

NUMBER 10

TWICE-A-MONTH

10 CTS.

# Top-Notch Magazine

Stories by

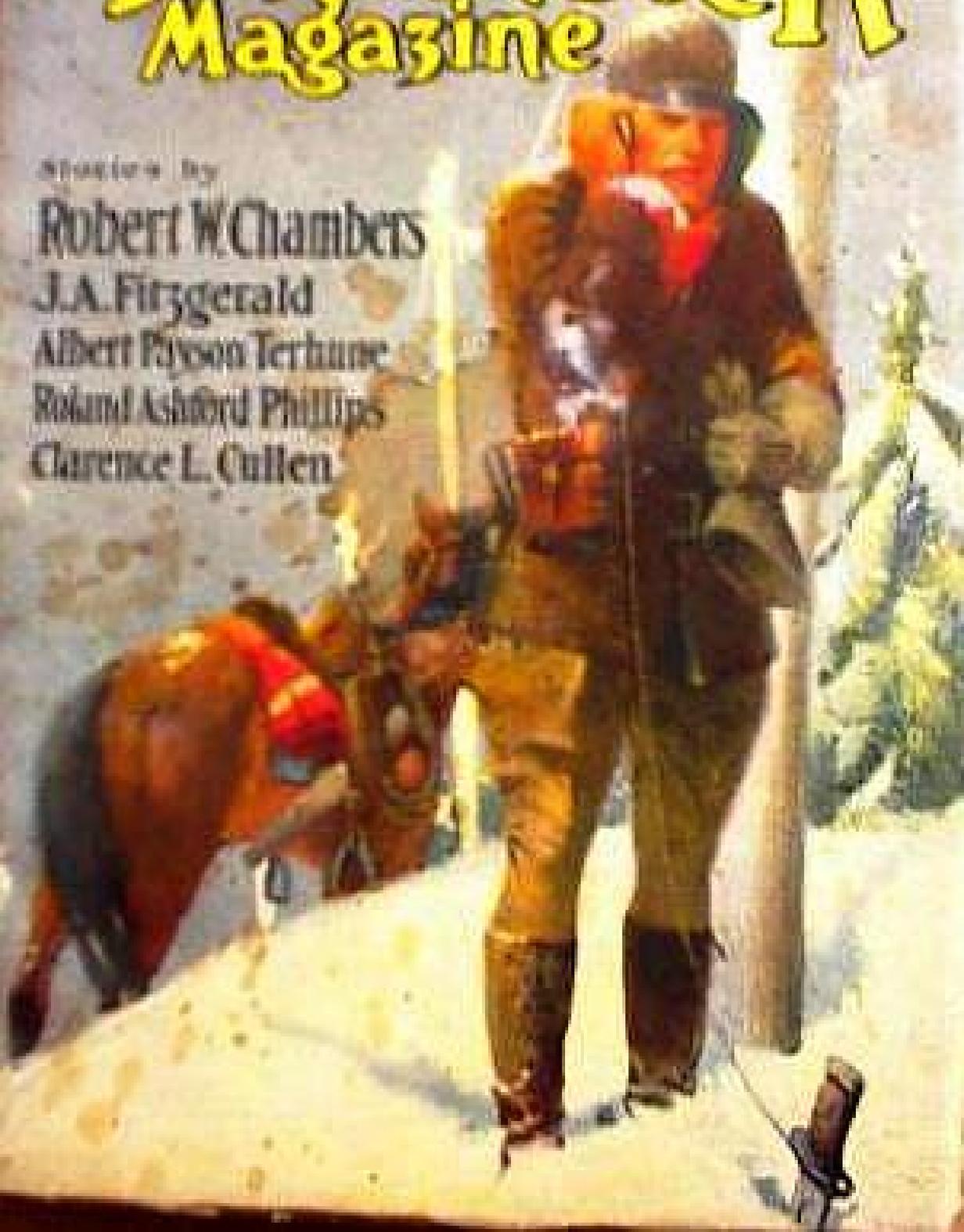
Robert W. Chambers

J.A. Fitzgerald

Albert Payson Terhune

Roland Ashford Phillips

Clarence L. Cullen





ISSUED THE 1st AND 15th OF EVERY MONTH

VOL. XV

NUMBER 6

# TOP-NOTCH

## TWICE-A-MONTH MAGAZINE

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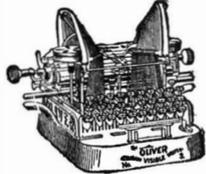
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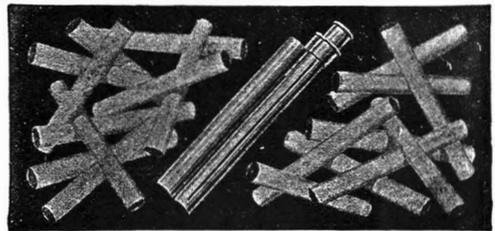
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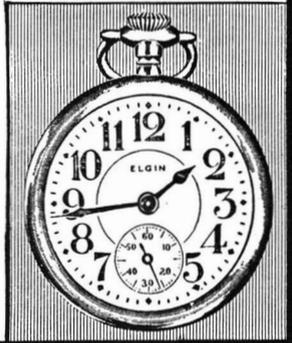
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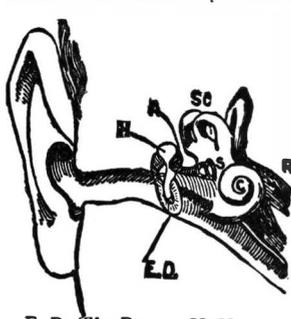
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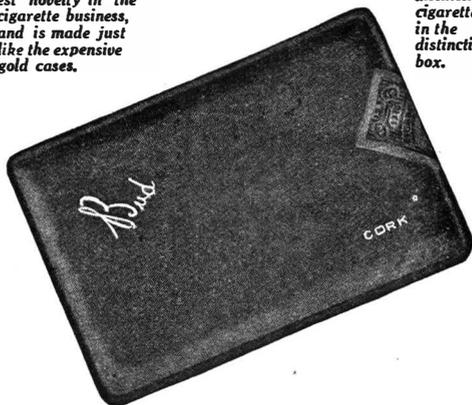


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Vol. XV

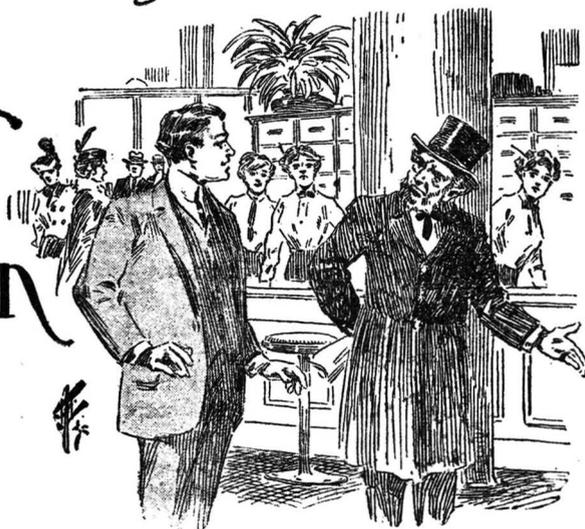
MARCH 15, 1914

No. 6

## The Firing Man

By  
J. A. Fitzgerald.

*Tale of a Big Department Store*



(A COMPLETE NOVEL)

### CHAPTER I.

ENTER OPPORTUNITY.

**F**OR fifteen minutes Barry Crane stood watching the crowds move through the doors of Waldron Brothers' mammoth department store. It was Monday morning. Eager-faced shoppers, nearly all of them women, their bargain appetites sharpened by tempting advertisements in the Sunday newspapers, their eyes alight with expectancy, descended from automobiles, surface cars, and elevated trains and swept into this one of the city's most popular trading places.

Crane's position in Herald Square commanded a view of the two sides of the ten-story building and the several

doors that swallowed up the surging mass of femininity. The spectacle fascinated him. The roar of traffic, the babel of voices, the footfalls of scurrying hundreds darting hither and yonder across the famous triangle—all the noises and diversions of that busy spot were not potent to draw his eyes from that building. They wandered from the gorgeously bedecked show windows to the windows of the upper stories, smaller and less showy, but sufficiently large to afford him a glimpse of the life and activity behind them. At length his eyes rested on the huge sign, which topped the structure and proclaimed by day and night that the firm was prepared to furnish "Everything For Everybody."

"And they've all got money," he

mused, as he watched the people thronging into the store. A laugh followed this reflection, not a bitter, envious one, but a wondering laugh, that of youth and strength for the moment embarrassed, yet too optimistic to believe that his share of the world's prosperity would be denied him.

"There must be something that you can do in that store, Barry, old boy," he said to himself. "It's a big jump from ranching to counter-jumping, but it looks like your last chance. They seem to be able to get along without you in every other business hereabouts." A moment of contemplation, and then: "Well, it's certain that Waldron Brothers are not going to come out here and coax you to go to work. You've got to go to them. Here goes!"

Even as he spoke, he was on his way, dodging vehicles with easy grace, and at last bringing up safe and sound—no mean achievement in Herald Square—at the main entrance of the store. To say that he plunged straight ahead would be to state an untruth. Barry was not lacking in courage, but no man, no matter how intrepid—man milliners and ladies' tailors excepted—has ever tackled one of the big department stores for the first time without quailing. Barry helped himself to a little quail, took a deep breath, and started forward, his expression that of a man prepared for the worst.

A succession of feminine shrieks brought him to a dead stop, just inside the door. Before he had time to consider whether he had frightened them, or if it was the ordinary tone of conversation used by bargain hunters, he became aware that hysterical women were pressing close to the counters in an effort to get out of the way of a shabby-looking man who was rushing along the aisle toward the door, followed by half a dozen excited men.

"A foot race as sure as shooting!" exclaimed Barry. "I didn't know they pulled off indoor sports in these——"

"Stop him, stop him!" came in a chorus from the men behind.

Barry saw from their gesticulations that they looked to him to do the stop-

ping. Then it struck him that the fellow in front had committed some offense. Even then, his inclination was to allow the contestants to fight it out among themselves.

"Get out of the way, or I will insert a knife in your anatomy!" yelled the man in front.

Crane's sympathy for the fugitive vanished then and there. The most peaceful chap in the world, he was not given to permitting any one to threaten him without resenting it. In a flash the smile in his big brown eyes had given way to a resolute glitter; the lines about the good-natured mouth were drawn taut. He stepped back a little and blocked that particular exit with his six feet of bone and muscle, his right foot set forward the better to withstand the shock of the inevitable impact.

