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SEPT. 7, 1924
VOL. LXXIII
No. 4

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

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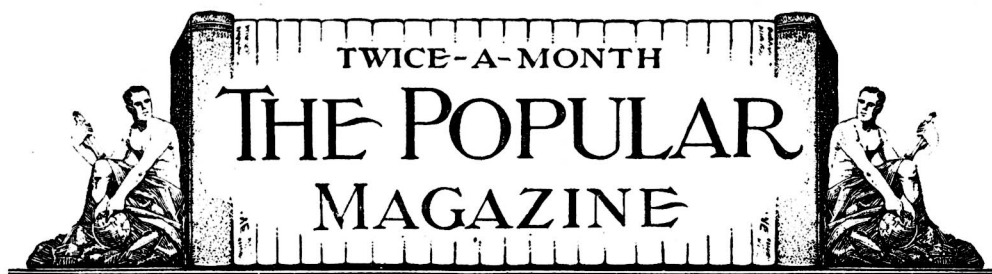
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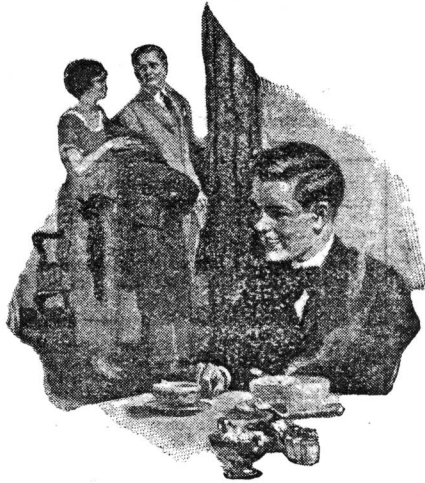
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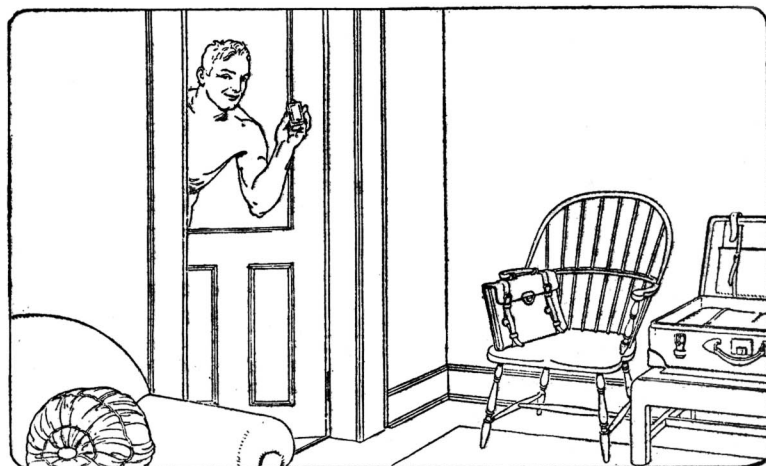
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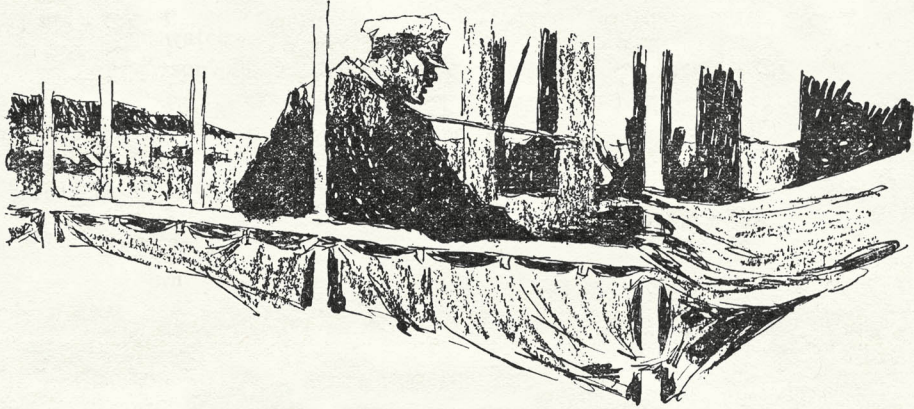
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No. 4



Twice in the Graveyard Watch

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "North of Fifty-three," "Loot," Etc.

Is the romance of the sea entirely dead? Have steam and wireless telegraphy, and the thousand mechanical aids to modern navigation eliminated the factor of danger in ocean transportation? Is the brass-buttoned watch officer on the steel bridge of the passenger greyhound any less admirable than his rougher forerunners who stumped the quarter-decks of the clipper ships in the earlier days of wood and canvas? Perhaps you will answer yes to these questions now. But wait till you have read this story of Sinclair's. The odds are twenty to one that you will change your mind before three pages are turned. The sea has lost none of its romantic terrors. And the men of the sea are the same sturdy breed they have always been. Here is a tale of seamen and sea adventure that will catch your interest and stir your emotions from the first sentence.—THE EDITOR.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

THE LIGHTS.

STONE heard the ship's bell strike seven in the graveyard watch, which is three thirty a. m. by shore time.

Night still lay like an ebony mist over the land, and the land pressed close on port and starboard, crowding the sea into a narrow pass, a danger-studded sea lane between high-wooded mountains, an artery through which flowed all the commerce between Puget Sound and Alaska.

The channel opened ahead of the *Man-*

darin a faint shade lighter than the general gloom. Still, a lookout could see little more than the white curl that spread fanwise from the vessel's bow. The *Mandarin* plowed up Johnstone Strait by time-and-compass courses, checking her position by known points, beacons, marks established for navigators. If she ran her courses true, so many minutes on a given course at a given speed, with proper allowance for all known factors, she avoided danger. She did not need to see—no more than a blind man needs to see in a familiar room.

Stone stepped out on the bridge. The

end of his watch was taking him into tricky waters and forthright dangers, chances that must be accepted by every vessel making that run through the inside passage.

The tide ebbs and floods through the long constriction of Johnstone Strait at from three to seven knots' speed. Dead ahead of the *Mandarin*, slashing south at fourteen knots per hour, helped onward by the full strength of the tide, Helmcken Island split the strait in twain, each narrowed pass made doubly dangerous by powerful surging currents, eddies, whirls that swung a great ship as if it were a toy. There was a clear channel on each side of Helmcken, a choice of two evils with little to recommend either in the way of ease or safety. Helmcken Island Light threw a red sector over Earl Ledge, an ugly reef standing two hundred yards out from shore a mile westward of Helmcken. That passed, a navigator could take his choice of chances, the north passage or the south, with the south generally favored—and with the O. S. S. steamers taking the north, known as Current Passage, for the very reason that traffic favored the south side. The less-used pass offered less chance of meeting another ship in close quarters.

On Helmcken Light Stone kept his gaze fixed, to hold his ship just outside the red sector until he cleared Earl Ledge. He could mark the *Mandarin's* course and position by that. He could feel the slight swing of her as she gave to cross currents. She was sweeping down on Helmcken under the combined thrust of her screw and the six-knot current at very close to twenty miles an hour over the ground.

In seven years of making the inside run Billy Stone had never been able to clear Helmcken Island by day or night without his nerves growing taut, without a feeling of relief once Speaker Rock and Ripple Shoal and Earl Ledge all lay astern. The *Mandarin* displaced five thousand tons dead weight. She carried a hundred and ten passengers and a light cargo. Her strong room held four wooden, iron-strapped boxes said to contain ninety thousand dollars in gold bullion from the Tanana mines. It wouldn't have made much difference if she had been merely in ballast and ship's stores and the only lives aboard her a capable crew. Billy Stone was the officer on watch. The ship was in his hands; he was responsible for her safety.

That curious tensivity began to creep over him now while the *Mandarin* still lacked half a mile of the outer danger, Earl Ledge, thrusting its rock-barbed shoal two hundred yards into the fairway from the Hardwicke shore. Over this when the tide ran strong the sea boiled and swirled with a sinister grumble. The depths about the ledge fell sharp to many fathoms. Its water-worn teeth bared at low tide. Stone stared over the port bow, straining his eyes for the white line of broken water that marked Earl Ledge on the blackest night.

As he stood there a queer jumble of thought traversed his mind. He was acutely conscious of his vessel's course, speed, position, alert to each detail of his duty, prepared for any contingency as it might arise. Yet he thought of a girl in Seattle, the long years of his service at sea, the slow drag of promotion. A hundred associated ideas flashed across his mind. He felt toward life, in that moment, a touch of the strange tension that he always experienced in clearing these dangers. He was merely a cog in the machine. Watch after watch, voyage after voyage. Years slipped by. Goals he hoped to reach stood far on the horizon. Regarded with the inevitable impatience of youth his progress toward them seemed a snail's pace, a road beset with as many difficulties as the passage of a ship through these rock-lined narrows.

He glanced in at the quartermaster gripping the wheel. He would not have changed places with the man, but for a fleeting instant he envied him his utter freedom from responsibility. The quartermaster had only to keep eyes steadfast on the compass card and shift helm as ordered. He did not have to exercise a judgment which might prove fallible. And in the merchant service there is no excuse for an error in judgment. Masters and mates in coastwise shipping stake their reputations and livelihood on the two-spoke turn of a steering wheel. One blunder unrectified puts an officer on the beach, wrecks whatever standing he may have gained in his profession as effectually as—sometimes even more effectually than—his vessel is wrecked.

Again Stone turned to look for the breakers and white foam on the reef. Presently it showed dim on the port side, well clear. The *Mandarin* swept by at train speed. Three minutes straight ahead at that pace would pile her with a crash on the end of

Helmcken Island. Stone smiled. In one minute and thirty seconds precisely he would order the quartermaster to put her over just enough to stand fairly into the middle of Current Passage. He looked backward, marking the overfalls and swirls and confusion over the ledge vanish astern—and as he swung to look forward his eye caught something which a moment before had not been there, something which caused his heart to give one tremendous leap and stand still.

The running lights of a vessel, the red and green and white triangle, bore head on as the *Mandarin* swung into the course she must run. The current set across the end of Helmcken. A powerful eddy worked there. If she bore to starboard and was caught in that fast water all the *Mandarin's* power would not keep her offshore.

And this other vessel, mysteriously flashing out of the darkness, had the right of way. Under the rules of the road at sea she must hold her course and speed. The *Mandarin* must give way. To give way meant a surety of being forced into the eddy. To stand on meant certain collision.

A multitude of possibilities, chances, questions, flashed through Stone's mind in that one transfixed instant—even to a seaman's solution of why this vessel's lights so suddenly opened near at hand.

They stood out terrifyingly clear, converging rapidly. Behind and below the red and green he seemed to see the faint haze of cabin windows. He knew that without a quick shift the two would cut each other down. There was a chance to shave the eddy; there was no chance in a collision.

Thought outstrips lightning. All these things occupied no more than a fraction of time in Stone's mental processes. He acted almost instinctively, yet with a clear knowledge of the possible consequences of his act. So crystalline clear was his perceptive faculty that as he shouted his order he saw that the helmsman's eyes were on the compass, but that his face was yellow in the pale reflection from the binnacle light and that his lips were parted over tight-set teeth. He was braced and ready. The wheel spun in his hands at Stone's first word.

Billy stood in the doorway watching the lights that seemed to rush down on him. They were so close they must scrape sides in passing, and he prayed for the *Mandarin* to turn on her heel. She had never seemed

so sluggish. But she swung. Her bow shifted in an arc until at last she showed her red to the other red and Stone heard the quartermaster's held breath go out in a shuddering exhalation.

Then—just as Billy Stone's mind grasped the fact that although the two ships were nearly abreast the other had not answered his passing signal, nor could he mark a single gleam beyond the red and white and a range light astern—he felt the *Mandarin* heel sharply over, and he knew that he had been forced into the eddy.

As he ordered the wheel over again to stem that savage current and pass clear under the stranger's stern he found himself staring blankly into the empty night. There were no lights, no sound—nothing but the dark loom of the Helmcken shore to starboard and the smother of white water where the current snarled at the rocks.

And as the master of the *Mandarin*, clad only in his pajamas, burst into the wheelhouse the strong side sweep of the tide carried the deflected ship into the Helmcken shore against all the thrust of her engines working full speed.

They felt the dull crunch, the sickening shudder that ran through her steel frame as she took the ground.

CHAPTER II.

AGROUND.

LOOKING aft from a position by the forward winches, Billy Stone stood at rest for a minute. The *Mandarin* lay impaled upon a hidden ledge. She heeled badly. Her stern was awash while her bow stood if anything a trifle in the air. Her situation was rather bad. She had struck with a good deal of force, filled and settled astern within half an hour after stranding. They had determined by the sounding lead that the hull was supported only from amidships forward. The sternward half of her projected out into a watery space. A tiny slip back, a slight movement, and the ponderous hulk would upend and slide stern first into over sixty fathoms deep. A swift current, eddying and surging this way and that, a twelve-foot rise and fall of tide were unreckonable factors. She might shift; she might not.

Since at sea life comes first and treasure afterward the passengers were all ashore, camping now pleasantly enough in a fir

grove with stewards to tend them. They had food and blankets, all their personal belongings. To them, after the first shock, an unavoidable wave of excitement in that dusky hour that comes just before dawn, the thing began to take on a certain aspect of adventure. Shipwrecked. Cast away on an island. There were no hardships to destroy an air of romance for those romantically inclined. The morning was warm and still. The sunrise breeze brought fragrant odors out of the forests to mingle with the smell of kelp, and coffee boiling in great pots over camp fires. Stone could hear them talking and laughing. For them, he knew, the situation was dramatic or comic or merely inconvenient, according to personal bias. They had no sense of any tragic element—nothing of the mingled anger, pain, and incredulity that filled Billy Stone's heart with conflicting emotions in this, the first breathing spell since the *Mandarin* struck.

He stood there reckoning up the consequences. No life had been lost, or even imperiled. The underwriters, not the owners, would shoulder what monetary loss accrued. But for him, red ruin; literally just that. He had given an order. By his command the ship had been turned from her proper course and wrecked.

And now, in the cold light of day, it seemed that no danger had ever threatened. There had been no running lights; no steamer. No one besides himself had seen anything in the shape of another vessel bearing down on the *Mandarin*. Not a soul. The quartermaster, when Stone demanded: "You see those lights?" had looked startled, uncertain, confused for a second. But he answered, with a shake of the head and a look of surprise:

"Didn't see nothin'. What was it?"

Stone knew the man lied. But he couldn't convey that knowledge to any one else. It was based on the expression of the quartermaster's face, on a momentary flash of something in his eyes.

The man, like Stone, had a job at stake, only unlike Stone he had no responsibility. He had only to keep his eyes on the compass and obey orders. He was not supposed to keep lookout nor to report what he saw. His only duty was to obey orders. But Stone felt that the man, like Peter of old, denied for his own safety. In the merchant marine it is not well for a man's future to

admit himself subject to visual hallucinations.

Was it a hallucination? Had he conjured up a set of phantom lights to his own undoing? Stone might have doubted the evidence of his eyes—only for the startled, tense expectancy of the quartermaster at the moment. The man had seen what Stone saw, understood what it implied, stood ready for the only possible order that could adequately meet the occasion. No, Billy Stone was thoroughly mystified. There hadn't been any steamer. A vessel could not so quickly have vanished out of hearing, out of range of searchlight and signal blast; the very sounds of her passing must have filled that narrow channel, and the wash from her must have broken against the *Mandarin* and the Helmcken shore with a noise like ocean surf. And there hadn't been a sound.

Nevertheless Billy had a positive conviction that whatever he saw in the shape of well-defined running lights the quartermaster also saw in spite of his denial—and the same hallucination does not affect two separate sets of optic nerves at the same moment. Not that this conclusion promised to be of any service to him in the outcome, but it served to steady him. The sea annually tots up a respectable score of mysteries, and some of them have broken men's hearts, to say nothing of driving them mad.

The *Mandarin's* skipper came clawing forward. He stood beside Stone, glancing over the muddle of his ship, at the passenger groups showing on the rocky beach, at the great hawsers running from bollards on deck to tree trunks on the bank—a tentative effort to minimize the danger of her slipping off.

"Everything's done that can be done?"

He spoke as much to himself as to the mate.

"Yes, sir, I think so," Stone replied.

The skipper looked him over keenly. He seemed about to put a direct question, then refrained. Probably, Stone reflected, he thought the board of inquiry would attend to that. Stone had already told him why he put the *Mandarin* off her course.

Captain Stevens had taken his own time to consider and verify that. Then he had observed slowly that there was neither sight nor sound of a vessel, and lacking corroboration Billy Stone's story didn't hold water—didn't account for anything.

"I'm sorry for *you*, Stone," he had said, almost pityingly. "You weren't drunk and you weren't asleep. I guess you just naturally cracked, Billy. Too bad."

The Old Man was sorry. That was explicit in his attitude. In his speech he confined himself to orders and casual remarks.

Now, standing by, with nothing to do but stand by until a salvage vessel and the underwriters' representatives arrived, and a steamer picked up the passengers, Billy Stone wondered if he *had* momentarily "cracked." Had he simply seen things?

He didn't believe it. Visual realities ordered the world of navigation. Instruments and calculations alike depended upon the verification of the human eye. If a man couldn't trust his vision the world became pure phantasmagoria. His had never failed him, even in the moments of stress. He couldn't believe it had failed in this instance. The facts in the case were incomprehensible, that was all.

But he knew very well and it pressed upon him with an intolerable heaviness that whether those lights were realities or phantasms he had issued an order that put his ship ashore. As an officer in the American merchant marine his day was done, short of proving the existence of those lights—for which there was only his unsupported word. They would take his ticket away from him and put him on the beach higher and dryer than the *Mandarin*. They would see to it that an officer who saw lights where there were no lights would never stand on any ship's bridge to issue another order.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRONG ROOM.

STONE had a chance to look at the wreck from shore the evening of the third day. The *Arethusa*, a black, ungainly vessel with powerful cranes lifting above her decks, lay close in to the half-submerged *Mandarin*. The wrecking experts had looked over the sunken ship and pronounced her tolerably safe as she lay. In the morning their divers would go down. By and large within twenty-four hours they would know if the steamer could be refloated; and if not whether any or all of her cargo could be salvaged.

It might have been worse, Billy reflected. No life lost, no great material loss perhaps,

if the salvage job was successful and easy. Perhaps, thought he, the black mark against him might not be too great to wipe out. But he couldn't get much comfort out of that hope. What a board of inquiry would do to him was pretty well established by precedents which had been a long time in the making.

Helmcken lay silent in the shadows that crept out from the western shore. Day faded. The little noises aboard the wrecking ship seemed muted sounds in a great hush. The passengers who had filled with their clatter the grove of fir trees where Stone now stood were speeding south on another O. S. S. boat. In the last of a sun which he could not see for the great mountain barrier of Vancouver Island the mainland ranges on the east lifted in great tiers, one behind the other, shading from a dusky green to far-off purple, out of which white peaks stood stark against the blue. In another mood Stone might have marked this beauty, been moved a little by it; he wasn't altogether insensitive to form, to color, even to such an intangible thing as an atmosphere; few men are.

But as matters stood the tremendous reach of forest and hill and mountain, immobile and unchangeable, as vast as the sea itself and filled with uncanny silences, gave him a sense of desolation. It wasn't beautiful in that aspect. It wasn't friendly. It was even hostile in its immensity, its aloofness. The space and the heights and the silence dwarfed him. The mutter of the streaming tide against the rocky shore had a sinister sound in his ears. Perhaps he was too greatly weighed upon by the associations of that particular spot—the grave of many a seaman's reputation and a trap for ships.

He stood thinking absently until he became aware of some one whistling in the woods behind him. His curiosity aroused, he moved toward the sound. In a short distance he came out of the screen of trees and thicket bordering the shore, into a slashing brightened and made faintly aromatic by piles of split red cedar. A man sat on a low stump by one of these smoking a pipe and whistling a little tune, an old sea chantey that Stone recognized and thought incongruous in that setting. As Stone drew near the man looked up.

For an instant Billy Stone gaped in astonishment.

"Well, for the love of Mike!" he ex-

claimed at last, "you're the last man I expected to find here, Joe. How goes the battle?"

"So-so," the other answered casually, as he stuck out his hand. "Surprise party for me, too. Didn't know you were on the *Mandarin*. Looks like the O. S. S. is due to lose another boat. Who's in dutch, this time?"

He laid a peculiar emphasis on the "this." "I am," Stone replied tersely.

"Tough luck," the other responded. "Too bad. Think you'll lose your ticket?"

"Pretty sure to," Stone admitted. "I'm in wrong—in deep."

"You never can tell." The man's tone was edged with cynicism. "They might strike an average by overlooking you. You know they made me the goat to save a pet skipper, don't you?"

"I heard something like that."

"Fact." Joe Molter smiled sardonically. "It isn't supposed to be done, but they did it to me. But it was a good turn in the long run. I've made out all right ashore. I expect you're like me. I thought I couldn't live off the bridge. Darned near broke my heart to be kicked out. But I discovered that a man don't have to be brassbound to get along in this little old world. Sit down and make a smoke, Bill."

They talked desultorily for half an hour. Molter was working in timber, shingle stuff. He had a stumpage contract on all the red cedar growing on Helmcken. With two partners he ran a show that was making money. Molter had been the youngest master in the O. S. S. service four years earlier; a wreck had put him on the beach. He disclaimed any feeling for the sea or ships, yet there was a faint note of regret in his voice as he mentioned vessels and men they both knew. Stone got up off the stump to go when twilight began to fade into dusk.

"Say, Billy, if they beach you for keeps hop on a local boat and come up here for a while till you get your bearings," Molter suggested. "You might find something that looked good to you in this neck of the woods."

"Maybe I will. I don't know," Stone said. "I don't know just what'll happen, nor what I'll do."

"You don't stop living because you get kicked out of the merchant marine," Molter drawled. "I know how it goes. It's a jolt. But you get over it. A man has to

live. He sometimes finds out that he can live better ashore than afloat."

Stone went back to where the *Mandarin's* crew camped on the beach, since the angle of the vessel's decks prevented cooking, eating, or sleeping with any degree of comfort. Two days of hanging on by their eyebrows had made them glad to have level ground under their feet. There was besides the thoroughly understood, although never mentioned, fact that the *Mandarin* might slip sternward—and if she slipped in the night with her crew aboard there would be a casualty list that nobody particularly desired to figure in.

Dusk faded into a velvet-black night. Lights on the wreck and the wrecker standing by glowed like fireflies. A night wind sighed in the channel. Sleeping by snatches, wakeful because of the constant dwelling of his mind on things both inexplicable and unalterable, Billy Stone was glad when day came again. Action of any sort was a relief.

The *Arethusa* spraddled like a black spider in the center of a network of mooring cables to hold her stiffly in that rapid tide race that was full of savage cross currents. From her side a sturdy work boat with a flat scow deck moved alongside the *Mandarin*.

Stone watched the copper-domed, triple-eyed diver sink beneath the surface—a creature like some fish's nightmare. Stone didn't envy him his job and he had a first-hand knowledge of that sort of job because he had once tried his hand at the diver's game. Down there among rocks and seaweed, buffeted by heavy currents, life hanging on an air pipe and a signal rope—it took nerve as well as skill.

Billy turned away to some minor task on deck. An hour passed, perhaps more or less; he didn't mark the time. But an exclamation, a quick movement of men to the *Mandarin's* lower rail, drew him also.

He looked down. The diver in his ungainly suit was stretched on the work boat's deck. Two men hovered over him. Half a dozen others stood about, craning their necks, expectant. Hands worked at fastenings with evident haste. They drew off his windowed headpiece, the great breastplate. One remained on his knees, staring fixedly into the diver's white, set face. The other stood up. After a second he threw out his hands in a brief, expressive gesture that

chilled Stone. There was a terrible significance about that motion.

The master of the *Arethusa*, with the underwriter's agent, climbed aboard half an hour later.

"We're out of luck," he complained. "Curry was dead as a mackerel when they hauled him up. Funny thing. Markham, our second-string diver, absolutely refuses to go down. Says a man has no chance. Thinks Curry must either have gone into the place where she was bilged and got foul of the ragged plate edges, or else the current banged him about till it killed him. Anyway, he won't move."

"What's the next move?" inquired the *Mandarin's* skipper.

"Wire for another diver—one with some nerve," the wrecking captain snorted. "Meantime, the insurance man's hunch is to get off what cargo we can reach. We don't like her looks so well. She's shifted a trifle."

This was true. Stone had marked the change, a slight vibration once or twice. He hadn't said anything. He was under a cloud, his opinions manifestly not worth much to those in charge. He felt that implied rather than stated.

"That bullion first out of the strong room," the underwriter put in. "That'll be so much to the good. It should have been off before now."

"She's about on a balance," Stone impulsively pointed out. "You can only reach the cargo forward. A few tons out of her forward hold and she might upend like a seesaw."

"S true," the wrecking skipper agreed. "But we can clean out the strong room."

They proceeded about that at once. But there was a hitch. The *Mandarin's* strong room held treasure besides the bullion, but the gold was by far the most outstanding item on the ship's manifest. And the strong room was under water many feet. The wrecker went overside saying that Markham could go down within the hull without risk. He came back in twenty minutes swearing like a pirate.

"That yellow dog won't even look at his suit," he raged. "He says there's no use talking to him about going down on *this* job."

"I'll go down for that strong-room stuff, if you like, while you wait for another diver," Stone volunteered. "I wouldn't tackle the

outside because I'm out of practice. But I don't mind taking a shot in the hold."

"You ever been down in a suit? Much experience? I don't want to drown another man just because he's willing," the salvage skipper said.

"Two years at it," Stone replied curtly. "Long time ago."

"Want to chance one of your officers in a diving rig?" the wrecker addressed Stone's captain.

"If *he* wants to," the Old Man replied casually. "I have nothing to say."

The work boat came back from the *Arethusa*. They hoisted the pump equipment and gear and diver's suit aboard. They fastened Stone up, adjusted his helmet, tested his air line, and he went down the companionway that led to a lower deck and so to the treasure room, with the purser's keys tied by a cord to his waist. He had an electric lamp to light him on his way.

Below, in those shadowy depths full of strange sights in the glimmer of his lamp, Stone lost track of time. He did not know how long he stayed down, but long enough to learn more than he bargained for. He parted the upper waters that laved a grand staircase and presently heaved his unwieldy bulk to the deck and the light of day. They freed him of his deep-sea harness. And for a moment Stone stood staring blankly at the salvage chief, his own skipper, the purser and the underwriter's agent. Then he found his tongue:

"There's nothing there. The door was open. Lock bursted. The strong room's empty. Nothing but a few soggy sacks of mail. The bullion's gone."

"Stone," the captain of the *Mandarin* said quietly, almost with a trace of pity, "that can't be. You know it can't be so. The strong room was intact when we went aground. It's been submerged twenty feet below the surface where no one could get at it ever since. You've gone clean off your head. First you see running lights where there are no running lights and put the ship ashore. Then you tell us that a steel-plated room locked and bolted, proof against anything but an expert safe cracker, is wide open and empty. You're either crazy—or—or——"

"I tell you, captain, it's——" Stone burst out hotly, but he didn't finish the sentence. He bit it in two. A strange tremor ran through the dead hull beneath

their feet—a tremor followed by a faint, dull shock. She seemed to shake from below as if her dead engines had mysteriously begun to turn the great propeller once more. And slowly, very slowly, her bow began to rise.

"She's going! Overside everybody!" the salvage skipper barked. The *Mandarin's* captain issued orders, cool, unhurried instructions to his men. Boats for all lay alongside, hooked to the falls.

Inch by inch, yes, foot by foot, as they clambered down rope ladders she settled by the stern and rose by the head until, as they backed water with their oars her red forebody, fouled with clinging weeds, speckled with barnacles, rose dripping above the run of the tide.

There for a moment she seemed to hesitate, then heeled sharply to starboard and slid backward in the same motion, and the boat crews lay on their oars staring at the eddies and swirls that played back and forth across the depths into which the *Mandarin* had vanished.

CHAPTER IV. ON THE BEACH.

WHEN a man, even a very young man with all of youth's happy disregard for unpleasant consequences, has worked for years toward a definite purpose he may be pardoned a temporary discouragement in the face of finding all his pains and labor gone for naught. To work and feel that his work has been wasted; to plan and see his plans destroyed; to strive for a future that shall be better than the past and see that future shattered—only a superhuman being could face that dismal prospect undismayed.

Something like that loomed up before Billy Stone, without the superman's egotism to support him. He couldn't admit that he was merely suffering the usual penalty for careless or ill-judged navigation. There would have been a simple justice about that which he could have appreciated and accepted as his due. But he hadn't been careless. His judgment—ah, there was the rub! It would have been better—in retrospect—to risk collision rather than stranding, since it seemed proven that there had been nothing with which to collide. Still, he asked himself peevishly, how could he tell that from the bridge of the *Mandarin* in the

dark of the graveyard watch with the lights of a steamer staring him in the face?

He had to hold fast to the evidence of his own eyes that night by Helmcken Island. Otherwise he found himself spinning in the whirlpools of sheer fantasy, with his own sanity in doubt. His imagination reenacted that stirring sequence of events in Johnstone Strait. Those running lights—the orders he gave—the startled face of the quartermaster braced at the wheel—the shock of grounding— The scene would assume form for Billy without a single detail missing.

And the logic, the coherence of his detailed account of what he saw and did and why he did so condemned him the more effectually before the board of inquiry that sat on the *Mandarin* case. He could not have seen the running lights of a steamer. The movements of coastwise shipping proved conclusively that no vessel was near Helmcken Island or indeed anywhere in Johnstone Strait that night. Therefore it followed that Billy Stone simply lied to cover up a dereliction of duty, or a gross error in estimating his ship's position at a critical change of course. Those lights had shown to no eyes save his own. The quartermaster denied again. There had been no answer to the *Mandarin's* passing signal. And whether he had been the victim of a hallucination, of a momentary confusion or what not, as the officer on watch he had wrecked a ship and the board of inquiry duly dealt out a punishment to fit the crime.

That was a closed chapter now, Stone thought with a tinge of bitterness as he breasted the steep slope of one of Seattle's famous hills. It was distinctly unpleasant to be the sacrificial goat, and that was precisely how Stone regarded himself—although sacrificed to what definite purpose he could not say.

Stone's destination was a bungalow on Queen Anne Hill, a bungalow entirely surrounded by other bungalows, and occupied by a retired mariner named Captain Amos Powell. The captain's age ran around seventy, but he was yet hale. He had been born a Cape Codder, nurtured in Martha's Vineyard aboard fishing schooners, spent his early manhood on the broad bosom of the Atlantic and gone into steam upon the Pacific too late in life ever to be off with his earlier love, the full-rigged ship.

For many years this worthy seaman had

been compelled to repress a dislike that amounted to contempt for steamers and steamship men. He couldn't forget that steam had driven sail from the sea and he had been reared on the feel and sight and sound of sail. In the very necessary pursuit of a competence he had spent the last twenty years of his life going up and down the Pacific—which belies its euphonious name—in command of screw-propelled ships. Bottling up his real feelings during this long period as regards "wallopin' cargo boxes operated by a gang of marine motorists," which was his favorite way of describing steamers, once retired he felt free to air his opinions and indulge his dislikes—which extended to the modern breed of navigator who goes down to the seven seas in twelve-thousand-ton ships capable of doing twenty knots.

The captain had a daughter. The captain's daughter liked Billy Stone. Martha cherished also a good deal of affection for her irascible parent, although he was occasionally a trial. Said irascible parent disliked Billy. And Billy was sub rosa engaged to Martha Powell.

These things complicated Billy Stone's shore life considerably. As he climbed the hill he wondered just where this latest development would leave him standing in the Powell ménage.

Billy turned a corner. The front of the Powell home loomed across three narrow lawns. A yellow taxi stood at the curb. A male figure in gray tweeds detached itself from the Powell porch, came down the steps, entered the taxi, which thereupon departed in the well-known manner of taxis.

Stone had a keen eye. He recognized the man. He was also pretty sure the recognition had been mutual, even at the distance. And while there was no definite reason for such a feeling Stone was immediately beset by a slight irritation, an increase of the depression that afflicted him. He was, he said to himself, getting infernally touchy.

Martha herself let him into a tiny hall. Whatever else Billy Stone found lacking in life at that particular moment he had reason to be thankful for the quick glow in her eyes.

"Oh, Billy boy," she whispered from within the encircling pressure of his arms, "I'm so sorry. Why did they have to be so perfectly savage? I'd think a six

months' suspension would have been severe enough, wouldn't it?"

"I told you what I'd have to expect," Stone replied. "How did you happen to know what I got?"

"Joe Molter told me. He's in town and called. Left just a half minute before you came. Didn't you see him?"

"I thought that was Joe," Billy answered. "Shows you how bad news outruns a man. The board only handed out its decision a couple of hours ago. I wonder how Joe got hold of it so quick? He told you they took my ticket away for keeps, did he?"

The girl nodded.

"I'm sorry, Bill," she murmured. "It doesn't seem fair."

"It's the regular thing in cases of this sort," he commented a little grimly. "You couldn't expect a bunch of hard-boiled old salts to be easy on a young man who has just wrecked a very fine ship for a total loss. On the evidence presented—unless they believed my wild yarn without any supporting proof—I'm not a fit man to be put in charge of a ship. I see things."

Martha disregarded the irony of his words for more practical considerations.

"What'll you do now, Billy?" she asked. "It seems a shame to have a career stopped short like that. But after all, the sea isn't the only thing that matters in our young lives, is it?"

"It's been pretty much all there is to mine," he said moodily. "It's about all I know. I'm a little bit up in the air yet. I haven't made any particular plans. I've got to start in at something, but I haven't even begun to figure where or how to begin."

A little silence ensued. Billy looked intently at Martha Powell. She was very dear to him. He had never been able to define her charm. It was enough to feel it, to know that for him it existed. Martha was good looking without any claim to beauty; intelligent without being clever. If Billy Stone had been compelled to say why he loved her he could only have replied that he found her lovable.

"In another year or so I should have had a command," he continued. "We would have had something to go on. Now everything is all shot to pieces. I did have a future as a seaman. Unless I can get rid of this black mark against me—— It seems to me I've got to do that somehow."

He knitted his brows in thought for a moment.

"There's something about this particular wreck, Marty, that keeps nagging at me. I can't help thinking— Well, never mind. Are you game to wait, Mart? Or does it look like—like—"

She put one soft hand firmly over his mouth.

"If you start talking like that to *me*, Billy Stone," she said severely, "I'll sue you for breach of promise."

They smiled at each other.

"I'll tell you something," Billy said impulsively. "Maybe you'll think it sounds foolish. But it amounts to this; either there *was* a set of running lights showing off Helmcken or I'm given to hallucinations and delusions. In other words, I'm crazy. And I don't think I am. Nobody else saw them but me and the quartermaster. The quartermaster never admitted seeing anything. But I'd stake anything he did. I'll never be satisfied until I know. What I'm getting at is this: I'm going after this mystery instead of doing what common sense tells me I ought to do—which is to hunt up a shore job that amounts to something. There's a gambling chance that I might uncover something that doesn't show on the surface. I'm not superstitious. There's generally a man or men behind every queer thing that happens on land or sea. I would like to prove to 'em that there *were* lights over my bow—and that the *Mandarin's* strong room *was* empty when she slid off into deep water."

CHAPTER V.

TWICE!

FROM Queen Anne Hill, Billy Stone made his way downtown to a certain chophouse near the O. S. S. docks. He was hungry and old habit led him to this place patronized by sailors, longshoremen, the marine fraternity in general because good food was served there and it was handy to their stamping ground, the water front. Other than food Billy had at that moment no objective. He hadn't formulated any plan. He was groping in his mind for some possible course of action without having as yet found a feasible one. He didn't take much stock in intuition. A navigating officer's training embraces technicalities, empirical conclusions—but not hunches.

Hunches have put many a good ship on the beach, so the coastwise maxim runs.

Nevertheless Billy experienced something akin to a hunch as he stepped over the threshold. Nothing definite; mostly a state of feeling, an anticipation, an awareness that he was about to encounter something or some one. When man's psychic life ceases to be the riddle it is, Billy Stone may possibly find the true reason for that certainty that he had come suddenly, without rhyme or reason, to a focusing point on something of importance.

Whatever the basis of that conviction the thing itself brought him out of the shell of his self-communing, aroused an expectancy, made him instantly alert. He seated himself at a table, but his gaze roved. Men of all sorts and sizes lined a counter along one side of the room, perched on swivel stools that turned squeakily on iron pedestals. As his eyes swept down the line of the mirror behind, which had reflected many a grand elbow crooking in the days before the Eighteenth Amendment troubled the land, Stone's gaze matched glances with another—and having made sure of his man Billy left his table and took a vacant stool beside Dave Branston, ex-quartermaster of the lost *Mandarin*.

"Hello, Dave," he greeted.

"Why, hello, there—ah—ah——" The man seemed uneasy, uncertain whether to address Stone as a fellow being or as his superior officer.

Billy grinned inwardly. A purpose leaped full formed into his mind; the first logical step in a sequence.

"What are you doing?" he asked casually.

"Nothin' yet," Branston replied. "I'm on the O. S. S. waitin' list, but I'm lookin' for a berth any place I can get in. Got to eat, 'n' if you don't work you soon run out of eatin' money these days."

"They have plenty of ships," Stone observed. "They'll probably sign you on again pretty soon. There's nothing against you."

"I've a darned good mind to go back on the tugs." Branston grew confidential. "I went quartermaster coastwise with a first mate's ticket because I thought I'd get experience and a chance at promotion. But it don't look so good to me now. Yes, sir, I have a darned good mind to go back on a tug. The pay's as good."

"Why did you deny seeing those lights off Helmcken?" Stone asked crisply. "Why were you afraid to admit you saw them?"

The man's mouth opened. His face flushed.

"It doesn't matter now, of course," Stone continued dispassionately. "It might not have made any difference to anybody. But what made you lie about it?"

"The hell it wouldn't have made any difference to anybody!" the man sputtered, his face growing redder. "What makes you so darned sure I saw anything? 'N' you got a nerve to accuse me of swearing to a lie."

"You're a seaman, and pretty level headed," Billy went on calmly. "When I barked at you to put her over you didn't even look up. You were waiting for it, and you put the wheel over—bang! You were scared—not at the order, but at what you saw—what you had seen—the same thing I saw—a set of steamer's running lights right on top of us. You knew she had the right of way, and that we had to swing quick or crash."

"Hell's bells!" Branston grunted. "You're a regular mind reader, ain't you? What are you gettin' at?"

"Why you declared you didn't see those lights."

"There was nothin' to show runnin' lights, was there?" Branston muttered.

Billy smiled wearily.

"Did you lie deliberately, or did you think you simply imagined seeing those lights and were afraid to admit that you thought you saw them?" he asked point-blank.

"Them's strong words, Mr. Mate," Branston growled. His face was now a rich brick color. He looked at Billy, and then turned to his cup of coffee and gulped half of it.

"Look here," he said finally, with a sulky sort of frankness. "I got to admit that I've been feelin' kinda rotten about this business. But it didn't make any particular difference to you—did it?—whether I said I saw 'em or didn't see 'em. You was the officer in charge. You'd 'a' lost your ticket anyhow, for puttin' her ashore, just the same."

"True enough," Billy admitted. He did not explain that the shaking of his confidence in himself was equally as important as losing his license.

"Well, then," Branston said bluntly, "I seen them lights just like you did. But the minute we took the ground—while you're all centered on your own ship and what's happening to her, I step out of the wheelhouse to look for the other packet. And there ain't a sight nor a sound. No wash from her passing. There's no ship in the channel at all. I know it. And I'm scared. It's creepy. And while I'm rasslin' with this crazy idea that I've seen ghost lights in the dark, the Old Man jumps me. He's been talkin' to you and he's pretty near foam'in' at the mouth."

"He says: 'What in hell did you see, quartermaster?'"

"He's excited, and mad as a hornet—and I'm scared. 'Nothin',' says I. 'I ain't supposed to see. Only to obey orders—which I done.'"

"That's all," Branston confessed. "Havin' said one thing I stuck to it; I wouldn't back water. I figured it out before the board sat. They'd break you anyhow. That was a cinch. And I got a wife and two kids to keep. If I back up your story it don't help you, because if there ain't no ship to show her lights they wouldn't believe the two of us on a stack of Bibles, and you know it. And it leaves me marked. Every time I ask for a job, they'll say: 'Oh, yes, you're the guy that sees runnin' lights where they ain't. Guess we couldn't use you.' Now you got it straight."

"It's straight enough, Branston," Stone replied quietly. "I don't blame you. But doesn't it strike you that if we *both* saw the same thing at the same time there must have been something to see?"

But Branston only shook his head, looking deeply puzzled.

"No sabe," said he. "Funny things happen in this little old world—specially at sea. It gets my goat. There certainly wasn't no ship."

"There was something," Billy Stone affirmed. "And whatever it was it put the *Mandarin* on the rocks. And I shouldn't be surprised if a piece of the same hocus-pocus cost that diver his life."

Branston looked at him queerly.

"You ain't mentioned it yet," he said with apparent irrelevance. "But I suppose you seen the mornin' papers, ain't you?"

"No. Why?" Stone asked. Some curious quality in the man's tone made the question come out with a snap.

"The *Manchu* went ashore on Helmcken Island last night in pretty darned near the same spot," Branston told him gravely.

They sat for a half minute staring fixedly at each other. The same thought ran in their minds. They knew it without speaking.

CHAPTER VI.

A SACK OF GOLD.

STONE immediately got a newspaper. The details of the latest wreck on Helmcken were meager enough, he discovered on perusal. The *Manchu* was one of the finest ships on the Alaska run and her master was a particular friend of Billy Stone's, almost a contemporary. The simple fact of another wreck in the same place carried a certain significance to Billy. It revived and strengthened to a conviction what had been little more than a troubled impression that more than mere chance was involved in the disaster to his own ship.

Coming on the heels of his conversation with Branston, and the quartermaster's frank admission, the *Manchu* wreck spurred him to some pretty far-reaching speculation, caused him to evolve a theory and hunger for a hand in evolving a solution.

Lightning, he said to himself, strikes once by chance. A second stroke in the same place implies attraction. The attraction on Helmcken Island held sinister implications when he reflected upon that looted strong room.

But a theory leading to action requires some colorable support to be taken seriously. The things that had happened were wild enough. But that didn't guarantee that an even wilder surmise as to the effective cause would get a hearing. Warned by the way the board of inquiry took his own story Stone realized the necessity of corroboration. That was his first need. He had Dave Branston tagged. The man would testify when needed, he promised Billy. Now, Stone set out in search of Markham, the diver off the *Arethusa* who, after a look at his dead mate, had refused to go down in his deep-sea harness at any price.

But Markham was not to be found in any of the usual places. After diligent search Stone finally got track of him. Markham had gone out of town leaving word that he would return in a few days. Billy left a message to be given the man as soon as he reported back to the Divers'

Association. Then he sat down to wait more or less patiently until Paul Ackley, master of the wrecked *Manchu*, arrived in Seattle.

He hadn't long to wait. Within a week the crew of the wrecked steamer abandoned her to the underwriters and shipped south. Stone called up Ackley, set a rendezvous, and they forgathered in the Master Mariners' Club.

Ackley didn't look glum; merely thoughtful, inclined to be silent. Stone wasted no time in skirmishing.

"We went ashore, according to the *Arethusa's* say-so, within a hundred feet of where the *Mandarin* did," Ackley answered Billy's first question. "But we went on solid. They'll salvage her without any great loss. She can't slip off. She's aground practically the full length of her keel. But——"

"Go on," Stone urged. "But what?"

"I'll tell you after a while."

"All right," Billy acquiesced. "Tell me this. What put you ashore?"

An odd expression flitted across Ackley's face.

"What put *you* ashore?" he counter-queried.

"The board of inquiry," Billy retorted sardonically. "They took away my ticket for keeps. Permanently suspended."

"Oh. I didn't hear what the finding was. In fact I had no line on the *Mandarin* wreck at all. I mean what put the *Mandarin* ashore. It was in your watch, of course."

"Running lights dead ahead. Right on top of us. Other fellow had right of way. Altered course to pass port to port. Eddy put me on the beach."

"Running lights!" Ackley murmured. "Phantoms!"

"No," Stone declared positively. "There is no such animal. In your case—how many of you saw these lights?"

Ackley stretched his arms above his head and laughed mirthlessly.

"The fact is," he snorted contemptuously, "three of us saw them, but only one man admits it—myself, the commander. It's very odd, Stone. I'm bound to get it in the neck because it happened while I was still on watch. Yet I didn't open my mouth to issue an order. I should certainly have done so in another instant—and yet I don't know. Let me tell you just how it happened.

"I was on the bridge just outside the

wheelhouse door. I had been looking up Current Passage with a very good pair of night glasses. It was dark, but not too dark to have made out another vessel even if she hadn't shown a gleam. I could see the white water on Earl Ledge well astern. We had turned to enter the fairway. I lowered the glasses, turned my head. Next thing there were those lights, bright and clear—out of nowhere. You know how it feels when a set of running lights loom up close. You act instinctively. Everybody knows instantly what is to be done. Yet I was so absolutely sure no vessel could possibly be in that position off our bows that I just stared in amazement—until I felt the *Manchu* list as she always does when the helm goes hard over. The quartermaster was spinning the wheel. The mate—who had come up and was standing by to relieve me as soon as we cleared Helmcken—stood humped up, looking scared, pointing with his finger at those lights. He had told the quartermaster to put her over. They were both scared stiff at the idea of being cut down in that hell of a tide race. Nobody said a word until our bow swung. And the minute the eddy took hold of us those lights snapped off as if somebody had turned a switch."

"Probably did," Stone grunted.

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised, now you mention it," Ackley commented. "Anyway, you know there's no leeway in that passage. Before we could swing around to buck the eddy we were aground.

"Now, here's the rub. We whistled. No answer. Swept the channel with the searchlight. Nothing in sight. Then the mate and the quartermaster fudged. Swore they saw nothing. Quartermaster said I ordered the wheel over. Mate backed him up. Can you beat it?"

"Afraid of their jobs," Stone said contemptuously. "My quartermaster did the same. Only he thought better of it eventually. He's willing to go to bat now. That makes three of us for corroborative evidence. Might help at your hearing. I think perhaps I can get something that bears on another phase of it out of the *Arcthusa's* second-string diver—who looked at his drowned partner and refused to have anything more to do with the *Mandarin*, inside or out. Now tell me something more, if you can. Did the divers go down and survey the *Manchu*? What did they re-

port? Did you have any valuables, gold or securities in the strong room?"

Ackley looked at him soberly.

"I know what you're driving at," he said. "But how do you know what to expect? We did have treasure—bullion—a shipment from the Yukon to Seattle. The divers report the strong-room door open and the bullion gone. She got a hell of a bump and is badly holed—but that wouldn't open the strong-room door, would it, and remove two or three boxes of gold?"

"The question is," Billy mused, "was it looted before she went ashore, or after. There's a point. In other words, was the *Manchu*, like the *Mandarin*, wrecked to cover a robbery, or was she wrecked to make a robbery possible?"

"I wonder," Ackley echoed. "The same thing *did* happen to you?"

"Identically," Stone declared. "And while they didn't believe me, and it can never be proved since the old *Mandarin* slid off into depths where no diver can ever work," Billy continued, "I know that something crooked was pulled, because I went down in a diving suit to bring the bullion up after one diver had been killed and the other refused to work. It had already been taken. If the *Manchu* stays on the beach perhaps the story I told will get verified. There may be a chance for us yet."

They sat reflecting on this.

"What can we do?" said Ackley. "As it stands we're as apt—either or both of us—to be suspected, as any one unknown."

"It sounds difficult, and probably will be some job," Billy Stone ventured, "but I believe it's up to us to get to the bottom of this. Here are two wrecks, two robberies, and a man's death. I'm blacklisted; ruined as far as a career at sea is concerned. The sea is all I know; the thing I've been trained for and care most about, if you want the truth. You'll be in pretty much the same boat. Damn it all, we've *got* to do something about it."

"It'll take time. It generally takes money to camp on crooked trails until you find out where they lead to," Ackley put in moodily. "Maybe the Pinkertons'll clean it up. *I'm* no detective."

"Pinkertons—blah!" Stone flared. "This is a job for seamen. I'm going to get hold of Markham. Maybe he knows something, or has his suspicions. If he does—or if he doesn't—let's get him and Branston and

our two selves together and put it squarely up to the O. S. S. superintendent and the underwriters and bring it up at the hearing on the *Manchu* case if necessary. I want my ticket back—and you don't want to lose yours, do you?"

"Not unless I lose it on the square," Ackley admitted.

"All right. As soon as I get hold of Markham we'll have a mother's meeting and see what we can do," Stone declared.

With that they separated.

Before he got fairly seated in his own room Stone was called to the telephone. Markham had come back to town. Stone made an engagement with him at once.

"Would you mind telling me," Billy asked when they got together, "just why you refused to go down on the *Mandarin* job?"

The diver shrugged his shoulders.

"Shucks, I told 'em plain enough," said he. "Too dangerous. Fierce undercurrents there. Man's got to have *some* chance—for his life, as well as to get his work done."

"You have the reputation of not minding dangerous work underwater," Billy replied. "Loosen up, Markham. This is strictly between ourselves. There's something fishy about this whole Helmcken Island business. It has cost me my license. I figure there is a good deal more there than mere accident of navigation. Was there anything more than accident in Curry's drowning?"

The diver caressed his chin, frowning to himself.

"Well," he said at last, "a man can't prove nothing by wild talk. It sounds wild—and it might be that sawing across broken steel plates, and being bumped around down there along the *Mandarin's* keel, could have done it—but when I looked over Curry's gear I got so strong a hunch that a knife or a hatchet had gashed his air line and slit his suit that I wouldn't 'a' gone down for fifty thousand dollars, I had that creepy feeling so strong. Neither inside nor out. You went down into her hold, I understand. What did *you* find?"

"Nothing," Stone replied. "It doesn't sound reasonable, Markham, that a diver could be knifed secretly in ten fathoms of water."

"I know it doesn't," Markham admitted. "I told you it sounded like a pipe dream. Still, funny things happen below. The way the *Mandarin* went off that ledge wasn't natural. She should 'a' hung there till king-

dom come. She went off almost as if she was shoved."

"Did you know the *Manchu* went ashore in the very same place a few days ago?"

"The hell you say!" Markham stared.

"Under precisely the same conditions," Stone explained. "The same queer set of things happened her that did my ship. I have a theory, Markham, and I'd like to see it verified or disproved. Will you repeat to the underwriters and the superintendent of the O. S. S. the idea and opinion you've given me?"

"Sure—if you think it will do any good to tell those boneheads anything," Markham observed caustically. "I never found 'em very open to other men's ideas. Still, from what you tell me these wrecks have funny angles that look darned suspicious. I don't care a deuce of a lot about either the O. S. S. or the underwriters nor what *they* stand to lose, but"—he paused to run his fingers through a mop of curly black hair—"Jack Curry was a good friend of mine. If he was put out to make this gold-stealing play strong I'd take a chance or two to get my hands on the parties concerned. I'd guarantee there'd be new faces in hell before long. How in blazes could we go at this? Where would we start in?"

"I have an idea," Stone observed thoughtfully. "I'll open up if I can get any backing. The place to start is where these things happened; right on Helmcken Island—or on board any O. S. S. ship that happens to be bringing gold from Alaska. It's one or the other, maybe both places in cahoots. Anyway, the thing to do is get busy without the slightest delay."

They made arrangements to keep in touch, and from there Stone went straight to the Ocean Steamship Services dock and got himself admitted to the august presence of the chief superintendent. But he was not permitted to get very far with his subject.

"We're not interested in fantastic theories, Stone," the super interrupted crisply. "Incompetent navigation has lost us two valuable ships. Personally I think those mysterious lights you fellows give as a reason for altering your course are pure bunk. You and Ackley were either soused or dreaming on watch. In any case you are both done as ship's officers. If you must agitate this question see the underwriters. They bear the loss. It's a waste of time to discuss it with me."

Incompetent navigation! Drunk or dreaming!

Billy Stone went away from there without giving in to a burning desire to smite the O. S. S. superintendent on his angular jaw. Perhaps this sense of injustice keyed him up a little, made his manner more aggressive, gave his conversation a force that carried over. For whatever reason, he got the attention of the chief of the underwriters with his first blunt sentence. The man heard him out, asked a number of questions, sat thoughtfully silent at last, tapping his desk with a pencil.

"There is more in this than meets the naked eye, my worthy mate," he said dryly, at length. "Pity we didn't take you seriously at first. You see, Stone, your unsupported account at the hearing was too much like the action of a man grabbing at a straw to save himself. Nobody believed you, either, when you reported the *Mandarin's* strong room empty of bullion. That was a little too much. Now your story seems to have some foundation. We know that the *Manchu's* gold was looted. Whether before or after the wreck, or by whom, is of course still to be determined. I am interested. These two wrecks have cost us a lot of money. There does seem to be more to them than the act of God or peril of the sea. Can you get hold of these two men, and also Captain Ackley at about—say, three this afternoon?"

At three sharp Stone had his companions ushered in. The insurance man questioned them from a dozen different angles. When he signified that the interview was over, he also motioned Stone to remain.

"Now," said he, when the door closed on the other three, "let's get down to brass tacks. You want your ticket back and a clean sheet, eh? That's why you're so keen on this, isn't it?"

"That's motive enough, isn't it?" Stone countered.

"All right. How do you propose to go about getting at the bottom of this peculiar series of happenings?"

Stone hesitated. He had no clear-cut idea. But he did have a feeling that Helmcken Island somehow held a clew to dark secrets.

"I'll be frank," said he, "I'm going it blind, and probably will until I get hold of a definite lead. I have only a hunch that to go back to Helmcken, lie low, keep my

ears and eyes open and my mouth shut, might put me on the right track. To do that means I must have a gas boat, grub—and time. I'd like to take either Markham or Branston—preferably Markham, because he's a bright man and a diver besides, and he's game. I haven't got much capital to start a detective bureau. But I am willing to gamble my time if you'll stake me to an outfit to get about the country. I have more in proportion at stake than you have, to make me keen on getting results."

"H'm!" The man relapsed into a silent study of his desk, beating his little tattoo with the pencil end. For a considerable time he remained locked fast in this deeply reflective state. Then said he:

"Might get somewhere that way. All right. I'll supply you with a motor launch, and allow you three hundred dollars for expenses. Take a chance on you. Go to it your own way. But you haven't any definite clew, you say?"

"No. That's what I expect to find at Helmcken."

The insurance man again sat briefly silent. Then he opened a drawer, took out a parcel and laid it on his desk. His eyes, narrowed and quizzical, never left Stone's face while his fingers removed a paper wrapping. He displayed a small white canvas bag, about four inches wide by six deep. He flung open one end and exposed native gold in coarse grains, dust, nuggets.

"You recognize that?" he asked casually.

"Gold, by the looks," Stone answered.

"Don't seem familiar at all?"

The man's eyes burrowed into Stone's.

"No. Why should it?"

"I thought perhaps it might," Cleary drawled. "You see, we've had some Burns operatives at work on this case already. We don't usually take a loss on a mysterious wreck lying down. All sorts of queer kinks in this marine-insurance game. One of these sleuths got a hot tip on you from some unknown source. While you were in seeing me this morning he frisked your room. Understand? He found this. Came pretty near pinching you right off."

"Well?" Stone demanded hotly, in the pause.

"Happens to be one of the original sacks out of that bullion shipment on the *Mandarin*. In your room, you see?"

"I don't see," Stone challenged angrily. "Do you mean to say——"

Cleary held up his hand with a deprecating smile.

"I don't say," he remarked evenly.

"What do you *think*, then?" Billy demanded.

"I don't know what to think," Cleary responded. "But I know what I consider is the wise thing to do. I'm going to take you on trust—in spite of *this*. Let you go the limit. Give you all the rope you need. Then if you hang yourself——"

He stopped to smile encouragingly.

"But I don't think you will."

CHAPTER VII.

JOE MOLTER.

WHEN he left the underwriter's office Billy walked along the street a prey to very mixed emotions indeed. He was angry, resentfully puzzled at a deliberate attempt to incriminate him. Why should any one plant stolen property in his room and anonymously incite a detective to look there for plunder? Who could hate him enough to stab in the dark with such a deadly weapon? Vain queries. The thing was serious enough to stir him deeply. Men had gone to the penitentiary on just such circumstantial evidence. He could only feel grateful that the crudeness of the enemy's strategy had defeated its own end. Cleary had unequivocally voiced his own belief that the whole thing was a plant. It was just a little too raw. And he had repeated his promise to supply a launch so that Stone could be on his way to tackle the mystery on its own ground.

Nevertheless Billy realized the added complication of being suspect. Somebody was interested in him with a vengeance, with a wholly malevolent interest. He hadn't the least idea who or why. His career had been such as to make that kind of reprisal likely. It didn't matter much, he reflected, unless it went farther. If wilful, unlawful, malicious and felonious intent to do him injury took form in other overt acts he rather welcomed that in his present mood, because the man or men might thereby show their hands, and so give him a definite lead in the right direction. He was pretty sure of one thing; whoever planted that tiny sack of stolen gold in his room had a finger, if not both arms to the elbow, in the *Mandarin* pie.

True to his word, Cleary at once trans-

ferred to him a chunky gas boat. She was neither handsome nor large, being only some thirty feet over all, but she was stanch, heavily built, and powered with a good engine. She looked able and she was; a typical fisherman's craft, with living quarters for two men.

Stone put it up to Markham the diver. He would a little have preferred Paul Ackley, but Paul was out of the question. He had to stay in Seattle and go on the carpet. Markham jumped at the chance.

"Sure," he said simply. "I'll go."

Whereupon, certain details of food and fuel being attended to, Billy set out for Queen Anne Hill to bid Martha Powell good-by. He made sure of Martha being at home. But he did not know and could not reckon on Captain Powell's movements. He did not desire contact with that worthy ex-mariner. The captain didn't like him and made no bones about his feelings. For that matter, Billy had lately come to the conclusion that the old man didn't like any one who manifested too lively an interest in his daughter. Martha professed to regard that attitude with amusement but it irritated Billy Stone.

The captain's motive seemed quite clear and rather ignoble, to Billy. Captain Powell looked on Martha as the crew of the good ship *Home*. He found himself very comfortable on this quarter-deck in his declining years. He did not take kindly to any chance of being superseded. Martha kept his house, served his food, supplied him with companionship as a dutiful daughter should. And it appeared to Billy that Martha's irascible old parent desired only that this—for him—most comfortable schedule should be continued regardless of any wish or affection or passion his daughter might be moved by. Personally Billy looked on Captain Powell as a domineering and utterly egocentric old person with a waspish tongue—an elderly dragon from whom a lovely and altogether desirable girl stood in need of rescue.

It had been troubling Billy Stone for some time that his salary didn't quite permit him to insist on marriage with the corollary of a decent home in which to install a bride. That was one reason why he so desired a command, and why he took it so hard that his prospects as a seafaring man had been snuffed out like a blown candle. Hence his distaste for Captain Powell grew, if any-

thing, more acute since he recognized that the old man had now valid ground for his objection to him as a son-in-law. For a long time he had avoided any meeting with Martha's truculent father unless it was necessary.

This day, because he particularly wanted a quiet hour with Martha, fate brought the captain on the scene as soon as Billy rang the doorbell. He joined them in the living room, planted himself in his favorite chair and gazed a trifle maliciously—or so it seemed—at Billy.

"Lost your ticket, heh?" he suddenly gave the conversation a disagreeable personal twist. "What you goin' to do now?"

Stone shrugged his shoulders. Privately, he felt that was none of the captain's business. But he tried to be polite.

"If I don't get reinstated," he answered, "I dare say I can make myself a place on land as well as at sea."

"If you were a seaman, you'd know better," quoth Captain Powell. "Man that falls down at sea hasn't much chance ashore. But there ain't any seamen any more," he snorted. "Nothin' but a bunch of machinists and dog-barking navigators shoving cargo boxes up and down the coast."

"You spent a good many years, daddy, doing just that," Martha put in a defense of her own generation. "And you seemed to think it took some skill, then."

"Yeah, I had to keep you and your mother going," he growled. "And I was a sailing master before I had to go into steam in order to make a living. And I never lost a ship, sail or steam," he ended boastfully.

Billy said nothing. Captain Powell sat tight, and Billy tried to outsit him. He probably would have failed in this had not some crony of the captain's, living near by, reminded him over the telephone that he had a chess engagement. His departure gave Billy and Martha a little while to themselves. Not that they had a great deal to say. It was sufficient to be together. There existed between them that rare understanding which does not always require expression in words.

When Billy was at last compelled to go Martha walked with him a little way. Within a block of the house they met Joe Molter. He halted only long enough to shake hands and exchange a few sentences, then went on. Martha glanced after him

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and somehow Billy Stone got the impression of trouble in her eyes.

"Vot iss?" he asked.

She looked at him wonderingly.

"Clairvoyant!" she retorted, but she did not smile.

"What's bothering you?" he persisted. "Is Joe Molter still preying on your young mind?"

"N-no," she said hesitatingly. "But I'm still on Joe's mind, it seems, and I don't like it much. He has been in town for a while. Dad, I think, rather encourages him to come to the house. I used to be sorry for Joe. Now he just makes me uncomfortable."

That was an old story. Joe Molter, Martha Powell and Billy Stone had grown up together in the Rainier Valley, wrangled and chummed through grammar and high school—with Molter two years in the lead, and always assuming a natural leadership that went unquestioned until as a man Joe began to regard Martha with more than friendly eyes—and Martha had chosen to love Billy Stone instead. Joe had accepted that a little sadly, but without rancor, as the fortune of war—or of life. Billy wondered why Molter should choose the present to renew that old siege.

"Maybe you'd do better to take him seriously," he joked. "I believe Joe is ready money; seems to have done pretty well in timber up North. Good second string if it's going to take me half my young life to make a stake."

Martha pinched his arm. Her blue eyes glowed.

"Billy," she said bluntly, "does it ever strike you that we stress this money thing too much? Why should we have to have a—a cinch? Suppose you don't get this mess cleared up and get a ship. Suppose you do have to start in somewhere at the bottom. Let's start together."

Billy's heart leaped. Without regard to street traffic and possible amused eyes he bent over and kissed her.

"God bless your soul!" he said tenderly. "We'll do it. I wondered—but I didn't have the nerve. It doesn't seem quite fair to you—and still——"

"Why should we wait forever?" She voiced his own thought wistfully. "We've only one life to live. If we wait too long we'll——"

She made a little quick gesture with her

hands, and Billy understood. The same thought had been often in his own mind.

He was sailing on the next tide. A street car came rumbling along.

"I've got to get this one," he said.

"Take care of yourself, Billum," she whispered. "Good-by."

Deep in his own reflections as the car went clanging and shuddering downtown Billy wondered from what subtle pressure Martha wanted to take refuge in his arms. She hadn't said so. No. But Billy had a curious prescience of something that troubled Martha more than she cared to own, something that constituted a threat to their chance of happiness. Or was it simply that she was like himself, lonely and unsatisfied? He wasn't sure. Probably both. He smiled and then wrinkled his brows. He was getting almost psychic in his capacity to scent trouble. Idly he wondered if evil either in thought or deed could fling its own form of disturbance into the ether—like radio. And if now and then somebody could, so to speak, unconsciously tune in so that they could catch vague impressions without being aware of the source. Fantastic? Of course. But there was no denying the fact that he was getting abnormally sensitive to impressions, tones, even to so indefinable a thing as personal atmosphere. Probably because his nerves were strung up tight.

By that time he was at the docks.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HIDDEN BOAT.

FREE of Canadian waters by virtue of a cruising permit, Stone and Markham drove the *Wasp* up sheltered channels, across the blowy stretch of the wide Gulf of Georgia, and at last through the swift tide races of Discovery Passage into the swifter tidal surges that ebbed and flowed by Helmcken Island.

Evening of the third day saw them two hundred and fifty miles from Puget Sound, nosing into a bight at the upper end of Helmcken, a little bay well out of the heavy swirls that troubled the channel. They edged the *Wasp* in beside a rough log float before Joe Molter's bolt camp and made her fast.

There was a definite purpose in Stone's selection of this berth. Molter knew everybody in that region, and he knew Billy

Stone. Billy had a choice of guesses. One, that the wrecking was done to cover the looting of ship's treasure, to mask an "inside" job; the other that the *Mandarin* and *Manchu* had been fooled into a change of course that must put them on the beach for the specific purpose of looting them by operations from shore. In either case those mysterious vanishing lights involved confederates ashore. Ashore could only mean Helmcken Island or the immediate vicinity of Helmcken.

Hence every man in the region was tentatively suspect to Stone and he took it for granted that any casual stranger touching there in a boat would likewise be suspect to the unknown wreckers unless said stranger was logically accounted for. Billy reasoned thus, to Markham:

"I've lost my license and naturally I'm done as a ship's officer. Naturally I have to look about for a fresh start in life. Molter knows me since I was knee-high to a grasshopper. Nobody can very well question us openly about our private affairs, even if he should be curious. Therefore if they know nothing about us and especially if we keep more or less under cover and do any snooping around, we'll be pretty closely watched by anybody with an interest in keeping tab on what goes on around this island. Molter, knowing all the local people, can, and altogether likely will, talk about who we are and what we're after to any one who happens to mention us or the *Wasp*. Therefore we tie up to his float in his bay, and we're scouting for the main chance, logging on a small scale, a whack at land settlement or anything that promises to beat working for wages. People are always nosing about on this coast looking for a chance to make something."

As camouflage it seemed natural. It did account for them and it left them untagged as possible investigators of a puzzle that was perhaps more formidable than it looked.

"Joe may not be here," Stone observed. "He was knocking around in Seattle the night we left."

But Molter was on hand when they went ashore to call at the camp. He had come up on one of the coasting steamers the day before.

"Well," said he to Billy with a genial grin, "couldn't you resist coming back to the scene of your crime? Or do you like the looks of the country? Or are you just

on a holiday since you've retired from the merchant marine?"

"There's lots of good-looking country laying around loose up here," Billy rejoined. "It struck me that since I've been chucked ashore I may as well try to do some good for myself ashore. This looked like it might make a jumping-off place. I'm willing to listen in on any dope you have on timber, if you've got any you want to pass along. I've got to live, and I'd like to make money."

"Most of us have ambitions of that sort," Molter remarked dryly.

However, Joe not only talked timber with them, but he volunteered to show Billy Stone just how he could best go about making a start in either shingle bolts or hand logging. He introduced a dark-faced man named Perez as his partner in the cedar operations, and an obvious Scandinavian as the foreman. They worked thirty Japanese as cutters. There *was* money in cedar, Molter observed casually, if a man went at it right. He further invited them to make themselves at home in the camp.

The wrecking of the O. S. S. steamers naturally came in for comment, but Molter, like most people not particularly concerned, took that as the ordinary chance of navigation in those tricky waters. The whole coast of British Columbia, with its network of channels and rapid tidal currents, bold rocky shores and periods of thick weather, is a nightmare to seafarers. From Vancouver's voyage of discovery down to date its history is sprinkled with wrecks, strandings, a long roll of disabled ships and total losses.

"It's simple as A B C," Molter dismissed the subject at last. "The O. S. S., like every other steamship company, lays out a schedule from port to port that calls for speed. You make time or you lose your job. The law of averages under such navigating conditions would put a certain percentage of vessels ashore under any circumstances. And when one goes up on the beach there always has to be a goat to take the blame. That's the system. A coast-wise skipper gets penalized for acts of God and stress of weather and the demands of owners who insist on fifteen knots where ten would be safer. And he takes that chance year after year for about a good carpenter's wages. Pah!"

Molter snorted and changed the subject. A collision in the foggy reach of Grenville

Channel had cost him a captain's papers, and he was frankly prejudiced.

Once aboard the *Wasp* Markham said: "That big Swede has a darned familiar look to me. Know anything about him, Bill?"

Stone shook his head.

"I can't place him," Markham admitted. "But his mug certainly reminds me of something or somebody."

They slept, soundly, dreamlessly. Once Billy awakened, listened drowsily for a minute to the sibilant murmur of agitated waters outside the sheltered bay, to the sighing of a night wind among the close-ranked trees ashore. When he opened his eyes again the sun was peeping over the high, green crest of Hardwicke on the east and Markham was laying a fire in the galley stove.

They ate breakfast and went ashore. The Japanese were just beginning to stir. Around the Molter quarters no life showed, except a streamer of blue smoke from the cook-house chimney.

"Let's take a walk to the upper end," Billy suggested.

They made their way along a path cut through the cool, green forest. In the heart of Helmcken, back from the tide-swept shores, the cedars stood bough to bough, thick-trunked noble trees whose feathery crests shut out the sun even at high noon. Heavy moss overlaid the floor of these woods so that a man walked softly as on a thick-piled rug. - Here and there thickets of salmonberry, devil's-club, salal, giant bracken, made a jungle in which birds were merry and the small life of the forest stole furtively about its affairs.

They tramped half a mile to the first workings. Down trees, a litter of broken boughs, chips, peeled bark, stumps, a most unlovely confusion amid which stood ricks of split cedar, bolts cut to a size one man could handle, ready for their journey to the shingle mills. The woodsy odors of shrub and vine of Oregon grape and wild honeysuckle mingled with the new-cut cedar smell to make a fragrance that teased the nostrils. And Stone reflected, as he stood for a moment sniffing that scented air, that a man *might* do worse than quit the sea to work at such tasks amid such surroundings. But he stiffened himself with the thought that the quitting should be voluntary. A man doesn't like to be **kicked**

out. He wanted a clean sheet. That was why he was there.

In another fifteen minutes they came to the last slashing where Stone had talked with Joe Molter while the *Mandarin* still hung on the rocky beach. Here was more piled cedar, a horse-sled path that meandered away to some loading point. In the edge of this working, almost on the shore itself, stood a couple of shacks, one of logs and very old apparently, the other built of cedar shakes only slightly weathered. The log cabin was abandoned, windowless, occupied only by a rude bedstead in one corner on which lay a mattress ravaged by rats and mice. The other served as a sort of storage for tools and fresh-filed saws of the bolt cutters. The two looked in briefly and passed on through a narrow fringe of shrubbery and fir trees. Less than a hundred feet brought them out almost under the bows of the stranded *Manchu*.

She lay canted to port, half submerged. A twinge of pity ran through Stone; he was a seaman with a seaman's strange personal feeling for a crippled ship. She looked so forlorn. The bow of the same salvage vessel which had served the *Mandarin*—the black-hulled *Arethusa*—was pushed in close beside the after part of the wreck. Her powerful crane was lifting up and transferring cargo to great lighter scows. The salvage work went on under a double shift. Once lightened they would patch the holes below water, pump the *Manchu* out and re-float her. Stone knew the process. It did not then greatly engage his interest. He would have liked a word with the *Arethusa's* skipper, but there was no connection between the salvage steamer and the shore. The wreckers lived afloat. Their only connection with Helmcken was the mooring cables that held the *Arethusa* against the strong surge of changing tides.

"We might have rowed up here," he said to Markham. "We could have got aboard."

They stood a little longer. Two ships wrecked. One man's life forfeited under water. The careers of two others stopped short, besmirched. Somewhere, many fathoms below those swirls and eddies that spun and swayed in jade-green whorls, flecked here and there with white splotches of foam in the sunlight, the *Mandarin* rested her bones on the bottom. And behind those linked events lay plan and purpose, Stone felt very sure. He discounted chance. The

sequence was too orderly. Yet it seemed incredible at that moment, in that place. Evil seemed to have no lurking place there. The sea muttered as it hurried through its pent channel. The deep green of forested shores looked calmly down on the tide. Immobile and silent mountain ranges stood afar, purple and blue and white tipped behind the nearer hills. An atmosphere of peace. A great silence. The tidal murmurings and the whisper of a morning wind in the fir tops were muted notes in the hush. Until, as they stood there gazing, the winches and gears on the *Arethusa*—which had been silent for a time—began to clank and whir and grind once more.

"When you stand off and look around," Billy remarked, "it don't seem promising. No place to begin. Still, we're here to try and pick up a lead. Suppose we split up, Mark? I'll go back along one side of the island. You take the other. It may stand us in hand to know the lay of this island. We can row up here later on. I don't know that there is anything to be gained by going aboard the *Arethusa*, after all."

They parted. Markham disappeared in the thickets lining the shore that faced Vancouver Island. Billy stood gazing at the wreck for a minute or two longer, thinking, reckoning the chance that seemed so slender now that he was on the ground. He soon gave over that. He had to begin, even if it was to grope blindly for he knew not what.

He began to traverse the opposite side of Helmcken. Without any objective, except that he sought a taking-off place which *might* be supplied by unlikely chance in the most unlikely spot, Billy painstakingly looked into and over every dent, cove, crook and brushy pocket that lay along the shore. He marked how the tidal stream swirled wickedly here and lay like dead water there. He coned swampy hollows, penetrated dense thickets, marked the contours of the land.

He got his reward—or at least he found something which vastly stimulated his curiosity.

In a narrow, V-shaped break in the shore line, well masked by overhanging clumps of willow and alder he came down to the beach to seek freer progress along the rocks. The cleft, rather a jump-off, barred his way. He turned to the right and went about skirting the head of this cove. He came presently

to low ground running out of the woods down to this notch. Soft earth, leaf mold, rotten logs, rank vegetation filled the hollow. There were signs of some one or something having lately passed through the heavy fern growth. It was trampled, pushed aside. And when Billy stooped to examine the moist soil to determine whether a man or a deer had crushed the vegetation his eye caught the glint of water under the thicket.

He turned back toward the beach. It was getting hot in the woods and he was tired of fighting brush. The jungly undergrowth and the primeval forest offered nothing but lessons in woodcraft. He decided to confine himself to the open shore. And making his way thence down the gut of the hollow he was in he came fairly into the brush-screened mouth of the little cove—and nearly ran into the sharp stem of a boat drawn well up into the mud and her topsides completely covered by a green tarpaulin.

"Hidden," was the first word that popped into Stone's mind. Then followed the inevitable "Why?"

He examined his find. The query grew more insistent. It wasn't the type of craft common to those waters or indeed likely to be used by any one in that region. It was the costly and powerful toy—from a seafaring man's point of view—played with by people with money who craved the thrill of speed. Barely twenty-five feet long, broad beamed, with the pronounced V-bottom of the speedster, and powered, Stone surmised from the length of her locked engine compartment, to do anything from twenty to thirty knots. Mahogany and brass and copper—all hidden under a recent coat of dull-green paint. "Camouflage," Billy hazarded. She wasn't abandoned in that secluded place. By the feel and appearance of her exhaust outlet her motor had been firing within twenty-four hours.

The whole thing had an air of concealment; costly paint and metal and fine joiner work smeared with base paint; that perfect hiding place which he had only stumbled on by accident. Even the green tarpaulin, blending perfectly with the foliage, spoke of design in its selection for a cover. A man rowing alongshore, or passing twenty feet inland through the brush, could look straight at the spot and not distinguish a boat. Yet with the tide high she could be pushed afloat at will.

Billy took a last careful look and turned away. At least his mind had something tangible to chew on. The idea which immediately took substantial form was that this hidden craft would bear watching—by night!

CHAPTER IX.

THE LIGHTS AGAIN.

MARKHAM had seen nothing more impressive than rocky shore line backed by thickets and shadowy forest. It was ten o'clock when they got together aboard the *Wasp*. They rested a while, ate luncheon, and went ashore to talk with Joe Molter about timber and land and such chances as the B. C. coast offered a man who had to make his way without much capital. Stone was not wholly simulating interest in those matters. For all he knew he might be on a wild-goose chase. If it turned out that way opportunity might still beckon somewhere along these wooded shores.

When the noon hour ended in the bolt camp the conversation ended also. Molter had business at Elk Bay, a few miles along the strait, and he departed thence in a gas boat that was almost the double of the *Wasp*.

"We're going to start loading a scow with shingle bolts to-morrow," he said before he left. "You'd better come along and take a look if you have nothing else to do. I'm going to tow the scow into a bight near the other end some time to-night."

Stone and Markham went back aboard and took a nap. Dark closed in without Molter's appearance with the scow, but that made no difference in either their plan or intentions. They slid their rowboat into the water and rowed softly down the eastern shore of Helmcken. Little swirls twisted them this way and that. A hundred feet offshore the tidal stream swept by like a river in flood, strongly on the ebb. Clouds that were fleecy tufts at sundown banked thick above, hiding the stars. In that narrow waterway, little more than a deep cleft between high-forested slopes, the dark of a cloudy night was like a shroud of crape. The channel was only a vague paleness in the general gloom; the shore a mass of solid black.

In that uncanny blackness Stone made repeated efforts to locate the cove that held the hidden launch, but failed. Half the time they rubbed the rocks on shore with-

out being able to see them. At the best they could only feel with an oar and listen. Poking tentatively into one spot after another they presently found themselves nearing the northern end of Helmcken, far past the spot they wished to locate.

"No good. Too black to find anything against that timbered land," Billy grumbled. "May as well go ashore here on the point and wait for slack tide. We could never row back against this current. And the clouds may break after a while."

They landed, fumbled their way to a seat on a mossy ledge. In the silence Billy Stone reflected how futile, how aimless a course they must follow. Yet they could do nothing else. Be opportunists; wait and watch; they could do no more than that.

Through the fringe of shore trees over the lower end lights gleamed aboard the *Arethusa*. In the stillness, broken only by the monotone of broken water grumbling over Earl Ledge down channel, they could hear voices over the water, laughter, the faint tinkle of the ship's bell ringing off the thirty-minute stretches. Some one on the wrecker began to play an accordion, and ceased at ten thirty. The lights blinked out, all but a bright lamp at the masthead. The night was warm. Inaction made for drowsiness. At midnight the changing tide brought slack water.

"I tell you Mark, we're foolish. We can't go all day and all night too, this way," Billy said. "Suppose you take the dinghy and row back. I'll stick around here until it begins to break day. Then to-morrow night you can take a shot at doing this sentinel stuff."

Markham, thoroughly sleepy, grunted assent, got into the dinghy and pushed off.

They had come down there very quietly. Their talking had been done in discreet whispers. Even if they had not felt the necessity for caution the hour and the surroundings and their quest would have called for silence, indeed for stealth. Their oarlocks were muffled with bits of cloth. Markham vanished without a sound, melted into the darkness and for half an hour thereafter Billy sat amid a hush that was tomblike. The sepulchers of long-dead kings knew no silence or darkness more profound.

Billy Stone fell to regarding matters dubiously. He began to doubt the wisdom of being there at all. What could be seen, heard, discovered? The dark border of a

forest at midnight awed him a little, it was so melancholy, so utterly forsaken of light and life. The night air began to chill his body. A vain watch and a futile undertaking. In the little hours a man leans toward pessimism.

Then his shifting gaze marked the lights of a steamer showing far up Johnstone Strait. He reckoned her position as about opposite Blenkinsop Bay. She had a turn of speed by the way she bore down on Helmcken. In less time than it took to weary his eyes with watching she was abreast of Earl Ledge, surging up on the breast of a fair tide. Stone could see the phosphorescent gleam where her bow wave curled aside—luminous waves spreading out in a great V.

From his rock he marked her lights and estimated her size, felt a touch of envy for the man on her bridge. To feel a tenthousand-ton ship surging under his feet! Never again—except as a passenger. A lump rose suddenly in Billy's throat. He had chosen the sea because the sea drew him with all its subtle magic. And it still drew him—the sea and all that moved upon it by steam or sail. It hurt him to sit by like a discarded lover; hurt him the more because he had not failed his chosen mistress. He had simply been a victim of chance. That or a sinister purpose that took no reckoning whatever of himself as a factor.

He sat probably within a hundred yards of the two tumble-down cabins, not more than two hundred yards from the beached *Manchu*. As the oncoming steamer drove down on Helmcken, swung a little to port to make the fairway end on and avoid being set ashore by the eddy, Billy Stone half rose and involuntarily gasped.

In mid channel, dead in the path of the steamer, he saw another steamer's running lights—the red port lantern, above it the white, the range light higher aft. Incredible—but there it was. Stone knew no steamer bore those lights. From his fixed position he could see that they were trick lights, false beacons. They simulated an approaching steamer, but they were fixed, immovable.

For a moment he was tempted to cry out, to warn that southbound vessel. Then he realized how useless that would be, and in the same instant there flashed across his mind the possibility that here, now, to-night

he perhaps stood within grasping distance of the key to the Helmcken riddle.

He stood tense, eager-eyed. Two shrill blasts woke a resounding echo. Stone started. She wasn't going to alter her course. He could interpret the mind of the man on the bridge. Perhaps he had heard how the *Mandarin* and *Manchu* had been put ashore. Or faced as he thought by the alternative of stranding or collision, he took the chance of crashing into the other vessel rather than the certainty of being swept ashore by the eddy. Stone could understand.

She came on full speed, undeviating by a hair's breadth. Her searchlight flashed on, a dazzling beam. But before it fell on the phantom lights, burning where no lights should burn, they vanished—but not so quickly that Stone failed to note that they did not simply blink out. The ruby red and the yellow lamps seemed to move backward in a short arc before they snapped out. And the southbound steamer passed fairly over the spot where they had shone so bright, the blazing ray of her searchlight playing from side to side, revealing nothing but gray-green water broken by swirls and eddies and miniature tide rips. She drove on past Helmcken, vanished up the pass toward Discovery Passage, with only the bright speck of her stern light and a few dim portholes showing astern.

Stone leaned against a tree, pondering. He had seen the unexpected, but he was little the wiser. He wondered if the night watch on the *Arcthusa* marked those lights. He doubted if they were visible from the salvage ship's position, but he determined to find out in the morning.

Alert in spite of concentrated thought, he got an impression, out of one corner of his eye, of something moving in the line of his vision between himself and the *Manchu*. For just a moment he thought to distinguish against the lighter background of a small open space a blurred shape or shapes that moved, flitted in and out of the field of his gaze. He didn't move. He didn't think his eyes had played any trick. He was quite sure that he had seen momentarily a dim figure or two moving softly.

It struck him for the first time that the situation might contain an element of personal danger. He was spying. He was unarmed. If he *did* by chance, under cover of the night, come into the vicinity of those

wrecking and robbing operations he would certainly be up against men who would slit his throat and throw him to the dogfish if they caught him warm on their trail.

There was no sound and no further movement—though Billy held his post till dawn brought a pallid gleam into the east. He waited until the sun cleared the Coast Range, hunting the heavy shadows before it. And when the strait began to sparkle and the forest glowed warm as green plush he made his way down the shingle-bolt trail and out the float landing to board the *Wasp*.

Markham poked his head out the cabin door. He grinned and pointed to the dinghy, hauled out on the float.

"What the devil!" Stone exclaimed as his gaze took in the little boat.

One side was badly splintered all along the rub strake. Her upper planking along that side was cracked till the joints gaped. One rowlock block was split and torn clean off.

"That's what I *said*," Markham grunted. "Believe me I come near taking my final bath in the salt chuck, last night."

"How come?" Billy inquired.

"I don't know, exactly, but I have my suspicions," Markham told him. "I was rowing along a little offshore. You know if you got in too close under those trees you couldn't see past the end of your nose. It was black enough anywhere. First thing I knew there was a *phoo—oo* and a humming like a big bee and something hit me *biff*. I was rowing with my back up channel. I only saw a faint shape slide past. Pretty near spilled me. I heard somebody say, 'Damn it all!' and the shape was gone. Then the rumble stops. Somebody plays a bright little flash lamp on me out of the dark, holds it on me till they get a good look, I suppose, then shuts it off. I'm still afloat, although she's leaking like a sieve. Then the light snaps off. I hear this hum and the *phoo—oo* sound again for a few seconds. Then I don't hear anything at all. After which I bail and row and bail and row until I land in here with water in the bottom up to my ankles. And I'd guess it was your hidden speed launch that bumped into me."

