoughts drifted into a region of benignant aspirations. Then came Jenny and presently the detective followed her into a garden of flowers behind Villa Pianezzo.

"Giuseppe and Mr. Brendon have gone to the hills," she said. "And now I am ready to talk to you, Mr. Ganns. Don't fear to hurt me. I am beyond hurting. I have suffered more in the past year than I should have thought it possible to suffer and keep sane."

He looked at her beautiful face intently. It was certainly sad enough, but to his eye, beneath the lines of sorrow, lay an anxiety that concerned neither the past nor the future, but the immediate present. She was apparently unhappy in her new life.

"Show me the silkworms," he said.

They entered the lofty shed rising above a thicket behind the villa—a shuttered apartment where twilight reigned. The place was fitted with shelves to the ceiling and between the caterpillar trays tall branches of brushwood ascended to the roof. Out of the cool gloom of this silent chamber there glimmered, as it seemed, a thousand little lamps dotted everwhere on the sticks and walls and ceiling. Not a place where a worm could climb or spin was unadorned, for the oval, shining cocoons, scattered like small, ripe fruit upon the twigs, made a delicate light on every side through the somber dusk. Mr. Redmayne's silkworms were descended, through countless generations, from those historic eggs stolen by Nestorian pilgrims from China and carried thence secretly in hollow canes to Constantinople some thirteen hundred years before.

The caterpillars had nearly all done their work and completed their silken cases; but a couple of hundred fat, white monsters, each some three inches long, still remained in the trays and they fastened greedily on fresh mulberry leaves that Jenny brought them. Others were but beginning their shrouds. They had sketched them and appeared to be busily weaving in the preliminary bag made of transparent and glittering filament. A few of the creatures began to turn yellow, though as yet they had not devoured their last meal. Jenny picked them up and held them to the morning light.

"Never mummy was wound so exquisitely as the silkworm's chrysalis," said Peter; and Jenny chatted cheerfully about the silk industry and its varied interests, but found that Mr. Ganns could tell her much more than she was able to tell him.

He listened with attention, however, and only by gradual stages deflected conversation to the affairs that had brought him. Presently he indicated an aspect of her own position arising from his words on the previous night.

"Did it ever strike you it was a bold thing to marry within little more than nine months of your first husband's disappearance, Mrs. Doria?" he asked.

"It did not; but I shivered when I heard you talking yesterday. And call me 'Jenny,' not 'Mrs. Doria,' Mr. Ganns."

"Love has always been very impatient of law," he declared, "but the fact is that unless proof of an exceptional character can be submitted, the law is not prepared to say of any man that he is dead until seven years have passed from the last record of him among the living. Now there is rather a serious difference between seven years and nine months, Jenny."

"Looking back I seem to see nothing but a long nightmare. 'Nine months!' It was a century. Don't think that I didn't love my first husband; I adored him and I adore his memory; but the loneliness and the sudden magic of this man! Besides all that, surely none could question the hideous proofs of what happened? I accepted Michael's death as a fact which need not enter the calculation. My God! Why did not somebody hint to me that I was wrong to wed?"

"Did anybody have a chance?"

She looked at him with a face full of unhappiness.

"You are right. I was possessed. I did wrong; but do not fear that I have escaped the punishment."

He guessed her meaning and led her away from the subject of her husband.

"Tell me, if it won't hurt you too much, a little about Michael Pendean."

But she appeared not to hear him. Her

thoughts were concerned entirely with herself and her present situation.

"I can trust you. You are wise and know life. I have not married a man, but a devil!"

Her hands clenched and he saw a flash of her teeth in the gloom of the silent chamber.

He took snuff and listened, while the unfortunate woman raved of her error.

"I hate him. I loathe him," she cried and heaped hard words on the head of the debonair Giuseppe. She broke off presently, panted and then subsided in tears.

Peter studied her very carefully yet, for the moment, showed no great sympathy. His answer was tonic rather than sedative.

"You must keep your nerve and be patient," he said. "Even Italy's a free country in some respects; you need not stop with Doria if you don't want to."

"Might my husband be alive? Do you think it possible that he might be alive? I think of him as my husband again, now that this midsummer madness is over. I have much to say to you. I want you—I pray you—to help me as well as my uncle. But he must come first of course."

"We shall possibly find that in helping him we are helping you," answered Peter. "But you ask a question and I always answer a question when it's reasonable to do so. No, Jenny, I cannot think that Michael Pendean is alive. Let us go out into the air; it is stuffy here. But remember I do not say that he is not alive. It was certainly man's blood that an unknown hand shed at Foggintor; it was man's blood in the cave under the cliffs near Mr. Bendigo Redmayne's home; but as yet we know no more, with absolute certainty, who lost it than who spilled it. That is the large problem I am here to solve. And perhaps, if you want to help me, you can do so. This at any rate I promise you: if you help me you will also help yourself and your Uncle Albert."

"He is in danger?"

"Consider the situation. In process of time the estates of the vanished men, Albert's two brothers, will devolve upon him. That means, I suppose, that sooner or later the bulk of the money must be yours. Albert is frail. I do not think he will be a long-lived man. What follows? Surely that you—the last of the Redmaynes—will inherit everything. And you are married. Here is a proposition, then. And what have you just told me? That your husband is 'a devil,' and that you hate him since you have seen a glimpse of his heart. These facts cannot be entirely separated. They may or may not be closely allied."

She looked at him steadfastly.

"I have only thought of Giuseppe Doria in connection with myself, never in connection with Uncle Bendigo and Uncle Albert. Uncle Bendigo died—if he is dead—before I consented to marry Doria—before he asked me to do so. But keep my mistake from my uncle. I don't want him to know I'm miserable."

"You must decide where to put your truth, my dear," answered Mr. Ganns. "Otherwise you may find yourself on dangerous ground."

She weighed her answer.

"You are thinking of something," she said.

"Naturally. What you have told me as to your relations with your Italian husband offers considerable food for thought. But consider very carefully. You cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. How many a bad man and, for that matter, how many an innocent man has come to grief in the attempt. Tell me this. Does Giuseppe know that you no longer love him?"

She shook her head.

"I have hid it. The time has not come to let him know that. He would be revenged, and God knows what form his revenge might take. Till I have escaped from him he must not dream that I have changed."

"That's your feeling? Well, the questions are two. Do you know enough about him to assist and justify your escape and, if you do, are you prepared to confide your knowledge to me?"

"I do not know enough," she answered. "He is a very clever man under his lighthearted and easy-going way. He is, I believe, faithful to me and he takes care never to be unkind in the presence or hearing of a third person. But this I think: that he knows very well what you've just told me—that all the Redmayne money must sooner or later be mine."

"And yet he behaves to you as though he were a devil? That's not very clever of him."

"I can't explain. Perhaps I have said too much. His cruelty is very subtle. Italian husbands——"

"I know all about Italian husbands. We'll talk over this again when you have had time to think a little. There's a reason for your hate and distrust of him no doubt. You would not pretend such emotions. He's faithful, you say, so perhaps that reason is linked with knowledge you do not care to impart to me—or anybody? Perhaps it embraces the mystery man we want to catch—Robert Redmayne? Does Doria know more about him than you and I do? And you have found it out? There may be quite a number of things that make you hate Doria. So think it over and consider if to hear any of them would help me."

Jenny looked at Peter with profound interest.

"You are a very wonderful man, Mr. Ganns."

"Not a bit—only practiced in the jig-saw puzzle we call life. Attach no special importance to what I have just said or the possibilities I have just thrown out. I may be altogether wrong. I have only at present your word that Signor Doria is not a kind husband. I may not agree with you when I know him better. You may not be a judge. My mind is quite open on the subject, because I have often found that a wife knows much less about her husband's character than do other people. Remember that hate blinds quite as frequently as love; and love turned to hate is a transformation so complicated that it takes a cunning psychoanalyst to interpret it. Therefore to know the importance of your fears, I must know more about you yourself.

"We'll leave it at that—and all you need think of me at present is that I want to serve you. But I am an old bird, while Brendon, on the contrary, is still young; and youth understands youth. Remember that in him you have a steadfast and faithful friend. I shan't be jealous if you can tell him more than you can tell me."

Jenny's lips moved and were again motionless. He perceived that she had started to say one thing, but would now say another. She took his big hand and pressed it between her own.

"God bless you!" she said. "If I have you for a friend, I am content. Mr. Brendon has been very good to me—very, very good. But you are more likely to serve Uncle Albert than he."

They parted presently and Jenny returned to the house while the detective, finding a comfortable chair under an oleander bush, sniffed the fragrance of the red blossom above him, regretted that his vice had largely spoiled his sense of smell, took snuff and opened his notebook. He wrote in it steadily for half an hour almost without a pause; then he rose and joined Albert Redmayne in the library.

The elder was full of an approaching event.

"To think that to-day you and Poggi meet!" he exclaimed. "Peter, my dear man, if you do not love Virgilio I shall be broken-hearted."

"Albert," answered Mr. Ganns. "I have already loved Poggi for two years. Those you love, I love; and that means that our friendship is on a very high plane indeed; for it often happens that nothing puzzles us more infernally than our friends' friends. In our case, however, so entirely do we see alike in everything that matters that it is beyond possibility you should be devoted to anybody who does not appeal to me. By the same token, how much do you love your niece?"

Mr. Redmayne did not answer instantly.

"I love her," he replied at length, "because I love everything that is lovely; and without prejudice I do honestly believe she is about the loveliest young woman I have ever seen. Her face more nearly resembles the Venus of Botticelli than any living being in my experience; and that is the sweetest face I know. Therefore I love her outside very much indeed, Peter.

"But when it comes to her inside, I feel not so sure. That is natural for this reason, that I do not know her at all well yet. I have seldom seen her in youth or had any real acquaintance with her until now. When I know her better it is pretty certain that I shall love her all through; but one must consider that I can never know her very well, because the gap in age denies perfect understanding. Nor does she come to me as it were alone. Her life turns to her husband. She is still a bride and adores him."

"You have no reason to think her an unhappy bride?"

"None whatever. Doria is amazingly handsome and attractive—the type a woman generally worships. I grant that Italo-English marriages are not remarkable for their success; but—well, no doubt Jenny's husband is worldly-wise. He has everything to gain by being good, everything to lose by be-

having badly. Jenny is rather a proud girl. She has qualities. There is a distinction about her. She would stand no nonsense and she knows that I would stand no nonsense. I hope to see much of her, though it appears that their home will be in Turin."

"He has abandoned his ambitions to recover the family estates and title and so forth? Brendon told me all about that."

"Entirely. Besides it seems that one of your countrymen has secured the castle at Dolceacqua and bought the title too. Giuseppe was very entertaining on the subject. But I'm afraid he loves idleness."

Before luncheon Mark Brendon returned from the hills with his guide. They had seen nothing of Robert Redmayne and appeared to be rather weary of one another's company.

"You must impart your wisdom and gay spirit to Signor Marco," said Giuseppe to Mr. Ganns when Brendon was out of earshot with Jenny. "He is a very dull dog and does not even listen when I talk. Not simpatico I suppose. He will never find out anything. Will you, I wonder? Have you any ideas? A new broom sweeps clean, as you say."

"I must suck your brains before you suck mine, Giuseppe," said Peter genially. "I want to hear what you think of this man in the red waistcoat. We must have a talk."

"Gladly, gladly, Signor Peter. I have seen him now many times—in England three—four times—in Italy once. He is aways the same."

"Not a spook?"

"A spirit? No. Very much alive. But how he lives and what he lives for—who can tell?"

"You do not fear on account of Mr. Redmayne?"

"I much fear on account of him," answered Doria. "And when my wife told me that she had seen him I telegraphed from Turin that they should be careful and run no risk whatever of a meeting. Jenny's uncle is frightened when he thinks about it; but we keep his thoughts away as much as possible. It is bad for him to fear. For the love of Heaven, good signor, get to the bottom of it if you can. My idea is to set a trap for this red man and catch him like a fox or other wild creature."

"A very cute notion," declared Peter. "We'll rope you in, Giuseppe. Between you and me and the post, our friend Brendon has been barking up the wrong tree, you know. But if you and I and he, together, can't clean this up, then we're not the men I take us for."

Doria laughed.

" 'Deeds are men; words are women,' " he said. "There has been too much chatter about this; but now you are come, we shall see things accomplished."

It was not until after the midday meal that Ganns and Mark were able to get speech together. Then, promising to return in time to meet Virgilio Poggi, who would cross the lake for tea, the two men sauntered beside Como and exchanged experiences. The interview proved painful to the younger, for he found that Peter's doubts were cleared in certain directions. Brendon, indeed, led up to his own chastening very directly.

"It makes me mad," he said, "to see the way that beggar treats his wife—Doria I mean. Pearls before swine. I never hoped much from it; but to think they have only been married three months!"

"How does he treat her?"

"Well, one isn't blind to her appearance. The cause is, of course, concealed; the effect, very visible to my eyes. She's far too plucky to whisper her troubles; but she can't hide her face, where they may be read."

Mr. Ganns said nothing and Mark spoke again.