The hunted man reached for his pocket as he neared Crane, as if to make good his threat to use a knife. But the man planted at the door, white-faced but confident, never budged. Another second and the other was upon him. Their bodies came together with a thud, Crane timing the impact with the skill of the man trained to defend himself and leaping backward the next instant to save being knocked from his feet. The trick worked like a charm. It left the fugitive dazed for the fraction of a second, just long enough for Crane to pinion his arms behind him and make him helpless as a baby. Reassured to some extent by this turn of events, pursuers and spectators came closer.

"Careful, sir, careful!" admonished a man who appeared to be in authority. "He may pull a knife on you."

A hollow laugh came from the captive. "Have no fear, kind sir," he spoke up quickly. "I assure you that my intimation that I am armed was a gross exaggeration."

"He's safe enough," Crane said easily, smiling at the prisoner's absurd manner of expressing himself.

"Where's Mullin?" asked the man who had spoken before.

"Here he comes, Mr. Olcott!" some one answered.

A heavy-jawed, beetle-browed fellow, with a clumsy, shambling gait and a repellent air, pushed his way through the crowd.

"Well, what became of you, Mullin?" Olcott inquired testily.

"I thought he was going to make for one of the side doors," explained Mullin, who proved to be the store detective.

"Get him to the station house as quickly as possible," said Olcott.

"All right," returned the detective. "I'll take charge of him," he added, speaking to Crane, who released his man.

"Do you want any help?" asked Crane.

The detective turned with a sneer on his face. "When I need help I'll ask for it," he snarled.

Then he hustled the prisoner through the door. Crane could not help feeling that Mullin had acted ungraciously toward him, to say the least. Olcott noticed the surprised look on Crane's face.

"Mullin is sore because he didn't catch him," explained Olcott.

The crowd was pressing about Crane and the heads of departments who had joined in the chase.

"What did he do?" some one asked. "Did he steal something?"

Olcott nodded, and presently the women returned to their pursuit of bargains. Barry, had concluded that the man was a shoplifter, or pickpocket. He was amazed, therefore, when he heard Olcott say to one of the store men:

"Well, that fellow's arrest ought to come pretty near solving our advertising mystery."

"I'm sure it will," said another. "He's been snooping around the advertising rooms for the last week. I think we'll be able to get a confession from him."

Barry was about to make inquiry as to the location of the store's employment bureau when Olcott made it unnecessary. "You are a brave man," he said, extending his hand. "You can have no idea of what the arrest of that scamp means to us. While those who

witnessed your courageous performance are under the impression that he is a common thief, I don't mind telling you that we believe his offense to be far more serious than that. I wish there was some way for Waldron Brothers to express their gratitude to you." He looked inquiringly at Crane's flushed cheek.

"There is a way," said Barry. "I'd like a job."

Olcott and his associates looked at him incredulously.

"Do you mean it?" said Olcott.

"Surest thing you know. I was coming in to ask for a job when that chap insisted on doing the tango with me."

Olcott and the others laughed at this airy description of the incident. They surveyed his well-knit figure with evidences of satisfaction.

"Well, I think we can make a place for you, all right," Olcott said, with emphasis on the last three words. "Come with me."

## CHAPTER II.

### READY FOR BUSINESS.

OLCOTT, a portly man past middle life, dressed with scrupulous care, suave and soft spoken, led the way toward the rear of the store, his whole manner indicating keen satisfaction at the outcome of the spectacular happening. Barry Crane, his hopes bounding, a few paces behind, talked with the men he had guessed were assistants of Olcott. This guess proved to be correct.

"Olcott will make a place for you," whispered one of Barry's companions. "He is the general manager of the store—practically runs the business. Old David Waldron, the surviving member of the firm, spends most of his time in Europe."

The way past counters laden with merchandise of every description was in the nature of a triumphal march for Barry. Shoppers, saleswomen, cash girls, salesmen, and floorwalkers went out of their way to show their approval of his recent performance, many of the employees and spectators mounting the stools and tables to get a better look

at the man of the hour. As for the object of the admiration, he failed to see why his act should have attracted so much favorable attention. To a man who had spent four years on a ranch, matching strength with wild horses and broadhorns, and wrestling with burly cowmen, the achievement did not size up as one that called for so much fuss. Still, he was glad it had been the means of putting him in a position that insured him a job.

On reaching the elevators, Olcott slowed down and waited for the other members of his party.

"This car, Mr. ah——" Olcott said, smiling and nodding toward Crane.

The car referred to was just descending. All but one or two of the men left Olcott and Crane and started toward their respective posts. As the operator opened the door of the car, fifteen or twenty women stepped to the main floor, the last to leave being one whose beauty and shapely figure made Barry forget the events of the preceding few minutes. With great dark eyes, reflecting both tenderness and self-reliance, and a mass of jet black hair, she was dressed in the simplest fashion. A plain black gown, relieved at the throat and wrists by touches of white, harmonized perfectly with hair and eyes, the whole presenting a bewitching picture in black and white. Crane could not take his eyes from her, as he stepped aside to let her pass.

"Oh, Mr. Olcott!" he heard her exclaim, as she sighted the general manager. "I was just going on a hunt for you. Here's something you dropped during the chase."

She handed him a gold pencil.

"Miss Sheridan, you're a brick!" Olcott exclaimed. "I was wondering where I dropped that trinket. I wouldn't have lost it for the world. I'm sorry to have troubled you. This car will take you back to your department."

The prospect of being in the same car with her thrilled Crane.

"You—you caught the fellow, I understand," Miss Sheridan ventured timidly to the general manager.

Olcott turned to Barry. "That distinction goes to this man," he said. "Mr. ah——"

"Crane," supplied Barry. "Barry Crane, if you can stand a full portion."

Miss Sheridan acknowledged the half introduction to Barry with a smile that made his heart beat faster. "You deserve a lot of credit," she said, piling up his delight.

"The credit should be divided between you," said Olcott, looking from Crane to Miss Sheridan and back again. She seemed to understand; Crane didn't. Olcott made haste to explain. "It was Miss Sheridan who first called our attention to the man," he went on. "She is manager of the cloak and suit department on the fifth floor. The advertising rooms are at one end of the floor. She noticed this fellow hanging around there."

"I saw him not less than three times in the past two weeks," she said. "His actions this morning made me suspicious. But I was surprised to see how quickly he got away. We all had been under the impression that he was a cripple."

Olcott laughed. "Only a pose," he said. "You should have seen him go when he hit the third floor. He kept to the stairs for the first two flights after leaving here. He made the rest of the trip via the banisters. That's how he got such a start on us."

Olcott then regaled her with a graphic description of the hand-to-hand combat in which Crane had proved his superiority, holding the car at the fifth floor until he had finished. She shook Crane's hand as she stepped from the car.

"Cleverest woman we've got in the store," said Olcott when the car had resumed its upward flight.

Barry was only too eager to believe anything good about her. The elevator stopped at the eighth floor. He did not need to ask what business was transacted on this floor. Long rows of frosted glass doors, bearing such inscriptions as "General Manager," "First Assistant Manager," "Second Assistant Manager," "Suburban Manager," and

so on made it plain that this was the administrative department of the gigantic enterprise—that this was the mental power house of the big plant, the central point where the battles for commercial success were planned, and from which the industrial army of more than three thousand was directed. Olcott made straight for the general manager's offices, which occupied the whole of one end of the floor.

"I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to wait a while, Mr. Crane," he said. "Take a seat in the reception room. I'll get around to you as quickly as possible."

"No hurry, sir," said Barry. "I've got more time to spare just now than anything else."

Olcott smiled and hurried away. Crane gave himself up to a brief retrospection. In a few minutes he had reviewed his whole career—his boyhood and early youth in a small town in Iowa, the death of his parents within two years of each other, the last blow coming in time to prevent his graduation from high school; the alacrity with which he had accepted a distant relative's invitation to go to work on a ranch in Wyoming, his happiness there until the life began to pall on him and he realized that there was little or no opportunity there for the advancement that he desired; his trip to New York and his struggle to get suitable employment during the six weeks he had been in the city.

"Mrs. McGuire will be glad I've roped a pay envelope," he thought, with a smile. "I never saw any one worry about money the way she does. But then, I suppose, when she doesn't see the color of a man's money for three weeks, a landlady is justified in getting personal in her observations. Still, she's been more considerate than most people I've met in this neck of woods."

A wait of twenty minutes afforded Crane ample time for meditation. At the end of that time, Olcott's secretary informed him that the general manager was ready for him.

"Have you ever worked in a depart-

ment store?" Olcott inquired, getting down to business without delay.

Crane shook his head. "No, sir. I'm raw material so far as this business is concerned. But if you'll give me a chance, I will make good. I don't care where you put me."

Barry's earnestness impressed the general manager. "A man with your determination to get on doesn't need experience," he declared. "You're the type of worker we want here."

"Thank you," said Crane.

"I don't——"

At this juncture, Mullin appeared. The abrupt manner in which the store detective burst into Olcott's office told Crane that he was a privileged character about the place. Mullin looked surlier than usual, if that were possible. He shot at Crane a glance that was filled with malice. Barry was at a loss to understand the man's apparent hostility.

"Well?" Olcott said impatiently.

"That fellow gave me the slip," Mullin said sheepishly.

Crane felt easier. There was the reason for the detective's unfriendly attitude.

Olcott frowned. "You mean that he got away from you?" he asked doubtfully.

"That's it," admitted Mullin.

The detective kept his eyes glued on Olcott's desk. The general manager, plainly annoyed, strode away toward the window and let his eyes wander over bustling Broadway and Sixth Avenue.

"How did it happen?" he asked after a while.

"He took a desperate chance and got away with it," Mullin answered. "We were crossing Seventh Avenue on our way to the station house in West Thirtieth Street. I had hold of his coat sleeve. Suddenly he jumped in front of a racing automobile and tried to pull me with him. I had to drop him or take a trip to the hospital, perhaps the morgue, so I released my grip. He cleared the car by a hair's breath and I lost him in the traffic. I'm sorry,

but he's the first prisoner I've ever lost."

The note of regret was not lost on Olcott. "I'm sorry he escaped," the general manager said, his tone gentler than it had been. "Better luck next time, Mullin. I regret that he got away chiefly because I believe the fellow was at the bottom of our advertising mystery."

"I don't think we could have held him," put in the detective with a knowing air. "You see, we didn't have anything on him. Could I talk with you alone for a few minutes, Mr. Olcott?"