"I shouldn't be surprised," Billy said slowly. "It strikes me we'd better get breakfast and go look see if she's still there—or if she's been used. And we'd better

stick a gun apiece in our pockets, because you never——”

As tersely as possible he related to Markham what had befallen after he left. Markham whistled. Billy sat in the cockpit of the *Wasp* smoking a cigarette as he talked. Markham began fussing with the galley stove. He paused with one lid uplifted in his hand.

“I wonder,” said he, “if those birds that ran me down weren’t on their way to the upper end of the island to do their stuff with those lights?”

And after a minute he added:

“You wouldn’t think that even the damndest sort of pirate would try to wreck everything that comes down the channel, would you? They’ll pull that stuff just once too often and something’ll come down on ’em like a ton of bricks. It looks to me like we got a good start, Bill.”

CHAPTER X.

THE APROW.

BILLY lay down to take a sleep. His forty winks extended well into the forenoon. Whereupon, having stowed away a bite of luncheon, he and Markham patched up the sprung seams and torn rub strake of their little rowboat. After this task they went ashore. Noon had passed. No one but a grinning Japanese cook was about the place, and his conversation was limited to two words: “No sabe.”

“Probably loading that scow Joe mentioned,” Billy surmised. “Let’s row along and see. Incidentally we’ll take a look for that hiding place. I can find that speed boat by day, all right.”

He located the tiny cove after one or two trials. Coming at the place by water it was even more effectually concealed than he had thought. But the launch was no longer there.

“Flown the coop,” Markham commented. “Well, it looks suspicious and yet for all that it might be a blind lead, Bill. The crowd responsible for this launch might *not* have anything to do with the wrecking.”

“That,” Billy replied, “remains to be seen.”

“Well, what next?”

“You go on alongshore in the dinghy,” Stone directed. “I’ll take another cruise through the woods. If you see ’em at work stick around until I turn up. If I

don’t see any scow loading I’ll walk on to the point.”

Stone plunged into the brush. He had no object except to look over the ground. Chance must supply him with anything more than general results. It would do no harm to know Helmcken from end to end, inside out and across. Such knowledge might at any moment become important. For anything more he trusted to luck. He had seen enough in twenty-four hours to convince him that Helmcken Island had some very peculiar aspects, to say the least.

Halfway between the little bight and the northern end Stone, moving softly through the thickets and timber, stopped to listen. Unconsciously he had flitted through the woods as stealthily as a hunting Indian—a reversion to the days spent as a youngster with a rifle after deer in the Olympics. Now he stood still with ears a-cock. He had been arrested by a sound, a breaking branch, the rustle of foliage—something. He had paused beside the bole of a massive fir. Salal stood all about him; wide-fronded bracken lifted waist-high. Beyond that, thickets lifted in a jungle that might hold anything besides the tall trees that thrust pillar trunks toward the sky. Stone had no reason to suspect danger. But for the moment he was swayed by a primitive instinct to be wary.

And as he stood at attention, listening, looking, something flashed by his head with a faint, swishing sound. He didn’t know what it was. A small bird darting might have made such a whir. He hadn’t seen it. But he had felt the breath of its strange passing and heard the rustle of slightly disturbed foliage beyond. He stared. It was like a flash of something in the air. And while he stared, within the space of ten seconds, he heard very faintly a sound that he recognized and instantly there came a second flash and something went *pluck* in the bark of the fir tree at about the level of his breast.

The human eye is quick; and the mind quicker. Billy Stone’s optic and aural nerves conveyed a definite message to his brain. He dropped prone among the fir and salal. There he lay looking curiously up at a missile lodged in the tough brown bark, knowing now what that first flash had been and realizing just how narrowly he had escaped death.

It quivered a little yet—a long, broad-

head arrow—the cloth-yard shaft of the old English archer. Stone himself had practiced archery as a sport for a year or two before he went to sea. He knew the history of the bow, more especially the English long bow, which the careless modern reckons as obsolete, except for savages and children playing Robin Hood. But Billy Stone was aware of it as a very deadly weapon. He knew the broad-head, the hunting shaft of the bowman. Twenty-eight inches from nock to point, three eighths of an inch in diameter, barbed with a piece of spring steel an inch and a quarter wide by three inches long that was ground to a lancet edge.

He lay quietly looking up at a beautiful specimen now, a deadlier killer than the revolver his hand gripped. He noted the white cock feather, the scarlet binding. The barb was buried deep. Driven from a long bow full drawn that arrow would have gone through his body like a knife. He had seen like shafts range a deer from shoulder to flank and fall twenty yards beyond. He would be a dead man now where he lay, instead of being very much alive and angry and vindictively hopeful that the hidden bowman would show himself.

But though he lay there until an hour had elapsed and his body grew cramped with inaction his eyes beheld no enemy, nor did his ears warn him of any movement in the surrounding brush. He therefore decided that it was his move. Finding that the arrow stood at about the level of the fern-tops where he could reach it without exposing more than his hands he dug around the buried barb with his knife and gently worked the arrow loose. After which, with his trophy in hand, he crept and stole from tree to tree until he was well clear of that vicinity.

It *might* have been accident. But Billy knew that no archer sufficiently up in the craft to possess such equipment would ever drive two shafts at random. Nor, having missed his mark, would he fail to seek his shafts on the line of flight. A good bowman treasures his arrows. No, that was not an accident. The broad-head was meant for him.

But by whom? And why? Stone's face darkened. He thought he knew the answer to the second query. It was not a pleasant or encouraging conclusion. He perceived himself at a grave disadvantage. He didn't

fancy that particular mode of assassination.

If he were correct then certainly he was getting on a warm trail. But it was a blind one yet; and promised to be a rough one. A dead man here and there didn't seem to matter much to the crowd whose apple cart Billy Stone was desperately seeking to upset.

CHAPTER XI. COMPLICATIONS.

SOUND guided Billy to the scow loading. He hid the arrow in a hollow cedar near the bolt trail and went down to the shore. Markham sat on a log talking to the Scandinavian. Perez was on the scow, and Molter was fussing around in a row-boat, outside the boom sticks—a string of which, chained end to end across a dent in the shore, confined hundreds of cedar bolts four feet long and roughly a foot thick, shingle material in the raw. Japanese in pairs heaved them up on the scow with stout pike poles. Others stowed them in place. There was a lot of activity, none of which greatly interested Billy Stone after he had watched for half an hour.

Perez and Molter remained on the boom and scow directing operations. The Swede did not bestir himself except to drawl an occasional order to a Jap. So Billy left Markham to continue his conversation and strolled on to the end of the island to stand staring at the wreck of the *Manchu* and the salvage operations that went on apace. And while he stood looking a curious thing happened.

A man on the *Arethusa's* bridge squared himself erectly and, thrusting one arm straight out before his body, drew the other hand back to his jaw. Something glistened in his hand.

Involuntarily Billy dodged behind the nearest tree. He recognized the archer's stable stand and he took no chances. But a second look convinced him the shaft was not aimed his way. As it flew his eye followed the low, graceful arc of its swift flight, and marked its quarry—a hair seal hauled out on a flat rock above tidewater. The shaft missed by inches only. The animal raised on its flippers, sniffing. The archer drew his bow again. His second arrow struck home. The ~~beast~~ ~~fopped~~ off the rock into a shallow pool. There, lacking strength

to gain the deep, it thrashed in its death struggle.

A boat put off from the *Arethusa*. Billy walked quickly to the spot, looked down at the dead seal, retrieved the shaft which had missed and the other which had passed clear through the animal's body and dropped a few feet beyond. The points of both were turned and blunted by contact with the granite. But they were true broad-heads, cloth-yard shafts, beautifully feathered and barbed.

So a skilled bowman stood on the *Arethusa's* bridge. And two hours since a skilled bowman had tried to spit him as this one had spitted the dog seal.

What if the two were one? Stone stared at the arrow in his hand. He knew shafts as a dealer in antiques knows period furniture. The arrow he had hidden in the cedar was a hunting shaft like these, as beautifully fashioned. There the resemblance ceased. There was a different finish to the nock that fitted the bowstring; a different cut of feather; a decided variation in the broad-head point; a distinctive color scheme.

Every archer worthy of the name has his individual colors, his own style of finish, whereby he identifies his shafts in addition to elaborating his personal idiosyncrasies in arrow making. Having once known the sport Billy was aware that the shafts in his hand as well as the hidden one were equally the work of a practiced fletcher; and they had likewise all been shot by a practiced bowman.

He didn't know what to think. Now he turned his attention to the man stepping ashore from the rowboat and saw at a glance that he was a typical deck hand.

"You kill the seal?" Billy feigned ignorance.

"Lord, no!" the man grinned as he hauled the animal by a flipper to the dry bank. "That was the mate. Regular bug on the bow 'n' arrow. Some shot, too, I'll say. Hate to have him plunk one of them things through *my* gizzard."

The man talked on while he skinned the seal. It was part of his job, Billy learned, to retrieve arrows and game for the *Arethusa's* mate.

"Was he ashore hunting this morning?" Billy asked.

"Dunno. Don't think so," the man answered indifferently. "He don't shoot much ashore. Mostly from the deck—unless he

takes a target on the beach to shoot light arrows. He's always making new ones. Spends all his spare time monkeying with them things."

So that was that. The bowman of the *Arethusa* might have been in the woods that day—and he might not. But if there was uncertainty about the man there was no uncertainty in Billy's mind about the weapon and the intent. The archer who shot at him in the forest meant to get him. He was master of his weapon. Here was also a master of the bow, who could put a shaft through a seal at eighty yards.

Billy went back to the scow loading with this added complication turning over in his mind. The work continued monotonously. Midafternoon was gone. Markham and the Swede still sat on the log carrying on their interminable conversation. They had been joined by Perez and Molter. They sat comfortably in the shade while the Japs sweated in the hot sun. They talked timber and hunting and navigation along the Pacific coast until five o'clock ended the day's labor. Then the woodsmen took the path to camp.

Billy signed Markham to wait. When the others had vanished up the trail through the slashing he slipped through the brush to his hollow cedar and retrieved the arrow. As they rowed alongshore he told his tale to Markham.

"The plot thickens to beat hell, don't it?" Markham frowned. "I got a sort of an eyeful this afternoon myself."

"How?"

"Your green speed boat is stowed in chocks on the after deck of the *Arethusa*," Markham stated bluntly.

"Are you sure? How did you find out? How do you know it's the same boat that I found cached in the cove?" Billy asked.

"I can't swear to it, naturally," Markham replied. "But remember I lived aboard the *Arethusa* until a month ago, or less. I know her boats inside out. You described this launch to me. I took a look at the wreck with a pair of corking good binoculars I borrowed from Perez. And I got about a ten-second squint at this speed boat when a deck hand lifted off the canvas cover. The green tarp you mentioned was folded across her forward deck. A green speed boat about twenty-five feet long with a hard-knuckled bilge and automobile controls. There isn't likely to be

two such combinations here at Helmcken at the same time, is there?"

"What about this archer mate?" Billy asked. "Ever see him shoot?"

Markham shook his head.

"He's a new one on me. Never saw him or a bow and arrow aboard the *Arethusa* in my time."

The dinghy slipped into Molter's bay and Markham sidled up alongside the *Wasp*. He sat holding the rub strake, his gaze on the camp ashore.

"Another thing," said he slowly. "That big Swede foreman of your friends is a diver. He don't know I've got his number but he tipped his hand talking to me this afternoon. I recalled him perfectly when he made the slip. Worked with him once. I was on a job in San Diego about ten years ago—where he was head diver."

"Huh!" Stone grunted. "By the way, were all three of them at the scow when you rowed down there?"

"Now, I'll be darned if I can say for sure," Markham replied. "I started talking to the Scandihoovian and I don't remember. Maybe they were. And again I have a sort of impression Molter and Perez came along after a while. Strikes me one of 'em came in a boat, and the other come hiking down the trail."

"Oh, hell!" Billy threw out his hands. "It's getting so darned complicated it makes my head swim. We're up against something that isn't small-time stuff by a long shot. It isn't exactly a healthy place for us, Mark, this Helmcken Island."

"I wouldn't fancy being found in the brush with one of those things sticking through my middle." Markham eyed the broad-head distastefully.

"Nor I," Billy agreed. "But I'm not quitting. There's a combination here that has started in to hunt me—and I'm going to hunt back. Watch and wait. Go armed. Be careful. There's no reason anybody should try to pink me like that fellow did to-day, except that I'm getting close to something that needs to be kept dark. I don't like crooks and I don't like murder. But I'm willing to take my chance."

"Same here," Markham returned. "I'm with you. Do you suppose, Bill, that this shingle-bolt crowd, including your friend Molter, is in the show?"

"Do you suppose," Stone enlarged the field of speculation, "that the *Arethusa*

crowd may be putting it over? It isn't a small undertaking to wreck two steamers and get away with close to a hundred and fifty thousand in gold out of their strong rooms. That looks almost too big for a couple of ordinary men, don't it?"

"Maybe they're all in cahoots," Markham suggested. "Whether they are or not—how was it worked? How is it worked?"

"God only knows," Billy Stone replied soberly, "and He's not telling. It's *our* job to find out."

CHAPTER XII.

TRAGIC NEWS.

IF the first forty-eight hours had given them something to chew upon in the way of incident, the succeeding forty-eight proved utterly barren. The salvage work went on at the wreck. The bolt loading continued. Stone and Markham visited more or less at Molter's camp. They watched, and by night they prowled surreptitiously around the northern end—drawing only a blank. They seemed to have come to a dead stop after a fairly exciting start.

"Let's run down to Rock Bay," Billy suggested the third morning. "There should be some mail for me."

The *Wasp* chugged down stream to this branch post office at a big railway logging camp. Billy's journey was rewarded by a letter from Martha Powell. It was brief, but slightly disturbing, inasmuch as Billy sensed an agitation uncommon to his sweetheart. It ran:

DEAR BILL: I must see you as soon as possible. Since we always take a two week's vacation somewhere during the summer I've persuaded Papa Powell to go to Campbell River for a few days. He likes the salmon fishing there. We leave Victoria on a Union boat early the tenth and arrive at Campbell River late that night. I do want to see you, Bill. I can't tell you why in a letter. I'll be looking for you every day till you come. Lovingly,
MARTHA.

Billy looked up the date—the eleventh. Martha was at Campbell River now, expecting him. He wondered what could so trouble her. He felt that she was troubled beyond the mere wording of her letter. And he wanted to see her. He always wanted to see her. That longing had been coming over him at intervals for five years like touches of homesickness. Yet he was of a divided mind as he sat on the Rock Bay wharf reading his letter. Helmcken Island

claimed his attention. Even in this short run to the post office he felt himself derelict in a duty. Any hour, he felt, might see some clew put in his hand there. The same sense of responsibility that rides a ship's officer on watch bore on Stone in this task of seeking the key to the mysterious agency which had destroyed his ship. Yet it was a task wholly self-imposed, a matter in which he was comparatively his own master.

In the end he decided that he must see Martha. He could not carry on wholeheartedly his job at Helmcken while any sort of appeal from her went unanswered. She was too sturdy a soul to be troubled without cause.

But somebody had to be on the job. It wouldn't do to go on to Campbell River with the *Wasp*. She was too slow. They would lose too much time. He remembered that coasting steamers invariably called at Salmon Bay, a little distance above the northern end of Helmcken. They were fairly fast boats. If he could get one that afternoon—

He inquired of the Rock Bay storekeeper. Yes, two local boats southbound touched Salmon Bay that afternoon, one at two o'clock, one in the evening. The following morning early a northbound steamer called at Campbell River. He could make close connections.

He talked it over with Markham.

"Sure, I'll hold it down if you want to go," Markham declared. "We can easily make Salmon Bay to catch that two-o'clock boat. Tell you what I'll do while you're gone. I'll go aboard the *Arethusa*, just for luck. They don't think much of me since I fudged on the *Mandarin* job. But the skipper won't throw me off. And I might pick up a thread."

That settled they drove the *Wasp* up channel to Salmon Bay, catching the steamer with a little time to spare.

In the dusk of that evening Billy strode into the office of a quaint old hotel built to house guests who came from far afield to try their angling skill on the Tyee salmon that had made the place famous. He looked over the register, and turned from that to see Martha coming toward him across the lobby.

"Let's go for a walk," she suggested. "Papa Powell is roaming around the hotel somewhere. If he finds you're here he'll

stick so close we won't have a chance to talk."

They left the hotel, went down past a row of cottages and found a seat on a beached log facing the tide that streamed like a river current toward the choked gate of Seymour Narrows.

"Shoot," Billy said. "What's on your mind? What's the trouble?"

"Did I sound like trouble?" she murmured. "I didn't mean to. But I was disturbed when I wrote that letter. In fact I was really frightened. Perhaps I exaggerated things a little. And the funny thing is I can't tell you why. Except that if you love me, Billum, you won't stay around Helmcken Island."

"Why?" he asked quickly.

"I can't explain," she answered. "I simply can't. Only it worries me to think of you being at that place. I'm afraid. It's dangerous. Let the old wreck go, Bill, and come back to Seattle. You can get into something there. We can manage. I've been a dutiful daughter long enough. I'm about ready to—to break away."

Billy Stone's heart fluttered. He knew what she meant. He knew also that they could manage. Waiting because he wanted promotion, a decent income on which to make a home, had been partly dissembling between them. There had always been Captain Powell and his necessities, his natural demands. Martha's sense of loyalty to a rather exacting parent had been as much of a bar to marriage as material circumstances. But there was more behind this mood of Martha's than a weariness of sacrifice to her father and a longing for her lover. And Billy tried to find out what it was. He had an impression that Martha was afraid, not for herself but for him.

"I wish you'd tell me *why*, Mart," he repeated gently. "You know I'd chuck almost anything, honey bunch, to play the game with you. But I'm in this rather deep—other people too. It seems to me there's something important at stake. My own reputation as an officer—even if I never go to sea again. What has scared you so? Why do you think Helmcken is a dangerous place for me?"

"I can't tell you," she sighed. "It doesn't seem like a logical or sensible reason sometimes. Not even to me. And I'm sure it wouldn't to you. But just the same I'd give anything if you'd drop this detective work."

I'll be uneasy as long as you're around in Johnstone Strait."

Dangerous to him on Helmcken? Well, Billy recalled that broad-head shaft quivering in the fir tree on a level with his breast and was quite willing to concede danger; danger with malice behind it. If on or about Helmcken Island those responsible for the wrecks were aware of his presence and purpose then certainly the element of danger was very real. But he had discounted that risk, and he wondered where Martha Powell got this new, keen apprehension for his safety. Was it based on something she had learned? Or merely on something she felt? Billy had never taken much stock in pure intuition. He knew that there was that odd thing called a "hunch." Of late he had been inclined to believe that a "hunch" was as likely to be correct as an elaborately reasoned process.

But he couldn't get anything definite out of Martha. She put her arms about him and pleaded with him to go back to Seattle. She would marry him on twenty-four hours' notice. Anything. And the more she talked the more certain Billy grew that Martha had acquired a definite cause for fear on his behalf. Nevertheless she wouldn't tell what she knew—only what she felt.

And Billy's pride was involved. He had set his hand to the job. He didn't want to quit. He wouldn't be a yellow dog. He told Martha that. She could see his point. Still, being a woman and fearing for him—although she stubbornly refused to say on what valid grounds—she pleaded that after all neither their lives nor their real material welfare depended on his personally solving the Helmcken Island mystery.

And in the end Billy said good-by to catch the northbound steamer rather unhappy and no wiser for his coming.

He brooded over unanswerable questions all the way north. He knew Martha pretty thoroughly. She wasn't panicky. Something tangible had stirred her up. He was still pondering when he debarked on the Salmon Bay wharf and looked about for the *Wasp*.

Neither the *Wasp* nor his partner was in sight, although it was getting on for noon. Billy cooled his heels on the wharf for two hours, growing both uneasy and impatient, until at last he hired a fisherman to run him across to Helmcken.

When they were drawing up to the island

so that Stone could plainly see the canted hull of the *Manchu* overtopped by the *Arethus*'s deck gear, her enormous crane and winch engines spitting jets of steam, a power cruiser came surging by. It passed close, drew up under the *Arethus*'s broad quarter. Billy watched with idle curiosity a man or two clambering up the wrecking ship's side. Then a point of Helmcken cut off his view. A minute or two later his fisherman drove into Molter's bay and stopped at the float landing.

The *Wasp* lay in her accustomed berth. But her dinghy was gone. Billy scanned the beach in vain. He looked in the cabin. The galley stove was cold. He stood a moment wondering where Markham could be—why he hadn't met the steamer. Then he shrugged his shoulders and paid off the fisherman. When the man swung clear Stone dived into the cabin and began getting into his boat clothes. He was a trifle puzzled, uneasy, and he intended to cast off and skirt the eastern shore of Helmcken with the *Wasp* and pick Markham up. He must be poking about in the rowboat. But why hadn't he met the steamer?

Stone was dressed and just about to start the engine when a boat came swinging around the point; the same craft which had landed at the *Arethus*. She bore in beside the *Wasp*, looming over her, a chunky forty footer painted a businesslike gray, with a good deal of varnished oak and polished brass about her decks. By the blue ensign aft, Billy knew she was in the government service. One man made fast her lines to the float; the other stepped into the *Wasp*'s cockpit.

"My name is Pearce, provincial constable from Rock Bay," he announced briskly. "Are you William Stone, one of the two men on this Seattle power boat?"

Billy verified this.

"Where you been the last twenty-four hours?"

The man put the question bluntly, almost brusquely. Both the tone and question nettled Billy.

"I don't see how or why that's any of your business," he replied. "But as a matter of fact I was at Campbell River."

The constable grinned genially.

"I'll say it's my business," he remarked. "Don't get peeved. I got to know these things. I'm not asking questions for fun. Now, you left here yesterday. Did you get

one boat to Campbell River, stay there part of the night, and get the next one back?"

"I did," Stone replied.

"You can verify that, I suppose," the constable asked, "by steamship men and wharfingers, and people generally, eh?"

"If necessary, yes." Billy was startled. "What's the idea?"

"I guess that accounts for you," the constable nodded, disregarding Stone's query. "Now, who do you know around here that had it in for your partner? Anybody he was likely to quarrel with?"

"Nobody that I know of. What's wrong?" Billy demanded. "Markham was to meet me with the *Wasp* at Salmon Bay. Has something happened him?"

"I'll say something happened him," the man replied grimly. "Somebody killed him. He come drifting down past that wrecking ship about daylight this morning, laying dead in a rowboat."

Billy stared, with a chill creeping over him—to be followed by a hot wave of anger.

"How was he murdered?"

"That," the constable said, "is one of the funny things about it. Looks like a knife. But I never saw a knife that would make a neat slit about an inch wide clean through a man's body."

Across Billy Stone's mental vision flashed a picture of a dead seal—of an arrow quivering in the bark of a tree. The long bow and the silent shaft with its deadly broad-head point! He knew what weapon made such a wound as puzzled the constable.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MYSTERIOUS ARCHER.

IN the gray of dawn that morning the anchor watch aboard the *Arethusa* had seen the *Wasp's* little dinghy drift on the tide out from behind the eastern shore of Helmcken. Caught in the sweep of the big eddy it circled within a few yards of the wreck, and the watch saw then that it was not empty as he first thought. There was something in it that looked like a man, asleep or drunk or disabled. Whereupon he called an officer. They lowered away a boat. Thus they found Markham lying in a pool of blood that was still warm.

This Stone learned upon boarding the *Arethusa* with the constable. They had lifted the dinghy to chocks on the after deck and Markham still lay huddled in the

bottom with his sightless eyes staring at the blue sky when Billy drew aside the canvas they had spread over him.

He stood looking down at his partner. The wrecking winches groaned and whirred and clanked. Men talked, shouted, machinery ground on. The constable stood beside him, gazing at the corpse with a speculative air.

"Something funny about all this excitement around here," he observed at last. "Two steamers run aground. A diver loses his life below. A man is murdered. I hear one of these wrecks had a lot of gold stolen out of her. All in the last four weeks. And I understand that this fellow was a diver aboard this ship we're on now, and that you were the officer on watch aboard the *Mandarin* when she drove ashore."

"All true," Billy said.

"Like to know the answer to it all," the constable drawled. "Helmcken's in my district."

"So would I," Stone replied. "I *will* know, if they don't get me too."

"They?"

The constable was a short, almost fat man, with the countenance of a sunburned cherub. His innocent air altogether belied his capacity.

"They got him!" Billy pointed to the dead man. "You don't suppose people who wreck ships to rob 'em, mind killing anybody who might be likely to find out who they are and how they turned the trick, do you?"

"That what you fellows are after?"

Stone grew cautious.

"I didn't say," he evaded. "Only Markham's partner was the diver who was drowned when he went down to survey the *Mandarin*. And I lost my ticket over the wreck. We weren't exactly disinterested parties to what's going on here."

"Is there anything going on here," the constable murmured quizzically, "more than can be seen with the naked eye? If there is, seems like I ought to be in on it as a matter of business."

"Maybe. I don't know for sure," Billy returned. "*This* rather looks it."

"I'll say so," the constable agreed. "Murder's no parlor game. I wonder what he was killed with."

"With a thing like this," said a voice behind them.

Billy turned. At his elbow stood a man

who had come up silently in rubber-soled shoes, a compactly built man in uniform. He carried in his left hand the most perfect specimen of an archer's weapon Billy Stone had ever seen. The bow was of fine-grained yew, the rich-brown heartwood worked into graceful tapered contours, its back of sapwood gleaming white as polished ivory. The lower limb rested on the deck by the officer's toe. The curved upper nock stood four inches above his peaked cap—a six-foot English long bow, that historic weapon that turned the tide for England at the battle of Crécy and with the like of which Robin Hood and his merry men slew the king's deer in Sherwood forest. A strange anachronism on the deck of a modern steamer.

The mate carried in his hand a broad-head arrow, banded with blue, green, gold, the feathering on the shaftment of snow-white turkey wing. For a moment Stone had a feeling as of the hair on the back of his neck rising, as if he were an animal facing an enemy. That subsided at once. Reason conquered instinct. Stone stiffened to attention on the man's words. He noted too that the mate's eyes glowed with feeling and that his speech, though concise enough, was shot through with a peculiar tenacity—as if he were repressing anger, or laboring under some excitement.

"That may surprise you. But it is true. I know what I am talking about. I happen to be an archer," he continued, addressing himself to the constable. "I have been shooting the bow for years. I have killed a variety of game with the bow. The thing that killed your man was an arrow like this—nothing else could make that precise sort of wound."

He held out the broad head.

"A bow drive an arrow clean through a man?" The constable's tone was slightly incredulous.

"Take a good look at it." The mate handed over the arrow.

The constable fingered the broad steel blade, edged like a knife, brushed the symmetrical feathers contemplatively, balanced the shaft across a finger.

"Nasty little sticker, all right," he commented. "But it don't look reasonable that the stick in your hand could shoot it through a foot or more of flesh and bone."

"You think not? Try this."

The mate of the *Arethusa* placed the

lower nock under his left instep, grasped the bow midway with his left hand, and slid his right palm to the top of the upper limb, heaved sharply till the yew arched and so slid the loop into the slotted horn. He twanged the rigid bowstring with his thumb. It gave out a faint musical note.

"This is an eighty-pound bow," said he. "You are a strong man, I should say. You cannot draw it arrow length. Try."

The constable braced himself, drew till his face reddened and the cords in his neck stood out like small ropes—yet the bowstring was still short of his face.

"Left arm fully extended. Bowstring back to a point on the jaw directly below the right eye. You're five inches short. Draw full."

There was a peremptory note in his voice. The constable let down the bow, looked at it with respect.

"It ain't so much of a toy as it looks," he conceded. "It might do the trick. Still I can scarcely——"

"Watch."

The mate picked up a piece of board fully an inch thick, set it up against a boat chock. He took up his bow, walked back a few paces, nocked an arrow, drew the head to his jaw, back till the wide end of the barb touched his gripping finger, and let fly.

For a second he held his graceful archer's pose, bow arm extended rigidly, string fingers at his ear. The broad-head flashed to its mark, struck with a sharp *pluck*, passed through the board and split it apart. Twenty feet beyond it stuck in the *Arethusa's* deck planking as if it had been tapped in with a hammer. The archer lowered his weapon. They walked up to the arrow. The broad head was driven so deep in the wood that he worked half a minute with a pair of small pliers to draw it free.

The constable eyed the arrow, the bow and the splintered board; then the man.

"That's reasonable proof that it can be done," he said slowly. "It also happens to be fairly strong circumstantial evidence as to who killed Cock Robin. Eh? That strike you, Mister Mate? You're the only bow-and-arrow expert that I know of running loose in this neck of the woods. If you haven't got an alibi you're wide open to suspicion."

"I have an alibi if I need one," the

officer eyed him gravely. "I merely show you that it can be done. I have something else to show you, Friend Constable. Likewise something to tell you. There's a bowman—or a madman—as good or better an archer than I, here on Helmcken Island."

The constable stared. Billy Stone's pulse took on a quicker beat.

"Come up on the bridge with me," the mate continued. "Both of you."

They followed him.

On the port side, facing the timbered point on which Stone had seen the mate kill the dog seal, he stopped by a latticed door abaft the wheelhouse.

"See that mark—and that?" he asked, pointing.

They looked. In two places the teak-wood slats were cut and splintered as if a broad-bladed knife had been driven through with considerable force.

"Now come in."

Within the cabin he opened a locker and took out an arrow. The barb was bent slightly and the shaft cracked. But as a whole it stood intact, a broad-head hunting shaft—and Billy Stone's attention focused sharply because he had its mate, feather for feather, color for color, nock pattern and general design in every detail, stowed in a drawer aboard the *Wasp*. It was twin to the shaft that had missed his breast by a hand's breadth that day in the woods.

"Yesterday evening about sundown," the ship's officer told them in a dry, matter-of-fact tone which his look somehow belied, "I was standing alone on the bridge. I had shot a couple of light arrows at a dead tree on shore. This broad-head whizzed across and drove through the lattice. If I hadn't seen the flash and known what it was and dodged instinctively, it would have spitted me fairly amidships. I'm not panicky. It didn't occur to me then that I was being shot at. I took it for a wild flight. And I was much interested in the mere fact that another bowman was about. They're rare. I stood looking at the shaft and glancing toward shore for the archer. Then he shot again. The second landed within a few inches of the first, as you can see. I realized then that I was the mark he aimed at.

"Now, I'm not a fool. I know the work of a bowman when I see it. If an archer wants to shoot with me or at me I'll play the game with him. That's the way I feel

about it. So I put a boat out and went ashore, bow in hand, with one of the crew. We beat the brush together. I didn't tell him what I was after, except that I had lost an arrow. We heard nothing—saw nothing. Whoever it was shot his shafts at me and stole away. There are his arrows. Perhaps one out of the same quiver killed this man you found in the boat. I don't know. Take your choice. I didn't kill him. He *was* killed by a broad-head. There *is* a skilled bowman on Helmcken Island. Take your choice."

"Don't seem to be a choice so much as a blind guess." The constable fingered the arrow. Then, after a brief silence he said: "A police boat with the coroner from Campbell River will be here shortly. Perhaps we'll get some light shed on this at the inquest."

Stone went back to where the *Wasp* rubbed beside the constable's power boat at the *Arethusa's* quarter. He climbed down, seated himself in his own tiny cabin and tried to figure it out.

Was the mate of the *Arethusa* lying cleverly? He was a bowman. Every one aboard his ship knew his weapon and his skill. Was he simply covering up his tracks, establishing an invincible alibi against a possible charge? And if—and why—Stone found himself in a maze of bewildering conjecture out of which only two things emerged clearly: his partner had been murdered; his own life wasn't worth much in or on or around Helmcken Island.

Behind these sinister events he couldn't help seeing a definite motive—and that motive had to do with those trick lights and the looted strong rooms. But what had the mate of the *Arethusa* to do with that? And if he had aught to do with it would he deliberately have made such open display of his skill with the bow?

It was a maze in which Billy Stone felt that he must wander alone from now on. He wondered if Martha had some strange prescience of what had occurred, of what might yet come about, that made her fear for him? Either she had learned something she feared to tell, or she must have the gift of second sight; a phase of the occult Billy frankly disbelieved in.

He couldn't quit now. He sat on the side of his bunk and fingered the six-shooter in his pocket. He *wouldn't*. A man couldn't be broken by plundering

crooks, see his friends assassinated, and run when the trail grew dangerous to follow. Somewhere near at hand crafty minds were planning, unseen eyes were watching, strong predatory hands were ready to act with ruthless decision.

It wasn't precisely a cheerful prospect. Billy knew he had to beat them at their own game if he beat them at all. He conceded that his chances were slender. But he meant to keep trying. It was that or quit cold. And he wasn't quitting.

CHAPTER XIV.

GROPING IN THE DARK.

THE heavens may open and the floods descend; the tragic consequences of human folly may set ugly specters stalking abroad; but even in the midst of battle, pestilence, murder and sudden death, a healthy man must eat when he is hungry if food is at hand.

So Billy Stone busied himself in the *Wasp's* galley. He wasn't worrying. He was saddened a little without being depressed. If anything, he was angry—and determined. It was not his idea of a happy ending to lie stark and stiff in the forest or drift dead on the tide like his partner. But neither could he entertain the idea of drawing back now that the going promised to be rough. There was a dirty mess to be cleaned up here on Helmcken and the cleaning up seemed to be quite definitely his job—more so now than ever. He felt as if he somehow had a debt to pay on behalf of Markham. His own vital interest seemed even less than that obligation.

So he cooked and ate, and meanwhile pondered, without getting any light on what might come next, nor what his next move logically should be. While he was thus engaged the police launch from Campbell River drew up alongside, then Molter's launch with Joe, his partner, and the Scandinavian. And finally a strange cruiser which sidled up against the *Wasp* and made fast to her bow and stern. Through a porthole in this craft, to Stone's amazement, he saw Martha Powell's face, wearing a strained anxious look. She put her fingers on her lips and beckoned him to come aboard.

There were two men on this trim, raised-deck cruiser. They sat down on the top deck and lit pipes. Beyond a nod and a

3A—POP.

brief "Howdy do," they paid no attention when Billy stepped aboard and went down the companion ladder.

Martha met him at the foot of the steps. She put both hands on his shoulders, looked long and earnestly into his face before she kissed him with a passion that set Stone's blood dancing. Yet that shadow never left her face and there was a suspicious hint of wetness in her eyes.

"Is Joe Molter on the *Arethusa*?" she asked. "I thought I saw him look over the rail as you came aboard."

"Yes. He just came from his camp. Why? And how come you to be here?"

"I don't want him to see me," she confessed. "That's why I kept inside. I heard about your partner getting killed. They wired in to the coroner and the police and there was a lot of talk. I just had to come, Bill. I'm scared stiff something will happen to you. Something *will* happen you if you stay around Helmcken Island. Billy, it isn't worth while."

"Sometimes a man has to go through with a thing he has started, whether it's worth while or not," he answered quietly. "But what are you scared of? Look here, you don't get away from me this time without telling me exactly what's on your mind."

"I don't want to get away from you, ever," she sighed, and lay passively within his encircling arms. "I'd be willing to stick right at your elbow from now on, Billum, if we could just put about two hundred miles between us and this place by snapping our fingers."

"Well," he said tenderly, "I'd be willing as far as the first part goes. But that's not telling me what has frightened you this way."

"Joe did—the day you left Seattle. You remember we met him when you were getting a car? Well, he came back to the house later in the evening," she said. "I think he must be crazy. He acted like a crazy man. You know he always had quite a crush on me, Bill?"

"I knew he did once," Stone replied. "But I thought he'd got over it long ago."

"So did I," she murmured. "But evidently not. He's been dropping in at the house more or less the last three months. I always liked Joe—only not the way he wanted me to like him. I thought he understood that well enough. But somehow or other Papa Powell began to take an in-

terest in Joe's case. Joe's made some money. At least he has made that sort of impression on dad. The pressure began to grow. I didn't say anything to you. It only amused me. I didn't take it seriously. Then the day you left Seattle to take up this wreck thing, Joe came as I told you. He asked me to marry him. Insisted that I must. Got quite excited about it. And when I managed to make it quite plain that there wasn't the ghost of a show he—well, he simply went wild. He raved. I never saw a man in such a state. Before he got through he had flatly assured me with the most frantic earnestness that he'd wipe you off the map. He hinted all sorts of dark, mysterious things. I can't begin to describe the way he talked and acted. It was like the raving of a maniac. Only when he did calm down he apologized for frightening me; but he came back from the door to repeat that I might just as well forget about you, because you were done. He wouldn't explain what he meant by that. But it sounded like a threat. And he seemed to fairly gloat when he was putting forward these hints and threats. He'd do anything to you, Billy. I know it."

"Was that what worried you so?" Billy asked. "Why didn't you tell me at Campbell River?"

"I wanted to—intended to when I wrote you to come," she confessed. "And then I was afraid to, for fear you'd come back here and start something. It did seem childish."

"And it is childish," Billy soothed her. "Joe can't do anything to me, and I don't believe he'd want to. You know he always was like a tornado for a few minutes when he lost his temper. But I'm as good a man as he is if it did come to a clash. I go armed around here, besides. I'm much less worried about what Joe might try to do to me in a spasm of jealousy than I am about other things that go on here at Helmcken Island. Hang it all, Mart, if it was childish to warn me of Joe Molter at Campbell River wasn't it even more so to hire a boat and come all the way here to tell me now?"

"It seemed a good deal more significant when I heard that your friend Markham had been murdered." She shivered a little. "I am afraid of Joe Molter. There's no use talking, Bill. I know how devilish he looked and acted. He'd do anything. Maybe he mistook Markham for you. If you're going

to be in danger of that sort I want to be with you."

"You wouldn't scandalize everybody by staying here with me offhand?" Billy smiled down at her.

"There's a Church of England minister at Rock Bay," Martha whispered against his breast.

Billy stood with one arm around her, stroking her hair. He was sorely tempted.

"You'd want me to drop this job," he muttered. "And I can't. Don't you sabb what it means to me, Martha, to clear myself of this wreck and robbery? They're trying to hang this bullion theft on me now. There's more than just a jealous man camping on my trail. I've got to go through with this, or at least try."

"I'd like you to quit, Bill," she said softly, after a brief silence. "I'll have my heart in my mouth until it's over. Do you imagine it's nice for me to think of them holding an inquest on you? But I'm not yellow. I'll do whatever you say. If I can't help I won't try to hinder. If you'll only be careful."

Stone stood for a little while holding her close to him. Then said he:

"You put me in a hard place, old girl, and I've got to lay down the law to you. You have to go back to Campbell River. I have to go on with this. If, in a week or ten days, I get nowhere, and the people who are backing me are satisfied, I'll quit. We'll get married and I'll make a fresh start somewhere. We have waited long enough haven't we?"

"Yes," Martha murmured agreement. "Too long. I've only begun to realize that. Oh, Bill, I don't like it. I don't want to be a cry baby. But I'm afraid—for you. I don't like it—I don't."

"Neither do I, much," Stone admitted. "But it's got to be done."

"From out the mesh of fate our heads we thrust,
We can't do what we would, but what we must."

Martha quoted plaintively.

"Ho, Stone!"

A voice from the *Arctousa's* rail broke in. Billy put his head out the hatch. The Rock Bay constable beckoned him.

"Inquest's on. Come up. You're wanted."

"I've got to go," he said to Martha. "Go straight home. Don't worry. Any time I have a chance I'll send you word."

"You'll be careful, won't you, Bill?" She clung to him for a second.

"Carefull!" he echoed. "Careful is my middle name. I'll be so darned careful I'll side-step my own shadow. You'll see. I'll come out right side up. I always do. So long, honey bunch."

He turned at the head of the ship's ladder. The launch was swinging free of the *Wasp*, the exhaust of her motor beating like a snare drum. She bore off southward. And there wasn't even a wave of Martha's hand. Stone turned to face along the *Arethusa's* deck. Joe Molter stood looking along the rail at him. Joe nodded.

"Kinda tough thing to happen Markham," he said casually. "Wonder how it happened. Kinda creepy to think of somebody around here bumping him off like that. Helmcken'll get a bad rep 'if this rough stuff keeps on."

"Liable to," Stone returned. Fresh from that conversation with Martha Powell he felt a quick stirring of anger against Molter for so disturbing her, a touch of contempt for a man who blustered and threatened an absent lover. But he no more than exchanged those brief sentences than he was called before the empaneled jury backed by a little knot of witnesses, all clustered around the *Wasp's* dinghy with the dead man huddled in the bottom.

How little one man counted in the general scheme, Billy Stone reflected as he listened to the inquiry. Forward the great crane swung slings of dripping cargo up from where the divers worked in the submerged holds. The winches puffed and whirred. A tug lay by pouring black smoke from her funnel, getting ready to tow away two heavy-loaded scows. Industry proceeded in spite of death and disaster. Markham's life, his own, the life of any single one there counted for so little in the unremitting mass effort—yet the mass effort was made up of individual efforts. That was why, Billy surmised, a man couldn't lie down on the job without a penalty—because of the mass pressure behind him, unseen, perhaps never even comprehended, but a driving force always. Always something to be lived up to, to be carried on—countless little necessary jobs making up the one big job—which was nothing less than life itself.

He roused out of this abstraction. The coroner summoned him by name. He was

sworn. He identified his partner. Gave a full account of his own movements.

The Rock Bay constable took him in hand for a minute or two. Afterward Billy stood by, alert. Man by man they testified, not to anything of far-reaching importance, but to simple facts. No one remotely connected with the affair, having acquaintance with the dead man, was overlooked. The watch that saw and rescued the masterless boat; the wharfinger from Salmon Bay who saw Markham bring Stone to the steamer and go away in the *Wasp* alone; Molter, the Swede and Perez, who saw him last alive—who in fact conversed with Markham on their own float late the evening before. The constable had them all tabbed. He put scores of questions. None shed light on either the nature or motive of the killing, nor gave the faintest clew to a possible murderer. That remained a blank. No one even hazarded a guess. In the end the only possible verdict was rendered by the jury: "Death by wounding at the hands of some person or persons unknown."

Only when it was over did Stone realize that neither the mate nor the constable had once mentioned the bow and arrow. Why? It was an important point. He got the constable's ear and asked him. That worthy shrugged his shoulders. He glanced about to see that no one was within hearing.

"Don't do to get romantic," said he in a low tone. "Take a tip from me. Keep that arrow stuff dark for the present. Might 'a' been a knife. If it was a bowman—"

He spread his hands in a gesture of indecision.

"Keep your weather eye peeled around here, Stone," he concluded quietly. "You don't tell all *you* know. Neither do I. There's a few queer kinks to this whole business. You going to stick around Helmcken?"

"Yes," Stone informed him curtly.

"All right," the constable nodded. "I'm comin' back to-morrow to talk things over with you."

Markham's body was wrapped in a canvas, lowered to the police launch for shipment to Seattle. The blood-stained dinghy was dropped astern of the *Wasp*. And as Billy prepared to follow overside he paused by the *Arethusa's* rail, his eye caught by the sharp bow of the green speedster showing from under its canvas housing. Markham

had been right—the craft Billy had found hauled up in the cove was the one that now stood in chocks on the deck. But he couldn't establish any connection. The green boat might be an implement of piracy; it might be a perfectly innocent part of the *Arethusa's* equipment. It was merely another tantalizing angle of affairs. He stood looking at it, wondering if it would be prudent to quiz a deck hand, or perhaps the mate, about this green packet.

And while he hesitated by the rail a short, thick-bodied man in blue trousers and khaki shirt, a benevolent-looking individual with the butt of an unlighted cigar clamped in one corner of his mouth, sidled up, laid elbows on the rail and appeared to gaze earnestly down into the green depths overside. In reality he was addressing Billy Stone without looking at him, speaking in a very discreet tone out of one corner of his mouth.

"Don't pay any attention to me at all," he said. "I'm here on the same lay you are—tryin' to get a line on these pirates for the insurance people, see? I sneak around in the green speeder at night now an' then. Bumped your partner in the dinghy the other night. That was me. You wanta keep close watch this end of the island. That's where them fake lights is worked from. Watch out they don't get you."

"Who?" Billy muttered.

"Like to know myself," the man answered. "I'd know it all then."

"What about your arching mate?" Billy asked.

"Got nothin' on him yet. But nobody's barred in this game. Blind alley so far. Cinch he didn't kill Markham. I see the watch wake him up, and the man hadn't been dead more'n half an hour then. Look. You got a police whistle?"

"No."

"I'll drop one by my foot. You pick it up, after I go. Case you get in a mix-up and need help. Blow one long, two short, and I'll get to you if I can. She'll sound half a mile. If you hear that signal from me hop to it as fast as you can, because I'll be needin' help darned bad. Get the idea?"

"Yes," Billy answered—a little dubiously. It sounded plausible enough, and it was more than likely that the underwriters would have several strings to their bow.

But it might also be a trap. Billy couldn't help being suspicious of everything and everybody.

There was a faint tinkle in the scuppers. The man strolled forward. Stone looked down. A bit of bright metal glistened. He moved sidewise. After a few seconds he picked it up, put it in his pocket and went down a rope ladder to the *Wasp*. Molter and his partner had nodded and gone as soon as the inquest ended. Billy looked at the nickel-plated police whistle when he got aboard and wondered if he had found an ally. Or if part of the *Arethusa* crowd *did* have some connection with those wrecks and were craftily preparing a deadfall of some sort for him. The mate was almost too convincing with his demonstration of archery to the Rock Bay constable and his story of being shot at from the shore. Certainly he had two arrows of the same sort as were shot at Billy in the woods. It was all damnably puzzling, exasperating.

From the spot where the *Mandarin* had struck and afterward sunk to where the *Manchu* lay beached was a matter of two hundred feet. Between, a cleft in the rocky shore seemed to offer a mooring for the *Wasp* out of the sweep of the big eddy that made the *Arethusa* strain at her cables. Into this nook Billy headed his launch. He had no desire to go back to Molter's bay. Here he was on the spot where things had happened and where, he had an unreasoning conviction, they might happen again before long.

With the *Wasp* swinging between two anchor lines so as to scantily clear the rocks at low tide Billy lay down on his berth to consider his next move. For the life of him he couldn't see any positive action indicated. There was no clew that led anywhere or pointed to a single man. Nothing but mere conjecture. All he could do was to watch and prowl, wait his chance.

He fell into a doze. When he awakened from an hour or two of fitful napping the sun had dropped behind the ragged backbone of Vancouver Island. Billy sat in the cockpit with a cup of tea. The evening hush lay heavy as a fog. Not a voice sounded, not a solitary gear clanked on the salvage ship. The eastern mainland rose from dusky-green slopes to rocky palisades, beyond which loomed tall peaks shining with a rosy tinge in the afterglow. Smells from the forest drifted on imperceptible airs. It

was very beautiful with a holy sort of peace that charmed Billy Stone into momentary forgetfulness.

He presently roused himself out of that. Certain aspects of nature, the forest and those majestic mountain ranges and the cool green sea hurrying in its channel might be lovely indeed, but the works of man as lately demonstrated on and about Helmcken had a decidedly evil cast. And he had to do something about that, besides sit and admire scenery. There was a matter which he thought that he would attend to that very evening.

He put his revolver in one pocket, a fairly powerful but compact electric flash light in the other, and went ashore in the dinghy. The dark stains in the bottom gave him a queer feeling for a moment, a distinctly unpleasant feeling. Once on shore he passed through the thicket and bordering trees into the shingle-bolt slashing and so struck the rude trail that led up to the other end of the island.

For the time he was not so much concerned with wrecks and wreckers, with murder and mystery, as he was with himself and Martha Powell. He had been brooding more or less on that for several hours, and the more he thought the more resentful he grew at Molter's outburst which had frightened Martha so. Direct, outspoken, aboveboard in everything, Billy felt an overwhelming desire to tell Joe Molter that caveman stuff with a girl was out of date. He was headed for Molter's camp for that specific purpose.

But he changed his mind. Halfway up Helmcken, in the gathering shadows, he stopped, sat down on a log. What was the use? He wasn't angry with Molter. Merely irritated, annoyed. Molter had made his wild declarations to Martha. He was not likely to repeat them. He knew Joe's explosive, ungovernable temper; had in fact wondered sometimes at its manifestations when they were youngsters together. And he had liked Joe in spite of his occasional spasms of fury. Billy wasn't afraid of Molter because he was not afflicted with fear of anything in the shape of a man. But he did realize that for him to broach such a subject to Joe would almost surely lead to a direct clash. Better to pass it up this time.

So he reasoned. Also the thought struck him that with the slow-gathering dusk he

made a fine mark sitting there in the edge of the open. He didn't become at all uneasy, but motives of prudence urged him to caution. He had Markham's memory to suggest that caution did not come amiss anywhere or at any time, on Helmcken. So he moved quietly back into a screen of brush. There he waited until dark made an archer's aim uncertain. Then he decided that he would camp on the point outside the two cabins and keep watch.

He fingered the police whistle in his pocket. Would its shrill blast bring help if he needed help? From whom and from where? Or would that signal bring a hornets' nest about his ears? In the mood of that moment one possibility seemed as likely as the other.

If he could just get hold of one real thread in this tangled skein! He wondered how much longer he would grope, quite literally, in the dark.

CHAPTER XV.

THE UNDERGROUND CHAMBER.

SEATED on the same mossy rock where he and Markham had kept vigil not so long before, Billy felt the chill and gloom of night creep into his soul rather than into his bones. To sit alone in the edge of a brooding forest with the sea making faint mysterious noises in its tidal race and darkness hanging like a shroud about him is not a joyful occupation for any normal man. Dim racial memories quicken in him; old ancestral impressions of fearsome things questing in the dark. When in addition he has a real sense of personal danger haunting him his nerves are apt to tighten, his hearing grow abnormally sensitive. He becomes, by proxy, his savage forbear of a forgotten generation, caught in the forest by night and listening warily for the saber-tooth tiger nosing his trail in the dark.

Thus not a leaf stirred nor a bough scraped nor any little lapping of water by the shore but came with uncanny distinctness to Billy Stone's ears. And by midnight sheer inaction, pure nerve strain, made it impossible for him to sit still. He began to move very softly across the point in the direction of the *Arethusa*. He would stir his blood and settle his mind by a reconnaissance of the whole lower end of the island. As well that, futile as it might be, as sitting still like Micawber.

Halfway between his abandoned roost and

the log cabin he froze against the base of a tree in brush shoulder high. He had heard a noise, faint, indefinable as to cause or direction. Still as the dark forest itself he waited. The clear evening sky had grown hazy with clouds. Only a slight glimmer of reflected light from the sea lane enabled any sort of vision whatever. And in this gloom Billy strained eyes and ears to an ultimate reward.

He had stopped just short of the comparative open about the two cabins and now across his narrow field of view certain dim shapes seemed to move slowly. The subdued noise he had heard and could still hear at intervals was the cautious tread of feet. Whether one or more persons he couldn't tell. There was only an indistinguishable moving blur, shadowy but in motion. He was quite positive of that.

They passed almost immediately from view. Men who prowled by night on lower Helmcken had a vital interest for Billy Stone. Risk or no risk he must follow them, learn who they were, what they did, why they stole through the forest like nocturnal animals.

He moved stealthily. Ahead he could hear slight sounds of the others' progress. They were distancing him but he dared not hurry. Haste meant betraying noise. He took a pace or two and listened, another pace or two and listened again. Eventually all sound ahead of him ceased. He stopped.

The formless shape of the log cabin showed before him. Was that the destination of these nighthawks? What rendezvous could it be they held there?

There was only one mode of learning. He went on. Drawing nearer he got down on all fours, crawled even, until he could touch the wall of the cabin under the paneless east window. There he lay listening breathlessly. His guess had been correct. Whoever they were they had business in that deserted cabin. He could hear movements, scrapings. Whatever they did was done without speech. Honest men, Stone reflected sardonically, do not prowl silently in unlighted houses after dark. His heart quickened. His mind took cognizance of various possibilities, modes of action, to find out who they were and what they were about without betraying himself as the watcher. Foolhardy to break in on them. Better wait. Luck might be with him for once.

He waited. Sound ceased. The night hush held the spot so jealously and so long that Stone was tempted to believe himself the victim of his own imagination. Then a faint scuffling within the cabin that continued for several minutes. After that a man's body loomed, scarcely discernible at one corner of the cabin. Then another and a third. They melted into the night one behind the other, each stooped a little as if he bore some burden.

For one instant the desire to flash his light on them tugged at Stone. He had the torch in one hand, his thumb on the button, his revolver gripped in the other. But he desisted. Better first explore that cabin. There must be something important to be discovered in there. If there was aught to draw those prowlers they would return. If not that night then another.

He lay quiet for half an hour. Then he crept to the door. It gave to his fumble at the wooden latch. Once within he took to his hands and knees again and with the torch shaded so that it cast only a round spot on the floor and no gleam could be reflected from the walls he began a systematic exploration of the floor. The scuffling sounds had been low. Back and forth he moved until he had covered the sixteen-foot-square area save the space under the decrepit bedstead in one corner upon which rested a torn, mildewed mattress. Searching beneath this his hands encountered loose soil, which his flash light showed him had been freshly disturbed. He pawed and scraped, burrowed his fingers in the loose earth, encountered something hard. He swept the loam aside until he reached a depth of six inches. Then he bared flat iron. Moving still more earth and gradually baring this surface he laid clear a square of boiler plate with a ring handle. Tapping of knuckles gave a hollow sound. He tugged at the ring and lifted the iron sheet clear of a square hole.

For a depth of three feet it was cribbed with timber. Below that stood walls of solid rock. Stone stared down into a shaft three feet square, ten feet in depth. It was like a well, down one side of which a ladder ran. He could see the floor and an opening leading thence ten or twelve feet below his vantage point.

Without an instant's hesitation he let himself down. Playing the light below, carrying his gun ready for he knew not what,

with every nerve in his body tight as a fiddle string, Stone descended.

He found himself in the mouth of a tunnel cut through solid granite. It ran toward the shore, dipping down at a moderate incline. His light picked out the way. For fifty feet, a hundred, two hundred almost, he followed and came at last into a chamber twelve feet across hewn out of solid rock, and stood there in amazement.

For it seemed to him that of a certainty he had entered the cavern of the Forty Thieves, with all the equipment of modern science and industry suborned to their unlawful ends.

He guessed that this room stood at or about the level of high tide. Another tunnel, man-high and fairly wide dipped down under the sea. Stone traversed it a little way until his feet touched water. He marked the pulsating rise and knew that the tide was on the flood. He went back to the storeroom, power house, magazine. It was all these things. He stood in the center casting his beam over the separate items, cataloguing in wonder.

Along the tunnel that ran seaward there was stretched a pair of lead-insulated electric cables leading away from a switchboard that was in turn connected up to a storage battery. Likewise along this passage and out—to the channel, he surmised—ran a quarter-inch flexible steel rope wound on a drum with a handle like a small winch—an arrangement very much like that of a steering cable on a boat. For other items there were tools, a box half full of sticks of sixty-per-cent dynamite, a complete diving suit with all its equipment, air pump and hose and signal rope.

Lastly, but almost first in importance to Billy Stone because it verified the significance of all the rest, was a small wooden box which he recognized. There were several others, but the end of this one he remembered very well. He had examined it himself when it was being lowered into the *Mandarin's* strong room at Skagway with more than casual interest. If he had not known it, the name of the consignee lettered in black, "U. S. Assay Office, Seattle, Wash.," would have told its own tale. The lids of all had been forced. Billy looked into the *Mandarin* box. It was still half full of small canvas bags. He opened one. Yes, the gold was there—part of the loot at least.

The *modus operandi*, all but a few unimportant details, flashed clear to Stone. He knew enough about mechanics to guess that from this secret chamber those false running lights were raised and lowered, flashed off and on. Electricity and some mechanical contraption operated by that steel rope and winch. That was obvious. The tunnel gave egress under the sea. A diver could reach either wreck unseen. He could walk the bottom without risk and do his nefarious work at his leisure.

So then, here was the wreckers' nest, and all the tools of their trade.

With that Billy realized that he was in a very deadly trap indeed if those pirates returned while he was underground. He knew enough now. He could trap them in their own rendezvous—once he was out and they were in.

But if they caught *him* in there. Well, he had Markham for an object lesson—and he did not know how many men, nor whom, might be involved in this craftily designed undertaking. He did know that from any of them he could expect short shrift.

He moved quickly to the foot of the ladder, eager now to be aboveground, all at once a little apprehensive. Life had never looked so good to him as it did at that moment. The key to a deadly mystery, his own rehabilitation in his chosen career, the recovery of the plunder—he held it all in the hollow of his hand once clear of that pit. And he wondered briefly as he paused to listen at the foot of the ladder why he should at that moment feel the deadly implication that he might *not* get out.

Above him the silence and the dark. He snapped off his torch, climbed the ladder, listened again, shoved the iron cover into place, drew the earth back over it.

Then as his head and shoulders emerged from beneath the rude bedstead the darkness of the cabin interior became for him a blackness in which he floated for one sickening instant before unconsciousness freed him from a blast of pain that seemed fairly to shatter his head.

CHAPTER XVI.

SEVEN BELLS IN THE GRAVEYARD WATCH.

STONE came back to consciousness in the characteristic fashion of a man who has been clubbed insensible; that is, he opened his eyes in very much the same bewildered

ment that affects one untimely awakened from a sound sleep. Only there was in addition to mental confusion an intolerable ache in the back of his head. His body felt as if it had been beaten with a club.

His head cleared in an instant. He recognized his surroundings. He was back in the rock chamber, back in the thieves' den. Electric light from two bulbs shed a glow over the details he had picked out by the gleam of his torch. Feeling his hands cramped beneath his body as he lay flat on his back Billy essayed to move. Unavailing—his wrists were lashed tight. So were his ankles. He twisted himself over on his side and so faced Joe Molter sitting on a box and staring at him with a curious blend of derision and triumph. When their eyes met Molter's face broke swiftly into an ugly smile.

Billy looked at him. He hadn't quite expected that. If it had been the bowman off the *Arethusa* he would not have been surprised. And still—at any rate there sat Molter and he seemed wholly at his ease. The inference was obvious. Perez and the big Swede, whom Markham had asserted was a diver, would be confederates. They were the three figures he had seen stealing up to and away from the log house. He continued to look at Molter. There didn't seem to be anything to say.

"Have a good sleep?" Molter inquired sardonically. "You'll have a better one by and by."

"Think you can get away with it?" Billy tried to make his tone casual.

Molter didn't answer. He continued to stare. There was a strange fixity in his gaze, as if he saw something besides Billy Stone.

"Dog draw, stable stand,
Back beyond, bloody hand."

He droned the words twice, and yet a third time.

The unfamiliar phrases, curious terms, seemed meaningless to Billy—for a second. Then he recalled them as a couplet in an old work on medieval archery which he had once read. It dealt, in the chapter that carried that blunt rhyme, with the drastic penalties bestowed by the early Normans on a Saxon suspected of hunting the king's deer. If the man was caught following a hunting dog, set in the pose of an archer, with venison on his back or the blood of butchery on his hands he was hanged forth-

with to the nearest tree with his own bow-string!

And Molter was mumbling this.

"You would butt in," Molter growled presently. "I knocked you on the head and chucked you back below. But I'd rather have hunted you in the forest. The good yew bow and the cloth-yard shaft!"

His eyes glowed with a sudden fire.

"Damn your soul!" he cried fiercely. "I'll get you all! All! Down to yon up-start archer who stands on the bridge of a ship and shoots my seal. Broad-head for broad-head I'll match him if he'll come ashore. You"—he snorted contemptuously—"you and your diver partner! I nicked him with a good, clean shot at daylight."

He stopped, cocked his head on one side in an attitude of listening. Billy could hear sounds in the passage echoing hollowly. The grim expression faded suddenly from Molter's face.

"Come on; look what I got," he said in an entirely different tone. "Lord, you fellows are slow!"

The Swede and Perez advanced into the light. They looked startled at sight of Stone bound on the floor.

"Caught him crawling out of the shaft," Molter chuckled. "Tapped him on the bean and here he is."

"What'll we do with him?" Perez drawled. "Why didn't you tap him for keeps?"

"Oh, we'll leave him here with the works when we take the last of the stuff out," Molter said. He shrugged his heavy shoulders. "He'll be dead safe—down here."

The Swede looked down at Stone, across at Molter.

"By God, Ay am seek of dis keel, keel!" he said thickly. There was disgust, a trace of something like horror in his tone and on his face. "You are a dam' butcher, Joe."

"What the hell!" Perez grumbled. "We got to protect ourselves. If these guys will butt in!"

"Dat Markham he don't butt in," the Swede muttered resentfully. "He don't see nothin', hear nothin', know nothin'. Joe keel heem for fon—dat same crazy fon Ay tank why he shoot the arrow at the *Arethusa's* mate. You like to keel with the bow. Ay tank you go crazy, Molter. You keel an' keel until the whole dam contray is hunt dis island anch by anch."

"You started it, Ole, by bumping off that first diver," Molter laughed.

"Ay was scare when he come on me by the hole," the Swede muttered. "I bump him before Ay tank. Ay want dat gold, but Ay don't wan keel no more man."

"Never mind. Don't be scared," Molter told him easily. "We'll take the last of this stuff this time. We can divide it up to-night and you can take your share and beat it, Ole, if you're getting cold feet. Back to Sweden and the flaxy-haired dames for yours, eh? I'm going to stay around here. It's good hunting."

The Swede shuddered. Perez grinned broadly. Molter laughed outright. Something seemed to amuse him vastly.

"I'll be back in a second," Molter said, rising from his seat on the box. "There's just about a good load for one man, but you can split it in two if you like. We'll go together. And we'll seal up the tomb for keeps this time."

He bent a malicious grimace on Billy Stone and stepped into the tunnel that ran undersea. Stone turned his gaze on the other two. They paid no attention to him. There was nothing to be gained by talk. He was trapped. They had him. It was his life or theirs. And though he was sure the Scandinavian was horror-stricken, aghast at this new turn in which both Molter and Perez held a man's life so very cheaply, Billy knew an appeal was useless. The Swede might be inclined to mercy in that revulsion of feeling, but he wouldn't dare. Billy lay still, looking on. If he was not butchered like a sheep before they left, he might have a fighting chance.

Perez and his companion emptied the wooden box into a stout pack sack muttering brief comment on whether the load should be packed singly or divided between them. Both men were bent over a little. Their backs were turned to the tunnel.

Something flashed silently in the rock room. Perez straightened with a cry, clutching at his middle. Stone stared at the sight with a fascination bordering on horror. Perez was transfixed by an arrow. The yellow-and-black-and-scarlet shaft with a white cock feather that Stone knew and hated now had buried itself in him to the feathered shaftment. As he spun around and around uttering fearful sounds Billy saw the steel broad-head stand clear of his ribs.

And as the Swede stood hesitating, open mouthed, another arrow, aimed higher,

struck him fair in the throat. It passed through, smashed against the rock wall, and clattered to the floor. The Swede staggered. His hands went involuntarily to his neck.

Perez sank to his knees. His hands pawed feebly. There was a bloody froth on his lips. But the Swede was game. Perhaps his viking forefathers had died lunging at the enemy with arrows in their throats. He rushed at the tunnel mouth. Another broad-head met him. Stone heard the bowstring twang, the curious sound of the arrow as it drove into the man's breast. He heard Molter laugh.

The Swede's knees buckled under him. He wilted, cursing hoarsely with his last breath, fumbling with uncertain hands for some weapon in his pocket. But he was dead before he could get it free. Perez too had ceased his spasmodic struggling. He sprawled face down on the floor, the barb of the cloth-yard shaft standing straight up out of his back like a miniature spear.

And Molter stepped out of the tunnel into the light, a quiver in one hand, a short, beautifully finished yew bow in the other. He stood head up and chest thrown out, looking first at one dead man and then at the other, resting the lower nock of his weapon on his toe. Then in a terrible sing-song voice he began to chant:

"Oh, Robin Hood was a merry, merry wight,
Who slew his enem-e-e-e
With a clothyard shaft from the good yew bow
Beneath the greenwood tree.
Ho! Ho!
Under the greenwood tree."

Then he laughed. He leaned on his bow and shook with laughter—a hollow mockery of ribald mirth.

"Dead men tell no tales and divide no prizes," he chuckled to himself. "To the victor belongs the spoil. Good old Horrible."

He patted the bow; took out a handkerchief and diligently polished the glistening wood. He placed the lower tip under his instep and bent the bow to release the string from the upper nock. Then he stood it carefully against the wall, and callously set about retrieving his arrows.

His eyes fell upon Stone as if he had but remembered him. He frowned. Then he seated himself on a box between the two murdered men, with a bloody arrow in his hand, and began to talk to Billy. And it struck Stone with an inward chill that he

was not listening to a normal man gone bad, but to a homicidal maniac afflicted with an archery complex.

"They were all against me," Molter said boastfully, "and I've beaten them all. If I could find a few men like myself we'd take the damned country. But I guess I'm the last of the bowmen. And I have to keep it dark. Hunt 'em when they don't see. Hunt 'em in the green forest. Hunt 'em on the shore. I've got one more to get on Helmcken. He thinks he's a bowman but he isn't. If he walks the bridge at sunrise I'll drive a shaft through his liver." Molter's voice rose to a snarl. "What business has that brass-buttoned archer shooting my seal on my beach?"

He muttered away to himself for a minute. Then he strode up and down the rock chamber, back and forth three steps and a turn, three steps and a turn, like a caged leopard, mumbling unintelligible phrases. At last he sat down again and put his head in his hands. He kept this posture so long that Stone thought he had fallen asleep.

When he looked up again there was a totally different expression on his face. The wild-eyed look had vanished. He gazed down at Stone with a calm, satisfied air.

"I won't waste steel and wood and good turkey feathers on you," he said with a touch of contempt. "You're here and you're damned well tied, and you can stay here to keep this carrion company until you all rot together. You couldn't get out even if you were loose. When I leave I'll pile rocks over the iron door and set a match to the old cabin. I've got the plunder—enough to last me a long time—in spite of you. If I ever need more maybe I'll come back and hoist the running lights again and put another Ocean Service boat ashore. I can easily get a diver who knows how to handle giant powder to walk the bottom and blow in a plate so he can get at the strong room. And after he's got it for me I'll add his bones to the collection. It was handy to have been a skipper on the O. S. S. once. I know the ropes. I'll beach the *Ming* for them some day. They beached *me*. But I have a good stake now. I can hunt and hunt—with the bow. A good yew bow, a quiver full of broad-heads, a flagon of ale, and a maiden fair. Ah, she can't refuse me now. You fool," he frowned darkly, "you should have kept away from here!"

He bent over Stone, felt of the knotted

corde. A grin of satisfaction spread over his face, to be darkened immediately by a look of hatred. He stood up and kicked Stone savagely, with a muttered curse.

"I wanted to catch you in the open and put a broad-head through you!" he gritted. "There would have been some satisfaction in that."

He turned to the wooden boxes and examined them. Satisfied that they were empty he belted on the quiver that bristled with feathered shafts, shouldered the pack sack with the last of the gold and took up his bow. His footsteps died away up the rock passage.

Lying there, Billy expected that any moment the lights would blink out and leave him in utter darkness with two dead men for company. The full realization of his plight brought a clammy sweat out on his face.

But the lights shone. Whether Molter would come back or not he did not know. The man might be seized by any sort of vagary, Billy surmised. His first task was to be free. Even with his hands tied behind his back and his ankles lashed he could move his body. He wriggled into a sitting posture, strained and struggled to get his hands before him. If he had been a contortionist he might have accomplished that; for the ordinary man it was an impossible feat. He tugged and twisted in an effort to work loose. All in vain. A sailor had tied those knots. They would never come unfastened under strain.

Stone ceased struggling. He was afraid with a fear no direct menace of physical danger had ever brought on him. And he knew that to lose his head and grow shaky with panic was fatal now. He could scream his soul out in agony and no one would hear his cries. He had to think himself out of this mess. And he thanked God for the light—even while he wondered if Molter had left the light burning for a purpose or had merely forgotten to add the horror of darkness.

So he sat looking about for something sharp and found nothing that he could reach or use. Until as a last resort he rolled himself over to Perez, who lay nearest, and fumbled and touched the dead man's pockets for a knife. He failed there, and hitched himself over to the Scandinavian. Here he had better luck. Lying with his back to the Swede so that he could use his fingers

he located a knife and again thanked God—this time that Molter had neglected to search his victims.

It took him minutes to work the knife free, half an hour of fumbling to get a blade open, less than ten seconds to cut the cord; slashing both his wrists in the blind process so that blood ran down his hands and made them slippery. But he stood at last free of his lashings.

His revolver and electric flash light were gone. But he did find a loaded automatic in the hip pocket the Swede had grasped as he fell. Armed with that Stone hurried up the tunnel to the foot of the ladder. The trap door was in place. He put his shoulder against it and heaved. Solid, unyielding; his greatest effort did not budge it a fraction of an inch. He understood, he thought, why Molter was careless of the lights—what he meant by “hermetically sealing the tomb.” Above that half inch of iron doubtless by now lay hundreds of pounds of rock. He knew at last that Molter had made good his word, because as he stood on the top rung with his shoulder against the piece of boiler plate he felt it slowly growing warm. Molter had fired the cabin!

Billy went back to the room, examined every article in it. The dynamite was useless; there was neither fuse nor cap. There was no tool of any service against stone or iron. He stripped naked and walked down the seaward tunnel under water until his heart was ready to burst and he was within an ace of drowning before he got back. He couldn't use the diving suit. A man couldn't fit the breastplate and helmet on himself and work the air alone. From any angle that he viewed the situation he was trapped in that rock chamber with two dead men for company. He had no food, no water—unless he drank brine. Already his throat was dry. A pleasant prospect!

Billy sat down again to think. It was an effort. There was a horrible suggestiveness about those two inert figures that disturbed him. Absently he looked at his watch. Three thirty. Seven bells in the graveyard watch! It was daylight—out in the world of green forest and singing birds and running water.

He leaped to his feet with an exclamation. Why hadn't he thought of that before. Seizing the handle of the small winch that carried the steel rope running out to sea he began to turn. He wound until it

came to a heavy pull and a dead stop; waited five minutes and reversed the winding. He could tell by the greater effort required at a given point that some unseen mechanism was operating. Doggedly he kept this up. Hour after hour, it seemed to him, he turned that handle. His palms blistered with the friction. The blisters broke and the raw skin stung and burned, his back added an ache to the ache in his bruised head, and still he turned.

And the reward of his wits and dogged persistence came at last when he heard a slow *clump—clump* and looked up heavy eyed from his labor to see the circular, Cyclopean eye of a dripping diver regarding him from the seaward tunnel's mouth!

CHAPTER XVII.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM STONE.

BILLY sat down on a box. He didn't need to be told that the diver came from the *Arethusa*. His plan had worked. They had seen whatever mechanism and framework Molter and his confederates had devised rising and falling in mid channel and they had traced it to its source by the run of the steel cable. For a few seconds the sense of relief made him shaky. His knees trembled and he became acutely aware of the soreness of his hands, the dull ache in his head where Molter had struck him, and the great weariness that crept over his body. That tremulous reaction passed. The diver stood like some grotesque copper-headed idol. Billy could see his eyes behind the round window. He carried a diver's underwater lamp in one hand and a hatchet in the other. His air hose and signal rope trailed away behind him like a pair of tentacles. He spoke to the man. Then, realizing the difficulty of hearing his words through that deep-sea armor, he made signs for him to unscrew his faceplate.

The diver advanced a step, fumbled at his helmet. The faceplate and glass came away in his hands. In the opening was framed a rotund face, bright-blue eyes, a stubby red mustache.

“By heck!” said he, looking down at the two dead men. “What's been goin' on here? How come? What's the big idea?”

“Get me out of here,” Billy said. “We can talk afterward.”

“How'd you get in,” the diver asked.

“Knocked down and dragged in,” Billy

told him. "There's an opening into a tunnel in a log cabin ashore. I have an idea maybe it's burned, though."

"She is. Saw her ablaze a while before daybreak. Regular Hell's Kitchen, this Helmcken Island. Some galoot started shooting arrows at the mate this morning. Spiked him in the arm, too. Mate's ashore with a bunch of men hunting him yet. And then this framework with lamps on it starts rising up and going down in the water. You worked that, eh?"

"It was the only chance. I figured they had this winch rigged to raise and lower those fake running lights. If I hoisted 'em up and down often enough somebody would see them and work along the cable and in here. Otherwise I was done for. What about the tunnel you came in? Can I make it out there? You could help me on with this suit. One good inflation ought to see me above water."

"Uh-uh. Too far. You'd drown sure as hell," the diver replied. "I'd better go up and have some of the crew locate that land opening. Where the old log shack stood, you say?"

"The opening was in the northeast corner," Billy told him. "They'll probably find rocks piled over it. Then if they root around they'll find a square of boiler plate about five or six inches under the level of the dirt. Hurry. I'm kinda keen to see the sun once more. I'm hungry and thirsty, and I don't relish these dead men for company."

"I don't blame you," said the diver. "I'll get up and ring for full speed ahead. Here we go."

He screwed the window of his helmet back into place and *clump-clumped* on his heavy leaden soles down the way he came. Billy heard him splash into the water. After that a silence in which he could almost hear the beating of his own heart.

Then he moved up to the shore end of the long tunnel and sat down at the foot of the ladder to wait.

The Rock Bay constable, the archer mate, the underwriter's representative on the wrecking job, the skipper of the *Arethusa*, flanked by half a dozen deck hands stood about the mouth of the shaft when Billy Stone climbed the ladder to stand blinking in the bright sunshine. The ground was still hot from the fire. They moved clear. It was good to be out in the clean

air once more. He looked at the ring of inquiring faces.

"Well," the skipper of the *Arethusa* broke the silence, "looks like you might have something sensational to talk about. Eh?"

Billy made concession to the weariness of his body by sitting down on a convenient stump.

"There's a tunnel leading to a room hollowed in the rock, where there is all the necessary apparatus for working those fake lights. There is a complete diver's outfit that I imagine was used to get into the *Mandarin* and the *Manchu* from the bottom."

The skipper nodded.

"Sounds reasonable. We looked over that light rig before we took to following the cable. Very ingenious—and simple. Outfit anchored about ten feet below the surface. Pipe framework on a couple of logs. If a vessel passing over it fouled the thing it merely shoved aside. Electric cables to the lamps. Very ingenious indeed. How'd you get into their plant?"

Billy told them.

"Good work," the skipper nodded again. "Our diver found a hole in the bottom of the *Manchu* that he swears was never made by a rock. The diver that went down on the *Mandarin* didn't live to tell what *he* found. You were there when we hauled him up. Markham was right."

"The big Swede who dived for Molter killed Curry, I think, from something I heard said last night," Billy related. "The bullion was in that room below, or most of it, until last night. They were packing it out when I sneaked in on them and they caught me. I have an idea you'll find most of that gold in or around Molter's camp. I think they were fixing to make their get-away with it. Only Molter spilled the beans. He was the bow-and-arrow man who killed Markham. He shot at me twice in the brush one day. I have one of the arrows aboard the *Wasp*. Last night—or early this morning—he killed both his partners—shot them with the bow in that place underground. He left me tied hand and foot to keep them company. I got loose and worked that light gear, hoping to attract your attention. That's all. That's the solution of the wrecks. Molter and Perez and the big Swede who was a diver. 'Two of 'em are dead as doornails. Down below."

"Some detective work, I'll say." The

Arethusa's skipper turned to the stout, jovial-faced man who had dropped the police whistle for Billy the day of the inquest. "He beat you to it, Sullivan."

The heavy-set man grinned.

"I've seen simpler cases of crime," he observed. "I guess Stone deserves all the credit. He took long chances, and he was pretty lucky to get away with it. I had my suspicions. But he got results. I suppose you know," he addressed Billy, "that the underwriters offered ten thousand dollars for the recovery of that gold bullion and the identification of the wreckers—if there *were* wreckers."

"I didn't know," Billy murmured. "They didn't offer it to me. I only knew I'd never walk a steamer's bridge again if it wasn't cleaned up. I *knew* I saw a steamer's running lights that night. So did my quartermaster—only he lied."

"You'll get a clean sheet now," the *Arethusa's* captain assured him. "By gad, you sure did take long chances with a hard gang. You ought to get a command."

"All I want, right now," Billy confessed wearily, "is something to eat and a sleep. But there's a job to be done yet. Look here." He turned to the detective and the Rock Bay constable. "We'll have to get Molter. I think he's mad—in fact I'm sure of it. He's loose here somewhere, if he hasn't taken a boat and skipped with the plunder."

"Don't worry about Molter." The Rock Bay man grinned. "He sure is crazy, but we've got him. He tried to spike the mate here at sunrise this morning. And the mate—who is some punkins with a bow himself, I want to tell you—went ashore with some men and rounded him up; pinned him to a tree with an arrow through his shoulder. Whaddye know about that? Say, if anybody ever tackles me with a long bow and them broad-head arrows I'll move in a hurry, believe me. Yes, they've got Mr. Molter where he's harmless—chained to a mast aboard ship. Now, about this gold. That's important. You think it's around Molter's bolt camp?"

"I'm guessing it is," Billy replied. "They were packing it away somewhere, last night. I'd try their camp. They felt pretty safe and they might have it up there, ready to be taken where they could spend it."

The upshot was that after the constable and the detective had made a brief examina-

tion of the underground workings and what it held, they set off with a party to search Molter's camp for the loot. And the captain and mate took Billy Stone aboard the *Arethusa*.

The skipper went into his own quarters. The mate bore Stone company aft toward the dining saloon. And when they came by the after part of the ship Billy stopped to gaze for a moment at Joe Molter, handcuffs on his wrists, chained by one ankle to the butt of the mast. A deck hand stood by to keep watch over him.

They passed on.

"Man's insane—I should say that's clear," the mate volunteered quietly.

"How did you come to go after him and get him?" Billy asked.

"That Rock Bay man told you. We had him cornered on a point. We were sneaking and he was watching for us when I got a lucky shot. You see, he drove a third arrow into the front of the wheelhouse this morning with a note tied around the shaft, challenging me to come ashore and shoot it out with him," the mate concluded quietly. "And I went."

Billy washed his sore hands and doctored them with salve. Then he ate, and lay down to get the sleep he needed so badly. But though his body was wishful for rest, his mind was too abnormally active to permit sleep. He lay on a berth in a shaded cabin dozing lightly, until he heard the unmistakable voice of the Rock Bay constable on deck. He went out to see what luck had brought them in the search, and discovered to his satisfaction that they had found the bullion, still intact in the canvas sacks, up at Molter's camp, dumped carelessly beneath the covers of Molter's bed.

Whereupon Billy returned to his berth, heaved a sigh of complete relief, and let himself slide peacefully off into dreamland.

The steamship *Ming*—rated the crack boat of the Ocean Service Alaska fleet—drove full speed up channel past Helmcken Island. The sun was shining. The sky was as blue as the proverbial maiden's eyes. The *Ming* did her seventeen knots per hour so easily that she seemed to glide through the water; an illusion quickly dispelled by a glance over her bows. Then the great white bone in her teeth showed her power.

"This," said Captain William Stone to

his wife, "is a very special privilege, d'ye know it, honey bunch, for a coastwise skipper to be allowed to take his wife with him on his maiden voyage? And there's the historic spot where all the excitement came off. You know, sometimes it hardly seems as if any of that crazy business really happened to me."

Martha squeezed his arm. She had nothing to say that needed words, and that was her way of saying it. They stood for a minute on the rail along the main deck just under the bridge. Passengers, singly, in pairs and groups, sauntered along the promenade. Presently there halted near them a man of the type perhaps best described as a prosperous-looking merchant, probably retired and doing a little globe trotting. A great many such people made that Alaska trip on O. S. S. steamers during the summer, lured partly by the cool sea winds of the high latitudes and partly by the gorgeous scenic effects that begin on Puget Sound and reach their climax among the tidewater glaciers and famous gorges that border the inside passage to the Land of the Midnight Sun.

This gentleman eyed Captain Stone in his blue uniform and gold braid. Brass-bound men aboard ship appear to exercise an unholy fascination upon certain types of passengers. This tourist nodded genially to the captain. Also he began a conversation with the usual commonplaces. He remarked favorably upon the beauty of a highly diversified shore line. Finally, said he:

"Beautiful country and all that sort of thing. Extremely so. But tell me, captain, don't you officers who make this run all the time find it monotonous? Don't you get tired of going over the same ground?"

Billy shook his head and smiled. Monotonous? He looked at the green stretch of Helmcken alongside. He thought of the *Manchu* and the *Mandarin*, of Joe Molter as he saw him last—striding up and down the incurable ward of Steilacoom Asylum, happy in the delusion that he was Robin Hood and that his merry men would soon come to set him free, after which he would lead them once more to the green forest where with the good yew bow they would slay the king's deer to their hearts' content. Billy Stone recalled a number of other in-

cidents in connection with night and narrow passes, the infinite variety of incidents that go to make up a watch on deck. Monotonous? He shook his head and smiled again. It was no use explaining to a landsman what it was that held a seaman to his calling.

"The romance has all gone out of a seafaring life," the man continued. "I don't see how you fellows stand it; although I suppose a command is a good thing in itself. But you take such vessels as this. Like a floating hotel. Everything mechanical perfection. Every move is made on schedule. Port to port like a railroad train. Must be about the same as sitting in an office attending to business. Nothing ever happens."

"Well, perhaps it's as well not to have too much excitement," Billy observed dryly. "Operating a passenger ship is not classed as a sporting proposition—although sometimes it may be."

"As a sporting proposition," the gentleman laughed as he turned away, "I'd about as soon operate a street car."

He passed on; a portly, well-fed, well-clothed person, with a portly, well-fed, well-clad female of the species on his arm. Billy looked after them thoughtfully. He looked across at Earl Ledge where the white water boiled over the sunken shark-tooth rocks. He looked back at Helmcken. And he smiled again.

Nothing ever happened!

The *Mandarin* rested in seventy fathoms for the codfish and red spanners to house in if they wished. The *Manchu* lay in a Seattle dry dock with steel riveting hammers clanging on her torn bilges. A half-point shift of the compass in close quarters, Billy reflected humorously, might make that round person change his mind about the monotony of life at sea.

Nothing ever happens! He looked down at Martha fondly. So far as he, Captain Billy Stone, master of the steamship *Ming*, was concerned, he hoped the clocklike regularity of that port-to-port schedule would never again be complicated by such matters as rose before him in a swift series of unbidden memory pictures when he looked back at Helmcken Island, now rapidly falling astern.

More stories by Mr. Sinclair will appear in future issues of THE POPULAR.



Battling for Betty

By Holman Day

Author of "The Fields of Fear," "The Gunner of the 'Chocorua,'" Etc.

Sometimes all the modern girl needs to make her as old-fashioned as her grandmother is a very small taste of what Betty got.

RUVIAN WYER, professional gum picker, was strolling through the forest with his chin in the air, on a hot July afternoon. He was sharply scrutinizing the trunks of spruce trees, spying out gum seams. As often as he located one far up on a tree he chipped it with a chisel fastened to the end of a long pole. The gum globules fell into a small canvas sack tied under the chisel; the sack's mouth was held open by an alder withe bent in a circle. He moved slowly, peered intently; his alert quest was worth while; spruce gum of the clear-quill, ruby-nugget sort was retailing for a dollar an ounce.

But suddenly young Mr. Wyer lost all interest in gum at any price.

He heard a sound, lowered his eyes and beheld the strangest sight he had ever met up with in the years of his perambulation of the woods.

From the rim of a cuplike glen, through which a small brook bubbled, he saw what his flabbergasted mind decided was a girl—though he was greatly shocked by the appearance she presented. Her back was toward him; she continued to be busy at what she was about; his approach on the soft duff had been without sound and she remained placidly unaware of his presence.

The fact that this was a girl and that she

was alone way up there in the big woods was not the reason why Wyer was so utterly amazed; women are ubiquitous in these days of feminine freedom! Her rig was what made him relax his jaw muscles and goggle his eyes!

Over her bare shoulders was loosely draped a deer's hide. The rest of her attire, as accurately as the blinking Mr. Wyer could determine, was made up of the broad leaves of moosewood. However, there was not enough garb to satisfy the Wyer ideas about propriety in woman's dress.