"Do you begin to see any light?"

"Not much upon the main problem. A minor feature has cleared, however. I know the rock you split upon, my son. You were in love with Jenny Pendean from the moment you knew that she was a widow. And you're in love with Jenny Doria now. And to be in love with one of the principal figures in a case is to handicap yourself out of the hunt as far as that case is concerned."

Brendon stared but made no answer.

"Human nature has its limits, Mark, and love's a pretty radical passion. No man ever did or could do himself justice in any task whatever while he was blinded with love of a woman. Love's a jealous party and won't stand competitors. So it follows that if you were in love anyway you wouldn't be at your best; and how much more so when the lady in your case was the lady in *the* case?"

"You wrong me," answered the other rather hotly. "That is really unreasonable. Emphatically the incident made no sort of difference, for the very good reason that she was not in the case, save as an innocent

sufferer from the evil actions of others. She helped me rather than hindered me. She's the soul of truth and honesty. Despite all she was called to endure she kept her nerve from the first and fought her own grief that she might make everything clear to me. If I did come to love her, that made no sort of difference to my attitude to my work."

"But it made a mighty lot of difference to your attitude to her; and because you say and believe the lady is the soul of truth, it doesn't follow that's the last view possible. However, your word runs with me, Mark, and I'm very willing to attach all due importance to your conclusions. But I am not in the least willing to accept your estimate of character without further proofs. You mustn't feel it personal. Only remember that I'm not in this case for my health, and, so far, I have no reason whatever to eliminate anybody. Why, now, do you assume that Redmayne's niece is incapable of falsehood?"

"Because you know some things without proof and are proud to take them on trust," answered Brendon. "Have I not seen her under affliction and in situations unspeakably difficult? She has been marvelously brave. After her own great sorrow her only thought was her unfortunate relations. She buried her own crushing grief——"

"And in nine months was married to another man."

"She is young and you have seen for yourself what Doria is. Who can tell what measures he took to win her? All I know is that she has made an appalling mistake. Perhaps I feel it rather than know it; but I'm positive."

"Well," said Peter quietly. "It's no good playing about. At a seemly opportunity, after her first husband died, I guess you told her you loved her and asked her to marry you. She declined; but it didn't end there. She's got you on a string at this moment."

"That's not true, Ganns. You don't understand me—or her."

"Well, I do not ask much; but since I have picked up this thing for Albert's sake, there's one point on which I insist. If you are going to take Mrs. Doria into your confidence and assume that she has no wish or desire other than to see justice done and the mystery cleared, then I can't work with you, Mark."

"You wrong her, but that doesn't matter, I suppose. What does matter is that you wrong me," said Brendon, with fierce eyes fixed upon the elder. "I've never thought or dreamed of confiding in her or anybody else. I've nothing to confide for that matter. I did love her and I do love her and I'm deeply concerned and distressed to see the mess she's in with this blighter; but I'm a detective first and last and always over this business; and I have some credit in my painful profession."

"Good. Remember that, whatever happens. And keep your temper with me, too, because nothing is gained by losing it. I'm not saying a word against Mrs. Doria, but inasmuch as she is Mrs. Doria and inasmuch as Doria is as yet very much an unknown quantity to you and me, you must understand that I'm not going to allow any appearances to blind my eyes or control my actions. Now if a woman hints or indicates that she is unhappily married, then nothing is more natural than that a man like yourself, who entertains the tenderest feelings to the woman, should believe what he sees and regard her melancholy as genuine. It looks all right; but suppose, for their own ends, that Jenny Doria and her spouse want to create this impression? Suppose that their object is to lead you and me to imagine that they are not friends?"

"My God! What would you make of her?"

"It isn't what I'd make of her. It's what she really is. And that I'm going to find out, because a great deal more may depend upon it than you appear to imagine."

"A moment's reflection will surely convince you that neither she nor Doria——"

"Wait, wait! I'm only saying that we must not allow character, fancied or real, to dam any channel of thought. If reflection convinces me that it is impossible for Doria to be in collusion with Robert Redmayne, I shall admit it. As yet that is not so. There are several very interesting points. Have you asked yourself why Bendigo Redmayne's diary is missing?"

"I have—and could not see how it was likely to contain anything dangerous to Robert Redmayne."

Peter did not enlighten him for the moment. Then he spoke and changed the subject.

"I must find out several fundamental facts and I certainly shall not learn them here," he said. "Next week in all probability, un-

less something unexpected happens to prevent it, I must go to England."

"Can't I go?"

"I shall want you here; but our understanding must be complete before I leave."

"Trust me for that," said Mark.

"I do."

"You want me to look after Mr. Redmayne?"

"No; I look after him. I haven't broke it to him yet; but he's going with me."

Brendon considered and his thought flushed his cheek.

"You can't trust him with me, then?"

"It's not you. It's somebody else. Mind, I'm only guessing; but, anyway, the risk is too considerable. I must go, because, until I've been, I'm in the dark over some vital matters that have got to be cleared and can only be cleared in England. Vital in my opinion that is. But in the meantime Albert is not the sort of man to be trusted alone, for the reason that he has no idea whence the danger threatens; nor can he be trusted with you either, because you are equally ignorant."

"But if the danger lies with Doria, as you seem to hint, how can you or anybody else save Mr. Redmayne from it? He likes Doria. The beggar amuses him and is tactful and clever to please where and when he wants to please. He's been trying to please me. To-morrow he'll try to please you."

"Yes—a very light-hearted, agreeable chap—and clever as you say. But I don't know yet whether what you and I see is the real Doria."

"Possibly not."

Ganns considered and then proceeded.

"See here, I must give you a clear understanding. I'm so used to playing a lone hand and saying nothing till I can say everything that I may be tempted to treat you in a way you don't deserve. Now I'll tell you how the cat's jumping. She's jumping in the dark—I'll allow that; but what I seem to see dimly is this: that Giuseppe Doria knows a great deal more about the man in the red waistcoat than we do. I hardly think Doria is the man to murder my old friend; but I'm not so sure that if somebody else wanted to take the step Doria would prevent him.

"If Albert disappeared, you've got to remember that Doria's wife would be the worldly gainer. Why anybody should want to kill Albert to put money into Jenny's pocket I can't say. But it's a feature; and while I'm in England I'll ask you to keep your eyes skinned and try and find out as much about Giuseppe as you can. Not from his wife, however; I needn't tell you that. You'll be free to poke about and try and surprise 'Red Waistcoat.' Perhaps you'll do the trick; but take care he doesn't surprise you. All I ask is that you don't believe a quarter you hear, or half you see. We must get under the appearances if we're to make good."

"You think, then, that Doria and Robert Redmayne may be running in double harness? And perhaps you think that Jenny Doria knows this fact and that in this secret knowledge her present misery lies?"

"No need to drag her in; but your own question suggests the possibility."

"Not against my own knowledge. She could be a willing party to no crime. It is contrary to her inherent character, Ganns."

"And yet you're a detective 'first and last and always'—eh? One would think that I wanted you to put her through the third degree. Not that I ever put any man, or woman through it myself. It is a dirty business and quite unworthy of our great service. We'll leave Mrs. Doria, then, and concentrate on her husband. There are a lot of very interesting things to find out about Doria, my boy."

"You forget that he only came into this business at Crow's Nest."

"How can I forget what I don't know? Why do you say he only came into it at Crow's Nest? He may have come into it at Foggintor. Perhaps he and not Robert Redmayne, or any other, cut Michael Pendean's throat."

"Impossible. Consider. Is not Michael's widow Doria's wife?"

"What then? I'm not saying she knew he was the murderer."

"Another thing: Doria was the servant of Bendigo Redmayne at the time."

"And how do you know even so much?"

Brendon showed impatience.

"My dear Ganns, that's common knowledge."

"Common nothing! You can't prove he was the servant of Bendigo Redmayne on the day that the murder was committed. To prove as much would entail an amount of solid research that might surprise you. Of this crowd, only Doria for certain, knows

when he joined up at Crow's Nest. His wife may, or may not know. I'm quite unprepared to take Giuseppe's word for the date."

"That's why you wanted Bendigo Redmayne's log then?"

"One of the reasons certainly. The diary may be here yet. You can use your eyes when we are away and try to find it. If you are allowed to stumble on it, note particularly the pages torn out or erased or faked."

"You still believe this man and his wife are criminals?"

"I believe that it becomes very necessary to prove they are not. Perhaps you'll succeed in doing so before we return. There's a devil of a lot of clearing to be done yet before we begin building. What beats me frankly is the fact that my old friend Albert is still alive. I can see no reason whatever why he should be—and a dozen why he should not."

"Thanks to your forethought in coming unexpectedly perhaps."

"With all the will and wit in the world you can't prevent one man from killing another if he wants to do so—that is, assuming the would-be murderer is at liberty and unknown. One more thing, Mark. When I leave with Mr Redmayne, I disappear altogether, and so does he. It must be understood that nobody here is going to hear anything about us till we come back again. If you want me very urgently you must telegraph to New Scotland Yard, where my direction will be known, but nowhere else. And look after yourself sharply too. Don't run any needless risks on trust. You may be in danger and certainly will be if you get on the scent."

Two days later the book lover and Peter were taking a steamer for Varenna, whence they would entrain for Milan and so return to England. The meeting of Signor Poggi and Mr. Ganns afforded exquisite satisfaction to Albert and Peter did not cloud his pleasure with any allusion to the future until the following day. Then, having expressed his enthusiasm for Virgilio and his hope of better acquaintance on their return, the American broke to Albert their immediate departure. He anticipated some protest, but Mr. Redmayne was too logical to make any.

"I asked you to solve this enigma," he said, "and I am the last to question your methods of so doing. That you will get to the bottom of these horrid mysteries, Peter, I am quite certain. It is a conviction with me that you are going to explain everything; but I shall not question your operations and if you hold it necessary that I go to England, of course, dear friend, I go. You must not, however, count upon me for any practical assistance. It is entirely contrary to my nature to take an active part in this campaign. To put any enterprise or adventure upon me would be to ask for failure."

"Fear nothing at all," answered Ganns. "I don't want you to do anything whatever but lie low and amuse yourself. The danger may follow you or it may not; but my only wish is to come between you and danger, Albert, and keep you under my own eyes. For the rest we'll hide our tracks. Get Jenny to pack your portmanteau for a ten days' tour. If all's well you'll be home again at the end of next week."

The morning of departure swiftly arrived and while Mr. Redmayne gave final instructions to his niece Peter and Mark walked the landing stage as the paddle steamer *Pliny* came thudding across from Belaggio to take the travelers on the first stage of their journey. Brendon defined the position.

"It stands thus," he said. "You strongly suspect Doria of being in collusion with another man, but doubt whether the other man is really Robert Redmayne. What you want me to do is to watch Doria and see if I can surprise the great unknown or learn the truth about him. Meanwhile you go home and your work on the case you prefer to keep to yourself until it is considerably clearer and forwarder than at present."

"The situation in a nutshell. Keep an open mind. I ask no more than that."

"I will," answered Brendon. "Already I suspect the explanation of Mrs. Doria's sufferings. It is tolerably clear to me that she knows more than we do and has some secret of her husband's that is causing her unhappiness."

"A theory capable of proof. You'll see a good deal of the dame during the coming week and the time oughtn't to be wasted, if what you suspect is true."

On the steamer stood Virgilio Poggi. He was come across the water to take leave of Mr. Redmayne and see him as far as Varenna. The three men departed presently, leaving Mark, Jenny and her husband to-

gether. At Varenna, Virgilio also took his leave. He was not content with embracing Albert but clasped Mr. Ganns also in an affectionate farewell.

"We are great men, all three of us," said Signor Poggi, "and greatness cleaves to greatness. Return as quickly as you can, Albert, and obey Signor Ganns in everything. May this cloud be quickly lifted from your life. Meantime you both have my prayers."

Albert translated the speech for Peter's benefit; then the train moved forward and Virgilio took the next boat home again. He sneezed all the way, for he had accepted a pinch from Peter's snuffbox, ignorant of its effect upon an untrained nose.

TO BE CONTINUED.

MUCH SILVER AND FINE GOLD

IN one sense, in spite of the amount of unemployment in the country, we would seem to be in a fair way to accumulate a sort of embarrassment of riches, for we are gradually acquiring more and more of the world's available gold reserve. At the end of last September, of an estimated world total of monetary gold of about $8,000,000,000, we held in the neighborhood of 42 per cent—gold reserves in Federal Reserve banks being then not so far from $3,500,000,000, a new high record for the country. Which, at first hearing, sounds all very nice, but if it continues, how is the rest of the world, under present conditions of commerce, eventually going to finance their purchases of what they need from us with? The present credit of a good part of Europe is none too good, as it is. Silver, too, is steadily trickling toward us, though up to date this is only amounting to the restoring of our national silver chest to its normal level of content. It is coming in sufficient volume, however, to prove that the bank vaults of Europe in which silver has been hoarded for months are being emptied.