Crane started for the door without waiting to be told.

"I'll finish with you directly, Mr. Crane," Olcott called after him.

Barry returned to his seat in the reception room. He had been there five minutes when a violent ringing of the telephone in Olcott's office arrested his attention. A second later, the door opened, and the general manager walked briskly toward the elevator.

"Mr. Mullin will give you your instructions," Olcott called out to Crane as he hurried across the floor. "I'm obliged to go downtown at once."

The detective strode over to where Crane was seated. Barry rose and met him with the frankest of expressions. Mullin ignored his friendly advance.

"Report at the men's clothing department, fourth floor, right away," growled Mullin, without raising his eyes. "The boss says they'll have to keep shifting you around until they get a regular place for you. He says he'll start you at fifteen dollars per."

"Week or month?" asked Barry amiably.

Mullin flared up in an instant. "You can't kid any one around here, young fellow!" he exclaimed heatedly.

Barry was amused at the fellow's manner, but he had no desire to jeopardize his job by betraying the fact. He pretended to be properly crushed.

"I'm sorry you took it that way," he said humbly.

"You'll get fifteen dollars a week," blurted the detective.

They walked to the elevator together.

Barry made another effort at friendliness with the detective. "There ought to be a fine chance for a man to go ahead in this establishment," he ventured optimistically.

The car had reached the fourth floor. "Fresh guys like you don't get ahead anywhere," snarled Mullin as Crane stepped into the men's clothing department.

### CHAPTER III.

#### WHEN ALL WAS FAIR.

**B**EFORE the new man could make reply, the elevator and its surly passenger had dropped out of sight. Crane was given to grinning and bearing things, but the manner of Mullin toward him passed the bounds of amusement. Only a pressing need of employment prevented him from going after that burly store detective and demanding an explanation. "I've made my last attempt to conciliate that fellow," said Crane to himself. "He doesn't like me; he isn't going to like me, and that's all there is to it."

With this determination to give Mullin a wide berth, Crane presented himself to the head of the department.

"We've all been waiting to get a look at you," said that individual. "Mr. Olcott told me he was going to place you here, temporarily, at least. A fellow of your build shouldn't have any trouble selling clothing. You can show them off well. That's half the trick. The prices are on everything. Don't hesitate to cry for help if you need it."

The warmth of the welcome put Barry at his ease again—made him forget the store detective's churlish behavior. He found the other salesmen good fellows, all eager to help him. The news of his achievement had reached their ears, and they made no secret of their gratification at having him in the department.

"That's the luckiest stop you ever made in your life," asserted one of his fellow salesmen. "You've made a friend of Olcott, and when he takes a

shine to you, there's nothing to it but a rush to the front."

Little wonder that Barry tackled his new job with a light heart. His first chance to prove himself a clothing salesman came with a man who was carrying three or four hundred pounds of fat—more than half of it in the vicinity of the waistline—and whose peevish expression indicated that he was not overjoyed with the job nature had given him.

"I want a spring overcoat," he announced sharply.

"Yes, sir," said Crane. He knew the others were watching him, and he was eager to make good. His quick eye saw that the man would look better in black than in anything else. He returned with half a dozen black coats, soft as to material and silk-lapelled.

"Try on one of these," he said to the prospective purchaser.

The portly man did so. The first coat was too small, but the next fitted him perfectly. A glance in the glass brought a satisfied look to his face.

"Well, that's something like it," he declared, his smile leaping over his half dozen assorted chins and losing itself in the extra tires at the back of his neck.

"That's a good coat," Crane said, with an ease that surprised the head of the department and the other clerks. "I don't think it needs any alterations, either."

The customer raised his hand in mild protest. "I wouldn't let you touch it," he declared. "It's just what I want. I've been to seven stores, and you're the first salesman that has showed anything like common sense. You're the first one that didn't try to sell me one of those full-bearded atrocities, with belts, and buckles, and straps, and cuffs, and Heaven knows what. They actually forced me to try them on. Why, I looked like Santa Claus——"

"And felt like a rummage sale," interposed Barry diplomatically.

The fat man laughed joyously. "That describes it perfectly," he said. "All they showed me was reds, whites, blues,

plaids, and conservative things like that."

"If they tried to sell me anything like that I'd call a policeman," suggested Barry.

"I was so mad that it looked as if the coroner would be called in before I got through," the customer returned. "But this coat has put me in a more charitable frame of mind. You can imagine the job I have trying to find a tailor who can fit me."

Crane nodded. The fat man handed him fifty dollars, and went away, smiling.

"Bully for you!" exclaimed the head of the department to Crane. "You're going to run away with this business. It's judgment such as you have just displayed that sells the goods. Why, that man will send a dozen customers to this department."

Three college boys were next to claim the new salesman's services. His manner won the youngsters to such an extent that he had no difficulty selling them complete outfits of evening clothes. Closing time found him with several good sales to his credit, and the head of the department congratulated him without reserve.

During the afternoon, Barry had been hoping that he might get another glimpse of Miss Sheridan, but he was denied that pleasure. He hurried to his boarding house in West Eighteenth Street, and, bounding into the parlor, broke the news of his good fortune to Mrs. McGuire.

"When are you going to get paid?" was the first question put to him by the queen of the dyspepsia plant.

The directness of the query almost caused Crane to burst into a laugh; but he managed to control himself, and put on a solemn face. "Why, Mrs. McGuire," he gasped.

"None of that indignation stuff," she cried. "Because you're three weeks ahead of me, don't get the impression that I'm running a charitable institution."

Some of the other boarders, all of whose appetites had long since outdistanced their financial resources, tried

to get out of the danger zone when they caught the drift of the McGuire observations.

"That goes for everybody here!" she shouted. "Some folks around here seem to think it the height of indecency to hand me any money."

"You don't doubt for a minute that I'm going to pay you?" said Crane.

"I doubt everybody since I started a boarding house," Mrs. McGuire answered, sweeping the room with her frosty eye. "It's a business that makes you doubt. Some persons seem to think it's a crime to pay for what they eat; and, unfortunately for trusting women like myself, those persons are the heaviest feeders." With this observation she flounced out of the room.

"Don't pay any attention to her, Mr. Crane," advised an attractive-looking woman who posed as a leading lady, but whose activities in this direction had been confined to leading the march to the dining room. "She's out of sorts this evening; something's gone wrong with her. She had the effrontery to ask me for money a little while ago."

Crane could not help construing the landlady's hot words as a cordial invitation to stay away from the table, so he left the house and bought his supper at a near-by lunch room. He arrived at the store fifteen minutes before the opening hour next morning. He was about to spend the intervening time in an inspection of the windows of some neighboring shops when he saw Miss Sheridan approaching.

"Good morning," he said, lifting his hat and taking a step toward her.

"You had all your trouble for nothing yesterday, I understand," she said.

"Yes; the bird flew away."

"Too bad. I'm sure that man was behind our advertising troubles." Frequent allusions to this advertising mystery had aroused his curiosity. It was plain that the department heads, from Olcott down, were extremely eager to catch the person or persons responsible for the trouble; the problem appeared to be giving them the greatest concern. In his leisure hours Barry had endeavored to comprehend how such a pro-

saic thing as advertising could form the basis of a mystery, but his efforts failed to bring an answer. He decided to ask Miss Sheridan about it.

"I've been wondering what that advertising mystery is," he said to her.

"I'll tell you all I know about it, Mr. Crane," she began quite frankly. "For a month or so Waldron Brothers have been unable to announce a bargain sale in the newspapers that hasn't been duplicated by Spencer & Todd, our hottest competitors. The other firm not only advertises the same articles that we do, but offers them at lower prices—just a little cheaper."

Barry began to see the light. "On the same day?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; that's the worst of it. If Waldron Brothers advertise women's waists at ninety-eight cents, Spencer & Todd announce the same morning that they will sell the same waists that day for ninety-seven cents. If Waldron Brothers run a page, Spencer & Todd do the same, and shave our price on every article."

"Well, that isn't very pleasant," said Crane. "Decidedly irritating."

"Irritating!" she exclaimed. "It's a scandal, the talk of the whole department-store trade. Some one is betraying the firm to our rivals, giving Spencer & Todd information that enables them to undersell us."

"Whom does the firm suspect?"

"I don't know. We felt sure that the man you caught yesterday was back of it. I do know that Mullin, the store detective, has been working on the case day and night without being able to get a clew. It's made him as cross as a bear. It makes him feel foolish when he is forced to admit that he has made no progress."

In this explanation Crane thought he saw a reason for Mullin's ungracious attitude toward him; the detective was sore on everybody because of his failure to solve the mystery. They chatted a few minutes longer, then started for their respective departments. To his delight, Miss Sheridan offered no objection when he said it would give him

pleasure to walk home with her that evening.

"Oh, Rita!" some one called as they were on their way to the elevator.

Miss Sheridan turned and beamed on a pretty girl behind the leather-goods counter. "Did you call, Alice?" she inquired.

"Uh, huh," answered Alice. "I want to ask about those dancing frocks you were telling me of yesterday."

Miss Sheridan excused herself to Crane and went over to talk with her girl friend. As for Crane, he felt that he was going straight to heaven as the car shot up to the fifth floor and the men's clothing department. "Rita!" he kept repeating to himself. "Rita Sheridan!" He was positive it was the prettiest name he had ever heard. He walked on air for hours after that. Six or seven customers claimed his attention that day; only one went away without buying. Once again the head of the department congratulated him.

"Olcott is tickled to death with your progress," the head of the department assured him. "I've been telling him about you."

Crane was happier than he ever had been in his life. The prospect of steady employment and advancement, his congenial surroundings and his acquaintance with Rita Sheridan all combined to make the future look extremely rosy. After luncheon he received notice to report at the tinware department in the basement the following morning.

"We're sorry to see you go," said the head of the clothing department, "but this being shifted around is the best thing that could happen to you. It will familiarize you with every branch of the business. The biggest tinware sale of the year starts to-morrow."

Crane felt the same way about being shifted, realizing that the utility man in any business is well-nigh indispensable. An hour before closing time he heard his name called. A boy was hurrying toward him.

"Mr. Hannigan, manager of the grocery department, wants you right away," said the youngster.

Crane was sure the boy had made a

mistake. "Did he say he wanted Crane?" he inquired.

"Yep. Mr. Crane."

"Where's the grocery department?"

"Basement—front."