Mr. Wyer had no knowledge whatever of mythology. He had never found dryads mentioned in the current detective stories to which he devoted himself. So far as his modern and practical observation went, here in the forest was a bob-haired girl who seemed to have lost her regular clothing. His first conscientious impulse was to tiptoe away. But he was restrained by the second thought that she was plainly in distress and might be helped out by the loan of the sweater and the slicker which he carried in his duffel bag.

His skin prickled when she gave a shrill cry; that it was a cry of triumph was indicated when she dropped something from her grasp and clapped her hands and laughed aloud.

In front of her a trail of smoke began

to rise from tinder. Mr. Wyer, having made his eyesight acute in his gum pursuit, perceived what she had dropped. It was a bottle, and water was bubbling from its uncorked neck. The girl must know something about woods tricks! Wyer had lighted tinder beforetimes, in emergencies, by using a bottle of water as a sun-glass when he had no matches.

By way of introducing himself he stammered, clapping his own hands to make the applause general, "Goo-good work!"

When she leaped up and faced him he yelled, "Goo-good gawsh!"

He slumped into a sitting posture and allowed himself to slide down the slope on the slippery carpet of pine needles.

The moment he had seen her face he recognized the girl, of course, because he was tremendously in love with her; she was Betty Bewley, the pretty waitress from Taumoc Hotel, down at the jumping-off place for that neck of the woods. Mr. Wyer was not an accepted suitor—he was merely a runner-up in the ruck of the woodsmen who frequented the Taumoc tavern and blinked at Betty like sick calves when she set food before the guests.

"What has happened?" he gasped as he struggled to his knees in front of her.

She squatted on a rock and made the most of her scanty skirt of leaves. "You go along about your business!" commanded the waitress, just as pert as she was when her tavern patrons tried to make love to her. "And be careful to keep that big foot of yours off my fire." The flames were showing in the tinder and she leaned forward and fed dry twigs to the blaze. Beside the fire were a few small trout.

"But what is it all about?" he insisted anxiously. "I've been off in the woods—I ain't been hearing anything for three weeks."

When she scowled irefully into his searching, too-inquisitive gaze he flushed and looked steadily up into the shadows of the trees, his experience as a gum picker making that more prudent posture easy to maintain. "I've got some extra duds in my pack—you can slip 'em on and I'll guide you back the shortest way to Taumoc, Betty."

"I don't want your old clothes—and I don't mean to go out of these woods yet a while. And I'm not inviting you to stay for dinner, either. This isn't the tavern

and I'm not waiting on table now nor ever again."

"I've got grub in my pack. Help yourself," he invited eagerly.

"Do you think I'm going to throw away these fishes after I have waded a brook two hours to catch 'em in my hands? Ruve Wyer, I tell you to go along about your truck and trade. I have plenty of my own business to tend to!"

"You don't call this, what you're doing, a business, do you?" he demanded skeptically.

"I'm going to earn a thousand dollars at it—rate o' five hundred a week—and no knowing how much else," she declared with spiteful pride. "If you had been anywhere lately except in the woods with your nose stuck in the crack of a gum tree, you'd have seen in the papers how I'm now the most-talked-of girl in the United States. There's whole columns printed about me every day. I'm 'Betty, the Beautiful Cave Girl.'" She fairly smacked her lips over the words. "I'm here in the woods to do what that Joe Bragg did as a cave man—only this time it's a girl, and that makes it a bigger thing."

He flung a look at her face and was both reproachful and indignant. "He never done it, what he said he done! He came up in here and faked. I know the man who sold him that bear he paraded around with in the cities. Why, gor-ram it, I lent Bragg my knife to skin the deer he poisoned and a lot of others can say—"

"I know what they can say—it has all been gabbled over to me between bites while I have waited on 'em at Taumoc. But you can't go out and tell anybody that I took your clothes, or your grub or your advice. And I don't want any more of your company. A girl is squarer than any fellow who ever lived in a thing like this. That's woman's nature when she promises to do a big thing. I stepped off into the woods with only my two hands and no clothes and—"

"Terrible!" he gasped. "Awful!" he mourned.

"There was nothing terrible about it, Mister Wyer! It was handled polite and genteel by the boys from the newspaper that's hiring me. I threw my clothes over a screen at the edge of the woods and they allowed me to wear a sheet till I could get to a moosewood thicket. And there was a

whole week of writing me up in the paper before I started!"

"I say it's awful—a nice girl like you!"

"Is it any business of yours, what I do?"

"I'm in love with you, Betty!" he declared with dolor but with emphasis.

She sniffed disdainfully. With the edge of a fresh-water clamshell she began to grind off the head of a trout, making it ready for the fire.

In his perturbation he tried to conciliate her by a special gift, as he had in times past. He proffered spruce gum! He held under her nose the little sack at the end of the pole. "Take your pick, Betty. There are nice lumps in there!"

"I'm up in the woods now where I can pick my own gum, thank you, Mister Wyer!"

There ensued a long silence. It was broken by a sound like the snort of a startled deer. The two in the glen looked up and saw Beck Ludic, well known to them. He was a timber cruiser for the Great Northern Paper Company. Under his arm was his measuring instrument—his calipers—and he carried a pack on his back. He strode down the slope and confronted the girl. "Betty, dear, you're quitting on the fool job, ain't you?" he asked anxiously.

She shook her head and continued to dig at the fish with the rude cutting tool.

"I couldn't believe my ears when I heard up the line what you were starting out to do. It ain't sensible and it ain't——"

"Be pretty careful what you say to me to my face, Mister Ludic!"

"I'll add my own word to that!" growled Wyer, displaying the manners of a rival when he stepped in front of the other man.

"And here's a word from me, too!" Wyer's demeanor had challenged and Ludic accepted promptly. "I have been trailing you—and that's why I'm here. The Great Northern has ordered me to drive off trespassers, 'specially gum pickers and ship-knee thieves. Now I have caught you right! You started that fire on our land and it's a prison crime." He pointed to the blaze over which Betty was roasting a fish, holding it on a forked stick.

"I didn't! She lighted it with a bottle of water."

"That'll sound pretty in court. A hel-luva sport you are, shifting the blame onto an innocent girl, hiding behind her skirts."

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"You are no gentleman—swearing in front of a lady and insulting her about what she has on!" declared Betty hotly. "And I lighted that fire, just 'as he says!"

This looked like shielding a favored suitor. Ludic's jealousy flamed. "I know what I see with my own eyes—and I'm going to lay complaint against Ruve Wyer. I'll put him where he can't shine up to my girl behind my back."

"Your girl!" she shrieked, leaping to her feet, dropping the trout into the fire. "Why, you poor puddle minnow! I'm getting my name up where I'll only have to choose between millionaires. Before I left Taumoc more than a hundred men had written letters asking me to marry 'em."

"And that's the cuss of a girl getting her name into the newspapers!" retorted Ludic. "Only crazy men write such letters. Millionaires! They're raving in their sleep. I'm wide awake. Look here, Betty, I'm talking to you on my feet. I've gone into a stumpage contract as a silent partner——"

"Then why don't you practice up by keeping your mouth closed about other things?" she broke in tartly. She went to work with the shell on another fish.

"If you open your mouth to lie me into court, I'll nail your hide to the high hack-matacks," promised Wyer acridly.

"That's exactly what I ought to have done when you reported me to Warden Keene and lied me into court on a deer-killing case," Ludic snarled. "And we'll strike a balance between us any time you say the word!"

"See here, you two men, if you want to fight you'll kindly step out of a lady's dining room while she is trying to enjoy her victuals." Betty had managed to roast a trout and was stripping the backbone from the pink flesh.

At this juncture, however, a third intruder presented himself. He displayed more assurance than the other men. He gave a cry of delight when he ran down the slope and reached out his arms to Betty and tried to kiss her. He laughed when she flung the trout's backbone in his face.

The newcomer was Ziba Keene, ranger warden in the State's fire-and-game service. He was tall, well set and good looking and was manifestly quite sure of himself where the girls were concerned.

"You're getting into the cave-girl spirit, sure thing, Betty, sweetheart! But I didn't

expect to find you at the foot of this smoke column when I spied it over the treetops. If you're playing fair, you brought no matches."

His smile vanished when he turned on the two men. "Which one of you lighted this fire? You know, don't you, that the commissioner of wild lands has issued a special order against July camp fires?"

"Don't either of you two dare to spoil my game for me," cried Betty shaking her fist at Wyer and Ludic. "I lighted that fire, Mister Keene, with a bottle of water."

The fire warden chuckled tolerantly. "I wouldn't get you into trouble with the law, Betty. You ought to know that! I'll grab these two fellows. I order you to report before the trial justice at Taumoc, Ludic and Wyer, Saturday, week."

"Condemn ye, it's only a cheap excuse to rasp me some more!" blazed Ludic. "You can't make out no case against me!"

"How about this one?" The warden put his hand significantly on the raw deerskin draped over the girl's shoulder, with tenderness in the caress. For touching the hide he made his official duty an excuse and patted softly; but there was a hard light in his eyes. "You killed a fawn, cut out the kidney chops and left the carcass in the bushes beside Jomary stream. Old Mitch Sockabesin heard the gun, spied on you, was skinning the deer after you had gone on and was scared off when he got a glimpse of a wild woman, so he told me. He hasn't got the thing figured out yet, being only a poor Indian who doesn't read the newspapers." Keene was taking great relish in his statement. "And then Betty strolled along where Mitch had been busy and she found something mighty handy!" Again he patted the hide and stroked her shoulder. She ducked indignantly out from under his hand.

"I killed that deer and skinned it!" she affirmed furiously. "It's going to be a part of my story."

"All right!" he agreed indulgently. "Everything goes, in the newspapers, these days! But now you're getting into Joe Bragg's class."

"I'm doing this job on the square—if only the men would let me alone," she whimpered. "Are you going to tell what you know about this hide?" She was displaying the first symptoms of weakening.

"Oh, that depends on what inducements

are offered to have me keep still, Betty, dear," drawled Keene. "If you'll let me start in again calling that string of freshwater pearls, I gave you, our engagement present why—well, you know!" He winked at her.

"No, sir!" she snapped. "I'm going ahead, now I have the chance, and make something of myself, on my own hook!"

"You'll make yourself another Joe Bragg, if you don't look out!" he warned.

"This has gone about far enough," rasped Wyer. "Don't let him blackmail you, Betty. Zibe Keene goes around stealing girls from their fellows by his lies; he stole one from me. And the thing ain't yet been settled, Keene!" He wagged his fist at the rival.

"All I know is, a girl shook you and married somebody else," Keene retorted. "That's as little as I had to do with it. But if you think there's any account to be balanced between us, come on and figure!" he added, echoing Ludic's recent offer.

The girl flew into anger of her own. "Suffering, sizzling, Sister Susan!" she cried, using her Taumoc vocabulary in this emergency. "You are driving me mad, you three fools! I hate all of you! You're spoiling my plans. Go off by yourself and fight it out, the three of you! I'm going my way, and if you chase me I'll throw rocks at you."

"This is cave stuff all 'round," chuckled Keene. "And a three-cornered fight for us men, all of us pitching in at the same time, would be something new on the cards, eh?"

When the other two men scowled at him he returned the scowls with interest.

Betty leaped across the brook and started away.

Then she looked up into the heavens and uttered a yelp of alarm.

The four persons in the party had been much absorbed by their quarrel; the stifling heat had incubated a thunderstorm; the purple-black clouds were rolling up from the west and lightning was stabbing the thunderheads viciously.

Betty jumped back across the brook and joined the party; she was shuddering under the menace of the storm.

"Come along with me, poor little girl," invited Ludic. "I'm carrying a key to the old store camp down in the next clearing. We'll get under cover."

"That's a good idea," agreed Keene.

"Wait till you're invited," growled the timber cruiser. "The Great Northern ain't standing for trespassers—and I'm their officer!"

"Well, then, consider yourself under arrest, Mister Officer!" declared the warden. "You're a poacher and the State's behind *me!* I'll go along with my prisoner." He unslung his rifle from his shoulder when Ludic put his hand on his own weapon. The latter muttered something about the "presence of a lady," and allowed the thing to become a standoff. The thunder was cracking and Betty urged haste. She went along, skating on the bark sandals which she had contrived. The three men proffered their moccasins and the assistance of their arms. She scornfully declined aid of any sort. "I'm in wrong enough as it is! But I won't stay out and be hit by lightning for all the newspapers there are in the world!"

"Where in the name o' Pete have you been spending the nights?" asked Keene, striding at her side, after he had elbowed away the persistent Wyer, who was exerting presumable rights as first discoverer.

"I found a nice little cave and carried in boughs. I had to be a cave girl!"

"My goodness, it's lucky the bear didn't come home," Keene said, carrying on his campaign to break down her morale. "If you are foolish enough to keep on with this thing you must stay out of caves. And if you climb into a tree to sleep, you'll fall off a limb and break your neck. Aw, say, Betty! Come back to your senses! Let's be married!" He patted his breast pocket. "I'm still carrying around the marriage licenses I took out months ago when you told me——"

"I'm not going to give up my prospects. I've been promised a job on the stage."

"Wearing this rig, I suppose."

"Of course."

"I won't stand for it."

"You have nothing to say about it, Mister Keene." There was a vivid flash, and it was followed by an alarming crash of thunder. "And I'd as soon be married to a fish hawk as you! Where's your job if you're not on the wing all the time?" Her fright had forced her to consider once more the possibilities in marriage, at any rate, he felt. This life in the forest was revealing its disadvantages.

"I've been offered the Mount Holeb fire

station—a nice home to live in and good pay."

"Well, go perch there! I'll never marry you—or anybody else up in these woods! I'm having enough and plenty of 'em!"

The rain hit the wayfarers before they reached the store camp.

Betty grimly took the lashing of the storm.

As she hurried on she snatched leaves from the moosewood which fringed the trail and was carrying quite a sheaf when she fled into the camp after Ludic had unlocked the door.

The spacious interior was bare except for scattered tools and bits of warp from an old snubbing line.

The girl retired to a dim corner and, with the leaves and ravelings from the warp, started work on repairs to her costume. The clouds dumped their torrents on the roof and the thunder crashed in the near vicinity and roared and boomed in the echoing distances.

The voices of the three men in the camp rose into louder clamor. Their jealousy and mutual grudges seemed to be spurred by the electric influence of the storm. She tried to keep her mind on her occupation. Keene, Ludic and Wyer were all talking at the same time.

On account of a prolonged thunder roar she did not hear the final taunts which precipitated the three rivals into actual combat. She saw them engage, kicking and battering at each other. Each was for himself in the *mêlée*. When Keene knocked down Ludic, the latter struggled up and smashed Wyer and Wyer retaliated on Keene, who got in the gum picker's way when both of them lunged at Ludic.

The ex-waitress of the Taumoc tavern, with a twig for a bodkin, stitched away on her leaves and, after a cursory glance or two, kept her eyes off the gladiators. A struggle between two men would have interested her more. But there did not seem to be much head or tail to this rough-and-tumble performance.

Her own project held first place in her mind. That self-centered attitude caused her to feel considerable indifference regarding what might happen to any one of the fighters.

She had no particularly clear understanding of what the newspaper writers meant when they called her a cave girl. While

she sat rather placidly at one side, awaiting the issue of this struggle in the camp, stitching leaves together, her plate-juggler's intellect could not grasp the picturesqueness or the analogy of this avatar of the primal masculine impulse. As she viewed the case, these men were settling the old grudges about which they had been twitting each other. It was not in her mind to give herself to the victor. She was not conscious of an especial personal interest in any one of these individuals who leaped and struck and panted and cursed. In the obscurity they looked alike. The vivid lightning blinded her when it revealed them. She hoped they would soon whip each other thoroughly and be done with their silly fight.

Finally they did give over beating each other; they leaned against the log wall and exchanged stares.

"This is getting us nowhere!" affirmed Keene.

"See here, Wyer!" suggested Ludic, wiping away blood with the back of his hand. "This whelp wears a law badge and has it in for the two of us! Suppose you and me jine drives and whelt the everlasting tar out of him!"

"Nothing doing with *me*, Mister Ludic!" returned Wyer. "You're also claiming to be a law man for the Great Northern and I don't like you on general principles. I'm for myself—and I stay for myself."

"I'm willing to be honest in this thing and admit I'm fighting for the sake of Betty," avowed Keene. "I'll let other grudges slide." He took a few steps in the direction of the girl. "Betty, all of us have told you in the past about being in love with you. If you'll make your choice now there'll be no more punching. What say?"

Manifestly Mr. Keene was still building hopes on his good looks and his way with women!

"I'll say you're all fools!" was her spiteful verdict. "At any rate, you all three showed me some respect in Taumoc while I was only a waitress. And now when the whole country is reading about me and I'm prominent, you swear and fight right in front of me."

"Good blazes!" stormed Keene. "This is the greatest compliment a girl can have paid to her—three men fighting for her sake, as I have already said!"

"Go and find some girl who likes a com-

pliment of that kind—then finish your fight. Don't talk any more to me!"

After that the members of the party sulked, each in a corner of the camp. The storm rolled over, the night descended.

Keene did more real thinking than the others; he had a shrewder mind. He sincerely wanted the girl for himself. She was pretty and she would make a good wife, he knew. There had been too much catering to her vanity in the tavern; she had kept all suitors on tenterhooks in order to prolong her reign as queen of the woodland hearts. Out of her vanity and desire for acclaim had grown naturally a willingness to engage in what he considered was a very foolish exploit. He had watched and protested while enterprising reporters had egged her on after she had carelessly boasted that a girl could outdo the redoubtable Joe Bragg at the same game. She had served Bragg at her table and had appraised him. Miss Betty Bewley needed to have a few props of pride knocked out from under her, Keene was firmly convinced.

But most of all, so he reflected, she must go through some experience which would jar her out of her assumed poise and self-sufficiency. The girl did have grit, in her own way! Having it, she might respond to its display by another.

The door of the camp was open. As he meditated, he gazed forth into the night. 'Twas hot, humid, muggy, sodden, within the camp and outside. There were old, rotted stumps of trees in the range of his vision. In the decayed wood, here and there, blotches of phosphorescence glimmered against the black velvet of the gloom—the woodsman's well-known fox fires.

After a time he rose from his corner and went out of doors.

Making sure that the other two men were still in the camp, he broke off bits of the rotten wood and put them in his pocket.

Then he strolled back to the door and stood lounging there, his shoulder propped against the jamb. "Ludic and Wyer, are you awake?"

From two corners came grunts.

"Fists can't get us anywhere, as we have found out! And there are matters between us that can't be settled by the gambler of pulling straws! I'm wondering just how much grit you two rabs have in you!"

From her corner Betty whined something about everlasting fighting!

The potent presence of the female spurred Ludic and Wyer; they could not back down before this third man who was making use of the primal challenge of the male.

"I'm perfectly willing to show my grit, anywhere, anyhow, any time," said Ludic.

"Same here!" announced Wyer. "No, not the same! I won't have anything in common with you, Ludic. I'm saying for myself as how this thing has got to be settled! I don't care what way!"

"Didn't I get a glimpse of a stack of old cant dogs standing in one of the corners of the camp?" pursued Keene implacably.

"They are here in my corner," reported Ludic.

"Then this is my proposition! Let's throw out of doors all but three of those cant dogs. We'll scatter those three around the floor of the camp. Betty is to go outside and wait. She'll shut the door behind her and it will be pitch black in here. We three will make a dive, each to get a cant dog. The fellow who can't find one mighty sudden will be out of luck. Then we'll fight the thing out in the dark, all three of us!"

"It'll be hell!" averred Ludic.

"Goshalmighty!" was Wyer's comment.

"That's my proposition!" Keene went on. "Quit on it if you want to! By the way, if you'll glance over into Betty's corner you'll note that you can see the glimmer of her eyes. I don't want to take any advantage of you men. If we watch out sharply enough we may be able to get a hint of each other's whereabouts while we're fighting."

"If one of you comes out of this camp alive do you think I'll marry a murderer?" wailed the girl.

"Well, it's a sure thing you won't marry the one who quits cold, here and now, on the proposition," Keene declared. "And when your feelings get smoothed down a little later you're going to appreciate the compliment and fall in love with the man who risked his life to get you. You wouldn't be a real woman if you didn't—and if you ain't a real woman no man wants you. According to my notion, it's a good way to find out about each other, all round!"

"But if you all kill each other," whimpered the girl, "what's to become of me, here, alone in the woods?"

"You'll be only keeping on with your

stunt as you have planned it out with those newspaper renegades who don't care what happens to a nice girl, so long as they get an item for the front page," retorted Keene. "All I ask you to do for me, Betty, dear, is to go once in a while and put flowers on my grave. And I'm going to fix the expense part." He entered the camp and went to her corner. He found her hand and pressed into it a match box. "I'm going to fill out the blank in my bank book, giving you an order to take out all my savings for yourself. Strike matches while I write."

"I'll do no such thing. I don't want your money!"

"Then I'll have to make the best shift I can for myself," he said resolutely.

It was a fine play for favor, that of Mr. Keene's, and chivalrously done!

While his first match was flickering in his left hand and he was penciling hurriedly with his right, Suitor Ludic declared loudly that he carried a bank book, too, and did not intend to be outdone. Wyer made less noise about his determination, but a match promptly flared in his corner of the camp.

Betty started for the door, hysterically declaring that she would not be a party in any way, shape or manner to such a dreadful affair and refusing to have anything to do with such bloody money. But Keene caught her at the door and forced his book into her hand; the other two men came and obliged her to take their books, also.

"I'll throw them into the first brook I can find!" she threatened.

"Then I'll haunt you!" declared Keene. "I have worked too hard for that money to have it do no good to the one I love best."

She was assured in similar vein by Messrs. Ludic and Wyer.

"But let's have a final understanding," hedged Wyer, now that the affray was imminent. "Betty, if you'll marry any one of us, it ain't right to have the other two, or one of us, as it may happen, kill him off. I don't want it on my conscience. I'm honest enough to say as how I don't relish this idea, anyway!"

"Quitting?" queried Keene, eyeing him insolently.

"Not with two black eyes and a front tooth knocked out a'ready!" stated Wyer with venom. "I don't know which one of you did those jobs on me—but the bill has

got to be settled. I'm only giving Betty a square chance."

"I tell you all three again, you're driving me perfectly crazy," she cried. In her hysteria, grief was crowded out by anger. "You men are crazy, too! These woods are enough to make anybody a lunatic in the nighttime. If the Lord ever lets me get back to table work at Taumoc anybody else can have this cave-girl job!"

Keene ignored her continuing laments; he grinned furtively.

"How about you, Ludic? You're keeping pretty quiet!"

"I'm letting others do most of the gabbing. I'm ready! I ain't going to have anybody traipsing up and down this section, man or woman, reporting as how I sneaked out of a he-man job. I reckon you'll have to tell about this thing, Betty, and it will be written up along with your stuff. My name never got into the papers but once and then they spelled the first name B-e-a-k and put a k onto my last name. If I ain't around and about to tend to it myself, I wish you'd see to it that my name is put in right."

When Ludic made reference to his aversion to the branding mark of "sneak" he revealed considerable of his animating impulse in this affair; in the North woods a man thus ticketed may as well go to Tophet and be done with it! He can have no peace of mind among his fellows. Ludic was succumbing, as was Wyer, to the force of circumstances and the presence of a girl.

Keene hurried affairs, making himself master of ceremonies.

He escorted Betty to a stump outside and seated her there.

Perched on the stump she continued her shrill lamentations.

Keene brought out in his arms a load of cant dogs. They were murderous weapons, stout ash staves tipped with steel hoods, each having a swinging barbed hook.

He dumped them on the ground and selected one for himself; he flung it in through the door of the camp. The other two men followed suit.

The three lined up and at Keene's call of "One—two—three—go!" they leaped toward the open portal. Keene was last in; with a heave he slammed shut the heavy door of planks.

He had left one of the cant dogs standing in the corner and he hastened there and

secured his weapon; the other men were scrambling about, seeking theirs.

Keene placed two bits of the fox-fire wood on a log in the wall, on a level with his head.

He hastily tiptoed to two other corners and planted little beacons which glimmered palely.

Then he took his stand against the wall at a safe distance from the fox fires.

He was testing the qualities of belligerency in the other two men.

He judged they had secured their weapons; the muffled clank of two metal dogs signaled that fact. After this noise the silence was breathless.

According to Keene's best judgment neither of the adversaries, yon in the absolute blackness, had the grit to begin hostilities by lunging toward the fox fires; he had craftily suggested that the eyes of the opponents would be revealed; he knew better; a part of his fire-warden training had to do with the laws of reflected light. In the camp, now that the door was closed, there was no light to be reflected.

He broke the silence, after a long wait. He whispered cautiously. "Say, men! How about the fight?"

A whispered declaration, equally as cautious, came from one of the others. "I have been dragged along till now because I couldn't find any sensible place to grab in without seeming like a coward in front of that girl. But I'm saying now as how I ain't going to make any damn' fool of myself on account of Betty Bewley."

"That goes for me!" was voiced in another whisper. "If anybody comes my way he'll get a poke in the gizzard. If he keeps to his place he won't get hurt. If I see any of them eyes moving, the trouble begins!"

"Well, we'll take a little time to think it over, anyway," suggested Keene. "In the meantime, the girl can be doing some tall thinking, too. It'll do her good!"

Outside the camp Betty was not only thinking—she was listening! A man was talking earnestly, rapidly to her, his mouth close to her ear.

He had frightened her when he first appeared, stealing out of the covert of the lean-to at the side of the store camp.

He reassured her, striking a match to light up his face.

"You know me! I'm Joe Bragg. I came

up to trail you—to see how you were putting it over. A newspaper is paying me to expose you. I followed your party down to this camp—and I've been lying low to get a chance to talk with you. This is *some* story! Three men fighting to the death for Betty, the Beautiful Cave Girl!"

"It's *my* story!" she insisted angrily.

"When you're older and wiser, girlie, you'll know more about the science of newspaper scoops."

"I can expose you—and I'll do it," she threatened fiercely.

"Ah! Now you're hitting it! As it stands, we're naturally partners! There must be teamwork! Let's milk the thing together, instead of scaring the cow! Listen, dearie! I fell hard for you when I was at Taumoc."

She whirled around on the stump but he circled it and resolutely confronted her. "I've thought up a scheme! Let's you and me get married! Public wedding! On the stage! Cave man gets the cave girl! This fight over you in that camp will be in every paper in the United States. A million dollars' worth of publicity for nothing! We can make our fortunes by sticking together. Come on! Let's beat it for Taumoc!" He offered his hands to help her down from the stump.

She took them with a greediness which surprised him; he had not hoped to find it so easy!

Betty shook her leafy plumage into place when she was on the ground. "Understand me, Mister Joe Bragg! I ain't agreeing to anything you have proposed! Not a bit of it! But I'm starting for Taumoc and I'm afraid to walk through the woods alone."

At that moment an infernal clatter broke out in the camp. Men yelled raucously in furious combat.

"I'm afraid of the woods but I'm more afraid of what's happened in there!" she bleated. "I can't stay here and face what's coming out—if anything does come out. Run along with me! Hurry!"

"Sure thing!" agreed Joe Bragg complacently. "We can get the news about the fight when it's daylight. All set! I'll know how to talk partnership up to you as we walk along."

They hastened down the tote road to escape from the sounds of conflict.

Another whispered conference in the

camp had served as prelude to the conflict mentioned.

"It's this way!" Keene had said to his companions. "The newspapers are writing up everything about Betty. This fight for a girl may make us seem like damn' fools, as one of you has suggested. But if she had gone out and reported that we were afraid of each other, after all our talk, we'd have to quit our jobs. We'd be laughed out of the North country! We'll have to give her a good story for those devilish reporters. The poor kid can clean up some money out of it to help her in case she doesn't intend to get married. She'll be all right after she gets done making a fool of herself. So here's the idea! Let's all three of us pound our cant dogs on the walls and floor and dance around and yell like blazes. Then we'll go staggering outdoors and fight around there in the open for a spell. She is bound to put up a great holler for us to stop it. We'll stop after she has hollered enough. Whatever is said in the newspapers, they won't be giving us the high-fang-dangle hoo-haw. They'll have to say we went at it like men!"

After that they did go at it, each for himself and keeping discreetly apart from the others. They prolonged the affair for the purpose of producing an effect on Betty.

Keene at last flung open the door and backed out followed by the other two. In the clear space in front of the camp they were able to see each other's forms and they clashed the cant dogs in valiant fashion.

But the expected entreaty failed to come out of the shrouded night. At last the silence became suspicious. The three men stopped fighting on Keene's grunted suggestion; he believed the girl had been overcome by her emotions and had fainted.

They found no cave girl presiding over the primal battle of the males. The stump pedestal no longer supported the goddess of conflict.

"She is hiding handy by!" stated Wyer.

"She wouldn't dare to go any distance, alone in the night," agreed Ludic.

Keene made no comment.

The other two men began to hunt around the premises. Ludic plunged into the lean-to; Wyer beat the bushes behind the camp, calling to Betty.

Keene pulled from a decayed stump a large chunk of wood which was luminous

with fox fire. He swung the glimmer along the ground and discovered several moose-wood leaves, one after the other, affording the hint of Betty's trail along the tote road. Kneeling, he found the fresh print of a nail-studded boot heel. The toe mark of the boot pointed toward Taumoc.

He needed no further evidence that Betty had taken advantage of a man's escorting companionship.

The fire warden rose, grabbed up his pack, flung away his illuminant, and hurried down the tote road. In a moment the night and a turn of the path hid him from Ludic and Wyer.

Treading on the rain-softened ground, overtaking the couple, he had no difficulty in approaching close behind the girl and her escort; the garrulous man was intent only on Betty and was keeping her thoughts fully occupied.

"As I have told you already, half a dozen times, I don't love you, of course, Mister Joe Bragg," Keene heard. "But I'm out to make something more of myself than a table girl and if you and I do get married I can see where it will be good business, probably!"

"A cinch, dearie! And now a word more about those bank books you're carrying!"

"I don't want to hear another word about 'em, Mister Bragg!" she cried indignantly.

"They have made over the money to you," he insisted. "Probably they'll kill each other. You and I are out to make our pile. Don't start in by being a fool. I'm looking after our business interests. You don't know the world the way I know it. You're going to cash in those orders as soon as the bank opens, I tell you!"

She threw the books over her shoulder when Bragg made a clutch at them; one of them smacked squarely into Keene's face.

Her act jolted an oath out of Bragg. He halted, whirled, struck a match and started to hunt for the books, bending to peer at the ground:

His posture was inviting. Keene stepped forward and kicked Bragg with violence.

Some of his stuttering remarks while he floundered in the muddy ditch indicated Mr. Bragg's belief that the cave girl had acquired vigorous muscles and very hard feet during her sojourn in the woods.

Keene promptly proceeded to relieve Betty from such insulting imputations re-

garding her femininity. He got hold of Bragg's collar, lifted him to his feet, pummeled him senseless and tossed him into the bushes.

"That's more of this cave-man business—and I hope you're relishing it!" Keene informed Betty. "And how does this other stuff suit you?"

He picked her up bodily and shook her. When he set her down and she stood gasping in front of him he crooked his fingers about her neck and shook her some more. "You'd better be mighty thankful if I don't twist my hand into that bobbed hair and drag you from here to Taumoc. If you say two saucy words to me, I will!"

He unslung his pack from his shoulder and loosed the buckles.

"There isn't much to do with in this duffel o' mine, but it will help some! Pull on this sweater! Stick your legs through the sleeves and buckle the belt around your waist. Put on this slicker! Take these moccasins!" He was throwing the articles over his shoulder toward her as he talked. "Not a word out of you, Betty!"

While she was garbing herself he found the three bank books with the aid of his matches.

"I don't like your actions," she quavered.

"Yes, you do—and you know it!" he retorted ruthlessly. "By going into the woods, like you have, you have shown your cave-girl hankerings. You have been advertised as a cave girl. Now I'm coöperating with you. Any time you want the genteel treatment, be a nice girl, like you can be."

"What did you do to those men in the camp?" she queried, anxiously, humbly.

"I'm not sure! I may have killed them on your account. When I start in being a cave man I go the limit. Look out for me! Now march!"

He teamed her down the tote road.

In the pink dawn he held her by one arm and pounded with his fist on the door of the village parson of Taumoc.

Keene was determined to cash in on those dog-eared, pocket-soiled marriage licenses. The girl lamented, sobbed, begged for time and urged clothes better suited to a wedding but Keene was adamant. He was carrying the affair with a rush while the cave spirit persisted; he was taking no chances on a let-up.

So they were married as soon as the par-

son could get on his clothes and put off his amazement.

The wedding breakfast was at the Taumoc tavern and attracted much attention.

Warden Keene, besieged along with Betty by the reporters who had been waiting at the jumping-off settlement for the cave girl to emerge from the forest, did the talking for his wife.

"There's nothing much to say! She simply made up her mind that it was no job for a nice girl, any more than waiting on table for woodsmen is! We've been engaged for a long time—I happened along up there in the woods—wedding this morning—at home after this at the fire station on Holeb Mountain. That's all! Make what you want to out of it!"

Mr. Bragg, perhaps, could have made more, but he said nothing.

Messrs. Ludic and Wyer were equally reticent.

On the side, relenting Husband Keene said to his bride, "I'll throw up the Mount Holeb job, if you say so, and we'll settle in the city. I don't mean to bury you in the woods."

She put her arm around his neck and

Another story by Holman Day in the next number.

snuggled on his knee. This conversation occurred some hours after the wedding breakfast. "I won't like to live in the city. I'm afraid there are too many there like Joe Bragg—awfully dishonest, ready to cheat everybody. I was scared to death when he showed his real character to me. You don't know how my heart leaped for joy when you came along—even when you were shaking the foolishness out of me."

Warden Keene perceived a wonderful opportunity to say something beautiful at that point. But his woodsman's vocabulary was limited. He stammered the usual banal observation—something about love being a queer thing—and kissed her rapturously. Betty understood him thoroughly, was delighted and said so.

Then Mr. Keene contentedly reflected that the old way was the best way, after all; he was glad because he had not tried any innovations in the line of language on a girl like Betty. By a trickle of primitive instinct he was informed, also, that the method he had used on her in the woods was an old way in spite of the fashion in which it has been gew gawed up in modern times.



WHEN LAFAYETTE WAS OUR GUEST

A HUNDRED years ago the United States was busy honoring and entertaining a national guest—the Marquis de Lafayette, who, a half century after he had helped Washington and his soldiers achieve American independence, was revisiting the nation that he had helped build.

None of the distinguished men of nations that have visited us ever have been received with quite the intimacy and affection with which the great Frenchman was greeted. Life in America in 1824 was more formal and yet more simple than it is today. National heroes loomed larger in the popular imagination than they do now, and Lafayette was honored as one of the heroes of the Revolution.

After landing in New York on August 16th, and visiting Brooklyn a little later—an account of this visit was written by Walt Whitman, when the poet was an old man; Lafayette had lifted the little boy that was to become world famous, and kissed him—the French patriot traveled by boat and carriage through twenty-four States of his adopted country. From Maine to the Gulf of Mexico, and from New York to the Mississippi he received a welcome that must have assured him that, in his case at least, the United States was one republic that was not ungrateful. After being the guest of Presidents Monroe and Adams in the White House, Lafayette returned to France in September, 1825.

Efforts now are being made toward a national celebration of the one-hundredth anniversary of this famous visit. If these efforts are successful, and the anniversary celebration is one half as picturesque as the welcome that was given Lafayette, the anniversary should be well worth while.



Bill Morningstar

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "Captain Simian," "'Suds,'" Etc.

Stranger adventures than those of Bill Morningstar in the African jungle have happened often enough, but stories as unusual and as good as this one occur less frequently.

DOCTOR OGILVIE began the discussion by stating that hobos were altogether too indolent to establish or observe any system of signs by which they might either be guided to the homes of those sympathetic or might avoid those antagonistic to their class. Manning—we were spending the evening at his house in the Santa Monica hills—took exception to Ogilvie's declaration, more for the sake of discussion than because he cared whether or not the doctor was correct. Ogilvie, always intolerant and pugnacious, swallowed the bait, and he needed no encouragement from "Buck," or Steve or myself to convert the discussion into an argument. Now, strangely enough, Manning disliked argument, a fact which Ogilvie ignored. Ogilvie was of the full-blooded, thick-necked type which likes to thump its knee with its first and shake its head and point its finger at a conversational antagonist. "Shadow boxing," Steve called it. Manning, though of a nervous temperament, always spoke in a low tone and seldom gestured.

"Those chalk marks," declared Ogilvie, "which one sees occasionally on the side-

walk, or gate, or doorpost, are made by kids. Pirate stuff. If a hobo happened to pick up a piece of chalk long enough to make a mark with, he'd eat it. You've got to show me!"

It was the fall season and the rains were heavy. The road past Manning's bungalow was as uninviting to a traveler on foot as rain and mud could make it. Moreover, his home was several miles from anything like a town, or a railway station. Consequently we were a bit surprised when Manning quietly laid fifty dollars on the table and asked the doctor if he were willing to wager an equal amount to substantiate his argument.

"You mean," said Ogilvie, "that you bet fifty you can prove I am wrong?"

Manning shook his head. "Fifty that I can prove I am right."

Buck smiled at the distinction.

"How will you do it?" queried Ogilvie.

"With a piece of chalk."

"Nonsense!" said Ogilvie.

"But I may require a week or so to conclude the experiment." Manning gestured toward the window. "The rains would wash out a chalk mark on the fence. But

if it lets up, in the morning, I'll make the little mark."

"Done!" And Ogilvie produced five ten-dollar bills and laid them with Manning's money. This rather put a period to the conversation. Ogilvie glanced at his watch, got into his raincoat and invited us to risk our necks in his machine. We left Manning standing in the open doorway waving farewell. "Better take it easy on the last grade," he said. "The bridge may be there—and it may not."

"For a man who's been through what he has, he's fussy," declared Ogilvie.

"I'm glad we have a surgeon along," said Buck. "If you ditch us, we'll take it out in professional services—and you lose."

"But not my fifty," declared Ogilvie.

About a week later Ogilvie routed us out and said he was going up to Manning's and collect his winnings. We had heard nothing from Manning in the meantime—possibly because the rains had continued, more or less steadily, and the byways were worse than ever. We arrived at Manning's bungalow, and learned that his telephone was out of commission, and that he had not been away from the place since we had last called. A log fire was going and the spacious living room was a most inviting refuge. The sound of the rain drumming on the roof enhanced our feeling of security and comfort. A nip of Scotch was not only welcome—it was expected.

After we had warmed ourselves at the fire and got over the feeling that our collars were damp and our clothing bedraggled, Manning stepped to the windows and pulled down the curtains.

"What's the idea?" queried Ogilvie. "Never knew you to hide your light like that, before."

Manning smiled. "If a hobo did happen along and saw the room filled with a joyful throng he would most probably pass on. If he should see the curtains down snug and just an edge of light showing he might take a chance and try for a hand-out."

"So your chalk marks didn't work?"

"Not yet. But the week isn't up until ten to-night."

"Splitting hairs," observed Ogilvie.

"The money is still on the table," said Manning, gesturing. It was—apparently just as it had been left, a week ago. I recalled that Manning had set an ash tray

on the bills to keep them from blowing about when the door was opened. The bills were under the ash tray.

We smoked and talked about the roads and the weather and automobile accidents, and listened while Ogilvie told of no less than six cases he had attended—fractures and contusions and cuts due to collisions, and reckless driving. Ogilvie seemed to enjoy the more or less gory details, and Manning's obvious dislike for them. Manning was, in fact, a peculiar combination of hardihood and sensitiveness. Lean, muscular, and tall, he might have been mistaken for an attorney or a physician, himself—yet he had spent much of his life wandering about the world, incidentally gathering, no doubt, much of the material eventually used in his magazine stories.

"That smash-up at the corner of Figueroa and——" Ogilvie was about to launch into another description of mutilations and suffering when Manning's Jap boy came in. "Honorable tramp he want something to eat," declared the Jap stolidly.

"A frame-up!" declared Ogilvie. "It's nine, and you planned your climax beautifully, you old scoundrel."

"Let's investigate, anyway," said Manning, winking at Buck.

"That's all right," said Ogilvie. "But I'll do the questioning. Bring on your sample."

"Tell the honorable tramp to clean his shoes and come in," said Manning. The Jap nodded, his face expressionless.

Presently the hobo entered. In spite of his misfit garments, his shapeless hat and his oversize shoes, there was that about him which suggested the sea. Possibly it was in the expression of his eyes, bright-blue eyes under heavy black eyebrows; eyes accustomed to gazing upon a far sky line with the placid, speculative interest of experience. The man's face was an even red round the edges of his black beard. He was exceedingly robust, and carried himself with a sort of go-to-hell swing of the shoulders that was typical of his class. "What's the idea, mate?" he asked, addressing Manning.

"We were waiting for you," said Manning.

"Just how much did he give you to do this turn?" queried Ogilvie.

"Me? Give me? Which turn? Say, is this a kiddin' party, or do I eat?"

"Great stuff!" cried Ogilvie. "You have your lines perfectly."

"Me lines? Say, ain't you a doctor?"

"Me a doctor!" Ogilvie pretended extreme surprise. "I should say not! What made you think so? Did Mr. Manning coach you to ask that question?"

"Which guy is Manning?" queried the hobo.

"You're a dam' good actor, anyway," declared Ogilvie.

"Quit your kiddin'. But if you ain't a doctor, you look the part. What did you fetch me in here for, anyway?"

"How did you happen to spot this house, up here in the hills?" countered Ogilvie.

"Huh! Easy. Any guy what's hit the grit could find it in the dark. What you gettin' at? Tryin' to string me?"

"No. We had a bet"—Ogilvie indicated Manning—"that there was nothing to these alleged signs and symbols directing tramps to easy picking. Did you follow any chalk marks on your way up here?"

"Sure! Do you think I'm a mind reader?"

"No. Neither am I. What I'd like to know is, how did you happen to choose this cañon road in the first place, and this particular house, in the second."

"Suppose we sit down while our friend has his supper," suggested Manning. "That's what he wants. Maybe he won't refuse a nip of Scotch."

"Me? I should smile! Now you're talkin' sense."

The hobo took his nip standing, with a "Here's to you, gents," and wiped his mouth with the back of his red paw. "Now lead me to the galley," he said, grinning.

The Jap was summoned, and with evident disgust showed the visitor to the kitchen. We could hear the tramp's voice, occasionally, but no sound from the Jap.

"He's no more a hobo than I am," declared Doctor Ogilvie positively. "He's a sailor out of luck."

"Can't agree with you, Ogilvie." Manning shrugged his shoulders. "He's a tramp, sea tramp and land tramp, but no sailor. No doubt he's been a stoker, done a hitch or two on a windjammer, and shipped as a hand, here and there—but he's an out-and-out hobo, else he wouldn't be this far inland. He'd be at San Pedro, or San Francisco. I'll lay you another fifty that he's beating his way to New York."

"You must think I'm an easy mark! Here you go and scare up a hobo, just to make good your theory, and ring him in on us at the eleventh hour, just to make it dramatic, and expect us to fall for it."

"I fall for him," declared Buck. "He's the real thing. I ought to know."

"Straight goods, Manning—did you ever see the chap before?"

"Never. But the day after you left, when it had stopped raining, I monumented a little trail from the boulevard, up here. Made my chalk mark just under the edge of the automobile sign down on the corner, and on the under side of the bridge girders. Laid a few stones, to help out. Fact is, I am as surprised as you are."

"I'll take your word for it," said Ogilvie, somewhat grudgingly.

"But no," said Manning. "Take his. You ought to be enough of a psychologist to determine whether or not he's playing a part."

"He's a husky player," said Buck, grinning. "I'd hate to have the job of goal tender in his game. He's some wampus cat!"

The "wampus cat" was again ushered into the living room, this time looking a bit less formidable, though even huskier. He had his hat in his hand. A long scar showed at the roots of his black hair above his ear. A bald spot, nicely centered, gleamed like a disk of pink parchment. He bowed with a swagger. "Much obliged, for the eats." He cast a longing gaze at the bottle of Scotch. "And the drinks. She's a wet evenin'."

"Sit down," said Manning. "Have a cigar? And a little more Scotch? That's right! And when you get comfortable, if you'll kindly decide this bet for us, we'll appreciate it."

"About me bein' a bum? Sure I am! If you don't believe it, ask me friend, the Prince of Wales."

"Where are you from?" queried Ogilvie with that irritatingly professional, I-am-your-physician-and-you-must-tell-me manner of his.

"Home," said the hobo. "And there's where I'm goin'."

"How long have you been a tramp?" continued Ogilvie, whose lack of tact was notable among his friends.

"What's your name, anyhow?" countered the hobo.

"Ogilvie. What difference does that make?"

"None—to me, mister. Only, Ogilvie is Scotch—and you lose your bet."

Manning, who had been poking the fire, turned round. "I beg your pardon, I should have introduced you. Mr.—" He hesitated.

"Tribulation," supplied the hobo. "That's me. Kind of fancy for a gent in my walk of life, eh?"

"Tribulation," said Manning, "this is Buck Yardlaw, and Doctor Ogilvie, and Stanley Forbes. It is ten o'clock. All bets are off. Take your fifty, Ogilvie. I'm satisfied with proving my contention."

"But I will not!" said Ogilvie, frowning. "I'm game. Only I'd like to get a little action for my money."

"You'll have to operate to get any out of me," declared Tribulation. "Course I could give you the regular stuff about enterin' the ministry and gettin' laid off account of hard times, and doin' six months for swipin' a pie out of a front window to save me starvin' family—and would you kindly sew a shirt on this button, lady? But what the use? You wouldn't believe me."

Tribulation crossed his legs and leaned back in the armchair, sighing robustly. "This is the life! When you can let your belt out three holes and it don't fall off you—and a bottle of the real stuff in your fist, and a fire goin', what difference does it make what a guy's name is or where he hails from? Give me a good feed and a couple of snorts of booze and a good cigar, and I'm as rich as any guy ever gets. You fellas don't know how easy you got it."

"We work for it," declared Ogilvie sentimentously.

"Work? Say, doc, do you think them hands been pickin' lilies for a livin'?" demanded Tribulation, thrusting out his seamed and calloused paws, with their salt cracks and stubby fingers. "If I ain't earned my ticket to there and back, nobody has."

"You uphold my contention," said Ogilvie. "A hobo never works. You are a sailor, are you not?"

Tribulation shook his head vigorously. "Not when I can help it. When I get where I got to ship, I ship—and dam' glad to see land and stretch my legs. A gangway only looks good to me when she slants down.

But a guy has to keep movin'. I been around five times."

"Around the world?" This from Buck.

"Sure! I ain't got nothin' else to do."

"But what do you get out of it?" queried Ogilvie.

"Looks like I'm it, in this here question party. Supposin' I was to ask you what you get out of carvin' up folks?"

"It happens to be my profession," said Ogilvie frigidly.

"Same here. Seein' things is my profession. I'm workin' at it right now."

"I think I'll run along," said Ogilvie, rising. The doctor most evidently was not enjoying the tramp's society.

"Suits me," said Tribulation cheerily. The doctor frowned. Tribulation, however, was bomb proof. He grinned, nodded affably, and asked the doctor if he might not hold his coat for him. "Dam' insolent!" muttered Ogilvie. Manning was enjoying himself.

Tribulation, staring blissfully round the room, his huge hands crossed on his stomach, his head back against the comfortable chair, his bulging calves accentuated by his damp trousers, seemed inclined to make the most of an unusual occasion. Manning switched on the center lights. We had been enjoying no other illumination than the glow from the fire. Tribulation rolled his eyes lazily toward Ogilvie, who wanted to stay and yet felt that he must go, or risk a quarrel with the hobo. The doctor had just slipped into his coat, when Tribulation sat up, and thrusting out his rugged arm, pointed to a large photograph above Manning's fireplace. "Where did you get that?" he queried.

"That? It's an enlargement of the snapshot of a chimpanzee I used to own. His name was—or is—Captain Simian."

"You got that chimp yet?"

"No. I had to dispose of him."

"Funny. What color was that cap he's got on?"

"Red. Boy's baseball cap. Why?"

"Oh, nothin'—only, I know that cap."

"There are thousands like it," said Manning.

"But not along the Loango coast. Them natives don't wear those kind of caps, no sir!"

"Loango? That's north of Benguela, isn't it? Congo country?"

"Congo is right, captain. But it wasn't

a native had that cap on when the Old Man piled our hooker up on the Kassongo reefs—the *Morningstar*, out of Sydney with a cargo of trade goods, so he said. I figure it was booze.” Tribulation cast an appreciative glance at the bottle of Scotch. Manning filled Tribulation’s glass. Tribulation emptied it. He became comfortably silent. Ogilvie fidgeted, took off his raincoat and sat down. “Do English ships trade in the French Congo?” he queried.

“Do doctors give prescriptions for booze to folks that ain’t sick?” countered Tribulation.

“Once in a while,” said Ogilvie.

“Once in a while,” said Tribulation.

The tramp gazed at the picture of Captain Simian—the ape which Manning had lived with and studied and finally conveyed to the jungle, anticipating the time when the chimpanzee would become unmanageable as a domestic companion. “I knew that ape,” declared Tribulation.

Ogilvie laughed. “Met him at a reception in Whitehall, I suppose?”

“Red cap,” said Tribulation, paying no attention to the doctor’s sarcasm. “He didn’t have it on. But he showed it to me, back there in that creepy, green jungle, where them brown-and-gold pythons hunt them little apes for breakfast. I know! Showed me his red cap, and put it on kind of sidewise, and shook hands, and bowed like a regular gent. That was him.”

We glanced at each other. Tribulation, or the liquor, had begun to create a picture. So long as it was a good picture none of us cared whether it was of actualities or of the imagination. Manning signaled to Ogilvie to keep silent. Tribulation gazed at the ceiling, lounging back in his chair. Shadows from the log fire twitched back and forth across the space which Tribulation seemed to be gazing at. “Must have been washed ashore along with that mess of rigging. Not another soul in sight: nothin’ but a flat stretch of yellow sand, like a long, curving road between the sea and the forest. It was dark in there, and creepy. Says I, ‘The *Morningstar* has gone down for keeps. Looks like I’m the only survivin’ member of the whole crazy outfit.’ Says I, ‘Stick to the beach, Bill. Somebody’ll show up.’

“Thirsty? A whisky thirst ain’t in it with a real water thirst. No, sir! Mornin’ wasn’t so bad; but along toward noon, when

I got so I could set up and look around a bit, it was hot. I crawled back into the shade. There was plenty of it—more’n I needed. I set lookin’ out across the sea, which was rollin’ oily and slick in the sun. I felt sick. My head was buzzin’ like a dynamo. Fightin’ off six or seven different kinds of flies, I got up and went down to the water. ‘Trade goods!’ I says to myself as I hauled a case up out of the smeary edge of the beach. The case was partly stove in, and some of the bottles was broke. But six was O. K. and it was gin—as bad as I ever tasted.

“It was flamin’ stuff! Talk about a thirst! Say, when I had swallowed mebbly a half pint of that white liquor I felt like a box of matches had been lighted inside of me, all at once. I throwed that bottle as far as I could. But I took another along when I started to look for water. Mebbly I worked back into that jungle a couple of miles. It seemed like a couple of hundred—crawlin’ under hangin’ vines, and around trees growin’ so close together you couldn’t go between ’em. It was kind of dark, in there. When you did strike a patch of sunlight, it like to blind you. Like gold—hot, and the air steamin’ like a laundry. I wasn’t thinkin’ of snakes, or natives, or lions, or gettin’ lost. All I was thinkin’ of was water. I had a lump over me ear, where I must have butted some floatin’ riggin’ or somethin’, and two of me ribs was stove in, but I didn’t know it then: only a kind of ache all the time, with a sharp jolt, like a knife, once in a while for variety. I pawed away vines and wallowed along, all the time tellin’ myself to stick to the beach. But thirst was drivin’ me.

“When I did find water—black water in a kind of low, green hollow which smelled like dead weeds, the water was sickenin’ warm and tasted like the bottom of a rain-barrel smells after you drain off the water. If they was bugs in it, I never stopped to count ’em.

“Then I set out to find my way back. ‘Stick to the beach,’ I says to myself, and kept on goin’. But the longer I kept on goin’ the more the jungle looked queer and different. First thing I knew, I struck some ridges of rock, and little openings, and the trees got scarcer, and the country more rollin’ and open. I knew I was wrong, but the goin’ was easier than in the jungle, so I kep’ on. I guess, what with my bein’

stove up, and empty, and scared, and the gin workin', I was kind of off my head. I was feelin' all right. The ache in my ribs was gone. Only my head felt kind of numb and when I tried to fix my eyesight on anything for long the focus was clean off. I could see plain if I looked quick, or sidewise at anything. It was hot, and the air was like steam you don't see but can smell."

"Shock, exhaustion, and a partial paralysis of the medulla oblongata," declared Ogilvie sententially.

Tribulation allowed a lazy glance to drift over Doctor Ogilvie, a glance unconcerned, unspeculative and as impartial as moonlight. "I know that ape," declared Tribulation, gesturing toward Captain Simian's picture. "He had a little red cap, hid away where the other apes couldn't find it. He fetched it out and showed it to me."

"Where?" queried Manning.

"Back in that jungle"—Tribulation's gaze was again fixed on the ceiling—"where them apes live, in a regular town, just like the natives. Only the apes is wiser. They build them little shacks kind of far apart, and only get together when somethin' happens, or they figure to move along to another place. Sometimes they all go up to the top of the trees, or a hill, and set and hold their hands up to the sun when it's settin'. I guess that is their religion. Sometimes, in the mornin', the whole bunch will come out and set on a ridge and look at the sun when it is just comin' up. I know. I lived with 'em."

"Evidently you have read a bit of natural history," said Ogilvie. The doctor was a superlative skeptic.

Without changing his position, or lowering his eyes, Tribulation acknowledged the remark. "And I can tell you a lot that ain't in the books. I know, because I've read 'em. If you don't believe that me and old man Darwin went to school together, just ask him."

Tribulation ceased gazing at the ceiling, sat up straight and glared at us. "You guys think that everything about apes and horses and dogs and humans is in books because you get all the stuff you think you know from books, instead of from the animals. And when some scientific guy figures he will study apes, he goes to the zoo or buys one and puts it in a cage, and looks at it. Ever see a man with handcuffs on act natural? Same with them animals. To

get 'em you got to go where they live, and if they don't get you, you mebbly will learn somethin' about 'em."

As no one accepted Tribulation's challenge, he sat back and folded his hands on his stomach complacently. "It was what you might call pretty country, back there beyond the jungle. Grass, and little round hills and a few trees, and them rocky ledges. If it hadn't been for the flies and bugs and snakes, I could 'a' stayed there the rest of me life. You see, them apes treated me good, after I got the hang of their way of doin' things. Did I tell you how I knowed they was apes there? Well, I didn't know till I come to a spring of honest-to-God water, next to a big, slanting rock which run up mebbly twenty feet and then was flat on top—room enough on it for about eight or ten folks, mebbly. I was on my knees, drinkin'. I sat up, wonderin' what to do next. That long, cool drink kind of steadied me so I could think plain. Says I, 'I'll climb up on top of that there rock and get my bearin's.' But I wasn't in a hurry, what with my heart thumpin', and the sweat runnin' down my face, and them busted ribs beginnin' to smart again. So I just took a look at the top of that rock, figurin' the best way to climb her. I changed my mind quick. Settin' on the edge and lookin' down at me was the biggest chimpanzee I ever seen, and I've seen plenty. He was settin' just like I was, only I guess he grinned harder. And it weren't what you'd call a friendly grin, either.

"Then I begins to shiver—and, by whack, the ape he begins to shiver—only his was mad, and mine was scared. He was fair bristlin', and he was settin' on his hunkers, just like me. I figured he was gettin' ready for a jump. I know I was. Then he commences to talk. He said a whole lot, in his lingo, and I figured he was tellin' me to beat it out of there or he'd call the bunch and run me off the lot. I was willin' to go—but I didn't like the idea of turnin' my back on that bird, so I just stood up and gives him a little talk of my own. He listened, all right. Once in a while he would pound the rock with them long hands of his, mad clean through. Says I to myself, 'Bill, you got to bluff this guy—play his own game.' So I squats down, and he commences to chatter and cuss at me, and when he would get to cussin' too hard I sets to and slaps

my hands on the ground, like I didn't like what he said, and wanted him to know it.

"That was all right, for a while. But pretty soon I seen another ape come swingin' by one hand down a limb over the rock. And plop, he lands beside the other ape. I says to myself, 'Bill, this is your finish.' The other ape was a little fella, alongside the old bird that was entertainin' me. But he was different. The little guy had a different look to him. He didn't get excited and jabber. He just eyed me kind of curious, and takin' hold of the other ape's arm, give it a shake, like he was tellin' him to lay off the rough stuff and give him a chance to do some of the visitin'. Then that little ape did somethin' which sure set me to thinkin'. He stands up and salutes, just like a marine. I does the same. He acted like he was tickled to death. He shuffled to the edge of the rock and stuck out his mit like he wanted to shake hands. I was willin', if it hadn't been for the big guy, settin' there with his jaws workin', and murder in them little red eyes.

"Pretty soon that little ape—and he weren't so little at that—must of said somethin' to the big one, for the big one turned and mooched off, his hands touchin' the rock and his back humped, and lookin' at me over his shoulder. All I seen was teeth.

"Right there the little ape goes a-galumpin' acrost the rock and comes round to where I was squattin' by the spring. When he got clost to me he raises up on his legs, like a man, and sticks out his paw. By whack! I didn't want him to get a grip on me, but I had to shake hands. And he sure was a gent! He seen the bottle of gin on the ground by the spring and he picked it up and tried to get the cork out with his teeth. Thinks I, that little fella is almost human. I reaches out for the bottle and he give it up. I pried the cork out with me knife and hands him the bottle. He tries her, but it is flamin' stuff, and chokes him. So he gets mad and sets the bottle down and makes motions with his hands like shooin' it away. Made me laugh. Then he bends down and takes a drink of water. I was curious to see just how much human he is, so I takes out me watch and shows it to him. And, by whack! if he didn't put her to his ear, and then try and wind her! Havin' me pipe and some tobacco and matches along—all of 'em wet—and some trinkets in me pock-

ets, I take 'em all out and lays them on the ground. He picks 'em up, one at a time, and kind of talks to himself, like he was tickled. He smells of the pipe, and sticks it in his mouth. Then he tries to light a match, but it don't work. Mebby I wasn't guessin' where he come from and how he knowed about things!

"But I wasn't feelin' what you might call comfortable—not me! Apes don't live by themselves. And I had figured the big ape about right. He was no gent, and would, most like, spread the news that they was a stranger in camp. When he humped along over that rock he acted like he had somethin' on his mind. So, wonderin' if the little fella could understand human talk, I told him that I was in a bad fix and wanted to get down to the beach and out of that country while the road was open. I made signs like I was swimmin', and drowndin', and hungry, and how I come through the jungle lookin' for water, and that my head hurt me. When I rubbed the lump over me ear, the little ape comes up and puts his cold fingers on the lump, and says somethin' in his language, and kind of whines, like he was hurt instead of me. 'You sure savvy a whole lot, captain,' I says to him. And you ought to see him grin and do a hula hula when I said that! 'You're all right, captain!' I says. And he acted like he was tickled to death. He catches hold of my hand, and starts off, expectin' me to come along. Thinks I, he savvies what I told him and he's goin' to show me how to get down to the shore again.

"But, no, sir! He was for the top of the big rock. I figured he knowed what he was doin', even if I didn't; so I snatched up the bottle of gin and goes around to where he came down and followed him to the top. It was flat, and smooth. It was mostly in the shade, account of the tree which stood alongside. Soon as I got settled the little ape he gives me the sign that he was goin' to beat it. Thinks I, he'll waddle back to his folks and the whole tribe'll come over—and that will be the finish of Bill. But what could I do? I wasn't feelin' like travelin' a whole lot, specially when I didn't know which way to go. So I takes a hooker of gin, and tells him to hurry back. 'Tell your folks I'm friendly, cap,' says I. And by whack! that little fella grinned and puts his long arm around me

neck and lays his other hand on me forehead like he was feelin' to see if I had a headache. I was scared he would shut down with that long arm, but he didn't. He set there, smoothin' my head and makin' funny sounds, like he felt real bad about my feelin' a whole lot worse than that. Pretty soon he takes my hat and puts it on. It was so big it come down over his ears, and just his eyes showed and his face. He sure looked funny. I laughed—and he takes off the hat and drops it and dances up and down and slaps the rock with his hands and gets excited wonderful.

"Seems he forgot that he was goin' somewhere. Instead, he gets busy and does a few circus stunts, just for exercise, mebbly. He makes a jump for the limb above the rock, catches her and swings up, scramblin' through that tree, jumpin' from one limb to another, hangin' by one hand and scratchin' hisself with the other, and boundin' around somethin' amazin'. Pretty soon he drops, plopp, right aside of me. 'Great performance, cap!' says I. And he acted like he was tickled to death.

"That was all right—but I wasn't forgettin' the other ape and them fangs and long arms and the skin workin' up and down on his forehead. So I tells me friend that he's a Jim Dandy, but that I figure to lay in some ammunition, just in case the tribe don't like my looks. I goes down and picks up some chunks of rock and a couple of dead limbs and carries 'em up to the lookout. The little ape watches me, blinkin' and fussin' around. And pretty soon he goes down and lugs up a few chunks of rock, like I done. That kind of gave me an idea. Thinks I, I'll build a kind of rock house up here, without any roof, and big enough to stand in and swing a club, in case the other apes try to take me apart, mebbly.

"I gets busy, and the little ape he helps. But we didn't build that house. We had lugged up mebbly twenty or thirty hunks of rock, little and big, and I was kind of plannin' to make a turret without a roof, when that little ape, comin' up the slant with a chunk of rock, drops it and bounds on up and grabs the limb, and is at the top of that tree, cussin' like a pirate, before I could figure what had het him up. But I found out, soon enough. First I thought the whole tribe was comin'. Then, not seein' anything along the trees round the clearin', I commenced to look clostere to the

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big rock. And I was took with a real chill when I seen the grass movin' in ripples, mebbly twenty or thirty feet from the spring. Then the head of one of them pythons raised up, and he come swimmin' along with all sails set, right toward the spring.

"The little ape, up in the tree, was cussin' somethin' terrible. I was too scared to do anything but shiver and shake. Thinks I, 'Bill, this is the finish.' And I got kind of mad. I figured if the apes tackled me, what with them rocks and clubs I had laid by for 'em, I could give 'em a wonderful scrap before I blowed up and went to the bottom. But that smooth-slippin' python, weavin' along with his head up and fair dazzlin' bright in the sun—why, that wouldn't be a fight. He would just wind me up cold, and I wouldn't even know how he got to me. So I hunched down out of sight and picked up a chunk of rock about as big as a binnacle. Thinks I, 'Bill, you can get in one shot, anyhow—but don't miss the first time, or—'

"It was awful still, all of a sudden. The little ape up in the tree wasn't makin' a single squeak. Now I was shiverin' and shakin' and wonderin' what that snake was doin'. I leaned over the edge of the big rock. The python's head was weavin' back and forth over the water in that little rock basin, and his tongue was slippin' in and out, dartin' quick. The rest of that big snake wasn't movin'. Thinks I, 'Apes is bad enough, but snakes on top of that—' And I up and heaved me a chunk of rock straight down. I didn't know where it took him, right then. The air was full of windin's and unwindin's and thrashin's and coils and loops of yellow and brown, and his tail pounding the ground like a maul. It fair raised the scalp on me head. That python did more travelin', right there, than he ever done in his whole life, before. Once, when he raised up, I seen that his head was hangin' kind of ragged, like it was just tied onto his neck with a bit of marlin. The rock had took him a couple of feet back of his head and just about sawed him in two against the rock on the edge of that spring. It wasn't him, but just snake nature that was writhin' and loopin' and fightin' against the finish. Pretty soon he quit the big-show stuff and quivered and kind of straightened out. Every oncet in a while he would kind of shiver, like shallow

water over a sand bar: the ripples startin' at his head and windin' up at his tail. He died hard—and I like to died watchin' him do it.

"You ought to heard that little ape do his stuff when he seen the big snake thrashin' himself to death! Ever hear a chimpanzee holler when he's mad? I thought that little ape would shake the top out of that tree, what with his whoopin' around and tellin' his mates that the big show was on. Me, I took a good long drink of gin and set down, feelin' limp and sick. The sun was commencin' to hit the top of me rock, and pretty soon I got wise that evenin' was comin'. Thinks I, 'Bill, you ain't any better off than when you started. Them apes will lay for you and take you apart—snake or no snake.'

"The little fella up in the tree was peekin' down and jabberin' at me, so I looks up and says for him to come out of the riggin' like a man. But he didn't seem to like the idea. You see, that python wasn't what you would call dead, yet. Every onct in a while he would kind of heave up in the middle and quiver and then settle down still. Sundown would be the time when he would quit for keeps, like all snakes what's been killed but ain't dead. And along about sundown that little ape commences to swing down out of that tree, droppin' from limb to limb, mighty easy and slow. When he comes to the limb over the big rock, I tells him to quit his foolin' and come on down and keep me company. It was gettin' dark, and even a chimpanzee would 'a' been good company right then.

"He come to the end of the limb and lets himself down, hangin' by one hand, with his hind legs drawed up, but he didn't let go for a while. I told him everything was all hunky, and just to show him the python was dead I takes one of me clubs and crawls down and gives the big snake a poke—and the snake didn't move. I guess that little ape knowed his business. Pretty soon, plop, he drops on the big flat rock and comes galumpin' over to the edge and peeks down, and says a whole lot in his lingo. But he's scared yet, and it's gettin' dark, and me matches is wet, or I would 'a' had a fire goin' for company.

"When I shinned up to the top of the big rock again, the little ape was gone. Thinks I, 'Bill, them apes will get you, sure, if you don't make a fire and keep a

club or two handy, and stand watch all night.' And I was feelin' like I could sleep for a week, and then turn over and take another snooze. So I takes a hooker of gin, and feels better. So I takes another hooker. And pretty soon I want water. Says I to meself, 'Bill, you don't want water bad enough to go down there again and get it.' But that raw gin was burnin' me up, and pretty soon I says, 'Oh, hell! that python ain't interested in you no more.' I was fair numb in the head, not carin' what I done. So down I goes and takes a drink from the spring. The night wasn't what you would call dark—it was fair black, right then. I guess I lost my bearin's. Anyhow, first thing I had stumbled over somethin', and next thing my hands was on that dead python. I guess I wanted to feel scared, but I didn't feel scared. I got to feelin' wise and mighty smart. 'Apes is scared to death of snakes,' says I to meself. 'And I'm scared to death of apes. Play one against the other,' I says. It was a grand idea.

"If I stayed clost to that snake all night I was pretty safe from gettin' jumped on by the ape tribe. They wouldn't come too clost to that python, even if he was dead. But I didn't just fancy campin' down there in the grass all night. No, sir! So I set to, to drag that dead snake up to the top of the rock. Say! I couldn't lift more'n a couple of yards of him, anyway I tried it. Ever try to lift twenty foot of wet cable? Well, that's easy, agin' tryin' to lift twenty feet of dead python. But there's tricks in all trades. At that, I guess I would 'a' quit if the moon hadn't come up about then, so I could see how to go at the job, handy. Says I, 'Easy does it, Bill. A little at a time and you can warp her in.' So I takes hold of him down by his tail and moves as much of him as I could toward that big rock. Then I takes hold of him by his neck—his head a danglin' and bumpin' against my legs—and heaves as much as I could toward that big rock. Then I get hold of him in the middle and heaves as much as I could toward the rock. I must 'a' heaved pretty strong, for pretty soon, plop, he goes over—and his belly shinin' in the moonlight.

"What with the damp from the spring, and the heat in the air, and me sweatin', and the smell of that python, I was fair sick. It was what you might call a slip-

pery job, and creepy. I shoved and heaved and pulled and worked like I was crazy, and I guess I was. Pretty soon I got that dead snake round to where you could climb up to the top of me lookout, and then I had a real job on me hands. I would get part of him up a ways when, *zish*, and he would slide down in a mess, and I would have to begin all over again.

"The moon was ridin' high and pretty when I got that python up where I wanted him. And right there I quit and took a hooker of gin and laid down. Mebby I snoozed a bit. When I come to the moon was shinin' right down in me face, and over the tops of the trees, and on the big python, till he looked like he was alive and mebby asleep. I could hear somethin' movin' around over in the jungle, somethin' heavy, but movin' quiet. Thinks I, the whole tribe of them apes is marchin' through the jungle, comin' to find me and take me apart. I was too scared to think that the apes don't travel around at night. I gets up and takes hold of that python's tail and hauls it around to where his head was, leavin' him in a coil. I steps inside the coil and sets down. Thinks I, 'The apes can't get to me now. They won't cross the dead line.' And I laughed.

"And then you ought to heard the noise in that jungle! A yelpin' and howlin' and squawkin' that fair raised my scalp. I took another hooker of gin. 'Come and get me,' I calls out. But the jungle seemed like it had gone to sleep again. Not a sound. And the moon shinin' down till that dead python looked like he was crawlin' round and round in a ring, and me in the middle, wishin' I could get out and run, but too scared to move a finger. What scared me most was that the gin in the bottle was pretty near all gone. It shook light when I took that last drink. Thinks I, when the gin dies out I'll go crazy with the creeps. I had heard folks along the coast, south, say moonlight in the jungle would give you the willies. But I guess I had 'em before the moon came up. Every time I looked down that dead python was crawlin' round and round me, the spots on his back movin' and heavin'—and no sound: all quietlike, and me settin' there scared to lift a finger.

"Sometimes I would go to sleep, and wake sudden; and there was that snake, movin' round and round, slow, and the jungle with the moon slantin' acrost the tops

of the trees, like a play where somebody gets knifed, and the orchestra does that shivery stuff. Thinks I, when the sun comes up, I'll take my bearin's and strike for the beach, apes or no apes. Sometimes I would think of some of my shipmates—and the worst of 'em would 'a' been an angel of mercy, if he had been alongside me for company that night. Sometimes I tried to figure how that little ape savvied so much human stuff, and where he come from, and what he said to them other apes when he lit out and left me watchin' the python, there in the grass. I fair worked myself into a sweat, tryin' to think of things so I wouldn't get to lookin' at that dead python crawlin' round and round—and me settin' in the middle, scared to move.

"The moon slid back of the jungle, and pretty soon I could see the grass round the rock, and stones, and the place where the python had lashed the grass flat, when I fixed him. The sun come up red and big, and the birds begin to swoop acrost that clearin' and dive into the trees. I seen they was about one drink of gin left in the bottle. But first I crawled down to the spring. I was burnin' up, inside. I was just gettin' to me feet again when I heard a branch swish, over along the edge of the jungle. I looked, and there was a big ape, which had just let loose of the branch and was kind of standin' up, with one of his arms touchin' the ground like a walkin' stick. He was lookin' my way, all right! So I made for the big rock and got inside that coil again, and I guess I wasn't any too quick about it, either. Seems like the woods was full of apes. They come droppin' from the trees, and boundin' along the clearin' toward me rock, some of 'em big ones and some of 'em smaller, but all of 'em chatterin' and showin' their fangs and makin' faces at me. Thinks I, 'Bill, stick to the python.'

"Bein' so many, I couldn't tell me friend the little ape, right away. But when the whole tribe had come clost to the spring and was smellin' of the ground where the python had thrashed round, and sneakin' off, lookin' over their shoulders, and then comin' back again, I seen one ape what seemed like he was different. He come galumpin' over to the rock and looked up and said a whole lot in his lingo. So I talks back, tellin' him I was friendly and willin' to get out of their country if I got

any kind of a chanct. He steps up clost to the rock and smells where I had drug the snake up, and backs off, makin' faces and cussin' aplenty. But somehow he didn't act so scared of the rest of his bunch. They stayed around, standin' on three feet like they was ready to run. But this little fella, he goes over to the tree and first thing he is shinnin' up and swingin' out over the rock on the limb. He hangs by one hand and looks down—and it's the snake he is lookin' at, and not me. But he don't drop. He just hangs on and looks. Pretty soon he swings up, and gets to the other side of the tree and drops. He goes hoppin' over to where the other apes are prowlin' around, uneasylike, and I guess he tells 'em somethin', for pretty soon they all beat it for the jungle. Thinks I, 'It's time to strike out for the beach.' I gets my bearin's by the sun, takes the last hooker of gin, and starts for the edge of the woods. 'Apes or no apes,' says I, 'I'm goin' to get out of here.'

"What with the heat steamin' up from the ground, and the sun fair blindin' me, and me bein' empty, and a stitch in me side like a hot iron, I had all I could do to keep a straight course for the bush. Me knees wabbed, and me head was buzzin' like a dynamo. Worst of all, me eyes wouldn't work right. I couldn't look straight at anything and see it. I had to look sidewise, and quick, or everything was mixed up and foggylike. I took along one of the clubs, and the gin bottle, which I had filled at the spring and corked, ag'inst the long haul to the shore. I was so used up, what with pythons and apes and jungles and bein' alone, that I guess I didn't care whether I got through all right or not.

"Inside the jungle it was darker, and hot—fair steamin'. Everything got kind of foggy in me head. I knowed who I was and that I was goin' somewhere, but everything else, outside, was like a dream. I kept dodgin' them hangin' vines, and pushin' through ferns as high as a house, and crawling round the roots of trees what humped up like snakes, so high, sometimes, you could crawl under. I was feelin' weak and wanted to quit, but I knowed the minute I quit I would get scared and want to go ahead again. So I kept on, with me club and me bottle of water, and a million of them little flies swarmin' right along with me. Pretty soon I got a chill, thinkin' some-

body was followin', and was goin' to jump on me back. Thinks I, 'I'll fool him, whoever he is.' So I keeps on, like I didn't know they was somebody behind me, till I got ready, and then I jumps round and swings up me club. Mebby twelve or fifteen feet behind me was one of them apes. He stops, and shows his fangs and says a whole lot in his lingo. I guess I was too scared to notice that they weren't no other apes along with him. Anyhow, I remember I put up me hand to wipe the sweat from me face, and by whack! that ape he comes up on his hind legs and does a salute like a marine. It was the little fella, all right—but I wanted to make sure. So I held out me hand. He comes side hoppin' up and shakes hands, and then I seen that he was carryin' somethin' in the other mitt. What he had looked like a red banana. 'Let's see what you got, captain,' says I, friendly, and I stuck out me hand. But instead of givin' it to me, he backs up and pulls open a little red baseball cap, like the kids wear, and puts it on. Thinks I, 'That's all right. But it don't get me no breakfast.' So figurin' that that little ape was a wise one and that somebody had learned him to wear caps, and salute and understand human talk, I tells him I'm hungry and makes the signs of eatin' some grub. He drops down and runs off, with his hands just touchin' the ground in front. Bein' weak and dizzy I sets down with me back ag'inst a tree and takes a drink of water out of the bottle. Pretty soon along comes that little ape with two, three bananas in his fist, and gives 'em to me. They was small, but I was empty, and stowed 'em away pretty quick. And then I got the idea that mebby he could understand a whole lot of talk, so I tells him that I'm lost and to show me how to get to the beach. 'Come on, and be a sport,' I says to him and sticks out me hand. That little fella takes hold of me hand and we start for somewhere, him hoppin' along and lookin' up at me and makin' sounds like he was tryin' to tell me somethin'. When we would come to a bad place to get through, he would let go me hand and go humpin' along ahead. And every time he would find a way through and wait till I could catch up.

"I hands him the bottle oncet, and sure enough, he pulled the cork and took a drink. just like a human. Pretty soon I

stopped. I thought I heard the surf. And mebbly in an hour I could see light ahead, and hear a kind of poundin'. Thinks I, 'I'll just have a talk with this here little trick, and get him to come along with me. He'd be worth a pile of money in a show.' But I was way off my reckonin' when I figured I could get him clost to anything what looked like a town."

Tribulation stopped talking. Ogilvie coughed. "Amazing!" he exclaimed, adding in a lower tone, "if true."

Tribulation sat up, glared at Ogilvie, reached in his pocket, and then seemed to change his mind.

"Have another drink," said Manning.

Tribulation accepted briskly. "Good liquor is all right in its place," he declared. "And that's where I'm puttin' it."

"You got down to the beach, all right," observed Manning.

Tribulation leaned back and crossed his hands on his stomach. "Not that journey, captain. What I thought was the surf poundin' was the roarin' in me head. The light I seen was a clearin', kind of like a big park, with the trees far apart, and some bushes and little round hills and lots of grass. First thing, I hear a chatterin', and one of them apes what was settin' on top of a kind of ridge goes hoppin' off and scoldin' and makin' plenty noise. Pretty soon I see apes everywhere, all of 'em gallopin' off after that first ape like a bunch of mill hands rushin' for dinner. Thinks I, 'Bill, you might as well quit, right now. You ain't slick enough to fool 'em, and your friend with the red cap has got ideas which you don't savvy.' But the little fella he reaches for me hand and tells me, in his lingo, that I better come along. What with me feelin' sick and dizzy, and like it didn't make no difference anyway, I goes along with him to a ledge across the openin' and sure enough there is his hut, all fixed up with a roof of branches and leaves, and inside a lot of leaves for a bed. The sun is slippin' down behind the jungle, and way off in the clearin' them apes is chatterin', and the little ape is tellin' me to crawl in and take a snooze. How does he tell me? First off, he takes me bottle of water and puts it in the hut. Then he comes out and takes hold of the club. I lets go slow, not likin' the idea. But he puts me club in the hut, and comes out again where I'm settin' watchin' all around. He reaches up and

takes off me hat and puts that in the hut. And then, by whack! if he doesn't try to unlace me shoes!"

"Captain Simian used to unlace my shoes," said Manning quietly.

"But I tells him to lay off unlatin' me shoes," continued Tribulation, "and bein' dead wore out, I crawls in. It was smelly and hot, in that hut, but it was safer than sleepin' out there in the open—and in about a minute I was asleep. Last I seen of that little ape he was settin' in front of the hut, right in the openin', with that red cap on crooked. Thinks I, 'Bill, he's standin' watch. Catch a wink of sleep while you got the chanct.'

"I dreamed of snakes, mostly. Once I woke up. The moon was shinin' out there in the clearin' and I could hear a chatterin' and movin' around. The little fella was settin' right in the doorway. I could tell it was him by the cap on his head. Thinks I, 'Bill, you're livin' with the apes. They're kind of savin' you, so some day, when you ain't expectin' it, they can take you apart.'

"The sun come a boomin' up, big and red. It was mornin', all right, and them apes hadn't took me apart yet. But the little fella was gone. I was shakin' with fever—not sweatin' a drop. I sticks me head out of the coop. Over across the clearin' I sees another ridge, and a hut and on top of it a ape settin', scratchin' his ribs. Pretty soon I sees another hut, and another ape settin' on the roof. Mebbly I counted twenty of them huts, not clost together, but scattered round the openin', here and there; and on every one of 'em was a ape settin' and lookin' at the sun. Pretty soon the little fella comes side-wheelin' along, three legs agoin' and carryin' a bunch of them little red bananas in his fist. He lays 'em down and takes one, and I take one, and we set there, eatin' our breakfast like a couple of shipmates in a coffeehouse.

"But what I was burnin' for was water. The bottle was empty. So I hands it to the little fella and tells him to go fill it. Sure enough he waddles off with the bottle in his fist. One of them apes comes down off his hut and goes slitherin' over to the little fella and looks at the bottle and takes a smell of it and sets it down and goes slitherin' back to his family. The little fella takes the bottle and slips into the jungle. Pretty soon he is back. The bottle is only filled about half, but the water is clean and

I drinks it, and tells him he is a Jim Dandy pal. And sure enough he acts like he is enjoyin' hisself waitin' on me. Pretty soon I commence to sweat, and then I get to feelin' weak. So I crawls back into the hut and take another snooze.

"It was moonlight when I come to. I must have sweat out most of the liquor, for I was plenty weak, but me head was clearin' up. Them apes don't sleep much at night. I know. I lived with 'em. Every time I woke up I could hear 'em stirrin' around and chatterin' and sometimes howlin' somethin' awful. It give me the shivers, listenin' to them. Now that night the little fella wasn't settin' in front of the hut, but up on the roof. I could hear him stirrin' around, and whinin' onct in a while like he wasn't feelin' good. Thinks I, 'Bill, they is somethin' in the air. The little fella is worried about somethin'.' So I got to worryin', and I crawls out in the moonlight. And there was the little fella, sittin' atop the hut, turnin' his head and watchin' like he expected trouble, or pythons or somethin'. All of a sudden he gets up on his hind legs, weavin' back and forth and swingin' his arms like a fella gettin' ready to biff another guy on the beak. I could tell by the way he grinned and kept a liftin' his feet that he was mad. 'What's the trouble, captain?' says I. But he didn't pay no attention to me. Seems like he was sore because I came out of the hut, for when I crawls back in again, he quits his whinin', and everything got awful quiet.

"All of a sudden the little ape sets up a squawkin' and hollerin' and afore I could get out of that hut where I could stand up, *zish*, comes somethin' through the hole, and one of them apes had me. I recollect drawin' up me leg and givin' him me heel in the stomach, and that kind of broke his holt. All the time I was thinkin', 'If he gets a grip on me, I'm done for.' So I slams him one—me on me knees, tryin' to get up—and I slams him another and like to busted my hand on his head. But I knocked him through the hole, and was scratchin' around tryin' to find me club when the little fella lights off the top of the hut and lands on the other ape.

"Now the one what tackled me was mebbly twice the size of the little fella, but I figure he was only about half as mad. That little ape was fair swarmin' all over the big ape, a-bitin' and tearin', and dou-

blin' and twistin', till it look like they was six or seven apes havin' a wonderful set-to. I gets me knife and opens it and commences to walk round 'em, waitin' for a chanct to prod the big one. Thinks I, 'Bill, if that big ape does for the little fella, you ain't got a friend left in this here jungle.' But I didn't get me chanct till the big fella, a-reachin' out, gets a grip on the little fella and starts to chew his neck. I jumps and sticks the big ape in the back of the neck and draws me knife sidewise. The big ape he gurgles and drops limp. I prods him a couple more, for luck. The little fella crawls out from under and stands there in the moonlight, a-weavin' and swingin' his arms and grinnin', till I was scared he was fightin' mad and would tackle me next. But that weren't the worst. The clearin' round the hut was fair alive with apes, little ones and big ones, chatterin' and grinnin' and movin' around in the moonlight, excitedlike, and some of 'em side-wheelin' up pretty clost to the hut. Thinks I, 'Bill, this is where they take you apart.' So I grips me knife, ready to get in a lick or two before they got me.

"But the little fella, what was swingin' his arms and swaggerin', stops and walks over to them other apes just like a human, on his hind legs, and never touchin' the ground with his hands. Then he commences to jabber, and I guess he told 'em aplenty. Them apes can talk. I know. I lived with 'em.

"That was all right, but there was the big one what I had stuck, and no way of tellin' 'em it was a case of self-defense. It looked like me and the little fella against the whole tribe. Pretty soon the little fella comes back, and the other apes goes slidin' away through the moonlight, and it gets awful still. Me and that big ape had just about took the front out of that hut when we come out together. So me and the little fella, bein' kind of used up, sets down with our backs ag'inst the ledge and watches the light commence to break through the clearin'. When it is daylight I sees that the little fella is used up some. One of his ears is chewed bad, and teeth marks showed pretty near all over him. His neck is chewed the worst and he keeps puttin' his hand to his neck and whimperin' like a baby. Bein' thirsty, and the water in the bottle gone, I tells the little fella to go get some. He takes the bottle and goes

limpin' off across the openin'. I watches. The apes don't bother him any. Pretty soon he comes back. I takes a drink and then I takes me bandanna and washes his cuts for him—and him settin' there just like he was used to bein' doctored. The dead ape is layin' there on his face in front of the hut and the flies swarmin' around him.