Of the two incoming streams, silver and gold, it is the humbler metal which at present holds for us the greater "human interest." It comes back to us, as it were, with a service stripe, after having done its bit toward the winning of the war. For in 1918 a great flood of silver from here was playing its part in sweeping back German propaganda in the Far East. To understand this, it must be realized that in India silver is the money of the bazaars, the coin with which purchases are made and bills paid. Familiar with it from childhood, it is the one bullion in which the natives place implicit confidence. Well aware of their alarm in 1918 over the stability of their paper currency, Germany was then augmenting the trouble arising from it among the natives to the best of her ability. To dispel the growing disquietude, silver dollars lying idle in the United States treasury were melted into bars and hurried over to provide additional cover for the paper money about which natives of India had become so perturbed.

It accomplished its purpose. But it meant in that one year of 1918 we exported a net amount of over $180,000,000. It is to be noted, in this connection, that production of silver here in that year amounted to only some $75,000,000, making it readily understandable why treasury dollars had to be melted down to meet the need. As a matter of fact, indeed, our net silver exports, from 1915 to 1920 inclusive amounted to over $440,000,000, while silver production here, in that period, amounted only to some $330,000,000. It is easy to see the necessity of the Pittman Act of 1918 authorizing the melting down of silver dollars to the extent of $350,000,000, if necessary, to help meet the world's shortage of silver. In the period 1915 to 1920 inclusive, silver money held by the United States was reduced from $757,400,000 to $540,282,000. Now, however, the government has resumed the coinage of silver and will continue its purchases of silver and its coinage operations until the treasury dollars melted since 1918 to help win the war have been replaced. Up to last September $48,783,000 had been coined toward effecting this replacement. In good time the task will be finished.

Meanwhile, with our silver chest being restored to normal or more—partly through the acquisition of the metal from Europe, and with our gold chest brimming over with foreign gold stock—and more coming all the time, the question remains: how long will we be able to stand this sort of prosperity? It somehow reminds one of Midas and his golden touch.

Old Jobs for New

By Louis Weadock

In spite of his loyalty to Shakespeare the old actor finds there is at least one point on which he is in agreement with the spirit of the movies.

THERE were symptoms of uneasiness, if not of apprehension, in the manner of Ernest Ashe as that dignified old actor turned from sun-plashed Broadway into the dim lobby of the first-class second-class hotel that was his home. The agitation, which he strove manfully to conceal, increased rather than diminished as the sufferer, on his way to the elevator, skirted the desk behind which a cold-eyed clerk was pretending to polish his nails. The clerk was really no more interested in his nails than Mr. Ashe was interested in the gold-headed cane which he began to study intently. There was nothing the matter with the gold-headed cane. Mr. Ashe had an uneasy feeling that the clerk knew as well as he did that there was nothing the matter with it. Yet Mr. Ashe continued to inspect it critically until the elevator which, of course, was at the top of the shaft, descended leisurely and took him aboard.

Only when the cage began to creep upward did Mr. Ashe venture to cast a furtive glance toward the clerk. He was sorry that he looked, for the clerk had moved and his moving had given Mr. Ashe an uninterrupted view of a placard which said that the hotel was protected by the Bloodhound Detective Agency. Mr. Ashe shivered and, lifting his silk hat, passed a voluminous silk handkerchief over his fine, old face. He was as unhappy as it is possible for a man in a silk hat and a frock coat and a velvet waistcoat to be. His unhappiness was not mitigated by the survey of himself which he made in the cracked mirror. His silk hat needed ironing, his square-toed shoes of flexible leather needed shining, although to have shined the frock coat would have been superfluous. He had tried, by sleeping upon them, to do his duty by his old-fashioned trousers; but the knees were of a bagginess which, while it would have been appropriate enough in trousers designed for use as part of a Zouave uniform, was a detriment to the only trousers owned by a sterling legitimate actor who in earlier days had advertised boastfully that he was "a good dresser, on and off."

That the sterling actor owed a hotel bill which he could not pay was the reason why his home-coming was attended by so much trepidation. An actor's home is where his trunk is. Mr. Ashe's battered old trunk, spattered with theatrical labels, none of them of recent date, had been parked so long in this musty hotel that Mr. Ashe had conceived for his dwelling place a fondness that owed more to habit than to the intrinsic merits of the establishment. Still, the ways of the Hotel Underwood were easy-going ways with which Mr. Ashe and the other old actors, who shared with him the dingy hospitality of the sublimated rooming house, fell in pleasantly.

At the Underwood no objection was made to a reasonable amount of amateur laundry work in the rooms, nor to a reasonable amount of amateur cookery. The dim corridors, in which one might have the honor of bumping his shins upon trunks owned by actors who had been distinguished upon the speaking stage until the moving pictures had come along and extinguished them, were always quiet until noon, no matter how noisy they became afterward. Guests could and did play cards and the piano without interference by the management. Upon only one point was that management inflexible. All bills were payable weekly.

Mr. Ashe, carried skyward in the creaking elevator, had plenty of time in which to meditate upon the glaring injustice worked upon him by the enforcement of that regulation. A series of written communications which he had received from the nail-polishing room clerk had caused him to give up one of the few small pleasures which his poverty had left him. This pleasure was his

participation in the nightly feast of reason and flow of soul in the lobby. To speak truth, there was more soul than reason in those informal conventions the delegates to which were all legitimate actors who were out of work and who gathered every evening to point with pride to the past and view with alarm the present and the future of the legitimate stage. They all blamed the moving pictures.

Mr. Ashe blamed them more sincerely and picturesquely than any of his colleagues. But now three nights had passed without his voice being lifted in the lobby. When the room clerk had begun to write to him in red ink he had ceased to use the lobby as a forum and had begun to use it only as a thoroughfare. He felt that "the boys" missed him as much as he missed "the boys;" but he felt also that until he got an engagement and paid his bill, or, as he would have said, "liquidated his indebtedness," he had best absent himself from the indignation meetings over which hovered the disturbing presence of the cold-eyed room clerk.

All of his reasons for hoping that this engagement would come soon were not financial reasons. Being no longer under the necessity of talking for several hours each night, he had had more time in which to think. One result of these deliberations was that there had occurred to him several additional arguments he yearned to lay before the other members of the old guard.

But, as floor after floor fell away into the dark backward and abysm of the elevator shaft, his yearnings became not so much psychological as physiological. They shaped themselves into a physical longing to take off his shoes and his self-mended socks and solace his feet with the grateful coolness of a radiator. He yearned also toward the two eggs which he was sure that he had saved and which he intended either to boil or poach over the alcohol stove which was as much a part of his professional equipment as was his gold-headed cane. With a gentle little sigh of anticipatory delight, he concentrated his mind upon the relative merits of boiled eggs and poached eggs, deferring until a more favorable moment the consideration of his financial problem. He had the eggs, which was more than he could say of the money that he needed to pay his bill and reinstate himself as speaker of the evening in the lobby assembly.

True, he had in his imitation pigskin wallet a lonely one-dollar bill, and in his watch pocket, whence his silver watch had long since fled, a bit of metal which puported to be a dime. But the authenticity of this so-called dime was so dubious that Mr. Ashe —who, although he was a bad actor, was a good man—never had tried to take advantage of a fellow creature by trying to pass upon him a spurious coin which he himself had been too guileless to question.

Before the elevator stopped with a convulsive shudder, Mr. Ashe drew from the tail pocket of his faded frock coat a plate of jagged tin almost as large as a saucer. To this plate was attached the key with which Mr. Ashe was to admit himself to the delights of the radiator and the eggs. Jingling the hardware and humming an old tune, the actor mounted the stairs which led to the top floor. He lived in "Millionaires' Row," which was the name he had sardonically given to the row of tiny rooms which nestled under the roof—the occupants of which tried to make themselves believe that their fine view of Blackwell's Island compensated them for the absence of elevator facilities, running water, and telephone communications. Highest in location these rooms were lowest in price.

Breathing a bit heavily, Mr. Ashe came to a standstill in front of the room which was lower in price than the others. Stooping, and not so easily—for from rheumatism he never was entirely free—he inserted into the keyhole part of his handful of metal. The key would not turn. Mr. Ashe applied an investigatory eye to the keyhole, then straightened laboriously and murmured, "Plugged!"

There had been injected into the keyhole since he had last used it a metal disk which now prevented him from using it at all. The inference was obvious. The management would give the room back to Mr. Ashe when Mr. Ashe gave some money to the management.

"'The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,'" muttered Mr. Ashe, turning, with drooping shoulders, toward the stairs.

He was not thinking of slings and arrows; he was thinking of eggs and a radiator; but in moments of crisis Mr. Ashe was accustomed to clothe his thoughts in the words of another actor of whom he always spoke familiarly as "the Bard." He soon had occasion for more of Shakespeare's golden lan-

guage, for when he reached the terminus of the elevator there stepped out of the cage a red-faced, well-fed man who glared at him ferociously. In him Mr. Ashe recognized another crisis.

The red-faced, well-fed man wore a derby hat on the back of his head and a thick cigar in the corner of his mouth. To Mr. Ashe he said briefly: "I wanna see you."

" 'As harbingers preceding still the fates and prologue to the omen coming on'," said Mr. Ashe to himself; aloud he wavered, "At your service."

"In your room," snapped the red-faced man, whose diction had, at least, the virtue of directness.

"I am sorry," answered Mr. Ashe, with an ingratiating smile which had no roots in his heart, "I am sorry that that is impossible."

"No, it ain't," contradicted the other, "I'm the house detective. Come on."

He placed an urgent hand upon Mr. Ashe's arm and kept it there until the two were safely in the room and his master key was again in his pocket.

Then, for the first time removing his hat the detective took from that capacious receptacle a folded paper which he tendered to Mr. Ashe. The old man's fingers trembled as he reached for it. Upon the stage he had been served with legal processes, including warrants for his arrest. Yet to be arrested upon the stage for murder or treason was a trifle as compared to being arrested in real life for beating a hotel bill. Afraid to open the paper, he regarded it with mild protest in his eyes—noticing that it differed from stage documents of like character in that it bore no large, red seal—and hoping against hope that its stark simplicity might render it null and void.

The detective put him out of his misery.

"That's your receipted bill, pop," he said genially, "and here is five ten-dollar bills. Count 'em and gimme a receipt."

Mr. Ashe sank into the only dependable chair in the room and began to take off his shoes.

" 'Angels and ministers of grace defend us,' " he murmured piously.

"I see you mend your own socks," observed the detective, who was always seeing things whether he was paid to do so or not.

"I have mended one sock," admitted Mr. Ashe. "I shall attend to the other later. If you don't mind I'll just cool my feet for a moment and then you can keep on looking for the rightful owner of that money and that receipted bill."

"The coin is yours," said the detective, with an intimidating look, "and if you know what's good for you you'll take it and you'll also look at that bill."

Mr. Ashe was afraid to resist. He placed the money beside him so that when the time came to give it back there would be no suspicion that he had tampered with it, and then he opened the bill. It was made out to him and stamped "Paid." But his feet made such insistent demands upon his consciousness that he tossed off his socks, to only one of which a garter was attached, and, with a beatific expression of countenance, wriggled his toes between the cold iron pipes of the radiator.

The detective surveyed him indulgently.

"If I was married," he said, spitting in the general direction of Mr. Ashe's cuspidor, "and I had a daughter and she was a big movie star, you can bet your socks that I wouldn't be too proud to take money from her."

Upon the detective the old actor flashed a withering glance; at least, it would have been withering had its target been anybody other than a hotel detective.

"Keep your shirt on," advised the intruder tolerantly.

Mr. Ashe intensified the severity of the glance. He might as well have tried to wither the wall.

"Your allusions to my wearing apparel are distasteful," he said loftily, "and you will forgive me if I fail to be interested in you and your hypothetical daughter."

"I'm interested in yours," retorted the detective, unmoved. "Stella Swift is one of my favorite actresses——"

"I imagine that she would be," interrupted Mr. Ashe, with pity in his tones; but whether it was pity for the detective or for the actress or for both was uncertain.

"She's downstairs," said the detective importantly.

"Let her stay there," said Mr. Ashe.

"You're a cruel-hearted parent," said the detective.

"You're a damned fool!" said Mr. Ashe.

He sprang to his feet. Rather he sprang to one foot, being unable to resist the temptation to keep the other in soothing proximity to the cold radiator.

"I'll borrow this money," he said, with

an effect of grandeur that would have been improved had he stood upon both feet instead of only upon one like a crane, "I'll borrow this money and I'll accept this receipted bill. Here, take one of these other bills. Get yourself a cigar that does not smell like a tannery and get out. Get out first."

Into the speech he had put the heart note that for more than forty years had been one of his most effective mannerisms. And the speech and the ten-dollar bill had the desired effect. The detective started to back toward the door. He backed into a most attractive young woman, who with one arm pushed him out of the way and with the other encircled the neck of Mr. Ashe.

To the detective the young woman said: "I appreciate all you've done for dad. Here's five dollars."

"Give him five cents," said her parent disgustedly. "He's worth it."

"I don't want your money," demurred the admirer of Stella Swift. "I just want to shake your hand and tell you you was great in 'Dripping Daggers Drawn.'"