Concluding that he was wanted in that department to help out until closing time, Crane got his hat and coat and started to obey the summons. On reaching the grocery department the boy pointed out Hannigan; he was talking to a stout woman whose back was turned to Crane. Her figure looked strangely familiar. As he neared them she turned squarely around. It was Mrs. McGuire. Crane gave a start. She bowed coldly. They hadn't spoken since the landlady had expressed herself so forcibly concerning boarders who did not pay promptly.

"Why——"

Barry had started to remark the coincidence of her being there, but Hannigan didn't give him a chance.

"Now don't try to explain your stupidity, Crane," exclaimed Hannigan. "Any explanation you may make won't alter the fact that this lady has suffered serious embarrassment as a result of your blundering. You knew when she ordered that ham and those vegetables yesterday afternoon that she wanted them in time for dinner. You——"

"But, Mr. Han——"

Crane got no further with his protest. Mrs. McGuire, too, appeared to be astonished at the vehemence of the manager's attack. Several times she made as if to speak, but he shut her off with an imperious wave of the hand.

"You knew that you promised to deliver those goods at five o'clock yesterday afternoon," Hannigan declared. "It's incompetents like you that lose good customers for Waldron Brothers. It's a good thing you brought your hat and coat with you. Put them on, get your money from the cashier, and get out. And don't ever show your face in this store again."

Mrs. McGuire made another effort to break in.

"I know how you feel toward him, madam, and I don't blame you," Hannigan interrupted. "We've done every-

thing in our power to rectify the stupid performance of this fellow."

Crane was certain the grocery manager had gone crazy. Olcott happened along just as Hannigan ordered the puzzled clerk off the premises. Crane looked appealingly at his benefactor of the day before. Olcott returned his glance with a look of annoyance. Then the general manager and his subordinate entered the latter's private office and closed the door behind them, making any further appeal impossible.

Crane shot a reproachful look at Mrs. McGuire. He felt certain that his landlady was responsible for his dismissal. With a heavy heart he made his way up to the next floor and passed through a side door into the street.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A HOPELESS PROBLEM.

UTTERLY unable to understand, Crane wandered about in a somewhat aimless way. The more he thought of what had happened the more he became convinced that Mrs. McGuire was at the bottom of his trouble; that she had brought about his dismissal because of the fear that he was not going to pay her. But why should she deprive him of the only chance that was his to settle the indebtedness to her? That would appear to be a foolish move on her part. But it was Olcott's change of front that puzzled Crane most. The general manager knew that he had not been anywhere near the grocery department, and yet he had stood by and seen him discharged for some one else's blunder without coming to his assistance.

Try as he would he could not figure out why he had been dismissed. After several hours of reflection, during which he had collided with three or four persons, he gave it up. "I've been fired and that's all there is to it," he concluded. "If I keep on trying to ascertain the reason they'll have me in the nut house before morning."

Several times during his cogitations he had recalled his promise to walk home with Rita Sheridan that night.

He had been on the point of sending her word before he left the store, but changed his mind, deciding that their delightful acquaintance must cease for a time. It was not without the keenest regret that he came to this conclusion. An hour before midnight he reached his boarding house. Mrs. McGuire let him in.

"Well, I suppose you're satisfied," he said. "But it was only biting off your nose to spite your face. Now I can't possibly pay——"

"Stop!" she fairly shouted; and then in a quiet tone: "I've been waiting for you to come home to find out what it all means, Mr. Crane. Your supper is in the oven."

"Find out what it all means?" he repeated. "Do you mean to say that you were not the cause of my dismissal?"

"Mr. Crane," she answered in a solemn manner, "I give you my word of honor that I never mentioned your name to that man in the grocery department. I was stunned when he sent for you. True, they did forget to send my order, forcing me to use the prunes I had for this morning's breakfast, but you had nothing to do with it. If you think that what you owe me had anything to do with your dismissal you are doing me a great wrong. Of course I wouldn't try to deprive you of your only chance to pay me."

Crane could not see that she had made matters much clearer. "Why didn't you tell Hannigan I did not wait on you; that some one else sold you the groceries?"

"Why didn't I tell him?" Mrs. McGuire repeated impatiently. "Why didn't you tell him something? I notice you tried hard enough. We both tried to explain, but he wouldn't let us get a word in edgewise. I think the man is crazy."

"That was my guess until I saw Olcott, the general manager, approving his actions."

They went over the situation again, discussing it in all its aspects, and came to the conclusion that they could make nothing out of it. But there was a better understanding between the land-

lady and her boarder before they parted for the night. Mrs. McGuire assured Crane that she had every confidence in him; that her daily appeals for money were directed toward the other guests of the Maison McGuire, the leading lady in particular. Crane managed to sleep that night, and notwithstanding his threat to absent himself from the table, he joined the pilgrimage to breakfast and entertained his share of the sausage and pancakes.

"You'll feel better, now," whispered Mrs. McGuire, slipping him a newspaper, opened to the "Help Wanted" page. He had to smile when he observed this gentle hint. On turning the pages, his eye caught the advertisement of Waldron Brothers announcing their big tinware sale—"the banner event of the season." On the opposite page Spencer & Todd informed the public that articles in their tinware department would be sold at a great sacrifice during the day. He studied the advertisements closely. Sure enough, Spencer & Todd's prices were lowest.

Before he was aware of it, Crane found himself wrestling with the advertising mystery. He had been at it half an hour when it occurred to him that there wasn't the slightest reason why he should bother his head about it. He marked several promising advertisements in the "Help Wanted" columns and announced his intention of investigating them. Just then the telephone rang. Mrs. McGuire answered it.

"Yes," she said. "He's right here." She called Crane and handed the receiver to him. "Some one for you," she said.

"Thank you," said Barry, and he placed the instrument to his ear. "Yes, this is Crane. Who is talking?" The next instant Mrs. McGuire saw him give a quick start.

"Why, I wasn't trying to take advantage of my position," Crane said eagerly to the person at the other end of the line. "You know I was fired yesterday, and—all right, I'll come right over. Tinware department. Yes, sir."

He hung up the receiver, and stared at his landlady, a smile of mingled

gladness and bewilderment curving his lips.

"Then you haven't been fired," she exclaimed before he could speak. "It's all a mistake."

"Evidently," said Crane. "That was Olcott, the general manager, talking. I don't understand it at all. He was very short with me; didn't like it because I hadn't put in an appearance this morning. Said I mustn't try to take advantage of my position. I don't know what the dickens they are all driving at."

"What did he say when you told him about being dismissed?"

"He said he had no time to listen to any long stories. Told me to hurry back to work."

Mrs. McGuire shook her head. "It's beyond me."

"Must have been all a mistake," said Crane, but the way he said it and the look on his face proclaimed that he was still bewildered.

"That's the only explanation. Go back to work and forget about it. Don't try to find the answer. If you do, some other poor fellow is liable to lose his job. All's well that ends well."

Barry decided that this was good advice. Nothing would be gained by keeping the disagreeable experience alive. It didn't take him long to get to the store. He found the tinware department jammed with wild-eyed women. The mad scramble for skillets, strainers, dishpans, dustpans, biscuit cutters, and all the rest of the kitchen artillery, with the attendant banging and dropping of these articles, created a frightful din. As Crane endeavored to make himself heard above the commotion, it occurred to him that General Sherman's definition of war might very well be applied to a bargain hunt in the tinware department.

"Hello, Crane, old scout! Got your hands full to-day, eh!"

This cheerful greeting, accompanied by a resounding whack between his shoulders, caused Barry to halt his glowing eulogy of a teakettle. Turning, he saw Hannigan walking briskly toward the grocery department. He

couldn't believe that the greeting had come from the man who had fired him; but all doubts on this score were removed when Hannigan waved his hand to him in the friendliest manner and then disappeared behind a pyramid of canned tomatoes. Barry, a foolish expression on his face, waved back at him.

"What the—what do you know about that?" he asked himself, standing frozen with wonder. The teakettle fell from his hands and hit the floor with a clatter. The noise brought him to his senses. "Crazy as a bat," was Barry's verdict in Hannigan's case. "The firm knew what it was doing when it put him in the nut department."

He was pleased when the head of the department told him to go to lunch at the noon hour. His strange dismissal, his stranger reinstatement, Hannigan's contradictory actions, and the battle of the bargain hunters in the tinware territory—all these had set his brain whirling like an electric fan. He took a deep breath when he reached the street. Half a dozen times he caught himself standing still and laughing, to the astonishment of those about him.

He dropped into a cigar store a short distance from the Waldron Building, and was engaged in conversation with the clerk when Mullin entered and went straight to the telephone booth. The detective remained in the booth a few seconds, then stepped out and made way for another patron. In his haste he had not noticed Barry. The latter thought something of inviting him to join him in a smoke, but as there was nothing in the other man's expression to indicate that he felt any friendlier toward mankind than on the previous day, he abandoned the idea.

Entering the store, Crane came face to face with Olcott. The general manager smiled pleasantly, gave him a few words of praise, and passed on, leaving Barry staring after him with a puzzled expression on his face. For the hundredth time that day Crane shook his head in utter bewilderment. He had got to the point where he was assuring himself that he had never been dis-

charged; it wouldn't have taken much of an argument to convince him that he had never been in the store.

With the confusing incidents of the past few hours serving to throw him off his balance, he finished the day in the tinware department with several good-sized sales to his credit. Yet he was guilty of one or two absurd mistakes, as was natural enough in the circumstances. His worst slip was made when a large, angular blonde, with loose, china-blue eyes, stepped up to him and announced that she would like to view the prevailing styles in wash boilers.

"This one ought to look well on you," Crane blurted out absent-mindedly. She reddened to the roots of her highly colored hair, but accepted his apologies with a succession of smiles. He assured her it was a slip of the tongue, due to his having come from the clothing department. She said she believed him, taking so long to say it that he was worried for fear she would never leave.

At closing time he met Rita Sheridan and apologized for his failure to be on hand to walk home with her the previous evening. Her smiling welcome, as well as her tact in not asking questions concerning his absence, served to recall Olcott's declaration that she was "one of the cleverest girls in the store."

"He should have said the world," thought Barry, as he left her at the door of her home.

## CHAPTER V.

### GETTING INQUISITIVE.

THREE weeks in the big store, during which time he had acquitted himself creditably in half a dozen different departments, convinced Barry that at last he had found a place in the mercantile life of the city. The pleasure he found in his new employment was manifest in the eager way he went at every task and the thoroughness he brought to the performance of it. He loved the bustle and activity of the huge emporium, the contact with all classes of humanity, the fierce competition that

urged each man to give to the task of holding his own.