"Pretty soon along comes two, three apes and grabs up that dead ape and lugs him off—the little fella watchin' 'em but havin' nothin' to say. Some of the lady apes comes from their huts with the babies hangin' to their necks. The husbands of these here lady apes is settin' on top of the huts, scratchin' themselves and lookin' at the sun. The little fella goes back into the jungle and pretty soon he fetches in some of them little red bananas, and we eat. It was right after that, that the little fella goes out and comes back with the valise—one of them English travelin' bags—and sets her down in front of me. Thinks I, 'Bill, he'll go get your ticket next, and mebbly a taxi to take you to the coast.'"

"I suppose there was a change of linen in the bag," said Ogilvie with huge sarcasm.

"Nothin' but a comb, busted in two, and a old brush, and a piece of busted lookin'-glass," said Tribulation casually. "The little fella showed me them things, but I didn't savvy his idea. I don' know as he had any, only, he showed 'em to me. Think I, 'Bill, the little fella is givin' you a hint to beat it.' And by that time I was willin'. Anyhow, if it wasn't his idea, I gets one. I takes me hat, and the trinkets in me pocket, and me bandanna, and the bottle, and puts 'em all in the valise, the little fella watchin' me. 'Now, captain,' I says, 'I'm ready to pull for the coast.' And I gets up and takes the valise and starts west acrost the clearin'.

"This time the little fella he follows along, kind of whimperin' like he didn't want me to go. But I kept goin', and he kept goin', for what with pythons and apes and moonlight and the shivers I was as near crazy as a man can get and know what he is doin'. But all the time we was fightin' our way through the jungle I was thinkin' as how I could make a pile of money with that ape, by dressin' him up like a man and travelin' around the country, me doin' a Robinson Crusoe act and

the little fella me man Friday. When we would set down and take a rest, the little fella would come up and open the valise and take the things out and look 'em over and put 'em back; and then mebbly he would look at me with them brown eyes, kind of mournful, like he savvied I was figurin' to play a trick on him. His lookin' at me like that, kind of got on my nerves. We was two days gettin' to the coast. We come out in one of them little coves, the brush thick along the edge of the sand, and no sign of anybody livin' around there.

"As soon as that little ape seen the ocean, he runs down to where the waves is sloshin' up the beach and raises up and looks out to sea just like a human. Pretty soon he drops down and comes side-wheelin' back to where I'm settin', and jabbers and claps his hands like he is tickled to death, and takes the valise and opens her up and takes out the junk and looks it over. It was like a kid playin' with toys. Seems like them apes got to stop every little while and do somethin' different from what they started out to do. Seems like they don't remember anything very long. Or mebbly they don't want to.

"Anyhow, bein' all in, and a stitch in me side like a knife, I lays down and takes a snooze. The little fella is playin' around, scamperin' down to the water, and runnin' back, and climbin' around in the brush. Thinks I, 'If he beats it back into the jungle, fair enough. If he sticks around, it's me and him for a show, and we'll make a pile of money.' Seems I must 'a' been asleep four or five hours when I woke up, with the little fella jabberin' and pullin' at me arm. I looks around. Out in the cove is one of them cabin cruisers, with a couple of natives on deck, and a white man just shovin' off in the dinghy. I jumps up and waves me hat and hollers. The white man keeps pullin' for shore. The little ape gets awful excited and jumps up and down and swings them long arms like he was goin' to biff somebody in the eye. 'It's all right, captain,' I tells him. But it weren't all right, and I guess that little ape savvied it. He kept pulling me by the arm and tryin' to get me to beat it back into the jungle.

"The white man hauls the dinghy up on the beach and comes marchin' up like he was curious to find out what kind of folks we was and what we was doin'. 'What's the trouble?' he says, stoppin' a couple of

yards from where I'm standin' and the little ape aside of me grippin' holt of me pants leg.

"Shipwrecked,' I tells him. 'Morningstar, out of Sydney.'

"He was a pretty fair chunk of a man, with blue eyes and a black beard trimmed to a point, like them Frenchmen. But he talked English just as good as me. 'Morningstar?' he says, lookin' at me hard. 'Then I'll just take you along with me. Coast patrol,' he says, noddin' to the cabin cruiser out in the cove. 'Where'd you pick up the chimpanzee?'

"I got lost back in the bush,' I tells him. 'This here little fella is me friend. No need your fingerin' that Luger. He's tame. I been livin' with the apes.'

"How long since you got shipwrecked?' he asks me. I told him it was mebbly a week, but I'd have to kind of count up the days. I didn't like the way he was sizin' me up, like I was a river pirate or somethin'. And seein' as how I'd been fightin' pythons and apes and the jungle, right along, he didn't look too big to handle, even with that Luger pistol strapped onto him. Thinks I, 'Bill, if the coast patrol get you, you'll lay in jail, and have to stand trial, and mebbly get sent down for a long hitch, even if you ain't done nothin' wrong.' But I was hungry, and most anything was better than livin' in the jungle.

"Then he says, 'Come along,' just like I was arrested. I tells him that the little ape is tame and can shake hands and salute, and savvy my lingo, and that I'm goin' to take him along with me and make a actor out of him. The fella with the pointed beard and the Luger, laughs. 'You're crazy,' he says and pulls the Luger and tells me to march for the dinghy. Just then the little ape sets up a chatterin' and cussin', like he is mad and scared and don't know if he should beat it for the bush or tackle the guy with the gun. And first thing I know, the white man takes a crack at the little fella with that Luger and misses. 'Kill me pal, would you!' says I, and I jumps for the white man and plants one in his face afore he can pull down on me with that gun. He sags back and I use me boots, and when I get through, he's out. The natives on the cruiser set up a squallin' and hollerin', and dance around on the deck. I picks up the pistol and lets drive for the cruiser, and they duck into

the cabin. Thinks I, 'Bill, bein' shipwrecked and lost in the bush is bad enough, but puttin' the river police to sleep is the limit. They'll send you down to the rock pile for life.'

"Then I thinks of the little ape, and if he is hit. But the little fella ain't there, so I steps back into the bush a piece, and pretty soon I sees him a side-wheelin' down a open stretch with the valise in his mitt, like he was sure hooked up for a long journey. I hollers to him, but he keeps a-goin' like a horse gallopin' on three legs, and that valise a-bumpin' ag'inst him, till he makes a turn and is out of sight. I comes back to the beach and there near the bush is that little red cap, layin' on the sand. I picks it up and goes over to the coast-patrol guy. He is layin' there, not movin', but he ain't dead, for I can see the vein in his neck swell and sink, easy and slow. It was gettin' along toward evenin' and the natives on that cabin cruiser keep chatterin', and I figure it is time to do somethin'. So I goes down to the dinghy and shoves her off and pulls for the cruiser. I steps aboard with the Luger pistol in me hand and tell them natives to hop overboard quick. They don't wait, but plop, they go and strike out for the beach.

"When I got that cruiser under way I looks back. The coast-patrol guy was settin' up, and the natives standin' each side of him. She was a gasoline boat with a big electric searchlight, and roomy, for a fast one. I give her all she had and headed straight for the settin' sun. They was grub and water, and some liquor aboard. I didn't have any keys, but a cold chisel and a hammer was all I needed. Two days after I started cruisin' I was picked up by the *Joseph Dodge*, a Yankee tramp with a cargo of cheap German hardware. She was bound for San Pedro. Her captain wasn't interested in coast-patrol cruisers, nohow, and when I told him about the little ape and the hand-out that police guy give me, the old man said he wished he sunk her, just for luck. We left her rollin' and pitchin', with the dinghy a-bobbin' up and down like a kid taggin' its mother.

"And if that picture there ain't a picture of the little fella, with his red cap, and them mournful eyes, then I ain't Bill Morningstar."

And Tribulation, or Bill Morningstar, as he called himself, rose and flexed his heavy

arms. "You figure me a first-class liar, I guess," he said, indicating Doctor Ogilvie with a jerk of the head.

"You have a wonderful imagination," said Ogilvie, rising and slipping into his raincoat. "Do your eyes ever bother you, since you were injured by that floating rigging?"

"Sometimes," said Tribulation. "But mostly at night. Oncet in a while I think I can see that little ape a side-wheelin' along the road with me, carryin' that valise, and his red cap on crooked. You got pretty good eyes, yourself, ain't you?"

"Why, pretty fair. A little astigmatism in the right eye, but nothing to speak of."

"Well, you ain't color blind, or anything like that?" queried the tramp, gravely.

"No."

"Then take a look at this." And Tribulation, or Bill, or whatever his real name was, reached in his coat and pulled out a small red baseball cap such as boys like to wear upon all occasions. The cap was faded and slightly torn. He handed the cap to Ogilvie who turned it over, glanced

at it and handed it to Manning. Manning turned the cap inside out and examined the sweat band. Without any comment he laid the cap on the table. "It was Captain Simian's," he declared slowly. "I wrote his name in it, and the date I bought it."

Tribulation nodded. "What'll you give me for it?" he asked.

Manning glanced at Ogilvie. The doctor was frowning, and tapping the table edge with his fingers. "It's worth it," he said finally, gesturing toward the bills under the ash tray. "True or not, it's worth the money," he added.

"Much obliged, gents," said Tribulation. "I'm for the hay." And he pocketed the bills which Manning gave him without counting them. He glanced longingly at the bottle of Scotch. Manning poured for all of us and we drank, standing.

"To Captain Simian," said Manning.

Tribulation was gazing at the photograph of the ape. He shook his head, and tossed down his liquor. "So long, little fella," he said and waved his hairy paw toward the picture.

More stories by Knibbs in early issues.



HOW TO IMPRESS THE WIFE

CHARLES DICK, former United States senator from Ohio and still a Republican leader in that State, was one of Mark Hanna's aids in the campaign to give McKinley the presidency. While doing that work in Washington, he handled Hanna's enormous mail, weeding out the unimportant letters. One morning, when thus engaged, he came across a communication written on light-blue paper and saying:

"MY DEAR SENATOR HANNA: I had always disliked you intensely, because of the cartoons of you printed in the papers, until I visited the senate gallery the other day. But, as I sat up there watching you hour after hour, I realized that my opinion of you was wrong, and now I admire you even more than I disliked you. I shall be in the last seat on the left of the front row in the woman's gallery at two o'clock to-morrow afternoon. If you will glance up at that corner twice in succession while I am there, I will meet you at the west entrance of the Senate restaurant. I want to tell you how glad I am that I have changed my opinion of you. YOUR NEW ADMIRER."

Having read the letter twice, Mr. Dick placed it where the great man would be sure to see it. Hanna came in a little later, carefully read the effusion and, with an absolutely expressionless face, carried it out of the room which he used as an office when working in his home. He returned in a short while and, without comment, applied himself to the rest of his correspondence. In a quarter of an hour Dick's curiosity got the best of him.

"Senator," he inquired, "what did you do with that baby-blue letter?"

"I dropped it," Hanna replied, his face still blank, "exactly in the middle of the floor of my wife's sitting room."



Ivan's Foe

By C. S. Montanye

Author of "Old King's Coal," "Old Father Hubbard," Etc.

Those who have followed the ridiculous career of the absurd Scandre are aware that his success is more a matter of a horseshoe than a brain—but Ivan, the terrible mechanic, goes Ottie one better; with only half the brain he does twice as well, using two horseshoes.

ONCE upon a time a couple of brothers who rejoiced in the family name of Grimm knocked out enough to pay their income tax through the simple medium of throwing together fairy tales to delight a bunch of credulous kiddies. Mr. Father and Mrs. Mother, whose duty it was to read the bedtime stories to their youngsters, undoubtedly held the strong suspicion that the Grimm boys were either taking it in the wrist or smoking it in a bamboo pipe. That, however, was in the sweet old days and times have changed. Right now there are more fairy tales in any evening newspaper than the enterprising Grimm twins hopped up for the tots and if you're the least bit skeptical tell me what fairy tale has it on the radio, the photographs they send by wireless, the airplane flights that begin with breakfast in China and end with dinner in Brazil, the machines that give anybody a look at their own interiors and—finish it yourself. Because of this, the yarn of "Jack and the Beanstalk," "Princess Kind Eyes" and "The Wicked Dwarf" are enough to make the average child throw away its cigarette, yawn and inquire where that stuff was obtained from.

This spicy narrative can't be properly called a fairy tale even if it reads like one. For the benefit of those who weren't seated before the first curtain let me present our hero, Prince Charming Scandrel, set the prologue in the Night-and-Day Garage, a twenty-four-hour gyp joint for the cans, and drag on Ivan the Terrible, Moe the Ogre, Winnie the Beautiful and all the rest of the characters that make merry while the plot unfolds.

To begin at the beginning, Ottie had bought the Night-and-Day Garage for a song and a dance. The trap was nearer the East River than the Hudson, had prices like those of a Rialto café private swine list and prospered under the direction of the big clown. Scandrel took to the legalized-highwayman thing like a soldier to gunpowder. Really, the way he could figure an estimate on a repair job was nothing less than remarkable. Ottie could tell how much the cost of overhauling a motor would be by sniffing the fragrance of its burning gas. He decided how much new axles would add up to by merely feeling the upholstery, and a broken rear end was always priced according to the length of the running board.

The ludicrous part of it was that when the arks were given the K. O. and put on the street again they ran like a commuter for an early-morning train!

As the proprietor of a busy garage my boy friend was a laugh. The fact that he knew absolutely nothing about the profession bothered him less than the monthly milk bill does the family cat. Oattie, certain that the thing was as simple as a kindergarten, spent most of his time rushing around doing nothing and ran his mechanics with a heavy hand and foot. An example of his directorship was presented quite vividly one afternoon between Monday and Sunday when I chanced to stop in at the garage office, a chamber that made a telephone booth look like a ballroom, and found the world's most noted half-wit bawling out a hapless mechanic who listened to everything he said, a wrench in one hand and an egg sandwich in the other.

This party was worth anybody's second glance. Not only was he a symphony in grease but wore overalls that could have been coasted on, had ears that resembled sails, a head that came to a point and a witless smile that seemed to tell the world he didn't know what it was all about and cared less.

"Honest, you'd make a fish seasick!" Scandrel was raving, when I closed the door and entered. "I ought to hit you a kick, you little stiff. The next time there's a soap convention in town I'm going to attend so I can wash my hands of you. You're ignorant, your heels are too close to your ankles and you're a tight connection. Are you listening?"

The mechanic shuffled his feet, took another generous bite out of the sandwich and sighed.

"I hear you. What was you saying?"

"What's all this?" I inquired, while Oattie reached for a ledger.

"These here ignoramuses, Joe!" he moaned. "I can't trust none of them out of my sight for more than five minutes, Eastern standard time. They're trying to shove me into bankruptcy. This frozen knot here—Ivan Mulligan by name—is the dumbest of the lot. He knows more about rattles than Henry Ford and he repairs a mean motor, but he's got cement looking like skimmed milk for thickness and to make it even all around he's one of these superstitious monkeys. *You* talk to him.

Ask him why he lets a thirty-one dollar repair job go out for thirteen washers when the amount was plainly wrote on the ticket."

Mulligan finished his lunch, put a crust of bread in one pocket of his overalls, scratched his ear, took out a bunch of four-leaf clovers, looked at them, put them back and giggled.

"I read the repair tag backward. Anyhow, thirteen is a lucky number and thirty-one ain't, positively. My old gent was thirty-one years old the day they chased him out of Russia and into Ellis Island. I got a cousin in Brooklyn whose house got burned up in a fire with no insurance on Thirty-first Street and I know-a party who got gunned because he had thirty-one dollars in his kick. Should there be thirty-one cars in this here——"

"Shut it off!" Oattie yelled. "You and that luck stuff bend me out of shape. You're proving yourself more absurd than ridiculous. Make your conversation fewer and better; remember that on Saturday your pay envelope will be minus the difference between thirty-one and thirteen and get outside and line them brakes on that Curb Creeper or I'll knock you so far there won't be enough gasoline in the world to run a car out to bring you back!"

Ivan Mulligan fingered a chin well paved with cup grease.

"Mister, I forgot to told you that it was on the thirty-first day of three months ago that Moe Morowitz lowbrow crooked my gal off me. Don't be telling me nothing about thirty-one. It's a bust and there ain't even good-luck symbols to hold it off!"

In the act of cuffing him, Scandrel paused, glanced in my direction and lifted a brow.

"Moe Morowitz, you say? Do you mean 'Queensboro Moe' Morowitz, the light-weight leather pusher who's been running after Benny Leonard lately?"

Mulligan nodded glumly.

"That's him—the baby I'm going to get even with if it takes from now until beer and light wines come back!"

"And he stole your girl?" I put in.

"That wouldn't be anything unusual," Oattie smirked. "Any guy that will turn a trick like sending out a repair job for thirteen kisses when it's tagged thirty-one could have his elbows swiped and wouldn't know it until he sat down to eat. What

surprises me is that he ever had a gal. What was the matter with her?"

Asking Mulligan the question was identical with hitting a nervous thoroughbred with a whip. He lost little time in getting started.

Briefly, the mechanic's cheerful story was along somewhat familiar lines. It seemed that he had lived next door to a Stella Brady, had tumbled in love with her when a child and had grown up beside her. If Ivan was to be believed, this ringer for Eve was the most beautiful creation that had ever blossomed on the East Side. We were informed of the fact he had proposed matrimony once a month for six years and had finally been accepted. Then, so he said, he squandered his life's savings on a diamond engagement ring, rented an apartment in Astoria and furnished it to the queen's taste. After that he consulted a crystal gazer, found an auspicious day some two months distant and set about making arrangements to throw a wedding.

Stock stuff.

While waiting for the happy day the fair Miss Brady, at a dance, had become acquainted with Queensboro Moe Morowitz, a neighborhood socker who enjoyed high popularity and who was foot free and fancy loose. The leather pusher, so we gathered, had a charming personality, a collection of classy clothes, money enough to stop a strike and a fast line of gab. The upshot of the meeting was that the incredible Stella, being both fickle and feminine, had, in an absent-minded minute, forgotten the faithful Master Mulligan long enough to run off and change her name from Brady to Morowitz.

It was a sad, sad, story but something about it amused Scandrel.

"Ha-ha!" he laughed. "So Morowitz gloms the rib and gives you a push-out, hey? You poor half-wit, you! What good will revenge do you now when he's got the moll and they're tied?"

Ivan made a gesture.

"They done it so quick I couldn't have chance to think of nothing before, mister. The two of them got married on St. Patrick's Day and it's bad luck to hit an East Side boy on an Irish celebration. But listen. Mebbe it'll take a week, mebbe a month, mebbe a year, but I'll get him in the end. I'll show him. I'll even up!"

"Outside!" Ottie ordered. "You talk

like a dime novel and we ain't got no time to listen to all that jazz. Tear them brakes apart and if you can accidentally knock a hole in the radiator while you're doing it, so much the better."

The mechanic picked up his wrench, pulled up his overalls and tottered out.

"So he's superstitious?" I murmured.

Ottie curled a lip.

"That isn't the half of it. I don't mind him hanging a gander's shoe over the front door, but when he brings in one black cat on Tuesday and has a cellar full of black cats on Friday it's time to give him the gate. Just a minute now and I'll be with you. I've got to hand Central a telephone call. Er—maybe you've heard of this party I'm ringing up—Stephen Fosdick?"

There were few in hilarious Manhattan who didn't know of Stephen Fosdick and of Fosdick's sensational rise to prosperity.

In the days of brass foot rails and cracked ice Fosdick, with nothing except two hands, some brushes and a bootblack box, had started cleaning up shoes around Park Row. He had gradually saved enough to start a small factory to manufacture the same paste the shine boys put on your shoes and quickly rub off with a rag. The factory had prospered like a pickpocket at a circus, one factory had meant another, another still another, until Fosdick was reputed to be worth a hot million.

Because of the bootblack business he called his vast New Jersey estate Sunshine Corners, was rumored to be a democratic Republican who wasn't too proud to be seen in his shirt sleeves, drink his coffee from a saucer or show up at his office with a dinner pail.

"Fosdick, eh?" I murmured.

Ottie came out of the phone book, gave the combination to the operator and grinned crookedly.

"You do ask questions, ain't it so? Fosdick's opening a new factory over on the East River and until his own garages are finished he wants to know can he park six of his delivery trucks here at night, how much, why and where. I'll take him and no mistake there. Just a minute now and I'll tool you up to the Bronx."

There had been considerable talk around my uptown gym to the effect that Looie Pitz, the well-known fight manager, had a dark horse under contract that was going to show the Gotham fight fans a new wrinkle

in the line of give and take. Pitz, poverty stricken for years, had finally hit a winner in a welterweight wonder that had packed his poke with paper and sent him on a tour of the country. Because of the travel thing nobody around the Bronx had seen or heard from him more than a post-card's worth until he had wired from Chicago that he was due home again.

It was curiosity to learn whom Pitz had signed, how he was making out under the stress and press of wealth and what his plans were that took Scandrel and his usual sneer up to the gym in a car borrowed from those sheltered at his garage. When we reached our destination we found two motors standing at the curb in front of the gymnasium. Both were of the same brand and aroma, and both had cost in the vicinity of six thousand dollars apiece.

As we docked, the door of the second car opened and Looie Pitz, himself, alighted.

"For crying out loud!" Ottie bawled. "The kid himself back from the great souse-West and dressed like an undertaker! Look and laugh, Joe! Ain't this a darb, I'm inquiring?"

Pitz was groomed in a cutaway coat with braided edges that hung on him like a tent. An English bowler was on a level with his eyebrows, he featured a pair of trousers with one leg longer than the other, carried a walking stick thick enough to have ended a dog fight and smoked a cigar that had *three* bands on it.

Scandrel's laughter made Pitz color up. He took off his hat, looked at it, put it back and made sure his suspenders were tight all around.

"What's the matter with me, O'Grady?"

"The matter with you?" Ottie bellowed. "You're a picture that no artist would want to paint. Look at that coat, Joe, will you? Treat yourself to the legs on them pants, and the shoes! Slant them shoes!"

"Still suffering from chronic dumbness!" Pitz snapped, making a pass at him with the blackthorn. "You're the kind who wouldn't give credit to the party who invented electric light. You big sapolio—chuckle at me and I'll summon an officer."

"One minute!" I cut in. "This will be enough of that. Inside with you both before somebody rings for the green wagon."

Upstairs, the reception Pitz received from the studio gang that had never taken the trouble to notice him when he went through

life on ten cents, a transfer and a celluloid collar, put him in better humor. He shot his cuffs, turned his back on the still hysterical Ottie and made a break for one corner of the room where a youth who looked somewhat familiar was holding court. As they shook hands I looked the stranger over. He was a tough-looking proposition possessing a face that was his misfortune, a bugle that had evidently been Roman before it had been hammered out of shape, a pair of wise eyes, the same number of ears and a chin as square as a soap box. Pitz pried him away and introduced him with a flourish.

"Meet the new lightweight I'm managing now—Queensboro Moe Morowitz, the biggest sensation that's hit this town since they first took down the swinging doors! This boy is guaranteed fast, so tough he uses a rock for a pillow, as clever as a ventriloquist and has more punch than a bowl of it."

"Why not?" Morowitz muttered with a shrug. "Tell him how I take punishment and how I stand up under it. But if they're city fellars don't bother. I guess they heard of me."

I expected Ottie, who never tolerated any one with more conceit than himself, immediately to go up in flames. Instead, the big buffoon amazed me by shaking the lightweight's hand with what passed as high enthusiasm.

"Well, well, well! So you're Queensboro Moe? Then that big boiler downstairs must be yours. I seen M. M. on the door. Am I right or wrong?"

"That's my car and I can prove it," the lightweight shot back. "I did buy it second-handed but if it's a stolen job that ain't my lookout. If the cops can't stop these crime waves—"

"Come out of it!" Ottie hollered, producing one of his cards. "If I'm a flatfoot you're a tenor and what a heck of a note that would be. Here's my card. I'm running a clean and honest garage and I don't expect your patronage—I demand it. Repair jobs are a specialty. Give us a fair trial and be convinced. When will you come in?"

"To-morrow," was Morowitz's answer. "Er—Looie and I just come in from Chi together and I ain't made no garage arrangements yet. I'd rather I should do business with one of my admirers than some

gypper who might think I was a lamp and try to trim me. Does Pitz do business with you too?"

"Do I look insane? Put on the pillows, Moe, and step a few frames for the benefit of the crowd."

The product of the East Side had a sneer for the suggestion.

"Get away with the benefit stuff. I've got a date with my wife to take her down to Coney Island to a hot-dog show. Er—can I leave you off somewhere downtown, gentlemen?" he asked Ottie.

"Certainly," Scandrel replied. "And on the way I'll tell you all about the garage and how we turn out a repair job. Listen, Joe. Leave that car we come up in stay downstairs at the curb. I'll send a mechanic over to bring it back to-night."

"If the street cleaning department don't beat him to it!" Pitz snickered.

True to his word, Morowitz took his big car to the Night-and-Day Garage the following afternoon for space with service, but no casualties were reported after a meeting between the lightweight and his superstitious enemy. Ottie, who enjoyed every minute of it, explained that the lubricating oil combined with the grease that Ivan Mulligan wore was a sufficient disguise to keep him from being recognized. A day or two after that a slight hint of the jilted suitor's feelings was apparent when Morowitz dashed in from the curb, shot his bus up the runway, knocked down two car washers who were doing their best to destroy the paint on a limousine, pulled on the brakes and lighted a cigarette.

"Hey, you!" he shouted at Mulligan. "Give this craft a drink of water, fill the radiator and tighten up that rear fender—it's noisy. Have it ready in a half an hour. I'll be around with my wife to get it. And don't try to push the price up. I'm Queensboro Moe Morowitz, I am. I guess you know me."

"Yes, I know you," Ivan mumbled, his itching fingers straying toward a hammer that Ottie promptly came out of the office to take away from him.

Once the box fighter had checked out, Scandrel tried to find out why the carpet tacks he had sprinkled along the runway hadn't worked, added another two dozen and went back where the six-thousand-dollar car was planted.

"That crook!" Mulligan moaned, burn-

ing three of his fingers on the radiator cap. "First he steals my gal off me and then he asks me do I know him? I suppose next he'll want to know if I'll be sore if he kisses me."

"Pipe down!" Ottie hissed. "Snare yourself some common sense. What if he did walk out with your sweetie? There are plenty more fish in the brook."

"Sure, but I spent all my bait!" Mulligan moaned. "To-night I'll go by the fortune teller I do business with. Mebbe I got a little luck coming to me that I don't know nothing about."

"You'll have something coming to you that you won't know nothing about if you don't get back to work on that chariot!" Ottie promised. "Every time I listen to you my ears hurt me for an hour afterward. Come on inside now, Joe. I think there's somebody in the office waiting for me."

There was.

This was a brunet girl with eyes as dark as Easter night, lips as red as paint, though without it, and a certain charm that couldn't be concealed by the rather shabby little gown she wore. A three-cornered but sadly worn hat was another article of her street apparel, a pair of cracked patent-leather slippers were on her little feet and her pretty hands were as devoid of rings as the telephone of any one looking for charity.

Scandrel, usually the most enthusiastic pursuer of poultry the world had ever rolled an optic at, amazed me by merely glancing at the young lady briefly and coughing slightly.

"What's on your mind, sister?"

"I'm from Mr. Fosdick's factory over on the river," she explained. "This is my lunch hour and Mr. Gorman, the superintendent of the traffic department, requested me to stop in and ask if it would be convenient for you to take six of our trucks to-night."

At this Scandrel became all business. First he looked at a calendar from which the previous month had not been removed. Then he went to the safe and dipped into three ledgers. After that he consulted the loose-leaf filing index, looked up the petty cash account, helped himself to a glass of water and jotted down a note or two on his cuff.

"Yes," he said finally, "I think we can

accommodate you but I'll find out for sure in a minute, Cutey."

"That isn't my name," the young lady smiled. "It's Winifred—Winifred Blake."

"I'm glad you told me," Ottie smirked, throwing open the office door. "Hey, Luck," he hollered at the industrious Ivan, "come here a minute, will you? I want one-two-three words with you."

The revenge-seeking mechanic dragged up his overalls, removed a quarter of a pound of grease from his chin and shuffled in. I saw him look at Ottie and then at the employee of the Stephen Fosdick factory. Mulligan's jaw dropped like a white hope, his eyes widened and he gaped witlessly while he nervously produced the foot of a cottontail he carried with him and began to rub it idly.

"This here young lady wants to know can we accommodate six of Fosdick's delivery trucks, kid. Can we? Have we got room in the back of the pavilion?"

"Absolutely, certainly," Ivan replied vaguely. "What—what did you say, mister?" he added, coming to himself with a start.

"I'm saying it now—get out!" Scandrel snarled. "You're as cuckoo as a Swiss bird. It's all right, Winnie," he went on, turning back to Dark Eyes. "Tell your boss to gas them around any time to-night and we'll find room for them. Er—I'll look 'em over myself, personal. Maybe they'll need a little repairing. The brakes on some delivery trucks are like women and cigarettes—some smoke and some don't. You won't forget to tell him it's all O. K. here?"

The girl gave Ottie a long look and shook her head.

"No, I won't forget. Thank you so much for the information. Good-by."

"Goo'-by!" the voice of Ivan Mulligan mumbled behind us. "Mister, that gal has something about her that reminds me of Stella. Mebbe the way she stands, mebbe the way she walks, mebbe them black eyes of hers."

"I'll give you a couple myself if you don't lay off!" Ottie roared, wheeling around and slapping him. "What are you doing in here when I told you to go out fast? You're going from terrible to much more so. Beat it before I crack a couple of your ribs!"

"Possibly," the astonished Mulligan murmured, under his breath, "*she's* the dark

female the fortune teller meant. I'll look him up to-night after work and make sure. She's got a job over in Fosdick's factory and her name's Winnie? I can remember that because it's the same as the noise a horse makes. Mebbe—"

He dodged a chair Ottie tossed at him, picked up his wrench and went back to spoil the upholstery in Queensboro Moe Morowitz's expensive vehicle.

Sheer curiosity if nothing else made me loiter around the establishment for the better part of an hour to see what might ensue when the fickle Stella and Ivan's enemy appeared on the scene to reclaim the repaired roadster.

"She'll see through him like glass," Ottie said when I mentioned the subject. "Trust a skirt to pick a broken heart, grease and all. You can't beat a woman—and I don't mean because it's against the law either. I've got a sawbuck that says Stella or Mary or whatever her name is, spies Ivan and recognizes him immediately. Picture the rest. Then Morowitz puts the best one of his feet forward and clouts the nozzle stiff. Is it a gamble with you at even money, Joe?"

I glanced out the office window and saw Mulligan's complexion.

"I'll take you for ten and, believe me, you'll pay up if you lose!"

"As if I never did!" Ottie snarled indignantly.

Twenty more minutes dragged past before Looie Pitz's new lightweight, wearing his better half on one arm, blew in from the street. One look was enough to reveal the faithless Stella as a person with a mind of her own and a frequent inclination to express it. She was modeled along the same lines as Winifred Blake, had coppery red hair, eyes as black as chips of anthracite and a look as cold as the bill of an Eskimo.

"Don't miss a minute of this!" Ottie muttered, rubbing his hands. "Look at the pan on that wren. Imagine coming home to that after a hard day's work with a pick and shovel. If you ever held a quarter out of your pay envelope she'd have private detectives following you to find out what moll you were running around with. Watch 'em now!"

Halfway over to the motor on which Ivan was putting a few finishing touches, the lightweight's wife came to a sudden and complete stop.

"What do you mean by bringing me into a disgusting hole like this, Moe?" she demanded angrily. "Look at the grease and dirt and oil! Is this all the respect you have for *me*? This isn't fit to bring a pig into!"

Morowitz nervously patted her arm.

"Ssh, baby! It's all right. This ain't no time to be talking about pork. Look at the hour we saved by walking down here. It is a little untidy but——"

"Untidy!" the girl screamed. "It's disreputable! I can actually feel the oil oozing through the soles of my shoes! You needn't bother to get the car for me. I'll take one that runs on tracks over to Aunt Minnie's house."

"Baby, listen!" Morowitz pleaded. "Jump in and in two minutes——"

"Don't you dare to baby me! And take your hand off me! On second thought I'm not even going to Aunt Minnie's. This has given me a nervous headache. I'm going straight home. And you needn't try and detain me, either, you bully!"

While Scandrel and myself stopped, stared and listened the girl wrenched her arm away, picked up her skirts and flounced out. She was hardly gone before the temperamental Ivan's emotions overwhelmed him.

"Ha, ha!" he laughed. "This place ain't fit for a pig and she ain't going to Aunt Minnie's either! Don't you dare to baby me and you needn't try and detain me, you bully!"

The sound of Mulligan's hysterical laughter seemed to freeze the fuming Morowitz to the spot. For at least a round of minutes he glared speechlessly at the superstitious car wrecker before him. Then, yelling like an Indian, he surged forward.

"At whom are you laughing, at whom? Has it got to be that the conversation of a married man and wife ain't private no longer? I told you that I was Queensboro Moe Morowitz but I guess you didn't believe it. Now I'll prove it!"

"You put in a call for an ambulance and I'll get a crowbar!" Ottie bawled, throwing the telephone at me before leaping for the door.

Twenty steps carried the frothing pugilist across to Mulligan. Morowitz pulled back his right for the Ostermoor jolt but the punch never was delivered for the reason he couldn't set himself on the grease-finished

floor. He slipped and fell directly onto the quick guard that Ivan had thrown up. As misfortune would have it the lightweight brought his chin directly down on the mechanic's fist and little more was necessary. Spinning around he did a nose dive under a twelve-hundred-dollar sedan, out completely as Ottie and I reached the scene together.

"Did you see that?" Ivan shouted, wildly excited. "I knocked the low life out!"

Like a tiger with its first kill the youth took a punch at both of us, threw his wrench at a startled taxicab owner who had come in to get his rig out for the evening plunder and chased two of his coworkers to the street. To get attention Ottie had to stiffen Mulligan. This done he fished Morowitz out from under the closed car.

"Oy—this is terrible!" the lightweight moaned, once he was on his feet again. "Er—if them newspaper fellars ever hear of this they'll kid the silk shirt off me. I should croak in a Christian neighborhood. Er—keep this quiet, friends. By me it's accidental and by you it's a secret. Here—get yourself a new necktie or something."

Stopping only to peel two bills from his bank roll and hand them to us, he jumped into the roadster, threw it into reverse and went out the garage with extreme speed.

"Well, I see I lose that bet we made," Ottie mumbled, peeking at the gift bank note and discovering it was worth ten dollars anywhere. "But you never hear of me welshing on no wagers, Joe. Here—take your money and scratch it off. I'm the prince of good losers, if I do say so myself."

He handed me the green smacker as Mulligan pulled himself up on the running board of a car, felt the spot on his jaw that had put him on ice and, to ease the ache, tied a handkerchief around his ankle.

"What do you mean by bringing me into a disgusting hole like this, Moe?" he mumbled faintly. "'This has given me a nervous headache.' And I knocked him cold with one punch!"

"You're even now," I pointed out.

"Yeah—so get back and make a space for Fosdick's perambulators," Ottie ordered. "You're creating a theyater out of my garage. I suppose you'll be bringing in an orchestra next to give musical comedy. You pasted Morowitz, you got your revenge, so get back to work."

Ivan checked off his teeth, pulled up his overalls and shook his head dumbly.

"That wasn't no revenge," he declared. "When I get him I've got to get him in public—I've got to show him up in front of a crowd."

"You're undoubtedly out of your mind!" Ottie snapped. "Instead of trying to lay this boy you ought to save up your salary and send him a present for stealing that gal away and marrying her!"

To continue.

Mulligan, once he had dropped in to visit his favorite fortune teller and was given a liberal dose of the future, promptly began tripping over to Stephen Fosdick's shoe-paste factory the minute he had tightened up the last nut of the day, had slid out of his greasy costume and had let one of the car washers spray him with a hose. As the Fosdick layout didn't lay off until six bells, Ivan had ample time to make himself fascinating for the dark, dreamy eyes of Miss Winifred Blake. How, why, and in what manner he had been able to capture the girl's attention was a complete mystery but the fact remained that Mulligan had escorted himself in right and was taking the little brunette places after business hours. Twice they passed the garage, Ivan strolling along like Romeo with an eye out for a balcony.

This budding romance vastly amused my egotistical boy friend, who had nothing but a sneer for the mechanic, another for the young lady herself and a couple more for love's young dream as it was being tenderly unfolded.

"Picture a snapper like her bobbing for Grease-ball," he giggled. "She must be minus upstairs the same as him."

"It's odd," I murmured. "Miss Blake is decidedly attractive and in the entire history of our acquaintance I've never before known you to pass up an opportunity to impress your personality upon some attractive young lady."

"Banana oil for that jazz, Joe! You're rapidly approaching the verge of lunacy. What do I want to be bothering with a factory canary for when all I need is a shave and a clean collar to step out and take my pick of the débutantes? I've kept away from the orange blossoms too long now to topple for anything short of Fifth Avenue. The gal I wed is one who's going to have plenty jack and who can support me in the

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style to which I'd like to be accustomed. So much for that. Where are you bound?"

"Up to the Bronx."

"Wait until I borrow somebody's car and I'll chug you up. And that reminds me. I must ask Harry Water, the head washer, if anybody ever brung back that last truck we borrowed."

As it was an hour at the gym when Queensboro Moe Morowitz pulled a bout with whatever sparring partners Looie Pitz could bribe to go in against him, we found half of the East Side present when we arrived in the more remote spaces of the Big Town.

"They're packed in like sardines," I said. Ottie snickered.

"Yeah, but sardines are better off because they're laying down. Ain't that Looie over there? Trap him and we'll get away from these bandits before they get to us. I just got three teeth filled with gold and I don't want to take no unnecessary chances."

Pitz, to prove he had more than one complete change of raiment, was turned out in a frock coat, a silk tile and another cane. We managed to entice him away from the gym ring and into my private office where Ottie began.

"The—now—coat, Looie. What kind of a coat do you call it—an overcoat?"

"It's a frock coat," Pitz explained with some pride.

"Yes, but is it an overcoat?" Ottie insisted. "Do you put a coat over it or under it and if so when?"

"It's a frock coat!" the little fight manager repeated stubbornly.

"But is it an overcoat, Dummy? I ask you and you tell me the same thing over again."

"You've heard of a frock?" Pitz hissed. "Well, this is a frock coat!"

"That's different. Why didn't you say so in the first place?" Scandrel mumbled. "How is that new lightweight terror of yours moving along? You claim that he's as well known as Little Bo-peep but I don't see that he's got any more dates than a cross-eyed gal in a one-horse town. What's the next scuffle on the book? Tell me lots."

In reply Pitz produced a letter, opened it and coughed.

"Here's a fight right here with a chance for a little gravy. I got this letter yesterday. It's off Steve Fosdick, the wealthy millionaire who makes that stuff they ruin

your shoes with on Sunday mornings. Fosdick says that he's giving a big party and housewarming out at Sunshine Corners, his Jersey estate, at the end of the month as a surprise to his wife. They tell me she's one of them society dames who's sick in bed for a week every time she catches Steve with carpet slippers on or red suspenders. In this letter he tells me that he thinks an exhibition bout between Queensboro Moe Morowitz and somebody else will be a crash for the dailies and get him in right with his wife. He wants to know will I be willing to arrange a bout for him for three grand for the night."

"Three thousand clinkers for an exhibition?" Scandrel chanted, licking his lips. "What do you mean—gravy? That's a whole steak and not a chance of an error. I bet you sprained an ankle getting to a telegraph office to wire acceptance."

Pitz smiled sadly.

"Not a chance. I broke this to Moe but he turned me down like an elevator. Benefits and exhibitions to him are the same thing as low tide to a bootlegger. And there ain't a bit of use of trying to make him change his mind."

With an exclamation of excitement Scandrel leaped to his feet, threw his cigarette in the trash basket and snapped his fingers excitedly.

"Hold everything! Here's a bargain for you, Looie. I—er—know more about the plug-uglies than you do. I know how to broadgab with them and make them jump through hoops. If I can compel Morowitz to change his mind will you match him for the exhibition with a jobbie I've got down at my garage? This boy is the same weight, religion, color—when he's washed clean—as Moe and a sweet set-up. I'll give you a written guarantee that he's never fought in a ring and is as harmless as a picture book for children. For one third of the graft I'll fix you up and make Morowitz talk cents. Right?"

Pitz agreed with rapidity and five minutes later we were in the dressing room where the famous lightweight was cooling out after his afternoon's romp.

"A little attention," Ottie requested, transfixing him with a glittering orb. "What's this I hear about you being unwilling to step an exhibition match down at Stephen Fosdick's big place in New Jersey at the end of the month? Picking on

your manager because he's a little guy, are you? Come on now, tell me something!"

For a long minute Morowitz stared at Ottie and it was a cinch to see that he well remembered the slippery floor of the Night-and-Day Garage and knew that the big clown also recalled it quite vividly.

"Sure, I'm doing the exhibition bout. Er—I was only kidding Looie. Who do I spar with? I ain't taking no chances with anybody outside my weight class."

"What's your boy's name, Ottie?" Pitz asked, taking the center of the stage.

"Ivan Mulligan."

"*Ivan Mulligan!*" Morowitz blinked and straightened up. "This is a fancy! I owe *that* bird a beating up. The little tramp went and let me steal his gal off him and marry her. Believe me, I'll give him a ride!"

One hour and twenty minutes after that we were back in the garage again. Scandrel tore Mulligan away from the transmission on a motor, threw him into a corner and explained the proposition in detail.

"Will I fight Moe in public?" the mechanic cried. "Does a violin make music? That's all I want to do—make a monkey out of him before a lot of people. I'll fight him and I'll lick him for nothing!"

"Er—that ain't exactly necessary," Ottie giggled. "Just to show you I got your interest at heart I'll give you five dollars out of my own pocket whether or not you win, lose or draw. Pardon me while I call up Moe's manager and tell him to go ahead with the necessary arrangements."

"And pardon me," Ivan broke in, "while I comb my hair and get ready to keep a date with Winnie. Such a girl—you ain't got no idea. She won't tell me where she lives at but she's got a grand disposition. Last night she said I reminded her of a character in a book."

"A parsnip in a cook book!" Ottie laughed. "You remind me of the same thing!"

Fully familiar with the fact that Mulligan had no more chance with Morowitz in the ring than a lame man would have of winning a relay race, Scandrel allowed Ivan to do his training under the cars that were towed in to be overhauled. Looie Pitz dropped down several times to look his lightweight's set-up over, was satisfied the mechanic was no more dangerous than pastry and at length the day before the house-

warming party at Sunshine Corners came along with Mulligan shuffling into the office of the garage to beg for a holiday.

"You want a day off?" Scandrel echoed. "What do you do—lay awake at night thinking up these funny sayings?"

Mulligan looked at me and sighed.

"Listen, gentleman. First of all I got to stop in and see my fortune teller about the fight to-morrow night. For six dollars cash or two for ten dollars he tells me he'll fix it so I win easy. In the afternoon I want I should show Winnie the animals in Central Park. She's getting half a day off. Leave me go and I'll work on the night shift after dinner."

"That's fair enough," Scandrel admitted, after thinking it over. "But nothing doing on the zoo. With them ears of yours I ain't taking no chances!"

This is what occurred.

Arriving at Sunshine Corners the following evening in the classiest limousine Ottie could pick out of the garage, we were met at the front door of the villa by a servant whose powdered wig, swallow-tail coat and black-silk knickerbockers overpowered Ivan with hilarity.

"You ain't got the manners of a cow in a parlor!" Ottie snarled, cuffing him twice. "Get in order, Dizzy. Don't you know a footman when you see one?"

"A footman?" Mulligan panted. "Well, he'd better not try to kick *me!*"

Displaying considerable concern over the valise that held the ring paraphernalia and the gloves he had been made a present of the previous week, Mulligan was conducted off to a subterranean billiard chamber to dress while a butler led us into a lounge room and turned us over to the self-made Stephen Fosdick, himself. The shoe-shine king turned out to be an undersized little tomato with a weather-beaten countenance and a browbeaten manner. He put on the shoes he had taken off to rest his feet and handed us each a cigar and a nervous handshake.

"This is a little surprise party for the wife as much as a housewarming," he explained. "I know my daughter will eat it alive because she has funny ideas about money and people putting on airs, but I'm a little worried about how the missus will take it. Florine, the wife, has got ideas of her own. If either of you are married you can understand."

"I'm still in business for myself but I get you anyway," Scandrel assured him. "Don't worry a thing. As long as there's a chance to gossip the ladies will enjoy themselves."

"Why shouldn't Mrs. Fosdick like it?" I inquired.

"Well, I sent out the invitations myself and I didn't ask none of *her* friends," our host explained. "The bunch up to-night are all business acquaintances of mine—the customers who buy stuff off us. I had D. S. N.—dress suits necessary—printed on every card but I forgot that a lot of the boys can't read English. Let's go down to the sunken garden. I'd better stay around there in case Florine sinks me."

The full significance of what Fosdick told us became more apparent when we exchanged the villa for the outside garden. There, disporting themselves with carefree abandon, were at least ninety per cent of all the proprietors of bootblack stands in Manhattan. Really, it looked like a festival day in Naples. Not only were the Italian gardens full of shine artists, but the majority of them had brought along their wives and children and the kiddies were picking flowers, paddling in the marble fountain and having the time of their lives while six or eight of the villa's staid serving staff circulated among them with silver trays and high complexions.

"The wife," Fosdick explained, "ate out to-night with some of her tony friends over on Park Avenue, New York. But she'll be in later. Ah—how does this look to you?"

Ottie patted him on the back, straightened his necktie and pulled down his vest for him.

"It's the candy! If your wife likes children you're in while she's still out. Look at that little monkey over there breaking branches off that tree. What could be cuter?"

The millionaire owner of the establishment left us and a couple of minutes later Looie Pitz dropped anchor, plastered to the brow in an assortment of evening clothes which he claimed had taken his tailors three months to design and six months to stitch together.

"They've set up the ring in the grand ballroom," he explained, once Ottie got through giggling. "I've just now examined it and Tex Rickard himself couldn't have

done a better job. I'm told the fight goes on at ten sharp so they can take the ring apart and dance on the floor afterward. Moe's putting on his ring togs. I hope he lets your boy stay the limit so Fosdick won't think we're short changing him. Shall we take a walk around the grounds together?"

"And have some one see you with me and think that I'm a friend of yours?" Ottie grunted. "You got more ideas than a flapper in a jewelry store. Me and Joe are going inside to see how our hustling mechanic is getting along. I hope he don't steal nothing and get a bad reputation."

At ten o'clock exactly the guests were seated in the camp chairs some undertaker had supplied, a regulation referee and timekeeper were on the spot and a half dozen New York newspaper reporters wandered about, missing nothing and enjoying everything. Fosdick climbed into the ring, made a short speech in which he stated that he hoped every one would enjoy the bout and after that Scandrel with his chest out and Ivan Mulligan and seconds in tow entered and seated the mechanic in the proper corner.

As much at home as a tramp in a straw-lined freight car, Mulligan sat down and remained seated until Pitz with Queensboro Moe Morowitz and their chorus boys awoke cheers by a dramatic appearance and made the roped inclosure. As they entered it the former admirer of the perfidious Stella Brady jumped up and shook a fist wildly.

"I got you now, you lowlife, you dumber!" he shrieked, to the intense amusement and pleasure of the spectators. "You should never look your mother in the face again. She won't recognize you after tonight!"

Morowitz promptly showed his dentistry.

"Who's a dumber? My mother won't recognize *me* but there ain't a camera made that will take a picture of *you!* You're going to try and kill me but I'm going to murder you!"

Ottie in one corner and Pitz in the other finally managed to restore some kind of order. The gong clanged a dozen times or more, an announcer delivered the Gettysburg Address, the ring was cleared with difficulty and a few minutes later the battle was on.

Sweet Rosie O'Grady!

Like two wounded leopards, goaded be-

yond all restraint, Morowitz and Mulligan met and clashed directly in the center of the ring. The lightweight idol of the East Side had possibly planned his attack but the etiquette of fisticuffs against the jabbing, swinging, snarling and kicking Ivan was as valueless as a blank check. From a sparring match with a few punches tossed in for good measure the affair immediately deteriorated into something one degree lower than a water-front brawl.

In a whirlwind of disorder both went to the mat—lashing out with both fists, squirming and panting epithets. As they went down the crowd got up and the gong clanged futilely. Ottie climbed through the ropes at one corner while the dismayed and alarmed Looie Pitz did the same thing at the other end of the ring. Both, with the aid of the referee, the timekeeper and six of the Fosdick servants pried them apart and dragged each back to his respective stool.

"Foul! Foul!" Pitz protested, trying to make himself heard above the tumult.

"Sit down! You craz' wid de heat!" a swarthy gentleman in the first row of chairs roared up at him. "For ten-a cents I steek you wid a knife!"

The bell ended some of the confusion and before the ring could be properly cleared Morowitz and Mulligan were up and at it once more. The lightweight, in an admirable endeavor to end the two-man Port Arthur, set out to knock his wife's former suitor for an immediate goal. Morowitz missed with a left to the head, was short with a right to the body in his excitement and before he could cover up it was all over. Ivan's right glove slapped up against his chin with incredible force. The mechanic's left glove went straight to the plexus and Queensboro Moe Morowitz went down on his face as if he had been hit with a sledge hammer!

"I got him—the crook, the loafer!" Mulligan panted, placing a triumphant foot on the shoulders of his fallen enemy. "It cost me ten dollars down at the fortune teller's but I got my money's worth!"

The dazed Ottie managed to get his mouth shut while some one practiced first aid on the stricken Looie Pitz.

"What do you mean, it cost you ten dollars?" Scandrel demanded.

Mulligan grinned crookedly.

"I'm telling you. The fortune teller had

a couple of good-luck horseshoes—one for six dollars—two for ten. He said if I bought them I *couldn't* lose. I've got one in each glove here and, gentleman, I win!"

Approach that if possible.

The next development in the evening's entertainment happened hard on the rubber heels of this remarkable dénouement. The expensive draperies over the main doorway of the grand ballroom were flung back an instant later and a stout woman who wore a diamond dress and enough bracelets to take a trainload of yeggs up the Hudson, appeared, took in the scene with a stupefied gaze and opened her mouth.

"What does this mean, Stephen?"

Fosdick, trying hard to smile, stood and coughed.

"A little surprise party, my dear. Some of my old business customers dropped in and we've just finished a highly interesting example of the manly art. As soon as the ring is taken down we'll dance and——"

His wife helped herself to another look.

"*Customers!*" she screamed, fainting on the spot.

Stephen Fosdick looked at us and shook his head.

"That was Florine," he explained colorlessly. "Something told me she wasn't go-

ing to be pleased. Now we'll have to get her up to her room. Where's my daughter?"

"Right here, dad!"

A soft, well-remembered voice from the rear wheeled us around and the next watch tick found us staring at the self-styled Miss Winifred Blake who had pushed her way down the aisle.

"Daughter?" Scandrel hollered. "Don't let yourself be deceived, Mr. Fosdick. That gal ain't your daughter no more than she's mine! She's trying to get away with something because she works in your factory over on the East River!"

The attractive brunette cast a languishing glance at Ivan Mulligan and then another at us.

"Oh, dad knows all about *that*," she explained. "You see, I have ideas of my own and I've always wanted to be loved for myself and not for father's money. I persuaded him to let me take a position in the new factory so I could meet a plain man of the masses and be courted as a working girl and not as an heiress. Ivan, darling, take off those funny boxing gloves, come down here and let me introduce you to your future father-in-law."

And they lived happily ever after!

Another Montanye story in the next issue.



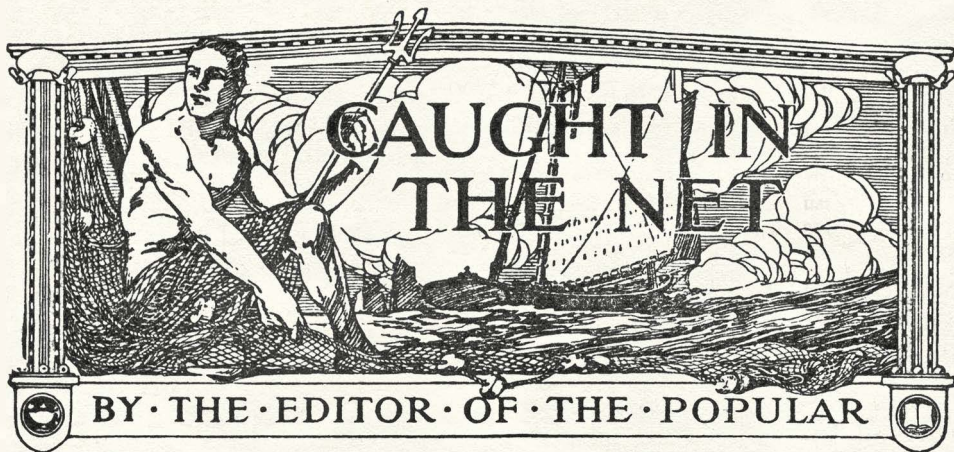
THE BRYANS

WHEN Charles Bryan announced his candidacy for the governorship of Nebraska a year or so ago, his brother, the one and only William J. Bryan, announced that he would support him and stretch every nerve and muscle, particularly those of tongue and throat, to round up the necessary votes. But there was not undiluted strength in this reënforcement of Brother Charles. William J. having been in continuous process of making both friends and enemies up and down the State ever since his leap from obscurity in 1896, there was naturally a Democratic faction which considered voting for a Bryan a particularly repellent proposition.

A short while after going to the aid of Brother Charles, Brother William dropped off a train in the national capital and set various conciliatory and harmonizing wheels in motion, the sweet result being that the newspapers next day carried under big headlines the announcement of a perfect reconciliation between the Great Commoner and Gilbert H. Hitchcock, United States senator from Nebraska and victorious leader of numerous anti-Bryan Nebraskans.

"Mr. Bryan's burying the hatchet with Hitchcock," remarked Senator Heflin of Alabama next day, "was a very fine act."

"In fact," agreed Mr. Williams of Mississippi dryly, "a very brotherly act."



MORE ABOUT THE RESERVE

WE spoke, in the last issue, of the steady deterioration in value of the citizen body scattered through the country known as the Organized Reserve. We pointed out that the men holding reserve commissions in the army of the United States, who, together with the troops of the national guard, are supposed to constitute the nation's first line of defense against a foreign enemy, receive nothing by way of reward except the satisfaction of knowing that they are doing a great deal more for their country than any law requires.

The reserve officer is the man upon whom the war department counts when— if ever—the nation must be mobilized and trained for battle. From him, in time of emergency, will be expected the same technical excellence as that presumed to reside in professional soldiers of corresponding rank. He will be asked to recruit and equip and organize units of varying size and complexity. He will be ordered to make soldiers and fighting men out of raw recruits. He will be expected to assume responsibility of life and death; to wield power, such as no civilian ever exercises, with restraint and effectiveness; to demonstrate that spiritual magic that is implied in the term leadership. He will be expected to assume the duties implied by these things on a day's notice. He holds the president's commission certifying the confidence of the commander in chief in his ability to work this miracle.

In business, the reward of a man in whom is reposed such confidence would be very considerable. Business organizations would pay well merely for the privilege of retaining, against possible need, the services of such a man. Our government retains thousands of men, ranging in rank from second lieutenants to lieutenant colonels, in whom it reposes, by official proclamation, the most implicit confidence. In return it offers them the privilege of calling themselves patriots.

As we suggested in a prior editorial, this is not enough. The idea of the reserve is a democratic idea. It is a good idea. It should be preserved and furthered. But it is losing force because it is not receiving practical support. The reservist is at constant expense, in time, in energy, in money. He receives no compensation of any sort. There are valuable privileges which might be accorded him by the nation in return for his services. In a hundred ways his life might be made easier and more enjoyable, at little or no expense to the government. Nothing is done to favor him above his neighbors. Not only does he receive no retainer fee, but he is taxed for such pay as he does receive in the event of his call to active service. This looks to us like rubbing it in pretty harshly.

The wonder to us is not that so few young Americans are willing to accept the honor of the president's commission, but that so many still consent to bear the unrewarded responsibility of its discharge.

PUBLIC PUNISHMENT

AS everybody knows without being told, our course of justice is notoriously slow, and frequently it requires several years before a case is reached on the calendar. Perhaps it would be truer to say that Justice is not so slow but that she is overworked here. This is a bad state of affairs, for it encourages the multiplication of criminals, who reason that punishment is not imminent and that they can "take a chance" and perhaps get away with it.

Not long ago an English critic of American institutions advocated a revival of flogging to counteract the prevalent evil of wholesale robbery in this country. He pointed his argument by citing the salutary effect that this form of punishment had had upon a similar wave of highway robbery in Great Britain during the 'nineties. Flogging, he added, may seem unnecessarily cruel and inhuman, and even a return to medieval barbarism, but it is a powerful engine of reform. He said that many of the guilty ones caught in the period he mentioned begged for additional years in prison rather than endure the stripes of the lash.

Possessing somewhat of the same viewpoint, an American jurist declared recently that if bootleggers and rum runners were set in stocks or put in the pillory, it would exert a deterring influence upon those who are not afraid of court fines and brief jail sentences for the riches they may accumulate in their particular form of lawbreaking.

Doubtless, public punishment has a humiliating effect upon its victim that scarcely anything else can equal, but would it bring about a noticeable reform in criminal circles? That is an open question. The more humane penologists are of course against such measures of degradation, and find in them nothing but poisonous counterirritants which breed further evils. On the other hand, there are authorities who assert just as positively that public castigation was for centuries one of the most potent weapons with which to combat crime, and still remains so, despite all the later psychology of reformation.

If we progress in a circle, as some philosophers contend, perhaps we may live to see, in these days of renascent blue laws, a drunkard wearing bilboes, a swindler in the stocks, a bootlegger with a big capital "B" in red on his back, and even a ducking stool for scolds. For liars, they may revive the cleft stick in which the tongue is inserted, but if they do, this will be an all-too-silent world.

THE MACHINE

EVERY machine has some device to keep it from running away and wrecking itself. The electric motor is kept in hand by rheostats, transformers, circuit breakers, and the like. A throttle moderates the ambition of the gasoline power plant. The steam engine is safeguarded by an invention called the "governor."

Humanity is the engine of progress. It has a governor, too. Humanity draws its power from youth. And age is the device that controls the flow of power. Youth is like steam, electricity, and the explosive vapor born of air and gasoline—it is forever fighting to make the wheels turn faster. But humanity, the engine of progress, was built to run just so fast. If youth had its way it would burst the cylinders, burn out the fuses, and wreck the whole contrivance in its impatience to outrun the ordained processes of evolution. But age steps in and checks the pace, holding it to the structural limitations of the machine.

Imagination and daring are the gifts of youth. Experience and caution are the fruit of age. Youth is full of rash ideas for getting things done quicker, better and more profitably. Age is more concerned with protecting and cherishing whatever has already been accomplished.

There were two farmers, Brown and Jones, and each had a son. Brown and his son could not agree about working their land, so they divided it between them. Brown, the elder, continued to walk behind a horse plow. His son borrowed money, bought a tractor and did all his work by modern machinery. Jones and his son

took counsel of each other. They plowed by horse until they had saved enough to pay for a tractor. Each year they bought a new machine. But they never changed an old method until they could pay their way to a new one. They prospered slowly but surely. Meanwhile their neighbors, the Browns, went deeper and deeper into debt. Brown, the elder, could not make the most of his land because his methods were behind the times, and competition cut down his profits. Brown, the younger, had sunk his capital in more machinery than his land could use or support. His overhead expenses outran his income. In the end the Browns, father and son, sold out to satisfy their creditors and hired themselves to their neighbors. Now the Joneses work both farms.

Youth, uncounseled, overreaches itself. Age, spurred, stagnates. The machine cannot run without power. But it needs a governor to hold the pace within the factor of security. If you are young and impatient with the old fogies—or old, and out of sympathy with the young upstarts—remember that progress runs by the laws of the machine.

THE BUSINESS OF THE STORY

WHAT," a hard-boiled acquaintance asked us the other day, "is the practical good of romantic fiction? I never read fiction novels, and the only magazines I see are those that contain articles of fact. A great deal of ink and paper are wasted printing stories about things that never happened outside the minds of the writing profession. And, greater than the waste of material is the waste of time given to reading such stuff. What is the good of fiction—why do people spend hours poring over it? Why don't they improve their minds and increase their store of information as I do?"

We answered this man—but we probably didn't convince him, because as we said, he is hard boiled and a dogmatist. He didn't want to be convinced. He only wanted to argue.

However, here is our answer. Fiction has a practical value. The good story has a serious mission. People imagine they read novels and stories of romance to be amused. But in reality they read them to acquire a kind of knowledge that is hard to get firsthand—the knowledge that all life is a pattern of dross and gold, a fabric whose woof is coarse and lusterless but whose warp is woven of gleaming strands of beauty. The gleaming strands are slender, tenuous, hard to see. The harsh material through which they run imposes on the close-held eye. To catch the glint of sunlight on the brighter threads you must stand aloof and find the proper angle of vision.

But it is hard to stand aloof from your own life. And here the teller of tales steps in to help you. It is he who stands apart and catches the elusive shimmer of the hidden gold in the fabric. And when he has caught it he lends you his eyes. Then you can see it too.

And who shall say this is not a practical service? We are too apt to think our lives a dull and colorless grind. And if we think them so we lead them so. But when in books and shorter tales we see that romance can be built out of just such stuff as makes the pattern of our own existence, we take heart and courage to fresh and brighter endeavor.

That is the business of the story—the practical mission—to point out the glamour that cheers us on to better living, to catch the golden sheen of the sun where the slender shining threads of hope lie ambushed in the woof.



POPULAR TOPICS

If your husband comes home late some evening, Mrs. Popular Reader, and informs you that he has seen an animal with the long ears of a burro, the legs of a kangaroo, and the head of a wolf that has taken a trip through a laundry mangle, don't begin thinking about divorce or a new family bootlegger. In all probability Friend

Husband has done nothing more wicked than take a trip to the New York Zoo and a look at the aard-vark, an animal that looks even sillier than it sounds.

The aard-vark, usually called the ant pig, is Dame Nature's most successful attempt at the joyful art of caricature. When full grown it extends a distance of four feet from north to south and attains an altitude of two feet. In addition to its other misfortunes it has an appetite for dried grasshoppers. It is the animal that started the laughing hyena laughing.

THERE were so many dogs—students' dogs and the relatives and friends of students' dogs—on the Cornell University campus last spring that the college authorities decided to order their removal. This action caused our old friend Mr. Grouch to remark that it would be more sensible to remove "them fresh students" and allow the dogs to remain.

Many dogs have gone through college with their masters. We used to know a fine collie who had spent four years at Princeton. He acquired a very liberal education in most ways but showed his inferiority to man by refusing to learn to drink beer.

This dog attended all the classes inflicted upon his owner, with the exception of those conducted by Professor Woodrow Wilson. For a long time we were under the impression that this discrimination was caused by the fact that the collie was a member of the G. O. P.—his name was Mac, short for McKinley—but finally his master told us that even in those days before Mr. Wilson loomed large in the affairs of the world there was "something about him" that forbade the taking of liberties.

We suggested that an audience of dogs in the lecture room must be somewhat distracting to both students and teacher. "Oh, no," said the owner of Mac. "The dogs are just like the students. They get sleepy and don't make any trouble."

ALTHOUGH we realize that one man's lore is very likely to be another man's bore, we can't get away from the subject of dogs without calling your attention to the Friends of Medical Progress, an association which has for one of its main objects systematic resistance to those opposed to vivisection.

Perhaps the antivivisectionists—like many other people who help make the world a moderately livable locality—are swayed more by warm hearts than by cold logic. Even if that be true, they serve a useful purpose by acting as a brake on those scientific minds that seem unable—or unwilling—to discriminate between perhaps necessary cruelty to animals practiced for the ultimate good of mankind, and the unnecessary cruelty practiced on animals for the satisfaction of abstract scientific curiosity.

In spite of the list of distinguished names that adorns the membership roll of the Friends of Medical Progress, medical men are far from being agreed that vivisection is of any real use to medical science.

Mark Twain, who when really aroused was totally lacking in the sometimes dangerous virtue of toleration, expressed the feeling of a good many people when he said: "I have tried to understand why it should be considered a kind of credit and a handsome thing to belong to a human race that has vivisectioners in it."

HERE'S a thought for the fellow who thinks that wives are pretty expensive luxuries. Nine out of ten American wives do their own housework. Twenty million of them are on the job—and it's a tough job, too—in the United States. If their services were paid for, the bill would foot up to ten billions of dollars a year.

A LOT of gasoline is going to be burned in these United-by-good-automobile-roads-States this year. Last year we used 6,685 million gallons of John D. Rockefeller's favorite fluid, an increase of 23 per cent over 1922; and this year, it is estimated, we will use 7,800 million gallons, an increase of 17 per cent over last year.

SPEAKING, as so many of our acquaintances are, of divorce, there is the sad case of the Washington, Pennsylvania, woman who married Liberty—Thomas Liberty, if you must have the details—and had to go to the courts to get freedom.



The Hollywood Touch

By Jack O'Donnell

Author of "Capricious Patricia," and other stories.

Another story of the amiable and astute Professor Doane, self-appointed teacher of the science of honest horse racing to the veterans of the Bush Circuit.

THE "Feed-box Kid," stop watch in hand, nearly fell from the paddock fence where he had been roosting since dawn, when a quiet voice behind him asked, "Did you get Georgette's time for the three quarters?"

The speaker was Cornelius Doane, Ph. D., better known as "Old Doc" Doane, owner of race horses, who had come to the Bush Circuit from the classic halls of a great university after the president of that institution discovered that the learned doctor had an incurable weakness for the bang-tails and was in the habit of closing his classes every so often while he went to the nearest race track to dally with Lady Luck.

"No, I wasn't clockin' her," confessed the Feed-box Kid, recovering his equilibrium and turning his attention to the tall, gaunt old man with the long, kind face and snowy white locks which curled up over the silk-piped collar of his professorial frock coat. "I—I was thinkin' of something."

Had the dawn light been a little brighter and the old man's pale-blue eyes a little sharper he would have seen a flush on the Kid's boyish face. But Old Doc Doane, being wise in the ways of youth, didn't have to ask of whom or of what the Kid

had been thinking. He guessed, rightly too, that his daughter, Darla, had been the object of his young friend's dreams as he sat on the paddock fence.

"Of course you know, son, that Mr. Granville has purchased Georgette from the Sand Bar Stable, don't you?" asked the old man.

"What?" asked the Kid, incredulously. "Has that Hollywood fashion plate gone in for hoss racin'? The sport o' kings certainly is headed for the ash can. Rollo Granville a hoss owner! I'll never be the same after hearin' that!"

"And," continued Old Doc Doane, "Georgette is entered in the fourth race on Thursday's card. My horse, Carpet Sweeper, is in the same event; that's why I'm anxious to get a line on Granville's mare."

"Leave it to me, doctor! I'll have the old clock on her when she struts her stuff to-morrow mornin'. I ain't allus sleepin'. What else is in that race Thursday?"

"Not much except Kearns' Papst and 'Red' Morley's Ash Tray."

"Kearns and Morley both have entries, huh? Add them two birds to Granville and you have what I calls a dirty trinity. Too bad 'Piker Pete' Silverman ain't got a beetle

entered. That'd make it perfect—four bandits tried and true!"

"Aren't you a little unfair to Mr. Granville, son?"

"Not unless this race track is a church in disguise!" said the Kid. "Hasn't Granville become the little playmate of Kearns, Morley and Silverman? Ain't he with 'em most of the time? My dad used to tell me that if I laid down with dogs I'd get up with fleas, and that goes for Granville as well as me!"

"You may be right, son," said Old Doc Doane gravely, "and I don't mind telling you that I've been a bit surprised to see Mr. Granville associating with Kearns and Silverman. I wouldn't care, of course, were it not for the fact that I've permitted my daughter to go about with him quite a bit since she came to Oakwood."

"Did you tell her how them birds tried to make a pauper out of you back at Tall Oaks?" asked the Kid. "That ought to be enough to show her that anybody that'd play around with them guys ain't sittin' in your corner!"

"Darla is a sensible girl, son," the old man replied, "and I don't like to interfere with her amusements. If Mr. Granville isn't a genuine gentleman and sportsman she'll discover it in due time."

The Feed-box Kid derived small comfort from this prediction. He hadn't much confidence in women's powers of perception. He had seen enough of life to convince him that a smart guy like Granville could make Darla Doane or any other frail, which was his name for girls, believe that he was one of God's noblemen. He was searching his mind for words with which to convey this opinion to the old man without hurting the latter's feelings when his keen gray eyes detected a man coming from the stables west of the paddock. Following him was an oversized colored boy leading a sorrel horse with a blazed face.

The old man, seeing the Kid peering through the dim gray morning light, turned and followed his gaze.

"Looks like Morley," said the Kid. Then as the man drew nearer he added, "'Tis Morley. And that's Ash Tray the boy's leadin'. Gonna give her a work-out. Fair enough! Here's where I start to work!"

Morley led Ash Tray around to the three-quarter pole, where he stopped and said something to the exercise boy, and in an-

other second the big mare was thundering through the gloom of the back stretch.

As the mare broke swiftly into her full racing stride something clicked in the Kid's hand. "Wasn't in a trance that time," he muttered, as he and Old Doc Doane watched the flying Ash Tray burn up the track. Around the turn and into the stretch came the mare, lengthening her stride at every leap. As she flashed under the finish wire the watch in the Kid's hand clicked again.

"Whew!" he whistled. "Three quarters in one 'leven with a ton of coal on her back! And she was just beginnin' to run! You say, doctor, that Carpet Sweeper is in the same race with that mare Thursday?"

"He is, son. Looks as if Ash Tray might win, doesn't it?"

"Not maybe, but sure!" replied the Kid. "But Morley seems to be waitin' for something besides a soft spot. He's scratched Ash Tray the last four times she was entered. High-class mare, too. Full sister to Georgette and looks like her, except for that blazed face, but a much better runner!"

"Maybe Mr. Morley will let her run Thursday."

"If he don't you can bet the family plate Kearns and Granville and maybe Piker Pete are cookin' up something seasoned with strychnine. Look out for them birds, doctor, they'd steal the buttons off'n your B. V. D.s."

"You may be right, son," the old man admitted, smiling, "but there's an old Italian saying that 'It is not enough to know how to steal, one must know how to conceal.'"

"Right-o, doctor!" said the Feed-box Kid, "and that's one thing them guys know everything *but!*"

When Old Doc Doane invited the Kid to join him at breakfast the youth declined, saying, "Got to watch my knittin', doctor. They's a lot of beetles gonna loosen their joints here this mornin' and I got to be on the job."

"Good luck, son!" wished the old man, as he walked toward his barn.

Left alone the Kid remounted the paddock fence, propped his chin in one hand and lapsed into a soliloquy.

"Kid," he told himself, "you've got to come out of it. Here Old Doc Doane comes along and finds you sittin' on the paddock

fence dreamin' with your eyes wide open. You let that Georgette hoss do her stuff right in front of your eyes and you never even click the clock. Instead of gettin' a line on hosses, which is your business, you've been settin' here thinkin' 'bout a frail which don't even know you're on the Bush Circuit. Hosses is your game, Kid, not women. Just because Old Doc Doane lets you park your carcass around his stable and seems to like you ain't no sign his daughter's got to give you a tumble. Why should she? She's out of your class, Kid. You're just a plain hustler—a wise boy who gets information about hosses which are about to win and sells it to suckers who can't. Hustlin' ain't like toutin'. A tout can and does get five different suckers to bet on five different hosses in the same race, but a hustler's business is to find out just what hoss is going to win just which race and then go get himself a sucker who in exchange for that info will make a little bet for said hustler. Now, Kid, forget the frails and go to work!"

The Kid's intentions were good and he probably would have had a line on every horse that worked during the remainder of the dawn hour had he not seen Rollo Granville going toward the stable with his mare Georgette. The sight of Granville revived poignant memories. It took the Kid back to the day when he had first seen Darla Doane's photograph on the wall of her father's tackle room. Until then women had never intrigued his interest. But the photograph of this girl, then away at college, fascinated him. When Old Doc Doane wasn't looking he often furtively studied the face that smiled back at him. The picture of this fair girl lifted him out of the world in which he was accustomed to live—a world of excitement, horses, stables, crowds, bookmakers, jockeys, horse owners, touts and hustlers. It awakened in him something that had long lain dormant. It caused him to take stock of himself. He began by studying himself in the mirror. He wasn't at all impressed by the boyish face with the full gray eyes and tousled dark-brown hair reflected there. His clothes, which were not exactly conservative, running strongly to checks and colors, appeared all right to him, but when he probed deeper he wondered what a girl like Darla would think of a hustler like him. "Thank God!" he muttered, "I'm not a

common tout. At least I'm a square shooter. I pick winners for them that can't." So, when Old Doc Doane announced that Darla was coming from California to join him, the Feed-box Kid just hoped for the best.

He had gone to the little yellow station at Oakwood with Old Doc Doane the day of Darla's arrival, hoping that by the break of the game he would make a good first impression. When she alighted from the train he stood in the background waiting until the old man had greeted her. While father and daughter were still embracing, the Kid had caught his first glimpse of Rollo Granville, a tall, dark-eyed, flashily dressed individual with the manner of a dancing master. Granville's head was uncovered, displaying what the Kid later described as "a coat of patent leather" brushed straight back.

He heard Miss Doane introduce Granville to her father, and experienced a sinking feeling in the region of his heart when she added, "Rollo has been perfectly lovely to me all the way from Los Angeles. He's from Hollywood, dad, and he knows a lot about horses. He worked for Bill Hart in Western pictures."

Granville lost no time playing for Old Doc Doane's favor. He took the old man's hand and shook it warmly between both of his, smiling ingratiatingly.

Miss Doane, looking past her father and Granville, had seen the Kid waiting expectantly, and instinctively knew that he was with her parent. She flashed him a friendly smile that displayed two rows of small, even teeth and started the Kid's heart beating furiously. In another moment he had been presented, and the four moved up the platform, Granville carrying Miss Doane's luggage and—oh! irony of fate!—the Kid toting the smooth stranger's heavy suit case!

All of these memories flashed across the Kid's mind as he sat there in the early-morning light, scowling at the figure of Rollo Granville on his way back to the stable.

Thursday afternoon Old Doc Doane was in the paddock saddling Carpet Sweeper when the Feed-box Kid sauntered in. The Kid listened while the old man gave Jockey "Midget" Murray instructions on how to handle Carpet Sweeper in the race. After the old man had helped the boy into the

saddle, the Kid remarked, "Well, I see Morley has scratched Ash Tray again. What's the answer to that, doctor?"

The old man shook his head. "I don't know, son," he confessed. "Of course, everybody around Oakwood knows that his mare is ready and could win from this field to-day. If he started her she'd be odds-on favorite. Perhaps he is waiting until she's in a race where he can get a price. He doesn't believe in racing merely for the purse."

"I'm runnin' pretty light," admitted the Kid, "but I'll gamble every check I got that Morley and them other birds has got an ace in the hole. Some time durin' this meet there's going to be dirty work at the crossroads and don't you forget it. Kearns and Silverman would give their right eyes to send you to the cleaners."

Leaving the paddock Old Doc Doane and the Kid headed for the infield from which point of vantage the old man liked to watch a race. Near the clubhouse they met Darla Doane and Rollo Granville. The latter hadn't gone to the paddock to see Georgette saddled, leaving that formality to his colored trainer.

"Come with us, dad," Darla invited. "We're just going to Rollo's box in the grand stand."

The old man nodded assent, but there was a slight frown on his kindly face. The Kid could see that he was displeased to find Darla in Granville's company, but that young man was oblivious to Old Doc Doane's disapproval. As usual Rollo was very deferential to the old man, asking his opinion about different races of the day and nodding assent to everything Old Doc Doane said.

Arriving at the Granville box just as the six thoroughbreds pranced past the stands on their way to the post, the owner of Georgette begged to be excused, saying he wished to make a complimentary bet on his mare, Georgette. When he was out of ear-shot Old Doc Doane turned to Darla and said, "I wish, my dear, that you wouldn't be seen too much with that young man. He has taken up with a clique of questionable characters at this track—men who certainly are not a credit to the turf, and who have done and are doing their utmost to injure me."

"Why, dad!" exclaimed the girl. "I'm sure you are doing Rollo a great injustice.

He's a perfect peach. He's been simply wonderful to me. He wants me——"

"That's all right, dear," cut in her father, "but if he wishes to have the respect of decent men of the turf he must not associate with such characters as 'Handsome Harry' Kearns and Piker Pete Silverman. I repeat, I wish you wouldn't be seen with him so much."

"I'm sure you're wrong, dad, but I'll remember——"

The rest of her answer was cut short by the ever-thrilling shout from thousands of throats, "They're off!"

The Kid, who had a pecuniary interest in the outcome of the race, having induced one of his "clients," who hadn't cashed a bet all afternoon, to wager on Carpet Sweeper's chances, was on his feet the instant the barrier snapped.

"Get out of that pocket!" he screamed at Old Doc Doane's jockey, who, having failed to get Carpet Sweeper away well, was hedged in by three other horses before he had rounded the first turn. But the Kid might as well have been entreating the man in the moon to whistle. The roar of the crowd drowned out the Kid's voice, and Jockey Murray was left to his own racing wisdom to solve the problems of the race. The Midget, one of the best little riders on the Bush Circuit, was doing his utmost to find a hole through which to take his mount. He succeeded when the bunch was well up the back stretch. There he went around the horses that were impeding his progress, disposed of Georgette as they entered the stretch and then set out to wear down the leader, Papst.

"Go get that black beetle!" the little jockey on Carpet Sweeper urged his mount. "Show him the way to the pay-off station. Get along, ol' boy, get along about your business!"

At the eighth pole Carpet Sweeper shoved his nose up even with Papst's shoulder and in the final sixteenth drew away from the black gelding to win handily. Georgette, doing her utmost, finished third, half a length behind Papst.

Old Doc Doane and the Feed-box Kid waited until Granville returned before rising to leave the box. Granville appeared disappointed over Georgette's defeat, but shook Old Doc Doane's hand, congratulating him on Carpet Sweeper's victory. "You were lucky to-day," he laughed. "but Geor-

gette will show Carpet Sweeper the way home before this meet ends!"

"If she does," declared the Kid, "she'll have to ride in an airplane!"

Darla, pleased with Carpet Sweeper's victory, laughed gayly at this remark, and Granville flushed an angry red.

"That tout thinks he's funny!" he snarled as the Kid and Old Doc Doane pushed their way through the milling crowd that glutted the grand-stand aisles.

"He's not exactly a tout," the girl defended. "He's what is known as a hustler. Dad says he is a remarkably clean chap and as honest as the day is long. I rather like him!"

Granville made no retort. He was willing to bide his time.

A few nights after Carpet Sweeper's victory over Georgette, four men were conversing in low tones in the dim light of a solitary lantern in a feed room not far from Old Doc Doane's stable.

"Now, he thinks Carpet Sweeper can't be beat by anything at this track," said one. "And the next time he'll bet his bank roll on him."

"Doane can't afford to lose heavily again," said the man seated at his right. "He's dumped a lot of coin in the ring since he left Tall Oaks. First his mare Patricia went and pulled a tendon, then Mike, her half brother, was left at the post, and the last time he bet heavily on Cato that filly broke down."

The first speaker was Handsome Harry Kearns, a tall, broad-shouldered man with iron-gray hair, a youthful face and an engaging smile and manner. But no cleverer crook ever operated on the Bush Circuit. How he got away with his shady work year after year was one of the mysteries of the turf.

The second speaker was Piker Pete Silverman, heavy-jowled, overdressed, and pig-eyed. Old-timers on the Bush Circuit said he had been ruled off the Eastern tracks for fixing races. It was a story not hard to believe once one looked into his shifty eyes and watched his ever-twitching fingers.

The third and fourth members of the party were Rollo Granville, late of Hollywood, and Red Morley, a heavy-faced, thick-lipped man with a twisted nose, and owner of Ash Tray.

"Now, Granville," Handsome Harry sug-

gested, "if you think the only way you can grab the girl is to break Old Doc Doane, this is your chance. As Pete was saying, the old man has been pretty hard hit of late and I'm told he's having a hard time paying his feed bills. Of course, he can sell or mortgage a couple of his hosses, but as soon as he does that he's gonna lose his nerve. And once we get his nerve we've got him. He knows Carpet Sweeper is right at the top of his form now and next time he goes to the races he'll bet his skullcap. He'll probably figure this is his chance to recoup, borrow a lot of dough and bet it. Beat Carpet Sweeper next time out and you've got the old man in a hole. Let him win another heat and you ain't got as much chance of grabbin' the girl as a missionary has of living among the head hunters of New Guinea!"

Red Morley nodded in agreement. "Tuesday's the Fourth," he said, "and Doane has Carpet Sweeper entered in the last race. Granville's Georgette is in there, too. That's the layout we've been waitin' for ever since Carpet Sweeper got in shape. If you get cold feet now I'm through monkeyin' with you. I'll let Ash Tray run for the purses from now on. Lot of people are beginnin' to ask questions about the way I've been scratchin' her."

"I'm ready to shoot!" declared Granville, "but it seems to me I'm taking most of the risks while you fellows get the velvet!"

"Velvet hell!" exclaimed Morley. "Ain't I in up to my neck if there's a slip up? I've got as much to lose as you."

"Well, gentlemen, what do you say?" asked Handsome Harry in his silky voice, looking straight at Granville.

"All right!" said that worthy, resignedly. "You know what they say about faint heart and the fair lady. I'm on!"

"Then there's nothing more to be said," came from Kearns, who rose prepared to take his leave.

"Just one more thing," said Piker Pete, who never overlooked a chance to copper a bet. "In view of the fact this is a closed corporation this little stunt ain't going to be radioed to the wide world. I'm the only bookie in the ring that'll know what's on the cards. That'll give me the edge so's I can give a good price on Carpet Sweeper. But I want to be sure that Old Doc Doane does his gamblin' in my book. He nearly

ruined me at Tall Oaks and I'm itchin' to even the score."

"Oh, don't worry about that!" said Kearns impatiently. "Doane don't like you any better than you like him. He'd rather take your dough than saddle six winners in a row."

"All right," said Pete, rising and following the others out into the night, "but I wish there was some way to make sure of him!"

It was twilight of the day before the Fourth of July when "Umbrella Herb," so called because he was never without an umbrella, with a worry-lined face approached Old Doc Doane's tack room where the Kid had been enjoying the thrills of "Treasure Island" and the company of Old Doc Doane and his daughter, Darla. He didn't like to be disturbed, but gathering information was his business and in the past Herb, who was a tout, had often given him confidential news which had resulted in the Kid's increasing his bank roll as well as his clientele.

"I want to see you private," whispered Herb as the Feed-box Kid emerged from the tack room.

"Shoot!" said the Kid laconically when they had walked into the gloom some distance from the stables.

"Kid," began Herb impressively, "I want to know somethin'!"

"Shoot!" urged the Kid again.

"Know anything about dope?"

The Kid started slightly. "Sure!" he answered. "What d'you want to know about it?"

"Ever hear of a drug called anneline—brown anneline?"

"No-o-o, I don't believe I did," said the Kid slowly. "New one on me. Why?"

"Well," said Herb, "they's a certain guy here at the track wants me to go to the drug store and get him a package of brown anneline. Now, you know, Kid, I may be a tout an' all that, but I ain't buyin' dope for nobody. I never touched the stuff myself an' I ain't gonna be the goat for anybody what does."

"Who's it for?" asked the Kid.

"That'd be tellin'," replied Herb evasively.

"Well, I don't know what it is, but say the word and I'll ask Old Doc Doane; he knows everything!"

Umbrella Herb thought a moment, then said, "Go ahead. It can't do no harm."

Going back to Old Doc Doane's stable the Kid signaled the old man that he wanted to talk to him alone. Together they went into the box stalls off the tackle room, the horse owner telling the girl they would be back presently.