"'Dripping Daggers Drawn!'" shrieked Mr. Ashe.

"My latest release," explained his daughter, with a disarming smile; "it really isn't as bad as it sounds."

"It couldn't be," said her father.

"Don't take it so much to heart," she said, snuggling to him. "You don't have to see it."

"'For this relief much thanks,'" he assured her, his anger vanishing with the detective, who at this point made his way out with a parting bow to Miss Swift.

With the departure of the red-faced, well-fed man, Stella stepped back and folded her arms.

"Now," she said imperiously, "you'll simply have to get out of this kennel."

"I won't be here long," he told her, evidently more interested in the present condition of his feet than in the future of his whole being.

She glanced at him sharply. He read her uneasiness.

"Not that," he said tartly. "I expect to live for a great many years, but not in this room. No. I shall remove to a lower floor. I have had a very satisfactory interview with my agent. I have no doubt, no iota or scintilla of a doubt, that within a week I shall have a very good engagement."

"Some more one-nighters?" she sniffed.

"It's better than being a film," he said with dignity.

"But I don't want you to work at all. I want you to enjoy yourself. That's why I gave you that place in the country. You ran away like a bad schoolboy."

"I got tired of looking at that kind of scenery," he said impenitently. "I won't be happy till I get the grease paint on again. I fully intended to write you, but with one thing and another it slipped my mind, simply slipped my mind. I did have an opportunity, but the idiot that engaged me went into moving pictures. It didn't surprise me much. I'd always thought there was something the matter with him."

She smiled. He looked at her rebukingly.

"I did, indeed," he insisted.

"Why didn't you come out to the studio?" she questioned. "You don't know how worried I've been. Why, think! If it hadn't been for Jim Desmond I might not have found you at all."

"My old property man?" inquired Mr. Ashe.

"Jimmie was an assistant stage manager," said the young actress stiffly.

"Same thing," retorted her father, dismissing Jimmie with a large gesture.

He was so intent upon the proper stoking of his pipe that he did not see the light of resentment which his rejection of Jimmie as a topic of conversation had brought into the girl's fine eyes. When his pipe got going it disengaged fumes compared to which the product of the house detective's cigar was attar of roses. His daughter coughed and said with a touch of pride:

"Jimmie is my new director. He gets two thousand a week."

If she expected to impress her parent she was disappointed.

"That so?" he said calmly. "He was never worth more than forty a week to me."

"Times have changed," she said quickly. "Why don't you change with them? Why don't you come into pictures and draw a real salary?"

He glared at her.

"Why don't I do tricks upon the flying trapeze?" he demanded; then, as was his custom, he answered his own question. "Because I love my art, that is why. Because I love it so well that every night before going to bed I get down on my knees and say a

prayer of thanks because the moving pictures have not got me yet."

He finished with a fine flourish of his pipe, but neither his speech nor his gesture made the slightest impression upon his daughter.

"I wish that some of these nights when you're down upon your knees you'd pray for a little sense," she said. "I can get you easier work and more money in moving pictures than you can get for yourself on the stage."

" 'I'd rather be a dog and bay the moon,' " he broke in impatiently. "I'll stay what I am. For forty years I've worn the sock and buskin. I'll wear them till I die."

He stole an approving glance at himself in the hand mirror that was propped against a row of books on his pine dressing table. His daughter caught him, but pretended that she did not.

"I wouldn't know a buskin if I met it on the street," she said frankly; "but if I were you I'd mend those socks before I wore them another forty years."

" 'A hit, a palpable hit,' " he said, good-humoredly. "You don't happen to have a needle about you, and some black thread, do you?"

She smiled.

"No, you old dear," she told him, braving the smoke screen to kiss his cheek, "but I've got five or six hundred dollars here that you can buy needles and thread with."

He stiffened.

"I have accepted one loan from you," he said with some haughtiness. "In view of the fact that I may get an engagement at any time now I prefer not to accept another."

She moved toward the door. He followed her with his eyes, for, although she was a famous moving-picture star, as fame is reckoned in moving pictures, he always thought of her as his little girl.

"I don't like to see you go," he confessed, but not until her hand was on the door-knob.

"They're waiting for me at the studio," she told him. "I'm going on location to-morrow, and I won't be back for a week. By that time you'll have an engagement, I'm sure."

Mr. Ashe wished with all his heart that he was as sure.

"A week?" he asked uncertainly.

"Maybe two," she answered, trying to make her tone indifferent. "If you like you can drive out to the studio with me now. My car is downstairs. We can visit and I'll bring you back."

"I've never been in a studio," he said slowly. "I've promised myself that I never would set foot inside one of the monkey-shine emporiums."

"The name of ours is the Planet Film Corporation," she told him. "It is a studio, not a menagerie. Nobody will bite you."

"Maybe nobody else will be there?" he asked wistfully.

"Everybody else will be there. We're shooting 'Romeo and Juliet.' "

"You're what?" he cried in amazement.

She glanced at her platinum wrist watch.

"We're shooting 'Romeo and Juliet,' " she repeated. "To 'shoot' means to photograph. We've got two hundred actors and actresses in the cast."

"Hah!" he cried dramatically. "So it takes two hundred of you to play 'Romeo and Juliet!' Never until this very minute have I been glad that the Bard is dead. But never let me hear you say again that you have two hundred actors and actresses in your cast. There are not two hundred real actors and actresses in your whole business. Why should there be? What is your business? The immortalization of mediocrity, that's what it is, the immortalization of mediocrity."

But he drove to the studio with her just the same.

He could not help noticing that, as with his daughter he passed through the dark lobby of the hotel, several persons bowed to him who had never bowed to him before.

"Forty years on the speaking stage makes one's face familiar to the public," he explained.

"Yes, dad," she said fondly, as she snuggled closer to his shiny sleeve.

A group of elderly gentlemen were sunning themselves on the sidewalk. One wore a frock coat, another a silk hat, two had gold-headed canes; but none of them was in possession of all three. These grave gentlemen bowed respectfully to Mr. Ashe and lifted their hats to his daughter.

"Some of the boys," said Mr. Ashe proudly.

Stepping into his daughter's decorative car Mr. Ashe dropped his gold-headed cane to the sidewalk. It was the first time that an accident of this sort had ever befallen him, which probably accounts for the fact that he did not succeed in recovering the cane

until after all the boys had enjoyed prolonged and envious inspection of the car in which their old comrade was to ride.

"See you to-night, Ned," one of them called cheerily after him.

"See you to-night," responded Mr. Ashe.

"Trust them for that," sniffed the actress.

Her father made no answer. He was too busy craning his neck in order that his friend, the tobacconist, at whose unpretentious establishment adjoining the hotel Mr. Ashe had a small account, might note that at least one of his customers was in the habit of riding in a ten-thousand-dollar car.

"Trust them for that," repeated the young woman. "Now that they know you have money they'll make it a point to see you."

Mr. Ashe received in silence this aspersion upon the disinterestedness of his friends; but it was a silence which he achieved only by physical effort and which he maintained for only a few moments. For, according to Mr. Ashe's code, whoever attacked his friends attacked him. He would have sprung instantly to the defense of his calumniated cronies, had he not remembered, in the nick of time, that another article in his code forbade him to speak when he was angry. He knew he was angry now. So he did not speak, but silently ransacked his vocabulary for words severe enough to use when he could trust his voice to use them.

He and his daughter had ridden for several blocks before he became calm. But, then, much to his surprise, he found that instead of employing the epithets which he had selected he was saying, "I wish your knowledge of my friends were as deep as mine. If it were, you wouldn't have said that about them. Wait until you've had friends for forty years and they've shared their food with you and you've shaved with the same razor."

She pressed his hand as if to apologize for her hasty censure. It would have been too much to expect that she should put her contrition into words. She was her father's daughter.

He, thinking that he had hurt her feelings by having let her see that she had hurt his, tried to make amends by refraining from expressing his honest opinions about the moving-picture business, which business formed the staple of her conversation until they rolled into a studio that reminded Mr. Ashe dimly of some of the buildings he had seen when playing at McVicker's Theater during the days of the Chicago World's Fair.

With a benign expression upon his lean face, he followed his daughter through what seemed miles of offices and corridors. He could not help seeing that the men and women that spoke to her did so with a mixture of affection and respect. Neither could these men and women help seeing that Miss Swift's sire looked at them with the mildly benevolent expression with which old gentlemen sometimes regard the monkeys at the zoo. He thought that it was likely that these passers-by had seen him on the stage and had remembered him. Upon no other hypothesis could he account for the fact that to them he was undoubtedly a source of considerable interest.

It was just as well for his peace of mind that he did not hear a fifteen-hundred-dollar-a-week actor whisper to a poor colleague, who never had been able to rise out of the thousand-dollar-a-week class, "That's the old dodo that Stella Swift is going to pin onto this pay roll. He's starving to death in some hamfatters' roost downtown. He'll be a lot of help to the moving-picture business."

Miss Swift had been too wise to depend entirely upon a verbal appeal. True, in the car she had talked of nothing except the ease with which large salaries are earned in her branch of the profession; but she had counted most upon the effect upon her father which his first sight of an expensive moving-picture production of a Shakespearean play would have. She led him out upon a vast stage the walls of which were of glass and canvas, and then stepped back that he might feast his eyes upon Verona.

He could not repress an involuntary gasp of delight. This was Verona. In no stage production in which he had played, in no stage production which he had seen, had there been scenery which for sweep and color and mass could compare with the set upon which he gazed entranced.

"Wonderful!" he said more to himself than to his daughter. "Wonderful!"

A brisk young man in puttees came forward, his hand outstretched.

"Mr. Ashe," he cried heartily, "this is indeed a pleasure."

"Jimmie Desmond," said Mr. Ashe, unbending.

The young man swept Verona with an embracing gesture.

"I owe all this to you," he said.

Mr. Ashe, still looking at Verona, answered absently, "I don't think you owe me anything. I think you paid me that twenty long ago."

"I'm not talking about a twenty," said the young man, with a sidelong glance at Stella Swift. "I'm talking about this production. If it hadn't been for all I learned from you on the speaking stage I'd never have been able to do this."

"You mean that you painted this, Jimmie?" asked Mr. Ashe.

"No," said the director weakly; "but I told them how to paint it." With more assurance he added, "And I'm telling the people how to play the good old piece."

"Hum," said Mr. Ashe.

He turned to look with interest at a camera which was being set up beside him.

"We're beginning with Act Three," the director explained after Stella Swift had nudged him; "the quarrel scene between *Tybalt* and *Mercutio*."

At that name Mr. Ashe winced. His lips seemed to be dry as he asked: "And who is your *Mercutio?*"

He felt that in that question he had a legitimate interest. *Mercutio* was his favorite part. He had played it frequently before his daughter was born and had played it less frequently since. Indeed, he had played it not only in "Romeo and Juliet," but in other plays in which the existence of the character was not suspected even by the author until Mr. Ashe had shown that a showy-acting part like *Mercutio* can be played, under other names and with other lines, in almost any style of drama. He loved the swashbuckling friend of *Romeo* and always spoke of him as if *Mercutio* was one of his intimates at the Hotel Underwood.

"I haven't any," said Jimmie Desmond.

Mr. Ashe stared at him in astonishment.

"You have no *Mercutio?*" he demanded testily. "Possibly you're going to play 'Romeo and Juliet' without a *Romeo* or a *Juliet?*"

"I'm *Juliet*," said his daughter, softly as if confessing to some unbelievable crime.

"You are *Juliet?*" Mr. Ashe cried amazed. "I thought your line was comedy."

"So it is. I'm going to play her as sort of a kidding flapper. Jimmie's giving me some great close-ups on the balcony stuff, aren't you, Jimmie?"

"Yes, dear," answered Jimmie, starting guiltily when he realized that he had used two words where one would have been enough.

Mr. Ashe looked at the young persons suspiciously.

"Dear," he said to himself, but loud enough to make them uneasy.

Jimmie Desmond found himself animated by the courage of desperation.

"You see, Mr. Ashe," he began ingratiatingly, "we—I—both of us hoped that you would find it possible to play *Mercutio* for us. We thought——"

"You thought wrong," broke in the irate Mr. Ashe. "By what right did you think that I would stultify my art by stooping to appear in a cyclorama?"

"Stultify!" gasped his daughter.

"Cyclorama!" exclaimed her director, stung in his professional pride. "Mr. Ashe, this production will cost two hundred thousand dollars."

"I've put on 'Romeo and Juliet' for two hundred and eighty dollars," shouted Mr. Ashe, "and I'll bet my watch—no, I won't bet my watch—but I'll bet this cane that we played it better than you'll ever play it."

"Most of the people that could decide that bet are dead," said Stella Swift with asperity. "Now, dad, listen to reason. We'll give you one hundred and fifty dollars a week to do *Mercutio*. That's fifty more than your regular salary and there's no telling what it will lead to. Why, I know that if you make good in this——"

"If I make good!" he shrieked.

"If you make good," she went on, undisturbed, "you can get a part with the Super-Supreme Special people. They're going to do a burlesque of 'Hamlet.'"