Crane's cheery manner, hearty laugh, and all-round adaptability made him a favorite in the departments to which he had been detailed, a fact that did not escape the notice of General Manager Olcott, who took occasion more than once to tell Barry how well pleased he was with his work. Being shifted so frequently from one point to another brought Crane into contact with the general manager oftener than was the case with other workers in the ranks. He knew that Olcott's chief worry continued to be the advertising question, Spencer & Todd still being able to obtain the information that gave them a big advantage over their rivals. Barry found himself giving more and more thought to the mystery; his interest in the matter was stimulated, it must be owned, through discussing the strange situation with Rita Sheridan.

Rita and he were the best of friends now. Crane escorted her to her home each evening, and spent much of his leisure in her company. Mrs. McGuire had been paid in full, and, as a result, Barry had to battle to keep his waist-line within bounds, so insistent was the landlady that he take an extra helping of everything on the table. He no longer got the neck when they had chicken—a fact which indicated how well he had risen in Mrs. McGuire's esteem. His lot was so pleasant now that he didn't have a thing to complain about. It was this feeling of security which prompted him to ask Olcott a few questions about the advertising mystery. The chance to do this came one morning when he was chatting with the general manager.

"I see that Spencer & Todd are still putting it over on us," Barry suggested.

Olcott's face darkened. "Yes," he replied, the suggestion evidently bringing the whole puzzling situation to his mind. "They are still in a position to give us the laugh. It's a hard nut."

"I should like to help you crack it," Barry said.

A hopeless laugh came from Olcott. "Such a desire shows the proper spirit,"

the general manager declared kindly, "but I doubt if you would be able to accomplish anything. Mullin, one of the most skillful detectives in the business, has been unable to make any headway with the case; that shows you what chance an amateur would have. We've all tried our hand at it to little or no purpose."

"What is your own theory, Mr. Olcott, as to how Spencer & Todd get the information?"

"There are two ways: A leak in the newspaper offices, or from some one in the store. We have discarded the theory that it may be some employee of ours. Mullin reached that conclusion early in his investigations. That's about the only consolation for Waldron Brothers—the conviction that none of its employees are implicated in the matter."

"How many persons are connected with the advertising department?" Olcott's willingness to listen encouraged Barry to pursue his hunt for information.

"Oh, it's a large department. But our advertising manager, a man who has been with us for years and whom we have absolute confidence in, handles the big bargain ads—the ones that Spencer & Todd duplicate. The stuff is prepared a day ahead; the newspapers send us proofs so that we can make the necessary corrections before publication. We get a dozen of these proofs, as my assistants and myself are compelled to check up each advertisement. We would give a great deal to find out who is responsible for— Here comes Mullin, now. He may have something to report."

Crane and the detective had not spoken since their clash on the elevator; but they had met a dozen times since that unpleasant incident—twice in stores in the neighborhood where Mullin had gone to use the telephone; that Mullin should go outside to telephone aroused a mild curiosity on Barry's part as to the reason. He was unable to comprehend why the detective did not use the department-store instruments. His position with Waldron Brothers entitled

him to free personal service. In view of this fact, it seemed doubly strange to Crane that he should want to go somewhere else and pay for the calls. Mullin had seen Crane on only one of these occasions. At that meeting, the detective made as if to rebuke him, but changed his mind.

He gave Crane a mere nod of recognition now.

"Any progress?" asked Olcott.

Mullin attempted to lead the general manager aside.

"Don't mind Crane," said Olcott.

"He's just been making inquiry about our little mystery. He is anxious to help, if pos——"

"Mr. Olcott!" Mullin exclaimed angrily, his hulking figure shaking with rage, "I won't have these parlor sleuths interfering with my work. If I'm ever going to get to the bottom of this mystery, I've got to be allowed to do it in my own way. There's been too much meddling, altogether. I've worked day and night, and——"

Olcott halted his protest with a deprecating gesture. "There, there, Mullin," he said soothingly; "I realize the force of your argument. We know you are doing your best. Crane, like the rest of us, wanted to help. That's all there is to it. No one will interfere with your plans."

Olcott started away. Mullin did likewise, but returned to where Crane was standing. "You keep your nose out of what doesn't concern you!" he said hotly. "You're paid to sell stuff——"

"And I'm doing it," Barry replied sharply. He had made up his mind to give the detective as good as he sent. "You're paid to do detective work, and you're not doing it."

Mullin shot an angry look at him; then passed on. It was the biggest kind of a joke for Crane, that a man supposed to be intelligent enough to outwit criminals should be in reality such a clown. Barry spent the next few days in the drug department. Here, too, the result of his frequent changing, as well as his preoccupation over the advertising mystery, was responsible for some amusing mistakes. The period previous

had been passed in the grocery department, where he had charge of the egg counter. Several times he caught himself assuring surprised-looking customers that tooth powder "was laid yesterday," or that porous plasters came "direct from our own farm." The height of absurdity was reached when he insisted to one woman that the carbolic acid was "strictly fresh." His frank apologies and witty remarks following all these slips were accepted readily by the patrons of the department.

He was overjoyed when assigned to the cloak and suit department, because of the opportunity it would give him to steal an occasional chat with Rita Sheridan, who was director of that feminine fairyland.

"But what under the sun can I do there?" he asked Olcott, with a laugh.

The general manager appreciated his dilemma. "Don't worry," he said. "We're not going to ask you to display your charms. Our *promenade de toilettes* begins to-morrow. I suppose you know the meaning of that mouthful? Well, it's the name they give to the display of new gowns on living models. We have two shows a year—spring and fall. To-morrow we start showing the Easter and summer fashions in street and evening gowns."

"And where do I come in?"

"We want you to sort of supervise the affair. Miss Sheridan and her assistants will be too busy answering questions to see that everything moves smoothly."

"I am to act as stage manager?"

"That's about it; and see that our patrons are made comfortable. Go up to the clothing department and have them fit you up with a cutaway coat and supply you with other fixings, in case you haven't got them. And, by the way, be careful not to lose your heart. The man that directed the last show was married two weeks later to one of the models."

Olcott slapped him on the back as he made this statement. Crane felt that there was little danger of his losing his heart—to any one outside the cloak and

suit department. It already had been lost there. He was laughing like a schoolboy when he met Rita that night. He began to tell her about the arrangement, but found that Olcott had informed her during the afternoon.

In correct attire, borrowed from the clothing department, Crane appeared next morning at the place set aside for the gown display. Miss Sheridan complimented him on his smart appearance, and kept a straight face while doing it. She knew that he had borrowed the outfit for the occasion. They had had a good laugh over that incident the night before.

"My, but some one looks flossy," she exclaimed.

"Don't rub it in, Rita," he pleaded. "If I ever sneeze, they'll have to gather this uniform up in a basket. Great Scott, but it's tight!"

Rita assured him that it fitted him to perfection.

"I know," said Barry; "and I'm worried that some lady will mistake me for a floorwalker, and ask where she can get a bottle of hair paint. I couldn't tell her to save my life."

The show was scheduled to start at ten o'clock. Long before that the several hundred seats about the raised platform had been taken, and Barry was directing his assistants to bring chairs for the late comers. Presently the first of the stage beauties, specially engaged to wear the new creations, strode out of the dressing room and down the long platform to a buzz of feminine voices. Rita had drawn Barry to one side to congratulate him on his management.

"Do you suppose you could get me a seat?" came from the vicinity of Crane's elbow.

He looked over his shoulder. The bulky blonde with the slack, blue eyes, the woman who had talked him almost to a faint in the tinware department, was gazing up at him with a demure expression.

"I recognized you the minute I came in," she said, with an unsuccessful effort at coyness. "I know that you'll get me a chair."

Crane concealed his annoyance with

difficulty. He caught the interrogation in Rita's dark eyes. She looked from him to the blonde; then hurried to another part of the room, her cheeks aflame. Crane was furious.

"I've got on new shoes, and they hurt terribly," complained the blonde.

"That's good—I mean I'm sorry," Crane returned absently. He tried to catch Rita's eye, but she studiously avoided looking in his direction. "I'll get you a chair directly, madam," he said.

"Not madam—miss!" she called after him.

He stepped aside and spoke to one of his helpers. "Get that lady a chair," he said, indicating the blonde.

With a heroic effort to look pleasant, he strolled about the room, trying to overtake Rita, whom he knew to be avoiding him, and keeping as far away from the blonde as possible. But every time he dared look in the portly lady's direction he caught her smiling sweetly at him. Rita saw them several times exchanging glances. Crane frowned hideously at his tormentor, but that did not dampen the ardor of her looks or take off any of her bewitching smile. When at length it struck her that Barry was seeking to avoid her, she started after him. The little comedy developed into a foot race, with Rita trying to outdistance Crane, and he lengthening his stride to escape his peroxide pursuer. The latter gave it up after a while, and, to Barry's relief, left the department. But there was trouble awaiting him at closing time when Miss Sheridan greeted him with a smile about as sweet as grapefruit.

"Why, Rita, I'm surprised to think you would let that ridiculous woman come between us," Barry said. "It's the second time I have ever seen her."

"Allow me to congratulate you, then, upon the splendid progress you have made in so short a time," she returned, with curling lip. "Good night, Mr. Crane."

"Oh, come, Rita, you mustn't go away like that! I waited on that woman in the tinware department. That's the extent of our acquaintance. You

don't think for a minute I'd be interested in a woman of her type?"

Rita stepped to one side and was gone. Crane tried to comprehend how it could be that Miss Sheridan received such a wrong idea of his attitude toward the lady of the painted tresses. He came to the conclusion that Rita must have been so absorbed in watching the blonde's bewitching smile that she did not see the scowls with which Crane received them. He endeavored to console himself with the thought that Rita's changed attitude was due to jealousy; that it was proof she cared for him; but his better nature banished such a thought.

"That would be rank conceit on my part," he reflected. "More likely, I guess, that she is disgusted. She can't understand how I could ever tolerate such a woman."

The fact that the gown display was to last two days made him hopeful that he would be able to explain matters to Rita. She bowed coldly when they met the next morning. Crane begged her to give him a hearing, but she insisted with an aggravating indifference that she had no desire to listen to a discussion of his love affairs. When not feeling the humor of the situation, Crane brooded over the unpleasant turn that his romance had taken. Between worrying over Rita's unjustified conduct toward him and the fear that the blonde would make her reappearance at the show, Crane put in an extremely busy day. He breathed easier when the display came to a close without a second invasion by the cause of his trouble.

"Thank Heaven, she didn't show herself here to-day!" he muttered to himself. "The next time I see her coming, I'll do my hundred yards in six flat."