The Feed-box Kid plunged straight to the point. "Doctor, what's anneline—brown anneline?" he asked.

"Brown anneline!" echoed the old man. "Do you mean aniline—a-n-i-l-i-n-e?"

"I don't know how you spell it," answered the Kid, "but that's what I mean."

"Well, aniline is the base of many coal-tar dyes. Why do you ask, son?"

Then the Kid told him of Umbrella Herb's call and fear that aniline was some sort of drug, the purchase of which might get him in trouble.

While the Kid related what Herb had told him Old Doc Doane listened attentively, his pale-blue eyes lighting with interest. When the young man had finished, Old Doc Doane removed his skullcap, polished his glasses and said: "Son, your business around race tracks, as I understand it, is to gather inside information and dispose of it at a financial profit. I've never known you to stoop to underhand work and I would be the last person to suggest that you do. I believe too that you are in favor of clean racing. Well, to-night you are in a position to get some information which may be invaluable to me and other honest horse owners and which may mean a substantial increase in your bank roll. Go tell your friend that aniline is a dye and that he runs no danger in buying it. Then follow him. Keep out of his sight but see to whom he delivers his purchase. Keep your eyes open the rest of the night and you may discover some interesting things. Report back to me when you think you've seen enough!"

Returning to the outer darkness where Umbrella Herb was impatiently waiting him, the Kid laughed away Herb's fears and said: "Run along, pal, it's all right. Somebody's gonna restore his youth—that's all."

"Thanks, Kid," said Herb, moving off. "See you to-morrow. Happy Fourth!"

Keeping in the shadows the Feed-box Kid followed Herb from the race-track grounds to the little town of Oakwood, where Herb made his purchase, and back

again to the track. He saw Herb enter Rollo Granville's stable, and waited until the youthful tout came out again and disappeared in the darkness toward the Kearns stable, from which came the unmistakable sounds of a crap game.

Waiting until Herb was well out of sight the Kid moved cautiously up to the long row of stables, circled them and walking on the soft turf, back of the barns, made his way noiselessly to the rear of Granville's box stalls. In a few minutes he located a small knot hole through which he gazed for several hours witnessing strange happenings.

It was long after midnight when the Kid left Old Doc Doane's tack room after giving the old man a detailed verbal report of what he had seen and heard at Granville's stable. He hummed a popular love song as he made his way across the deserted track to the street leading to his rooming house. And just before he went to sleep to dream of a girl with blue eyes and Titian hair that curled cunningly at her temples he said to himself: "When the president of that Eastern college kicked Old Doc Doane out 'cause he had a weakness for the ponies he certainly done the sport o' kings a great favor—he sent real brains to the race track!"

The Fourth of July card brought out a tremendous crowd of horse lovers. Every train that puffed into the little yellow station at Oakwood disgorged thousands of sport-loving men and women from near-by cities and towns and when the bugle sounded calling the thoroughbreds to the post for the first race the stands and the lawns were jammed with a milling, happy and expectant crowd. In the betting ring runners for the various bookmakers encountered great difficulty in moving from book to book getting the ever-changing odds and reporting back to their masters.

On the edge of this milling mob, near the judges' stand, Rollo Granville, Handsome Harry Kearns and Red Morley stood together, talking about everything but the subject uppermost in their minds—the last race of the day. They had been there fifteen minutes when Granville, unable longer to suppress the desire to talk about that last race, asked: "Is everything O. K.?"

Kearns looked at Morley, and the man with the vivid scar on his cheek glanced

quickly to right and left before answering. "Everything O. K. on my end. How about you, Granville?"

"All set!" answered the youth from Hollywood. "It's up to the hoss now!"

The three men smiled. Each was thinking of the object at stake. Granville thought of a girl; Morley of gain; Kearns of revenge. Handsome Harry knew that Old Doc Doane had a weakness for betting—the only weakness in his make-up—and that he would spread his money lavishly in the betting ring when he thought his horse had a sporting chance to win. Judged solely on past performances there was nothing in the last race to-day which Doane's horse, Carpet Sweeper, couldn't outrun. The last time they went to the post together Carpet Sweeper had shown a clean pair of heels to Georgette and according to the form sheets Georgette was the only horse in the event that had a chance of beating the Doane entry. "I'm glad I haven't got a hoss entered," mused Kearns. "If there's any slip up Granville and Morley will have to take the gaff. I'm in the clear. And I'll have the satisfaction of seeing that old duffer Doane drop about all he's got left of the bank roll he won from Piker Pete and me at Tall Oaks. And I'll sink a good bet on Georgette. She'd ought to open at a good price."

While the fifth race was being run Old Doc Doane and the Feed-box Kid were talking earnestly to Midget Murray, jockey for the Doane stable, back of the paddock. A mystified listener was Darla Doane, clinging to her father's arm. "Don't bother your head about Georgette to-day, Midget," Old Doc Doane was telling the diminutive rider. "Innocent is the horse you've got to beat. Georgette will make the pace, but you lay off that. Pay no attention to Georgette, but be sure you bring Carpet Sweeper home in front of Innocent and the others. I'll take care of Georgette myself. Now don't lose your head and wear out Carpet Sweeper trying to overtake Georgette at the upper turn. Just beat Innocent and the others. That's all I ask, and I want you to assure me you understand."

"Sure, I understand!" declared the boy. "I won't pay no attention to Georgette even if she leads as far as from here across the track. I always obeys instructions, Doctor Doane!"

"I know you do, boy," said the old man, patting the youngster's shoulder.

The clear, high notes of "Boots and Saddles," coming from the bugler on the lower level of the judges' stand sent the Midget hurrying into the paddock. Old Doc Doane, the Kid and Darla followed more leisurely.

"Dad," said Darla, "I don't quite understand why you told your jockey not to worry about Georgette. You know she is the most dangerous contender in this field to-day. In fact, dad, Rollo told me that if I wanted to pick up some pin money to bet she'd win! When I told him I wouldn't think of betting against one of your horses he said that was foolish sentiment. He's going to bet a large sum on her. He feels absolutely sure of Georgette's victory!"

The old man smiled indulgently on his daughter. "You've just come from college, my dear, where you studied many things," he said. "Do you happen to recall a line of Homer's to the effect that 'Oft the victor triumphs but to fall?' If you see Mr. Granville after the fourth race this afternoon you might quote that line to him." Old Doc Doane hesitated a moment then added, "But I don't believe you'll ever care to see the young man from Hollywood after to-day."

The girl said nothing, but the Feed-box Kid saw a look in her eyes which told him that Darla Doane's heart had already been more than half won by Rollo Granville.

After saddling Carpet Sweeper the old man led the party to the grand stand. There he placed Darla in a box, saying, "Wait here, child, while we go down and do some business with Piker Pete Silverman and a few others. When we come back all of us will find a spot near the judges' stand where we can watch the finish of this race."

Down in the betting ring Piker Pete Silverman was straining his eyes for a glimpse of Old Doc Doane and his bank roll. His long, sweaty fingers were itching to relieve the old man of his money. His board showed that he was offering eight to five against Carpet Sweeper, two to one on Georgette—and taking no bets—four to one on Innocent and as high as thirty to one on some of the other six starters.

The talent, or wise betters, fancied Carpet Sweeper to win and wagered accordingly. Many of the books shortened the odds against Doane's horse to seven and

even six to five, but Piker Pete Silverman stood his ground, taking all bets offered at eight to five. When he saw Old Doc Doane and the Feed-box Kid pushing their way through the crowd, Pete leaned forward on his block and shouted: "This way, Silver Locks! Here's the place to do your shopping. Step right up and order what you want!"

The Kid tunneled his way through the crowd at Piker Pete's book and helped make way for the dignified old man at his heels. When they stood directly in front of Pete the old man removed the skullcap, which he always wore on pleasant days, mopped his expansive brow and said: "Mister Silverman, I am glad to see that you are not shaving the odds as some of your colleagues are on my horse Carpet Sweeper. It appears to me that Carpet Sweeper should be as good as two to one. This horse called Georgette is in pretty light, while my entry is carrying top weight!"

"Two to one if you say so, old-timer!" said Pete. "I'm here to do business and if you won't play my game I'll have to play yours. Dig into your jeans and let's see what you've got."

"How much of a wager will you accept at those odds?" queried Old Doc Doane.

"All you've got and all you can beg, borrow or steal, grandpa!" answered Pete, and there was a nasty sneer in his voice. "You've been shot full of luck in the past, doc, but you've gotta have something more than luck to win money at the races—you've gotta have brains, too."

It was obvious that Piker Pete was trying to anger the old man, hoping to draw a heavy bet. If such was his intention it utterly failed. Old Doc Doane smiled his kindly smile, pulled a wallet from his inside coat pocket and began peeling off yellow-backed bills.

The crowd, knowing the feud that existed between Old Doc Doane and Piker Pete, looked on with popping eyes as the old man counted off hundred after hundred. When the count reached four thousand dollars Doane returned the wallet to his pocket and with great deliberation divided the bills into two sheaves of two thousand dollars each. Piker Pete watched the bills with greedy eyes.

"Here's two thousand I'd like to wager against four thousand that Carpet Sweeper wins!" Old Doc Doane said quietly.

"What y'gonna do with the other two grand?" asked Pete, taking the money offered.

"Wait around until the price goes to three to one," the old man replied evenly, knowing that Piker Pete, confident Georgette already had the race as good as won, would give those odds now that his greed was aroused.

"You don't have to look no further nor wait no longer," cried Pete. "Make the doc out a ticket—six thousand dollars to two thousand dollars," he instructed his assistant.

As Old Doc Doane was pocketing his tickets Piker Pete addressed the crowd: "This old antique thinks pretty well of a hoss called Carpet Sweeper. Any other suckers in the crowd? If so step up and trade!"

"I'll be back after the race to trade these two tickets for ten thousand dollars, Mister Silverman," said Old Doc Doane.

The crowd laughed, but Piker Pete laughed loudest.

With Darla between them Old Doc Doane and the Feed-box Kid went to the little gate that opens on the track near the judges' stand. The girl was visibly worried. She knew that her father had been forced to borrow part of the money he bet on Carpet Sweeper. She knew, too, that Rollo Granville was supremely confident that his entry in the mile event would win.

The nine thoroughbreds were now at the post, their riders jockeying for an advantage. Carpet Sweeper, one of the best-behaved horses that ever went to the post, kept on his toes but always faced the barrier even when crowded out of his rightful position by other high-strung animals. Jockey Connors, on Georgette, tried several times to beat the barrier, only to bring upon himself the wrath of the official starter. "Bring that mare back here!" he bellowed. "Next time you try that I'll fine you, Connors. Bring her back, I tell you!"

At last the nine thoroughbreds, their eyes flashing, nostrils flaring, all faced the web at the same time and in alignment. At that second the barrier shot into the air, the assistant starters cracked their whips at the heels of the racers and the starter screamed: "On your way. You're off!"

Georgette, who had the rail, was a quick breaker. She rushed to the lead, Innocent, from position number two, at her

flank. Midget, from an outside position, took Carpet Sweeper at an easy slant to the rail and fell in behind Innocent. As the bunch rounded the first turn and started down the long back stretch Georgette, leading by several lengths, was setting a fast pace. Midget Murray, following instructions from Old Doc Doane, paid no heed to the flying mare, but clung to Innocent's flank.

"Georgette's got speed to sell to-day!" said the Feed-box Kid. "Looks like she's going to make every post a winning one. Innocent has a lot in reserve, but the Midget's got Carpet Sweeper's head in his lap. Wait 'til he sets that hoss down in the stretch! That's where races are won!"

Darla, seeing the wide gap between Georgette and Carpet Sweeper, shuddered. She couldn't see how her father's horse would ever overtake Granville's flying mare. "He told me she'd win, dad, and, oh! I'm so sorry!"

"Races are not won until the official numbers are hung up, daughter," the old man replied. "It's a long way from the stretch turn to the judges' stand, and it's a longer way from the judges' stand to the pay-off station."

The girl did not understand this enigmatic statement. She prayed that Georgette would quit at the head of the stretch, that by some turn of fortune Carpet Sweeper would come under the wire first.

Into the stretch turn came the thundering thoroughbreds. Midget Murray let out a wrap and sat down to ride. Carpet Sweeper shot forward, sticking his nose up to Innocent's shoulder. As they straightened out for the run home, Jockey Ince, on Innocent, brought his whip down sharply on his mount's flank and the game little thoroughbred responded nobly. At the eighth pole Georgette was leading by three lengths and going strong. Innocent and Carpet Sweeper were on even terms now, fighting it out for second place. At the sixteenth Midget Murray brought his open hand down on the flank of Carpet Sweeper and that good horse leaped forward in pursuit of Georgette, leaving Innocent half a length behind.

"Guess the difference in weights has given Georgette the best of it to-day," remarked the presiding judge who was watching the oncoming horses closely. "Connor hasn't laid whip nor spur on her and she'll

win easily. Belongs to that chap from Hollywood, doesn't she?"

"Yep!" grunted the associate judge. "Understand he learned all he knows about horses working for Bill Hart out on the coast. But it certainly appears to be enough!"

Old Doc Doane, with four thousand dollars bet on his horse to win, just glanced at Georgette as she flashed under the wire, then turned to watch Carpet Sweeper, who was doing his utmost to hold off Innocent. His horse weakened slightly twenty yards from the wire, but managed to keep his nose in front long enough to cross the finish second to Georgette.

"Now, Darla dear, you watch things closely," he said, his hand on the gate leading to the track, "and you'll see what is meant by the old saying that 'A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.'"

Old Doc Doane waited until Connor, a broad smile on his wizened face, brought Georgette back to the judges' stand and into the chalk circle which is reserved for winners.

Just as the little jockey touched the visor of his cap with his whip and said, "Judges!" the smiling Rollo Granville stepped up to shake the boy's hand. At his heels was Old Doc Doane. The old man walked through the ring to the judges' pagoda and held up a long slender hand. The judges, recognizing the tall gaunt old man with the snowy white hair curling up over the collar of his professorial coat, bent over to hear what he had to say.

"Gentlemen!" said Old Doc Doane, his voice slightly lifted above its normal tone, "before you give the signal to hang up the numbers which make this race official, I want to show you what the moving-picture people mean when they say 'So-and-so doubled for So-and-so in that picture.' Mr. Granville, owner of the mare Georgette, is from Hollywood where he learned a lot of tricks. Tricks are all right in the movies but we don't need them on this circuit! With your permission I'll now expose one of them!"

Granville, standing near Georgette, stared

at the old man, his white face twitching and his mouth open.

Turning to Georgette Old Doc Doane pulled a small tin can from his pocket, turned its contents into a small sponge and began rubbing the sponge up and down on the face of the trembling animal. Instantly the odor of ether permeated the air. At the same time the brown on Georgette's face began to run, giving way to a long white streak.

"A ringer, by gad!" exclaimed the presiding judge.

"Yes," explained the old man, "this is not Georgette, but Mr. Red Morley's excellent horse, Ash Tray. Mr. Granville did this artistic bit of work with aniline dye over at his barn last night. It's what we might call a Hollywood touch!"

The presiding judge's face flamed with anger. Looking down at Granville he waved that thoroughly chagrined young horseman off the track. Then in a hoarse trembling voice he cried, "Change those numbers! This mare is disqualified! The race goes to Carpet Sweeper, with Innocent second and that fourth horse third."

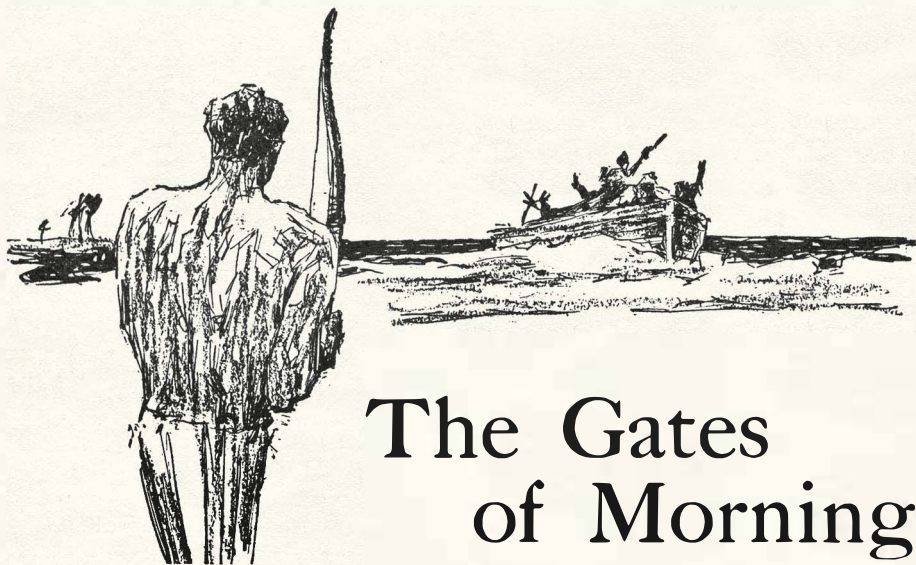
As Granville slunk away he almost bumped into Darla Doane and the Feed-box Kid. He opened his mouth as if to speak to the girl, but she turned away, put her arm through the Kid's and said, "Come! Let's join dad!"

"Son," said Old Doc Doane, as he walked along with the Kid and Darla after cashing his bets on Carpet Sweeper, "I made a good bet for you to-day, and I think you ought to take care of your friend, Umbrella Herb. Herb probably didn't know it, but he gave you some good information. And you might tell him that his friend Granville has announced his intention to return to the West immediately. I guess he hasn't a friend left on this track. Has he, Darla?" he asked pointedly, turning to her.

"Not to my knowledge!" said the girl emphatically and she smiled up at her father—and gently squeezed the arm of the Feed-box Kid.

Another racing story by Mr. O'Donnell in the next number.





The Gates of Morning

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "Gold and the Girl," "The Garden of God," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Although he did not know it, Fate led Colin Peterson, master of the schooner *Kermadec*, by the hand when he put into Karolin atoll for water. Fate brought his boat to the southern beach where the half-breed Kanaka girl, Le Moan, was waiting. Fate hid the rest of the Karolin tribe from his eyes and hid him and his ships from the Karolinians. And Fate sealed the lips of Le Moan and sent her back aboard the *Kermadec* with Peterson. From then on Fate left matters in the hands of Le Moan. And in due time she brought the *Kermadec* back from Levua to the great lagoon of Karolin. But Peterson stayed in Levua, where Rantan, the mate, and Carlin, the beach comber, and Sru, the Kanaka bos'n, left him for dead. Le Moan, with her savage instinct for direction, brought the *Kermadec* back; and Rantan and his mutineers followed her because of the pearl she wore behind her ear. Karolin was a virgin pearl lagoon—and they came for the pearls. Now Rantan was a clever man. He had planned with cunning. All the known factors in the murderous game he played had been dealt with and discounted by his crafty brain. Fatal for him that he did not know, and could scarcely have foreseen, the one factor most important of all. Dick Lestrange was the joker destined to bring his schemes to disaster, wreck his hopes of wealth, and lead himself into the shadow of death. The depleted tribe of Karolin knew Dick as Taori, and acknowledged him its king. How this English boy, born a castaway of a castaway mother and father, came with his castaway mate, Katafa, to Karolin, is a long story. The details of his early life on Palm Tree Island, to the north, with Kearney, the old sailor, concern this tale only indirectly. Likewise, the childhood of Katafa, Spanish of blood and savage of breeding, is only distantly pertinent. Neither Dick nor Katafa remembered much of those early days nor cared much to dwell on them. Of the white blood in their veins they knew nothing. To themselves and their subjects of Karolin they were Kanakas—Kanakas of a superior mold—but Kanakas none the less. They were concerned only with themselves and the immediate moment. The past was nothing and the future but little more. Nevertheless they held unguessed potentialities—the potentialities of their white heritage. Karolin had never served a king and a queen so gifted with the ruling talent. It was against a tribe fortified with such leaders that Rantan brought the *Kermadec*, all unsuspecting.

(A Four-Part Story—Part II.)

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LITTLE SHIPS.

LE MOAN had left Karolin as a gull leaves the reef, unnoticed.

Not a soul had seen her go and it was not for some days that Aioma, busy with the tree felling, recollected her existence and the fact that she had not fol-

lowed him to the northern beach. Then he sent a woman across and she had returned with news that there was no trace of the girl though her canoe was beached; also that there was no trace of food having been cooked recently, also that the girl must have been gone some days, as there were no recent sand traces. The wind, even when it is only moderately strong, blurs and ob-

literates sand traces, and the woman judged that no one had been about on the southern beach for some days. She had found traces, however, for which she could not account. The marks left by the boots of Peterson, also the footsteps of the Kanakas who had carried the water casks, disturbed her mind. They had nearly vanished, but it seemed to her that many people had been there—a statement that left Aioma cold.

Aioma had no time for fancies. If the girl were alive, she would come across in her canoe; if death had come to her in any of the forms in which death walked the reef, there was no use in troubling. The call to the canoe building, resented at first, had given him new youth. The spirit of the sea sang in him and the perfume of the new-felled trees brought Uta Matu walking on the beach, and his warriors.

Aioma, like Le Moan, had no use for the past or the future. The burning present was everything.

Things that had been were to Aioma things floating alongside at a greater or less distance, not astern. It was not the memory of Uta Matu that walked the beach, but Uta Matu himself, untouchable because of distance, and unable to talk as he had talked in life, but still there. Aioma had not to turn his head to look backward at him as we have to turn our heads to see our dead; he had only to glance sidewise, as it were. The things of yesterday, the day before yesterday and the day before that, were beside Aioma at greater or lesser distances, not behind him; all like surf riders on the same wave with him and carried forward by the same flowing, yet ever separating one from the other though keeping in line.

In the language of Karolin there was no word indicating our idea of the past except the word *akuma*—distance—which might mean the distance between a canoe and a canoe, or between a happening of to-day and of yesterday, and to the woman who judged that Le Moan had not trod the beach for some days, "days" meant measures of distance, not of time. Le Moan had been traveling, moving away from the beach, not returning, while so many sunrises had occurred and so many sunsets. She had been away a long distance, not a long time.

The speed of a man running a mile on Karolin had nothing to do with the time occupied. It was a measure of his strength. The race was a struggle between the man

and the mile, and of the runners the swiftest to a Karolinite was not the quickest but the strongest and most agile. This profound truth was revealed to their instinctive sight undimmed by the *muscæ volitantes* which we call minutes, seconds and hours; also the truth that when the race was over it was not extinct but just removed to a distance, just as a canoe drifting from a canoe is not extinct, though untouchable and out of hail and fading at last from sight through distance.

A dead man on Karolin was a man who had drifted away. He was there, but at a distance. He might even return through the distance in a stronger way than memory sight could reveal him! Many had. Uta Matu himself had been seen in this way by several since he had drifted away; he had come back once to tell Nalia the wife of Oti where the sacred paddle was hid, the paddle which acted as the steer oar of the biggest war canoe. He had forgotten that the war canoe had been destroyed. Still he had returned. Though with a Melanesian strain in them, unlike the Melanesians the men of Karolin had no belief that the souls of ancestors become reincarnated in fish or birds, nor did they believe in the influence of Mana, that mysterious spiritual something believed in so widely by Polynesians and Melanesians alike.

Memory, to the Karolinite, was a sort of sight which enabled the living to look not over the past but the present, and see the people and things that floated, not behind in a far-off past, but to right and left in a far-off present.

Just as the surf rider sees his companions near and far, all borne on the same wave, though some might be beyond reach of voice, and some almost invisible through distance. The return of a spirit was an actual moving of a distant one toward the seer, as though a surf rider were to strike out and swim to a far-off fellow at right angles to the flow of the wave.

So Aioma, as he worked, saw Uta Matu and his warriors and the old canoe builders, not as dead-and-gone figures, but as realities, though beyond touch and hail of voice and sight of the eye of flesh.

Since the war, years ago, between the northern and southern tribes, a large proportion of the children born on the island had been boys, while most of the women had developed manly attributes in accordance

with that natural law which rules in the remotest island as well as in the highest and broadest civilization.

Aioma had no need of helpers, leaving out the boys, some dozen or so, who could wield an ax as well as a man, but Aioma, though his heart and soul were in his work, was no mere canoe builder. He had in him the making of a statesman. He would not let Dick work at the building or do any work at all except fishing and fish spearing.

"You are the chief," said Aioma as he sat of an evening before the house of Uta Matu, now the house of Dick. "You are young and do not know all the ways of things, but I love you as a son. I do not know what is in you that is above us, but the sea I love is in your eyes. The sea, our father, sent you, but you have still to learn the ways of the land, where the chief does no work." Then he would grunt to himself and rock as he sat, and then his voice rising to a whine: "Could the people raise their heads to one who labors with them, or would they bow their heads so that he might put his foot on their necks?" Then casting his eyes down he would talk to himself, the words so run together as to be indistinguishable, but always, Katafa noticed, his eyes would return again and again to the little ships in the shadow of the house, the model ships made by Kearney long ago, the vestiges of a civilization of which Dick and Aioma and Katafa knew nothing, or only that the ships, the big ships of which these were the likenesses, were dangerous and the men in their evil and to be avoided or destroyed if possible.

The *Portsey* of long ago that had fired a cannon shot and destroyed Katafa's canoe, the schooner that had brought the Melanesians to Palm Tree, the Spanish ship that had been sunk in Karolin lagoon and the whaler that had come after her, all these had burned into the minds of Dick, Aioma and Katafa, the fact that something of which they did not know the name—but which was civilization—was out there beyond the sea line; something that, octopus-like, would at times thrust out a feeler in the form of a ship, an *ayat* destructive and, if possible, to be destroyed.

Ayat was the name given by Karolin to the great burgomaster gulls that were to the small gulls what schooners are to canoes, and so anything in the form of a ship was an *ayat*, that is to say a thing carrying with

it all the propensities of a robber and a murderer; for the great gulls would rob the lesser gulls of their food and devour their chicks, and fight, and darken the sunshine of the reef with their wings.

The comparison was not a compliment to the Pacific traders or their ships or the civilization that had sent them forth to prey on the world, but it was horribly apposite.

And yet the little *ayats* in the shadow of the house had for Aioma an attraction beyond words. They were as fascinating as sin. This old child after a hard day's work would sometimes dream of them in his sleep, dream that he was helping to sail them on the big rock pool, as he sometimes did in reality. The frigate, the full-rigged ship, the schooner and the whaler, all had cruised in the rock pool which seemed constructed by nature as a model testing tank; indeed the first great public act of Dick as ruler of the Karolinites had been a full review of this navy on the day after he had fetched Aioma from the southern beach. Aioma, fascinated by the sight of the schooner which Dick had shown him on his landing, had insisted on seeing the others launched and the whole population had stood round ten deep, with the little children between the women's legs, all with their eyes fixed on the pretty sight. The strangest sight, for Kearney the illiterate and ignorant had managed to symbolize the two foundations of civilization, war and trade, and here in little yet in essence lay the ships of Nelson and the ships of Villeneuve; the great wool ships, the *Northumberland* that had brought Dick's parents to Palm Tree, the whalers of Marthas Vineyard and the sandalwood schooners—those first carriers of the disease of the white man.

To Aioma the schooner was the most fascinating. He knew the whaler, with her try works and her heavy davits and her squat build; he had seen her before in the whaler whose brutal crew had landed and been driven off. He knew the ship, he had seen its likeness in the Spanish ship of long ago. The frigate intrigued him; but the schooner took his heart; it was not only that he understood her rig and way of sailing better than the rig and way of sailing of the others. It was more than that. Aioma was an instinctive ship lover and to the lover of ships the schooner has most appeal, for the schooner is of all things that float the most graceful and the most beautiful and in

contrast to her canvas the canvas of your square-rigged ship is dishcloths hung out to dry.

He brooded on this thing over which Kearney had expended his most loving care, and in which nothing was wanting. He understood the topping lifts that supported the main boom, the foresail, the use of the standing rigging. Kearney, through his work, was talking to him, and just as Kearney had explained this and that to Dick, so Dick was explaining it to Aioma. Truly a man can speak though dead, even as Kearney was speaking now.

The method of reefing a sail was unknown to Aioma. A canoe sail never is reefed; reduction of canvas is made by tying the head of the sail up to spill the wind. Fore canvas was unknown to Aioma, but he understood.

The subconscious mathematician in him that made him able to build great canoes capable of standing heavy weather and carrying forty or fifty men apiece, understood all about the practice of the business, though he had never heard of centers of rotation, absolute or relative velocities, of impelling powers, or the laws of the collision of bodies, of inertia, or pressures of resistance, or squares of velocity, or series of inclinations.

Squatting on his hams before the little model of the *Raratanga* he knew nothing of these things and yet he knew that the schooner was good, that she would sail close to the wind with little leeway when the wind was on the beam, that the rudder was better than the steering paddle, that the sail area, though great, would not capsize her, that she was far and miles ahead of anything he had ever made in the form of a ship; that the maker of the *ayat* was a genius beside whom he was a duffer—unknowing that Kearney was absolutely without inventive genius and that the schooner was the work of a million men extending over three thousand years.

Katafa, sitting beside Dick, would watch Aioma as he brooded and played with the thing. It had no fascination for her. The little ships had always repelled her, if anything. They were the only dividing point between her and Dick. She could not feel his pleasure or interest in them, and from this fact perhaps arose a vague foreboding that perhaps some day in some way the little ships might separate them. When a woman loves she can become jealous of a man's

pipe, of his tennis racket, of his best friend, of anything that she can't share and which occupies his attention, at times, more than her.

But the essence of jealousy is concentration and Katafa's green eye was cast not so much on the whole fleet as on the little schooner. This was Dick's favorite, as it was Aioma's.

One night, long after the vanishing of Le Moan, so long that every one had nearly forgotten her, Aioma had a delightful dream.

He dreamed that he was only about an inch high and standing on the schooner's deck. Dick, reduced to the same stature, was with him and half a dozen others and the schooner was in the rock pool, which had spread to the size of Karolin lagoon. Oh, the joy of that business! They were hauling up the mainsail and up it went to the pull of the halyards just as he had often hauled it with the pull of his finger and thumb on the tiny halyards of the model—but this was a real great sail and men had to pull hard to raise it, and there it was set. Then the foresail went up and the jib was cast loose and Aioma, mad with joy, was at the tiller, the tiller that he had often moved with his finger and thumb.

Then, pressed by the wind, she began to heel over and the outrigger—she had taken on an outrigger—went into the air. He could see the outrigger grating with drinking nuts and bundles of food tied to it after the fashion of seagoing canoes, and he shouted to his companions to climb on to it and bring it down. Then he awoke, sweating but dazzled by the first part of the dream.

Two days later a boy came running and shouting to him as he was at work, and turning, Aioma saw the fulfillment of his vision. Borne by the flooding tide, with all sails drawing and a bone in her teeth, the little schooner, swelled to a thousand times her size, was gayly entering the lagoon. It was the *Kermadec*.

CHAPTER XV.

"WAR."

RANTAN was at the wheel, and Le Moan forward, with swelling heart, stood watching as they passed the break, the Gates of Morning, through which the tide was flooding like a mill race. She saw the southern beach still deserted and the northern

beach where the trees sheltered the village from sight. Not a sign of life was to be seen in all that vast prospect of locked lagoon and far-running reefs till from the distant trees a form appeared—Aioma.

After him came others till the beach close to the trees was thronged by a crowd, ever in movement like a colony of ants disturbed, and showing now against the background of the trees the glint of spears. Le Moan's heart sank under a sudden premonition of evil. She turned and glanced to where Rantan at the wheel was staring ahead and Carlin close by him shading his eyes.

Rantan had not expected this. He had fancied Karolin deserted. Sru had said nothing of what Le Moan had told him about Taori and he said nothing now as he stood with eyes wrinkled against the sun blaze from the lagoon. Taori, he had gathered to be some Kanaka boy, a love of Le Moan's who, so far from giving trouble, would welcome her back. But that crowd, its movements, and the flash of the thready spears! He made vague answers to the questions flung at him by the mate, then at the order to let go the anchor he ran forward, while Carlin dived below returning with two of the Veterli rifles and ammunition. Then as the anchor fell and the *Kermadec* swung to her moorings on the flood, nose to the break, Rantan, leaving the wheel and standing with compressed lips, his hand on the after rail and his eyes on the crowd, suddenly broke silence and turned to Carlin.

"We don't want any fighting," said he. "We've got to palaver them. It's a jolt. Peterson said the place was empty and I reckon he lied or else he didn't keep his eyes skinned, but whether or no we've got to swallow it. Worst is we've no trade to speak of, nothing but sandalwood. No matter—we don't want nothing but to be left alone. Order out the boat and we'll row off to them—and keep those guns hid."

He went below for Peterson's revolver, which Carlin had forgotten, and when he returned the boat was down, with four Kanakas for crew and Carlin in the stern sheets. He followed and took his place by the beach comber, and the boat pushed off.

He had made a great blunder, had absolutely forgotten the existence of Le Moan and her use as an ambassador, but the mind of Rantan was working against odds.

He had never consciously worried about

Peterson; the dead Peterson was done with and out of count, and yet away in the back of his mind Peterson existed, not as a form, not even as a shadow, but as the vaguest, vaguest hint of possible trouble, some day. Steering, or smoking below or enjoying in prospect the profits to be got out of the venture, Rantan would be conscious of a something that was marring his view of things, something that, seizing it with his mind, would prove to be nothing more than just a feeling that trouble might come some day owing to Peterson.

On sailing into the lagoon, the wind across that great blue pearl garden had swept his mind clear of all trace of worry. Here was success at last, wealth for the taking and no one to watch the taker or interfere with his doings. No one but the gulls. A child on that beach would have shattered the desolation and destroyed the feeling of security and detachment from the world.

Then the trees had given up their people and to Rantan it was almost as though Peterson himself had reappeared.

He had reckoned to get rid of the crew of the *Kermadec* in his own given time after he had worked them for his profit, to get rid of Carlin, of his own name, of everything and anything that could associate him with this venture—and here were hundreds of witnesses where he had expected to find none but the gull that cannot talk.

Truly it was a jolt.

As the boat drew on for the shore the crowd on the beach moved and spread and contracted and then became still, the spears all in one clump.

There were at least thirty of the boys of Karolin able to hurl a spear with the precision of a man, and when Aioma had sighted the schooner and given the alarm, Dick, who had been on the outer beach, had called them together. Taiepa, the son of Aioma, had distributed the spears and Aioma himself in a few rapid words had fired the hearts of the tribe.

The strangers must not be allowed to land. For a moment, but only a moment, he took the command of things from Dick's hands. "They came before," said Aioma, "when I was a young man, and the great Uta, knowing them to be men full of evil, would not allow them to land but drove them off. And yet again they came in a canoe bigger than the first"—the Spanish ship—"and they landed and fought with

Uta and he killed them and burned their great canoe, and yet again they have come and yet again we must fight. We are few, but Taori in himself is many."

"They shall not land," said Dick, "even if I face them alone."

That was the temper of Karolin and it voiced itself as the boat drew closer to the beach in a cry that rang across the water, harsh and sudden, making the Kanaka rowers pause and turn their heads.

"They mean fighting," said Carlin, bending toward one of the rifles lying on the bottom boards.

"Leave that gun alone," said Rantan.

He ordered the rowers to pull a bit closer, rising up and standing in the stern sheets and waving his hand to the beach crowd as though intimating that he wished to speak to them.

The only answer was a spear flung by Taiepa that came like a flash of light and fell into the water true of aim but short by a few yards. The rowers stopped again and backed water. While Carlin picked up the floating spear as a trophy and put it with the rifles, Rantan sat down. Then he ordered them to pull ahead, altering the helm so that the bow turned away from shore and to the west.

As they moved along the beach the distant crowd followed, but the mate did not heed it. He was busy taking notes of the lie of the land, and the position of the trees. The trees, though deep enough to hide the village from the break, were nowhere dense enough to give efficient cover. The reef just here was very broad but very low. A man would be a target—the head and shoulders of him at least—even if he were on the outer coral. Rantan, having obtained all the information he required on these matters, altered the course of the boat and made back for the ship.

"Aren't you going to have one single shot at them?" asked the disgusted Carlin.

"You wait a while," replied the other.

When they reached the *Kermadec* he ordered the men to remain in the boat, and going on board dropped down below with his companion. He went to the locker where the ammunition was stored and counted the boxes. There were two thousand rounds.

"I reckon that will do," said Rantan. "You said you were a good shot. Well, you've got a chance to prove your words. I'm going to shoot up this lagoon."

"From the ship?"

"Ship—no! The boat's good enough. They have no cover worth anything and only a few old fishing canoes that aren't good enough to attack us in."

"Well, I'm not saying you're wrong," said Carlin, "but seems to me it will be more than a one-day job."

"We aren't hustled for time," replied the other, "not if it took weeks."

They came on deck, each carrying a box of ammunition. The spear salvaged by Carlin had been brought on board by him and stood against the rail. Neither man noticed it, nor did they notice Le Moan crouched in the doorway of the galley and seeming to take shelter from the sun.

Carlin had ordered a water breaker to be filled. He carefully lowered it himself into the boat, then got in, followed by the mate. The boat pushed off, with Sru rowing stern oar and Rantan at the yoke lines.

It was close on midday and the great sun directly overhead poured his light on the lagoon. Beyond the crowd and the trees on the northern beach the coral ran like a white road for miles and miles to be lost in a smoky shimmer, and from the reef came the near-and-far voice of the breakers on the outer beach.

The crew left on board, some six in number, had dropped into the fo'c's'le to smoke and talk. Le Moan could hear their voices as she rose and stood at the rail, her eyes fixed on the boat and her mind divided between the desire to cast herself into the water and swim to the reef and the instinct which told her to stay and watch and wait.

She knew what a rifle was. She had seen Peterson practicing with one of the Viterlis at a floating bottle. There were rifles in the boat, but it was not the rifles that filled her mind with a foreboding amounting to terror; it was Rantan's face as he returned and as he left again. And she could do nothing.

Carlin, before lowering the water breaker, had handed an ax into the boat. Why? She could not tell, nor why the water breaker had been taken. It was all part of something that she could not understand, something that was yet evil and threatening to Taori.

She could not make his figure out among the crowd; it was too far, and yet he was surely there.

She watched.

The boat drew on toward the beach. Then at the distance of a couple of hundred yards the oarsmen ceased rowing and she floated idly and scarcely drifting, for it was slack water, the flood having ceased. One might have thought the men on board of her were fishing or just lazing in the sun—anything but the truth.

Then Le Moan saw a tiny puff of smoke from the boat's side, a figure among the crowd on the beach sprang into the air and fell, and on the still air came the far-off crack of a rifle.

Carlin had got his man. He was an indifferent shot but he could scarcely have missed as he fired into the crowd. Rantan, no better shot, fired immediately after and by some miracle nobody was hit.

Then as Le Moan watched she saw the crowd break to pieces and vanish among the trees, leaving only two figures on the beach, one lying on the sands and one standing erect and seeming to threaten the boat with upflung arm. It was Taori. Her sight, as though it had gained telescopic power, told her at once that it was Taori.

She saw him bend and catch up the fallen figure in his arms and as he turned to the trees with it the boat fired again, but missed him. Another shot rang out before he reached the trees, but he vanished unscathed, and quiet fell on the beach and lagoon, broken only by the clamor of gulls disturbed by the firing.

Le Moan changed her place; the ebb was beginning to run and the schooner to swing with it. She came forward and took her position near the fo'c's'le head, her eyes still fixed on the boat and beach. From the fo'c's'le came the sound of an occasional snore from the Kanakas who had turned in and were sleeping like dogs.

Four fishing canoes lay on the sands near the trees, and now, as she watched, she saw the boat under way again, pulling in to the beach. The rowers tumbled out and the boat pushed off a few yards with only the two white men in her, while the landing party made for the canoes and began to smash them up.

Sru—she could tell him by his size—wielded the ax, two others helped in the business with great lumps of loose coral, while the fourth stood watch.

It took time, for they did their work thoroughly, breaking the outriggers, breaking the outrigger poles, breaking the canoe

bodies, working with the delight that children take in sheer destruction.

The god Destruction was abroad on Karolin beach and lagoon. Though without a temple or a place in mythology of all the gods, he is the most powerful, the most agile and quick of eye, and the swiftest to come when called.

Le Moan, watching, saw the four men on the beach stand contemplating their work before returning to the boat.

Then she saw one of them throw up his hands and fall as if felled by an ax. The others turned to run and the foremost of them tripped as a man trips on a kink in a carpet and fell; of the two others one pitched and turned a complete somersault as though some unseen jujutsu player had dealt with him, and the fourth crumpled like a sudden closed concertina.

Le Moan's heart sprang alive in her. 'She knew. The terrible arrows of Karolin, poisoned with argora that kills with the swiftness and more than certainty of a bullet, had, fired from the trees, done their work.

The spear was the favorite weapon of Karolin, not the bow. The bow was used only on occasions and at long distances. When they came down to resist the landing of Rantan, they had come armed with spears. Driven to the shelter of the trees, Aioma, the artful one, had remembered the bows stowed in one of the canoe houses. It was years since the arrows had been poisoned, but the poison of argora never dies, nor does it weaken with time.

In four swings of a pendulum the arrows had done their work, and four upstanding men lay stretched on the beach, motionless, for this terrible poison, striking at the nerve centers, kills in two beats of the pulse.

Rantan and Carlin, close enough to see the flight of the arrows, put wildly out, tugging at the heavy oars and rowing for their lives; a few hundred yards offshore they paused, rested on their oars and took council.

It was a bad business.

Armed with rifles and with easy range they had only managed to bag one of the enemy whereas—

"Hell!" said Carlin.

The sweat was running down his broad face. Rantan, brooding, said nothing for a moment. Then suddenly he broke silence.

"We've dished their canoes. They can't come out and attack us. We've got the

range over them. Those arrows are no use at any long distance. They live mostly on fish, those chaps, and they can't come out and fish, having no canoes, and we aren't hurried for time." He seemed talking to himself, adding up accounts, while Carlin, who had picked up one of the rifles, sat with it across his knees, his face turned shoreward where on the beach lay the four dead men, and save for the gulls not a sign of life. The boat on the ebb tide was drifting slowly back in the direction of the schooner.

"We've just got to row up along," went on Rantan, "and get level with the trees. Those trees don't give much shelter across the reef. Their houses wouldn't stop a bullet from a popgun. Take your oar; when we've got our position we can anchor and take things quiet."

Carlin, putting his gun down, took his oar and they began pulling the heavy boat against the current till they got opposite the village and the trees.

Then, within rifle shot but beyond the reach of arrow flight, they dropped the anchor and the boat swung to the current and broadside to the shore.

Rantan was right. The trees, though dense enough in patches, were not a sufficient cover for a crowd of people, and the houses were death traps. From where they lay they could see the little houses clearly marked against the sky beyond, and the house of Uta Matu, with the post beside it on top of which was the head of Nan, god of the coconut trees—Nan the benign watching over his people, the puraka beds and the pandanus palms.

Of old there had been two gods of Karolin, Nan the benign and Naniwa the ferocious.

Le Moan's mother had been La Jonabon, daughter of Le Juan, priestess of Naniwa, the shark-toothed god. On the death of Le Juan, Naniwa had seemed to depart from Karolin. Had he? Do the gods ever die while there is a human heart to give them sanctuary?

Nan, the benign, grinning on his post—he was carved from a coconut—was set in such a way that his face was turned to the east—that is to say, toward the Gates of Morning. He was placed in that way according to ritual. Chance had anchored the schooner in his line of vision. Helpless, as are most benign things, poor old Nan could

do nothing to protect the people he no doubt loved. He could keep the weazle-teazle worms away from the puraka plants and he could help a bit in bringing up rain, and it was considered that he could even protect the canoes from the cobra worms that devour planking, but against the wickedness of man, and Veterli rifles, he was useless.

And yet to-day as he gazed across at the schooner his grin was in no way diminished, and as the wind stirred the cane post he wagged his head jauntily, perhaps because on the deck of the schooner he saw the granddaughter of the priestess of the shark-toothed god and said to himself with a thrill and a shudder: "Naniwa has returned."

In the old days when a man revenged himself for some wrong, or, going mad, dashed out the brains of another with a club, he was supposed to be possessed by Naniwa, for just as Nan was the minister of agriculture, the shark-toothed one was the minister of justice. He was in a way the law, executing criminals and also making criminals for execution, just as the law does with us.

Anyhow and at all events and bad as he may have been, he was the sworn enemy of foreigners. He had inspired Uta Matu to attack the whaler and he had inspired Le Juan in calling for the attack on the Spanish ship of long ago and to-day perhaps he had inspired Aioma in resisting the landing of these newcomers. The battle was still in the balance, but there on the deck of the anchored schooner stood the granddaughter of his priestess darkly brooding, helpless for the moment, but watching and waiting to strike.

No wonder that Nan grinned and wagged his head at her with a click-clocking noise, for the coconut had worked a bit loose on its stick.

Rantan took his seat on the bottom boards in the stern, resting his rifle comfortably on the gunnel; Carlin, going forward, did the same. The wind which had risen and which was moving Nan on his post, stirred the foliage, and between the boles and over the bushes of mommee apple the shifting shadows danced and the shafts of light showered, but sign of human being there was none.

The crafty Aioma, through the mouth of Dick, had ordered all the children and

young people into the mommee apple and the women into the houses, while he and Dick had taken shelter behind trees, two vast trees that stood like giants amid the coconuts and pandanus palms, brothers of the trees growing farther along the reef that were being used for canoe building.

Aioma knew from old experience what white men could do with guns, but he did not know that a house wall capable of stopping an arrow was incapable of stopping a rifle bullet.

Rantan, seeing nothing else to fire at, aimed at one of the houses, fired, and as the smoke cleared saw, literally, the house burst open.

The women poured out through the broken canes, made as if to run along the reef to the west and were suddenly headed back by a figure armed with a canoe paddle. It was Dick. He drove them into the mommee apple where they took cover with the others, then running to the second house of refuge, while the bullets whizzed around him, he bade the women in it to lie down, calling to the other hidden women to do the same, and then taking shelter himself.

But the blunder of Aioma was fatal. The men in the boat knew now for certain that the mommee-apple thickets were packed, that there were no potholes or crevices of any account on the seaward side of the reef, that they had the population of Karolin corralled.

Resting his rifle carefully on the gunnel, Rantan led off. He couldn't well miss, and the deafening explosion of the rifle was followed by a shriek and a movement in the distant bushes where some unfortunate had been hit, and, striving to rise, had been pulled down by his or her companions.

Carlin laughed and fired and evidently missed, to judge by the silence that followed the shot.

Rantan had some trouble with a cartridge. His face had quite changed within the last few minutes and since the corralling of the natives was assured. It was like a mask, and the upper lip projected as though suddenly swollen by some injury. He flung the defective cartridge away, loaded with another and fired.

The shot was followed by the cry of a woman and the wailing of a child. One could guess that the child had been hit, not the woman it belonged to, for the wailing kept on and on, a sound shocking in that

solitude where nothing was to be seen but the empty beach, the line of mommee apple and the glimpse of empty sea beyond and through the trees.

Carlin, more brutal but less terrible than Rantan, laughed. He was about to fire when a form suddenly moving and breaking from the trees took his eye and stayed his hand.

It was Dick. In his left hand he held a bow and in his right a sheaf of arrows. Aioma had directed that before taking cover the bows and arrows should be laid by the westernmost of the two big trees that he and Dick had chosen for shelter. Dick had only to stretch out his arm to seize the weapons and armed with them he came, leaving shelter behind him, right into the open and on to the sands.

At the cry of the first victim, he had started and shivered all over like a dog; at the voice of the child thought left him, or only the thought that there, among the bushes with the children and the women, was Katafa. Seizing a bow and a handful of the arrows he left the tree and came out on to the beach and right down to the waterside.

There were seven arrows. He cast them on the sand, picked up one and fixed it with the notch in the bowstring; as he did so Carlin, altering his aim from the bushes to this new target, fired. The sand spurted a yard to the right of the bowman, who, drawing the arrow till the barb nearly touched the bow shaft, loosed it.

It fell true in line but yards short, and as it flicked the water, Rantan's bullet came plunging into the sand, only three inches from Dick's right foot.

Dick laughed. Like Rantan's, his face was transfigured.

He had come with no instinct but to draw the fire away from the bushes to himself. Now, in a moment, he had forgotten everything but the boat and the men in the boat and the burning hatred that, could it have been loosed, would have destroyed them like a thunderbolt.

Bending and picking up another arrow he loosed it, increasing the elevation. This time it did not fall short, it went over the boat zipping down and into the water from the blue several yards away in the lagoon side.

"Hell!" said Carlin.

He dropped the rifle in his hands and

seized on the anchor rope, dragging up the anchor, while Rantan, firing hurriedly and without effect, seized an oar.

Poisoned arrows, even when shot wildly and at random, are not things to be played with, and as they rowed, the fear of death in their hearts, came another arrow wide but only a yard to starboard, then came another short and astern.

"We're out of range," said Carlin. They let the boat drift a moment. Another arrow came, but well astern.

Then with a yell as if the silent devil in the soul of him had spoken at last, Rantan sprang to his feet and shook his fist at the figure on the beach.

Then they dropped the anchor and took up the rifles. The boat was out of arrow range, but the bushes were still a clear target for the rifles.

Like artists who know their limitations, the two gunmen turned their attention from the single figure on the beach to the greater target. And Dick, on seeing the boat draw off beyond range stood without shooting any more, victorious for the moment but waiting.

He saw the anchor cast over, he saw the boatmen taking up their positions again, he saw the tubes of the guns and knew that the firing was about to recommence; then, bending, he seized an arrow and clasping it with the bow in his left hand, rushed into the water.

Swimming with his right arm, he headed straight for the boat.

Dick in the water was a fish. To get close to the boat, and, treading water or even floating, loose the arrow at short range was his object. He was no longer a man nor a human being, but implacable enmity, reasonless energy directed by hate.

Rantan and Carlin had fired before they saw what was coming—a head, an arm half submerged and a bow skittering along the water. Carlin's jaws snapped together, he tried to extract the cartridge case from his gun, fumbled and failed.

Rantan, less rattled and quicker with his fingers, extracted and reloaded, aimed and fired and missed.

"Fire, you damned fool!" he said to the other, but the game was lost. Carlin was at the anchor rope, the memory of the four dead men on the beach slain by the poisoned arrows of Karolin had him in its grip as it had the other, who with one last glance at

the coming terror dropped his gun and seized an oar.

They were beaten, put to flight—if only for the moment.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SPEAR.

AS they rowed, heading for the schooner with the light of the westering sun in their eyes, they could see the head of the swimmer as he made back for the shore, and away on the beach near the trees they could see the great gulls congregated around the forms of the four dead men, a boiling of wings above the reef line and against the evening blue of the sky.

Predatory gulls when feeding on a carcass do not sit and gorge. They are always in motion more or less, especially when they are in great numbers, as now. Far at sea and maybe from a hundred miles away guests were still arriving for the banquet spread by death, late comers whose voices went before them sharp on the evening wind, or came up against it weak, remote and filled with suggestions of hunger and melancholy.

"God's truth!" said the beach comber, spitting as he rowed.

They were coming on toward the ship and it was the first word spoken.

They had defeat behind them, and even if it were only momentary defeat, ahead of them lay explanations. How would the remainder of the crew take the killing of Sru and his companions? There was also the fact that they had lost four divers.

The *Kermadec* was close to them now, but not a soul showed on her deck—not even Le Moan, who on sighting the returning boat had slipped into the galley where she sat crouched in a corner by the copper with eyes closed as if asleep.

She had told the fellows below that she would warn them on the return of the boat. She had forgotten her promise. Her mind was far away, traveling, circling in a nebulous world like a bird lost in a fog, questing for a point to rest on. She knew well that though the boat was returning this was not the end of things. To-morrow it would all begin again, the destroyed canoes, the implacable firing from the boat, the face of Rantan as he pushed off, all told her this. Crouching, with closed eyes, she heard the oars, the slight grinding of the boat as it

came alongside and the thud of bare feet as Carlin came over the side onto the deck. No voices.

The beach comber had taken in the situation at a glance. The crew were down below, smoking or sleeping, leaving the schooner to look after herself. It was just as well. Down there they would have heard nothing of the distant firing, seen nothing of the killing. He knew Kanakas, knew as well as though he had been told that as soon as he and Rantan had pushed off the crew had taken charge of the fo'c's'le.

Leaving Rantan to tie up, he went below to the cabin for some food. A moment later, the mate joined him.

In a few minutes, their hunger satisfied, they began to speak and almost at once they were wrangling.

"Shooting up the lagoon—well, you've shot it up and much good it has done us," said Carlin. "I'm not against killing, but seems to me the killing has been most on their side. What's the use of talking? It will take a year at this game to do any good and how are you to manage it from the boat?"

"To-morrow," said Rantan, "I'll move the ship up, anchor her off that village and then we'll see. Chaps won't come swimming out to attack a ship and we can pot them from the deck till they put their hands up. We've no time to wipe them all off, but I reckon a few days of the business will break them up and once a Kanaka is broken, he's broken."

Carlin, without replying, got into his bunk and stretching at full length, lit his pipe. As he flung the Swedish match box to Rantan, a sound from the deck above like the snap of a broken stick made him raise his eyes toward the skylight. Rantan, the box in his hand, paused for a moment, then, the sound not being repeated, he lit his pipe.

Throwing the box back to the other, he went on deck.

The deck was still empty, but the spear that had been leaning against the rail was gone. Rantan did not notice this; he came forward passing the galley without looking in and stopped at the fo'c's'le hatch to listen.

One of the strange things about seagoing Kanakas is their instinct to get together in any old hole or corner out of sight of the deck, the sea, the land and the sky, and in an atmosphere that would choke a European—frowst.

The fellows below were just waking up after a cat nap and the fume of Blue Bird, the old tobacco of the old Pacific days sold at two cents a stick, was rising from the hatch mixed with the sound of voices engaged in talk. They had heard nothing of the firing, if they had they would not have bothered; they had no idea of the fate of Sru and his companions, if they had they would not have much cared. Time was, for these men, the moment; unspeculative as birds they took life with a terrible light-heartedness scarcely human in its acceptance of all things. Blows or bananas—the righteousness or the rascality of the white man.

Rantan rapped on the hatch and called on them to tumble up. Then when he had them all on deck, the sunset on their faces and fear of what he might say to them for leaving the schooner to take charge of herself, in their hearts, he began to talk to them as only he knew how.

Not a word of abuse. The natives of this island were bad men who had treacherously killed Sru and his companions, who had landed to talk with them. In return, he, Rantan, had killed many of them and destroyed their canoes. To-morrow he intended to bring the ship farther up toward the village, and with the speak sticks kill more of them. Meanwhile the crew could go below and enjoy themselves as they liked, leaving one on deck to keep watch on the weather. There was no danger from the beach, as all the canoes had been destroyed.

Then he dismissed them and went aft.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MIND OF KANOA AND THE RISING MOON.

THE crew, numbering now only six, and deprived of the leadership of Sru, watched Rantan go aft and disappear down the saloon hatch. Then they fell to discussing the fate of Sru and his companions. The lost men were from Soma, of the remainder two were from Nanuti in the Gilberts, the rest were Paumotuans hailing from Vana Vana and Haraikai. The loss of the others did not affect them much, nor did they speculate as to the possibility of their own destruction at the hands of the natives of Karolin; they had little imagination and big belief in Rantan, and, having talked for a while and chosen a man to keep watch, they

dived below. Then dark came and with it the stars.

Kanoa was the man chosen, a pure Polynesian from Vana Vana, not more than eighteen, slim and straight as a dart, and with lustrous eyes that shone now in the dusk as he turned them on Le Moan, the only living creature on deck beside himself.

He had been watching Le Moan for days, for weeks, with an ever-increasing interest. She had repelled him at first despite her beauty and owing to her strange ways. He had never seen a girl like her at Vana Vana nor at Tuta Kotu, and to his simple mind she was something more than a girl, maybe something less, a creature that loved to brood alone and live alone, maybe a spirit; who could tell? For it was well known at Vana Vana that spirits of men and women were sometimes met with at sea on desolate reefs and atolls, ghosts of drowned people who would even light fires to attract ships and canoes and be taken off just as Le Moan had been taken off by Pete'son, and who always brought disaster to the ship or canoe foolish enough to rescue them.

Sru had kicked him for speaking like this in the fo'c's'le. After Pete'son had been left behind at Levua, supposedly killed by Tahaku and his followers, Kanoa, leaning on his side in his bunk, with pipe in mouth, had said: "It is the girl or she that looks like a girl, but is maybe the spirit of some woman lost at sea. She was alone on that island and Pete'son brought her on board and now, look—what has become of Pete'son?" Upon which Sru had pulled him out of his bunk and kicked him. All the same Kanoa's mind did not leave hold of the idea. He was convinced that there was more to come in the way of disaster, and now, look, Sru gone and three men with him!

But Kanoa was only eighteen and Le Moan for all her dark beauty and brooding ways and mysterious habits was, at all events, fashioned in the form of a girl; and once in a roll of the ship Le Moan slipping on the spray-wet deck would have fallen only for Kanoa who caught her in his arms, and she was delicious.

Ghost or not there began to grow in him a desire for her that was held in check only by his fear of her. A strange condition of mind brought about by the conflict of two passions.

To-night, close to her on the deserted deck, the warm air bringing her perfume to

him and her body outlined against the starlit lagoon, he was only prevented from seizing her in his arms by the thought of Sru and his companions dead on the reef over there, dead as Pete'son, dead as he—Kanoa—might be to-morrow, and through the wiles of this girl so like a spirit, this spirit so like a girl.

He felt like a man swimming against the warm current that sweeps round the shoulder of Haraikai, swimming bravely and seeming to make good way, yet all the time being swept steadily out to sea to drown and die.

Suddenly, and just as he was about to fling out his hands, seize her and capture her in an embrace, mouth to mouth, and arms locked round her body, suddenly the initiative was taken from him and Le Moan, gliding up to him, placed a hand upon his shoulder.

Next moment she had pressed him down to the deck and he was squatting opposite to her, almost knee to knee, love for the moment forgotten.

Forgotten, even though, leaning forward and placing her hand on his shoulder, she brought her face almost in touch with his.

"Kanoa," said Le Moan in a voice just audible to him above the rumble of the reef, "Sru and the men who were with him have been slain by Rantan and the big red man—not by the men of Karolin. To-morrow you will die. I heard him say so to the big man, you and Timau and Tahuku and Poni and Nauta and Tirai." She told this lie with steady eyes fixed upon him, eyes that saw nothing but Taori, the man whose life she was trying to save. No wonder that love dropped out of the heart of Kanoa and that the sweat showed on his face in the starlight. It was the first time that she had spoken to him more than a word or two, and what she said in that swift clear whisper passed through him like a sword. He believed her. His fear of her was the basis of his belief. He was listening to the voice of a spirit, not the voice of a girl.

He who a moment ago had been filled with love, felt now that he was sitting knee to knee with Death.

Such was the conviction carried by her words and voice that he would have risen up and run away and hidden only that he could not move.

"Unless," said Le Moan, "we strike them to-night, to -morrow we will all be killed."

Kanoa's teeth began to chatter. His frightened mind flew back to Vana Vana and the happy days of his youth. He wished that he had never embarked on this voyage that had led him to so many strange passes. Strike them! It was easy to say that, but who would dare to strike Ra'tan?

He was seated facing aft and he could see the vague glow of the saloon skylight golden in the silver of the star shine. Down below there in the lamplight Ra'tan and the red-bearded one were no doubt talking and making their plans. Strike them! That was easily said.

Then, all at once, he stopped shivering and his teeth came together with a click. The light from the saloon had gone out.

He touched Le Moan and told her and she turned her head to the long sweep of the deck, empty, and deserted by the vanished light. It was as though the power of the afterguard had suffered eclipse. Rantan and the other would be soon asleep, if they were not asleep now, helpless and at the mercy of the man who would be brave enough to strike.

Le Moan turned again, and seizing Kanoa by the shoulder whispered close to his ear.

"Go," said she, "tell the others what I have said, bring them up, softly, softly so that *they* may not hear. They need lift no hand in the business. I will strike. Go!"

He rose up and passed toward the fo'c's'le hatch while Le Moan, going into the galley, fetched something she had hidden there, the head of the spear which she had broken off from the shaft—the spear Carlin had brought on board as a trophy, and the snap of which he had heard as he lay in his bunk while Rantan had been lighting his pipe.

She sat down on the deck with the deadly thing on her knee, poisoned with argora; a scratch from it would be sufficient to destroy life almost instantaneously; and as she sat brooding and waiting her eyes saw neither the deck nor the starlight, but the vision of a sunlit beach and a form—Taori. Taori for whom she would have destroyed the world.

The sea spoke on the great reef loud to windward, low to leeward; you could hear within the long rumble and roar of the nearby breakers the diminuendo of the rollers that smoked beneath the stars, ringing with a forty-mile mist the placid ocean of the lagoon.

The moon was rising. She could see the

gleam of its light on the binnacle where the godling lived that had always pointed away from Karolin, on the port rail and on the brasswork of the skylight. Then, roused by a sound soft as the sifting of leaves on a lawn, she turned, and behind her the deck was crowded.

The crew had come on deck led by Kanoa, and, the stern of the schooner swinging toward the break with the tide, the level light of the moon was on their faces.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NIGHT AND DEATH.

SHE made them sit down, and they sat in a ring on the deck, she taking her place in the middle.

Then she talked to them respecting what she had already told to Kanoa, telling them also that the men of Karolin were not enemies but friends, that Rantan and the red-bearded man though fair-spoken were indeed devils in disguise, that they had killed many of the men of Karolin, killed Sru and his companions, and intended on the morrow to kill Kanoa and the rest. And they sat listening to her as children listen to tales about ogres, believing, bewildered, terrified, not knowing what to do.

These men were not cowards. Under circumstances known and understood they were brave. Weather could not frighten them nor war against kindred races; but the white man was a different thing and Rantan they feared even more than Carlin.

They would not move a hand in this matter of striking at them. It would be better to take the boat and land on the reef and trust to the men of Karolin if they were trustworthy as Le Moan had reported.

Poni, the biggest and strongest of them, said this and the others nodded their heads in approval, and Le Moan laughed; she knew them and told them so, told them that as she had saved them by overhearing Rantan's plans, that she would save them now, that they had nothing to do but wait and watch and prepare their minds for friendship with her people when she had finished what she intended to do.

Then she rose up.

As she stood with the moonlight full on her a voice broke the silence of the night; it came from the saloon hatchway, a voice sudden, chattering, complaining and ceasing all at once as if cut off by a closed

door. They knew what it was—the voice of a man talking in his sleep. Carlin on his back and seized by nightmare had cried out, half awakened, turned and fallen asleep again.

The group seated on the deck, after a momentary movement, resumed their positions. There is something so distinctive in the voice of a sleep talker that the sound, after the first momentary flutter caused by it, brought assurance. Then, prepared at any moment to make a dash for the boat, they sat, the palms of their hands flat on the deck and their eyes following Le Moan, now gliding toward the hatch, the spearhead in her left hand, her right hand touching the port rail as she went.

At the hatch she paused to listen. She could hear the reef, and on its sonorous murmur, like a tiny silver thread of sound, the trickle of the tide on the planking of the schooner, and from the dark pit of the stairway leading to the saloon another sound, the breathing of men asleep.

She had never been below. That stairway, even in daylight, had always filled her with fear, the fear of the unknown, the dread of a trap, the claustrophobia of one always used to open spaces.

Lit by the day it frightened her, in its black darkness it appalled her; yet she had to go down, for the life of Taori lay at the bottom of that pit, to be saved by her hands and hers alone.

Kanoa, among the others, sat watching. The mind of Kanoa, so filled with fear when she told him that his death was imminent, the mind of Kanoa that had loved her, the mind of this child of eighteen to whom light and laughter had been life, and thought a thing of the moment, was no longer the same mind.

The great heroism he was watching, this attempt to save him and the others, had awakened in him something perhaps of the past, ancestors who had fought, done great deeds and suffered—who knows? But there came to him an elation such as he had felt in the movements of the dance and at the sound of music. Rising and evading Poni, who clutched at his leg to hold him back, he came to the rail, stood for a moment as Le Moan vanished from sight and then, swift-footed but silent as a shadow, glided to the saloon hatch and stood listening.

Holding the polished banister rail, and
8A—POP.

moving cautiously, step by step, Le Moan descended, the spearhead in her left hand. As she came, a waft from the cabin rose to meet her in the darkness, an odor of humanity and stale tobacco smoke, bunk bedding and bilge.

It met her like an evil ghost. It grappled with her and tried to drive her back; used as she was to the fresh sea air, able to scent rain on the wind and change of weather, this odor checked her for a moment, repelled her, held her, and then lost its power. Her will had conquered it. She reached the foot of the stairs and before her now lay the open doorway of the cabin, a pale oblong beyond which lay a picture.

The table with the swinging lamp above it, the bunks on either side where the sleeping men lay, clothes cast on the floor, all lit by the moon gleams through the skylight and portholes.

From the bunk on the right hung an arm. It was Carlin's, she knew it by its size. She moved toward it, paused, looked up and stood rigid.

Above Carlin, now on the ceiling, now on the wall, something moved and danced; a great silver butterfly, now at rest, now in flight, shifting here and there, poising with tremulous wings.

It was a water shimmer from the moonlit lagoon entering through a porthole, a ghost of light. It held her only for a moment. The next she had seized the hand of the sleeper and driven the spear point into the arm. Almost on the cry of the stricken man, something sprang across the table of the cabin, seized Le Moan by the throat and flung her on her side. It was Rantan.

Up above, Kanoa, standing by the opening of the hatch, listened. The reef spoke and the water trickled on the planking, but from below there came no sound. Moments passed, and then, sharp and cutting the silence like a knife came a cry, a shout, and the sound of a furious struggle. Then, fear flown, and filled with a fury new as life to the new-born, Kanoa plunged down into the darkness, missed his footing, fell, rose half stunned and dashed into the cabin.

Carlin was lying on his face on the floor, dead or dying; Rantan was at death grips with Le Moan. She had risen by a supreme effort but he had got her against the table, flung her on it and was now holding her down, his knee on her thigh, his hands on

her throat, his head flung back, the flexor muscles of his forearms rigid, crushing her, breaking her, choking the life out of her, till Kanoa sprang.

Sprang like a tiger, lighting on the table and then in a flash on to Rantan's back, breaking his grip with the impact and freeing Le Moan. He had got the throat hold from behind, his knees had seized Rantan's body and he was riding him like a horse; the attacked man, whooping and choking tried to hit backward, flung up his arms, rose straight, tottered and crashed, but still the attacker clung—clung as they rolled on the floor, clung till all movement ceased.

It was over.

The silver butterfly still danced merrily on the ceiling and the sound of the reef came through the skylight, slumberous and indifferent, but other sound or movement there was none till Le Moan, stretched still on the table, turned, raised herself on her elbow and understood. Then she dropped on to the floor. Rantan lay half on top of Carlin, and Kanoa lay by Rantan.

Kanoa's grip had relaxed and he seemed asleep. He roused as the girl touched him. The fury and wild excitement had passed and he seemed dazed; then recovering himself he sat up, then he rose to his feet. As he rose Rantan moved slightly, he was not dead; and Le Moan, kneeling on the body of Carlin, seized the sheet that was hanging from the bunk, dragged it toward her and handed it to Kanoa.

"Bind him," said Le Moan. "He is not dead. Let him be for my people to deal with him as they deal with the dogfish."

As they bound him from the shoulders to the hands a voice came from above. It was the voice of Poni, who had come to listen and who heard Le Moan's voice and words.

"Kanoa," cried Poni, "what is going on below there?"

"Coward!" cried Le Moan. "Come and see. Come and help now that the work is done."

"Aye," said Kanoa the valorous, "come and help now that the work is done."

Then, kneeling by the bound figure of Rantan, he gazed on the girl, consuming her with his eyes, rapturous, and unknowing that the work had been done for Taori.

Taori, beside whom, for Le Moan, all other men were shadows, moving yet lifeless as the moon-born butterfly still dancing above the corpse of Carlin.

CHAPTER XIX.

MORNING.

WHEN the firing had ceased and the boat had returned to the ship the wretched people hiding among the mommee apple had come out and grouped themselves around Aioma and Taori. Taori had saved them for the moment by his act in swimming out to attack the boat; he was no longer their chief, but their god, and yet some instinctive knowledge of the wickedness of man and of the tenacity and power of the white men told them that all was not over.

Among them as they waited while Aioma and Katafa distributed food, sat two women, Nanu and Ona, each with a dead child clasped in her arms. The child of Nanu had been killed instantaneously by a bullet that had pierced its neck and the arm of its mother. Ona's child, pierced in its body, had died slowly, bleeding its life away and wailing as it bled.

These two women, high cheeked, frizzy headed and of the old fierce Melanesian stock which formed the backbone and hitting force of Karolin, were strange to watch as they sat nursing their dead, speechless, passionless, heedless of food or drink or what might happen. The others ate; too paralyzed by the events of the day to prepare food for themselves, they yet took what was given to them with avidity. Then, when dark came, they crept back into the bushes to sleep, while Dick, leaving Katafa in charge of Aioma, left the trees and under cover of the darkness came along the beach past the bodies, over which the birds were still at work, until he was level with the schooner.

She showed no lights on deck, no sign of life but the two tiny dim golden disks of the cabin portholes.

Taking his seat on a weather-worn piece of coral, he sat watching her. Forward, close to the fo'c's'le head, he saw now two forms, Le Moan and Kanoa; they drew together, then they vanished. The deck now seemed deserted, but he continued to watch. Already in his mind he foresaw vaguely the plan of Rantan. To-morrow they would not use the boat; they would move the schooner, bring her opposite the village, and then with those terrible things that could speak so loudly and hit so far they would begin again—and where could

the people go? The forty-mile reef would be no protection; away from the trees and the puraka patches the people would starve, they would have no water. The people were tied to the village.

He sat with his chin on his clenched fists, staring at the schooner and the two evil golden eyes that were staring him back like the eyes of a beast.

If only a single canoe had been left he would have paddled off and, with Aioma and maybe another for help, would have attacked, but the canoes were gone—and the dinghy.

Then as he sat helpless, with hatred and the fury of hell in his heart, the golden eyes vanished. Rantan had put out the light.

With the rising moon he saw as in a glass darkly little by little and bit by bit the tragedy we have seen in full. He saw the grouping of the fo'c's'le hands as they came up from below, he saw them disappear as they sat down on deck. Then he saw the figure of Le Moan, her halt at the saloon hatch and the following of Kanoa; he heard the scream of the stricken Carlin.

Lastly he saw the crowding of the hands aft, Carlin's body being dragged on deck and cast overboard into a lather of moonshine and phosphorus, and something white carried shoulder high to forward of the galley, where it was laid on deck.

Then after a few moments lights began to break out, lanterns moved on the deck, the portholes broke alive again, and again were blotted out as the cabin lamp, lit and taken from its attachments, was carried on deck and swung from the ratlines of the main for decorative purposes. The moon gave all the light that any man in his sober senses could want, but the crew of the schooner were not sober, they were drunk with the excitement of the business; and though nominally free men they felt as slaves feel when their bonds are removed. Besides, Rantan and Carlin had plotted to kill them as they had killed Sru and the others. On top of that there was a bottle of ginger wine. It had been stored in the medicine locker; Peterson, like many another seaman, had medical fancies of his own and he believed this stuff to be a specific for the colic. It had escaped Carlin's attention, but Poni, who acted as steward, had sniffed at it, tasted it and found it good.

It was served out in a tin cup.

Then, across the water came the sound of voices, the twanging of a native fiddle, and now the whoop-whoop of dancers in the kula dance, songs, laughter, against which came the thunder of the moonlit sea on the outer beach and an occasional cry from the gulls at their food.

Dick, rising, made back toward the trees. His heart felt easier. Without knowing what had occurred, he still knew that something had happened to divide his enemies, that they had quarreled, and that one had been killed; that, with Sru and his companions, made five gone since the schooner had dropped anchor.

Lying down beside Katafa, while Taiepu kept watch, he fell asleep.

At dawn Taiepu, shouting like a gull, came racing through the trees while the bushes gave up their people. They came crowding out on the beach to eastward of the trees and there, sure enough, was Le Moan, the schooner against the blaze at the Gates of Morning, and the boat hanging a hundred yards offshore.

Kneeling on the sands before Taori, glancing sometimes up into his face, swiftly, as one glances at the sun, Le Moan told her tale while the sun itself, now fully risen, blazed upon the man before her.

Dick listened, gathering from the artless story the sacrifices she had made at first, the heroism she had shown to the last, but nothing of her real motive, nothing of the passion that came nigh to crushing her as Katafa, catching her in her arms, and, pressing her lips on her forehead, led her away tenderly as a sister to the shelter of the trees.

Then the mob, true to itself and forgetting their savior, turning, raced along the sands, boys, women and children, till they got level with the waiting boat, and stood shouting welcome to the newcomers.

Poni in the stern sheets rose and waved his arms. The boat, driven by a few strokes, reached the beach, and next moment the crew of the schooner and the people of Karolin were fraternizing—embracing one another like long-lost relatives.

And now a strange thing happened.

Dick, who stood watching all this, deposed for a moment as chief men sometimes are temporarily deposed and forgotten in moments of great national heart movements, saw in the boat the bound figure of Rantan lying on the bottom boards.

He came closer and the eyes of Rantan, which were open, met the eyes of Taori.

Rantan was a white man.

There was no appeal in the eyes of Rantan, he who knew the islands so well knew that his number was up. He gazed at the golden-brown figure of Taori, gazed at that face so strange for a Kanaka, yet so truly the face of an islander, gazed as a white man upon a native.

For a moment it was as though race gazed upon kindred race, disowning it, not seeing it, mistaking it for an alien and lower race, and from deep in the mind of Dick, vague and phantomlike, rose trouble.

He did not know that he himself was a white man, blood brother of the man in the boat. He knew nothing, yet he felt trouble. He turned to Aioma.

"Will he die?"

"Aye, most surely will he die," said the old fellow with a chuckle. "Will the dog-fish not die when he is caught? He who killed the canoes, the children, is it not just that he should die?"

Dick inclined his head without speaking. He turned to where Nanu and the other woman were standing, waiting, terrible, with their dead children still clasped in their arms.

"It is just," said he. "See to it, Aioma." And turning without another glance at the boat he walked away, past the shattered canoes, past the half-picked bones, through the sunlight, toward the trees.

Aioma, no longer himself, but something more evil, came toward the boat making little birdlike noises, rubbing his shriveled hands together, stroking his thighs.

The tide was just at full ebb, the old ledge, where the victims of Nanawa were staked out in past times for the sharks to eat, was uncovered and only waiting for a victim. It lay halfway between the village and the reef break, and in old times one might have known when an execution was to take place by the fins of the tiger sharks cruising around it. This morning there were no sharks visible.

Rantan was reserved for a worse fate, for, as Aioma, standing by the boat, called on the people to take their vengeance, the woman Nanu, still holding her dead child in her arms, stepped up to him, followed by Ona.

"He is ours," said Nanu.

Aioma turned on her like a savage old

dog. He was about to push her back among the crowd when Ona advanced a step.

"He is ours," said Ona, glancing at the form in the boat as though it were a parcel she was claiming, while the crowd, reaching to the woods, broke in, speaking almost with one voice.

"He is theirs. He has slain their children. Let them have him for a child."

"So be it," said Aioma, too much of a diplomat to oppose the mob on a matter of sentiment, and curious as to what gory form of vengeance the women would adopt. "So be it. And now what will you do with him?"

"We will take him to the southern beach with us. We alone," said Nanu.

"We would be alone with him," said Ona, shifting her dead child from her right to her left arm as one might shift a parcel.

"But how will you take him?" asked the old man.

"In a canoe," said Nanu.

"Then go and build it," said the canoe builder. "What foolishness this is, for well you know the canoes are broken?"

"Aioma," said Nanu, "there is one little canoe which is yet whole. It lies in the farther canoe house, so far in that it has been forgotten. It belonged to my man, the father of my child—he who went with the others but did not return. I have never spoken of it and no one has seen it, for no one goes into the canoe houses now that the great canoes are gone."

"Then let it be fetched," said Aioma. He stood while a dozen of the crowd broke away and racing toward the trees disappeared in the direction of the canoe houses. Presently the canoe, a fishing outrigger, showed on the water of the lagoon, two boys at the paddles. They beached it close to the boat. The dead children were lashed to the gratings with strips of coconut sennit; Rantan, raised by half a dozen pairs of hands, was lifted and placed in the bottom of the little craft, and the women, pushing off, got on board and raised the sail.

The steering paddle flashed and the crowd stood watching as the canoe grew less on the surface of the water; less and less, making for the southern beach, till now it was no larger than a midge in the lagoon dazzle that, striking back at the sun, roofed Karolin with a forty-mile dome of radiance.

CHAPTER XX.

THE VISION.

NOW, when Katafa led Le Moan away into the shelter of the trees, Le Moan, with the kiss of Katafa warm upon her forehead, knew nothing, nothing of the fact that Katafa was Taori's, the dream and treasure of his life, beside whom all other living things were shadows.

And Katafa knew nothing, nothing of the fact that Taori was Le Moan's—was Le Moan, for Le Moan had so dreamed him into herself that the vision of him had become part of herself, inseparable forever.

Ringed and ringed with ignorance, ignorance of their own race, and the affinity between them, of the fact that they and Taori formed among the people of Karolin a little colony alien in blood and soul, of the fact that Taori was their common desire, they went between the trees; Katafa leading the way toward the house of Uta Matu, above which Nan on his pole still grinned toward the schooner, grinned without nodding, maybe because the wind that had moved him had ceased.

Katafa, taking the sleeping mat used by her and Taori, spread it on the floor of the house. Then she offered food, but Le Moan refused, she only wanted sleep—for nights she had not slept and the kiss that Katafa again pressed upon her brow seemed to her the kiss of a phantom in a dream as she sank down and died to the world on the bed of the lover who knew nothing of her love.

It was still morning.

Outside in the blazing sun the people of Karolin went about their business, mending the wall of the house that had been broken, preparing food for the newcomers, rejoicing in the new life that had come back to them; while in the lagoon the anchored schooner swung to her moorings, deserted and without sign of life, for Dick had decided that no one should board her till he and Aioma led the way—that is, till the morrow. For there were many things to be attended to first.

Le Moan had brought him not only a ship, but six full-grown men, a priceless gift.

Aioma, who had held off from the business of fraternizing, watching the newcomers with a critical eye, believed that they were good men. "But wait," said Aioma, "till they are fed, till they have rested and slept among us. A good-looking coconut

is sometimes rotten at the core, but these I believe to be good men even as Le Moan has said; but to-night will tell."

At dusk he came to Taori, happy. Each of the new men had taken a wife; incidentally, in the next few days each of the newcomers, with one exception, had taken from four to six wives.

"Each has a woman," said the direct Aioma. "We are sure of them now. They are in the mommee apple, all except one who is very young and who says that he has no heart for women."

He spoke of Kanoa; Kanoa brooding alone by the water's edge, sick with love. The deed of Le Moan that had stirred in him the ghosts of his ancestors had raised the soul of Kanoa beyond the flesh where hitherto it had been tangled and blind.

Meanwhile Le Moan slept. Slept while the dusk rose and the stars came out, slept till the moon, high against the Milky Way, pierced the house of Uta Matu with her shafts.

Then sleep fell from her gradually and turning on her elbow she saw the moon rays shining through the canes of the wall, the little ships ghostly on their shelves, and through the doorway the wonderful world of moonlit reef and sea.

Nothing broke the stillness of the night but the surf of the reef and a gentle wind that stirred the palm fronds with a faint pattering rainy sound and passed away across the mommee apple.

Before the doorway, sheltered from the moon by a tree shadow, all but their feet that showed fully in the light, two forms lay stretched on a mat. Taori and Katafa. They had given up their house to the savior of Karolin, taken a mat from one of the women's houses, and fallen asleep with only the tree for shelter. Le Moan, not recognizing them, still dazed with sleep, rose, came to the doorway and looked down.

Then she knew.

Taori's head was pillowed on Katafa's shoulder, her arm was around his neck, his arm across her body.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CASSI FLOWERS.

IF the sea had risen above the reef, destroying the village and sweeping the population of Karolin to ruin while leaving her untouched, Le Moan would have stood

as she stood now, unmoved before the inevitable and the accomplished.

Her world lay around her in ruins and the destroyers lay before her asleep.

She had feared death and dreaded separation, but she had never dreamed of this, for Taori, in her mind, had always stood alone as the sun stands alone in the sky.

A spear stood against the tree bole and the pitiless hand that had killed Carlin could have seized it and plunged it into the heart of Katafa, but if the sea had destroyed her world as this girl had destroyed it, would she have cast a spear at the sea? The thing was done, accomplished, of old time. Her woman's instinct told her that.

Done and accomplished, without any knowledge of her, in a world from which she had been excluded by Fate.

Moving from the doorway she passed them, almost touching their feet. To right and left of her lay the tumbling sea and the lit lagoon, before her the great white road of the beaches and the reef. She followed the leading of this road with little more volition than the wind-blown leaf or the drifting weed; with only one desire, to be alone.

It led to the great trees where the canoe builders had been at work. Here, across the coral, lay the trunks felled by Aioma, filling the air with the fragrance of new-cut wood. One already had been partly shaped and hollowed, and resting on it for a moment, Le Moan followed its curves with her eyes, felt the ax marks with her hand, took in every detail of the work, saw it as, with outrigger affixed and sail spread to the wind, it would take the sea, some time—some time—some time.

The ceaseless breakers casting their spin-drift beneath the moon lulled her mind for a moment till trees, canoe, reef and sea all faded and dissolved in a world of sound, a voice-world through which came the chanting of stricken coral and, at last, pictures of the wind-blown southern beach.

The southern beach, sunlit and gull flown, a beached canoe, a form—Taori.

It was now and now only that the pain came, piercing soul and rending body, crushing her and breaking her till she fell on the coral, her face buried in her arms, as though cast there by the sea whose eternal thunder filled the night.

The night wind moved her hair. It was blowing from the village and as it came it brought with it a vague whisper from the

bushes and trees and now and again a faint perfume of cassi. Perfume, like music, is a voice speaking a language we have forgotten, telling tales we half understand, soothing us now with dreams, raising us now to action.

The cassi flowers were speaking to Le Moan. After a long, long while she moved, raised her head and, leaning on her elbow, seemed to listen.

Close to her was a pond in the coral, a rock pool filled with fresh water such as existed on the southern beach and a fellow of which lay in the village close to the house of Uta Matu.

Dragging herself toward it she leaned on her arms and looked deep down into the water just as she had been looking into the pool that day when, raising her eyes, she found herself first face to face with Taori.

The cassi flowers were speaking to Le Moan. Their perfume followed her mind as it sank like a diver into the pool's moonlit, crystal heart. Their voices said to her:

"Taori is not dead. While he lives do not despair, for who can take his image from you and what woman's love can equal yours? Peace, Le Moan. Watch and wait."

Presently she arose, returning by the way she came. She drew toward the house of Uta Matu and passed the figures on the mat without glancing at them. Then in the house she lay down with her face to the wall. When the dawn aroused Katafa, Le Moan had not moved. One might have fancied her asleep.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHAT HAPPENED TO RANTAN.

RANTAN, when they cast him in the fishing canoe, could see nothing but the roughly shaped sides, bright here and there where the scale of a palu had stuck and dried, the after outrigger pole, the blue sky above the gunnel and the heads of the crowd by the waterside.

By raising himself a little he might have glimpsed the two dead children tied to the outrigger gratings, but he could not raise himself, nor had he any desire to do so.

He knew the island, he had heard what passed between Aioma and the women, and as they carried him from the boat to the canoe he had seen the dead children tied on the gratings. What his fate was to be

at the hands of Ona and Nanu he could not tell, nor did he try to imagine it.