"Let me out of here," cried Mr. Ashe, gasping as if for air and forgetting all about his rule as to remaining silent when angry. "I wouldn't play my *Mercutio* in this madhouse for one hundred and fifty dollars a minute— "

"But I've got a dressing room for you," she said, catching him by the arm as he started away, "and there's a wonderful costume in it and we'll print your name in big letters on the screen——"

"Not that!" he protested. "Anything but that!"

"And Jimmie won't attempt to tell you how to play the part——"

"And we'll shoot the stuff now," broke in Jimmie quickly; "and I'll show you the

'rushes' to-morrow and you'll see how you look on the screen."

"I don't want to see how I look on the screen!" he almost wailed. "I want to get out of here!"

His daughter whirled him about that he might see that there were tears in her eyes.

"If you don't play *Mercutio* for me," she said brokenly, "you'll ruin my picture."

Mr. Ashe spent the ensuing half hour in arraying himself in the costume of *Mercutio.*

When he returned to the set he was in doublet and hose and carried in one hand a rapier and in the other the fragmentary remains of a sandwich. For in the dressing room to which his grateful daughter had escorted him he had found not only a complete costume for the outer man, but a tray filled with furnishings for the inner. The only shadow that crossed his feeling of gratitude came from the reflection that his daughter must have been pretty sure that he would yield to her forlorn appeal; else, before making it she would not have ordered for him a costume and the oyster patties and the club sandwiches of which he was inordinately fond. He did not like to feel his daughter had not been convinced of the sincerity of his antagonism toward that which she fondly and fallaciously called "her art." In his mind there was no question of that sincerity.

"But damn it all, man," he said to himself in the mirror, "she's your own flesh and blood! If you can save her picture or photograph, or whatever they call it, from failure it is your duty as a father to so save it."

Fortified by this salving of his artistic conscience he swaggered back to the set. His swagger would have been more impressive had not the shoes which his daughter had found for him been too tight; but it was sufficiently impressive to cause a marked revival of interest among those residents of Verona who, until his appearance, had been reading the newspapers and, less ostentatiously, shooting craps.

The fifteen-hundred-dollar-a-week Thespian who had whispered to his thousand-dollar-a-week confrère that Mr. Ashe was an old dodo now studied him with such care that he found in him, in his theatrical trappings, resemblance to the hero of one of the few stories that the fifteen-hundred-dollar-a-week critic had ever read through to the last page.

"We've got Don Quixote with us!" he confided to his friend. "They can't be serious in allowing this decayed old duffer to work in this picture."

"You bet your life they're serious," said his friend. "Jimmie Desmond told me it is all a play to get the old man where his daughter can keep an eye on him. They're going to cut his part to nothing at all, but he won't know that till the picture is finished. He'll think that he's doing great acting but the stuff won't show on the screen."

The fifteen-hundred-dollar-a-week beauty, whose homemade name was Reginald de Courcey and who was about to go on for *Romeo,* lifted his eyebrows.

"Do you call it charity to we artists to cast this picture from Sailors' Snug Harbor and the Old Men's Home?" he asked, in that fine English accent which he had picked up after leaving his ancestral home in Scranton, Pennsylvania. "The old boy may be a very worthy fellow, but he's so old that he's falling apart. Look at him now leaning against that light bank talking to Miss Swift. He ought to play *Mercutio* on crutches."

He might not have been so severe had he known that the only reason that impelled Mr. Ashe to lean against the light bank was that his feet were again hurting him.

"I wonder what my public will think of me when they see me fighting a duel with him?" asked the thousand-dollar-a-week young man that was dressed for *Tybalt.* "If I don't make it short and snappy he's likely to drop down of old age at my feet."

"Can the chatter and get to work," called Jimmie Desmond, signaling for the lights.

Mr. Ashe's feet suddenly quit hurting him. The pain that was in them shot abruptly to his eyes, for the lights in the bank against which he was leaning flashed into brilliance and he backed away from them in dismay.

His daughter put her hand reassuringly upon his arm.

"Now, dad," she whispered, "go out there and show them something."

"Right here," directed Jimmie Desmond in a kindlier tone than that in which he addressed the fuming *Romeo* and *Tybalt;* "here, if you please, Mr. Ashe."

Mr. Ashe strode majestically to the spot that the director indicated. There he was joined by the supercilious *Romeo. Tybalt* lingered outside the camera lines, for it was

to be upon his entrance that the duel between him and *Mercutio* was to be fought.

"Music," commanded Jimmie Desmond.

A long-faced, long-bearded violinist, whose presence had hitherto escaped Mr. Ashe's notice, began to play fervently a lively jig.

Mr. Ashe started in surprise.

"Are we to play Shakespeare or do a clog dance?" he demanded indignantly.

Romeo and *Tybalt* glared at him with contempt.

"It's all right, Mr. Ashe," Jimmie Desmond said soothingly. "It's just to establish the mood."

More than one fiddle would have been needed to establish in Mr. Ashe the mood in which he usually performed the part of *Mercutio.* The odds against him were too great. The careless informality of the proceedings distressed him, for he missed that atmosphere of dignity for which not only the discipline of the theater but the instinctive seriousness of his old associates was responsible. He was accustomed to playing in performances whose tone was earnest, almost devotional. This new pantomime to which he had committed himself seemed by the other participants to be regarded as a lark. Mr. Ashe's habit of mind forbade him to regard as a lark anything which had to do, even remotely, with the work of Shakespeare.

Nor was it only the holiday air that pervaded the affair that disturbed him. He had seen his daughter furtively slip into her gold mesh bag a small bottle upon which he was almost sure he had seen a label that read ammonia. Now, his knowledge of moving-picture technique was of the slightest, but he could not forget that he had heard—from a friend who, in his day, had played *Romeo* but who recently had been impersonating butlers and kindred humble folk—that in moving pictures tears are induced by mechanical means. He was unable to shake off the feeling that his daughter's sudden tears had been caused not by anxiety, but by ammonia.

Melancholy sat upon him as he stood where Jimmie Desmond had told him to stand; and the livelier the fiddler fiddled the more morose did Mr. Ashe become. He was oppressed by a vague misgiving that even his participation would not make the scene a success. Suddenly he knew why.

"Where's *Benvolio?*" he asked crisply.

"Ben who?" inquired Jimmie Desmond politely.

Upon Jimmie Desmond Mr. Ashe darted a scornful glance.

"*Benvolio* is on in this scene," he said impressively. "He carries me off in his arms after *Tybalt* stabs me. You might have run across his name had you read the play."

"I only read the continuity," admitted the director. "I guess the continuity writer must have cut out your old pal, Ben."

His speech was not intended in an unkindly spirit and his manner was conciliatory. Which was no protection against the wounded sensibilities of a worshiper of the Bard.

"Why didn't the blundering idiot cut out *Mercutio* also?" he asked sarcastically.

Jimmie Desmond knew enough to refrain from answering. *Tybalt* did not.

"They're thinking of it, Mr. Booth," he murmured.

Mr. Ashe honored him with a scornful look.

"Let her go," cried Jimmie Desmond. "Action. Camera."

Mr. Ashe felt his arm clutched by *Romeo.* That young man began to jabber gibberish at him, rolling his eyes the while and stamping his foot. Mr. Ashe, deciding that this was the accepted mode of acting in moving pictures, jabbered gibberish back at him and rolled his eyes and stamped his foot—but only once, for the foot still hurt. To the annoyance caused by that member there was now added the distracting click, click, click of some metallic instrument.

"Stop that damned noise!" yelled Mr. Ashe. "How can I put forth my best efforts with that infernal click, click, click in my ears?"

"That's the camera," *Tybalt* informed him in a stage whisper from outside the camera lines.

Mr. Ashe's eyes followed *Tybalt's* indicative finger. Sure enough, he saw that the objectionable noise proceeded from the innocent-looking box beside which stood Jimmie Desmond with a megaphone. Mr. Ashe no sooner saw that part of the camera was moving than he moved also. That is, he moved his head. He moved it as far from the camera as he could and finally twisted it around so that he was looking directly away from the instrument of torture. *Romeo,* who was not camera-shy, substituted his own face for that of Mr. Ashe and

smirked and smiled into the eye of the machine.

"Now, *Tybalt,*" cried Jimmie Desmond, and the furious *Tybalt* rushed upon the scene. He rushed with great speed, because he realized that if he did not get into the scene at once *Romeo* would have stolen most of the footage.

" 'By my head, here come the Capulets; by my heel, I care not,' " declaimed Mr. Ashe gracefully, or so he thought, blending with his speech as *Mercutio* a speech of the *Benvolio* that had been excised by the continuity writer.

"Don't call me a heel," retorted the angry *Tybalt.*

He knew little Shakespeare, but he knew actors' slang well enough to know that "heel" is not a term of endearment. Mr. Ashe paid no attention to his remonstrance. That is, no attention except to draw his rapier.

Tybalt drew his.

"Good," cried Jimmie Desmond, "mix it up! Two up and two down, then, Mr. Ashe, please be kind enough to stab *Tybalt.*"

"With the greatest pleasure in the world," roared Mr. Ashe.

He had fought stage duels before this particular *Tybalt* was born. From the vigor which he now displayed, it began to look as if he would live to fight more stage duels after this *Tybalt* was dead. For Mr. Ashe, aflame with resentment against the moving-picture business and all its representatives, forgot all about the harmless two strokes up and two strokes down and began to fence. Against his masterly swordplay the other was helpless; helpless but not hopeless, for even in those uncertain moments when it seemed that Mr. Ashe was to commit the unpardonable sin of mutilating not only *Tybalt* but Shakespeare, *Tybalt,* with the grim resolution of the natural-born footage grabber, kept his anguished face pointed at the camera.

Mr. Ashe, whose rapier continued to flash about the head of the uncomfortable youth, finally shouted to him in desperation:

"Stab me, you nincompoop, stab me!"

The relieved *Tybalt* smiled weakly and obeyed. To reach Mr. Ashe he had to lunge under the arm of *Romeo,* which feat he accomplished so dexterously that he succeeded in placing himself between *Romeo* and the camera. *Romeo* naturally resented this exclusion of himself from the center of attention. While he and *Tybalt* struggled, Mr. Ashe turned his back upon them and upon the camera at the same time and lay him down to die. He was an unconscionably long time about it, so long a time that he kept on dying for more than a minute after Jimmie Desmond had ordered the camera man to cease firing.

"Very good," said Mr. Ashe, rising to his feet and dusting himself. "Very good."

"Very good," repeated Jimmie Desmond dazedly; to himself he added, "and rotten."

Mr. Ashe's performance was, in truth, the worst which Mr. Desmond had seen.

That night in the lobby of the Hotel Underwood, Mr. Ashe, sitting at his ease, surrounded by his elderly companions and expanding under their honest pleasure at having him once more among them, said:

"Boys, I violate no confidence when I say that this afternoon I received a most flattering offer to enter moving pictures. I declined it. I shall decline every such offer which is made to me. They will never get me, boys, they will never get me."

His hearers nodded in grave approval.

"I could not resist the temptation to give them a taste of my quality," he went on modestly, "and after I showed them up at their own silly game I resigned. My job is still open——"

"Where is the studio?" interrupted all of the boys in a breath.

AUTOS FOR BERMUDA

ANOTHER effort is to be made to have the assembly of Bermuda pass a law allowing the use of motor cars, now barred from the island. Many residents of the colony, which has an area of less than twenty square miles, object seriously to the innovation, which they regard as dangerous and unnecessary. Bermuda is, perhaps, the only place in the world where the automobile is not welcomed—or, at least, tolerated.

The Phial

By Hubbard Hutchinson

Author of "Chanting Wheels," "The Body of Blynn Anderson," Etc.

In this tale of the old vicar, the sinister curate, Rose Williams and wild Hugh Evans is recaptured the spirit of that dark faith of Britain's Middle Ages which still casts its shadows over the simple folk of this peaceful English countryside.

IN a far-off corner of Britain there stood a strange, ancient church, where the hills swim in mist and through a tangled web of rank weeds the rivers rush seaward under trees whose branches waved when King Arthur was a child, whose trunks, perhaps, still hide the spirit of the banished Merlin, the wizard.

Its great tower, softened with a tapestry of vines, soared from the slight hill that the church crowned. Among the peasantry of the country the spot bore a mysterious hallowedness, for it was here, tradition said, had been the altar of that dark earlier faith which still cast its shadows over local legends. Sometimes, when the clouds that never quite left the hilltops merged slowly together and lightning flickered pallidly from earth to heaven, men—it was said—had seen the church shine with a curious, intangible and unearthly glow that seemed to come from within the very fabric of the ancient stones.

The vicar laughed quietly at all these quaint and foreboding tales. But not so his old servant who always shook her head when his smiling assurance turned off her muttered words. If the wind shook at the vicarage at night she leaned closer over the fire and crooned to herself; if the lightning quivered over the valley, she touched a curious stone upon her breast.

All of this the vicar quite understood. He had lived long enough among his people to comprehend their strange fancies and to suffer them. Through unfailing kindness he had welded their ancient inherited superstitions to his own Christian purposes and substituted love for fear.