"Mr. Crane!"

It was Rita's voice, calling from the opposite side of the platform. She was coming toward him. He hurried forward to meet her, certain that she was about to reinstate him in her good graces—to tell him that it was all an absurd misunderstanding.

"I knew you were too fair a girl to——"

"Dobbins, head of the china department, sixth floor, wishes to see you at once," interrupted Rita, in her most businesslike voice.

Crane looked his disappointment. "All right," he said. "But you ought to let me explain. May I walk home with you to-night?"

"No, thank you. I can find my way alone, I guess."

"But, Rita, you are unfair to me. Let me explain. Anyway, you promised to go to the theater with me to-night."

"I know I did; but I'm not going. Mr. Dobbins is waiting."

She walked away without another word. Barry turned his steps toward the china department. He had served an apprenticeship there, and supposed that Dobbins wanted him to help out at another sale. His mind preoccupied, he did not notice at first that Dobbins was talking earnestly to a woman. At sight of her, Crane gave a quick start. It was the blue-eyed blonde of the bewitching smile. "I don't wonder that you start," began Dobbins sarcastically. "You put this woman in a most embarrassing position; but you'll never have a chance to mistreat another of Waldron Brothers' best customers——"

"Why, I haven't done any——"

Dobbins shut off Barry's protest. "Not another word out of you!" he almost shouted. "You've done enough damage already."

Crane stood speechless now, certain that the blonde was getting even with him for his failure to notice her; but somehow she looked anything but vindictive.

"I expected you to say you were innocent," Dobbins rushed on. "See the humiliating position you placed this woman in. She orders a set of dishes from you to be sent by special messenger. Your feeble mentality could not grasp her idea; you did not send the china, and there she was with a houseful of company, a kitchenful of food, and no dishes to serve it on. In discharging you, I want her to see that Waldron Brothers will not tolerate such stupidity on the part of their employees. Now,

get out as fast as your foolish legs can carry you."

Dobbins took the blonde by the arm and led her into his private office, explaining the while. Barry, puzzled at this second dismissal without cause, stood trying to figure it out. Olcott was out of town, and would not return until the next morning; in his absence Crane knew that there was no appeal from the decision of the heads of departments. Still he was more mystified than disheartened when he left the building.

"Fired twice in four weeks," he said to himself. "What the dickens is the answer?"

## CHAPTER VI.

### MYSTERIOUS MULLIN.

MRS. MCGUIRE and Barry's fellow boarders were stunned when he arrived home and announced that he had drawn another decapitation.

"What kind of a place is that, anyway?" the landlady demanded.

"I confess I don't know how they do business," Crane said. "When they're in doubt, I guess they fire me."

"Strange that you should be dismissed for a mistake made in another department," one of the boarders remarked. "Can you think of any reason?"

"Only one," Barry answered: "The woman who made the complaint has tried to flirt with me on several occasions without success."

Mrs. McGuire's knife and fork dropped to the plate. "That explains it all," she declared. "She's sore on you. The hussy!"

Mrs. McGuire went on to state with an air of authority that while it was a certainty his first dismissal was due to a mistake, there could be no doubt that this jealous female was back of his second discharge.

Two or three of the boarders begged Barry to accompany them to a social session of the Elks, intimating that a little diversion would help to cheer him up. After much persuasion, he accompanied them. He regretted doing so later in the evening, when he became

involved in an argument with a tipsy fellow, who asked him for the loan of his dress clothes.

"I assure you that I don't own a dress suit," Barry told him more than once.

The tipsy one laughed boisterously. "Do you think I don't know a fashion plate when I see one?" he said, lurching against Barry. "Come on, now, like a good pal; tell me I can have the loan of your party clothes for to-morrow night."

Crane tried to be patient. "I'm telling you the truth," he said. "I haven't any dress suit."

"Tell that to Foley!" the other blurted out. He made his way unsteadily to the door; but, before passing through, wheeled about and leveled a scornful finger at Barry. "The idea of a swell dresser like you being without the evening stuff!" he shouted. "You're afraid I'll wrinkle your fancy togs, eh? Well, you can keep 'em. I'll buy myself a suit better than yours."

With that, he was gone. Barry tried to laugh off the incident, although he was far from enjoying it. One of the members, noticing that he was annoyed, hastened to reassure him. "Don't mind what that fellow said," he remarked pleasantly. "He doesn't belong here. He's one of those nuisances that haunt the rooms of fraternal organizations. We have hinted strongly on numerous occasions that we could get along without him; but his sort never take a hint."

"He asked me——"

"I know," Barry's friend interrupted. "He tried to borrow your dress suit. That's his hobby. He borrowed them from our members in ten or fifteen instances; until we found it out. The minute he sees a stranger around here, he makes a play to get his evening clothes. If you had complied with his insolent request, you'd not have seen your clothes for a week."

It was not until he had arrived at the boarding house and had started to undress that it occurred to Crane why the fellow had picked him out as a man apt to have a complete wardrobe. He was still wearing the apparel he had bor-

rowed from the clothing department. That explained it. Another restless night was inevitable after the puzzling experiences of the day. Next morning he decided to look elsewhere for a position. It was half past eight when he reached this conclusion. As he was going down the stoop, he was met by a messenger boy.

"Crane live here?" asked the youth, studying the writing on a letter in his hand.

"I am Mr. Crane," answered Barry.

He took the envelope, ripped it open, pulled out a note, and read:

MR. CRANE: You were due to work in the men's furnishings, main floor, this morning, but you failed to put in an appearance. Unless you are at your post I shall engage another man to take your place. It surprises me that you should attempt to take advantage of your position. I have spoken to you about this before. The firm's feeling of obligation toward you for your service a few weeks ago explains our willingness to warn you more than once.

OLCOTT.

He dashed into the house and showed the note to Mrs. McGuire.

"That's not a department store," she said savagely. "It's a lunatic asylum."

Crane got Olcott on the telephone without delay, but as on the previous occasion, the general manager declared he had no time to listen to him.

"Forget yesterday's affair, and come to work," was Olcott's order.

"Don't pay any attention to any of them," counseled Mrs. McGuire. "Just draw your pay and let it go at that. You'll be as loony as they are if you try to figure it out."

Half an hour later, Barry was dealing out shirts, suspenders, collars, and neckties. He was not surprised when Dobbins passed the counter and gave him the friendliest kind of a greeting; nor did Olcott's smiling "Good morning, Crane!" a few minutes afterward, puzzle him. He had passed the stage where anything that happened to him in the store could upset him. He wouldn't have been surprised if Mullin had come up and asked him to luncheon.

His assignment to the main floor enabled him to see more of Mullin than he had in any of the other departments.

The first morning, watching Mullin casually, he saw him glance at his watch, then leave the store in a hurry. It was just eleven o'clock. The detective was back in the store inside of fifteen minutes. There was nothing suspicious in his leaving the place so abruptly; but when Barry saw him go through the same performance at two o'clock, he found himself trying to find a reason for the detective's actions. Mullin had a strange fascination for Barry; he could not keep his eyes off the man. This interest was due partly to Barry's inability to understand Mullin's hostility and partly to curiosity as to whether the detective would ever solve the advertising mystery.

"I'll bet he goes out to telephone," Barry decided. "But why doesn't he use our phones?"

This was the question Barry had asked himself a hundred times. On the second day, he saw Mullin leave the store, morning and afternoon, but at different hours from the day before, returning just as promptly as on the previous occasions. The third day Barry's curiosity got so far the better of him that he decided to follow the detective. When Mullin left the store that morning, Barry was not far behind him. Sure enough, the detective went straight to a telephone booth in a drug store about two blocks away; trailing him in the afternoon, Barry saw him enter the telephone booth in a candy store, to reach which he had to take an opposite course to that traversed in the morning. The detective's action in using different booths mystified Crane more than ever.

"It was perplexing enough, trying to fathom his reasons for using outside telephones," Barry thought; "but his going to a different place every time makes it doubly so. Come to think of it, the cigar store where I saw him first is the handiest place, if he insists on patronizing other telephones. Why should he run all over the neighborhood when the cigar store is so convenient?"

In vain did Barry try to reach a satisfactory conclusion. "I may be giving myself unnecessary concern over his

movements—I probably am,” he said to himself; “but I simply cannot help it.” He laughed softly; then shook his head, as if he would rid himself of the problem. “To-morrow may satisfy my curiosity,” he concluded. “The chances are he’ll use the same telephones to-morrow.”

But the detective did not use the same telephones the next day, further strengthening Barry’s suspicion that he was playing some sort of game that would not bear the light of investigation. It was while watching the detective on the afternoon of the fourth day that Barry noticed something that had escaped his attention before; nothing of great significance, but of sufficient importance to whet his curiosity still further. He saw the detective go by a store where there were half a dozen telephone booths. From the street it could be seen that these booths were idle. Why didn’t Mullin do his telephoning there? Barry asked himself this question again and again. It was while trying to find the answer that he recalled, not without a start, that during the time he had been following Mullin he had never seen him use an exposed telephone; he had never seen him use any but the nickel-in-the-slot booths. Plainly the detective avoided stores that had switchboards and operators.

“Well, I’ve found out one or two things,” thought Barry. He was on the verge of congratulating himself when his better judgment warned him to postpone congratulations. “Yes, I guess I’m getting un-uly excited,” came his second thought. “His actions are certainly suspicious, and yet— Oh, fiddlesticks! I haven’t got anything definite! Maybe his movements have to do with the firm’s advertising troubles; maybe they haven’t.”

He laughed at himself. It always ended that way. When he tried to connect the detective’s mysterious movements with what he had in his mind, self-derision was his portion. What if Mullin knew of his surveillance and was purposely putting up a joke on him? He devoted the rest of that day trying

to think of a reason why a man should want to avoid telephone booths operated from switchboards.

“I’ve got it!” he exclaimed, half aloud, just before closing time. “Mullin doesn’t want to ask for a telephone number in such public places, for fear of being overheard. He isn’t taking chances on having the operator give out any information about his messages. That’s it.”

He rubbed his hands together gleefully, repeating “That’s it!” so loud on several occasions that patrons who happened to be claiming his attention at the moment went away wondering if it was the title of a new song.

For the first time since Mullin’s actions had aroused his suspicion, Barry felt that he was making progress. Unconsciously he found himself paying more attention to Mullin than to the business of selling goods. He could scarcely wait, each day, until the detective left the store, so eager was he to pursue his investigations. Fortune, in the shape of a ten days’ stay in the haberdashery department, helped Barry in this respect. The location of the department on the main floor commanded a view of most of the doors, and as the detective passed the greater part of his time on that floor, Barry had little trouble keeping him in view.