All being ready, the stem of the canoe left the beach, the two women scrambling on board as it was water borne. Nanu sat aft and Ona forward, trampling on Rantan's body with her naked feet as she got there. The paddles splashed and the spray came inboard, striking Rantan on the face, but he did not mind; neither did he mind the heat of the steadily rising sun, nor the heel of Ona as she dropped her paddle for a moment and raised the sail.

Sometimes he closed his eyes to shut out the sight of Nanu who was steering, her eyes fixed on the sail, sometimes on the beach ahead, never—or scarcely ever—on Rantan.

Sometimes he could hear Ona's voice. She was just behind his head, holding on to the mast and trimming the canoe by moving now to the left or right. Her voice came calling out some directions to the other and then sharp as the voice of Ona came the cry of a sea gull that flew with them for a moment, inspecting the dead children on the gratings till the flashing paddle and the shouts of Nanu drove it away.

And now as the sun grew hotter a vague odor of corruption filled the air, passed away with the back draft from the sail, yet returned again, while the murmur of the northern beach that had died down behind them became merged in the wash of the waves on the southern coral.

Then as the place of their revenge drew close to them and they could see the deserted shacks, the long line of empty beach and the coconut trees in their separate groups, Nanu seemed to awake to the presence of Rantan. She glanced at him and laughed, and steering all the time, with side flashes of the paddle pointed him out to Ona, whose laughter came from behind him, shrill, sharp and done with in a moment.

Truly Rantan wished that he had never embarked on this voyage, never seen Peterson, never left him for dead away there on Levua; bitterly did he repent his temerity in coming into Karolin lagoon and his stupidity in trying to shoot it up.

Sometimes, long ago, he had amused himself by imagining what might be the worst fate of a man at sea—shipwreck, slow starvation, death from thirst, from sharks, from fire. He had never imagined anything

like his present position, never imagined himself in the hands of two women of the islands, whose children he had been instrumental in murdering, two women who were taking him off to a desolate beach to do with him as they pleased. He could tell the approach of the beach by the face of Nanu and the outcries of Ona. Sometimes Ona would give his body a kick to emphasize what she was saying and which was Greek to Rantan. So sharp was her voice, so run together the words, that her speech was like a sword inscribed with unintelligible threats.

Now Nanu was half standing up, Ona was brailing up the sail, the paddles were flashing, the sands close. They brought the stem of the canoe onto the shelving sand, and, on the bump and shudder, dropping their paddles, they jumped clear, seized gunwale and outrigger and beached her high and dry.

Then seizing their victim by the feet and the shoulders, they lifted him from the canoe and threw him on to the sand. He fell on his face, they turned him on his back and then left him, running about here and there and making preparations for their work.

The tide was running out and the wind, that had backed to due west, bent the coco palm and brought up from all along the beach the silky whisper of the sands, the rumor of twenty miles of sea beating on the southern coral and the smell of sun-smitten seaweeds and emptying rock pools.

Rantan, who had closed his eyes, opened them, and turning his head slightly watched the women—Nanu, who was collecting bits of stick and wood to light a fire, and Ona, who was collecting oyster shells. There were many oyster shells lying about on the beach and Ona, as she went, picked and chose, taking only the flat shells and testing their edges with her thumb.

Rantan knew, and a shudder went through him as he watched her carrying them and placing them in a little heap by the place where Nanu was building her fire.

A big brown bird with curved beak and bright eyes sweeping in the air above them would curve and drift on the wind and return, making a swoop toward the beached canoe and the objects on the outrigger gratings, and the women, busy at their work, would shout at the bird and sometimes threaten it with a paddle which Ona ran

and fetched from the canoe. Not till vengeance had been assured would the dead children be cast to the sharks. The shark was the grave and burial ground of Karolin.

When everything was ready they turned from the fire and came running across the sand to their victim.

Rantan, lying on his back with eyes closed and mouth open, had ceased to breathe.

Never looked man more dead than Rantan, and Ona, dropping on her knees beside him with a cry, turned him on one side, turned him back, cried out to Nanu, who dashed off to the fire, seized a piece of burning stick, rushed back with it and pressed the red-hot point of it against his foot. Rantan did not move.

Then, furious, filling the air with their cries, with only one idea, to rub him and pound him and to bring back the precious life that had escaped or was escaping them, they began to strip him of his bonds, tearing off the coconut sennit strips, the sheet, unrolling him like a mummy from its bandages, till he lay free beneath the sun—a corpse that suddenly sprang to life with a yell, bounded to its feet, seized the paddle and flung itself on Nanu, felling her with a smashing blow on the neck, turned, and pursuing Ona, chased her as she ran this way and that like a frightened duck.

Few men had ever seen Rantan. The silent, quiet, sunburned man of ordinary times was not Rantan. This was Rantan, this mad figure yelling hatred, radiating revenge, mad to kill.

Rantan robbed of his pearl lagoon, of his ship, of his prospect of wealth—by Kanakas; Rantan, whom Kanakas had bound with a sheet and dumped into a canoe; Rantan whom two Kanaka women—women!—women! mind you—had trodden on, and whom they had been preparing to scrape to death slowly inch by inch with oyster shells, and burn bit by bit with hot sticks.

This was the real Rantan raised to his nth power by injuries, insults, and the escape from a terrible death.

Ona dashed for the canoe, maybe with some blind idea to get hold of the other paddle to defend herself with, but he had the speed of her and headed her off; she made for the rough coral of the outer beach but he headed her off; time and again he could have closed with her and killed her,

but the sight of her frizzy head, her face, her figure, and the fact that she was a woman, filled him with a counter rage that spared her for the moment. He could have chased her forever, killing her a thousand times in his mind, had his strength been equal to his hatred, but he could not chase her forever, and, suddenly, with a smashing blow he brought her to ground, beat the life out of her and stood gasping, satiated and satisfied.

Only for a moment. The sight of Nanu lying where he had felled her brought him running. She had fallen near the heap of oyster shells, the fire that she had built was still burning, the stick which she had pressed against his foot was close to her. She had recovered consciousness and as she lay, her eyes wide open, she saw him stand above her, the paddle uplifted, and that was the last thing she saw in this world.

He came down to the water's edge and sat, squatting, the paddle beside him and his eyes fixed away over the water to where the schooner was visible, a toy ship no larger than the model of the *Raratanga*, swinging to the outgoing tide.

Beyond the schooner the trees that hid the village were just visible.

He was free, free for the moment, but still in the trap of the lagoon.

Free, but stripped of everything; naked, without even shoes.

He was thinking in pictures; pictures now vague, now clear ran through his mind; the shooting up of the lagoon, the figure of Dick swimming off toward him and Carlin as they were firing from the boat, the fight in the cabin, the killing of Carlin, and again Dick.

Dick as he had come and stood looking at him—Rantan—as he lay bound and helpless. His hatred of the Kanakas and the whole business seemed focused in Dick, for in that bright figure and noble face lay expressed the antithesis of himself, something that he could not despise as he despised Sru, the Karolin people, even Carlin.

He loathed this creature whom he had only seen twice and to whom he had never spoken; loathed him as hell loathes heaven.

Then Dick dropped from his mind.

He was still in the trap of the lagoon. He turned his head to where behind him on the sands lay the two dead women, then he turned his eyes to the beached canoe where lay the two dead children strapped

to the gratings. The waves spoke, and the wind on the sands, and the bos'n bird returning with a mate swept by, casting its shadow close to him.

Rantan shouted and picking up the paddle threatened the bird just as the women had done. Then he sprang to his feet.

He must get out; get out with the canoe, clear off before the Kanakas had any chance of coming across. They had no canoes, but they had the ship's boats and if they came and caught him it would be death. He could get drinking nuts from the trees, but first he must untie those cursed children from the gratings. He turned toward the canoe and as he turned something caught his eye away across the water.

The merry west wind had blown out a bunt of the schooner's hastily stowed canvas in a white flicker against the blue. Were they getting sail on the schooner?

He turned and ran toward the trees. He could climb like a monkey and heedless of everything but drinking nuts and pandanus drupes he set to work, collecting them. A mat lay doubled up near one of the deserted shacks; he used it as a basket and between the trees and the canoe he ran and ran, sweating, with scarcely a glance across the water, his only idea the thirst and hunger of the sea which he had to face, the terror of torture and death that lay behind him. There was a huge fig tree, the only one on Karolin and a tree bearing an unknown fruit in form and color like a lemon. He raided it, tearing branches down and stripping the fruit off. Before his last journey to the canoe he flung himself down by the little well, the same into which Le Moan had been gazing when she first saw Taori, and drank and drank—raising his head only to drink again.

Reaching the canoe for the last time he threw the fruit in and took a glance across the water to the schooner. The wind had taken advantage of the clumsy and careless work of the crew and the size of the bunt had increased. In his right senses he would have known the truth, but terror had him by the shoulder, and seizing the gunwale he began to drive the canoe into the water. The falling tide had left her almost dry, the outrigger interfered with his efforts, getting half buried in the sand. He could not push her out and at the same time keep her level with the outrigger lifting. He had to

run from side to side, pushing and striving, till at last the idea came to him to spread the mat under the outrigger. That made things easier. He had her now nearly water borne; throwing in the paddle he prepared to send her out with a last great push, and, running through the shallow water, scramble on board.

Such was the state of his mind he had not recognized that the bodies of the two babies tied to the gratings were a main cause in the tilting of the canoe to port and his difficulty in keeping her on a level keel, nor did he now; but he recognized that he could not put to sea with those terrible bodies tied to him.

He set to work to untie them, but Nanu and Ona, as though provisioning this business, had done their work truly and well. The spray and the sun had shrunk the coconut sennit bindings and the knots were hard as bits of oak. He had no knife, and his hands were shaking and his fingers without power.

A gull swooped down as if to help him and he struck at it with his fist. The sweat poured from him and his knees were beginning to knock together.

The tide was still falling, threatening to leave the canoe dry again; he recognized that and, leaving the bodies tied on, raced round to the starboard side, seized the gunnel and pushed her out. On board he paddled kneeling, using the paddle now on one side, now on the other, making straight out, the loose sail flapping above him, his knees wet with crushed pandanus drupes, gulls following him, swooping down and clanging off on the wind.

Then, far enough out, he gave the sail to the breeze that was blowing steady for the break. He was free, nobody could stop him now. Wind and tide were with him, so were the lagoon sharks who guessed what was tied to the gratings and the gulls who saw.

A royal escort of gulls snowed the air above the flashing paddle and the bellying sail as the canoe, driving past the piers of the opening, took the sea and the outer swell, steering dead before the wind for the east.

Little by little the gulls fell astern, gave up the chase, swept back toward Karolin, leaving the man and the dead children and the canoe to the blue sea and the wind that swept it.

Rantan steered. He was used to the handling of a canoe and he knew that, alone as he was, he could do nothing but just keep the little craft before the wind. Where the wind blew he must go and with him his cargo, the fruit at his feet and the forms tied to the grating.

Once with a dangerous and desperate effort he tried to untie them, but his weight thrown to port nearly capsized him. Then, giving the matter up and steeling his heart, he steered before a wind that had now shifted, and was blowing strongly from the north.

At sunset it had not altered and all night long it blew, till the dawn rose and there before Rantan, breaking the sky line, palm tops showed, and the foam of a tiny atoll singing to the sunrise.

The break was toward the north and the wind brought him through it into the little

lagoon, not a mile broad, and on to the beach.

Springing onto the sand and looking wildly around him he saw nothing—only the trees, not a sign of life; only the trees in their beauty, the lagoon in its loveliness, the sky in its purity. Blue and green and the white of coral sand, all in the fresh light of forenoon—Paradise.

Having looked around him, listened and swept the sea with a last glance, he turned to the trees, cast himself in their shadow and leaving the canoe to drift away or stick, fell into a sleep profound as the sleep of the just.

He was saved—for the moment. Freed from Karolin, he had not done with Karolin yet. He had sailed for twenty hours before a five-knot breeze. Karolin was just that distance away below the horizon to the nor'-nor'west.

To be continued in the next issue, out on September 20th.



SKINNING THROUGH

GEORGE W. NORRIS, United States senator from Nebraska, is one of the "common people," evidence of which is found in the fact that he likes to smoke stogies. Also, like a true member of the masses, he has had some close shaves in his rise to prominence. He won the presidency of a debating society in his college by a majority of one vote. In 1895 he was elected judge of the Fourteenth District of Nebraska by a majority of two, and on one occasion when he was elected to congress, he got there by the slender majority of twenty-two votes. Before he got his college education he supported his mother by working as a farm hand and as a school-teacher, and, although he made both ends meet, they didn't lap over by more than one inch.



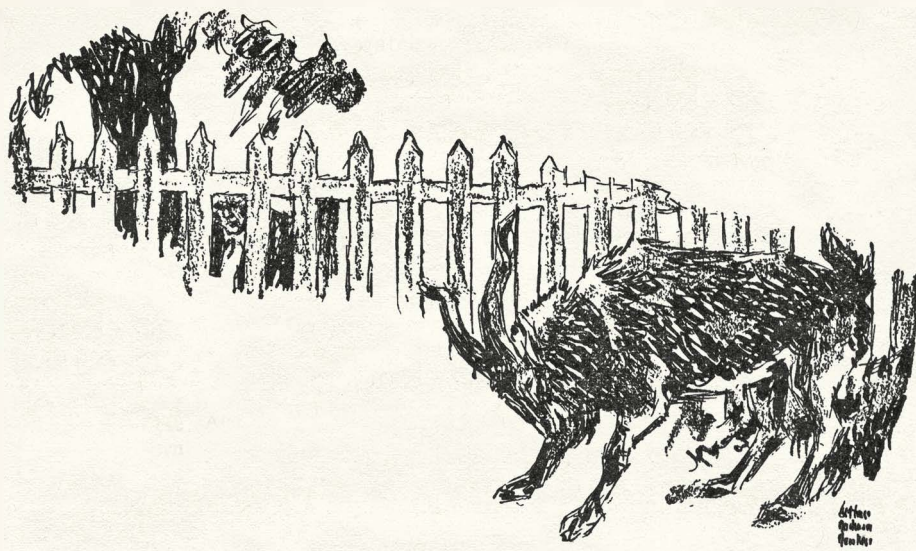
THE WINNING SPEECH

MACLYN ARBUCKLE failed as a farmer before he starred as an actor, and, while rubbing shoulders with the knights of the hoe in Bowie County, Texas, he one day so far tempted providence as to announce himself a candidate for justice of the peace. The moment he did it the man already in the race challenged him to a joint debate

"I spoke first," said Arbuckle in describing the grand event, "and I made a fine thing of it. I played on the heartstrings of that crowd like a piano. I pictured patriotism in fifty different colors, good citizenship in a hundred brilliant and iridescent hues. Taking my love of service as a text, I waved the star-spangled banner over it until in their minds they saw me getting round shouldered under the gigantic weight of my titanic labors in their behalf. Their applause thrilled me. I saw myself undoubtedly, indubitably and inevitably victorious on election night.

"Then the other fellow got up and pronounced these few prosaic words: 'Fellow citizens, to-morrow I'm going to open a large grocery store on Main Street and extend liberal credit to all my friends. The man who votes for me is my friend.'

"Having won the election with that, he sat down, and I in the fullness of time went on the stage."



Mascot Extraordinary

By Calvin Johnston

Author of "The Hill Horse," "In Siding," Etc.

The hard luck of some men can be conjured by an ordinary mascot—like a goat or a parrot—but others may only be saved from evil by the charm of a woman.

NEVER having any means to entertain himself the day before pay day, the boomer brakeman was wont to visit his acquaintance, the ancient flagman, in the crossing shanty, and solicit a dole of tobacco. In repayment he would listen to his host's chronicle of days on the old P. D., part of which he doubted and part heard without interest. But the story of O'Hanon's mascot, told across the shanty stove on a blustery fall day, impressed him as the message of an oracle.

"Superstition I have none," he would brood, "and yet 'tis strange that I should have lacked those two things all my life, good luck and a mascot. It is plain that the two must come into a man's life together."

Before adopting a mascot, however, he thought best to consult the crossing flagman again and refresh his memory on all the points of the story; in fact he had been somewhat drowsy that blustery day over the hot stove.

His host rebuked him sharply for his lack of attention, but, secretly delighted, ran-

sacked his own memory for the facts of the chronicle. So it was not his fault if any of them are missing in this twice-told tale.

A prompt and vigorous official was Superintendent O'Hanon in encouraging his employees to all the virtues—except one; he never encouraged friendship in them or in any man. In those days 'twas bad policy for the company to hire any one but an enemy to work for them, y'understand, and so change him into an enemy. And as for O'Hanon personally, the grief handed him as an official of the P. D. made him carry himself as an enemy of all mankind.

And so it was, having no friends, there was no one in his confidence to suspect the kind and smiling character concealed behind his scowling face, and roaring voice and manners of a charging buffalo. So many men did he discipline and fire and rawhide every day that the carpet before his desk where they were called was quickly worn out, and at last in the interest of company economy was replaced by a sheet of boiler iron to keep them from falling

through the hole in the floor before he had done with them.

And yet often in his hours off duty, O'Hanon would reflect, "'Tis not myself, the kind O'Hanon, who pounds his men; but I am used as an anvil by the dommed public and management and the blows glancing off land on the poor employees fit to drive them through the floor if I had not the consideration to put the boiler iron under them."

These hours off duty were passed at the home which he made with a deaf old couple near the edge of Barlow, the headquarters town. In the cold weather he had the parlor to himself and in summer the big yard where he would sit under the locust trees brooding over the state of things.

"Between receiving the sledge-hammer blows on one side and shedding them off on the other, 'tis a divil of a life," he was reflecting under the locust trees on the summer I am telling about. "It is old Hard Luck claims me for her own; she never lets up," he thought. "A few years more of train delays and engine failures, collisions, claims, sideswipes and short flagging and I am a shattered anvil."

So he would sit chewing his cheroot into a paintbrush and at times wondering dimly what it was that sometimes changed a man's luck for the better. 'Tis at such times that superstition takes hold of a man, but O'Hanon, after considering all the charms ever heard of, reflected: "'Twould have to be a charm strong enough to change the luck of the Foothills Division of the P. D. And a charm to do that would need the blessing of all the saints, under the present management."

So he would quit thinking entirely and sit under the locusts on the hot evenings glaring at the little girl of Conductor Cassidy in the next yard. For two years she had annoyed him by looking at him through the pickets and saying: "Howdydo, Mr. O'Hanon, d'ye want me to come play with you?"

And, O'Hanon, being straitly occupied with dislike of all the world, would tell her: "Gwan; don't bother me."

Then for two summers more she had annoyed him still more by saying: "I got a goat named Brian Boru now; don't you want he should come over and play?"

"Fiend seize on him!" answered O'Hanon for these two summers, and when Brian

Boru, who also looked through the pickets, muttered resentment in his beard, O'Hanon gritted his big teeth back at him.

But on this summer I am telling you about, O'Hanon realized with a disagreeable shock that the little girl of old Conductor Cassidy was not looking through the tall palings but over them. And she said nothing about playing but only stopped to study him with meditation, her head to one side.

"She has spied through the pickets for four summers and is now spying over them," snarled O'Hanon, his nerves kicking up, "'Tis too much," and would have moved his seat from under the locusts but for the goat. For Brian Boru, being now freed of the duty of playing for his living, could get down to the business of vendetta which he had been nursing for two years. And I have heard from the Eytalian section men that a goat does not exist by nature in the bog country of Ireland at all, but in the Appenine Mountains, the country of the vendetta, where he comes to his highest perfection, blating his resentment from peak to peak.

And because Brian came to blat at him through the palings, O'Hanon remained under the locusts in a convenient position to grit his teeth back at him. Dead game he was, y'see, under all the pounding of fate, but, confessing that about one more blow would make him a shattered anvil, and reflecting: "Sure, I should have fired old Cassidy for fathering a household which has grown steadily worse since the day the girl peeped through the palings five years ago. An evil eye she has, too; black as a coal, and wanting to play with me, which is what all the world has done till I am sore body and soul. And now comes the muttering in the beard, being the goat, of course, and not the girl, but filled with vengeance because I would not play." And the nerves of him kicked again and he ran his hands through his hair which grayed even as the locust blossoms fell on it, and he listened for the crash of a wreck or shout of an angry shipper in the distance.

"One more blow," he thought, and down the quiet street came a noisy flannel blazer and cap, and within them a young man singing a college song, who bolted through the gate and dumped suit and mandolin case under the locusts.

"Your nephew, Barney, Uncle O'Hanon,"

he said, shaking hands and explaining that he had preferred being a railroad official along of his uncle to clerking in his father's office in New York. "Who is the young lady in tan beyond the fence?" he asked. "Never mind, I will ask, and tell her who I am and square you if in wrong. No sooner said than done." And he was at the palings and making his bow in a moment, even to the goat, who bucked high in the air with indignation.

And Barney, observing this as a sign, dropped his voice to the young lady, so that all O'Hanon could hear was when they parted.

"I have dated Isabel for a month," Barney said, returning; "so that I can easily square you in that time. But, uncle, and believe me, as a man of the world I speak, you are in bad with the goat, which is of all creatures a mascot. Do not wonder if I spend whole days effecting a reconciliation. And now how about an advance on the old pay check covering my job, so I can eat and care for the responsibilities of entertaining Isabel who, I understand, you have much neglected, old bachelor as y'are?"

Hardened as he was to the blows of fate, O'Hanon had paled and trembled before the approaches of Barney. But, coming out from a crouch he swung back, intending to land on the flannel blazer over the short ribs. "A job I have for you, yes—'tis counting the ties on the P. D. homeward to the terminal," he said, and paused in triumph, expecting a totter and fade out.

"Faith, I have already counted the ties," answered Barney. "Believe me, the train on the P. D. does not spare a passenger any of them, so that I wondered why the rusted, crusted rails are there at all. As for the job, I obtained it in passing through the yard from the depot."

"A job!" hissed the O'Hanon, stimulated by a blat of malice from the goat, observing them through the palings.

"'Twas a greasy man as covered with rust as the rails of the P. D.," explained Barney, "who was bossing a gang of two men in a voice which could command an army. Sorting scrap iron they were till I stopped them and told who I was, and said what a poor position the boss held in the world for such a voice. My own, y'understand, uncle, is but a tenor, as I showed by taking out the mandolin from the case yonder and scattering a few notes, and

proving that such a job was not unworthy of me. So as the boss liked the mandolin and I liked the job, I traded, and got to boot——"

The young man opened the mandolin case and took out the greasy jacket and overalls of the gang boss. "So I go on my first railroad trick in the a. m.," he ended with satisfaction, "and by eating in the meantime can hand the full punch of muscles developed by mandolin training, to my job."

"Enough!" snarled O'Hanon weakly, but stared with so wild a curiosity of his nephew's luck that Barney explained:

"'Tis the mascot I brought along, a parrot who can repeat one of Solomon's Songs in Spanish-American, though whether Solomon ever sung or could sing in Spanish-American——"

"Enough—I have said it!" grated O'Hanon in a terrible voice, and handed over a twenty advance on the pay check. "No doubt the parrot will trade in Solomon's Song for a pair of overalls and follow you on the job. A mascot!" he snarled, but was silenced by a dreadful noise from the goat, like a blat of doom, and around the palings and under the locusts approached a figure, brass buttoned, white haired with a royal dignity which comes only of answering railroad passengers—Conductor Mike Cassidy.

"'Enough,' I heard you say, Superintendent O'Hanon," said Cassidy, rearing before him. "And it goes for me. Thirty years I have been on the P. D., running a train when it would run, and taking siding or going into the ditch when it would not. And always with the roaring of some boss, which roared louder and more profanely as years went by, till at last I was deafened by you. Till this very evening, when, glory be, I have turned in my punch and retired to live a life of quiet and self-respect on my estate."

"An estate?" repeated Barney, as his uncle beat his ears, not believing them.

"Estate," repeated Cassidy, "three miles down the line, where I will clear off the dandelions, bad cess to them, and eat them with corn bread and bacon. And when I have done, plant my acres in grain and vegetables such as the foothills grow, and pass the declining years of me in peace. Peace," he said, "and that means out of the sight of yourself, superintendent, who

have been boss and neighbor five years with nothing but growl or snarl for me or the little orphan, Isabel—or the goat,” he finished with afterthought which, all at once, made the blood of O’Hanon run cold.

“Another mascot,” muttered the superintendent, and with serious reflections on the luck of a roadman who had survived thirty years on the P. D.

“I will pension the goat,” he said.

But Cassidy sneered him to scorn.

“Sure, ’twill eat up your dandelions,” said O’Hanon in protest.

“Indeed,” resumed Cassidy, “you begin to feel what you will lose in my household. But, Superintendent O’Hanon! Neither yourself, nor what I understand is your nephew, can pension or associate yourself with one man, which is myself, or child, or weed on the Cassidy estate. Now and forevermore, I bid you good evening, gentlemen; I have now ceased to be a P. D. employee and become part of the public, me and my daughter, who can answer any dommed P. D. official or his dommed nephew as we see fit.”

Barney started up and after him. “But, Mr. Cassidy, I have dated her up——”

“Is it so?” replied Cassidy over his shoulder. “And what have you to offer the daughter of an estate?”

“Myself,” replied Barney with pride, but the other laughed so heartily that he turned back.

“’Twas the goat,” he told his uncle in gloom. “I knew no good would come of it.”

O’Hanon felt of his person as if to discover where a new blow had landed, but finding himself equally sore all over, growled, satisfied. “Now, nephew—since you must be one,” he said, “I was impressed with the luck of you in getting a job with me because of the mascot. I was so persecuted by bad luck that I seized at any superstition and so bid on Cassidy’s goat. But I have recovered my senses. Ha, ha!” he said. “No doubt you and your parrot are the worst luck ever befallen me and yet you persuaded me to bid on a goat,” and he bade Barney good evening so bitterly that the young man went away whistling at once.

Now, ’tis a matter of record on the flimsies of the P. D. pay roll of twenty-five years ago, that Barney went to work in the scrap yard and later became the assistant of the assistant roadmaster, Hoolihan,

as married an O’Rourke. So that being a matter of record, there is no need to mention it. But for the one circumstance—that whereas most assistant roadmasters are rough with the company property, Barney insisted on rails and fish plates and frogs being handled tenderly, because some day the girl of amber eyes and dark hair and slim figure should ride over them.

Many a girl the collegian had known and fallen for, y’understand, but when those days of song and music had gone and the days of iron and toil were upon him, only one appeared in the mirage that ever dances about the cinder beds. “Oh, you, Isabel Cassidy,” he would say, but the old parrot, having died shortly after a meal at the P. D. lunch counter, he was left without a mascot at the time he was most in need of one.

When uncle and nephew met they denounced each other, but in silence; O’Hanon, more scowling, more to be dreaded by employees, fought off the public on one hand and management on the other and was the king link in transcontinental railroading. But this big boss of them all, public, employees, management, was a sad man at heart.

“Divil take the luck of me,” he thought in the old parlor, or under the locusts. “I must live in a world of enemies which I make under compulsion.”

And on the Cassidy estate of prairie land where the dandelions had given way to grain and vegetables, was one who thought of him as a lonesome veteran of a desperate warfare of ambitious men, whom she had seen graying and gaunting even as the spring locust blossoms showered his head.

But old Cassidy knew him better than herself. “Sure, Isa,” he said when the name of his old oppressor was mentioned, “it takes a young boss like O’Hanon to be hard of heart.”

“Is O’Hanon at thirty-six young?” laughed Isabel, who at nineteen knows there is no youth beyond twenty, and there she hinted again that Barney should be permitted to call. “Here is another letter from him, begging.” She laughed, but Cassidy turned down the suggestion with a curse in which he named the O’Hanon family so it would not go astray. This was all right, but he made the mistake of also including the P. D. in general, so that he now had a curse abroad like a boomerang with no

particular place to land unless it returned home.

One afternoon in early spring a storm which had been making medicine for a week or more back in the big range felt strong enough to take the trail to the foothills, and Cassidy, having his ear cocked for the warning, locked the mule and cow in the barn and called to the goat, who was over by the railroad track where he would go to mutter at the locomotives.

Isabel, in the dooryard with her father, called attention to a cloud bellied out with wind and the two stood watching as the light changed to the streaky yellow y'have seen made by damp matches on a black wall. Then a flick of ice-cold air across their faces served the last warning that tornadoes pass out of their coming, and the monster himself rose up with a grin of lightning beyant a hill and Isabel went into the house.

"Brian, y'divil," bawled Cassidy, "come here," but Brian was already there, y'understand. So he had no one to blame but himself when, falling over Brian, he twisted his leg so that he had to be dragged indoors by Isabel. For a moment the doorway was congested with travel, as they say, the two Cassidys and the tornado trying to get in all together and 'tis said, though afterward set down to scandal, that the old goat traitorously assisted the tornado in clearing the way.

It may be scandal and may not—there is enough of it among families of station as the Cassidys now were so that a black-guard more or less was to be expected. Still I do not believe all I hear and 'tis only striking an average if few believe me.

At any rate, there is no doubt that the tornado did not get inside with the others, but that outside it was making free of its opportunities. Cassidy, with his sprained leg up on a chair, forgot to complain of the pain. "'Tis a risky night for the trainmen," he said, thinking amid the crash of wind and thunder of many an old crony on the line. When, with a last grand smash, the storm rolled on, Cassidy, with a queer uneasiness, had Isabel step outside to see what was to be seen of the line under the sheet lightning.

"The trestle is out," she told him at a glance, and there is no doubt the last smash of the storm had taken it. "No—nothing in the ditch or in sight," she told Cassidy,

running for lanterns, as any railroad girl would do. One was burning in the kitchen, and the other, Cassidy's silver conductor's lantern, was lighted. The old conductor put his foot to the floor and fell flat, then began to crawl, dragging his leg after, but it was realized in a moment that he would hardly even make the embankment. It was of course necessary to flag each way from the storm-wrecked trestle and at least ten or fifteen poles distant.

"Brian Boru," said Isabel, "many's the cart you've pulled and pack carried for me," and as she talked had the small silver lantern wrapped in red cloth and buckled into his collar.

Sprawled on the doorstep Cassidy watched with terrible anxiety the two mount the slight embankment. And the red lantern started west. Then Isabel ran around the trestle, through a sheet of water and to the east. No need of watching her. "Mother of Moses," said Cassidy, "the goat carries his red lantern with a stop signal; it is not for nothing he has been telling the locomotives day by day that he can flag them at will." Cassidy listened; both flags had disappeared on the curving track; then far to the west the wail of a whistle, and a faint thin scream. "Glory be—the emergency brakes!" he thought; but the rumble of the train increased, and, hardened veteran of a hundred wrecks, Cassidy took one look toward the black gap where the trestle had been and collapsed.

Not for over an hour did Isabel return, having run all of the way to the little way station two miles below and roused the operator who slept in his office. Then with the signal set against trains and the operator pounding out a report of the danger, she hurried back with an endless prayer that Brian Boru had held on till an engineer sighted his red lantern.

"Saints above, he likes to parade the track day by day with the whistles tooting at him," she reflected, "and why should he not do so at such need as this?" Her heart beat fast, however, as she rounded the last curve near home. "Sure, the signal was observed and I will see the headlight of a train which has pulled up beyant the trestle," she kept assuring herself, and then, coming around the curve on to the tangent, strained her eyes in disbelief. For it was certain as she had met no train from the east, that in all this time some train held

rights over this piece of track coming from the west; and if flagged its headlight would now be upon her. Instead, the long straight line stretched away in darkness, with the blacker gap of the great pitfall two hundred yards away choked with what broken cars and bodies? It was so because it could not be otherwise, and, shunning the charnel pit in a cold panic, Isabel left the line to circle the pit and splashed through sheets of shallow water to the cottage door.

Cassidy was sprawled half on the lounge and mechanically she lifted his injured leg, dragging on the floor. "'Twas dreadful," he whispered with staring eyes.

"'Twas not the passenger," Isabel whispered back.

"'Twas O'Hanon's car—a special." As if an afterbolt of the storm streamed through her the body of the girl sprung straight and rigid.

"Mother in heaven!" she said.

"He is down among the timber of the trestle," said Cassidy, and closed his eyes. For a veteran, whether warrior or railroad man—who are much the same, y'understand, only that a railroad man always dies for the public without selfish ambition which, if he had, he would not be on a railroad—even a heroic veteran who runs to danger, may be demoralized in sitting aside and watching his friends on such a run. So Cassidy, looking out helpless on that abyss in the rails with the trains plunging toward it, collapsed.

But Isabel, who had no tradition of the rails, no cronies of roundhouse and shanty to grieve for—stood, nevertheless, like the angel of mercy hearing the world was lost.

"Oh—Cornelius! Oh, oh!" she said, "and you so unlucky, with all the world against you and trying to be kind!"

"Who!" exclaimed Cassidy startled to his elbow.

"Cornelius—and what do you know about him? You, and all other men and the railroad, making a hard man of him—always fighting and handing blows, when he wanted to be gentle and play with me under the locusts. Oh, Cornelius!" she said, stamping her foot as an angry angel would clap her wings together over one whom the world had driven to suicide through a misunderstanding between them. "The best playmate"—and she paced the cottage crying her brown eyes out—"if y'had only had a chance!"

And O'Hanon—plodding in from his inspection of even more grief under the trestle, after ordering his special back to get out of the way of the wrecker—O'Hanon came in the door. "Cornelius!" he said, as in a dream. "Me!"

And the girl shrank away, and the supreme official of the transcontinental link glared.

"B'dam!" said Cassidy, staring at them with a shudder and covering his eyes with his arm in a spirit of resignation. For of all the supremacy which we are bound to submit to, the most appalling and inevitable to an Irishman is a boss in his family.

"You!" cried Isabel.

"Me—Cornelius!" answered the voice of O'Hanon.

The man of trouble, whose hair had grayed under the locust blossoms, and the girl who had watched him through the palings, looked at each other, and away. In all the world's field of dangers there is none which raises such a panic in the blood, y'understand, as the one in which a man and a woman who understands him, come on each other.

So both seized on caution as a means of approach.

"Before I sent my special back," said O'Hanon, "I had my secretary climb a pole and attach my instrument—"

"Surely a superintendent has to keep in touch with his division," answered Isabel.

"And the report comes of a red lantern signal holding up every train. Even the wrecker was halted."

"'Tis Brian—handling the stop for orders, or whatever train dispatchers hand out—all the way—"

"But he may go beyant Barlow," said O'Hanon, "and tie up the whole division. Sure a goat will walk and leap as long as he has a vendetta, and Brian and myself were not friends."

"But we will get the final report at your instrument," said Isabel, diverting O'Hanon from the embarrassing confession she had made of her interest in him.

So they walked with formal dignity to the telegraph instrument cut in at the trestle, and with other reports the sounder recorded one from Barney.

"The Isabel Cassidy goat in your absence has reported to me in the Barlow night yard. 'Tis a mascot to succeed me par-

rot," and here O'Hanon broke the sender and repeated the message to Isabel.

And the girl thought.

"I should say," she observed with a quiet which always afterward distinguished her among the people of the great railroad households of the land, "that Barney did not observe the danger signal attached to the mascot."

"Now, Isabel!" said O'Hanon.

"Now, Cornelius!" she answered.

"But I am an unlucky man!"

"I am a mascot."

And, as is not well known, even in their middle age, when controlling the transportation of the Great War and the world, the scared kiss of Isabel and the panic kiss of O'Hanon, with many blushes on both sides, were the means of ending a thousand griefs in the Old World and the New. Because — But whoever admits in war medals that a wife is a mascot?

More stories by Mr. Johnston in early issues.

WILD OATS FOR TAME

WE have been expecting, from day to day, announcement of the endowment of a Chair of Reform in some one of our great universities. The time is ripe. The practice of militant morality has become an affair of the practical pocket-book rather than a matter of the ethical convictions. It needs only the confirming seal of a parchment scroll and a college degree to raise the business of minding other people's manners to the dignity of a professional career.

Something along this line ought to be done without delay, if for no better reason than a decent consideration of the public's feelings. A man is naturally inclined to touchiness in respect to alien intrusion into such formerly private sanctuaries as his library, his humidor, and his cellar. It comes hard to be informed by the bumptious Mr. J. C. Smith, who never went beyond the eighth grade, that he is going to cause you to remove from your well-stocked shelves such and such dusty tomes, and to burn your pipes in the furnace, and to break your kegs in the gutter. But were the ultimatum to emanate from the urbane and personable J. Calthorpe Smythe, D. P. M.—Doctor of Public Morals—you would naturally feel quite differently about it. Naturally!

The occupation of the reformer, as a practical and hard-headed man of business, would appear to be both complicated and delicate. Success here, as in all business, must depend at the last upon a nice balancing of supply and demand. If all imperfection is reformed out of existence at a stroke there will be nothing left for the impetuous and shortsighted reformer to trade on. We must be reformed vigorously, but not too vigorously. New failings must be let to grow, for future harvests, while the old are being mowed away. Even so the prudent woodsman who sees the healthy second growth well started ere he fells the virgin timber.

To achieve this delicate equilibrium between supply and demand will be no task for amateurs. There must be no killing of the goose of the golden eggs. The day of the earnest, but impractical, uplifter is no more. Reform must be handled by experts.

Everything points to the urgent necessity for higher education in the field of Reform. More thought must be given to the expansion of the field, the creation of new markets. For this work there is need of trained men. At present the scope of the reformer is too limited. When he has had his fling at alcohol, tobacco and literature he has pretty well exhausted the existing possibilities. There is imminent danger that with a market so restricted the profession will shortly become overcrowded. If the growing generation of potential reformers are not carefully schooled to inquire out new vices for suppression—much as physicians are taught to hunt up new germs for destruction—they are liable to find themselves jobless.

The situation, however, need give no alarm. A little forethought, energy, imagination, is all that is required in the development of a rich and practically limitless field. The average man has no idea how wicked he can be made to appear by a really capable expert. Almost anything can be immoral if you want to look at it that way. All that Reform needs to preserve it for the reformers is a body of college-trained professionals skilled in the mysteries of converting tame oats into wild ones.



Galahad of Lost Eden

By William West Winter

Author of "Blue John Rights a Wrong," "The Toss of a Coin," Etc.

IV.—THE LADY OF FOSSIL CREEK.

**In which another leaguered princess bids for the lance
and the troth of the knightly outlaw from Showlow way.**

THE grizzled teamster, having dined wisely and well on venison fresh killed by a wandering band of Apaches who had donated a quarter to the forest ranger, stretched, sucked his pipe luxuriously and made payment without urging by beginning a narrative. Said he:

Game laws don't mean much in the intellects of such aboriginal children as them Murenos, but if, as you say, you and they have had a powwow and made a treaty by which they refrain from slaughtering game except in such places and times as laid down therein, you can gamble they'll adhere strict to it. Injuns, that a way, are prone to regarding treaties as sacred a whole lot.

But, speaking of game laws, there ain't any to protect outlaws and such in Arizona, especially at the times I have been telling you of, and nothing but the sporting instincts of the inhabitants renders them liable to an even break under any circumstances. Up to this time, the projects of Blue John, resting on chivalrous premises as you might say, inveigles the interest of

the natives to an extent wherein they don't enthuse none over persecuting him with territorial rangers and warrants. Though he rests under numerous indictments acquired in his protection of Hilda Raffe, barring the rangers, none of the officers of the law aims to hunt much trouble with him and those presentments of various grand juries rests a heap unregarded.

But his last exploit is something else, although even here there are a few who attempt to discriminate. They don't any of them animadvert to any extent over Blue John's sticking up George Rayfield and ensconcing Hilda in the job of cashier at a hundred and fifty dollars a month, because that outcome strikes everybody as being no more nor less than poetical justice. Nor is there any grief nor indignation because Blue John slays "Sinjin" that time, inasmuch as Sinjin has been inviting decease for many moons, and besides, he slices Blue John with a knife before ever John reaches for his hog leg. But when "Panhandle Pete," Blue John's latest ally, sweeps the boards and the drawer of all the cash Sinjin has, he also gathers in considerable belonging to

sundry citizens who are playing the wheel. There isn't no way of discriminating between Blue John and Pete in this instance, and no one tries to do it, beyond the fact that when the pursuit commences they all hive it after Pete who has the dinero and thus leave Blue John to wend his wounded way unmolested.

They don't gather in Pete, none to speak of, and he gets clean away, but after they have gathered together again there is an indignation meeting which is largely attended and in which the sheriff and the town marshal come in for numerous animadversions for not rounding up these outlaws before they breaks loose in any such plays. In the course of this the losses reported by sundry citizens hitherto never known to possess more than a grubstake loom up as positively monumental. The total, after Sinjin's estate has been credited with a bit more than a thousand dollars, adds up to at least fifteen hundred more, and Panhandle Pete ain't there to contradict the mathematics none.

Furthermore, Rayfield, who is the richest man in the Verde Valley, is peeved to distraction over having to pay Hilda wages which are respectable. He finds this prospect painful in the extreme and he moans about it a whole lot but he can't see no way out of it as long as Blue John remains at large and within reaching distance of him. Consequently, though somewhat cautious in what he says, he adds his bleat to the rest of the chorus and clamors for Blue John's hide. But on the first of the month he pays Hilda her stipend, prompt and in full, though he sheds bitter tears while doing it.

There is so much war medicine being cooked over this that the grand jury adds another indictment to the whole and votes a resolution condemning the marshal, the sheriff, the county attorney and the rangers for laxity in enforcing the law on Blue John. No, they don't add any more man-slaughters to the score, it being beneath the dignity of an Arizona jury to regard such sports as Sinjin as entitled to the protection of the statutes, but they tack on another count of robbery and assault with force of arms. Furthermore, the natives assemble and swear themselves in as a posse and set out to thrash Lost Eden up, down and around about, in the hope of flushing Blue John or Panhandle Pete out of cover.

In this they don't succeed for various reasons. As to Blue John, the best of all is that he ain't there. When he flogs it out of the Verde, he wades Clear Creek down near the mouth and climbs the bank to the flats on the other side. Then, skirting the mouth of the cañon, he heads out across the malpais, leaving no trail, and strikes straight across country the best he can until he comes to the edge of Fossil Creek.

Being a stranger in these parts maybe you don't know Fossil Creek. It rises out of nothing below the rim, where there is a steep basin dug out of the open slopes where the mesa tails off onto the lower country. A mile below the head of this basin the cañon grows steeper and deeper, with rocky cliffs rising for a couple of hundred feet, but the valley is fairly wide up there. Out of the cliffs on the west side spring a dozen or so springs of warm water, some hardly better than a trickle, while others spout a stream as thick as your body. They gather below and flow off to form the creek, which rises to quite a respectable size before it has gone two hundred yards.

On the east side there is a trail down that isn't so bad, though steep, and from the west you come down into the basin at the head where the slopes aren't so very hard. But down below the springs about a mile the cañon deepens and narrows until it's a box cañon without no passage up either side or downstream below several small falls that the creek makes.

By the time Blue John gets to the slope down to Fossil Creek his wound has begun to give trouble, what with loss of blood, which isn't so bad as it might have been if his shirt hadn't clotted on it, and a fever that comes on him. He gets light headed after riding twenty or thirty miles that a way and he begins to recite poetry to himself and to sing songs, based on visions he suffers from in which Hilda Raffe figures regardless. He has lost all sense he originally has when he slides down the slope to the bottom of the valley and he is sitting hunched up on the saddle with no more idea than a pilgrim where he is going and what he's going to do when he gets there.

But the horse isn't so inconsequential as Blue John and he smelts the water in Fossil Creek and heads down to it. He passes under the cliffs where the springs gush out above him, sniffing at the big ferns which grow lush and a hundred feet up the rocks.

and dips into the water. But the water is almost hot up here where it originates and the horse is suspicious of it. So he sniffs and snorts and wanders farther down to investigate for cooler liquor.

It's growing light even down in the cañon by this time and, as it's low altitude, no more than three thousand feet above sea level, the cañon is warm even in winter and you don't never have to use more than one blanket at night. At this time, the air is balmy and fresh with the damp from the warm stream.

Blue John comes halfway out of his trance in which he is seeing visions of floating females with golden hair and soft blue eyes, the same bearing a distinct resemblance to the lineaments of Hilda Raffe. He envisions these hallucinations as being somewhat like angels with floating and flowing robes of white, sailing around on clouds and singing hymns to him, and he is too much debased by fevers to exercise any discretion about them whatever.

Consequently, when his horse stops and throws his head up with a whinny and a pricking of the ears, Blue John looks up, all dazed and sore and stiff, and gazes ahead of him, not knowing where he is. He looks out along the creek flowing at his feet to where the cañon begins to narrow rapidly and where there is a big outcrop of flat rock overhanging the water, which dives over and falls some distance right here. Standing on this rock, sort of half veiled in the faint mist that rises from the warm water, is something that he takes for further visions centering on Miss Raffe in her angelic habiliments, though, as a matter of fact, this here vision hasn't got no more clothes on than one of them Grecian goddesses.

But Blue John can't see clearly nohow and he just stretches out his hands and makes a recitation.

"My homage to thee, sweet princess of my soul," says he or words to that effect, thinking it is a materialization of the spirit of Hilda. Whereupon, this vision stoops with a little screech and snatches a shotgun from behind the rock. She lets fly at Blue John with one motion and with the next she dives off that rock and into a pool just below it.

With the roar of the gun the horse jumps plumb out of itself and Blue John, sitting loose and unregardful, with hands stretched out, naturally hasn't neither grip nor bal-

ance to save himself. Likewise he is totally distracted from any notions of riding by a load of number-ten shot which rattles around him and punctures him in several places at once, though he is fortunately at such a range that it scatters pretty freely and what hits him don't more than penetrate painfully. Nevertheless, he don't have no time even to pull leather but goes spraddling right out of his hull and down with a thump onto the ground, while his horse makes tracks back up the cañon and out of sight.

When Blue John comes out of the insensibilities into which he has lapsed he opens his eyes and sees a female person bending over him and trying to peel his shirt off of where it has stuck to the slice out of his ribs, while she utters little moans and chirps of sympathetic nature. As his vision clears he looks into sorrowful but bright brown eyes under a thick and long screen of dark hair which hangs in wet wisps all around a face of the sort that them story writers designates as a "perfect oval." Letting his wondering regard wander farther he discovers that his suspicions that the lady he has seen about to take a dive into the creek was totally unclothed was apparently unjust, seeing she now rejoices in garments consisting of a flannel shirt and an Injuntanned buckskin skirt with a pair of boots to complete the costume. But that his visions don't entirely lack verity is shown by the additional fact that at her side on the ground, is lying the sixteen-gauge shotgun with which she blows him out of his saddle.

"Are you very much injured?" asks this young female, sort of breathless with anxiety. "You—you startled me so that I didn't stop to think, but just blazed away."

Now Blue John moves and, barring his sore side, and sundry painful orifices left by the shot, he seems to be all right, though his fever is probably responsible for his notions of health that a way. And that also addicts him to further follies regarding them visions he thinks he has seen. He gazes blankly at the brunet young woman, as though he don't understand.

"I reckon I can stagger around," he says doubtfully, and looks intently and with disappointment at the lady. "But wherever am I and how do I get here? It seems to me I was riding right straight over the clouds into heaven and I had just seen my

princess standing on a cloud without no clothes on when some jealous devil busts me where I look biggest with a shotgun. Now, wherever has that angel gone?"

Whereupon the young lady bending over him starts up and her brown eyes snap like firecrackers.

"Sir!" says she, with indignation. But although her face is tanned to a sort of soft brown, it gets so red now that she might have been taken for a sunset against cirrus clouds if it hadn't been morning.

"I don't mean any offense," says Blue John, "but I sure thought I saw Miss Raffe, standing on that rock with clouds all around her, clothing her like the spirits are clothed."

"I'll have you know, sir," says the young lady, redder than ever and with fire fairly burning in her eyes, "that that was me and not any riffraff or other trash, and you are no gentleman to sit there and watch a young woman who is going swimming when she thinks there is no one else about. Which I no longer regret that I let you have the full load out of that shotgun and I only wish it had been buckshot."

With which she leaps right up and stalks away, very hurried, but Blue John sinks back, with his head swimming and begins to rub his forehead and mutter things to himself as his fever mounts. The young lady marches about half a furlong and then remembers that she's left her gun lying on the ground so she looks back and sees him on one elbow, with head sagging and making feeble gestures with his other hand as though to clear his wits. She looks at him suspiciously for a moment and then her face softens and she comes back, slowly.

"Mister—Mister Whoever-you-are, are you badly hurt?" she asks.

But Blue John is wandering in the realms of romance where there isn't no reality at all and he can't hear her. He just mutters and recites poetry and things to himself and makes puerile digs at his forehead with his free hand while he sags on the forearm to which the other is attached. And the lady sees now that his face is flushed and his eyes are glassy.

"I'm afraid that you're sick," she says and looks around for help. But there isn't any available in the shape of humanity and all she can see is Blue John's horse, who has got over his panic and is grazing out in the valley with the bridle rein hanging.

She looks at Blue John and then at the horse and then she walks out to catch it. This isn't difficult, as the horse is tied to the ground by the rein hanging that a way and don't try to get away. She leads him up to Blue John and then stoops over him.

"Can you get up?" she demands, and shakes him gently. He just pushes her hand away peevishly, and continues to mutter. But she persists and goes so far as to try to lift him by getting her arms about his shoulders and heaving away at him. As he stands a scant six feet and weighs a hundred and seventy-five she don't make no outstanding success at this venture but, after expending considerable more effort than she was licensed to, she does get him sitting up. Then, as she shouts to him to get up and something of her intentions manages to penetrate, he makes some effort himself and staggers to his feet. The girl wrestles and tugs at him and boosts all she can and Blue John is docile enough, if helpless, so, in some way or other, she finally manages to hoist him onto his hull and keep him there by hanging to his bootleg. Then she leads the horse downstream past the rock on which Blue John has seen her and very carefully and slowly down over the terraces to the narrow cañon bed below the pool.

Down here about a hundred yards there is a widening of the cañon to a flat bench backed by the cliffs and there is a cabin built on this strip of land. Here she takes him and gets him to slide off the horse into her arms and then she drags him in one way or another into the place and finally gets him to bed.

I reckon it must have been an ordeal for this young woman when she has to cut the shirt loose from that slit in his ribs and wash and tie that up. Also, it is necessary that she goes after several and sundry shot that are embedded in his hide, probing for them, as I hear, with a thin pair of manicure scissors which is the nearest thing she has to an instrument for the purpose. Taking it by and large and with due consideration, I reckon she don't enjoy that performance none, nor does she get a favorable view of John, as she might have done if he'd been whole and free from gore and in his right mind. But Blue John don't recognize none of these difficulties whatever because he is lost in deliriums regarding Hilda Raffe and other reminiscences.

However, in his wanderings, he lets out enough to acquaint this young woman of Fossil Creek with the fact that he's an outlaw though she can't make head or tail of his other ravings. She gathers pretty distinctly that he's a fugitive from justice and that half the Verde Valley is at his crupper when he alights in her bailiwick.

Now that gives her something to think of. In the first place it indicates that a posse may come racking in there at any moment and she has her own reasons for not wishing anything like that. If it was an ordinary posse she wouldn't care so much, but it happens that she isn't on none too friendly terms with certain Camp Verde parties and she don't welcome any visits from them or their confederates. Still, she isn't harboring criminally inclined gents by habit or profession, and she isn't addicted to busting the law wide open for mere whims like nursing Blue John. Lastly she is plenty indignant at that party for horn-ing in on her beach party unawares that a way and then making what she regards as insulting remarks about it. As long as he remains delirious she don't mind so much, but it fills her with acrimonious feelings when she considers that he might come to at any moment and begin to recall having seen her in what you might call an unconventional situation. When this possibility presents itself she regrets the absence of buckshot in that gun even more than before.

She might have spared herself any blushes however, for when Blue John comes to he don't remember it at all. Leastwise he doesn't seem to, but, as I have repeatedly explained, he is a mighty chivalrous young gent and maybe he forgets it of set purpose. Meanwhile she is torn between her disgust at him and her disinclination to offend the law and her reluctance to have any Verde Valley sports squandering around on Fossil Creek. She finally decides to let it go and wait for the cards to be dealt as fate may decree.

Fate doesn't decree any posse for, as I explain, the posse is chasing Pete in the first place and when the organized hunt is later put under way they devote their attention to Lost Eden and never dream of going into Fossil Creek. Such folks as cross the cañon by the trail in and out don't never come down below the little falls, and so she is left alone there with Blue John while he slowly recovers from his injuries.

If you are looking for a dimming of the light of Hilda's golden hair and a shifting of the romantic interest of this yarn, you are roping at the wrong steer, for Blue John is a one-ideaed man and he has set that idea on blondes, with the result that he plumb dislikes brunettes. And the young lady who saves him is prejudiced equally or more so against any hombre who rides in on her ablutions in any such inconsiderate way as he does. In fact, you might say that from the beginning there is a state of armed neutrality between these two.

Nevertheless, since it takes some time for Blue John to recover to an extent where he can get out of bed and attend to his affairs, they do get pretty well acquainted. Blue John, who, living over Showlow way, don't boast any great acquaintance with Fossil Creek, is puzzled because he ain't ever heard that said cañon is inhabited since the project to build a power dam there was abandoned when he was a yearling. On this matter the young lady sets him straight when she comes to tell her story, which she does after he has been there two or three days.

"My name is Theba Willing," says she, "and you needn't laugh at the first part of it, because it's legitimate, seeing that I was born in Maricopa County near the hamlet of that name. Besides that, it is as good a name any day as this Hilda party boasts, whom you are always muttering about. My father was early left a widower and never entertains any notions of correcting that status after my mother dies. I grow up in sundry places and go to school out in California for some years, not being able to remain with my papa because he is an engineer and wanders about from place to place in pursuit of his profession.

"Many years ago he signs up with an outfit in Denver who have a scheme to develop a water-power and irrigation system on Fossil Creek. He hasn't no interest in this development beyond the fact that he's hired to examine into its feasibility and after he reports thereon it is understood that he will be in charge of the work if it is carried out. He makes said examination and survey and reports that a dam can be built and this power developed, though he isn't any too optimistic about the desirability of its being done.

"However, his unfavorable opinion of this project don't have any effect on this gang

in Denver, who are out to raise money from the public rather than supply power and water to it. They get out a prospectus incorporating the best parts of papa's report and suppressing the parts where he casts doubt on the proposition—in that after you've got your water and your power you haven't got any one to whom you can sell it. There is no mention of the fact that there aren't any settlements on the line of this electric-light plant nearer than a hundred and fifty miles away and that there isn't any land to irrigate anywhere along the line either. They go ahead and enter negotiations with political sharps having pull with the government and they get from the land office a favorable concession giving them title to all the basin of Fossil Creek and enabling them to do about anything they want to with it. Such grabs weren't uncommon in those days, though they can't be put over so easily in these.

"They are fully protected from prosecution, probably, by the acquisition of this bony-fidy title to the place, but they are cautious folks and they don't stop at that to safeguard them in their nefarious enterprise. They actually proceed to spend about one per cent of the money they extract from the suckers scattered over the land, in beginning work on the dam, thus establishing claims to having actually developed in accordance with their government patents. In this work my papa is supreme, being sole boss of half a dozen Mexicans and a few Injuns so employed, with which he makes some sort of start on this dam.

"You are doubtless informed as to how this project eventuates when the stockholders begin to inquire about the promised dividends and bring an action. There are receiverships and suchlike plays and it is discovered that all the money collected by the promoters has gone to pay salaries to themselves, trips to Europe, advertising and expense of selling stock. There isn't anything for the stockholders barring title to the creek and the projected dam and engineers report that no dam could possibly pay expenses.

"During these engaging exposures my papa has been working here for the promise of a large salary which isn't forthcoming. Likewise he has had to advance from his scanty funds sufficient to imburse these oilers and Injuns who toil for him. Conse-

quently he is out the amount he has been promised and about all his small savings with which he is educating me.

"He tries to recuperate by filing a claim with the receivers but the assets are non-existent to the naked eye and he can't recover. He has a mechanic's lien or something like that on the dam on which he has worked and he offers to sue on that. The upshot of it is that, having no cash and no property worth anything, the company compromises by passing title to my papa to this dam and the patent to Fossil Creek and environs. It can't be sold at auction because no one will bid it in at this time.

"So, since his money is gone and there is no prospect of getting it back, papa comes here and settles down in this cabin, which he built when superintending this dam. He can't pay for any more schooling for me and when I find that out I come here and start in to assist him. This is last winter and I have been here eight months.

"Papa has an idea that he can farm in the upper basin and irrigate from the springs so he fences in the valley, to which he has a right, and starts to break out a field or two of lucerne. He has to fence the creek and the springs from which it rises, of course, and he has a right to do it. He never considers that there might be objections, but he has no sooner run his wire around the place when in rides a tall and hawk-faced gent, strung with six-shooters and followed by two or three tough-looking riders. He announces himself as Mose Scott from around the Buckhorn.

"To make a long story short, this Scott party allows that he runs cows down past here and in the surrounding hills in winter and that he needs this water for their use and behoof. Furthermore, he intends to enjoy said use in spite of all the nesters that can hive around here. He is belligerent and forceful in his language and he won't listen to any argument regarding titles and rights, so papa unslings his shotgun and posts himself to protect his property from these vandals. He is one to four, however, and he hasn't any buckshot, so the outcome of the hostilities is that he's shot twice, once in the leg and once in the neck, while these night-riding scoundrels tear up his wire and turn in a bunch of cattle on his plowed fields.

"I find him there and get help from the

ranch at Strawberry where the Mormons exhibit plentiful sympathy and aid in my bereavement, old man Petersen himself packing his wagon and toting papa down to Jerome where there is a hospital. But it isn't any use. He is too far gone and dies when he gets there, leaving me this property in his will. And when I have seen him die I come back here, bringing the shotgun, and settle down again in this cabin, where I remain looking for a fair chance to bushwack this 'Windy' Mose Scott and put him where he won't oppress the helpless no more forever and ever."

"But," asks Blue John, puzzled and with his chivalrous instincts rising in spite of the fact that he harbors prejudices both against brunettes and against ladies who forgets their sex and indulges in warfare, "however do you manage to live here without no chance to earn your chuck?"

She puts him right on that. It seems that she counts on the Mormons around Pine and Payson and Strawberry for sustenance, hiring out to give music lessons and such to those folks. What use a Mormon has for music is more than I know; but, and it's a fact, them alleged benighted polygamists are charitable a whole lot toward this gentile lady, and they are sufficiently tactful besides to invest their alms that a way with the camouflage of lessons in harmonious warbles and such. Which there are plenty of other folks could probably go to school to them in such projects.

When he hears this story, Blue John is both shocked and indignant. He knows something of Windy Mose Scott, who is a cattelman owning the Buckhorn, which he is said to have acquired by more or less nefarious methods. He hires a tough bunch of riders and he don't hesitate to persecute any one who is liable to be helpless before him. In short, he is just such a sport as arouses all Blue John's antagonisms. When, added to this, is the fact that he's abusing a helpless female, even though a brunette, Blue John promptly sees his duty and proceeds to do it.

"Which I camps from now on on the trail of this ladrone and makes it my business to see that he don't worry you none whatever," he asserts. But Miss Theba doesn't enthuse over this to any extent.

"I can kill my own snakes and skin them too," she allows, though in more ladylike language. "This party is my game and you

can keep hands off of him. I don't need any outlaws to fight my quarrels."

By which she betrays the fact that she knows Blue John's status. Blue John doesn't like to rest under such implications and he sets out to undeceive her by telling her the most of his history. But Theba listens with an unconcealed sniff and when he dilates on the pulchritude investing Miss Hilda Raffé, she just stares at him as though she thinks he's loco.

"I'd surely like to observe this paragon of all the female beauties since Helen of Troy's days," she says. "Likewise, I'd like to meet a lady who is that supine and mushy that she submits to all the oppressions you detail without ever standing up for herself; and then permits a fool man to horn in her affairs and bulge them all up regardless this a way. If it was me," she adds, "and you came around filing claims on me without my consent and doing war dances over all of my predilections, I'd surely come among you in a manner to make your hair curl. I would so!"

Blue John is indignant but he hones for communication with his heart's desire, as he calls her, and he seizes on Theba's remarks to suggest that she go and actually view this lady, when he's sure she'll agree with his opinions regarding her. Being curious and likewise almost out of chuck, Miss Willing agrees and sets out to the Verde, halfway determined to tell the authorities that she's got their game holed up in her cabin and they can come and get him. But she don't, after all, not because she's too high-minded but because this story has intrigued her and she wants to see the game played out to the last deal.

She arrives in the Verde and gets her look, coming back without any remarks concerning Blue John. The posses are out on the mesa scouring Lost Eden and there is considerable talk of the clean-up Panhandle Pete and Blue John have made in their last enterprise, which is the first that Theba knows of it, as Blue John doesn't mention that he has any allies at all in this last enterprise, nor that Pete has swept the boards of all the loose cash available. When she arrives, after being away two whole days, Blue John is eager for news.

"Did you see her?" he demands. "What did you think of her?"

"I think she's plump now and will be fat in three years," says Theba contemptuously,

and it hits Blue John like a blow. "Furthermore, it may be natural but it's more likely that it comes from a drug store."

"What?" asks John.

"Her hair," says Theba, tartly. Blue John swells with rage but his chivalry prevents him telling Theba what he thinks of her.

"Did you extend to her the assurances of my continued devotion and homage like I told you to?" he asks, in his best poetic manner. And when Theba says she did, in a portentous manner, he is all eagerness to know how she takes it.

"She nearly has a fit," says Theba coldly, "and she begs me to go call the marshal and two or three deputies to stand guard over her and see you don't swarm in there none. Furthermore, I have to threaten her a lot to prevent her bawling out the fact that I know where you are. Judging from the indications I'd say that you didn't make much of a hit with her by this last play of yours. In addition, there are inquiries on foot as to what has become of a certain Ranger Griffiths who last was seen setting out on your trail. Still furthermore, how dare you come in here and enlist my sympathies and aid as a persecuted and misunderstood knight errant when all you are is a common holdup and robber? I'm telling you now that if you don't shell out your ill-gotten loot and let me take it back to the owners in Camp Verde, I'll give you just six yards' start of a load of number-eight shot, Mister John Adams of Showlow and points north!"

Her eyes, although brown, are snappy and bright and her mouth, although it is a prettily curved one, is firm enough to inspire respect even in Blue John. Besides, he don't make war on females and he is helpless before her indignation. He assumes what dignity he can.

"Whatever ill-gotten loot are you referring to?" he demands. "You can search me if you want to and if you find more than twenty dollars and sixty-eight cents on me, do with it what you wish! If there is any looting done over at Camp Verde it is done by that unregenerate train robber known as Panhandle Pete, and he has possession of the proceeds right now."

"You'd agreed to divide it, no doubt, even if he took it away," sniffs Theba. "And there's my ultimatum. I harbor no thieves in my domicile, and, sick or not, you get

that money and take it back where it belongs or I'll make you mighty hard to catch."

Now, there isn't any chance that he can see of getting hold of Panhandle Pete, but Blue John is sore and angry at her tone and her contempt. He is pretty well along toward recovery by now and so he arises from there and wraps himself in his gloom.

"I'm going," says he, "out into a cold and hostile world and I don't return until I am prepared to make you take back the unkind sentiments you have bestowed upon me. But," he adds impressively, "I am still Blue John Adams and, even if you cast your scorn upon me, I still extend to you my thanks and the offer of my services whenever they will be helpful."

"I'm obliged to you," says Theba curtly, "but I don't want any services in the line of holdups and abductions. If you'd go to work and run a plow or build me a fence or two I might be grateful, but otherwise, no!"

"Even that," says Blue John, with a bow, "I'll remember." And he gets up his horse and climbs into the hull to set out on his way once more. He doesn't notice that, while he's off after this caballo, Theba adjourns to the boudoir and when he comes back has discarded her boots and buckskin to appear in the door in a gabardine skirt with little trimmings on the pockets, white buckskin slippers and a shirt waist that never come from Sears Roebuck. Likewise, she has done her hair in waving and fluffy embellishments and maybe added a touch of something or other to her natural complexion. At any rate she is what you might well describe as blooming like a moss rose among a bed of ferns and she'd take the eye of a man less susceptible to female charms than ever Blue John was.

She stands there in the doorway, with a little, mocking smile, while John takes in the general scene. She don't say anything and he can't think of anything to remark either, so he turns with a sigh and rides away. He looks back once or twice and each time observes her leaning against the side of the door in a carelessly graceful attitude with that little smile on her face. But when he is out of sight and climbing the trail to Strawberry she goes inside and proceeds to get out of her war costume, saying with a vicious note in her voice:

"There, you overgrown child! You'll

have something else to think of on this trip besides that buxom blond biscuit shooter over at the Verde!"

Still, she is wrong to some extent about this. Blue John doesn't exactly think about her and he does think about Hilda. But he has been cared for by Theba for more than two weeks, and during that time he has had no one to look at but her and he hasn't found it exactly wearing to look, either. He doesn't like brunettes but if they are the only ones available, he can bear it. He rides away, dwelling fervently and devotionally on the golden hair of Miss Raffé, but he finds himself, somehow, missing the chief attraction of recent landscapes and finding the scenery he is forced to gaze upon a right drab and somber spectacle. Also, he feels lonely and abandoned a whole lot, and he begins to dwell on the dismal prospects of his life, which is apparently fated to end in several years of incarceration in a cell somewhere, or else to be prematurely cut short in the smoke of a gun.

Still, he wanders on, still a bit weak, musing on Hilda and her beauty, until he comes to Petersen's cabin at Strawberry, where he stops to water his horse and himself. Petersen knows Blue John, but he doesn't evince any hostility regarding his holdup of Swanson's wedding nor anything, nor does Blue John think he'll set the rangers on his trail, though he don't care much if he does. He asks Petersen if anything's been heard of Panhandle Pete in these regions. But Petersen hasn't any information.

So Blue John meanders on to Pine Village, intending to climb the rim over that way by the back trail and come into Lost Eden from the south. He rides up to the store and meets Bishop Swanson, who comes out and offers to shake hands with him in token that he bears no malice. And Blue John, knowing a good sport when he sees one, isn't at all averse to burying the hatchet.

"I'm not asking where you're from nor where you're going," says the bishop, after he's gently chided Blue John for being precipitate and violent that time when he breaks up the bishop's nuptials, when he could have done as well by merely explaining the facts to him. "It isn't any of my business. But if you're interested at all in Lost Eden, you might be curious to know that there's forty riders armed with sixshooters and carbines who have been beat-

ing the ferns and the spruce cover for nearly a week looking for certain parties said to have held up a roulette game at Camp Verde. I'd say, at a guess, that any one trying to crawl into Lost Eden right now wouldn't have no more show than a jack rabbit in a bulldog's jaws."

Blue John turns and looks up at the rim, towering nearly a thousand feet straight up with the fringe of the pines showing over the rocks at the edge. He envisions pretty readily the circle of riders closing in on Lost Eden and he sighs and agrees with the bishop, thanking him for his courtesy, which, all things considered, comes right handsome from Swanson. It's plain that he can't go looking for Panhandle Pete in there, so he turns his horse and rides away aimlessly.

But it is getting late in the season and there's a nip in the air around Pine Valley even if it ain't as cold as up on the mesa. He is weak and thin and he shivers as he thinks of night coming down and sleeping out in it after the mild warmth of Fossil Creek. He feels lonelier than ever and plumb deserted and forlorn and for the life of him he can't help recalling the comfortable visions that he had when he left Theba Willing standing in her door with her hair all fluffed up and a lace shirt waist and little slippers on. It isn't hard for him to convince himself that he owes it to her to ride back and tell her that his quest for Panhandle Pete is necessarily postponed.

He argues himself into this conviction in about a shake of the bridle rein and in another atom of time he is headed back over the route he came by. It is about five o'clock when he slides down the last slope to the bottom of Fossil Creek cañon and heads down to the cabin. It is getting along toward dusk then and he pushes right along without taking much notice of anything or else he would have seen that tracks ran down the cañon ahead of him.

When he comes down to the cabin after climbing over the rocks, he is startled to see lights there, which isn't remarkable, and to hear voices, which is. He gets down and loosens his gun in the holster and walks up to the door which is open on a crack so he can see in.

There is Miss Theba, dressed as she always was, previous to his going, and she is putting food on the table for a sport whose back is turned to the door, which alone is

enough to know he's hypnotized. Blue John sees something familiar about that back and he hears familiar sounds emanating from the mouth of this hombre.

"Miss," says this sport in the accents of Panhandle Pete, speaking with gallantry to sink a ship, "you-all sure adds a flavor which is incomparable to the finest chuck I have eaten in a moon or more. Which the sight of your sweet face does me more good than a sermon, I'm here to warble!"

"Don't talk so foolishly!" objects Theba, but she blushes and smiles with one side of her face though if Blue John had looked carefully, he'd have seen that the other side looked drawn and worried as though she was a bit frightened. He didn't look carefully, though, because he feels rage rising within him that this short sport should come around pestering respectable females that hadn't any natural protector. He throws the door open and strides in. Pete comes out of his chair like a watch spring and alights turned around to face Blue John, his hand dropping to his belt. But he hasn't a chance in the world. Blue John has him covered.

Pete's hands go up and slowly a smile of relief spreads over his face as he recognizes John. And he laughs and starts to drop his hands.

"Did they round you out of your hole, old-timer?" he asks. "They plumb chased me from cover to cover until it got monotonous and I pulled out and sneaked into Clear Creek and then over the mountain down here. Glad to see they didn't lass' you none."

"Ma'am," says Blue John, portentously to Theba, "was this shorthorn annoying you any when I came in?"

"N-no, not to speak of," says Theba uncertainly.

"Well, I've been chasing him around all day and now I've found him," says Blue John. "I'll just proceed to make him disgorge his ill-gotten gains regardless and show you-all that I'm no low-down holdup, whatever else I may be. Pete, you shell out the proceeds of your thieving propensities which you sequesters over to Camp Verde and then apologize to this lady for even daring to look at her!"

"I guess I can attend to his looking myself," begins Theba indignantly, but the astounded Pete drowns her out with his protests.

"Which they aren't no more mine than yours," he shouts. "You put me up to it yourself. And what kind of a draw is this that rounds on me when I'm not looking and strips me bare? With a fair break I'd shoot you fuller of lead than a porcupine has quills!"

"This lady," says Blue John, "objects a whole lot to illegal increments in the shape of holdups. Wherefore I promises her that I takes your gains away and returns them to the Verde. So spread them out."

Pete looks at Theba who smiles a little and looks down. Then he draws himself up indignantly.

"Do you-all run a monopoly on all the chiquitas in Arizona?" he sneers. "Let me tell you that I yield to no one, here nor there, in my devotions to ladies with eyes and hair that would draw a ground owl out of his hole. If this lady wishes me to reform and repent and return my loot to the rightful owners thereof, she merely speaks to that effect and I does it pronto. But I ain't going to turn it over to you and let you run off with the credit for it. If you got the nerve of a jack rabbit, you give me an even break and I'll shoot it out with you for the honors."

"No one asks for an even break from me twice," says Blue John. "Step out in the moonlight and walk to any cover you fancy. When you're ready, holler and we'll begin. Write your folks' address on the door as you go out and I'll ship your remainder to them, prepaid."

Pete glares at this but doesn't say anything. He makes a bow to Theba and stalks out to near-by rocks where he dives under cover. Blue John has moved out of line with the cabin and taken to a rock himself. Pete shouts his war whoop and they stick out their heads. In another moment the valley is full of smoke and the echoes are rolling and reverberating plenty sonorous to the sound of battle.

Pete put a ball through Blue John's hat and Blue John chipped the whole side off of Pete's right wristlet as he poked his gun out. They didn't heed the cries to desist that emanated from the cabin where Theba is protesting, but after they'd shaken their cylinders empty they paused long enough to refill and went to it again. This time Pete gets a flesh wound in the shoulder and Blue John, although he isn't hit direct, has the misfortune to get a chip of rock cut by

a bullet which glances and hits him on the forehead, temporarily dazing him. He sags down and his gun drops and Pete utters a yell of triumph as he prepares to pounce in and finish him.

He don't however, for when he rises there is Theba standing with the sixteen-gauge trained on him and she forces him back.

"You leave him alone," she says with determination. "If you men think you can perform your butcheries in my front yard you are away off. I hate and despise you all!"

"Ma'am!" protests Panhandle Pete, as he retreats from the gun, "I assure you-all that I respects and admires you a whole lot. Whatever you say goes with me, and I merely fights this sport for the privilege of obeying your wishes in returning that loot to the Verde. I don't aim to slay

him but I hope you see to it that he don't do the same to me."

"You vamose some hurried," says Theba determinedly, "and don't you come back until you know how to act. Leave this imbecile with me. I'll show him!"

Pete hesitates but there isn't any sign of relenting and so he bows his adieus and stalks away while Blue John is just coming out of his daze. He reaches for his gun, muttering:

"That wasn't a square hit. Let me get another shot at the lobo!" But he looks up and sees Theba standing over him with the gun in the hollow of her arm.

"Get in the house and let me wash the blood off your face," she says sternly. "You're a perfect sight!"

And Blue John can't think of anything to say but: "Yes, ma'am!"

Mr. Winter will have another Lost Eden story in the next issue.

THE BANKER FROM THE EAST

FRANK P. MORSE, himself a Washington, D. C., banker, thus maligned his own tribe at a recent capital city banquet:

It happened in the town known as the wildest and woolliest in all the wild and woolly West. For a year the law-abiding residents had been kept in a state of shivers and shudders by the quick-gun element, and at last they had elected "Sure-shot Bill" Wandles sheriff of the county.

"Whenever anybody, no matter who he is, begins shooting in this town," they instructed Wandles, "delay not, neither pause nor hesitate, but shoot and shoot to kill."

"I ain't never missed my man yet," responded Sure-shot Bill, "and I 'lows I ain't goin' to start missin' him now."

A week later, at that time when the peace of the sunset hour blesses the earth, the town was startled by the sound of shots at the upper end of its one and only street. A man on horseback galloped down the thoroughfare, an automatic spitting fire and bullets from each hand. Doors were pierced and windowpanes shattered; women's screams mingled with the sound of tinkling glass; brave men sought the shelter always to be found behind kitchen stoves. And still the fusillade continued until the wild invader of that peaceful hamlet came abreast of the sheriff's house.

Then Sure-shot Bill, the champion of law and order, stepped to the sidewalk and fired at the passing rough-house expert. The bullet had no apparent result. The wild man kept on shooting up the town. A second time the sure-shot custodian of the law fired, and a second time the bullet gave no pause to the bombarding invader. Finally, with his third bullet the sheriff brought his man tumbling to the dust.

But the law-abiding citizens were irate. They had elected Sure-shot Bill sheriff, they said, because of his ability to kill with the first bullet; but here he was, debased and degraded because he had needed three shots to make a crazy, drunken tender-foot bite the dust of Main Street. Sure-shot Bill heard this denunciation without a tremor. He had a defense in which there was neither flaw nor weakness.

"Friends," he said, reloading his trusty gun, "things air this way: there wa'n't nothin' wrong with my shootin'. If you will examine that carcass, you will see that my first bullet went through the man's heart, and my second went clean through the wound made in the heart by my first bullet. But, right after the second shot, I got next to what I was really up against. I realized that this visitor to these parts must be an Eastern banker, and I shot him through the head."



A Word for John Lawton

By Raymond J. Brown

Author of "According to the Dope," "The Wise-cracking Champ," Etc.

**The story of a bicycle race with much more
at stake than a purse and a championship.**

IT'S time somebody spoke a word for John Lawton, and I think the job is up to me. If you've ever followed the bike-racing game you may have seen him—a chunky, little, gray-headed fellow with a bad limp and a queer hand, kind of stoop-shouldered and helpless looking. Usually he's wearing a moth-eaten, faded sweater and a pair of pants that a guy who was particular at all wouldn't put on to grease an engine. You see him carrying water buckets, picking up the riders' bath robes, tinkering with the bikes; doing odd jobs of every kind around the tracks.

If you haven't noticed him, it's not very remarkable. He isn't the kind to attract any special attention, and you wouldn't rate him as amounting to much even if your eye did happen to fall on him. And yet a few of us old-timers in the game have a notion that John Lawton ought to amount to a great deal more than he seems to. I say "seems to" because, looking at his case in one way, he's done a lot more than most of us can boast of—he reached the goal he started out for; put over a thing that his whole mind was set on. They'll never put up any monuments to poor old John, but that won't bother him any. If you ask

him, he's raised his own monument. But I'm getting a little ahead of my story.

John and his Brother Elmer busted into the bike-racing game at the Newark track quite a few years ago. A couple of hours before they appeared an express wagon backed up to the door of the training quarters and dumped off two crated racing bicycles, brand-new and tagged to Elmer Lawton from a certain town out in the Middle West. The delivery of the shipment caused quite a stir among the riders and trainers who happened to be hanging around at the time. There weren't more than a couple of dozen high-class cyclists in the world just then, and the bunch knew that the name of Elmer Lawton didn't belong to any of them. Also, there wasn't a bike track within a thousand miles of the place the crates had been shipped from. So the gang began to buzz-buzz and ask one another how come? Even in those days when bike racing was popular in a lot more places than it is now, bike riders didn't usually drop from the skies like that, especially riders who could afford an outfit of two of the latest-model European bicycles, worth, including duty, something around two hundred bucks apiece.

Consequently there was a reception-and-investigating committee lined up at the gate when the brothers appeared. Elmer, the younger, was a tall, fair-haired, fair-skinned, cute-looking lad of twenty, the living image of "Willie off the Yacht" in ice-cream suit, bow tie, straw hat, silk socks and russet Oxfords with pointed toes. John, who was twenty-four but looked older, was shortish, thick-chested and settled looking, with swarthy skin, strong features, honest blue eyes and much wiry brown hair. He was the "Plain Son of the People" in a wrinkled and shiny outfit of blue serge, a skimmer from the year before and shoes that were designed for comfort and cargo. He was carrying all their hand baggage—two suit cases.

Elmer never gave the bunch a tumble as he entered the track. He strutted through the clustered rubbernecks as though he'd bought the place that morning and was arriving to take possession. John, though, gave a friendly smile and a nod to as many as caught his eye.

While Elmer stood around, looking the dump over as though planning improvements, John hurled the suit cases into a corner, took out some tools, knocked the crating off the two bikes and began to assemble them. In scarcely more time than it takes me to tell about it, he had both of them set up, with the wheels trued, the tires pumped and the seats and handlebars adjusted. Nobody said anything, but you could see that his way of going about things made a hit with the gang. He knew his business, and he handled his tools like a born mechanic.

By this time the dumbest among us had sized Elmer up as the pedal pusher of the team and John as the man of all work, and I know the idea which came to my own bean was that if the cyclist knew as much about his job as the other did about his, the fact that we'd never heard of him wasn't to be taken as any proof that he wasn't a real rider.

Neither was there anything in the way Elmer shaped up in trunks and jersey—silk, by the way, and like the bikes brand-new—to warrant any one in assuming that riding a bike was any new experience to him. He stripped off and got into his togs—white shirt and black trunks—as soon as John had finished setting up the wheels, and his well-shaped, muscular legs, telling

as they did their own story of many, many miles of pedaling, increased our wonder as to where this pair had fallen from.

When they went out to the track the bunch followed in a parade. European champs, brought over here to ride against the native stars, have not attracted half so much attention at their first work-out on an American track.

To hold the attention, though, of a gallery that's more curious than interested, you've got to show something, and this Elmer Lawton that day failed to do. He hadn't made more than half a circuit of the track before every one of us knew that he'd never turned a pedal on a banked track before that day. One by one the bunch drifted away until at last not more than three or four of us were left to witness the maiden efforts of the newcomer.

Elmer was game; I've got to hand him that. He started right out trying to ride the steep sides, but he was in difficulties immediately. It's a trick that's got to be learned, and, like most good tricks, can only be learned with practice. Elmer did all right for a beginner, but, after making a few laps, he got ambitious and the first thing he knew, he and the shiny new bike came tumbling down the track with a crash.

I've heard various people bawl other people out in my time, but never so thoroughly and so nastily as Elmer Lawton told his Brother John what was what when the latter came over to help him up that afternoon. Elmer was wild with anger. His fall had jarred him some, but what had hurt him most was the fact that it had taken place before witnesses who didn't consider it anything else but funny. He called John all the bad names he knew, and then invented some new ones especially for the occasion. He accused him of all brands of stupidity and of having committed a long list of crimes and misdemeanors, chief among which was whatever kind of assault it may be to cause a man to fall off a bicycle.

I'm not so young as I used to be, but I'll tell you, if anybody talked to me to-day the way Elmer Lawton talked to his Brother John that afternoon, I'd have his life, brother or no brother! John, though, took it all without offering a comeback. More than that, he seemed to agree with what Elmer said—that the fall off the bike was all his fault. He looked positively guilty as he

and Elmer, rolling the bike between them, started back for the training quarters.

Of course, we didn't know they were brothers then. But, even if we had, we couldn't have helped thinking that Elmer was talking entirely out of his turn in giving John all that abuse.

"Stump" Watson, a veteran rubdown artist who'd been training bike riders ever since there had been such things, probably sized up what the rest of us thought about it when he remarked to me:

"Well, all I got to say is that guy must need his job bad to stand for that kind of chin music! *I'd* shut that big boy up with a monkey wrench if I was him!"

Elmer never stopped chewing all the time it took him to get dressed after he and John had walked downstairs. It was a mean, irritating line he had, too, but it didn't seem to get under John's skin; that is, not to the point of making him mad enough to do anything to stop it. He took it, all as though it was coming to him, meanwhile going about his work of inspecting the new bike for possible damages.

But if Elmer's line of chatter was sweet music to Brother John's ears, there were others about who found it annoying. Doug Crowell, a husky cyclist from the West, at last stepped over and tapped Elmer on the shoulder.

"Say, Clarence," he said, "you talk too much with your mouth!"

Elmer stopped, turned and glared at him.

"You make me weary," said Doug. "If you got to bark at your man Friday, save it up and let him have it when I ain't around."

"Why," began Elmer, trying to be dignified, although Doug's size and hard face scared him some, "I don't see what right you have——"

"Shut up!" snapped Doug. "Get your clothes on and get out o' here or I'll——"

He got no farther, for at that point a short, lumpy figure in a wrinkled blue-serge suit was suddenly in front of him. Brother John, of course.

"May I ask what you're butting in for?" asked John pleasantly.

"Huh?" grunted Doug, surprised as any one would be to see a mummy come suddenly to life.

"We can get along without you," said John, making a meaning motion with his thumb.

"Why, say!" blustered Doug. "Who do you think you're talkin' to?"

"You!" yelled John, so suddenly that Doug jumped a foot. "And, if you don't understand my kind of language, I'll try to teach it to you!"

He didn't raise his voice much. There wasn't any motion he made that was a threat exactly, but Doug understood, as the rest of us did who were watching, that he meant business.

"Huh!" exclaimed Doug, trying to squirm out gracefully. "I ain't lookin' for no argument!"

"I am!" John told him, looking around the room in a way that said his words were meant for all. "If my brother has anything to say to me, and I don't object to it, I'll thank other people to keep out of it."

"Well, if that's the way you feel about it——" said Doug, looking like a fellow that's been caught lifting the pennies from a cripple's cup. It was a queer frame-up at that—Doug horning into the argument mostly because he was sorry to see a poor worm such as John appeared to be being walked on unnecessarily and then having the worm turn on him and show signs of fangs!

"That's the way I feel," declared John, giving the rest of us the eye again as though daring us to get into the battle. Then, seeing that his challenge had no takers, he shrugged his shoulders, grinned in an odd sort of way and went back to his work of looking over the bicycle.

I'm a nosey sort of guy, and the boys around the bike tracks don't call me "Windy" Bush because of any handicaps I have in the way of being tongue-tied and bashful. The Lawton brothers interested me. Why John, who gave every indication of being able to take care of himself in any company, stood for all that lip from his fancy young brother was something I wanted to know; so I took the easiest way of finding out—I asked him.