So he remained, a stoutly orthodox Anglican, amid a people who seemed in many ways scarcely emerging from the dark secrets of the Middle Ages; a loved and trusted man. Even Hugh Evans, counted the wildest lad in the shire, always stopped at sight of his thin figure and the wind-blown wings of his black cloak or smiled with unwonted gentleness before his youthful, old face framed in its tumble of white hair.

This cool mid-May night, relaxed before his fire in his study, the vicar seemed more than thoughtful. The quiet years had so slid into one another and so blended in a stream of content that age had merely laid an arm, half caressingly, about the vicar's slim shoulders. Consequently he had penned an indignant epistle of refusal to London when the proffer of an assistant had bolted out of the ecclesiastical blue upon him. But resentment had given way to astonishment and astonishment to acceptance, as is the way with the inertia of old age, and he had welcomed with gentle hospitality the young curate who came down.

After all, it was good to sit by the fire on the cold, black nights of winter with his lifelong friends, his books, about him, and to no longer trudge stoutly through the slanted rain to some isolated cottage.

Scarce had the assistant appeared, however, than the vicar felt, rather than knew, that something hardly definable had disturbed the calm of his life. For, try as he might, he could never send his spirit out to meet the young man; a reserve, a quality somewhat inexorable, a devotion to ritual as such almost amusing in one so young, precluded the intimacy that he had hoped to establish.

The vicar was in no wise alone in his feeling. Ellen, his old servant, had sounded the first note. After the tea immediately succeeding the curate's arrival the vicar, left alone among drained cups and the crumbs of Damson tarts, dusted his spectacles with

the gusto common to the small tasks of the old.

"Well, well, Ellen," he had remarked, "what do you think of Mr. Rockel? A very worthy young man, I believe."

Ellen's wrinkled, elfin countenance had puckered slowly toward him.

"Nay," she said. "He has but stones where his eyes should be."

And indeed the villagers, simple elemental folk for the most part, the remnant of a decaying commercial town that had seen its glories and population diminish with the centuries, expressed from the first a marked reserve toward Mr. Rockel.

As the year drew on this reserve solidified into almost antipathy. To be sure, there was no manifestation of it; Rockel mingled, or tried to mingle, with the social life of the village. Yet children, strange to say, could never be persuaded to approach him. Perhaps it was the pallor of his countenance, with its sensuous mouth thinned to asceticism, or the extraordinary unseeing aspect of his large gray eyes, brilliant without depth, as is granite. At any rate, after the unfortunate incident of his first baptism —at which the child's terrified screams had at last caused its mother to snatch it with a look of fury from the curate's long hands —the vicar found it wise to officiate himself. The curate seemed unable to unbend a stiffness out of place with his youth, and went thus untrusted, as is the fate of those who do not give themselves.

This night the vicar sighed and settled into his chair a little more deeply. His hand strayed mechanically to "The Urn Burial," open on the table beside him. He picked it up, then shut one finger into the book and conscientiously straightened his thoughts toward Rockel again. Perhaps he'd better have a real talk with the young man—— There was that book open again! He allowed his eyes to stray along a few lines of it and a phrase beautiful as the fragrant curve of roses down a branch caught his eye. With a twitch of guilty pleasure he allowed Rockel to fade into a transparent specter at the back of his mind and drifted away upon the mellow, quaint stream of Thomas Brown's prose.

It was Rockel himself who, an hour later, pulled the vicar back into reality by his entrance. He came in quietly, nodded a good evening and drew up a chair. The vicar knew what this portended, for Rockel was sparing of his company and, in spite of hospitable offers, preferred the bleak, rough-cut stones of the study he had fitted up in the tower of the church to the homely warmth of the vicar's shabbily book-lined den.

"I want to talk to you about Evans, sir," he prefaced. His voice, low in pitch and small in volume, possessed the basic carrying quality of rapped iron.

The vicar sighed gently. Secretly he loved Hugh, in spite of his swashbuckling.

"Why, what is it, Rockel?"

The curate's odd, blank eyes fixed on his brightly.

"He is the leader of a bad element here. His influence is considerable; and never in any but the downward path. Not long ago he thrashed one of his companions and sent him home to his wife with a broken head, for no reason whatsoever."

The vicar kept the smile out of voice and lip—more at the other's pedantic utterance than at his sentiment—but it lined the corners of his eyes.

"Indeed! I am sorry. I—I believe I heard something of it."

The curate allowed a moment of silence to accumulate accusation, then went on.

"I cannot reach him at all. I tried to talk to him about it not long after. He"—the young man's very pale face twitched—"he spoke to me in the most flippant manner, ridiculed all virtue and frankly laughed at me. And yet he has the face to appear from time to time within our church."

The vicar looked at him steadily.

"Surely, my son—you would not exclude him—or any other—from that place?"

Rockel reddened but responded with spirit.

"Certainly not, sir. But—I wish he were somewhere else than here. That is rather shirking it, I suppose. But he seems to have attraction to people of a certain type —that he may drag them down with him. He is a profligate of the worst sort for that reason. He——"

The vicar leaned forward in his chair in real surprise.

"My dear Rockel—your assertions are a little strong, I think. Hugh is a wild, thoughtless lad, right enough——"

"Pardon me, sir—he is much worse!" Rockel rose and paced the room. "I am sure that he is a libertine of the worst sort; men with his kind of animal good looks

generally are." His voice never rose above the cutting evenness of its level pitch. "I feel that his presence contaminates women and his attentions to Miss Williams——"

"Ah!" The vicar relaxed again and the smile would out, though his hand flickered to his chin to hide it. So *there* lay the wind —with Venus blowing gently along its breath. Rockel's assiduous and solemn attendance upon the rehearsals of the choir, of which Rose Williams was the sunny deity, was parish gossip.

The curate understood smile and tone. He stepped quickly toward the vicar.

"I am glad," he said evenly, "that you find the subject one for mirth. And I regret having intruded any portrait of your *beloved* parishioners upon you save one of perfection. None so blind as those that will not see!" He set his hat on his head and strode out.

The vicar half rose from his chair and called out as the door slammed.

But no answer came back and he sank down and gazed thoughtfully into the flames. A picture of Hugh standing before him a fortnight agone, listening in silence to his kindly severity, came to him—the flash of his dark eyes as he lifted them to the vicar's hint—and Hugh's instant, "No —sir—not that—yet," suddenly rose before him.

Then his thoughts turned again upon Rockel. For the first time since the curate's coming he had caught a glimpse of a living man inside that stalking bundle of creeds. He must see him to-morrow and apologize in some way for his levity.

His gaze remained fixed upon the fire where the embers lay orange under a blue haze of flame. His rest that night was disturbed and he rose next morning with distinct gout.

II.

The chamber inside the tower was a spacious one; gray, gaunt and high. Tall, pointed windows, at a great height from the floor, allowed only the entrance of faint light. Beneath the chamber, legend said, had been—and still lay hidden, buried deep and far—the sinister flat altar of that earlier worship that had fled into corners of England with the Britons. In this remote hill-closed countryside credence in old things gave way slowly or not at all to the light of modern reason and there were still among the shrouded valleys places where no peasant would venture upon the night of the full moon.

The spot had been the center of the cult, and in ages past, it was hinted, strange sacrifices had been made there, so that the veiled tales of them sifted down in vague and century-dilated horror to the people of the present. Many felt that within the valley and upon the eminence where stood the church there was distilled a peculiar atmosphere, an individual, powerful essence—as if the long, pendent clouds, the hills and the rushing, sedge-tangled brooks had absorbed the spirit of the dark past; many felt that upon this spot, though crowned with a Christian church, the old powers still held monstrous sway. It was said that they guarded the valley and its inhabitants as their own and jealously cared for them.

Rockel sat at his desk within the tower chamber, his book open, his queer eyes fixed unseeingly upon the spotted and antique book of vellum spread open before him. He had quickly caught the vague legends of the place and his spirit, given to fantastic though secret reverie, had magnified and enlarged them; they fitted well with certain sides of his nature. A morbid interest in the buried practices of the past, long porings over the early German-medieval school of philosophic thought, studies of the mystery of the Rosicrucians, secret attempts to follow their alchemical experiments—all this had fascinated him from very early youth, had given his mind a distorted morbidity and had twisted its philosophic breadth.

This aspect of his nature, which might never have stirred beyond an intellectual passivity in a London parish of chimney pots, was aroused to intense inner excitement by the gloomy strangeness of all around him and he had laid at the door of this new environment all the new feelings that he recognized in himself and that amazed and appalled him. His mind would not stay upon his work—even the secret chemical experimentations that were his diversion failed for the most part to interest.

The vicar's meaning smile had galvanized into consciousness the direction of these feelings and had shown them, like steel particles to a magnet, pointing straight to Rose Williams as center and source.

Since that revelation, five days before, he had lived a divided person. An early con-

vert to the church, he had taken up its asceticism with headlong zeal. He prided himself that the spirit had mounted permanently ascendant over the flesh. And in one startled flash he saw the flesh awake and at every moment heard it shouting lustily for fulfillment.

So he redoubled his ecclesiastical duties; but the feelings remained—and grew—and growing with them he came to know another—a crystallized hatred for Evans.

He had passed him, that day, in the village street. Evans had touched his slanted cap and smiled and gone by with a flash of white teeth and a gleam of bronzed arms in the sun. Rockel had felt himself grow coldly furious.

He rose stiffly from his study table and went to the door of the tower and looked out toward the south hills, green and sharp under the light of early evening. Then he saw Rose moving lightly down the road. He saw her turn aside into the meadow and begin to climb the hill. She was alone.

He stood very still, watching her, then quickly picked up his hat from his study table, carefully closed the door and with a strange eagerness set off toward the south road.

III.

Rose Williams walked slowly into the thin, green brightness of the twilight. It poured down the western sky in level sheets like a tilted ocean, and the smooth lift of the near meadow to a rounded hill shone splendidly against and beneath it.

The old road wound away to the south. Rose followed until the hedge-topped wall at the right broke for a moment into bars; she stooped between them, then stood in the meadow, her little hat cocked sidewise by raking against the top bar and her fluffy hair haloing her head.

Here a small path, sheep-fashioned, led slantingly up the hill until it lost itself upon the sky. Rose's narrow shoes sank into the springy turf and her chest filled with a great breath of air. She stretched her arms up, feeling the softness of the evening playing upon her body, suddenly conscious, as she walked, of the curves of herself, of resilient movement, of beauty like a spell over the country and of a desire to melt into the strength of the hills and feel as they felt.

She passed among gorse bushes, their rounded outlines soft and cloudy; she remembered with a twinge of inner laughter how she had tried to sit on their softly contoured tops as a little girl and the howls that had arisen at their prickly inhospitality.

She stood where the path fronted the sky and looked back upon the village. The church tower dominated, and Rose's mouth changed and her slightly arched brows drew together as she saw it; something of the light went out of the sky and the beauty from the hills in the thoughts that began to spread through her mind. And the more she thought, the less the thin, green twilight shone and darker grew the shadows under the gorse bushes. The church tower stood up gray-blue and very clear against the misted lavender and green of the far hills.

Little pictures flitted through her mind; Rockel in the pulpit on his first Sunday, his big, pale eyes fixed almost always upon her; Rockel's stiff figure standing beside the organ as she played for choir rehearsals; his talk on the way home. Then she remembered the first time that he had touched her. Up to that time she had been intensely conscious of him, of his powerful, repressed personality, of the flare occasionally in his eyes. With the touch of his fingers upon her arm as she had mounted a stile had come a certain change—she felt his fingers, tensed and hard, and every cell of her woke to a clamorous shouting of denial.

So over her zest of his mind and way of speech was spread a color of physical repulsiveness—and yet with a dread kind of attractiveness therein. After that, as a child will seek a fearful, dark closet or graveyard at night in an unwilling ecstasy of self-torture, so Rose wanted Rockel to touch her, longed for the contact that she feared—thoughts, needless to say, that she put from her with maidenly propriety and not a little horror whenever—rarely—they took enough shape to be consciously grasped.

She shook back her hair that the climb had loosened and tried to win again the earlier mood. But come it would not. Not even the hill meadow curving to the sky, the floods of fainting light pouring still over its top, could bring again the sense of union with turf and shadow, of expectant, melting delight.

She turned again to the village and recognized with small surprise Rockel striding

to her over the meadow far below. She sat down, then, and watched him grow large and larger as the path led him slantwise up the hill. The long approach made her feel as a bird might watching the coming hunter.

He came to her and stood a moment looking down. Rose looked up at him, then smiled and gulped a little.

"Please sit down," she said. "You seem so very high like that."

He quite suddenly dropped down in front of her, close, so that his brilliant eyes were very plain with their thin, short lashes.

Rockel spoke and his low voice shook a little.

"It is impossible that I longer refrain from telling you what you already know—I love you—I feel that Heaven sanctions it."

Passionate intensity shone through the stilted utterance as light through stiff, ill-jointed curtains.

Rose looked at him, unable to move her eyes from his. Somewhere something in her began, "You've been proposed to—you must say something." She had a creeping thrill of anticipation that Rockel would touch her.