A few mornings later, Mullin did his telephoning at the cigar store where his actions had first kindled Barry’s curiosity. That afternoon the detective patronized the booth in the drug store. Then the reason for Mullin’s constant changing of telephones took definite form. It was for the purpose of minimizing the chances of detection.

“Nothing else in the world,” concluded Barry. “He goes to different booths each day. It has taken him eight days to make the rounds. That’s the answer. But who does he telephone to? And how does he send his messages so quickly?”

The last question had given the amateur investigator considerable thought. Mullin was never in a booth more than half a minute; not long enough, rea-

soned Crane, to get a connection; at least not every time.

Several days went by without any new results so far as Barry's shadowing was concerned. This was discouraging. Mullin's actions impressed him as being suspicious; but would they impress any one else in the same way? Barry realized that he didn't have a shred of evidence that the detective was doing anything wrong. After all, there was no reason why Mullin shouldn't use any telephone that suited him. The fact that he made no effort to cover up his tracks on leaving the store was another feature that started Barry's suspicions wabbling.

"I'll watch him a few more days," he decided, "and if I don't get anything more than suspicions, I'll drop the confounded affair!"

But the very next morning his vigilance was rewarded. He made the discovery that every time Mullin stepped from a booth he was followed by the same man—a slim, sharp-featured, well-dressed fellow of middle age! He had seen the man follow Mullin into the booth the previous afternoon; he had seen him repeat the performance that morning, and, giving Mullin the benefit of the doubt, concluded it was a coincidence. But when, that afternoon, he saw the same man step into the booth the minute Mullin vacated it, he concluded that their being in the same place at the same hours twice a day was more than a coincidence. This belief became a settled conviction when, on following the sharp-featured man, he saw him enter Spencer & Todd's store by a rear door!

## CHAPTER VII.

### A WELCOME VISITOR.

**B**ARRY knew that at last he had landed something worth while—that he was on the eve of more important discoveries. Plainly there was collusion between Mullin and the man who had just passed into Spencer & Todd's; but to obtain proof of this was a task still before him.

Mullin and the sharp-featured man never exchanged a word when they met; never gave any sign of recognition. But the instant that Mullin stepped from a booth, the slim man took his place, having kept near enough to the booth after the detective had entered it to make sure that no one should come between them. Barry followed the sharp-featured man several times, and on each occasion saw him enter the rival store. But whom were they telephoning to? What was their game? In vain Barry asked himself these questions. But he was determined to find the answer. The strange developments had stimulated his curiosity to the point where nothing short of a complete solution of the matter would satisfy him.

Much to his chagrin, a big sale in the haberdashery department forced him to suspend his investigation for two or three days. He found it difficult to concentrate his thoughts on neckwear, pajamas, collars, shirts, gloves, and such things now. Yet he managed to keep his sales up to a point that saved him from a scolding by the head of the department.

He welcomed his little telephone mystery, because it helped to divert his thoughts from Rita Sheridan. Her refusal to listen to any explanation convinced him that repeated attempts along that line would only serve to lessen his self-respect. They still nodded when they met; but that was all. The last day of his stay in the haberdashery department he heard his name called. It issued from the throat of a cash boy. Instinctively Barry reached for his hat and coat. Every time he heard his name announced he could see himself explaining to Mrs. McGuire.

"Mr. Olcott wants you," the boy declared.

This information relieved Barry's anxiety. He knew that the general manager was the best friend he had in the store. Imagine his surprise when he found Rita Sheridan in the general manager's office! He was so intent on watching her that he failed to notice the annoyed expression on Olcott's face.

"Crane," said Olcott, in his most se-

vere manner, "I am going to make an example of you. I——"

"I beg pardon, sir," came from another part of the big office, the owner of the voice advancing toward Olcott. In his confusion caused by wondering what was in store for him, Barry had not noticed the fellow before. It was the man who had upbraided him for not loaning him his dress suit.

"Please don't interrupt, sir," admonished Olcott, addressing the speaker. The man fell back with a mumbled apology; Rita, a frightened look in her eyes, was biting her lip nervously.

"Crane," Olcott went on, in the same icy tones, "I am sorry that you have reached the end of your rope. This gentleman has been put to unnecessary expense and annoyance through your mismanagement. When he ordered a dress suit——"

"But, Mr. Olcott——" Barry broke in.

"Silence, sir!" cried the general manager. "I'll have none of your insolence. When he ordered a dress suit, I say, he had every right to get what he had paid for. He got a suit of overalls, and was forced to rent a dress suit. I don't know whether your sense of humor is responsible for the blunder, and I don't care, but I do know——this with an air of finality——"that you have ended your career in this store. I know what you are about to say: That you didn't take this man's order. That makes no difference. You are in charge of that department, and you engaged the man who did take his order. That makes you responsible. The cashier will give you what's coming to you. Get out of here, and be quick about it."

Barry saw the futility of protest. It was the general manager who was swinging the ax this time. There was no appeal from his decision. Rita had turned her head away. He bowed to his superior, and passed out of the door without a word. It still wanted an hour of six o'clock when he reached his boarding house.

"Home early, aren't you?" said Mrs. McGuire pleasantly.

"Home to stay, this trip," answered Barry, dropping into a chair.

She regarded him curiously. "Have——have you been fired again?" she faltered.

Barry answered in the affirmative. Mrs. McGuire folded her hands in her apron, and remained silent for a moment.

"Well," she said presently, "you're improving. You've lasted ten days this time."

"It's the finish, now," said Barry. "The G. M. presented me with my resignation this time, and, to tell you the truth, I don't care an awful lot. I'm getting gray trying to figure the thing out."

"Any reason this time?"

"I'm not certain. The fellow who made this complaint was the man who insisted on borrowing a dress suit from me. He may have done it for revenge, but, to tell the truth, he seemed to be as much mystified as I was."

He was in no mood to meet the other boarders, so he retired to his own room and endeavored to compose his mind by reading the history of Ireland. At about eight o'clock there came a rap on the door.

"Come in!" called Barry.

Mrs. McGuire, a finger on her lips mysteriously, entered the room. "A lady to see you, and a mighty pretty one," she whispered.

Together they made their way to the reception room on the main floor. The moment he appeared on the threshold Miss Sheridan came forward to meet him.

"Rita!" exclaimed Barry. "This is a great pleasure!"

Mrs. McGuire showing a decided reluctance to leave them, Barry decided to allow her to remain.

"Miss Sheridan——Mrs. McGuire!" he said, by way of introduction. "Miss Sheridan is in charge of the cloak and suit department at Waldron Brothers."

The landlady bowed. "I'm glad to hear that some one is still working there," she remarked.

Rita laughed heartily at this. "I see you are familiar with Mr. Crane's

strange case," she said. "Well, I came here for the express purpose of throwing a little light on the situation."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT.

**B**ARRY looked at Miss Sheridan expectantly; Mrs. McGuire pulled her chair closer, and sat at attention. Their eagerness set Rita's laughter rippling again.

"I'm sure you'll roar when you hear it," she said to Crane. "I haven't felt so badly in a long time as I did this afternoon when I saw Olcott discharge you."

Rita was looking straight at him, something of the old friendliness in her eyes.

"I was in Mr. Olcott's office going over some changes that are to be made in my department," she continued, "when the man who got the overalls instead of the dress suit entered and made his complaint. I was surprised when I heard Mr. Olcott send the boy after you. I knew that you hadn't been in the clothing department in weeks. I had all I could do to keep from crying when I heard him scold you—when I saw that he would not let you defend yourself. After you had gone and the complaining person had left the office, I was surprised to see Mr. Olcott burst into a laugh. 'No use talking,' he said to me, 'Crane plays that part to perfection.'"

Barry and Mrs. McGuire were hanging on every word.

"Olcott seemed to be getting so much enjoyment out of such a tragic situation," Rita hurried on, "that I was amazed. 'Yes, sir,' he said, 'Crane is the best man we have ever had for that job.' 'What do you mean, Mr. Olcott?' I asked him. 'Why, can it be possible you don't understand?' he said, and chuckled. 'Didn't you know that Crane was our firing man?' I told him I had not been aware of it up to that moment. I didn't know that Wilson had resigned from the position."

"The firing man!" Crane repeated. "What the dickens is that?"

"I must be awfully dense," put in the landlady. "I don't get it yet."

"Why," Miss Sheridan explained, "every department store—in fact, most of the large corporations whose employees come in direct contact with the public—have what is known as a firing man. He has to bear the brunt of the mistakes made by the other employees. Whenever a customer makes a complaint, the head of the department concerned sends for the firing man, abuses him like a pirate, doesn't give him a chance to say a word, and then discharges him. This satisfies the complaining customer, and doesn't reduce the strength of the store's operating force. In——"

There was a hilarious shout from Barry. Everything was clear to him. Mrs. McGuire was a bit late in grasping the idea; but when she did, she laughed until she shed her frizzes, rats, and back hair.

"The best I ever heard!" she kept repeating hysterically.

"That explains Olcott's repeated warnings not to take advantage of my position," Barry said. "Bully joke, and all on me!"

"Surely," said Rita. "Every time you stayed home he thought you were cheating."

"That explains why the assistant managers have been firing me one day and trying to kiss me the next," added Barry, his face wreathed in smiles.

"It explains everything," came from Mrs. McGuire.

Barry assumed a thoughtful attitude. "I am wondering," he said, "why it should be necessary for them to have a firing man. While it is true that I have been discharged three times in a very short period, it seems as if the dismissals should have come oftener considering the size of the store."

"I can explain that," said Rita. "While the heads of each department have scores of complaints to entertain each day, it is only in extreme cases that they find it necessary to discharge the firing man—cases where the complainant will not be satisfied unless some one is dismissed for the mistake that

has caused the trouble; also, where the blunder committed by a clerk is so stupid that the head of the department wishes to impress the complainant that the firm will not tolerate such stupidity."

"I see," said Barry, and Mrs. McGuire nodded understandingly.

"Another thing," continued Rita: "You happened to be engaged for the job at the dullest time of the year, so far as complaints are concerned. During the Christmas holidays, when shoppers are on nervous edge and the vast amount of business makes for a greater number of mistakes, the firing man may be discharged a dozen times in one day. Wilson, your predecessor, had a record of seven 'fires' in one morning. The heads of the departments were fighting for his services that day. Now that I have relieved your anxiety, I want to urge you to treat the information confidentially. It is not generally known."