Not in so many words, of course, but by means of a little clever fencing and cross-examining I wriggled the story out of him in the course of the next few days.

It seemed that the brothers were orphans. Their old man who had been foreman in an electric-light plant got himself involved in an open circuit in a big dynamo one day, and, when his estate was appraised, it was discovered that the only valuable things he

left after him were his widow and his two kids, then aged four years and three months respectively.

It was hard sledding for the widow for a time, but she managed to beat the game until John got big enough to help. As is the case in most families of the sort, Elmer, the baby, got all the gravy. The mother spoiled him and brought John up to treat him the same way. While John was learning his trade as a machinist, kicking in with a pay envelope every Saturday and wearing any old hand-me-downs he could pick up, Elmer was being put through high school, dressing right up to the minute and carrying pocket money just like the rich boys. Which John thought all right. He was proud of Elmer—of his good looks, of the way he wore the snappy clothes that he, John, worked to buy, of his popularity among the quality folks of town, people that John would hardly dare raise his hat to.

About the time that Elmer got through high school, which was two years before, the mother died, and, of course, John had made her a promise that he'd take care of her baby, no matter what. Not that the promise was necessary, for John thought the sun rose and set in his kid brother.

Said kid brother, though, I gathered after boiling down John's eulogies of him into cold facts, wasn't anything in particular to be proud of. He was, in short, a big, lazy, spoiled, mean-dispositioned lummoX, too strong for light work, a natural enemy to time clocks and bosses. In other words, he saw no need of doing anything for himself while John was around to do it for him.

About the only display of energy he ever made was shown on his bike. In the local road races and the contests held at the county fair between heats on the trotting track Elmer had made a hog of himself for three years.

"And, of course," John told me, "I want the boy to make something out of himself; I'm responsible for him. Since he couldn't find the kind of work he liked at home, I thought——"

"You thought you'd make a bike rider out of him," I butted in with a snigger. "Well, let me tell you, friend, if you figure that the kind of bike riding that they pay for is any armchair job for a lad who's sore on regular work, you're way off on your total! This here is a tough game,

even for those who've learned their trade, and, from what I can see of Elmer——"

"You needn't worry about Elmer," said John, his eyes shining. "Elmer is the greatest kid in the world. He can do anything he puts his mind on. He'll succeed as a rider all right."

"Hope you're right," I said, though not meaning it exactly. "But, by the time he's making enough to keep you both going you'll be——"

"He needn't hurry," said John. "I'll take care of things until then. I've already got myself a job in a machine shop. We'll get along all right until Elmer's ready to do his part."

Well, on thinking it over, I decided that maybe the frame-up wasn't so silly as it seemed at first. Lots of people use their last dollar sending their daughters to Europe to have their high notes lifted a peg or two. Why, then, shouldn't John Lawton speculate a little on a kid brother who had showed a little talent for working the pedals?

I won't annoy you by describing each separate step in the bike career of Elmer Lawton. Let it be said, though, that he surprised a lot of folks—supposed wise birds like myself—by making good with a capital G. Before anybody realized it, he was right where John thought he'd land—on the top of the heap.

John showed sense in keeping him out of the races for a couple of weeks. He let him watch two or three meets from the stand, meanwhile training every day to get the hang of the track. Then one Sunday afternoon Elmer's name was to be found on the program—as a rider in the amateur class. And he made what might be called an auspicious debut by waltzing away with every amateur event on the card.

At the next meet, the handicapper having moved him back to scratch, he didn't do so well. He won only two races and lost the third, a mile handicap, by the width of a tire, having experienced a little difficulty in working his way through a mob of long-mark men on the last turn. A week later he broke the world's amateur record for a mile. He'd probably have hung up a few more amateur records in the next couple of meets had not the track manager called a halt. The amateur boys set up an awful howl at the way Elmer was hogging things in their class, so the

manager smoothed things over by turning Elmer pro.

In the professional class Elmer of course found the competition a trifle keener, but the best of the money chasers couldn't keep down a guy who gave every indication of having used a bicycle for a perambulator. They're a rough-and-rowdy bunch, the boys who bike for what's in it. Stuff that in any other game would draw disqualification for life and that in private life would land a guy behind the bars is just strategy to the professional cyclist. The tried it all on Elmer, and Elmer just took it, gave it back to them and came up smiling. Brother John was right—he was a born bike rider.

Yes, he was that all right—but that lets him out! If you want me to tell it, Elmer Lawton was about as perfect a specimen of a human rat as ever walked the earth. I've suggested before that he was scarcely any humble, shrinking violet to begin with. Imagine him, then, after he'd given a few riding lessons to the topnotchers of the game, had heard his name roared from thousands of throats and had collected a few chunks of heavy dough for his performances on the track! Swelled head? The biggest in the world! There was no standing him, and the guy who got the brunt of his conceited goings on was faithful Brother John.

John had to take things from Elmer that would have turned the patient Job into a raving imbecile. The older brother was valet, nurse, porter, bodyguard, business agent, masseur, messenger boy, mechanic, cheer leader and yes man, all rolled into one, and still Elmer managed to keep well out in front of him in thinking up new jobs for him to perform. And John not only grinned and bore it; he seemed to like it. Admiration for Elmer was his ruling passion. When he had a few minutes' spare time he invariably spent it telling somebody what a wonderful chap his brother was.

It was, in a way, perfect teamwork, Elmer doing the riding, John training him, keeping his bikes in running order and warding off battling boys who got sore at Elmer's chesty ways and longed to take a poke at his nose. Perfect teamwork, as I said, in a way, for what John was getting out of it—except the glory of being brother and lobbygow to a popular hero—I couldn't

see. Elmer paid him no wages and gave him no split of the winnings. Gave him nothing—except orders. In fact, I'm told that to this day Elmer has never even paid John for the two bikes and the rest of the gear that he brought with him when he broke into the game.

Selfish? He was an island entirely surrounded by Elmer Lawton and tighter than a fat man's vest. Outside of what his swell clothes cost and what his landlady could jimmy out of him for board, whatever he got was his for keeps.

The beginning of Elmer's second season on the track found him in wonderful form. Winning the national sprint championship looked like a cinch for him, and that meant a winter in Europe, if he wanted it, and a basketful of jack from racing on the foreign tracks.

He was sitting pretty, without another rider of his class in sight and nothing to do but keep his head to continue cleaning up as long as he had strength enough left to turn a pedal.

So it wasn't remarkable that John got the idea about then that he'd kept his promise to his mother and had done his full duty by the kid. He'd pointed out to him the way to fortune and had set him on it. What else was there for him to do? Nothing, if you ask me, and John was of that opinion himself. In other words, the thought came to his head that it was about time he took a little care of his own affairs.

And the first action he took along this line was to fall in love!

I've seen that thing done time and time again for years. Never having got tangled up myself, I can't, I suppose, call myself an expert from personal experience. But from what I've seen happening to other fellows, I've come to the conclusion that this love game is played with an outfit that's rigged. Leastwise, it seems impossible for any straightforward, steady-going, well-intentioned guy like John Lawton to get an even break at it. I've seen dozens like him buck the game, and the same thing's happened to all of them—when they fell it was for some feather-headed, fluffy-haired, doll-faced dumb-bell, ornamental as a drug-store show case, but with just about brains enough to find her way around town by asking the cops.

John ran true to form. The dame he picked to lose his head over was a blond

chicken about nineteen years old, by name Trixie Ward. They didn't call 'em flappers in those days, but Trixie belonged to that class. By profession she was door-keeper in a downtown dentist's office, and she was a regular at the track, usually accompanied by some fancy-dressed kid of high-school age.

How John met up with her I don't know, but the gang around the track, including Brother Elmer, got the shock of their lives when the word drifted in that John, got up regardless, had been observed piloting Trixie into the orchestra of a vaudeville theater.

As I've hinted, John wasn't the kind that anybody who wasn't hankering for a bloody nose would go out of his way to kid, so nothing was said about it—to his face. The bunch, though, exchanged a little clever comedy when he wasn't around, especially when the early rumors about his blossoming forth as a Romeo were proved true by his appearance with Trixie at the track. He checked her in a grand-stand seat, then he came down to the training quarters, wriggled out of the new garments he'd staked himself to and started to work.

For the first time in his career as a cyclist Elmer had beaten John to the track that day. Being used to attention, it made him kind of sore not to have his faithful servitor on hand when he arrived. He was grumbling under his breath while getting into his riding rig, and he did some real growling when he had to roll his own bike out to the track and call for a volunteer to hoist him on it so he could warm up for a couple of miles before the start of the races.

He came in from his exercise spin about the time that John had got into his working clothes.

"Huh!" he grunted, giving John the up and down with a nasty curl to his lip. "Huh! Where have you been?"

"Sorry, Elmer," grinned John cheerfully. "I was delayed a little. I——"

"Yeah, I know," drawled Elmer. "Well, you've got to cut that kind of stuff out, understand? You're supposed to look out for me. If you think I'm going to wait till you get through running around with your skirt, you——"

"Elmer!" John's voice rang out like the pop of a busted tire. It was the first time he'd ever spoken to Elmer like that, or

looked at him like that, and the bunch clustered round to watch.

"Say, look here!" blustered Elmer, but not quite so fiercely as he'd begun. "I come first, understand? After I've been tended to, you can make a fool of yourself over any little, yellow-haired——"

"Stop it, Elmer!" bade John quietly, although his eyes blazed.

"Well, I oughtn't to have to tell you," complained Elmer, backing down gracefully as I'd seen others do when arguing with John. "You ought to know that——"

"Yes, Elmer, you're right," nodded John. "Let's through, boys, won't you?" he smiled, taking Elmer by the arm and making an opening for him through the surrounding mob.

Well, you'd have thought the question was settled. John had proved that on one subject anyway he wasn't going to stand for any lip—even from Elmer. And he'd done the thing nicely, too, without a row, without hurting anybody's feelings. Any sensible guy in Elmer's place ought to have been satisfied to let matters rest the way they stood.

Elmer, though, wasn't sensible. More than that, there was a streak of meanness and selfishness in him that had been increased and developed by his bringing up. To him his Brother John just represented a good thing that had been put in the world for the sole and exclusive purpose of making things easy for him. Whether he was jealous of John's sharing with anybody else the attention and regard that had formerly been his alone, or whether he merely wanted to demonstrate to John what a poor fish he, John, was when compared with his illustrious brother, I don't know. But before the week was up, the main topic of conversation around the track was the efforts Elmer was making to cop John's girl.

Yep, Elmer set out to take Trixie away from John with more vim and determination than he'd ever displayed on the last lap of a hard race.

And, of course, it was no even race. Nature had put John under a handicap to begin with. No chunky, plain-faced lad, no matter what sort of solid qualities he may have, can compete with a bully boy of Elmer's shape when a dame with the mental equipment of Trixie Ward is occupying the judge's stand! Besides, the girl was a bike

fan. What chance, then, would you give a lowly trainer with her against the best rider in the game? Of course, John was a trainer only from choice, and his regular job and prospects were not to be sneezed at by any young woman looking over what was around in the way of possible husbands. But a big-eyed sap like Trixie Ward couldn't be expected to consider that angle. To her, attaching a coming champion to her staff was the real berries. She was wise enough not to tie the can to John altogether; that might have killed Elmer's interest; but a much less brainy guy than John Lawton could have sized up about where he stood within ten days after Elmer entered the field.

Where he stood was at the foot of the class, and you could see that John realized it. Never a talkative, mixing kind of fellow at best, he began going around with a face as long as a six-day race, a hurt, strained look in his eyes and no more conversation than you could get out of a busted telephone. Being the sort that falls for one dame with a thud, the quick-and-easy turn-down Trixie had handed him had caught him right on the button and left him groggy. At that I think he'd have made a fair fight of it; done his best to win the girl and taken her answer like a supreme-court decision if Elmer had let him. But no. Not satisfied with putting the skids under John and having him make the slide without a holler, chesty Elmer had to shoot off his face about it—and to John.

A nasty, sneering remark delivered to John one day when he was repairing a tire at the track started the fireworks. The next instant the tire was wound around Elmer's neck and if a couple of quick-acting guys hadn't grabbed the older brother in time, John's fingers would probably have followed it. As Elmer, white as a sheet, backed away, John calmed his temper down, loosed himself from the boys who were holding him and walked out of the track. Which action was equivalent to his handing in his resignation as Elmer's faithful slave.

Several days passed before any of us saw John again. Of course the bunch talked the thing over while he was among the missing and the general guess was that John had left Elmer and the cycle game flat and lit out for home. What was our surprise, then, when John drove up to the

track one day in a hack to the back of which was lashed the latest thing in racing bikes. He paid off the driver, unloaded the bike, rolled it into the track and some ten minutes later he and the bike were rolling around the saucer in one of the most energetic, enthusiastic work-outs any of us had ever seen.

It was a laugh, but at the same time it had a sad side. What John was aiming to do no guy with any intelligence at all could fail to savvy. He was still cuckoo over the Trixie girl, and, since her taste ran to boys who could make a bike spin, he was going to be one of them. In other words, he was setting out to show up Brother Elmer as a cyclist.

Well, much as most of us admired his nerve and backbone, we couldn't hand him much of a chance at that game. Cyclists aren't made overnight; by John's own admission he'd started hustling for a living so early in life that he'd missed out on all the usual boyish sports and pastimes; hence, where did he fit? Every son of a gun of a white man in the game was willing to root for him, but what do you get, besides a sore throat, out of trying to root in a thousand-to-one shot?

And yet, watching John pedal his bike round the track that first day, I had to admit that he looked as much like a cyclist as a lot of birds who've made a fair splash in the game. He was strong and muscular as a wrestler, especially around the legs, where a bike rider needs it. He wasn't out for any records that day, still you could see by the smooth, easy way he pushed his bike along that there was a lot of power going into the pedals—and a lot more power that he was holding in reserve. He tore off five or six miles, got off his bicycle without any signs of being particularly tired and wheeled the bike down to the training quarters.

I followed him in, full of curiosity, and gave him a hold.

"Taking a little exercise?" I asked him by way of breaking the ice.

"Yes," he admitted.

"Thought you'd never had much time for riding a bike and things," I suggested.

"Oh, I've ridden some," he said. "Fact, I've ridden quite a lot. Out home we lived twelve miles from the town where I worked. I used to ride back and forth in good weather. It was cheaper than paying railroad fares. Yes, I did that for nearly seven

years. Never tried any racing, though, before."

"Oh," I said, "you're figuring on giving the racing game a try?"

"Yes," nodded John with a kind of stern look. "That's what I'm figuring on."

"Good luck, boy!" I wished him, reaching over and grabbing his hand.

He said nothing as he returned the squeeze. He gulped, though, and his eyes grew sort of bright. He saw that I'd doped the situation out and appreciated my taking seriously what he was doing.

Elmer nearly dropped dead when he found out that John was branching out as a cyclist. Of course he tried to make a joke of it, but you could see that the thing had got his goat a little. Even if you know you're the best in the world at your particular game, you're not likely to throw your hat in the air exactly when you hear that a wide-jawed, strong-willed, persistent and hard-headed candidate like John is sharpening up his knife with the avowed intention of going out after your hide.

I've never been a fellow to make any secret of where I stood on any proposition, and where I stood in the matter of the trouble that was brewing between the Lawton brothers I made plain to the entire world by offering my services to John as trainer. The goal he was shooting for—that is, the girl—I couldn't get excited about, but helping anybody hand a jolt to that puffed-up numskull Elmer Lawton—that was my dish! And I'm here to state that between us John and I made up some team!

For there's no use hiding from you any longer the fact that when he'd got accustomed to the going John proved himself a bear awheel. Two things a cyclist needs. One's at one end of his body, the other at the other, and they are legs and head. John had both. Talent often runs wild in one family, and in talent for bicycling the Lawton family was certainly oversupplied. Whatever Elmer could do on a bike John could match, a fact that he demonstrated to the satisfaction of everybody interested in cycling within a few weeks.

At the time John stepped forth as a rider, Elmer had what might be called a commanding lead in points won in the series to decide the national championship, for, until John got into the field, there was no one to give him a battle. Elmer won the first few races of the championship series so

easily that it looked as though a lot of trouble could be saved by handing him the title and letting it go at that.

With John in the field, though, there was a different story to tell. He won his first four championship races in a row, beating Elmer cleanly in all of them; and two of them were semifinal heats, which meant that Elmer scored no points in these at all. The result of all this was that the point standing showed Elmer on top with twenty-one and John climbing up his back with twenty. And from then on it was the hottest two-man battle I've ever seen in cycling.

Desperate, Elmer managed to grab the next race, a third-of-a-mile event, John taking second place. The next race, at the half-mile distance, Elmer won also, John just succeeding in nailing third place and getting himself two points.

At which stage of the proceedings Elmer's rooters—and there were plenty of them—were ready to claim victory. John's previous wins had been flukes, they said. He'd spoken his piece, shot his bolt and was through—a one-day champion, a busted phenom.

Meanwhile the cause of all the trouble, Trixie Ward, was playing it safe, which meant, you'll understand, playing one brother against the other. She liked the limelight, Trixie did, and there was no surer way of attracting its beams than being the center of a fight between the two leading cyclists of that season. So she strung the boys along, fanning their rivalry, smiling on one, then the other until neither knew whether he was going or coming.

No two persons can hate each other any more bitterly than two brothers, and in the tight days of the last few weeks of the championship season the Lawton boys hated each other murderously. They had sense enough to keep out of each other's way off the track, otherwise there'd have been a punching match sure. So all the hate, rancor and bitterness they had for each other was worked out on their wheels. Which was great stuff for the cycling game from the standpoint of the box office and great stuff for Trixie Ward, who was grabbing off as much notoriety as a lady murderess, but poor stuff for the peace and happiness of the Lawton family.

I don't think Elmer, when he started to rush the girl, had any idea beyond winning her away from John temporarily and show-

ing the older brother thereby where he got off at. His intentions weren't serious, as they say. He thought he could give Trixie a little whirl, slam the gate on her when he got ready and then let John or anybody else become her attentive swain. But he was reckoning without Trixie. If any jilting was to be done in that little triangular love affair, Trixie was going to see to it that she was the one to do it. In other words, she managed to get Elmer going and in less than no time had him sewed up as firmly as he was by his cycling contract.

Probably she got really fond of Elmer. A dame with her standards was likely to prefer an ornamental kid like him to a homely, serious fellow like John. At all events, watching her in the grand stand, I could see signs of real disappointment and gloom when John trimmed Elmer completely in the next two contests of the championship series—at the mile and two-mile distances.

After those two races Elmer was still out in front in the point standing. He had thirty-seven counts, John thirty-five. Only one more race remained to be run, one at five miles, and, unless there came some weird kind of an upset which would keep both of them out of the finals, the brothers figured to run one-two. If Elmer copped, the championship series was over. If John won and Elmer got worse than second place, it was over also, and John was the winner. If John got first money and Elmer second, they were both tied at forty points, and a run-off at a mile would be necessary to decide the championship.

In other words, it looked as though John *had* to win, and, aside from any personal feelings, I thought him worth a bet for the reason that plugging that long distance back and forth to work for so many years had given him stamina. His chances of having something left to sprint with after a long race seemed better than Elmer's, for the latter, strong and speedy as he was, had no fondness for punishing himself and preferred the shorter distances.

My dope was correct. John copped, but by inches only, and I'm here to state that when it was all over he knew he'd been in a race. As the bell clanged for the last lap, Elmer jumped, hunched himself down over his handlebars and let go with all he had in him. There was more than a length of open daylight between them as they shot

through the back stretch, and, try as he could, John failed to reduce his brother's lead by an inch. Coming around the last turn, Elmer paused for breath or something and John caught up a little, his front wheel being at Elmer's rear as they entered the stretch. Then John's bike seemed to leap in the air. A few revolutions of his pedals and they were on even terms. A towel could have been laid across their backs as they whizzed through the stretch. A yard or so from the finish line, both put a last desperate kick into their pedals—but it was John who kicked the harder. His margin of victory was scant, but that he'd won, even the staunchest of Elmer's grandstand supporters had to admit.

So there they were, tied at forty points each. Any other two riders in a similar situation would have seized the opportunity to pull a little tableau as they left the track—shake hands, pat each other on the back; something like that. But the Lawton brothers weren't playing to the grand stand. Their rivalry was the real, genuine article. They dismounted in the back stretch and walked across the infield as though neither was aware the other existed. Neither of them, though, could keep his eyes from a certain grand-stand box, and if there was any partiality in the smiles which came from that quarter I couldn't observe it, and I was watching close.

I've been told that before the run-off, which came the following week, both brothers tried to have an understanding with Trixie and were stalled off. "Wait till we see who wins the championship," is what she told them both, not saying, as you'll notice, that she'd agree to bestow her heart and hand on the winner, but leading them to believe that that was what she meant.

The result was that both brothers appeared at the track ready to do or die.

The run-off was a match race of a mile, the conditions favoring Elmer, both because the distance was short and because he'd had almost two seasons' experience at that style of riding while John had never ridden a match in his life.

The biggest crowd of several seasons jammed the track. They paid practically no attention at all to the eight or ten events which preceded the big race of the day, and, when John and Elmer were lined up at the start, after the cheering that arose when each came out of the training quarters

had died down, the big inclosure was so still that the effect was creepy.

As you probably know, bicycle match racing consists of many laps of stalling and jockeying for position and then a mad dash of a furlong or so at the end. At this sort of riding Elmer Lawton was in those days unsurpassed. By the time the sprinting stage arrived, he usually had his opponent tied in knots, which left him nothing to do but put on steam and ride to an easy win.

Knowing this, I was nervous about John's chances. As Elmer's former trainer and confidential adviser, of course, John had studied his younger brother's style and understood most of his tricks and dodges. But his knowledge along these lines was entirely theoretical; he'd never before attempted to match wits with his brother with only the two of them on the track.

The pistol cracked, and the pair got off. John, without any stalling, jumped immediately into the lead. Elmer trailed him to the back stretch, then he took the lead, John letting him do so without a struggle. As they reached the center of the grand stand, directly in front of the box where Trixie sat, Elmer back pedaled and slowed down. I think he had an idea John would follow suit, which would have given Elmer a chance to indulge in a little trick riding—standing still on his wheel and that sort of thing. There was no question but that he could have given John an awful showing up at that sort of stuff, but John didn't fall for it. Instead of slowing down and letting Elmer show the boys and girls how simple it was for him to take or relinquish the lead as he wished, John used a little muscle on his pedals, shot into the lead and kept going.

So it was Elmer who looked foolish, balancing himself like a circus performer while John went serenely about his business twenty-five yards in front. And there was nothing for Elmer to do but give chase, which he did accompanied by the laughs and hoots of the spectators.

When he caught John, who, of course, was merely breezing along, Elmer tried to jump him into the lead. This caused him to get his second surprise of that lap, for John wouldn't be jumped. Each time the younger brother tried it, John jumped with him or ahead of him. They kept this up for an entire circuit, then Elmer, failing to relish the guffaws and wise cracks with

which the customers received his efforts, decided to be good and dropped in behind John.

Up to the last lap there was no change in position, this being, of course, before the days when the rules forced match-race riders to alternate in setting pace. Then as the bell sounded Elmer jumped again, and this time he got away with it.

Except that there were only the two of them on the track this time, it was almost a repetition of the last lap of the five-mile race the week before. Every man jack in the place hopped to his feet with a yell as Elmer made his jump. The roar was deafening. Probably each individual rooter was chirping out some advice that was more or less sensible, but the general result was just bedlam.

It was only a part of a second after Elmer shot by him that John got under way, but to me, and to every one else in the place who was pulling for him, he seemed slow as a wooden man.

They tore around the turn and into the back stretch like a pair suddenly gone mad, their faces twisted with their efforts, their backs humped, their legs driving like pistons. Each was doing better than his best; there could be no question about that, although Elmer, having a smoother, more graceful action, seemed to be taking it easy by comparison with John who was moving from side to side in his saddle, seeming to put his whole body into each push he gave the pedals.

Inch by inch through the back stretch John crept up on his flying brother. As they rounded the far turn, John's front wheel was lapped over Elmer's rear one. Halfway around the turn his head was at Elmer's elbow.

The mob in the stands were maniacs. Down at the trackside I was as bad as any of them, yelling, screaming, waving my arms; I think I even did a little praying as I remember it. Riders and trainers, some of whom had seen hundreds and hundreds of races, were hopping around and screeching like kids who'd paid their four bits at the gate.

Making the last turn, John came up even. There was a sudden gasping roar from the crowd; then a crash, the crunch of breaking metal, the thud of a hard, heavy object hurled against the board track and—silence. For, in the tiny fraction of time in

which the two riders were even, before John started to pass his brother, John and Elmer had bumped together and the older brother had gone down.

And as he and his twisted bicycle slid down the track together, Elmer shot over the finish line.

For a few moments John lay still. Then as a score of us rushed down the trackside to help him, he turned his head and lifted one arm painfully. A gasp of relief came from the crowd as he moved. An instant later a dozen voices were raised in different parts of the arena in angry shouts.

I had had as good a view of the happening as anybody in the place and to this day I'll swear that Elmer did foul John. I'd distinctly seen him ride up the track slightly as John started to pass him, giving his brother the elbow and hip at the same time.

Elmer was pale as death as he got off his bike and started across the infield. His eyes were on the ground, for he dared look neither at the grand-stand box where Trixi Ward sat nor down toward the end of the track where two or three of us were helping John toward the training quarters. John was limp and weak. His face was ashen.

The referee stepped down toward the judges' stand, a troubled, puzzled look on his face. It was a ticklish situation for him. Apparently he wasn't certain how the thing had happened; and yet a decision of some kind was necessary, for a championship depended on the result of that race. People in all parts of the stands were calling on him for action. As is always the case when such things happen, everybody had seen the crash with different eyes—depending on whether their sympathies were with John or with Elmer.

Elmer slipped through the infield gate as we reached there with John. If ever a man looked guilty—and scared—it was he. He was shaking, his head was down and he was looking around sneakily from under his eyebrows. He caught a sight of John and swiftly looked away. He gave a glance to the referee and then stepped back suddenly as he realized the latter was walking toward him. Realizing what he had done, he had no way of knowing that it had not been seen by every one at the track.

I felt John stiffen in my arms. Then he suddenly took his arm from about my neck

and sprang forward, limping over to the referee.

"Don't say anything to Elmer—to the kid, Jim!" he cried. "He didn't do anything—all my fault—tried to ride him down off the track—protecting himself—couldn't help it—got what was coming to me."

Then he flopped.

Well, of course, after that there was nothing the referee could do but let the race stand as run. He tagged a three-month suspension on John for foul riding, but he might just as well have made it for life, because John never rode again. It was a couple of months before he got out of the hospital, and a twisted leg such as he limped out on isn't much service to a bike rider. His right hand was so well mashed up too that there wasn't much use of his trying to get back at his old trade of machinist. There's been something the matter with his head also since it came in contact with the track that day. So that's why you'll find him to this day hanging round the tracks, without any particular job, getting a sort of living from pickings.

Elmer, of course, never spoke up. He didn't have that kind of nerve. He got the championship and everything that went with it—including Trixie Ward, for they were married a week or so later. And he's done well since. After a few years of cycling, he retired from the game, invested his savings in a manufacturing concern in the West, and, from what I've heard of him, he's now sitting on the world.

Which, you'll say, is all wrong. The positions of the brothers ought to be reversed. Well, maybe; but I won't say so. John's satisfied. That much I know. He put Elmer over, and that's what he started out to do. I've never heard a peep out of him about the deal he got from life, and he's the one to kick if anybody is.

As for Elmer—who can say about him? I know that girl Trixie led him a dog's life up to the time that she left him flat. Maybe he didn't mind that, but I'm inclined to think he did. He's got plenty of money, and he's quite a citizen out in the place where his business is. But is that enough? I wonder if he thinks so when his thoughts travel back, as they must at times, to the day when his Brother John spoke up to win him his first championship?



Heritage

By T. von Ziekursch

Author of "On the Snow Trail," "Thunderer Pays Off," Etc.

The Irish wolfhound hails the god of its fathers.

AT its best the desert is a place of strangeness, a region of sand and rock with its harsh mountains rearing high—rock sentinels of hard mien that look down from their austere heights as though forbidding and challenging the invader at the same time. And the story of the pup was a story of the desert, of tragedy and faithfulness strangely intermingled. It went back to more than a year previous when the man had come into this place of heat and dryness, wandering across its sandy reaches into the mountains, one of the great cañons that split the rock abutments his avenue of entrance to the rising levels of stone where he had prospected.

He was an old man, bearded and gray, a man of the desert and mountains. With him came a great shaggy dog, and she was old, too. Unmistakably he had Celtish blood and it may have been true that the huge, long-limbed dog was of that unbroken lineage which led back to the hunting packs of the ancient Irish kings.

He called her an Irish wolfhound and those with whom he came in contact accepted it as truth, which it was, and marveled at her powers, which made it easy to believe that she was of a royal breed.

If the pup had ever seen the man he did not remember. High up in a gulch of the mountains tragedy had settled on the ancient desert rat and his old dog waited

vainly at the camp, left alone with her last litter, one weakling which died and this other pup. There had been bacon in the flap tent and that sufficed for those first few crucial days. Beyond that the old dog held true to her instincts of motherhood and reverted. Her heritage was that of a hunting race and her long legs lent tremendous speed. The pup grew and thrived on the great jack rabbits that she brought up through the long cañon to the rock flat where the tent still stood, the only monument to the man, who had erected it for its shade.

Contented, but lonely withal, the pup played and slept and waited for the rabbits that were brought; and in a sense he, too, reverted. There came a day when he went down through the long cañon that led out of the mountains to the flat and followed up along the edge of the desert to the fringes of the wild hills where his mother hunted. And he learned quickly the way of it, for his was the blood of the hunter. And then, there also came a day when his mother did not return from the hunt, when she wavered slightly, bumped into a sotol clump in a lagging burst of speed, and lay quietly.

That was the story of the pup. Now he stood, long-legged and shaggy of appearance, hard with that hardness imbibed at the breast of the desert, and from his position on the flat, rocky bench where the yel-

lowed flaps of the tent still offered shade he looked slowly about to all sides. His were eyes of amazing keenness, for he was of a sight-hunting breed. His colorings, also, were colorings of advantage in this environment for they matched the duns and lighter browns of rock and sand. And the dark spots that were his eyes, seemed peering out through the tufts of hair that curled up from his long, heavy muzzle.

In many ways he was fitted for this strange rôle in which circumstance had cast him. His legs, longer and more strongly built than those of a greyhound, gave him tremendous speed and that powerful, wiry body enabled him to hold it over long distances, while his great fangs would have unmatched those of a wolf. And this vast place of rock and sand that stretched away for miles on miles in its stern panorama of fierce colorings was his domain, a heritage that was unnatural but in which he fitted as though it had been ordained from the beginning of things.

It was no mean realm, this to which he had fallen heir, nor one so barren as that picture which man as a race has of desert places. Beyond the outer barriers of those mountains were miles of smaller ridges, dropping away in places to low hills with their pine and shrub-oak clumps. Hidden, mystic streams were the arteries of the mountains through which their lifeblood flowed to disappear in deep cañons and gorges and ultimately reappear miles beyond, finding its way at last to the range bottoms and the river.

Here, also, there was other life, each species fitting into its own particular niche in the great order of the wild and according to every other species the place due it. But to this huge dog each in its way bowed. He was a usurper and none had dared dispute his sway.

Now he leaped down lightly from the rock flat, for the sun was dropping toward those ridges. A few moments more and it would be gone, the shadows, that were purpled curtains behind which day found its couch, would fall and a new world would be born of the night sky, a world of unrealities.

It came swiftly, this desert night, and the great wolfhound was a mere shadow as he loped down through the long cañon toward the desert flats. The puma which had come down from the inner recesses of

the mountains cringed and then sped back up the steep face of the rock in flight from this monstrous specimen of the race which it feared most. Its terror was nameless, for the dog had nothing to match those great claws which were the cat's chief weapons. The wolfhound saw that flight of the cat and leaped vainly toward the base of the steep rock. Once he barked fiercely his inherent hatred, and the puma looked back and spat with a hissing sound, its greenish eyes flaming coldly, then fled on to disappear where the dog could not follow amid the rocky heights.

A long time he stood there peering after the cat, then went along the base of the mountains, avoiding the sharp prickly pear and dagger plants. Perhaps it was his keen ear that picked up a faint drumming sound carried by the sun-hardened flat, perhaps his marvelous eyes saw that streaking shadow which came from the sage clump to one side and the other streaking shadow that was in back of it as the startled jack rabbit burst into those enormous bounds right from under the stalking coyote's nose. A mere fraction of time the wolfhound looked on and understood, then galvanized into action with a leap that made the efforts of the pursued and pursuer seem slow by contrast. There was a faint swishing sound, a little puff that might have been dust faintly visible in the night, then the coyote fled for its life and died under the crushing, heavy-jawed assault of this shaggy brute. But this was not the game which the wolfhound hunted for food. This was merely one of those, as was the puma, that aroused natural hatreds without reason, without understanding. The great dog could not know that he was a descendant of a mighty breed with carefully nurtured emotions, with hatreds that were supreme and loves that only death could still. He had been too young to understand what it was that had brought his mother back always to that yellowed flap of canvas by the gorge where the one man who had meant more than any other thing in life to her had been claimed at last by these desert mountains.

Once he looked down on the carcass of the thing he had just killed, disdaining to touch it again, then he went on up along the base of the mountains, hunting now with all the skill of the wind for the jack that the coyote had pursued. But it was

gone and the wolfhound's hunger urged him on. Once he stopped and looked back. Deep in those mountains were the lower plateaus, verdure-clad hills well concealed by these forbidding outer regions. There the deer would be coming down from the high benches to drink and in the open valleys he could outmatch their speed and make his kill. But he had come far now. This was the land of small life, the flat desert. Somewhere in its recesses, living like wraiths among the cactus and sotol, the yucca and cholla, were a few antelope, but even his wondrous leaps could not match theirs. He went on in that tireless lope and the miles passed. Though he could not know it a change had taken place within him. The time had come when he was passing from the last stages of puppyhood, and the restless urging to explore this region was the natural impulse, unchecked by the contact with man that makes one particular human the orbit around which existence revolves. Also, the time of the new moon was at hand and its pale-gold scimitar split the purpled heaven—the running moon of the wild, bringing stronger impulses as it grew larger.

The mountains curved away, a vast bend, and their steep ramparts were lost in the vague light and distances interminable. On the other side the ground assumed a harder feel to the pads and the desert sands merged gradually with earth like the waters of a gentle sea mingling with a flat beach. Here also the sotol ceased and the cactus and all manner of sharp growths of the desert flats. The sage clumps were thicker and there were tuftings of buffalo grass with cooler, softer patches of the short grass of the range.

A strange thing, that may have been mere caution magnified, was on the dog and twice he waited too long when jack rabbits burst out from their cowering at his approach. Then a third leaped away with the dog in pursuit. But he stopped abruptly for dimly outlined in the night he saw huge dark objects that moved. A low rumbling sounded deep in that chest and he flattened, watching. They came nearer, a few stragglers from the edge of the herd, night feeders. A mile or more beyond was the nearest rider. These monsters the dog did not understand and he lay, quietly now, watching. He saw that among them were some that were smaller and knew instinctively

that they were the young. But these calves were close to the fierce range cows and perhaps it was instinct that told the dog of their powers and the need for caution. His stalking advance was as careful as that of anything born of the wild and when he leaped for the throat of the calf it was a slashing attack that would have done credit to a lobo. Immediately the cow attacked desperately with roaring bleats. The dog met her, leaping from side to side, matching his speed and snapping jaws against her lumbering rushes. The blood on his muzzle freshened at every lunge and the cow fled in terror and pain at last, leaving her dead calf behind.

But to the rider on the edge of the main herd came the sounds of the strife and the cow's flight. Spurs and quirt brought his pony toward the scene at full speed and the dog saw him coming and felt some sense of warning that he could not understand. His heavy lips tightened back and his great fangs were bared but there was something ominous, threatening about this power which neared to the sound of drumming hoofs and he fled at last from the scene of the kill, stiff-legged in his long lope, not deigning to use the terrific speed that was his. Instead he loped away in a far-reaching half circle and there was a point of red flame and a sharp roar as the man saw him at a distance, a bit of shadowy motion, and fired, thinking that some rare lobo had strayed down to the range from the huge wastes toward the south.

The dog stopped and growled and the man fired again, the clattering roar of the heavy .45 drowning the sharp yip of the dog as he spun around and fell under the shock of the blow when the bullet furrowed high across his hip, missing the spine by only a scant margin. Fiercely he snarled and bit at the wound, then gathered himself and raced off into the night, the foot of the wounded leg barely touching the ground. A third time the man fired but the dog was gone, gathering and leaping in those long bounds back toward the desert where the mountains loomed, a crazy, jumbled mass of forbidding blackness out of the flat as though part of the desert itself had been placed on end, tumbled together in one great mass and then hardened in the fires of the earth.

At last his pace slowed and he turned to avoid a clump of cactus that reared with

wide arms in mocking fashion, sentinels on the edge of the hot waste.

The long bounds gave way to a lope on three legs and often he turned to look back and snarl, but he went on slowly. Now a burning came at the injured hip and he stopped and sagged down to lick it tenderly before he went on. His hunger was forgotten and in its place came an unnatural thirst. Far away, miles beyond, was the long cañon that led up, a gateway and avenue into the mountains where he had been born as a wild thing. There the flap of yellowed canvas remained a monument to the man he had never known. There also was the region of wild gorges and silence, loneliness that lured now with an impelling appeal. Slowly he worked along at the base of the mountains, stopping often and panting heavily while the blood still flowed from that wound and he weakened.

The moon disappeared and the stars were gone, the purpled dome above blackening momentarily before that misty grayness came which preceded the dawn. Then there was a flush of rose in the low sky over the waste places; the blossoms of the giant yucca trees took on an appearance of creamy whiteness, there was a fresh, unreal greenness about the cactus and the sharp-pointed leaves which completed the rosette effects of the century plants. It seemed that a vial of flame had emptied its band of crimsons and yellows on the vague horizon and the sun was up, the sudden dawning of the desert day. With it came the heat renewed, an active power through the rarefied atmosphere.

The wound on the dog's hip burned with the fires of fever and the leg stiffened. His tongue protruded far and was like a dry sponge. Now the miles did not pass under the light touch of his strong paws. The blood stopped at last but he was weak and he dragged on grimly toward that cañon through which he could gain entrance to the silent fastnesses of the mountains. There was something almost heroic in his fight onward. And farther along, miles beyond the cañon's entrance on the other side, another waged a fight as grim, as dogged in every way.

Perhaps the fates sat on the sharp benches of those brooding mountains that reared from the hot sands, sat and looked down and knotted two of the threads they spun. Perhaps they directed the footsteps

of the man who came, wavering footsteps that rambled drunkenly. The man was youngish of appearance nor was he burned to that leathery hue of the other man who had come this way more than a year before with his old dog to find here in these mountains of the desert a tomb of majestic grandeur and pinnacled monuments that no king could equal. His face was not lined as had been the face of that other and his hair was the hair of youth instead of the grayed locks of that other, but beyond these few differences there was much of similarity. Perhaps the fates saw that also, and tied that knot more firmly in two of those threads.

The man reeled and fell once and it was apparent that his tongue protruded and was swollen so that his cracked lips could not close. Also he mumbled as he arose and went on. Again and again he lifted a canteen to that dried, swollen mouth, but no water came, and once he turned toward the wall of the mountains that joined the desert in a sharp line. The wry, drawn expression that came to his face was meant for a smile and he waved as though to an acquaintance, then shook his fist and fell again, mumbling. He rolled weakly to his knees as a drunken man might and remained there while his eyes widened at the thing he saw. Perhaps reason returned momentarily for he uttered a sound that was different, and the dog dragging itself along the flat toward the entrance to the cañon, halted and snarled. It saw through a red haze that rimmed its eyes and the thing it saw was a big creature on all fours that crawled, dragging as it dragged.

The man attempted to rise, but days without water, days of wandering under that blistering sun demanded their toll now and he fell and crawled on, giving voice to inarticulate sounds again, fighting for increased pace as the dog headed for that cañon entrance. There the rocks were sharp and blood appeared on them as the man's hands scraped along. Once he sagged forward but pulled back as his face came in contact with the stone and the skin was scraped until red drops appeared. But the dog went on and its eyes were half closed now. Nor did it turn to snarl as the man's mutterings came through the silence.

Above, the sun was mounting higher, searching through cañons and gorges.

Farther down in the lowest sinks of the desert the heat veils rose like phantom curtains across the harsh reds of the mountain barriers. Now the man's mumblings had lost that note as of one who would have commanded if he could and there was pleading as of a fever-consumed child. But the dog paid no heed, merely dragged on, and the man followed as though some invisible thread held them together. The coarse trousers that were tucked in his boots had torn in contact with the rocks and he sagged more often, but pushed up and on always. Less and less frequently he looked after the dog, following blindly now as the cañon's walls lowered and came nearer together. Then there was a broad, flat table formation of rock and a deep gorge. The fight for sanity that went on within at sight of the canvas flap that still hung, burned to a parched yellow by endless succession of fierce suns, was evident in his eyes. He tried to beckon as though to an imaginary figure beside the canvas, but it was only the shadow and a moment later he was creeping on again, answering the singleness of purpose that had made him follow this dog which crawled over endless deserts and interminable mountains.

There was a slight coolness in the gorge which dipped down steeply, a cleavage in the rock. There he saw that the dog had halted and lay at the edge of a wide fissure and its tongue lapped at the icy water that passed below on its way through the heart of the mountains. Very slowly the man approached and the dog cringed back with fangs bared, cringed and watched. There was blood on the man's hand as it touched the water and he lay flat with hand dangling in the crystal fluid. Perhaps its icy touch held some charm of the mountain's magic strength, some reviving power. He moved a little closer and his face came over the edge. His lips and swollen tongue touched the water and there was a sucking, gurgling sound. A long time he lay there and lifted his face occasionally to breathe. Then he rolled over and away from the fissure and the dog crept back and lapped again, occasionally stopping to look at the man a scant few feet away on the other side.

It may have been that magic touch of the mountain's water which brought some semblance of coherence to the man's words that came as the swelling rapidly disap-

peared from his tongue and the cracked lips closed.

The words were low and jumbled.

"Queenie—where—where's dad?"

The man's eyes opened and his head turned slowly until he looked at the dog.

Slowly, very tired in expression, his eyes closed again.

"Where—where's dad?" he asked again. "He ought—must be somewhere around where you are. Where—where's——"

They faded out into incoherence again and the man and dog lay quietly.

The sun attained its zenith and for a few moments its rays touched the bottom of the gorge, then wandered up the steep sides of rock slowly. The afternoon waned and the man stirred. The great dog, lying with shaggy muzzle resting on forepaws, merely opened its eyes and watched him. Slowly, as one who has just passed from the coma of exhaustion and is still weak, the man pushed up to a sitting posture and looked about.

"Queenie——" he began, then looked closely at the dog and his hand brushed across his eyes. "Why, you're not Queenie!"

Very carefully the man arose to an erect position and looked about, swaying as he stood. Again he rubbed his hand over his eyes and then made his way up to where sharp, jagged rocks were the entrance to the gorge. Again he saw the sun-yellowed canvas and went closer to examine it. Then his head bowed and there was something that might have been a tear in the corner of each eye. Very slowly he went back to the gorge and down, leaning against the rock wall and looking at the dog.

"I wonder if there were any others," he said; and the dog looked at him but did not move. "Dad was hoping Queenie'd leave him one like herself when——" He stopped. At his belt in back hung a small canvas sack and he opened it and drew forth a square, hard biscuit. Slowly he went nearer to the dog and held it out. There was a slight wrinkling of the wolfhound's great muzzle and its head drew back while the white of those great teeth showed. The man dropped the biscuit and stood watching. The dog smelled a moment, then its tongue came out to lick the proffered food and at last it ate.

The fire faded out in the sky and sharp

shadows fell over the desert, the outline of mountain crests cast obliquely by the drooping sun. The time of half lights came, then the sudden dusk, and the man emerged from the gorge and climbed to the broad rock where the flap of canvas hung idly in the evening air. Long he sat there with head bowed, then looked up and saw the myriad stars that brightened the desert night. At last a dark object came from the black recesses of the gorge, drag-

ging toward him. Almost at his side the great dog lay and reached out at last to take another one of the biscuits held toward it and another. Then the man leaned over and touched the shaggy head, resting his hand on it and the dog lay quietly as though new contentment had settled and with it some measure of the understanding that had come to the man, understanding of shifting sands and deep gorges that guard their secrets well.

More Von Ziekursch stories of the outdoors in early issues.

UNAPPRECIATED

THE man we are looking for is not hard to find. But he is difficult to come up with at the precise time and place, and under the peculiarly auspicious circumstances requisite if he is to be given his just dues. We have something in store for this man—something that he needs very badly.

The man in question enjoys an unusually wide acquaintance. He is personally known to every reader of this publication. A description of his characteristic gifts will no doubt identify him to at least one hundred five million persons out of the one hundred ten million individuals who are citizens of the United States.

It is scarcely necessary to mention the man's name. But we may as well, as long as we are on the subject. His name is Legion.

Physically this man is everything that a man can be. He is tall and short, with broad and narrow shoulders. He is deep and hollow chested. He is big enough to lick Jack Dempsey and small enough to shame Tod Sloan. He is powerful and puny. His voice has a rich bass rumble and he talks on a high squeaking note.

But the most distinctive thing about this man is his amazing store of knowledge. He is conversant with affairs of every kind, business, professional, scientific, artistic, local, national, international and universal.

He has "the general situation" at his fingers' tips. We wish that President Coolidge might have the benefit of his constructive thinking on matters of domestic and foreign import. He would be amazed at the man's grasp of problems which the "best minds" have struggled with in vain.

It is a pity that this man is not in the confidence of Rockefeller, Morgan, Gary, Ford, Gompers, Lenine, the president of the French Republic, the chancellor of the German Empire, and the Reverend Percy Stickney Grant. They too would be amazed and gratified. The facility with which his agile mentality seizes, classifies, coordinates and adjusts the scattered factors of the most abstruse and baffling problems, situations, and issues, is staggering. The simplicity of his conclusions and solutions is beautiful!

The only business we know of in which this man has not discovered the royal road to success is his own. That, he assures us, is simply because his talent has never found appreciation. The stupidity of the vulgar minds that blind chance has set above him cannot compass the expanse of his imposing genius.

We are looking for this man; we are eager to find him, but we are particular about where, when, and how the meeting shall occur. We are desirous of informing him, in adequate fashion, of our whole-hearted appreciation. To do this properly, the circumstances must be favorable. We cannot carry out our benevolent purpose in the drug store, or the corner grocery, where he sometimes is a clerk. There are too many people around for the unrestrained expression of sincere sentiment. Nor can we ask him to call at our office, for strange visitors are apt to drop in. The place we have selected to meet this man is the middle of a dark and noisome alley. The time—midnight. And for the rest, all we ask is a lantern in one hand and a monkey wrench in the other. Under those conditions we are prepared to furnish a cordial expression of our undying esteem.

Talks With Men

By Martin Davison

PERHAPS you can help me," writes I. F. "I want to cure myself of the habit of smoking too many cigarettes. I smoke about sixty a day, commencing with the moment I get out of bed. I can't seem to stop. Can you give me any advice that will help me?"

At first blush this question appears childish. The only thing for I. F. to do is to stop smoking cigarettes. Any one can do this. Any one can live without tobacco, pleasant as it is at times. It looks absolutely simple.

It is not, after all, so simple as it seems. If I. F. stops smoking but keeps thinking all the time how much he wants to smoke he will be living under a perpetual nervous strain and will be almost sure to break some time and start smoking again. Is there then no hope for him? Of course there is. The world is full of people who have cured themselves of bad habits and have not the faintest wish to return to them. They are people who have either by accident or thought discovered a profound psychological principle and learned how to apply it.

Almost every one has had at some time a bad habit. It may be neither smoking or drinking. It may be a habit of procrastination, a habit of laziness, the habit of eating too fast, or sitting up too late. As a matter of fact a great many of the diseases that the doctors treat are caused by bad habits of thought. Mr. Coué and the Christian Scientists as well are aware of this. Anything I say in advice to I. F. and his cigarettes applies to any bad habit whatsoever. Any man has a bad habit who continues to act in an irrational way, knowing at the time that his action is irrational.

The direct effects of the habit are not all the harm caused by it. In many cases the indirect effect is the worst. The gambler who cannot keep away from the cards loses more than money. He loses his peace of mind and his self-respect. Any one who continues in a course of action of which the better and more rational part of him disapproves suffers a sort of disintegration of the personality, a secret feeling of inferiority, a sense of abnormality and lack of adjustment. This mental state is a terrible handicap in life.

IF I. F. is going to set about his cure intelligently he must first learn something about the machinery which operates his personality. Fortunately modern science has placed us in a position where we are beginning to know and understand the springs of our conduct and why we do things. Beginning a century ago with the trick experiments of hypnotists and mesmerists in the great French hospitals a new science of psychology began to discover itself. The literature on the subject would fill years of reading. I am going to keep as far away as possible from technicalities and to give in a rough general way what seem to be the conclusions of the best investigators.

Every man's personality is dual in its nature. There is the active, conscious side of the man, the man who talks and thinks and controls his actions by a conscious effort of the will. Call this the objective man. Deep within every man is another mysterious individuality. It is not conscious of itself as is the objective mind. It cannot talk. It can apparently reason in a blind, deductive fashion. It has tremendous powers of memory. It has strange, telepathic gifts. It is the thing that in moments of sudden crisis makes a man do things without planning to do them and without knowing why. It is the thing that in a moment of danger turns one man into a coward, another into a hero. It is the thing that forces one man

to drink when he knows it is bad for him, that gives another man the painful symptoms of a dozen diseases when there is really nothing wrong with him. It is the thing in short that compels I. F. to smoke sixty cigarettes a day although he is getting no pleasure out of them at all. We may call it for convenience, the subjective mind. It is the unconscious part of the personality. It is strong willed, it has mysterious, instinctive powers. What makes it at once terribly dangerous at one time and most potent in its powers for good at another is that it is subject to suggestion. The hypnotist when he makes his subject apparently insensible to pain, or when he induces him to perform feats of memory or mathematics of which he would be quite incapable in a waking state has placed this unconscious subjective self in charge of the whole personality and at the same time holds it in the power of his suggestion.

IT is probable that the lowest forms of life are entirely unconscious. As we go up the scale a dim light of consciousness begins to show in the higher animals. In man the blind instinct takes a still more subordinate position. In the highest types of men the objective mind is in full control. A genius like Shakespeare or Napoleon is the man whose conscious objective self has complete control of his subjective self. It is like the Eastern story of the jinni who came out of the bottle. The genius is one who has this powerful creature in full subjection, who makes him remember things and perform tasks for him, who can call him to his aid in any problem.

The lunatic is one in whom, through some lesion of the brain or degenerative process of the nervous tissue, or for some obscure psychological reason, the subconscious self has taken complete control.

The mad genius, such as was William Blake, that strange poet and painter, is one in whom the two personalities alternate.

Every alienist knows of cases of people with a double personality. One is the conscious and the other the unconscious self. Frequently the unconscious self seems the abler and more unscrupulous of the two.

People of no particular ability but of blameless lives are perhaps those in whom the unconscious is asleep.

The task of building a harmonious personality and of mastering the spiritual realities in life is that of subduing and harnessing the unconscious and inducing it to obey the mandates of the conscious ethical will. The more fully one succeeds in doing this the more power he has in life. The genius is one who has the greatest control. Every one has the lamp of Aladdin, every one has the jinni at his call. To use the lamp and to tell this powerful creature the right things—this is the secret of success. A hypnotist can influence your subconscious self. But it is better to do it with your own suggestion.

TO be detailed and specific with I. F., the way for him to break off his habit is to stop smoking at once for a day or so. Any one can do that, but that is only the beginning and the least important thing. What he *must* do is to keep telling himself over and over, not that he must not smoke cigarettes, not that cigarettes are bad for him, not that it is a bad habit, not that he must use his will power. Never mind your will power, I. F., but keep telling yourself over and over—and meaning it as much as you can—that you don't *want* to smoke cigarettes. Once you persuade the inarticulate, powerful mysterious entity within you that he does not like them, nothing in the world can make him take an interest in them. Let the jinni of the unconscious do the work of swearing off.

This is the secret of most of the faith cures in the world. But the suggestion of another, whether hypnotist, faith healer or what not, may wear off and leave you in a worse case than before, while if you go deliberately and coolly about the task of harnessing your subjective self to your conscious will your mastery will grow more and more complete as the days go by.

PHYSICIANS when they write textbooks state their premises and conclusions and then give specimen cases illustrating them. I am following the same procedure. Here is my specimen case:

Squibbs, my friend, is a motor-car salesman, one of the best in the business. Years ago, before prohibition, he was in the habit of drinking far too much. He frequented a hotel café in the Fifties in New York familiar to most automobile men. He took his prospects there. The regular program was three high balls at nine in the morning, three before lunch and an indefinite number through the afternoon and evening. Squibbs being a strong steady man of great self-control was never drunk—but he was never sober. He realized suddenly that he was doing himself harm and started in to quit. Now Squibbs had never in his life so much as opened a book on psychology. Nevertheless in his own way he had divined almost as much psychology as can be found in books only he had no name for this knowledge of his. He was a great salesman—and salesmanship is the knowledge of psychology properly applied.

"When I was going to sell a car," he told me, "I never started in by saying that this was the best car, or that this was the car he ought to buy. In fact I didn't talk much technical stuff either. All I'd say was, 'This is the car you want.' And I'd keep on saying that and most of the time it worked."

Of course such salesmanship is nothing more or less than the practice of suggestion as understood by the faith healer or hypnotist.

"So when I decided to cut out the stuff," went on Squibbs, "I thought I'd kid myself just the way I did other people. I don't quite call it kidding, either, for I never sold a car I didn't believe in and I always sold to people who I thought would want the car I had. So when I said to myself, 'You don't want to drink. You know you don't. You don't want to. You can if you want, but you don't want to,' I wasn't kidding myself. I was just telling the truth."

"Did you have a hard time of it?" I asked.

"Not a bit," said Squibbs, the master of autosuggestion in a double sense. "I just forgot about it. One time I had lunch with a fellow I hadn't seen in years and he was at the hotel before me. When I got in there was a nice pink cocktail on my plate and a quart of wine in a cooler at the side. I did not notice either of them till I was leaving and then my friend pointed out that I had forgotten to touch a drop. I *had* forgotten too. It wasn't an effort of the will on my part, I just had lost interest in the stuff. I might take a drink now if I wanted it, but I don't want it. I tell you it's all in the imagination."

THE view of the human personality I have just outlined is not my invention but is derived from years of reading. It is a working hypothesis and it does work. I. F. can cure himself of a desire for cigarettes by a steady insistence on the fact that he does not want to smoke. After he ceases to care so much he can smoke in safety. Personally, I think that on the whole tobacco moderately indulged in does more good than harm by a large margin.

There are some diseases that suggestion cannot cure. Typhoid fever, a broken leg, Bright's disease—a long sad list of others—are all beyond the power of the jinni of the unconscious. Nor may a man recover from the morphine habit without the care of a physician. But for many and perhaps the most exasperating of our ills, the remedy is autosuggestion.

I have tried to make myself clear in this but if I have failed I shall be glad to answer any letters that come with a stamped, addressed envelope. I devoted the whole talk to this subject for the reason that there is nothing that comes closer to the individual. Few have the cigarette habit in any dangerous form—but almost any one needs all the information he can get as regards self-mastery.

I have purposely avoided psychoanalysis. It is not for the layman—and very few doctors recommend it at the present time.



The Auzanier Jewels

By Roy W. Hinds

Author of "Ever Since Pizzaro," "The Borrowed Burglar," Etc.

An ancient Chinese fable serves for the undoing of an underworld gang.

MY room was filled with the faint glow of a night lamp. This had been so arranged that the soft-toned light searched every corner. Only a few shadows lay in pools on the floor—shadows of furniture—but these were too small to afford lurking places for human enemies. The light served as protection, but was not strong enough to disturb my sleep.

Since the affair of the Pizzaro emerald two weeks previously, when I, Yun Chan-yao, had matched wits with the international adventurer, Andrew Dallane—and come out of the encounter with that priceless stone—I had never for a moment ventured into dark places. Even with my door locked and bolted I kept some degree of light in the room, for the menace of Dallane and his crew hovered constantly overhead, and would so hover as long as they were aware of my whereabouts.

I slept. It was a sweet, dreamless slumber—the kind from which a man awakens with eyes wide open and every shred of mist gone from his brain; the sleep that brings him out of bed with a spring in his joints and a song on his lips. I felt all these sensations except the desire to sing. My lips were set firmly together, for it was

not yet dawn, and I had been awakened by a knock at my door.

For two weeks I had lived, as it were, on the edge of physical encounter, feeling that the danger of attack from some quarter was always imminent. In this life I had chosen, the life of the shadows, a man must face such things. I had assessed my own abilities in this respect, and was satisfied. Adventure, danger, impart a tingle of zest to men of my race, yet we avoid physical encounter if possible. We achieve our victories by other means, but this is not due to cowardice. It is not due to weakness, moral or physical. Our blood flows cool, and we are true worshipers of the intellect and the superior qualities of caution and restraint. But on more than one occasion I have found it necessary to fight with my fists. I was never forced to fight boy or man the second time. Those whom I fought never thereafter called me a "chink" to my face; not that I care if one does call me a "chink," if he doesn't add to the appellation insults of an unendurable nature.

I stand slightly above medium height, without superfluous flesh. At college in England, in which country I was born, I took some part in athletics, after my skill and prowess on the track and in the gym-

nasium overcame the prejudice of race with which I have always had to cope. I find that white men quickly recognize physical achievements in men to whose intellectual attainments they remain forever blind. My speed on the track earned me a general respect at college far out of proportion to that accorded me for the high ratings I won in history, philosophy and astronomy.

My race shows itself in me in less degree perhaps than in the Chinese born and reared in China, though none ever takes me for what I am not, and I am glad of this, for I am proud to trace the current of my blood back to princes in the walled city of Lao-yun. Lifelong association with Western civilization, living the life of the West, wearing the clothes of the West and following the ordinary customs of the West, have left their impress at least on my manner if not on my facial lineaments.

But as I say, I had reason to feel assured of my capabilities in physical encounter. Prejudice against my race and a misunderstanding of my quiet and unobtrusive manner had led certain quarrelsome individuals to go a trifle too far with me, and, when these encounters occurred in public, so keen is the white man's sense of fair play, I left behind me respect and admiration.

I had deliberately chosen the dangers to which I now found myself subjected. I was young, not quite twenty-six, and never had felt stronger nor more assured in my life. I had a pistol on which I could rely, if things came to the worst. Thus I felt no fear when I got out of bed to answer the knock at my door.

I stepped across the room and, in pajamas and slippers, stood at the door.

"Who is it?" I asked.

"A friend."

I hesitated. A man must take chances in this life of mine. The man at my door might be an enemy. On the other hand, he might really be inclined to friendship, and of assistance in the task to which I had set myself—the task of gaining possession of the Auzanier jewels, now in the hands of crooks who had stolen them from the Frenchman and his family in a holdup in Russia. I opened the door an inch, but stood out of sight and ready to throw my weight against it if the caller sought to force his way in.

"What do you want?" I inquired.

"Quong Sai told me t' come here, see."

"Where," I pursued, "did you meet Quong Sai?"

"I set on the dragon."

This was sufficient, and I swung the door open.

My visitor presented an extraordinary appearance. He was young—twenty-five, I should say. His dress betokened both prosperity and a fondness for loud colors and garish effects. He wore a pearl-gray derby hat and a dazzling green necktie. He continued to wear the hat at a rakish angle. His hair was red and glistened with some sort of unguent, though it was difficult to understand why he thought it necessary further to inflame its fiery tone. He wore a light-brown suit, with sharply pointed lapels, yellow shoes and gray spats. In one of his large red hands he gripped a heavy black walking stick topped with the head of a fierce bulldog wrought in gold. His suit, of excellent material and excellently tailored, fitted snugly, setting off to good advantage his lithe, muscular limbs and strong, sloping shoulders. He was not a large man, but extremely well built, and his square chin and thick neck enhanced the impression of tenacity and strength which radiated from him. His nose was a trifle flattened at the bridge and crooked. I thought of a ring and boxing gloves as I looked at him.

I liked his eyes. They were shrewd eyes, yet their depths held a reassuring gleam of good humor and friendliness. I threw on a robe, and we sat down.

"It's late," my visitor said, "and we'll talk skippy, see. I'm 'Christmas' Jones."

I didn't quite understand, and he perceived the question in my eyes.

"Christmas Jones," he repeated, pronouncing each word carefully. "The 'Christmas' part of it's a nickname, see. Some yap hung it on me fer bein' a nifty dresser," he explained gravely. It was plain that he was not altogether displeased by the sobriquet. "I alluz took pains about my clo'es, see—and you know how the leathernecks look at a guy like that. Some wise ginko said I looked like a Christmas tree—and the name stuck, see. Christmas Jones is how they know me all over town. Thought maybe you heard the name."

"No, I hadn't heard of you, Mr. Jones," I told him. "You see, I'm almost a stranger in New York."

"Yuh—that's what Quong Sai said. I'm a friend o' Quong Sai, see. I run against a prize piece o' bus'ness the other night, and last eve'in' I got wind o' the fact that Quong Sai's inter'sted in it. I went t' see the old boy, and told him—late t'-night—and he said fer me t' dig right up here and tell you. I slid in this hotel without bein' seen, see. That's the best thing I do," he added proudly. "Nobody knows I come t' see you."

I was not so sure of that, but I ventured no comment. I was certain that agents of Andrew Dallane kept up an incessant watch on myself and my hotel. I nodded an invitation for Christmas Jones to proceed.

He lit a cigarette.

"Quong Sai said I c'd talk plain, see," he said. "Well, it's like this. I'm the 'Human Fly.' Know me now? No? Second-story man, t' make it plainer." I nodded understanding. "I work on big hotels and apartment houses. Sometimes I pick on houses, see—these here mansions along the Drive and Fif' Avernoo. I don't monkey with no little stuff, see—rich folks I'm after—and I get their trinkets too. Anybody'll say I'm the slickest climber 'n this town. I used t' be a circus acrobat. I be'n a prize fighter too. I'm strong and limber, and sure with my feet. I c'n climb like a squirrel. Anybody knows me'll say that. Ain't you read about the 'Human Fly' in the papers?"

I told him that I recalled now having read certain accounts of a clever young man who climbed about the outer elevations of hotels and apartment houses, clinging to precarious ledges, crawling here and there with so much daring that newspaper reporters had come to refer to him as the "Human Fly" in their accounts of the robberies he committed. Glimpses had been caught of him, but none sufficiently for identification. Yes, I had read of the Human Fly.

"That's me," announced Christmas Jones. "I'm the Human Fly. I got the police nutty, see. The whole force is out t' swat the fly, but I'm still crawlin' around." He jerked his head emphatically, to impress me with his cleverness, and then went on: "The other night I was workin' on a mansion uptown, see. There was a window part way open on the second story. I got up to it, and inside.

"It was about nine o'clock, and the place

was dark. It didn't seem like anybody was there. I prowled around, but found nuthin' worth takin', and pretty soon I heard voices talkin'. I don't know what drew me, but anyhow I listened in on them fellas talkin' in the lib'ary. There was five o' 'em—and three of 'em was old friends o' mine. It gi' me a jump when I found that out.

"One of 'em was Andrew Dallane, and another Harry Flushing. Guess you know them birds. Old Nick Taylor was there too. The other two was chinks—excuse me, Chinamen—and I don't know 'em. Well, I knowed I'd uncovered a nest o' crooks, who got that mansion rented, so I'm told. The things I know about Dallane and Flushing and old Nick Taylor, see, is enough t' turn me against 'em in any game that comes up. They ain't square—none of 'em; and they done dirt t' more 'n one friend o' mine, and t' me too. So I listened in on their game, and what I heard and what I picked up later here and there—piecin' it all t'gether with what Quong Sai told me—gives me an open squint at the game, see. I'm onto it, and Quong Sai says you're inter'sted."

With an effort I concealed my extreme eagerness, and told him calmly:

"I am very much interested in Andrew Dallane, though I don't know the other men you mentioned. I shall appreciate any information you can give me."

Christmas Jones continued his recital. He told me quite frankly that he did not ordinarily play a game with Chinamen against white men, but this was a special case. It seems that these particular white men had treated him shabbily; there were Chinese mixed up with them too, and he understood that there were white men interested in a favorable outcome of my ventures. It looked to him, he said, like a game of white and yellow against white and yellow—and at least Quong Sai had always treated him squarely, even generously. The situation called for no violation of his ethics or his racial loyalty.

When he departed an hour later, by putting his illuminating information with the information I already possessed, I was aware of precious secrets in this game I was playing against certain characters of the underworld.

I knew the hiding place of the Auzanier jewels. I knew that two bands of crooks,

each striving for the Auzanier jewels, led respectively by Andrew Dallane and Harry Flushing, had settled their differences and joined forces in an effort to recover the priceless Pizzaro emerald. That emerald was part of the Auzanier collection, and I had it. I meant also to have the remainder of the collection.

That afternoon I sat on the golden dragon at the feet of Quong Sai.

Only friends, tried and true, were permitted to sit on the purple rug and to listen to the words of wisdom from the dry lips of aged Quong Sai. He wielded his power now from a heavily cushioned couch, for he was old, but there was scarcely a movement in the shadows of the city that escaped his attention, so numerous and active were his friends.

He spoke of my quest, and told me a tale of old China, which set me thinking. One had to look for hidden meanings in the words of Quong Sai, and when I arose from the golden dragon embroidered in the purple rug, I experienced a lift of the heart, for it seemed a hint had been given me.

That evening I received, by appointment in my hotel room, another visit from Christmas Jones.

"I be'n watchin' that house t'-day," my guest said. "Old Nick Taylor's a kind of a caretaker there, see. He stays there all a time, the way I get it, but the others come and go—chinks—excuse me, Chinamen—and white men—a lot of 'em."

"And who is Nick Taylor?" I inquired.

"He's the orniest old skate in N' York, see," Mr. Jones informed me. "I don't see how them fellas come t' trust him. I wouldn't trust him as far's I c'd see with both eyes shut. He'd double cross his best friend for ten cents in cash, see. That's the kind of a guy old Nick Taylor is."

"That sounds very good," I remarked.

"Huh?"

"I say that sounds very good. We may have dealings with Nick Taylor."

"I wouldn't have no dealin's with him."

"Sometimes," I observed, "it is better to place your confidence in an untrustworthy man."

Christmas Jones grinned.

"That's some more o' that Chinaman stuff," he said. "You fellas work funny, and ye're alluz twistin' things around. Well, that's the layout up there, see. Dallane and Harry Flushing 've got that joint

for sumpin' or other, and there's a lot o' comin' and goin', with old Nick Taylor doin' guard duty. Maybe, if ye're inter'sted, it means sumpin' t' you. It's past me, see—but Quong Sai said you'd understand."

"I do understand," I assured him, "and I want your help."

"My help?"

"Yes. I want you to help get me into that house. I want to talk with Nick Taylor, in that house, when he's alone there. Are you and Nick Taylor active enemies?"

"No—not exact'y. We never had no trouble. I just heard all about him from good friends o' mine. I never mixed up with him."

"That's good—very good. He isn't in a bitter frame of mind toward you. He won't think you're trying to play a trick on him—eh?"

"No. We never had no trouble, and I don't know as he knows I don't like him. I never told him—I never had a chanct."

Christmas Jones finally told me he thought it could be arranged, though he emphasized the danger of such a mission. I understood that danger, and I made no attempt to minimize it, but my new friend was not deterred by danger. I told him something of the enterprise in which I was engaged. He agreed to get me into the mysterious house, at the first favorable opportunity.

I was privileged a few nights later to observe an artist at work. Christmas Jones, due to his extraordinary agility induced by practice as an acrobat and a pugilist, looked on heights and narrow footings with the most casual eye. They were nothing to him. He had an eye practiced for shadows too, and he could choose instantly those spots pitched in a desirable shade of gloom. On the way he led me, in our approach to that uptown mansion, he chose shadows in which our bodies presented neither silhouette nor form. We were part of the shadows themselves, and our bodies melted into them so quietly and completely that we might have been wrapped in magic cloaks of invisibility.

This required a form of genius, for light and gloom lay intermingled over the lawn. But we scooted from tree to tree and shrub to shrub, and presently reached the thick darkness at the side of the house. It was

a large, old house—apparently a home of wealth in some bygone day, but now the scene of the machinations of a band of international crooks.

From a vantage point, Christmas Jones and I had watched various men leave the house, and the lights go out one by one, until we felt reasonably certain that the place was occupied now only by the caretaker, that notorious old evildoer known as Nick Taylor. We could not be sure of course that Nick Taylor was alone, but this was a chance we must take—ever on guard for eventualities. We had come to this place only after hours of precaution to throw possible trailers off our heels, and we were sure that our secret and our mission were known to none but ourselves. My companion knew this house and its premises, as one who had previously effected an entrance there and who had since studied the ground. Thus he was aware of exactly what to do once we came to the side of the house.

And he set about doing it. He swung himself into the lower branches of a spreading maple tree, and disappeared. I heard only a faint rustling now and then to mark his progress upward and closer to the house. Then I heard nothing at all. I stood there alone in the gloom, looking upward for some trace of Christmas Jones, but seeing nothing but the dark bulk of the tree, and, beyond, the stars of a summer sky from which an early moon had sunk.

I waited, and nothing happened. I understood that Christmas Jones was to seek entrance through some window or door off a second-story balcony. He could attain this balcony from the tree only by stepping onto a ledge at the second floor, and, exercising his capabilities as a human fly, proceeding along this ledge to the balcony, which formed the roof of a sun parlor toward the rear of the house. It was a precarious journey along that ledge, but my companion thought it safer than shinning up the walls of the sun parlor on account of the starlight which fell there. I did not see him, either in the tree, on the ledge or on the balcony, and as the minutes passed I began to feel some concern.

This part of the business, effecting an entrance, was something in which I had no skill, and I had left this phase of the night's work to Christmas Jones without question. He had promised to get me into

the house and to Nick Taylor, and though I felt concern, it was concern for his safety. I knew that Christmas Jones would keep his promise, if it were humanly possible to do so.

Yet there was nothing to do but wait, for a time at least. I did this for at least fifteen minutes before my patience received its reward.

I heard a noise in the direction of the sun parlor. Then a form appeared close to me.

"Come on," said Christmas Jones.

The door of the sun parlor was open. My companion had made his precarious journey along the ledge, he had effected his entrance, and gone through the house and down to the sun parlor, where he had opened the door, in a surprisingly short space of time. I was soon to learn that he had accomplished another task.

We went inside, and through the house to a stairway.

"Old Nick Taylor's alone," the Human Fly whispered, and this seemed good.

We mounted the stairway. In a bedroom, after Christmas Jones had drawn the shades and switched on the lights, I saw an old man in night clothing lying on the bed. His wrists and his ankles were tied and a handkerchief had been stuffed into his mouth. My companion plucked the handkerchief from his victim's mouth.

"There's your man," he said to me. "Go ahead and talk t' him."

I smiled my thanks to Christmas Jones.

"I think he's uncomfortable," I said. "We may as well untie him."

My companion did this, and Nick Taylor, scowling darkly, sat up on the edge of the bed. He made no movement toward a fight.

"I got his gun," said Christmas Jones. "Go ahead and talk t' him. No tellin' when some o' his friends might come back, see."

I realized the wisdom of this observation, and proceeded to finish my business with Nick Taylor. I drew a chair close to the old man sitting on the bed.

"I have a proposition to make to you," I said. "You're hired by Andrew Dallane and Harry Flushing, and some of their Chinese friends, to guard certain valuables. Those valuables are in this house. I'll make it worth your while to turn them over to me."

A sneer gathered on his face.

"You're Yun Chan-yao," he said. "You're the chink that got the Pizzaro emerald. They told me to watch out for you. Nothing doing!"

"I am Yun Chan-yao," I admitted; "but what difference does that make to you, if I triple the amount you're being paid now?"

"It makes a lot of difference!" the old man cried. His contempt for me and my proposal was plain in his countenance and in his voice. "You can't buy me," he added doggedly. "I'm set—and I'll stick by my friends here. Go ahead and kill me; you won't get what you come after. Torture me, but you won't get the stuff."

"I hadn't thought either of torturing you or killing you," I told him quietly.

I was very happy inwardly, though I meant to show only disappointment. I had read the character of Nick Taylor—in the few words he had spoken, I had become convinced of his determination not to betray the trust Andrew Dallane and Harry Flushing had placed in him. I had learned my lesson from Quong Sai—this subtle shade of character. Nick Taylor, a man scorned and distrusted all his life by men of his kind, had suddenly been chosen as the object of an overwhelming trust. Jewels of tremendous value had been placed in his keeping, to his utter amazement, and he would guard them with his life. Full of betrayals as his life had been, this incredible trust in his old age would make of him a faithful servant. On the practical side of it, he was afraid of Dallane and Flushing, but there was something else to it. Dallane and Flushing had made him their devoted servant by trusting him to such an incredible extent while all the world distrusted him. So much for the present state of Nick Taylor's mind. I was sure that I understood it, and laid my plans accordingly.

"Suppose I told you," I went on, "that I know where you have the jewels concealed—that I could go to them this moment?"

He laughed a sharp, bitter laugh of derision.

"I'd call you a fool," he said, "for taking me for such a dumb-bell."

"Nevertheless it would be the truth," I insisted.

"Well," he demanded, "why don't you go and get 'em?"

"Because I want you to get them for me."

Again the laugh of derision. Scorn of me and doubt of the security of the Auzanier jewels were mingled in his countenance.

"You ain't got no chance of getting 'em," Nick Taylor declared. "You can turn this house upside down, but you can't find 'em. If you know where they are, what'd you come to me for? What're you putting up this argument for? Ha! You must think I'm an awful coconut!" He added: "Well, what d'you want of me now? I've told you you can't buy me. You might's well run along."

I studied him carefully. He rubbed a hand over his thinly haired head, and, feeling quite sure that we contemplated no violence, gazed at me directly with an air of scorn and triumph. I turned loose my next shot.

"If you will go look in the black box with copper corners," I said, "you will find a message from me."

He started, and I knew that the box Christmas Jones had seen in his possession that night he came there first as a prowler was the box which Nick Taylor had been set to guard, and which he now had in some secure hiding place. My shot had gone home. There was no longer any doubt in the mind of Nick Taylor as to my knowledge at least of the box.

"It will be to your advantage to get that message," I added.

He gulped. A film of perspiration gathered on his brow. A look of fear crept into his eyes. He peered at me closely.

"I don't know nothing about a black box—with copper corners," he said.

"Oh, yes, you do," I insisted; "and I know about it. There's an important message in it for you. The box is locked, and you haven't got the key—but I have keys here—for just that purpose." I tossed a bunch of small skeleton keys onto the bed. He stared at them, but made no movement to pick them up. "You'd better go get that message," I pursued. "We shall wait here—I give you my word. You can go to the box alone, and open it alone. Then I know that you will come back to me, as a friend, when you get the message that's inside that box."

He meditated. He looked again at the keys.

"How'd I know you'll wait here?" he demanded, gazing from one to the other of us

sharply. I noted with satisfaction that the face of Christmas Jones revealed no mystification, though I knew he must be as mystified about this proceeding as old Nick Taylor himself. "It's a trick," the old man said, "and you'll follow me."

"No," I assured him. "We'll sit right here, and take only ordinary precautions to see that you don't use the telephone. If you play square with us, we will with you. You can take your own time about inspecting the box, and do it only when you're sure we're not watching you. Meanwhile we will guard against your summoning help. That is all—for I'm sure you will be my friend when you get the message inside the box. There are the keys. You can open it somehow with that collection."

He hesitated a moment, then picked up the keys. He slid his feet into his slippers and stood up.

"I'll take a look," he said, and passed out of the room.

Christmas Jones stared at me.

"Watch him!" he said in a hoarse whisper.

"No need of that," I told my companion. "He's one of us now—or will be as soon as he looks inside that box."

My companion continued to stare at me incredulously.

"What kind of a game you playin'?" he demanded.

"Be patient," I rejoined.

But it was hard for Christmas Jones to be patient. He paced up and down the room, seemingly afraid that Nick Taylor would summon help.

"I don't think he will," I said. "At any rate, we mustn't watch him too closely. We must let him go to the box by himself. It may take him some little time to open it. If he should call help, we are both armed—we can fight our way out. It's all in the game. I'm staking everything on a chance."

"Did you put a message in that box I told you about?" he asked. "I don't see how you could 'a' done that. I——"

"There is a message in the box," I told him, "but I didn't put it there."

This served further to whet the curiosity of Christmas Jones, but he restrained his impatience. The minutes passed—nearly a half hour.

Nick Taylor returned. A cloud of stupid bewilderment was just passing from his

face. In its place there appeared the first dark hue of rage. This grew.

"Did you get the message?" I asked.

A torrent of curses flowed from his lips as his rage mounted to full heat.

"There ain't——"

I lifted my hand to restrain him. He stared at me, and I could see that his rage was directed toward the proper quarter, while for me there was dawning in his mind friendship and respect. I asked Christmas Jones if he minded if the old man and myself talked alone for a few minutes, and Mr. Jones went out of the room with the greatest good nature.

"Now you and I will talk business," I said to Nick Taylor.

Two nights later I laid in the lap of aged Quong Sai a leather case containing the magnificent Auzanier jewels—and this act marked my complete victory over Andrew Dallane, the international adventurer, who had set out to steal the collection from Harry Flushing, the leader of the gang who stole them years ago in a holdup in Russia. Quong Sai voiced a word of praise as Christmas Jones and I sat down on the golden dragon at his feet.

"This is all chop suey t' me," said Christmas Jones. "We start out after a black box with copper corners, and we never see it. I think the jools 're in that box. And a coupla nights later old Nick Taylor, who's been hired t' guard the jools, brings 'em t' you in a leather case—and I hear from your talk that he watched his chanct and lifted 'em outa a wall safe in Harry Flushing's apartment. How 'bout it, uh? How'd you get old Nick Taylor workin' for ye?"

"Perhaps," I suggested to Quong Sai, "you had better tell my friend the tale you told me a few days ago—of the rich man and his faithful servant."

Quong Sai spoke:

"There was once a rich man in Siningfu who had a faithful servant. The rich man had a store of gold coins, and this represented the most valuable of his many possessions. The servant, who was old, had a reputation for dishonesty, yet the rich man trusted him, and this was strange, for of all others he was watchful and suspicious. The rich man spent many sleepless nights with the gold close at hand, and was forever feeling of it, to see that it was still there.

"One day he handed to the old servant a box, locked, with the words: 'In this box is my gold. Guard it with your life. I trust you as I trust myself.'

"The servant, amazed, determined to guard that box with his life. The trust was so great as to overwhelm him with gratitude, and he determined to atone for all the petty misdemeanors of the past by proving faithful to this trust. It seemed a happy way to close his days, trusted and trustful. The old servant put the box away in a safe place, going to look at it from time to time to see that it hadn't been disturbed. The rich man asked about the box every morning and every night, but appeared content with the servant's reply, 'It is safe.' The rich man never once asked to see the box, and this further evidence of implicit trust swelled the happiness of the faithful servant.

"The years passed. The master slept peacefully, and the old servant glowed with the knowledge of trust and confidence. There came a day when the servant, carrying the box through the house to what he deemed a more secure hiding place, accidentally let it fall. The box struck upon one of its corners and broke asunder. Its contents poured out upon the floor—and the servant perceived that he had guarded all those years nothing more precious than a box of pebbles and common stones.

"He wept. For many days his heart ached, then smarted. His pride withered. A man who has turned honest is much more jealous of his honor than one who has al-

ways been honest, and takes trust as a matter of course. The pride he had built up withered. Seizing a day when the master was again absent, the servant searched the house and found the box which really contained the gold. He spirited it away, and the rich man never thereafter dipped his fingers into his hoard of gold."

Christmas Jones gazed from one to the other of us with blank, uncomprehending eyes. Presently he understood.

"Then they didn't trust old Nick Taylor?"

"Certainly not," I assured him. "That black box and Nick Taylor constituted a blind, and that was the trail they meant for me to follow. They didn't suspect that I would use their game to turn one of their own men against them. They thought only halfway."

"Well, listen—how about the message in that box?"

"The message was the fact that it contained nothing of value. I wanted the old man to learn that. It was very easy then to turn him into a friend, and he was a valuable friend—with his knowledge of wall safes, and his ability to turn a clever job. You see, it turned out well."

"Yes indeed!" said Christmas Jones.

He got to his feet, twirling his handsome black stick with the head of a fierce bulldog wrought in gold. It gave me a pleasant feeling to think that I had made a friend like Christmas Jones. Danger lay ahead. No telling when I might have to call on him.

NOTHING WRONG THERE

WHILE the Reverend Thomas McQ. Quillin, the well-known Southern evangelist, was visiting New York a short time ago, he went one morning to see St. Patrick's Cathedral. As he came out, two Irishmen were in front of him.

"Well, Mike," asked the one who was evidently acting as guide to a newcomer to the city, "what do you think of it? Ain't it gr'rand?"

"Pete," solemnly replied the visitor, "it bates the divil."

"That," said his host, "was the intintion."

WHERE THE HAND OF FAME WITHERS

REPRESENTATIVE CLAUDE KITCHIN, minority leader of the national House of Representatives, says the best epigram he ever read came from the pen of an old country editor down in North Carolina.

"Fame," says this gem, "has snatched men from the carpenter's bench, the hodcarrier's ladder and the blacksmith's forge; but it never reached over a picket fence and snatched a dude out of a hammock."



A Little Hitch on the Way

By Frederick Niven

Author of "The Electric Storm," "The Subconscious Self of Boosey Bill," Etc.

A mysterious episode on the four-sleep trail to Kaslo Lake

YOU know the way to Kaslo Lake?" asked Harry Vernon.

"You bet," the Indian replied.

A gnarled, lined effigy of an antique he was, a hat of the kind best described as slouch on his head, the hatter's band replaced by a strip of blue and white beads, his hair hanging down in braids, one on either side; and he wore a reach-me-down white-man coat, a white-man shirt, blue dungaree trousers and, on his feet, moccasins.

Query and answer were spoken in the "street" of Halcyon, Kootenay Lake, British Columbia, in the Old Days, so called only because of the rapidity of changes in the West, for they are not really old days. Harry Vernon's partners are still alive—Tom Enderby, who does not like to be called an old man even now; and Dick Mara. Tom, Dick and Harry. Men referred to them in those days as The Three Musketeers of the Mountains.

"How far?" asked Harry.

"O-h," said the Indian slowly, "four sleeps."

"You take me there to-morrow?" said Harry.

"All right," replied the sober effigy. "I show you to-morrow. I see you along creek."

Vernon nodded, and turned away to find

his partners and get them to the task of laying in provisions for the hike. This Kaslo Lake was no fabulous secret. It was known; a government cartographer had put it at least approximately on a map even then; a prospector or two had seen it from distant ranges; but so far as these three knew no one had ever prospected there, and they were curious, in view of the lower discoveries, to see just what manner of rocks old Nature had in store for the discoverer there, and what manner of sand the ages had sifted along the shore of that high and lonely lake.

The following morning they set out two by two, Harry and the Indian side by side, then Tom and Dick, each canted forward slightly under a back load of blankets and provisions. A rifle, as well, added weight to one of the white men's packs, a prospector's pick to another, a shovel to the third. Thus they went, two by two, until the wagon road on which they had left town ended at the mining proposition that had started Halcyon, put it on the map—a couple of holes in a slope of mountain, a couple of wedges of rubble strewn down among the trees.