"I want you for my wife, Rose," he was saying.

"I had never thought of that," she answered very slowly. "I don't know at all what to say."

She saw his eyes change as if doors behind them opened. His hands were upon hers and she thought fleetingly of an awakened statue's hands, hard as warm metal.

Rockel drew her close, and leaned to meet her; she felt his rigid body pressing suddenly close against hers, his thin, hard arms wound round her like cords. He kissed her savagely, long——

Then she freed herself, wrenched herself away and knew that she trembled violently. Rockel's face, twisted in contrition and chagrin, hovered before her. She heard him saying, "Forgive me, Rose—forgive me——"

"You must go away," she said presently. "Please go away. I—I can't talk to you now. Please——"

He got to his feet with grass and bits of moss sticking to his black clothes, tossed his arms up with a curious stiff gesture, then ran headlong down the hill.

Rose watched him till he had dwindled to the size of a bee and disappeared behind the hedge at the meadow's wall. Slowly the trembling in her subsided as she sat quite still. One after another, thin veils fell across the hills. She watched the violet shadows accumulate.

In the village the first light came out; Rose placed it by the huge oak tree shadowing the house and knew it for Hugh Evans' and the light for the light in his room.

With this came a flood of composite pictures of Hugh, crowding all else from her mind and filling it with a rush like the clean, sweet, strong smell of wind across hay fields at dusk—illusive fragments of him—his thick eyebrows meeting to a straight nose—his dark hair arching crisply over his forehead—the masculine sprawl of his long legs, the brown smoothness of his neck.

As these pictures shone and shifted in her mind the evening drew closer round her. Small night sounds of insects began to draw a faint skein of sound over the meadow; another light, then another, winked up from the village; strong and sweet the smell of the hill penetrated her.

With a little laugh she sank down and buried her face in the damp softness of the turf.

IV.

When Rose lifted her head deep haze had settled over the valley, purple-gray. The rounded backs of the hills hummocked up faintly green through the shadows.

She walked down the path; in the dusk all the gorse bushes seemed woolly, soft mounds—the whole hillside gave the illusive gray picture of sleeping sheep.

Inside her something waited; she felt the feel of trees that lift day-tired faces to the night and of buds on the point of blossom. A sense of completeness possessed her that she knew as a completeness that at the same time yearned for fulfillment. Swift waves passed from her body down her limbs and tingled deliciously at her wrists. All the way down the curving path, across the silent flat already damply cool, the still waves ran through her, piling a cumulative intensity, so that when she stepped out upon the road she was like a harp tuned and ready.

The road wound toward the village; in the east, above the curves of the kneeling hills, a light spread into the sky; and as she walked, the edge of the moon, deep orange, slid in a growing arc of deep, faint light above the hills as they knelt.

As she approached Hugh Evans' house, she felt her whole body humming silently.

He was leaning against the wall, looking into the deep orange of the moon. She came near as two men's lengths before he heard her step and turned. The faint shadow of a branch traced a pattern of flickering leaves over his white shirt and gave him a strangely vibrant look.

She came up to him, the sense of unreality, of humming expectancy strong upon her; she hesitated. He stared at her and leaned forward and his voice shook with awe.

"Rose——"

She nodded. He came nearer, so that she entered the intimate atmosphere that exhales from each person; her senses flooded with confused impressions—the comfortable masculine smell of clothes and tobacco—the dark, crisp arches of hair shadowing his square forehead above the thick brows—the wide sweep of shoulders and the beautiful glow of orange moonlight on his tanned throat and arms——

He bent and peered into her face.

"You—you look like a spirit walking!"

Still she could not speak. He bent so close that she saw her own white face inverted infinitely small in his eyes a moment—then she saw incredible joy race like a flame through his features.

Almost timidly his hands rested on her shoulders.

With a shout of song the pent vibrations burst through her body, drowning the faint outer murmur of the leaves. She felt Hugh's arms tightening like an answering melody to her own singing flesh.

V.

Two days later Rockel let himself into his study with his heavy key. His book lay as he had left it. His clothes were spotted with grass stems and splashed with mud. He had walked miles, unknowing, plunging across fields, following the courses of tangled brooks. He was like a flame driven by the wind, seeking to escape its own burning. Sheer physical exhaustion had brought him back. Beneath his eyes black hollows told of two sleepless nights.

He sank into his chair and closed his eyes a moment, then opened them quickly before the fantastic images that instantly swarmed there. He picked up the book and began to read. His overtaut mind raced quickly through the quaint difficulty of the medieval Latin. Gradually the lines across his forehead smoothed out—he sank to rest, at last to temporary forgetfulness in the wild surmises, the alchemical mysteries of the fourteenth-century monk whose rare book had by chance crossed his path. A passage of it ran:

> ——and this potion is an exceeding subtle one; for it is tasteless; and for seven days its effect is not to be seen, neither in the way of speaking nor in the gesture of him who has consumed it, nor yet in his features. If he has beauty of the face and body, that beauty waxes yet more beautiful; and if he have wit, so is it sharpened to finer cutting. But upon the seventh day does his speech begin to falter and strange words without meaning to come to his lips and his limbs act without his will, so that he runs when he would rest. And on the eighth day a shriveling of him sets in, so that he becomes slowly yellow and withered, as is a leaf scorched by fire. And on the ninth day is madness come upon him so that he foams and his brain is darkened—and those whom he most esteems are abhorrent to him. And his strength of body departs, drop by drop, so that for many years he may live thus, with the foam of madness upon his mouth and darkness upon his brain.

Rockel laid down the book, opened a small cabinet in his desk and lifted out with great care several small phials, small glass bottles with long necks. Then he lifted out a curious brazen arrangement like a miniature spirit lamp with a tiny cup fastened above it.

This he lighted. With infinite pains he uncorked one of the phials and, taking care not to spill any drop of it upon him, poured part of the contents into the tiny cup of the brazier. With frequent consultations of the book beside him he measured out a few drops from the other phial, green and purple and clear, bluish white, and dropped them into the now-heated cup. The liquid seethed and bubbled and a thin green vapor rose from it. His eyes suddenly deepened and glowed as he watched; his pallid, severe face changed, slackened, relaxed; a line sprang from nose to mouth corner and the eager carnalness prophesied in the mouth was as if by magic fulfilled in the whole countenance. His mind darted to an object—he must cage a rat or contrive to get a live rabbit for experimental purposes.

A step resounded through the hollow church. Rockel blew out the flame, watched the liquid settle to a deep amber color, then poured it carefully into an empty phial upon his desk. The steps approached his door.

He deftly slipped the brazier into the cabinet with the phials. A knock sounded on his door. He flashed shut the cabinet door, slipped the tiny phial of deep amber behind a book and settled into his chair before calling, "Come in."

As the door opened he did not turn but continued his apparent reading for a moment, then deliberately raised his eyes. He felt a sinking in his stomach and a cold hardening inside him as he saw his visitor.

"Good day, Evans," he said, after an instant's pause, in which the two men's eyes met in a brief, vivid flash of encounter. "This is an—unexpected pleasure. Sit down, won't you?" indicating a chair. He stretched his hand toward the other but did not rise.

Hugh stood for a moment, then took the hand in his own warm grip, laughed gently and threw himself into a chair.

"I guess you are thinking that I am not one to be here, Mr. Rockel," he prefaced. "You look surprised enough to see me—and none too pleased," he added frankly, with a flash of his white teeth. "And for that I should not be blaming you, either," he continued as the other's head drew back a little.

Rockel made no reply and waited. There was a short silence in which Hugh's eyes roamed curiously round the room, and Rockel never withdrew his from the sunbrowned face of his visitor. Finally Hugh fronted him with a sudden squaring of his wide shoulders and something of the intriguing ingenuousness of a small boy making a confession.

"I—I wanted to talk to you about something that—that——" He paused and flushed under his tan, one strong, well-formed hand twisting and untwisting about the arm of his chair. Then his dark eyes lifted to Rockel's face. "You see, I've made up my mind to change my ways a bit, sir—and—and—well—I wanted to start it right. I—I thought maybe you or the vicar——"

Rockel nodded slowly, his sense of justice struggling almost hopelessly with his prejudice against this man, for all he stood for, the freedom and magnetic vagabonderie that Rockel so hated him for having—hated with a double hatred as the hill meadow in the thin green twilight flashed before him and the feel of Rose Williams an instant in his arms spun through his head.

"I am very glad," he heard himself saying conventionally. "And I am sure that the vicar will be more than glad. You are one of his favorites, I believe. May I ask what prompted this determination? I can scarcely flatter myself that it was due to any effort of my own."

Hugh, too lifted by his own high happiness to note the other's careful ungraciousness, looked down a moment.

"It's that I want to tell you about," he said eagerly. He lifted his eyes again to Rockel's and with such shining that the other twitched forward suddenly, foreboding.

"Rose and I—we are—she—we are to be married within the month."

Rockel felt that the tumultuous crashing in his own mind must be heard in the room in the silence that followed. When he spoke his voice was as quiet as ever, but its metal sang like a plucked wire.

"Do you think," he said slowly, "that you are in any way worthy to do this thing?"

"God knows I'm not!" Hugh, in his deep earnestness, missed the level glare of the queer, clouded eyes. "And—I shall be coming to you for that. I stopped at the vicar's, you know, but he was from home. So I came straight on here. And—if I can—she wants me to begin taking communion again"—this very low—"and I want to."

Rockel's voice came quite mechanically as he asked:

"You're a member of the church?"

"Yes, though I've not been coming much till lately."

Vividly Rockel remembered them side by side in the Williams pew on the previous Sunday.

"I'd like to begin to-morrow," added Hugh wistfully, the repentant's urge for atonement that had sped him straight from Rose burning strong in him. The other's cold antipathy began to settle like icy mist round his glowing mood and he wished with a twinge of irritability that it were the beloved old vicar he was facing.

Rockel rose.

"I shall administer communion to you to-morrow morning, if you are quite sure of your change of attitude," he said precisely.

Hugh stood up with alacrity, like a small boy at the end of a lecture, his thin face curved into a smile, his body balancing lightly on the balls of his feet.

"I thank you," he said. "She—she will,

too, you know, eh?" An innate sense of delicacy and a growing suspicion of Rockel's interest prevented him from saying more.

He half extended his hand, then drew it back as he saw no motion of the other's arm to meet it. He flushed and left the room, with the curate's "Good night" at his heels.

VI.

After he had gone, Rockel stood quite still, then sat in his chair, motionless. In the gloomy church the shadows crept slowly together high in the stone vaulting and began to settle down the springing Gothic pillars to the floor. Now and then in the cool silence a joint creaked somewhere or the sudden twitter of a swallow sounded a moment and died into the leaden hush. The long rays from the choir windows fell upon the chancel steps, stained with thin tints the Litany desk and stole down the nave, slow-moving pools of color—somber purples, deep green-blues, heavy yellows. They stretched longer and longer down the ancient floor.

The man in the tower chamber sat without moving, his hands limp upon his desk, his face a white mask. The rays of light and pools of color reached the end of the nave and faded out; a gray shroud settled down upon the church. The outlines of his relaxed figure and impassive face, with its level-staring eyes, eyes that in their metallic fire seemed the only living portion of the man, grew dim in shade. A little wind rose and hurried sighing round the church tower high above him. Another joined it, then another, so that the silence was gradually dispelled, as is the night, by a rising dawn of sound, a continuous low whisper, punctuated with a creak or grumble from the century-old beams as the gathering storm began to wake in earnest. The door leading to the stairs of the tower swayed in the rush of air sweeping up the hollow interior and slammed shut.

The man sprang up and peered round him into the deepening dusk. He muttered swift phrases, incoherently.

"He has no right—the sins of the fathers —murder——"

He flung his arms wide, then stood transfixed, as a distant crash of thunder sent a thrill through the fabric of the building. He made one or two quick turns of the chamber and his coat brushed aside the book that had hidden the amber-colored phial.

He picked it up and stared at it. As he looked at it in the gray darkness, slim, hardly visible against the window, a thought flickered in the depths of his brain—flickered, then leaped into horrid intensity. As he thoroughly grasped it, he gave a low cry, lowered the phial quickly and backed from it as from a living terror.

The phial's contents were the same color as the sacramental communion wine.

Details, unbidden, sprouted from the original thought and twisted in writhing growths through his brain; with terrible exactness the plan, of its own volition, outlined itself completely before him. He remained rigid, gazing at the phial.

Then a second and nearer crash of thunder shook the tower above him and a phrase, a cry, sounded through him with its echoes and burst from him.

"I am an instrument in the hands of the Lord!" he screamed, and turned and ran into the black body of the church itself. Here he stopped, sure that what he saw was the reflection of his own tortured mind.

The void of the nave was dimly outlined, for from the windows of the clerestory appeared an incredible, faint, nebulous glow —a light sullen and unearthly, as if darkness had striven horribly and unnaturally into light.

The pillars loomed into blackness in the vaulted roof, but elsewhere shone with a pallid luster. From far across the sighing emptiness of the north transept came a sudden increased rumble of the nearing storm and a splintering of glass as one of the panes fell inward before the gale.

With the sound he hurried forward. He gained the choir and altar; he fumbled uncertainly at the communion table; his hands touched the crisp edge of cut glass. He seized the decanter of sacramental wine. As he turned, his eyes fell upon the shrouded altar. It seemed that, whereas the rest of the church gleamed faintly in the ghastly nebulous light, round that altar were black shadows in packed ranks, fold on fold. With a shudder he fled down the nave, aware that it had grown, in that instant, suddenly still and that his footsteps' sounds seemed to follow him and to run on hollowly before him. The glow of light about the clerestory pulsated gently; faintly greenish-yellow it waxed and paled like luminous mist—it was

as if all the ascendant breaths of worshipers for centuries, lingering about the high, dark spaces of the old church, growing older and older, had at last assumed the phosphoric aspect of fungi or of ancient, decaying tree stumps.

He regained his own chamber, oppressed by the heavy silence that falls rarely upon the crest of a storm. It was totally dark. He lighted a candle. The blue center burned with a vacant, eyelike luster and seemed to stare spectrally and to search for the shadows that it could never find and that crept before it into the corners of the room.

He grasped the phial and raised the decanter. Slowly he brought the phial's neck above that of the larger vessel, his hands very still in the concentrated clarity that is the opium eater's at the peak of his ecstasy or the confirmed alcoholic's in the last moments before consciousness leaves him. His face was thrust forward, white in the candle's glow, his lips drawn back from his large teeth.

With a faint clink the two glass containers met.

VII.

Hugh and Rose, walking slowly, reached the south road and Hugh stretched a hand for the top bars that led the way into the hill meadow.

Rose seized his arm.

"Oh—please—no!" she said quite breathlessly. "Don't let's go that way."

Hugh stared at her, his eyes crinkling into a puzzled smile.

"But I thought that it was your favorite walk."

"Yes—it *was*, but——"

She drew him along the road with her. "Let's not go that way to-day," she said. Hugh smiled delightedly at her small air of possession and gently slipped an arm across her shoulders. They walked for a moment.

Then Rose said: "That's so like you, you know, not to ask me why. Of course, I shall tell you. Here goes the path to the Beacon—let's walk up to the turn."

"Best not farther. There's weather brewing."

They turned from the road where a path at the left entered the woods. Immediately a deep twilight fell round them. Rustly holly, stiff and erect, stretched itself on tiptoe with every glossy spine spread. Haws and ground oaks flung friendly arms above the path and shadows lurked under the tall pines and elms. Across their high tops ran sudden little winds, indecisive and variant.

Hugh was speaking.

"He seemed that surprised to see me he couldn't talk," he said as they drew deeper and deeper into the forest. "I fancy he has little enough liking to me, poor chap. He tried to give me a bit of a talk once, but it was no go. He seems a stony fellow, eh, Rose?"

Rose clutched his arm.

"Oh!" she said. "It's rather awful—I might have liked him very much! You see—I did admire him—looked up to his learning—*part* of me did; and then—something happened. You must know all about it!" she rushed on. "It's very important for us both that you should, Hugh."

Manlike, he smiled secretly at her earnestness, and for answer slid his arm farther round her shoulders. She pressed his hand under her own upon her breast and began to tell him. They walked slowly upward through the woods, unconscious of the rising wind and darkening of the skies around them. From time to time Hugh's hand tightened encouragingly upon hers and his simply made, direct mind wondered a little what it was all about. Girls were like that, though; they always took things all apart in their minds—— With a rush of tenderness Hugh drew her swiftly close to him.

Rose's voice was very low when she finished.

"I don't know how—but after he had gone—I saw the light in your house, and then—somehow—I *knew*——"

The path turned sharply to the left and emerged upon the upper edge of a meadow, with the valley spread before them and the shoulder of the thick-wooded Beacon above.

As they stepped out a veiled flash of light came from the valley, followed by a sharp burst and rumble of near thunder. A blast of wind tore at their clothes.

Hugh turned her so that she sheltered in the lee of his body and they watched the black clouds rushing together across the valley. Their jagged, tumultuous lines crossed in agitated hurry of interpenetrating lines, like armies marching through each other. They seemed pouring over the hills from

every direction into the valley. The wind made a fluctuating roar.

"I've never seen the like of that," muttered Hugh, his dark eyes half shut in the wind and his tanned face raised against it like a breasting ship.

"It's wonderful," came from Rose. "But I would be terrified alone, I think."

Hugh turned and put his arms round her, so that each felt, with a rushing tingle, the warmth of the other's body. He bent and kissed her. As he lifted his head he felt Rose suddenly stiffen and saw her eyes open wide with amazement. She pointed over his shoulder down the valley and her voice fluttered like a pent bird in the leaden silence that had fallen.

"Look—look—the church—the tower!"

Hugh's head jerked round and he felt a cold wave go down his spine and icy fingers draw across the back of his neck at what he saw.

VIII.

The vicar, oppressed by a sense of uneasiness, was fussing round his library table. The storm had been gathering through the afternoon and threatened to be a gale. As he straightened, and dusted his hands carefully, there came up from the valley a distant crash of thunder.

He assembled his notes and prowled into three of the seven reference books open on his table. Little did it disturb the vicar that his congregation would have listened just as hard—or gone to sleep with equal facility—had he not prepared his sermons with the meticulous care and with much of the beauty of a fine essayist. To translate correctly the exact shade, the perfume, the color, of a ringing Greek phrase, to be *quite* certain about the reference to Macrobius—these things occupied him pleasantly with a sense of his knowledge and of his creative ability and usefulness—which is a very good thing for the old.

He sat before his books but the continued rattle of the windows annoyed him. Presently came a second and very near clap of thunder. The vicar called to Rockel, but his room was empty. As he came back to the study he noted that the wind had suddenly dropped; an ominous silence oppressed him. Outside the final shades of twilight had gone completely into darkness with the thickening of the storm.

Suddenly into the room burst Ellen, her face awry with terror.

"Master!" she shrilled. "Master! The church—the church!"

The vicar ran behind her into a darkened room whose broad, diamond-paned windows gave upon the church alone upon its eminence. A startled cry broke from him.

The low clouds were hanging apparently only a few feet above the tower's top, their ragged edges a level, inverted horizon cutting off the mountains beyond. From every pinnacle and point of the tower rose a faint flame of light, greenish white, so that a pale nimbus crowned the tower with an unearthly tiara, ghastly, nebulous, like a thing from another space and another world. Above it, reflected from the low clouds that rushed and billowed together, gleamed and paled a sudden and malignant radiance.

"St. Elmo's fire," whispered the vicar, though he, too, felt the flesh crawl at the back of his neck a moment. "It is nothing that need alarm you, Ellen, nothing but an electrical atmosphere——"

"Oh!" Ellen rocked her old body and moaned. " 'Tis no saint that! 'Tis the old ones, the great ones! And they be angry with——"

"Hush, Ellen," began the vicar with the sharp tongue of tight nerves.

But, as he spoke, came a rending crash, a blare of light that descended upon the tower, painting its traceries a blinding white for a moment. Then, as they looked the whole fabric crumbled with a long, deep roar into a cloud of dust and tossed-up smoke.

IX.

When the blackened ruins of the tower had been partly cleared away—for, strange to say, the remainder of the church was unhurt—the workers drew back before a hand protruding from a pile of rubbish in the very center. Its fingers grasped the neck of a small phial, the rest of which had been splintered away, and from the fragment, winding over the stiff and blackened thumb, was etched in the flesh a deep, livid burn.

Look for more of Mr. Hutchinson's work in the future.

A Chat With You

AND so," said Scheherazade, tucking in one of her satin-shod feet as she sat cross-legged on the soft divan, "and so the young caliph recovered the treasure of jewels and married the beautiful maiden. And Allah, the Compassionate, sent them many handsome children—all boys—and they lived happily ever after."

In the dusk of the palace chamber her face shone white and beautiful as a slip of the young moon between dark trees. There was a scent of jasmine in the air and, afar off, the lovelorn song of a bulbul and the cool tinkle of falling water.

With one hand the sultan twirled his short mustache; with the other he pushed up his turban the better to scratch his head. From a flagon at his side he took a long draft of Persian wine, chilled with snow from the distant mountains.

"By the three thousand and seventeen minarets of Bagdad!" he said. "That was a tale!"

SCHEHERAZADE did not speak. She knew, as a well-brought-up Arabian girl, that it was not for her to speak till called upon. Besides, she had been talking steadily all night long. Her jaws were tired and her throat ached. When she had paused for a moment, the sultan had bade her continue, so interesting was the tale. Now she refreshed herself, not with the Persian wine, but with a cool drink made from the golden lemons of Damascus and perfumed with rose leaves. The sultan threw himself on his back and looked at the dull-gold Arabesques on the fretted ceiling.

"What puzzles me," he said, "is how you keep it up."

"Anything that the poor handmaid of the sultan may do in his service is nothing," said Scheherazade modestly.

"You've been at it so long," the sultan mused. "The fact that you look just the same as you did hundreds of years ago is nothing—for was not our palace made an enchanted one by virtue of the slaves of the lamp that was Aladdin's and was not our youth made eternal by the same spell? What I cannot understand is the stories, all of them new and all of them good, with a goodness not to be surpassed by the golden words of Suleiman, upon whom be peace!"

"It is nothing," murmured the girl.

"You know, Scheherazade," said the sultan, sitting up suddenly and straightening his turban, which had been pushed over one eye, "there was a time when I was beginning to get tired of your tales. There was a sameness about them—genii, enchanted islands, great rocs and the like. I thought, by the sword of Allah! that I might take another wife."

His sultana shuddered. She remembered a time long ago when the sultan's domestic habits had been reprehensible. Being a woman hater, each night he had married a new wife, each morning he had ordered her execution. With her stories she had broken him of this expensive habit; but now, fearing that the old mood was coming on and hoping to divert him, she took her lute and sang:

"I'll sing thee songs of Araby and tales of fair Cashmere,
Wild tales to cheat thee of a sigh or charm thee to a tear.
And dreams of delight shall on thee break——"

"Stop!" thundered the sultan. "I'm sick of that song. All the amateurs are singing it. You hear it everywhere you go."

The high voice trailed off into nothing and the lute was mute. Scheherazade scowled as she fanned herself.

ABOUT ten years ago I was bored with your literary style," the sultan went on; "it was cramped, it lacked variety. Then it changed suddenly. It was wonderful. Since then, it's been great."

"Changed!" said the lady who had a secret she wanted to keep. "My lord imagines it."

"Imagine nothing!" said the sultan. "You got better. The yarns were different—more real, more real life in them. They used to sound like the whisperings and scandals of slave women behind a curtain; now they are like the words of great nobles and wise sultans. The stories of the north where everything is snow, stories of the sheiks and horsemen of the great plains, stories of the cunning intrigues of the bazaar and the stratagems of wise merchants, stories of all Ferenghistan."

The sultan leaned forward suddenly and pointed an accusing finger at his lady.

"You never devised these tales in your mind, these wonders and adventures in the land of the Ferenghi. Suleiman—upon whom be peace!—could not have done it. Where do you learn them?"

"I imagine them," said Scheherazade.

"You speak falsely," cried the sultan, "you deceive me! Speak the truth or I will clap my hands and the guards will come to drag you forth and the lord of the bow string shall attend upon you—and another shall sit here in your place."

SCHEHERAZADE sobbed with grief and fear. She could not speak but she knew that it was useless to try further to deceive the sultan. From beneath a cushion she drew an object which she tossed toward her lord.

"A paper of the Ferenghi!" he cried, examining it at length and wonderingly. "I can make nothing of this. I cannot read their writing."

"I can," said Scheherazade, still sobbing; "I learned it from a Ferenghi slave. It took me years. This is a magic book from across the black water in farthest Ferenghistan. It is called El-Populah and *there* I have read the tales you have marveled at in the last ten years."

"All those so mighty tales from this small book?"

"It is a magic book. The magic of it is this: At the bazaar, where the Ferenghi go, I left many pieces of silver. And by the magic of Ferenghistan this book comes afresh to me across the waters, even across the black waters to the west."

"Truly," said the sultan after a long silence, "I cannot read it but it must be the work of magicians more cunning than all our Arabians. A wise woman is a jewel in the turban of her lord; and you, sultana, are wise."

"There are many tales," said Scheherazade, drying her eyes, "many tales yet new. The tale of the man of the city streets who became a sultan in the wilderness, the tale of the adventurer in far Cathay, the tale of the assassin whom none might discover—these and a hundred others."

"And is it never done? Will one small book hold all of this?"

"The magic of the book is that it is still the same yet always new, each two weeks. Each time it has new tales, never heard of before, never sufficiently to be admired, each one better than the last."

"You have done well," said the sultan, lying back again. "Truly you are as one of the favorite wives of the Prophet. Tell me another story."

She told him another, even better than the last. It was easy enough, since she had the magic book, and it may be had at any news stand, especially if you order in advance—and even in Bagdad on the Tigris, if you care to subscribe.

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