Thereafter they walked in single file, first Peter, the antique red man, then Harry, then Dick, and lastly Tom, because, thence onward, they had but a narrow trail. It

was so good a trail that Tom asked once why they had not taken ponies. It seemed ridiculous to him, feeling this "too much like work," to be laden down with their heavy packs when a horse could have carried the burdens for them. Peter, however, explained, pausing for a moment, and putting up a hand, in a very Indian movement, to ease the weight of his pack slightly with a cupped palm.

"Only as far as one sleep trail any good," said he.

"Bad trail after that?" asked Tom.

"No trail," replied Peter tersely.

He wheeled and led on again, and for two hours thereafter the Musketeers and their guide trudged on through the forest on that trail, the Indian walking at a steady gait as of a thing of steel mechanism that had been wound up. There was something fascinating to the three whites in watching that insistent, regular motion. Only when he came to any chance declivities did the automaton aspect cease. At such places he went tittuping down the last few feet as an aid toward going up the next rise more easily. Behind him the white men showed signs of tiredness.

"How about lunch?" asked Harry anon, over his shoulder.

"You said it," said Dick.

"A good scheme," agreed Tom.

They sat down to eat by the wayside and Tom, when all were refreshed, had an inquiry to make.

"Say, Peter, you're a good walker," he said, puffing his pipe contentedly. "How old are you?"

"Maybe seventy snows."

"You must have been quite a walker when you were a young man," Tom said, and blew a smoke ring into the utterly still air.

The edges of Peter's slit of a mouth turned up slightly. A little imp danced among the two flames of his eyes.

"Oh, when I was a young man," said he, "I run!"

Again they slung their packs on their backs and held on, still upon trail; sunlight was on the heights of the westward-facing mountains when they reached its end, at a prospect where three men were working.

Tom, Dick and Harry were, frankly, utterly tired, but Peter showed no signs of being "all in," though immediately after supper he rolled himself up in his old blan-

ket and appeared to go to sleep at once, the first sleep of the four-sleep trek.

On the next day he kept up the same gait, and in camp on that night did not seem to be especially glad that another day's hike was over, ate a hearty meal, smoked his one evening cigarette, cocooned himself in his blanket, and in a moment was off in the second sleep. On the third evening Harry, rubbing his legs, which felt as though the muscles in them were knotted, gave a rueful laugh.

"How do you know this way so good, Peter?" he asked.

"I been here before," Peter explained.

"You come for berries?"

The old face wreathed in a smile.

"Bear," he said.

"You catch him?"

Peter, instead of replying, began, by all appearances, to undress. Suddenly the three men exclaimed: "Gosh!" for he was not precisely undressing; he was showing them his side, a side on which were many scars where a bear had mauled him. Here before them was another of these old Indians they had heard of who have been marked by Bruin. He told them how it had happened, told of the rifle he had bought from a white man, "not very good," for though it should have chambered six shells Peter found that if three were in the chamber, "him stick tight," sometimes even with two "him stick tight." To make absolutely sure that him wouldn't stick, Peter usually contented himself with one shell in the barrel and one in the magazine. He described how the first shot hit the bear in the shoulder but did not kill it, and how it dashed at him instead of running away; how he stood pat and fired again, then whirled in the wild hope of reloading, the bear after him with the two bullets in it. As it fell, so he explained, by his limited vocabulary and slight pantomime, it clawed him once. "You see?" They saw in their mind's eyes. His bear story having been told and the scars shown, he rolled in his blanket and fell into the third sleep.

"I'm going to roll up too," said Tom. "He ain't going to get ahead of me in the refreshment of sleep."

"Good scheme," agreed the others.

But next day, as the sun came toward noon over the quiet woods and the flaunting rock heights that could be discerned here and there between the treetops, Harry,

behind the Indian, murmured over his shoulder to Dick that he believed Peter was getting tired at last. They began to suspect that he had been setting the pace to show white folks what he could do. When they rested for lunch that day the old man sighed several times and once, as they looked at him, admitted, even without an inquiry to draw forth the admission, that his breath "not so good so high up." He looked at them sadly as he spoke. Lunch over he pointed to a little knoll near by.

"From up there you see the lake," said he. "We make him four sleep all right, after little rest, you bet."

"From up on that rise?" said Tom. "Guess I'll pop up and have a look, then. Coming, Peter?"

Peter shook his head.

"Too tired," he said. "I rest till you come back. You see for yourself up there, not need me show you. We go that way," and he pointed. He had clearly no desire to add a fraction to the hike unnecessarily.

So away went Tom, leaving his pack by the rest camp. Then Dick rose, and followed him up the little eminence whence the glimpse was to be had of their goal, smashing through the scrub, scrambling over the rocks. It seemed as though Harry meant to keep the old Indian company, but a few minutes later he followed the others and, to his astonishment, met Dick returning.

"What!" he ejaculated. "You haven't been to the knoll top already? Can you see the lake before you get up there?"

"I'm just going back for something," Dick murmured, and hurried on downward to the rest camp.

He did not stay long, however. A little later he made up on Harry as the latter came to the summit of the knoll where the glimpse could be had. He saw a blue-gray glitter, obviously of Kaslo Lake. Just as the two men came to that outlook place, Tom spoke from the other side and scrambled toward them over an outcropping rock rib.

"I'll be back," he said; and without further explanation bobbed down from sight again.

They heard him plunging over rocks and fallen trees in a series of alternate rattlings of stones and cavings in of punk wood. Then there was silence, save for the mew of a catbird.

"Poor old Peter," said Harry. "He looks his age to-day. Kind of a tough hike for an old man. But he's a jim-dandy on those pins of his."

"Sure," agreed Dick. "It was amazing that he kept up so steady a gait until to-day. He certainly looks tired now."

They strolled on the knoll top, looked over the silent forest to that gray-blue splinter of Kaslo Lake and the desolate yet majestic serrated edge of the infolding last peaks beyond. They picked out the A-shaped wedges of scree, noted veins of snow in high chasms to which the sun did not penetrate for many hours daily. Then they sat down and smoked leisurely to the peaceful and silent scene, collars open, enjoying a cool wind there. Tom rejoined them just when they were thinking that to make that splinter of lake by night it was time they departed. They rose, and the three roved over the knoll once more before going, kicking over loose stones that lay among its turfy surface and its tufts of bryanthus, and considering the revealed ribs of rock there.

"Well?" said Harry at length.

"I guess so," said Dick.

"Better get on," opined Tom.

They began to scramble down together, then suddenly and simultaneously stopped. A queer sound came to them from below. They listened. They looked one to another. Cannily then they descended, peering and prying between the tree stems on that steep little knoll.

"What is it?" said Tom.

"It's Peter!" said Harry.

"Peter!" exclaimed Dick.

They came to where they could see their packs in a little open space; and there was Peter the Indian honing a long hunting knife on a flat stone. That steady *frou-frou, frou-frou*, made part of the sound that had arrested them. The other part of it was Peter's voice as he chanted a barbaric-sounding song.

"Is he crazy?" said Tom.

"Is he drunk?" said Harry.

"Gosh, he can't be drunk!" said Dick; "we didn't leave anything in camp. Guess he's gone crazy." Head raised he listened intently. "I know a little of his Kootenay lingo, and I got the gist of it. He's chanting his prowess. Say, believe me, he's got a history to make your hair curl. And we got to look out for ourselves, for what he's

chanting now is that the white men are all usurpers, this is the Indians' country, and he is going to cut our throats when we're having our fourth sleep. If he pipped a grizzly with a punk rifle when he was twenty years younger, he could pip us all with that .303 left down there, and the magazine full at that. I hate knives in action. I hope we can get that one from him. We may as well make all the noise we can, and try what ordering him to drop it does."

They went smashing down the slope back to where their belongings lay; and old Peter, hearing them coming, gave a yell.

"Quit that!" shouted Dick. "Drop that knife!"

Peter did drop the knife, but only because he had bethought him of the rifle. As he leaped to it the three white men charged on him. There was a scattering of little stones under their feet; little puffs of wood dust from old rotted, fallen trees that their heels crashed through went up in air as they ran. They wrestled with the old man and found his strength amazing. As they fought he shrilled some words of contempt, by the sound, and his eyes looking up at them were like a cougar's. Suddenly Tom dug a knee in his wind three times quickly, bending to him; and as the old man lay gasping like a new-landed fish, Tom said:

"Quick, that rope, before he can get his breath again."

A minute later they stood back over a trussed old Indian. The balsam-scented dust fell. Squirrels chattered excitedly over the fracas. There lay Peter glaring up at them, his eyes more than ever like those of a cougar. But he chanted no more. They put his coat under his head, tossed his blanket over him, and sat down to think over this little hitch on the way to Kaslo Lake. As they sat watching him he closed his eyes and to all appearances fell asleep. It was too soon for the fourth sleep!

"Perhaps he takes crazy turns once in a while," suggested Harry. "I guess this ends getting to Kaslo Lake by the time he promised."

In the thick voice of a sleeper, or one half asleep, the Indian said: "Four—sleep," but he did not waken, heaved a sigh as of content, and then his breathing came deep and regular.

The three white men looked one to the other, almost guiltily it seemed. It had

not been a pleasant task to set upon this aged man, vigorous though he was, and truss him up. But for self-protection thus they left him while he slept.

"Gee, he's strong!" remarked Harry. "Considering how tired he was a little while ago you'd never think he'd be able to put up so good a fight. The ungrateful old son of a gun!"

"Ungrateful? We haven't done him any special kindness."

"No, no. Sure!"

Peter slept all afternoon, settling entirely the question of reaching Kaslo Lake that night. About sundown they made a fire and cooked supper, and at the sound of the crackle of burning wood the Indian woke. He seemed to be normal again.

"Take this off," said he. "I feel hungry."

"Guess you do," said Harry. "Are you often like that?"

Peter proved to them that there was no truth in the statement that Indians never laugh. The edges of the slit of a mouth turned up; a little imp danced again in the flames of his eyes, the little imp of merriment.

"You my tillicum," he said. "You my very good friend."

Harry cleared his throat, and perhaps it was the last of the sunset that made his face seem a deeper red than usual. He poured out a cup of strong coffee, then he loosened the guide's bonds and handed the cup to him. Peter shook himself, made no inquiry for his confiscated knife, ate a hearty supper, and then gave a great sigh.

"Pity not make Kaslo Lake for four sleep," he remarked. "Too late now. I sleep some time." He yawned. "Guess I sleep some more;" and he rolled up unconcernedly, as with a spirit of acceptance of the disappointment.

All was well again. It was a tranquil night of stars; and the occasional sigh of a wind passed gently in the pine tops. The fire crackled, sending up a lazy smoke that, where they lay, veiled a patch of stars as with gray gauze. They fell asleep, and woke to the sunshine, the fourth sleep over.

The little hitch on the way, apparently, might have been only a dream. Peter, as on the other days, was amazing. Away ahead he went with that tread as of an automaton, slackened only by a patch of dead-fall or an area of buck brush, the white

men plodding after him wearily. When they rested at the end of a couple of hours of that trudge they were very quiet, each deep in his own thoughts. Every now and then there showed a glitter of a smile in Peter's eyes.

About noon, proving that had there not been that hitch the day before they could have slept the fourth sleep by Kaslo Lake, they came to the blue gleam of it between the trees; for, close at hand, the gray was less evident. It was like a strip of the blue sky dropped into a pocket of big timber.

Peter did not once ask for his knife or make any reference to that disturbance while they tarried there. The white men eventually staked three claims; and when the party turned back to Halcyon each fought shy of mentioning the little hitch on the way when Peter relapsed from friend of the whites into a wild and resentful Indian.

But the full truth leaked out when, back in Halcyon, they discussed the trip. Peter had been paid, his knife, without comment on either side, returned to him; and Tom, Dick and Harry, home again, stretched out in their tent by the lakeside.

"You'd have thought," said Harry suddenly, "that old Peter had had a heap big snort of whisky that day before we made the lake."

Tom laughed.

"Well," said he, "I don't mind telling you now that I felt so darn sorry to see

the old fellow looking so tired that when I went back that time—do ye mind?—I gave him a pull of my flask. I made him promise not to tell you fellows, because it's kind of mean to give a drink to an Indian. But I was so darn sorry for him. I ought to have put some in a cup."

"A—pull!" whooped Dick. "Why, I felt so darn sorry for him that before I climbed up after Harry I gave him a good two fingers in a mug. And I told him not to mention it to you boys."

Harry blew smoke.

"He had quite a little jolt, then," he remarked. "For I felt so darn sorry for the old scout being all in that way that before I left to come after you I gave him just as much as the cup fitting on my flask would hold, asking him to keep quiet about it."

It was at that moment that the mine recorder looked in on them.

"About those claims you registered," said he. "You're all together. I see you've named them individually, but we are trying to give names to various groups together, for the sake of further clearness, and for the maps. Have you any suggestion for naming——"

Tom did not need to wait for the end of the inquiry.

"'Fire-water Group,'" he said, blowing a big smoke circle.

And: "Carried unanimously," said Dick and Harry.



EXACTLY THE RIGHT NUMBER

ON one of his many trips to Washington during a railroad strike some time ago, Bert M. Jewell, leader of the strikers, dropped into the office of Guy Oyster, secretary to Samuel Gompers, and the two fell to discussing children, Oyster commenting that he had six.

"By George!" exclaimed Jewell. "Have you six children?"

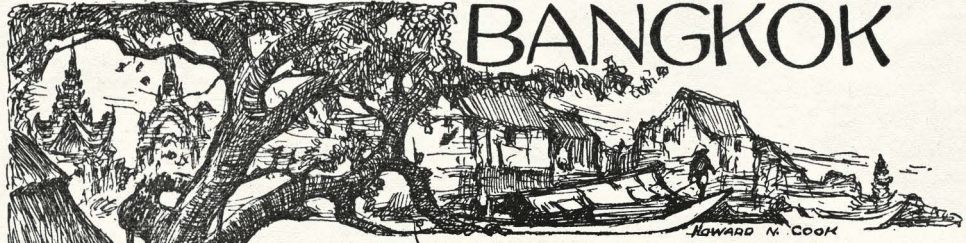
"Sure," replied the secretary. "Ever hear of anybody wanting less than half a dozen oysters?"



A REPUBLICAN SUPERSTITION

SENATOR CARAWAY of Arkansas is a Democrat. Last summer, the day before he left Washington for a trip to Europe, a newspaper man asked him what he thought of the outlook for the November elections.

"A lot of these Republicans," he replied with a Southern drawl slower than Christmas, "think they are going to be reëlected. They think they will be reëlected for the same reason that was working in the mind of the old colored man who told me he had always observed that, when he lived through the month of July, he lived through the rest of the year."



BANGKOK

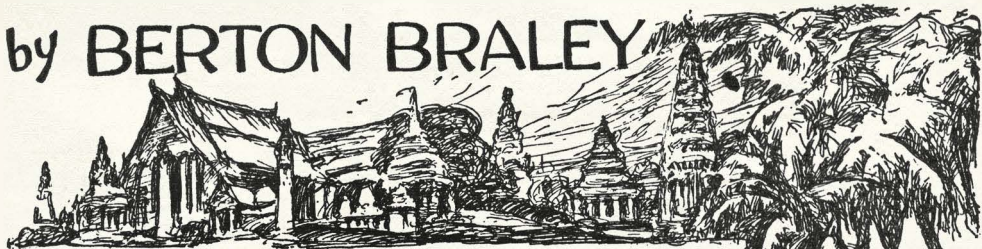


In Bangkok, in Siam,
Twelve thousand miles from home
The palms are waving gently
Beneath the blue sky's dome;
And brown-skinned smiling natives
In groups or lazy throngs
Slip by in boats and slim canoes
Upon the crowded klongs.

In Bangkok, in Siam,
The fish are strange of guise;
They climb the trees and look at you
With dull, sardonic eyes;
And when the sun has left the sky
And sudden darkness falls
The lizards chirp like merry birds
And crawl upon the walls.

In Bangkok, in Siam,
The priests in yellow decked,
Go forth upon the city streets
For alms they may collect.

by BERTON BRALEY

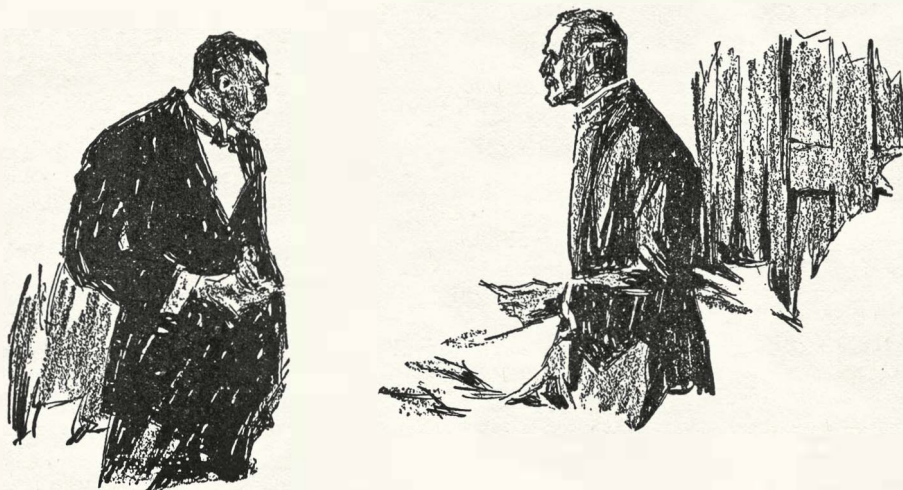


The little garry-horses trot
Along the packed New Road
Where rickshas, cars and tiny trams
Each bear their human load.

In Bangkok, in Siam,
Great Buddha is supreme;
His Wats with towers of porcelain
In tropic sunshine gleam;
Their gates are gates of gold and bronze
And carven guards are there
To frighten the irreverent
With their ferocious stare.

In Bangkok, in Siam,
They have a pleasant knack
Of chewing scarlet betel nut
Until their teeth are black—
But though their ways are different,
Their manners strange and queer,
At heart they're just about the same
As you and me, my dear;
In Bangkok, in Siam,
Twelve thousand miles from here.





The Smiling God

By Robert H. Rohde

Author of "The Monster of Moor's Head," "The Trail of 'Subject Z,'" Etc.

The Great Macumber reverses the criminological formula—and produces a crime to fit the evidence.

NOW what the deuce," murmured the Great Macumber, "would *he* be wanting of us?"

It was a chastely engraved slip of pasteboard which he had passed to me, and though the name it bore was not one I knew I was moved to speculation.

"Doctor F. Algernon Mowatt," said I, "doesn't chance to be an acquaintance of mine, but I would say offhand that he is no ordinary physician."

The Great One, I was pleased to observe, was giving me his earnest and almost respectful attention.

"On your general practitioner's card," I proceeded, "you'll find more information—a phone number, office hours. Doctor Mowatt is satisfied to let the whole story be told by his name. He is, therefore, well known; a specialist, I dare say."

Macumber chuckled.

"Cleverly reasoned, lad! Aye, Mowatt is a specialist, so to speak. And as for being well known—I'll admit you've hit it again there. Few in his line manage to get their names so often into the newspapers. But here will be the man himself, young-

ster; we'll see if those two sharp eyes of yours won't discover at once the sort of specialist that Doctor F. Algernon Mowatt chances to be. Come in, sir, come in!"

The door opened, and simultaneously what I had achieved of the grand manner wilted suddenly away. Doctor Mowatt of the artistically noncommittal calling card was a specialist who dressed his part, a specialist in souls. I noticed first of all that this man of the cloth before whom the Great One stood bowing was tall and portly and at the tag end of middle life; and then, before the ghost of Macumber's wicked grin had gone from the corners of his mouth, I became aware there were two of us in the room who labored under a sense of outrage. The plump and ruddy cheeks of Doctor F. Algernon Mowatt were atremble with indignation.

"I come to you, gentlemen," he intoned in a voice that rumbled like a pipe organ's reverberating bass, "at the suggestion of my attorney, Mr. Charles Phelps Grand. His name is familiar to you?"

"Indeed it is, doctor!" the Great One assured him. "Mr. Grand and I have been

friends for many years. In what way may I be of service?"

"That," replied the reverend specialist, "is a question for which you may find a better answer than I. But I would ask you this: Is there anything in my appearance that suggests to you the professional gamester, the card sharper, the bunko steerer?"

The Great One mustered an expression of concern and astonishment before the joyful flash in his eyes had a chance to register itself on our visitor.

"What a question!" he cried, scandalized.

Doctor F. Algernon Mowatt spread out his soft white hands after the manner of the martyrs.

"A question," said he impressively, "which I ask in all humility. Garbed as you see me—and on this very day—I have been in the hands of the police, an accused felon. I have been subjected to indignity and abuse, held under duress without resort to counsel, denied the rights not only due in respect to my cloth but guaranteed by virtue of my American citizenship. Would you believe this possible, Mr. Macumber?"

"Without your word for it, I would not. False arrests, of course, are almost daily occurrences—but in the case of such a man as yourself, I can't imagine the mistake being made."

Doctor Mowatt sank with a sigh into the chair which the Great One had put forward.

"In New York City," said he, "I do not think the mistake *could* have been made. No well-organized police department would tolerate so high-handed a procedure. Mr. Grand assures me that if I can identify the officer—and I promise you I'll not forget him, Mr. Macumber—I shall be in a position to exact heavy damages. That phase of the matter naturally rests in his hands. But there are attending circumstances which he advised me to lose no time in laying before you, sir. From Mr. Grand's altogether flattering report of you, I take it that——"

"Charles," interposed Macumber, "has ever a capital word for a friend. I venture to say he's regaled you at length with the history of the Ellinger affair? Ah, I thought so!"

The Great One's tone was impatient, but
12A—POP.

the expression induced by the clergyman's nod showed no vast amount of displeasure.

"I'd request you, doctor," he continued more genially, "not to think of me as a detective, regardless of what Grand may have said. By profession I am a magician; in criminology I am the dilettante. But I am curious to know why it should have occurred to our friend of the bar to bring us together. You made mention of 'attending circumstances,' did you not?"

"I did, and queer enough circumstances they are. However, I can't for the life of me reason out a connection between happenings of yesterday and last night and my ignoble predicament of to-day. I can't, that is to say, associate my arrest in New Hampton, Connecticut, with the fact that a pair of ugly-looking customers chose a few hours before to dog my footsteps in New York. Nor can I see anything in either of these occurrences to account for the disappearance from my desk between the two days of a small bronze image which had cost me less than half as much as the fountain pen which lay beside it."

Macumber settled back in his chair and filled his pipe.

"I agree with you unreservedly, Doctor Mowatt. The sequence is surprising. I'd be happy indeed if you'd enlighten me in the greatest detail concerning these events. May I ask how you came to be in New Hampton?"

The question brought a shadow to our visitor's face.

"It was," he said, after a moment's hesitation, "a confidential errand which took me there. But so long as no names are mentioned I think I may speak freely. I was to have performed a marriage ceremony."

"And you didn't?" came quickly from the Great One.

Doctor F. Algernon Mowatt shook his head.

"The couple were forced to alter their plans. They are quite young people, and—ah—there seem to be family objections on one side or the other. But both the young man and the young woman have reached their majority, and in all good conscience I could not refuse——"

"I am a reader of the daily press, doctor. Your liberality in viewpoint and independence of action are thus familiar to me. In a case where you knew two young

people and their hearts I'd not expect you to refuse to make them one, regardless of family ambitions."

Again the churchman faltered.

"But," said he, a little uneasily, "I didn't know the people—and in truth I have yet to meet them. The fact is that arrangements for my services were made by telephone at a very early hour this morning. The young lady in the case, I was informed, has come frequently to New York in the past to hear my sermons. She ardently wished the ceremony to be performed by me. But for her to visit the city, her betrothed told me, would be out of the question. It was at that point I sensed the element of parental opposition. The young man was frank enough to admit I was not far off in my guess. But he was so earnest in his urging that at last I consented to journey to New Hampton. And in justice to myself, Mr. Macumber, I wish you to know that the munificent fee which I was promised weighed little with me as against the youth's quite obvious desperation. He feared plans were afoot to separate him from his heart's desire, and——"

"And so," said the Great One, "you went to New Hampton. Yet you were not met there by your lovers true?"

"That was not the plan. A parlor had been engaged in my name in a local hotel—this by the young man who had telephoned to me. I was to remain there until he appeared with the young lady, or otherwise communicated with me. From New York to New Hampton is a run of less than two hours; and having been fortunate enough to catch a train very shortly after the conclusion of the telephone conversation I presented myself at the New Hampton House before noon. After waiting perhaps an hour I had a phone call from my young friend. He was afraid the time was not so propitious as it had seemed, but begged me to remain where I was for another half hour. If I had not heard from him again by that time, he said, I might know that for the time being the wedding was off."

"You were to be left holding the bag, as it were, without recompense for your time and actually out of pocket to the amount of your expenses?"

Doctor Mowatt smiled.

"Ah, no! The young man was much more perturbed on that score than I. He

would not be satisfied until I had agreed to accept his check for a most generous amount—for that precise amount, indeed, which would have been my fee had I actually performed the marriage ceremony."

"You *have* the check?"

"Not as yet; but I have no doubt it is already on its way to me at this moment. If I were to tell you the young man's name, Mr. Macumber, you'd not——"

"For the moment, at any rate, I'll not ask it. And before the half hour's end did you hear from him, doctor?"

"Unfortunately not; most unfortunately not. If I had I might certainly have depended upon him to vouch for me, and would have been spared my painful experience with Mr. Mullen."

"Mullen? You've not mentioned him before, Doctor Mowatt."

"The New Hampton city detective—'Sergeant' Mullen, he called himself."

"Ah!" nodded the Great One. "At what point in your day's adventure did the sergeant enter?"

"I had the extreme unhappiness of making Mr. Mullen's acquaintance before I had left the hotel parlor. It was perhaps ten minutes after I had hung up the telephone receiver when there came a rap at the door. As I opened it, thinking my young people had contrived to find their way to me, a full-bodied man of almost my own height slipped into the room. He stood silent for a moment, eying me most familiarly and unpleasantly.

"'Well,' said he presently, 'I'll be switched if it isn't old Doc Clark! What's up your sleeve, doc—the customary extra aces? Figuring on a little game in New Hampton, was you?'

"I had held the door open, meaningly.

"'You've made a mistake, my friend,' I said. 'My name is not Clark, but Mowatt—*Doctor* Mowatt. You'll excuse me, won't you?'"

Macumber was leaning forward. His brows were drawn, but beneath them his eyes were dancing.

"And the man's response, doctor?"

"He burst into a laugh, closed the door, turned the key and calmly dropped it into his pocket and then threw back the front of his coat to reveal a large silver star fastened beneath the armhole of his waistcoat. I was aghast at this procedure, and took a step toward the telephone. The man

seized me roughly by the shoulder and wheeled me about.

"Listen, doc," said he, "you ought to guess who I am, but if you can't I'll tell you. I'm Sergeant Mullen of the New Hampton police, and I've been campin' on the trail of you and your little playmates for three months on and off!"

The plump cheeks of Doctor Mowatt once more began to quiver under stress of the infamous memory, and for a space renewed ranklings held him speechless.

The Great One spoke consolingly, wondered that the clergyman had not had about his person papers which would serve to identify him.

"Of course I had papers and letters, to say nothing of the cards in my case!" exclaimed Doctor Mowatt. "But they meant absolutely nothing to the man. I didn't have to show them to him. He searched through my pockets as if I were a common criminal, already tried and convicted. And always he kept repeating: 'You've got something that don't belong to you, doc. Tell me what you did with it and I'll consider letting you slip away.' This while he was searching me and afterward. The name F. Algernon Mowatt he chose to regard as an alias. I could neither persuade him to get into touch with my young friend in New Hampton nor to permit me to put a call through to New York."

"A most remarkable proceeding, doctor," commented Macumber. "What was the upshot?"

"I gathered that whatever business Sergeant Mullen had with the man for whom he had mistaken me was not entirely official. My impression now is that he projected an extortion, but at the time I was so overwrought that my whole recollection is foggy. Eventually, I think, it began to dawn on him that my name might really be Mowatt. At any rate, after about an hour he said he thought he'd better lock me up and we started off in a small two-seated automobile which had been standing in front of the hotel. I was only too glad to be out of the place, for I anticipated that I should have an opportunity to talk to some superior officer who might possess more intelligence than the man Mullen. But Mullen, it developed, had been bluffing when he threatened me with the lockup. He guided the car out of New Hampton and finally put me aboard a city-bound railroad train

at a station some miles nearer to New York. I was tempted to jump from the train and return to New Hampton, but on second thought I decided to come on to town and consult Mr. Grand before taking action."

"In that," said the Great One, "I think you were wise. By the by, doctor, did you chance to make note of the license number of Sergeant Mullen's automobile?"

"Why, no."

"Too bad, for I fancy his business with you was rather of a private than a public nature. What did Grand have to say when you'd recited your Connecticut experience, doctor?"

"I fear he was disposed to regard the whole affair lightly, at first. He seemed rather amused by the idea that a man of my calling and reputation should have been confused by an overzealous officer with such a person as this Clark must be; although he did not conceal his belief that the municipality of New Hampton could be made to pay dearly. But when I chanced to mention the theft of my bronze Buddha and then spoke of the men who had followed me Mr. Grand stopped smiling. 'The one you should be telling all this to,' he said, 'is my friend Macumber. Leave the strafing of Sergeant Mullen in my hands, but don't waste a minute before you've let the Great Macumber hear the story of the mysterious men and the stolen idol. If there's a man in New York who can make sense out of apparent nonsense it will be he.' So to you, Mr. Macumber, I came."

"For which," said the Great One, handsomely, "I hold myself in your debt. Do I understand that this bronze Buddha of which you speak is not of any considerable intrinsic value?"

Our visitor shrugged.

"I paid something less than the equivalent of two American dollars for it."

"How and when was it stolen?"

"Those two questions I can answer in one short sentence, Mr. Macumber. It was stolen last night by a burglar. Of that I'm quite positive. At any rate I know there was a burglar in the house. I was awakened by a noise downstairs shortly after two o'clock this morning, and called out. For a few seconds after I had raised my voice there was silence. Then I heard a creaking as of some one tiptoeing over loose floor boards below, and after that a thump

and an imprecation suggesting to me that the intruder had barked his shin while wandering in the dark."

"It could not have been some other member of the household downstairs?"

"No; just now there *are* no other members of the household. Since my return from a vacation voyage to the Orient a week ago I have been living quite alone, keeping bachelor hall. My wife and my daughter, who were in Japan with me, broke their journey across the continent at Kansas City. They will not arrive in New York for still another week; and until their coming I am doing without a servant."

"It's just the noise you heard in the night, doctor, that makes you believe you were visited by a burglar?"

"The catch of a front window on the lower floor was open when I took a look about in the morning—and I am certain I had made everything secure before retiring."

"But you missed nothing aside from the bronze Buddha?"

"Nothing else, so far as I could see, had been disturbed."

"Where had the idol been?"

"On my desk in the study. That is the room at the rear of the house on the first floor, directly beneath my bedchamber."

"The history of your Buddha might be interesting, doctor. How long had you owned it?"

"A few weeks. It was one of the souvenirs I brought back from Japan."

Until that moment I had been a silent listener; now of a sudden a clear white light shone for me.

"There's the answer to one part of the problem, at least!" I exclaimed.

Doctor Mowatt turned a look of astonishment upon me, and Macumber smiled.

"Well, lad," said he, "let's hear it."

We had come, I felt, to a dramatic moment—and it was mine. Before I replied I carefully selected and fired up a fresh cigarette.

"Some one," said I then, "values Doctor Mowatt's two-dollar Buddha far more highly than the person who sold it to him. It may have come from a looted temple, or it may have been——"

I had been prepared to expound my theory at larger length, but Mowatt interrupted.

"Nothing of the sort," he said testily.

"This particular Buddha never saw the inside of a temple. It was a very ordinary little incense burner, factory made for the tourist souvenir trade. I bought it in a commonplace curio shop in Kobe, and the dealer could have supplied me with a gross just like it out of his stock if I'd cared for that many."

The Great One dropped a consoling hand on my shoulder.

"It wasn't a bad stab, lad. I'd been thinking of that same possibility, yet I find myself rather relieved than cast down by Doctor Mowatt's explanation. Can you not see that it leaves us with our puzzle intact? Isn't a burglar who's an eccentric far more interesting than one who's a mere fanatic? But you spoke of men who'd been following you, doctor. Tell me about them. How long has this unusual business been going on?"

"That I really can't say," replied the clergyman. "All I know for a certainty is that when I went to take tea yesterday with a group of ladies of my congregation I was dogged every inch of the way from my home. It was just by chance that I noticed the two men loitering in a doorway across the street when I left the house. There seemed to be something skulking and furtive about them at first glance, and as I turned the near-by corner I glanced back. They were coming along after me; and when I arrived at Mrs. Fawcett Updegriff's home after a walk of nearly a mile there was the same pair within a hundred feet of me, loitering again. I hadn't forgotten them when I left Mrs. Updegriff's, but my shadows were nowhere in sight. If they interested themselves further in my movements, I didn't see them."

"Sergeant Mullen of New Hampton wouldn't have been one of them, would he?" queried the Great One.

"No; I'm positive he wasn't."

Macumber smoked for a moment in silence.

"That's interesting, too," was his eventual comment; and then immediately he asked:

"Have you been home since your return from New Hampton, doctor?"

"Not yet."

The Great One sprang up.

"Then let me suggest, Doctor Mowatt," said he, "that it's high time we——"

Macumber's course had been set toward

his hat; the jingle of the telephone bell swung him off it.

"Hello," I heard him say. "You, Charlie? Yes; he's here. Yes. . . . Yes. Well, that's scarcely surprising, is it? No; but we're going now. You'll hear from me later on."

And then as he dropped the receiver back onto its hook the Great One turned to our guest.

"Mr. Grand," he announced, "has been doing a bit of investigating on his own account, doctor. One item of information he's picked up seems to make him doubtful that you'll be able to get far with a damage suit against the city of New Hampton."

"Eh?" cried Mowatt. "How so?"

"Because," said Macumber, "there's no one of the name of Mullen connected with the New Hampton police department. And, for that matter, it would appear that you've been the victim of another imposition as well. That eloquent young man who persuaded you to go to Connecticut was not the person he pretended to be. Grand has been in communication with the rightful owner of the name your man borrowed, and is thoroughly satisfied he knew nothing about the telephone calls."

Doctor F. Algernon Mowatt passed a plump hand over his forehead.

"But—but what could have been the purpose——" he began weakly.

The Great One, hat in hand, was at the door.

"I'm not prepared with an answer, dominie," said he. "But doesn't it occur to you that we may gather a hint, at least, at the rectory?"

II.

Ten minutes and a taxi took us from the Rawley to a small brick dwelling built close against the wall of a big brick church and identified by an ample and hospitable brass doorplate as the residence of F. Algernon Mowatt, D. D.

Here the window shades were discreetly drawn and outwardly all was in order, but we were no more than through the door when an anguished cry escaped the clergyman. A glance into his drawing-room, opening off the entrance hall, had revealed a scene of wild disorder.

Upstairs and down, as we speedily discovered, the rectory had been ransacked.

The contents of turned-out drawers of desks and tables, dressers and chests were underfoot everywhere; and the door had been ripped from the light and futile little safe in the study beyond the drawing-room.

A few moments after we had left the taxicab, and while Macumber still roamed the upper floors, F. Algernon Mowatt stood wringing his white hands before the wreck of his strong box.

"At any rate, doctor," I remarked inanely, "we have a sort of explanation here of your hurry call to Connecticut."

"But why? But why?" groaned Mowatt. "There was surely nothing within these walls that——"

A shout from above interrupted. Rapid footsteps sounded on the stairway, and the Great One came into the study. In an extended hand he held a beamy small figure of bronze—a figure on whose fat face shone a smile at once beatific and inscrutable.

"The missing Buddha!" he cried.

Mowatt gave evidence of no astonishment. He merely stared at the smiling god.

"You found it in the cabinet in my bedroom, didn't you?" he queried. "No, *that's* not the missing Buddha, Mr. Macumber. True, it came from the same mold and from the same shop, but——"

"Good Lord!" gasped the Great One. "How many of the things have you about?"

"Originally," replied the clergyman, "I had a half dozen. Did I not tell you there was absolutely nothing remarkable about the Buddhas—that I could have purchased a full gross had I cared to? As it happened, I did buy six. The one you have there is the last of them."

Macumber rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"And what," he asked after a moment, "has become of the others?"

"I've given four to friends since my return to the city. The fifth was taken by the burglar last night. Oh, no, Mr. Macumber; my word upon it, the man was no creature of a dream. He was here in the flesh."

The Great One flung himself into a chair beside the disordered desk.

"You'll scarce be in a mood for receiving congratulations, doctor," he sighed, "but I can't resist saying that it's a problem in a million you've brought to me. Quite aside from your extraordinary experience in Connecticut, I am fascinated by the eccentric-

ity of the burglars who have honored you with their attention. One comes by night, and despoils you of no more than an inconsequential trinket. Others come by day, after seeing to it you'll not be on hand to disturb them—and what do they get?"

"Nothing," said Mowatt. "Positively nothing. There was nothing of value for them to take. Even the safe was empty. I do not think I need to remind you, Mr. Macumber, that men of my calling are not often men of means. Even my trip to the Orient was financed by a group of loyal parishioners."

"Nevertheless," smiled the Great One, "there exist energetic and resourceful people who obviously expected to find a treasure in your home—aye, or on your person. We must not lose sight of the fact that while in the hands of the pseudo detective, Mullen, you were subjected to search."

"Treasure!" echoed Mowatt. "Preposterous!"

"To be sure. Housebreakers do not ordinarily put themselves to such pains, you know, on mere speculation. You can bank upon it that they expected to be well repaid for their trouble."

"But in what coin?"

Macumber had put the bronze Buddha on the desk before him. He blandly evaded the question.

"Take a look at the little fellow, doctor," said he. "Wouldn't you call that a *knowing* smile? A deal he might tell us, I'm thinking, had he the human gift of gab. So he made the voyage from Japan with many brothers, did he? And all were intended for gifts, you say?"

Mowatt nodded.

"That was the thought in my mind when I bought them. But later I decided to keep one for use as a paper weight."

"I see," said the Great One. "So that, of course, was the Buddha found by the burglar on your desk."

The clergyman hesitated.

"Yes—you might say so."

Macumber's chin came up sharply.

"*Might!*" he exclaimed. "What's this, doctor?"

"Why—why I don't see that it could make any particular difference; but, you see, I had a visitor yesterday with whom I spent so much time that I—I——" He floundered a moment, and concluded on a

plaintive note. "What difference could *that* have made, Mr. Macumber?"

The Great One's steady gaze held him.

"The truth most often lies in the trifles, Doctor Mowatt," he said gently. "Let's hear about your visitor, please. Who was he, may I ask?"

"A fellow clergyman from New England—Doctor Richard Darling."

Macumber's face fell a little at the reply, I thought; but he pressed on:

"You were about to comment on some connection between the visitor and your paper-weight Buddha. What was it?"

"Oh, no, no," Mowatt hastily disclaimed. "You misunderstand. I merely was about to say I spent much more time than I realized in conversation with Doctor Darling, and thus all but overlooked my tea engagement at Mrs. Fawcett Updegriff's."

One would have thought from the Great One's expression that he found this wholly comprehensible.

"Yes," he murmured. "I recall an earlier reference to the lady; it was on the way to her home that you were followed, was it not? But go on, doctor."

"Well," continued Mowatt, "I'd meant one of the Buddhas for Mrs. Updegriff—had promised her, in fact, to bring it with me yesterday. Being already late, and the figures being exact counterparts, I spared myself the trip upstairs and took along the one from the desk. Later it occurred to me to replace it with one of the two Buddhas then remaining in the cabinet above. And since *that* was no more than a half hour before I locked up the house for the night, I can be positive the bronze was here in the study when I retired."

"You need say no more to convince me it was," said Macumber softly. Then after a moment, irrelevantly and yet solicitously, he inquired: "Had you any other callers yesterday besides Doctor Richard Darling, by the by?"

"Not one."

The Great One shook his head dubiously.

"Doctor Darling, I dare say, is an old friend?"

"Why—ah—hardly that."

"But you were at least acquaintances?"

"Really, Mr. Macumber, I can't comprehend your interest in the man. The fact is, however, that I'd never seen him before in my life."

"He came to you with an introduction?"

"With none but his cloth. My soul, Mr. Macumber, what more——"

The Great One came forward in his chair.

"Please let me ask the questions just now, doctor. I *am* interested in Richard Darling—and for reasons which should be quite plain to you. Why did he come to you? What manner of man was he? What occurred while he was here?"

Doctor F. Algernon Mowatt sighed deeply.

"As you will, my friend," said he. "Doctor Darling called here because he had known me long by reputation and had planned on looking me up when he should be in New York. He is a young and an earnest man—a man, I should say, of a remarkable driving force; of a tremendous nervous energy. Your last question, as perhaps you will concede, is rather more difficult to answer. Nothing of moment happened during Doctor Darling's visit. We merely talked."

"What of?" persisted Macumber.

"Of many things," replied Mowatt, a bit stiffly. "I couldn't begin to repeat our conversation. It was here and there. Doctor Darling was anxious to hear my views on any number of topics; and I was ready, as always, to give them. I fear I had the floor a great part of the time."

I detected a glimmer of amusement in the glance which the Great One threw in my direction.

"And Darling," he mused, "seemed nervous. Aye, he might!"

Doctor Mowatt's distress became more acute.

"Come, Mr. Macumber," he entreated, "you mustn't permit yourself to be carried away on the wings of the fantastic theory you appear bent on building. I'm sure you do Doctor Darling an injustice even to consider him in conjunction with these strange and deplorable occurrences. I did not say, remember, that the doctor showed signs of nervousness. My remark was that I judged him possessed of a conspicuous nervous energy. There's a distinction, you'll admit."

"To be certain there is," acquiesced the Great One warmly. "But what I'd be pleased to have you tell me, doctor, is how this nervous energy was displayed that you came to remark it."

"Just," retorted Mowatt with a tinge of

irony, "as you're displaying something like the same quality in yourself at this moment."

Macumber, whose restlessness had carried him out of his chair a little since, ceased his erratic pacing of the room and regarded the clergyman with a smile.

"So Doctor Darling walked as he talked—or as he listened?"

"He was on his feet a great deal, roving about. Almost continually he was on the go, moving back and forth between the study and the drawing-room. Once or twice it even seemed to me that he had wandered beyond earshot; in fact I feared I was rambling on at too great length—for I realize that I am at times prone to discursiveness, Mr. Macumber. But I cannot doubt I had an interested and sympathetic audience in Doctor Darling. When I was at last obliged to confess that the whole of the afternoon was not my own, I know he was genuinely regretful. And when I left the house he insisted on walking with me to Mrs. Updegriff's door. So, you see——"

The Great One's manner showed contrition.

"I'm glad you've set me straight in respect to Doctor Darling, sir," said he. "It would be idle, I suppose, to ask if the reverend gentleman took any particular notice of your Buddha?"

"I could not say he gave it so much as a glance."

More apologetic grew Macumber before the slow elevation of the sacerdotal eyebrows.

"There remain"—he spoke as one chastened—"only two points on which I'd like to satisfy myself, doctor. Was your visitor at any time alone in the study?"

"Not for more than a minute or two—no."

"And that was when?"

"Directly before we went out. There was a chill in the air; and recollecting gratefully that my light topcoat was hanging in the closet in the lower hall, I went to get it. I see nothing unnatural in the fact that Doctor Darling, after I had excused myself, did not insist on following me from the room."

"Nor I," confessed the subdued Macumber. "Indeed, in the light he now stands in I see nothing unnatural about the man or his actions. But I do wonder if he was aware that when you went from the house

the Buddha lately on the desk went with you."

"Why, bless us, bless us!" fluttered F. Algernon Mowatt, staring. "I'm sure I can't answer *that* question in your mind, Mr. Macumber. It's quite possible he knew, and equally possible that he didn't. He was at the door when I went back for it—for to my shame it must be said that I'd all but forgotten my promise to Mrs. Updegriff. When I rejoined him I fancy the Buddha was already in the pocket of my topcoat; and whether I made mention of the reason for my return to the study I really do not recall." He glanced toward the telephone, significantly. "And now, as concerns to-day's outlawry at least, it seems to me the proper procedure to communicate with the police. I doubt there's anything further I can tell about Doctor Darling?"

The Great One moved his head in negation.

"No," said he, softly and sadly. "There's nothing—I'm afraid."

III.

There had been something tentative in Mowatt's suggestion of ringing up the police. He stood for a moment with the desk phone in his hand, yet appeared to hesitate to remove the receiver from its arm. His eyes were on Macumber, and they held a question.

"Oh, by all means notify headquarters, doctor!" said the Great One hastily when at length he realized that the rector waited a word from him. "In a case like this the trained police detective is invaluable. If a single finger print has been left you may depend upon the men from downtown to find it. They're matchless on detail, whereas I—— Why, good heavens, here I've been in the house the better part of a half hour and blessed if it's occurred to me to look for the place where the burglars entered!"

Something of grimness had come to Mowatt's face with the growth of his disapprobation, but now he relented.

"Time enough for that, Mr. Macumber," he said, attempting a robust geniality; "and little enough good it probably would do us if we'd discovered how the fellows got in."

"One never can tell," remarked the Great One dismally; and dropped his eyes before Mowatt's.

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed the clergyman, with a heartiness less forced. "I can't say I'm precisely surprised to find you haven't a snap solution to explain my misadventures. And so far as your late suspicions of Doctor Darling are concerned, I want you to feel that——"

"Speaking of Doctor Darling," interjected Macumber hurriedly, for already Mowatt was lifting the receiver, "may I recommend that for the present you say nothing to the police about the theft of your Buddha or your trip to New Hampton?"

Again the clergyman's eyebrows formed themselves into claustral arches, but before he spoke the most familiar of New York's million telephone numbers into the transmitter he had nodded.

"You may take my word for it, doctor," said the Great One when Mowatt had delivered his brief and agitated message to the headquarters operator, "that knowledge of what has gone before will be of no assistance to the police in their investigation of to-day's burglary. It might serve only to confuse them, for one thing; and for another, I still am not without hope of digging out the reason for certain people's interest in your Buddha and yourself. On that angle of the matter I'd prefer to have a free hand."

Mowatt seemed not sanguine.

"You truly believe——" he began dubiously.

"I truly believe," replied Macumber, "that I may have a practically complete explanation of everything that's puzzling you—within the next hour."

And on this roseate assertion, which he could not be persuaded to amplify, explain or even discuss, he stood pat until the arrival of a brace of massive gentlemen, distinguished by a common sharpness of eye and bluntness of toe, put an end to Mowatt's inquisition.

Macumber lingered only until one of the newcomers had returned from a brief exploration of the basement to announce that the area gate had been "jimmied."

"And that's that!" he whispered to the rector. "Did I not promise you they'd be practical men? The lad and I would as well be going, don't you think?"

Mowatt, who had been giving his attention to the other detective's meticulous routine search of safe door and desk top for

prints of the burglars' finger tips, nodded abstractedly.

"I surely appreciate the trouble you've been to on my account, gentlemen," he said as he walked with us into the front hall. "Shall I—ah—see you again?"

"If you don't, you'll hear from us, at least," replied the Great One. "Don't think for a minute I'm dropping the case."

But Mowatt, as he closed the door softly behind us, didn't look to me as if he considered it a matter of large moment whether we put forth further efforts in his behalf or not.

"Whither away?" I asked the Great One, for he had started off from the rectory at a pace suggesting that he had urgent business ahead.

"If we hurry," he grinned, "we may be in time for tea with Mrs. Fawcett Updegriff. We can't make her acquaintance too soon, lad, I'm thinking. Let's run in here for a second." He turned into the cigar shop at the corner beyond Mowatt's and consulted a telephone directory. "Good! She's listed. We'll give her advance notice of our call."

When he came from the booth Macumber was shaking his head.

"We're left," said he. "The lady's not at home and won't be there for the next couple of hours. Aye, and that's as I'd have it, too. Before we pay our respects to Mrs. Updegriff it would not be amiss to have a chat with Inspector Thomas Clancy. So to the detective bureau we go. Hi! Taxi!"

We were already far downtown, in the Washington Square neighborhood; and the run to headquarters was so swiftly covered that, within a quarter hour after we had taken leave of Doctor Mowatt, Macumber was presenting a large, impressively banded cigar—just plucked out of the ether before his startled eyes—to the corpulent and deceptively immobile official who rules New York's crack regiment of plain-clothes policemen.

"I was wondering, inspector, what might be doing in your line," said the Great One, dropping into a chair beside the wide flat desk and pressing upon Clancy a match which he appeared to have found, already burning, in a waistcoat pocket.

The other smiled and waved a hand toward the newspaper rack behind him.

"Read and learn," he recommended.

Macumber lifted a palm in ostentatious concealment of a yawn.

"I've been bored to distraction by the newspapers for a week past," he said. "There's not been a crime story of note published since that of the Substation K robbery—Tuesday last, wasn't it? But what I'm curious about is what's been happening in the last day or two. You'll not tell me the press has been let in on everything?"

Clancy became absorbed in contemplation of the traffic rumbling beneath his broad window.

"About everything."

Macumber chuckled.

"Then that valuable and venerable institution known as the 'squeal book' is no more?"

The inspector wheeled back suddenly to face him.

"What's on your mind?" he demanded.

"I'm merely trying to fit a crime to a set of circumstances. I know the circumstances, and I'm hopeful that you'll be able to supply some record of the crime. The specific day's happenings I'm interested in are yesterday's."

Clancy rolled the magical cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other.

"Well," said he diplomatically, "I'm not quite sure that I remembered to tell the boys about the Grossmuller bond case last night. Nope. Seems to me I didn't. Same old thing—new messenger with faked references and a dam-fool cashier with too much faith. Forty thousand's gone there."

The Great One wrinkled his nose.

"That doesn't help. What else?"

"The morning newspapers didn't say anything about a big matinée poker game in the Hotel Ferncroft bein' stuck up, did they? That was a sixteen-thousand-dollar job."

"Not a whisper of it was printed," Macumber replied cheerfully. "Funny, isn't it? But we'll have to go farther."

"Safe cracking in the Gunnison Company office help you out any?"

"Not a bit. Next!"

The inspector's smoke was again in transit.

"Then there was a slick piece of work in the King James Hotel," he said.

Macumber's face lighted.

"Now you're getting warm!" He turned to me. "We've been within a couple of

blocks of the King James this afternoon, lad."

The sleepy look had gone from Clancy's eyes. They were wide open now, snapping and alert.

"Something tells me I'm glad you came, professor. If you've got a line on *that* job——"

"What was it?"

"The biggest haul of the day, and the boldest job."

"Its proceeds being?"

"One hundred thousand dollars' worth—and then some, maybe—of African ice!"

The Great One glanced at the block of buzzer buttons on Clancy's desk.

"You'd oblige me by ringing for an interpreter," he said. "'African ice' is beyond my——"

The inspector grinned.

"That's what Lieutenant Phelan called the thing, anyhow; and he had *me* where I've got you. It's a big black pearl they got at the King James—one of the biggest in the world, I hear. Remember reading a month or so about Mrs. Risswell Nordyke getting a little present from friend husband in the shape of a black-pearl necklace? Well, it seems—— This interesting you, is it?"

The Great One nodded vigorously. "Keep on!"

"It seems," resumed Clancy, leaning forward eagerly and no longer suggesting sloth, "that the little lady wasn't nearly as happy as she ought to've been. The necklace had set Jim Nordyke back a quarter of a million or so, but it didn't have a pearl in it as big or as black as one she'd seen another woman wearin' at a ball in Washington last winter. That other pearl could be bought, and there wasn't anything for Nordyke to do but dig a little deeper and get it. He started negotiating a couple of weeks back; and yesterday Baron Kurt von Klemfuss—who lost about as much in the war as Jim Nordyke made out of it, I guess—came up from Washington and brought along his wife's prize pearl.

"There'd been a tip-off somewhere. Von Klemfuss hadn't been in his room at the King James five minutes when a couple of hijackers walked in on him and lifted the family fortune. They left him roped to the end of his bed and gagged so tight that it wasn't until evening he was able to get a loud enough grunt out of him to

bring help. So there's the story of the African ice—as far as I can go with it up to now. Does it seem to fit?"

Macumber had risen. His face was blank.

"That remains to be seen, inspector," said he. "Perhaps I can be of some slight assistance to you in the matter, but at the moment I can't be certain. You haven't had a report yet, by the way, on the Mowatt burglary?"

Clancy took the cigar from his mouth.

"Hell!" he ejaculated. "You know about that, too?"

"Apparently," smiled the Great One. "I believe I had the inside of the track on you there. Doctor Mowatt's a friend of mine."

The inspector looked out the window again.

"Yes?" he said after a little pause.

"Well, the old gentleman seems to be picking up a lot of queer friends, so——"

Macumber had taken a step toward the door. He halted and faced about.

"More queer friends, eh? Such as?"

Clancy fired up his cold cigar with a match of more obvious origin than the one he had had from Macumber.

"Such as Bertie Briggs, for instance," he said. "Know him?"

"I don't think I've ever heard of Bertie."

"Likely you wouldn't have. He managed to find Boston a big enough field until a year or so ago. Bertie's as clever a con man as ever hit town—an all-round high-class crook."

"What about him?"

"That's what I'd like to hear. I was going to mention that he had a nice long visit with Doctor F. Algernon Mowatt yesterday. How do I know? Well, a couple of my men spotted Bertie strolling along Fifth Avenue. He was got up like a preacher, with tortoise-shell goggles and a long coat, but just the same my people were sure they wasn't mistaken. We don't want Briggs for anything just now; still there didn't seem to be any harm in tailing him. And where do you s'pose he went?"

"You've said he called on Doctor Mowatt."

"That's what he did. But wait! I'm not through. Bertie must have spent an hour in the house. When he came out Mowatt was with him. They walked together nearly a mile, chinning like college chums, and finally parted in front of a

house where the doctor seemed to have a call to make by his lonely. Bertie went along and ducked into the subway. He lost my men there—just caught a train.”

The Great One picked up his hat again.

“It’s all very interesting, inspector,” he remarked. “And inquiries naturally have been made of Doctor Mowatt?”

“Naturally they haven’t,” replied Clancy pointedly. “We’ve got our hands full down here without drumming up trade. As to the burglary, that’s way out of Bertie’s line and I don’t see where—”

I would have offered a suggestion, but a hard look from Macumber silenced me.

“Being familiar with the tricks that the camera often plays, Clancy,” said he, “I’m personally disinclined to put too great faith in the camera eye. Don’t you think it’s just barely possible your sleuths were mistaken in their man?”

The inspector’s fat fist came violently down upon the desk.

“Mistaken your rabbitry hat!” he roared. “Wasn’t the Reverend Bertie Briggs out on the back platform when the train pulled away, grinnin’ like a Chessy cat at Sergeant Mooney and Lieutenant Muldoon? And tell me, professor, did you ever know a genuine minister to make that common sign of disrespect where the thumb meets the nose and th’ fingers wiggle?”

IV.

A gentle melancholy cloaked the Great Macumber as we left headquarters and walked toward the subway kiosk at Spring Street.

“Now all that remains for us to do is to introduce ourselves to Mrs. Fawcett Updegriff and recover the unfortunate baron’s black pearl,” he said dismally. “A rare case it’s been, lad, but too soon done with. ’Twill be our one pleasure ahead to observe the reaction of Doctor Mowatt when he hears of the fortune that lay hidden in the hollowness behind his Buddha’s smile.” He sighed. “Well, here’s the tube, lad. It’ll have us at the Rawley in ten minutes and we’ll have time for a bite of dinner before the last move’s in order.”

Between Spring Street and Fourteenth, where we changed, Macumber regained a measure of his usual buoyancy.

“Yet all in all,” he concluded when we were seated in the express train, “our experience with the good doctor has been en-

joyable. If only we had managed a meeting with Mr. Bertie Briggs I should be inclined to nominate the adventure an unqualified success. Poor chap! Can you imagine the state of his feelings just now, lad? Really, his thought of visiting Mowatt when he discovered Muldoon and Mooney on his trail was no less than a stroke of genius. An enterprise calculated to kill suspicion, that—and had Inspector Clancy’s men depended less on sight and more on reason I dare say they’d have gone about their business the moment the Reverend Bertie disappeared behind that life-saving doorplate at the rectory.”

I was far from completely enlightened, but we were rolling into the Times Square station then and I saved my questions until we were in the Rawley grill with a table between us.

“To understand all that’s happened to F. Algernon Mowatt in the last dizzy twenty-four hours,” resumed the Great One when he had disposed of the hovering waiter, “is only a matter of observing the sequence of events from the proper angle.

“This person Briggs may or may not have participated in the actual robbery of the baron. He was on hand in his clerical regalia, at any rate, for the purpose of carrying off the loot. A well-considered make-up for the purpose, you’ll agree. And yet as chance would have it Bertie’s vestments served rather to excite than to allay suspicions. Before he’d got far from the King James he realized he was being shadowed. There was a strong probability, he knew, that he might be taken into custody and searched. In that event ’twould never do to have the black pearl in his possession.

“To make certain the detectives were actually after him, Bertie had turned off the Avenue. Mooney and Muldoon came right along. A dilemma, was it not? And then within the next block his eyes fell upon the doorplate of Doctor F. Algernon Mowatt. Here was sanctuary. Up went Bertie and rang the bell, and a moment later Doctor Mowatt had met Doctor Richard Darling. Then——” He broke off. “But what I’m telling you, lad, you must surely have figured out for yourself?”

“Only mistily,” I told him. “Go on with your own reconstruction, maestro. You spare me brain fag.”

Macumber grinned.

“Of course,” said he, “I’d reasoned out

some of the details before we called on Clancy. The reason for his visitor's frequent wanderings into the Mowatt drawing-room struck me at once as being quite apparent. He'd been followed to the very door, and from the drawing-room windows was keeping watch on the watchers. But he didn't seem able to tire them out; and when at last it became clear that he'd soon have to surrender the shelter of the rectory he cast about for some safe and simple place of concealment for his pearl.

"Now, one feature of the smile of Mowatt's Buddha was that it was a smile that would come off. The whole head, in fact, came off when Bertie took up the figure; for, as you've seen, the idol was designed as an incense burner. Into Buddha's tummy, while Mowatt was rummaging in the hall closet for his topcoat, went the baron's black pearl—and Bertie, rid of its guilty companionship, was ready to face the foe. Aye, a sharp fellow he is, lad; and I can see only one error of judgment on his part in the whole business."

"That being?" I queried.

"An error due to a weakness of which I myself am not free—a weakness for the theatric. Bertie would have done better to have remained in character as the subway train carried him from the Messrs. Mooney and Muldoon. He was injudicious, to say the least; for the two whom he eluded might well have been moved to look up Doctor Mowatt and ask questions.

"Perhaps Briggs realized that himself. It may be the reason why he and his friends resorted to burglary last night when it would have been easy enough for Bertie to have revisited the rectory in the morning and then have recovered the Von Klemfuss pearl. The character of the Reverend Doctor Darling would surely have guaranteed him a welcome again."

"That's a point I wondered about," said I. "But still I can't understand why they should have carried off the idol when they found the pearl gone."

"Perhaps," hazarded Macumber, "the Buddha they found on the desk wasn't so easily beheaded as his predecessor had been. And Mowatt, as you know, had been awakened and was stirring above. Hearing him call they decided, I fancy, to get out at once and take the idol with 'em. Nor is it extraordinary that, failing to find their treasure, they should have believed Mowatt

had accidentally discovered it. Obviously they credited him with having recognized the pearl for a thing of some value, and expected either to come upon it concealed in the house or on his person. At all events it would scarcely have occurred to Bertie Briggs, et al., that fate had handed over to them the wrong Buddha. They'll be doing some hard and sorry thinking this evening, youngster."

I brought up a hand in time to protect my demi-tasse from a descent of sugar, for we had been served by a waiter unused to our preferences. The man dropped the tongs and retreated.

"It doesn't seem to me," I said slowly, "that F. Algernon Mowatt is out of the woods yet. Surely after having been to so much trouble Briggs and his friends won't abandon their efforts to repossess themselves of the pearl."

"Tush!" exclaimed the Great One. "I'll see to it that the newspapers carry at least enough of the story to make it plain that the gem has found its way back to its owner—which'll settle *that*. Yes, my boy? A phone call?"

A tow-haired page had suddenly appeared in the offing. Macumber rose and vanished in his wake. In no more than a moment he was back, dragging at my arm.

"Quick, lad! Forget the coffee!"

"What's up?"

"That you'll hear when we're under way. We must move fast. May be too late as it is!"

As we hurled into the third taxi of that wildly extravagant day the Great One called an address that meant nothing to me.

"Now where?" I demanded.

"To Mrs. Updegriff's. I've been an idiot, lad! We should have gone there at once from the rectory. It was Mowatt on the phone. Bertie's still hard after his pearl."

"But how the devil, maestro, can he know where it is?"

"That he doesn't know. But he knows where the Buddhas are—every one of them that F. Algernon's given away. We've been guilty of the unpardonable, youngster. We've underestimated the intelligence of the enemy. The presence of that last of the Buddhas in the rectory would have meant as much to them as it did to me, of course. But I was blind to it!"

He leaned forward and urged the chauffeur imperatively to greater speed. Then he explained:

"A few minutes before he rang me up Mowatt had a call from one of the friends to whom he'd presented his blooming Buddhas. In the course of the conversation she mentioned that she seemed to have mislaid the idol he'd brought her from Japan. Mowatt asked questions. It developed that late this afternoon the lady had been visited by a supposed telephone inspector, whose work took him pretty well all through the apartment before he'd done with it. He was 'tracing wires,' he said.

"Mowatt recollected then that he'd kept a list of his Japanese souvenirs, together with the names of those for whom they were intended. A methodical man, the doctor. The notebook containing the list had been on the desk when the burglars came to-day. He ran hurriedly through it. The pages he sought had been torn out. So now it's a race, lad—a question of whether it's Bertie Briggs or ourselves who'll be first to reach Mrs. Updegriff's Buddha!"

A race it was, and not by any means the first which I had run at the side of the indefatigable Macumber in the course of my long association with him as assistant at magic and apprentice criminologist. Other sprints we had come through to a triumphant finish; but this one we were fated to lose.

Arriving at the home of Mrs. Fawcett Updegriff, we found the small drawing-room in possession of two earlier arrivals, at least one of whom greeted our advent with hostile eyes. This was a bulky and dark-visaged man who sat with his hands plunged deep into the pockets of his coat and stared at Macumber after surlily returning his pleasant nod. His companion was slim and rather tall. He wore the cleric cloth, and his myopic brown eyes beamed upon us rather warmly through large round tortoise-framed glasses.

We were not left long enough alone with these two for a rising of embarrassment. The maid, ushering us into the preëmpted parlor, had told us that though Mrs. Updegriff was not at home she was momentarily expected. Her mistress' sister, Miss Cuddy, she said, had run upstairs but would be down at once to receive us.

And promptly enough Miss Cuddy came. To Macumber and me she bowed as she

walked into the room—a tall, plain woman whose devoutness registered in the gentle respect with which she addressed the slender divine. We two were left to wait.

"This is what you wished to see, Doctor Darling?" she asked.

In a hand which had been concealed from me when she entered she held forth the counterpart of the bronze Buddha I had seen at Mowatt's.

"Ah, yes," murmured the myopic one. "Thank you so much, Miss Cuddy."

He took the figure from her and turned to his seated friend. For a moment the idol was lost to view as the masquerader, stooping, conversed with the stocky man in tones inaudible at our end of the room. As he faced Miss Cuddy again his eyes seemed somehow brighter.

Why that should be it wasn't hard to guess. I awaited a signal from Macumber, but he gave none. He was displaying what would have passed with the strictest observer as a polite lack of interest in affairs that were none of his concern. And, feeling that a second was close at hand when we would be at grips with the pair opposite, I nevertheless did my best to emulate the Great One's pose of studied indifference.

Doctor Richard Darling, née Bertie Briggs, had placed the Buddha on the center table, and now was polishing the lenses of his spectacles with a handkerchief whisked from the tail pocket of his long coat, his face aglow with a great good nature.

"Thank you so much, Miss Cuddy," he said once more. "The bronze is an interesting bit, but quite modern. Not what Mr. Beebee hoped, quite. But he's glad to have had the opportunity of seeing it. We're both extremely grateful for your kindness, I'm sure."

The thickset man had risen, his hands still in the sagging coat pockets.

"We are that, lady," he said throatily. "I sort of figured——"

His ministerial companion darted a sharp glance at him, and he subsided.

"I'm afraid, Miss Cuddy," said the Reverend Bertie sweetly, "that we shan't be able to wait for Mrs. Updegriff to return. I've a quite pressing appointment I must keep in sight—a Y. M. C. A. dinner uptown at which I'm to speak. Some time later I hope to give myself the pleasure of

calling with Doctor Mowatt. You'll present my apologies to your sister, won't you?"

At that instant the Great One sprang forward; but as I would have followed him I perceived it was not his purpose to give battle.

"Permit me, doctor!" he cried, and deftly snatched up the topcoat toward which the wool-clad wolf was reaching. "Ah, there you are, sir! Just a second! Your collar——"

Thus pounced upon the Reverend Bertie had taken a step backward, but the prodigious amiability enthroned upon the face of Macumber was disarming. He submitted with a smile to the Great One's zealous offices and with a final, "Thank you so much!" and a sweeping bow was gone.

Briefly the two scoundrels lingered at the door with Miss Cuddy. I looked toward Macumber expectantly. He shook his head.

"No, we'll do no rushing, lad," he whispered. "I didn't come here for the purpose of committing suicide. That wide fellow has a pistol in his pocket, and he's been taking no chances. We've been covered since we stepped into the room."

The front door had opened and closed. The tall Miss Cuddy returned.

"Pardon my neglect," said she. "The gentlemen were friends of Mrs. Updegriff's pastor. They'd come to look at a little idol which Doctor Mowatt purchased for my sister in the Orient. Mr. Beebee—the stout gentleman—is an expert on such

things. He thought the Buddha might prove a valuable find."

The Great One shook his head.

"It's too bad he was disappointed," he said.

I had walked to the front window as the outer door slammed.

"We'll need to be moving faster than ever, maestro!" I called. "That big touring car across the street was waiting for them. They're off in it!"

Macumber made no move.

"Excellent!" said he.

He raised a clenched hand and opened it out. In his palm, lying in a fluffy white bed of cotton, was what at first glance appeared no more than a small black marble—a little dark sphere which, as I looked harder at it, seemed to burst into an iridescent glory, glowing with all the gorgeousness and athrob with all the ecstatic mystery of night.

The beauty of the thing held me enthralled, so that Macumber's voice seemed to come from a distance although he stood at my side.

"Where were your eyes, lad?" he was saying. "Didn't you see him slip it into the tail pocket when he dug for his handkerchief? Nor know what I was doing when I served him as valet? Oh, lad, lad! 'Twas the tug that set the collar did the trick!"

I wrested my gaze then from the black pearl to look up at the Great One, but his eyes were not on me.

He was smiling at the Buddha—and the god was smiling back.

Mr. Rohde will have another Macumber story in the next issue.



ASKING EXACT INFORMATION

WHEN Congressman Johnson, the Horatius of the lower House, was training for that military and physical perfection which was to result in the deaths of many Germans, the man on his left in the drill squad was a trifle awkward and slow, not to say stupid and boneheaded, so much so that the congressman thought it the part of wisdom to keep a watchful eye on him.

All went pretty well until one day when the members of the squad were ordered to load their guns with blank cartridges and stand at "ready." Then the drill sergeant commanded: "Fire at will!"

It was then that Johnson's neighbor lowered his gun and asked him in a hoarse whisper: "Which one is Will?"

A Chat With You

THE trouble with modern life seems to be that there are too many middlemen. Things come to us through too many different hands. The farmer in Iowa may send his wheat to Baltimore and buy his flour in Minneapolis. Too few of us get vegetables fresh from the garden, berries new picked, or milk straight from the cow. It is refreshing when we come to an exception to this rule. For instance, the following letter, which came in the mail this morning:

JACK WADE P. O., ALASKA.
June 25, 1924.

STREET & SMITH CORPORATION,
New York.

Inclosed please find $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. of gold at \$17 per oz.= \$4.25, for POPULAR MAGAZINE. Please renew my subscription for another year. I believe it expires in July and I can't get currency here nor a postal order, so got to send gold dust which is our currency here. I inclose coarse pieces. You can easily sell to jeweler as assay is too costly and our gold always passes at \$17 per oz. although it assays from \$17.35 to \$17.75 per.

Respectfully,
GEORGE E. PILZ.

We have the gold dust before us. It is either very coarse gold dust or a collection of very small nuggets. There are seven of them, the largest the size of a pea, the smallest a flat golden scale. They are very bright, yellow and attractive looking. Something in the charm of their appearance, something indescribable but powerful and rather intoxicating, something like the fascination of a dangerously attractive woman, explains to us why it is that men

go on, year after year, suffering hardships and disappointments in the hunt for this glittering stuff. Raw gold has a winsomeness, a siren seductiveness utterly lacking in the prosaic greenbacks. It is beautiful and like all beautiful things its charm is more in what it suggests to the imagination, the thoughts that it awakens than in a simple appeal to the eye. Many a character in many a POPULAR story has dug this precious stuff out of the earth, or retrieved it from a desert island. It has remained for one of the readers to send us in an actual sample.

* * * *

THERE is something direct and stimulating about the life of a man like Mr. Pilz. He has gotten right back to first principles. If he wants a bag of flour or a pair of shoes he turns his labor almost directly into the thing he wants. He must know the real value of things, for values with him are measured directly by sweat and toil. When he wants to lay up good reading matter for the next year he can take a pick and a shovel and dig it out of the ground.

Besides this there is a real thrill in washing out the dust. Many valuable things are ugly—but gold is beautiful, and when its gleam shines through the darker gravel there is the feeling that grim nature has melted toward you and that the earth itself is smiling. Solid sunshine that brings seventeen dollars an ounce is a lure that is hard to resist.

THE gold miner is no ordinary money grubber. The chances are that he could make more money at a desk in the city or working as a plasterer or house painter. The miner, however, is a poet and romancer. He lives out his romance and measures the cadence of his poem with the swing of his shovel.

* * * *

OUR own personal hunt for gold nuggets is quite as interesting in its way. There are plenty of thrills in it. There is the ordinary fine dust of good short stories, enough to keep any one on his toes, and then every now and then we turn up a whopping big nugget that gleams with such a beautiful glow that we hate to set it aside. There is, for instance, Bertrand Sinclair's complete novel in the present issue. Also there is Francis Lynde's book-length novel, "The Bull Basin Plunderbund," which you will get complete in the issue out two weeks from to-day. These are good big nuggets. The day on which we read the manuscript of a novel as good as either of these is a red-letter day.

Besides the big nuggets which bear the names of Lynde and Stacpoole, there is in the next issue a double handful of smaller nuggets which run very high to the ounce. There is a stirringly funny story of the North woods by Holman Day, Western

stories by Bower and Winter, a funny yarn by Montanye, a race-horse story by Jack O'Donnell, and mystery stories by Kennedy and Rohde. We have located several new veins of equally high-grade stuff that we will open up for you in future issues.

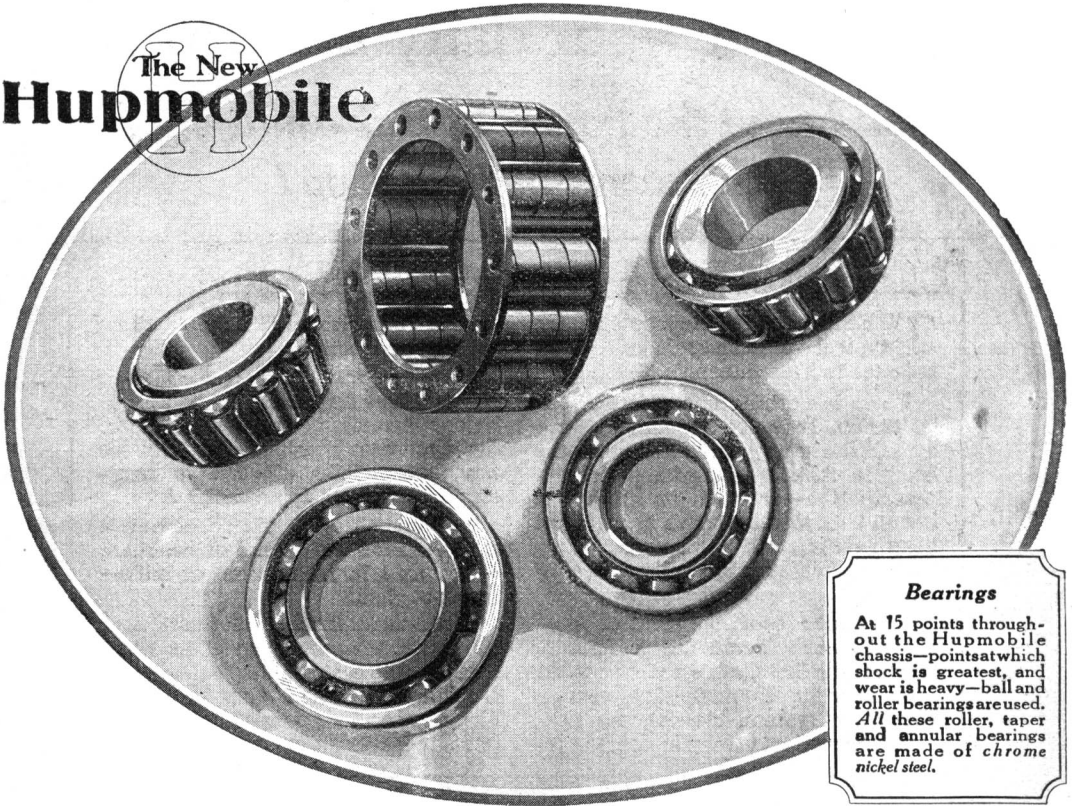
* * * *

MR. PILZ in far-off Jack Wade is facing a long, hard winter. He is considerably north of fifty-three, that parallel of latitude made famous by Rudyard Kipling and Bertrand W. Sinclair. He seems to be organizing himself for it in a sensible way. We honestly believe he could not have come to a better place for his reading matter. We are sending him our best wishes. More than that, we will continue to send him every two weeks, with our best regards, a complete book-length novel and a collection of the best short stories and novelettes being written to-day.

Please don't get the idea from anything we have said that you can pay for a POPULAR subscription by sending us a bushel or so of potatoes or a consignment of fresh-laid eggs. We cannot handle farm products in this office and our capacity for such things is limited in any case. For gold dust running seventeen dollars to the ounce, however, our capacity is practically unlimited.



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Concentrated in every cake of Fleischmann's Yeast are millions of tiny yeast-plants, alive and active. At once they go to work—invigorating the whole system, clearing the skin, aiding digestion, strengthening the in-

testinal muscles and making them healthy and active.

Dissolve one cake in a glass of water (just hot enough to drink) before breakfast and at bedtime. Fleischmann's Yeast, when taken this way, is especially effective in overcoming or preventing constipation.

Or eat two or three cakes a day—spread on bread or crackers—dissolved in fruit juices or milk—or eat it plain.

Write us for further information, or let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Address: Health Research Dept. Z-8, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.



"A martyr to indigestion and constipation, I was as thin as a rake with a complexion like mud. I had tried many different kinds of tonics and laxatives without permanent relief. I was advised to try Fleischmann's Yeast. In about four months my constipation and indigestion had disappeared. I am now in perfect health and look it. My complexion is clear and the envy of all who know me."

(Mrs. P. F. Robin,
Mobile, Ala.)

"When I was constipated I was always gloomy, melancholy, and unhappy. I got so I did not believe in any remedy at all. But I found on taking Fleischmann's Yeast that I did not have to have faith in it. It is one thing that will do its work whether one has faith in it or not. At the end of about three months I was as well as any man could possibly be. My constipation was gone, all my old headaches, listlessness and gloom left me. It does seem strange that these little yeast cakes can do this thing, but as sure as the sun shines, they can."

(A letter from Mr. T. C. Hinkle of Baldwin, Kan.)



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"I was only 24 years old, my health, my good looks, and the old time dynamic energy, were gone. A man of wisdom is my physician, but I thought him indeed crazy when he prescribed three yeast cakes a day. But at the end of a month I was much better. For two months more I took the Yeast and now, the old-time buoyancy and energy are mine again."

(Miss Elva Tanner,
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We are happy to announce the following as the June 7th prize winners:—

First Prize, \$15.00,	Miss Josephine Burr, 1210 Short St., Galena, Kans. <i>For letter submitted on Ivory Garter.</i>
Second Prize, 5.00,	Mrs. James H. Robinson, N. 4224 Post St., Spokane, Wash. <i>For letter submitted on Eastman Kodak.</i>
Third Prize, 3.00,	E. A. Agard, Lock Box 153, Fairbury, Ill. <i>For letter submitted on American Tobacco Co.</i>
Fourth Prize, 2.00,	Archie Cox, 413 Boxley Bldg., Roanoke, Va. <i>For letter submitted on Black Jack Chewing Gum.</i>

July 7th winners will be announced in October 7th Popular

THE FINAL CONTEST

It will be practically impossible for us to continue the ad contest on account of the flood of mail that has risen each month. Nevertheless, we are grateful to our readers for their response. We believed it would be hearty, but it has long since surpassed our most liberal calculations.

With greatest thanks to all our appreciative and responsive readers, we are,

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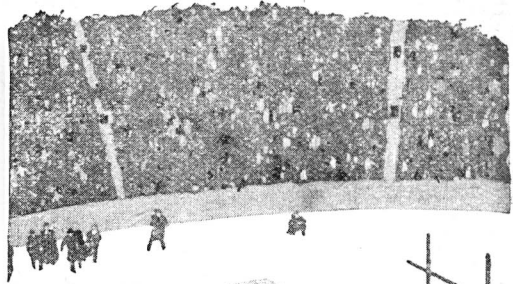


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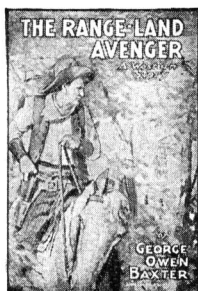


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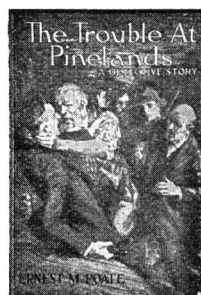
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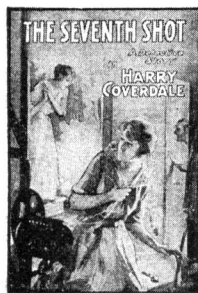
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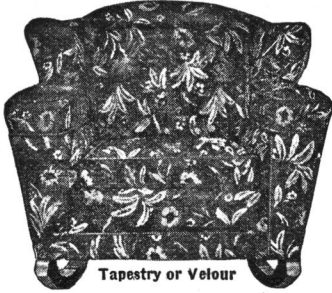
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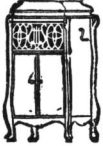
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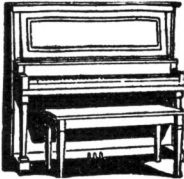
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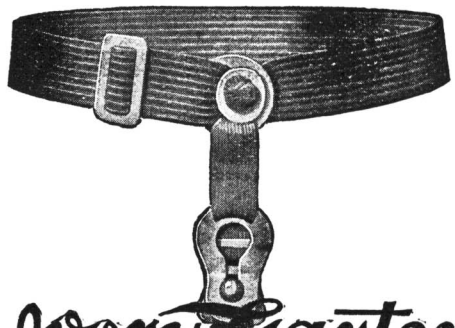
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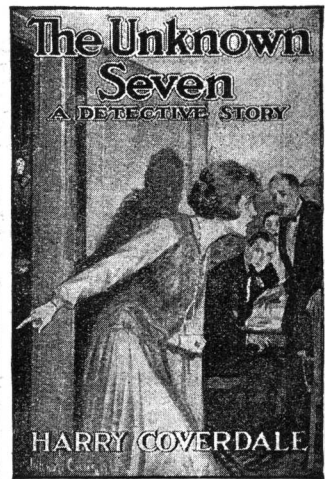
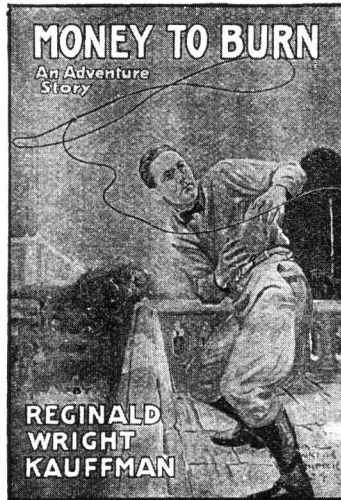
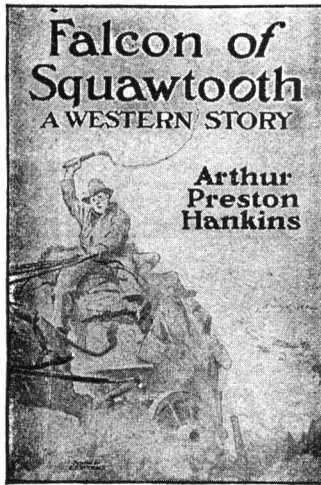
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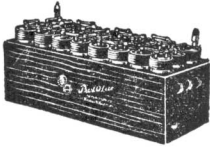
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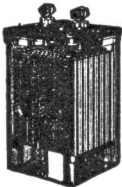
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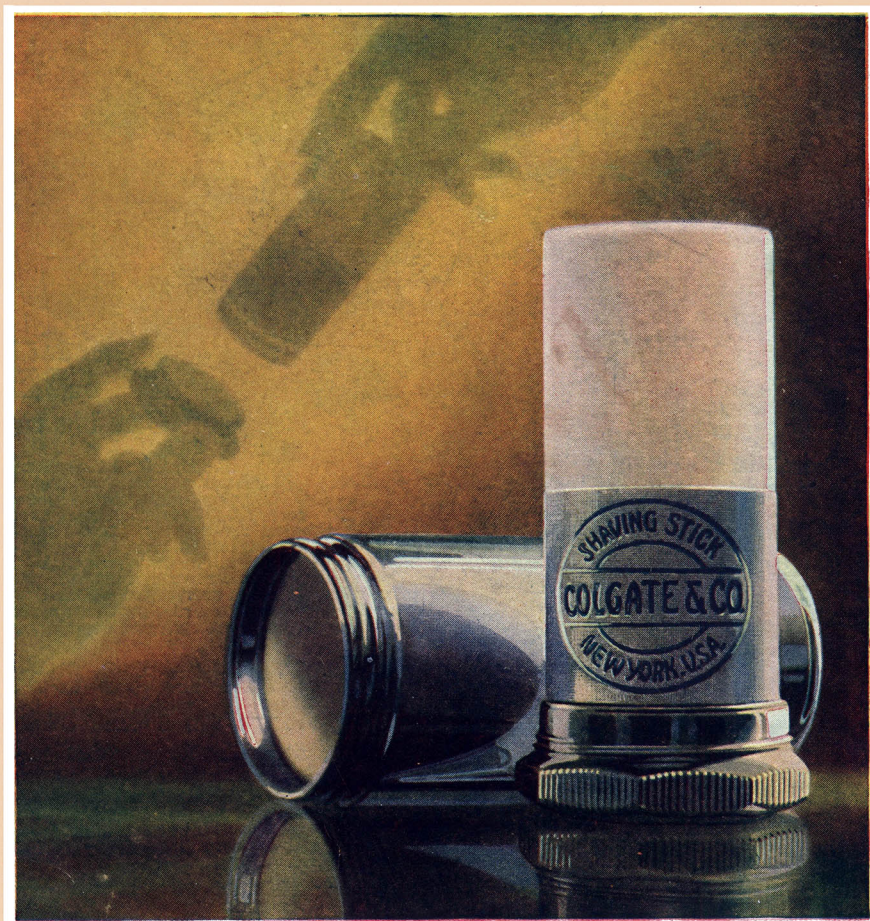
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