"But it's strange that Olcott or some of his assistants didn't tell me," said Barry.

"Well, there's been a slip-up somewhere," replied Rita. "Some one should have told you. Take my advice, and go back to work to-morrow, acting as if you knew all about it."

Barry chuckled softly. "You bet I will!" he said. "Now that I'm no longer in the dark, I think I'll get some fun out of this job."

## CHAPTER IX.

### IN HIGH SPIRITS.

YOU may be sure that Barry accompanied Rita to her home that night, and that their differences were patched up and they parted better friends than ever.

"I'm awfully glad I was able to bring you such good news," she said, when they were alone. "It gave me a chance to make up for doing you a great injustice. This morning I learned from some of the girls in my department that the peroxide person's been trying to force her attentions on almost every man in the store."

Barry laughed and wished her luck. "Do you know," he said, "that I was

fired as the result of one of her complaints, and I was foolish enough to think that she had taken that means of getting even with me for ignoring her advances?"

Rita thought it was the best joke of the season.

"You spoke about some changes in your department," said Barry. "Anything important?"

"In a way. Olcott and I have been trying to find some way to keep the prices at our spring sale from Spencer & Todd. We haven't hit upon a plan yet, and it doesn't look as though we shall. The sale must be advertised, and there doesn't seem to be any way of keeping our prices from the opposition. Somebody is tipping them off regularly."

"Remarkable that Spencer & Todd's informants should defy detection so long," remarked Crane.

"Olcott, Mullin, and most of the department heads are convinced that the rival store has agents planted in the newspaper offices. That's my theory, too."

Crane did not want to tell Rita what was in his mind just then. The subject of the mysterious advertising leak caused his thoughts to revert to Mullin and the latter's accomplice, for, despite the fact that he had not seen the two men betray their relations by either look or word, he believed that there was a complete understanding between them. On the way back to his boarding house, he gave himself up to contemplation of Waldron Brothers' advertising troubles.

In this thoughtful mood he left Sixth Avenue and turned into West Eighteenth Street. The darkness of that thoroughfare, which stretched away to the North River, was relieved only by the feeble light of the gas lamps that dotted the way at long intervals. All at once a shabby-looking individual loomed up in his path.

"My friend," came in a shaky voice from the vicinity of Barry's elbow; "my friend, could I presume upon your philanthropy to the extent of negotiating an insignificant loan?"

The man's attire was so strangely at variance with his soft speech and supply of large words that Crane could not help smiling. Something told him he had heard that voice and delivery before. The darkness made it impossible to get a good look at him. Crane knew that holdups and assaults were not infrequent in that part of the city, yet somehow he did not fear the man trotting along at his side. Knowledge of his own skill and strength was largely responsible for this confidence.

Curious to hear that voice again, Barry decided to question the man. "What do you want the money for?" he asked.

"The legitimacy of my appeal will undoubtedly astonish you," returned the shabby one. "It is long past the hour when I should have retired. Inability to persuade exacting landlords that they should trust me for a bed is my only excuse for lingering on the highway. Twenty cents will assure me a pleasant voyage to slumberland at yonder tavern. What say you, friend?"

As he finished this incongruous appeal, they passed under a street lamp. Each jumped back with a start, Crane uttering a sharp exclamation. Now he knew where he had heard that voice; he was facing the fellow who unwittingly had been the means of his being employed with Waldron Brothers—the man whose flight he had interrupted, who, later, had escaped from Mullin.

The stranger regained his composure with remarkable celerity. In the same high-sounding phrases, in the same nonchalant manner, he spoke up: "I perceive by your contemplative attitude that you are about to summon the authorities and have me placed in durance vile. Well"—this with an indifferent shrug of the shoulders—"I'm not certain that I shall enter any protest to such a proceeding. A period of repose in jail would give me opportunity for meditation. My peregrinations have been anything but rose-strewn since our last meeting."

Crane found himself studying his strange companion. His mania for large words interested and amused him. He recalled the man's loquaciousness on

the day he had captured him. He could not bring himself to believe that he was really vicious. As for having him arrested, the thought vanished from Barry's mind. Indeed, he was deeply touched by the plight of the man before him. He knew that the fellow was wanted by the police; but he could not find it in his heart, brimming with happiness ever since that last meeting with Miss Sheridan, to add to his misery. Two months of dissipation had reduced the man to a pasty-faced, hollow-eyed wreck, unkempt in appearance and unsteady of gait.

Crane gave him a dollar, which so surprised the man that he wept and poured out effusive thanks, never forgetting, however, to employ words of four and five syllables. Singularly enough, that dollar proved to be one of the best investments Crane had ever made. The object of his kindness told him a story which sent him on his way smiling, but not before Crane had promised to assist him in regaining his self-respect.

The umbrella department claimed Barry's services for the next week. Business was not so brisk but that he found time to keep an eye on Mullin. Every time the store detective went away on a telephoning expedition, Crane was just far enough behind to check up his movements. Mullin's feeling of security made Barry's task easier; but he knew that he had to proceed cautiously. He was certain in his own mind that he had established a connection between Mullin and the man who followed him into the booth on each occasion. He was equally certain that one unguarded act on his part would warn them of his interest in their movements, thereby bringing to naught his efforts to get proof of their relation.

For several days the case remained at a standstill. One morning, just as Crane was losing patience, he made a discovery which quickened his desire to get complete proof of his suspicions. That afternoon he saw something else—something that convinced him that a daring move on his part was necessary if he would get what he was after.

"It's a long chance," he thought, as he made his way back to the store. "It's a long chance, but it's my only one. I'll take it. Let me see. This is Tuesday. Thursday morning will be my best opportunity."

The hours seemed to drag for Crane until Thursday morning. The store detective was on his mind all the time now. Every thing else was lovely, though. Olcott was even friendlier than he had been before those once mysterious dismissals had been presented. Crane found the other heads of departments who had discharged him just as amiable as the general manager. But nothing could keep his thoughts off Mullin. Rita spoke of his preoccupation when they were together. Barry admitted that he had something on his mind, and begged her to bear with him a few days longer.

Soon after the store opened that morning, he was jolted out of his preoccupied state by the spectacle of the blond trouble-maker bearing down on him at full speed. He clapped on his hat with the idea of fooling her into the belief that he was there in the capacity of customer, not employee.

"I thought you'd been dismissed," she chirped blithely.

Crane knew that it would take a lot of diplomacy to extricate himself from the embarrassing situation. He assumed his most severe expression. "Were you addressing me?" he asked icily.

The plume on her hat waved affirmatively. "I said I thought you had been dismissed," she repeated, a little louder this time.

"Isn't it possible that you have made a mistake?" His frigid attitude shook her confidence.

She bored him through with her loose, blue eyes. "Then—then you don't work here?" she said doubtfully.

Barry thought he had outwitted her, but at that moment she brought her hands together with a loud report. "What are you doing behind the counter if you don't work here?" she demanded. "Customers generally stand on this side." She shot a look of triumph at him.

In his excitement he had forgotten to step from behind the counter. But he had gone too far now to turn back. "Am I behind the counter?" he inquired, laughing easily. "Really, I must have wandered back there to look in the show case."

The plumes assumed a menacing attitude. "Do you mean to stand there and tell me that you weren't fired recently by the head of the china department?" she insisted.

Barry looked his annoyance. "Perhaps, if you stopped to consider that there are several hundred men employed in this store," he returned, in the same chilling tones, "you would have realized that it is possible to find two men who greatly resemble each other."

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said quickly. "I guess I have made a mistake. I could have sworn that you were the same man who had been dismissed in the china department. The resemblance is truly remarkable. I happened to be there when the manager dismissed him, and I wanted to assure him that I had nothing to do with it. Pardon my persistence."

Crane bowed low and resumed his inspection of the umbrella stock. In confusion, the blonde started away. That there was still a doubt in her mind was evidenced by her action in turning every ten or fifteen feet, to ascertain if he was fooling her. Barry knew that she expected to catch him laughing. Through the tail of his eye he saw her mount the escalator, and, riding backward, the better to keep him in view, disappear over the horizon into the furniture department.

"Great Scott!" he said to himself. "Talk about narrow escapes! Am I never going to see the last of that woman?"

The prospect of having her continually bobbing up to annoy him was so disturbing as to rob him of his accustomed tranquillity. The more he thought of it, the more irritable he became. Consequently, when he saw an officious-looking old man, with white whiskers and lawn tie to match, pick up an umbrella and start away with it, he

called out: "Drop that!" and started after him. The old man darted a curious look in his direction and kept right on going. "Come back with——"

"Sh, Crane!" whispered a fellow clerk, tugging at Barry's sleeve. "That's the new head of a department, I think. At least, I saw him talking with Olcott in the general manager's office a little while ago."

"Oh!" ejaculated Barry. "All—right, sir."

The old man continued on his way to the street without paying the slightest attention to the salesman who had called to him.

"Must be one of the department heads," said Crane to himself.

Just then he caught sight of Mullin gliding through one of the side doors. Crane was after him in an instant, keeping far enough in the rear to minimize the chances of detection. After a while Crane came back toward the store, and the puzzled look was no longer on his face; he was smiling. Turning a corner sharply, he ran straight into Mullin. The angry look in the detective's eyes showed that he had awakened to the espionage.

"What do you mean by following me?" he demanded hotly.

Barry laughed. "What makes you think I've been following you?" he countered banteringly, his eyes looking squarely into the detective's.

"I know you have," replied Mullin. "And you've done it for the last time. You were ordered to keep off my preserves, and I'll see to it that you don't get another chance to disobey those orders."

"All right, Mullin," said Barry. "I'll promise not to follow you any more."

The airy manner in which he said it appeared to puzzle the detective. He looked at Crane steadily a moment, as if trying to read his mind; then, snapping his fingers contemptuously, entered the store without making a reply.

Barry was still smiling when he reached the umbrella department. His high spirits communicated themselves to his fellow clerks. Even a summons to

appear at the office of the general manager couldn't remove his smile.

"Another fire, I suppose," he chuckled, as he made his way to the eighth floor.

He was right. The elderly person with the white whiskers was the one who had sent for him. Three or four sour-faced people, all of whom Barry divined to be complainants, were in the reception room. Olcott, Mullin, and several of the department heads were grouped about the old man, their faces pictures of solemnity. Mullin kept his eyes averted from Barry.

"You're Mr. Crane, aren't you?" piped the old man.

"Yes," replied Barry, in a trembling voice. He wanted to show Olcott and the others that he was a good actor.

"Well, you're discharged!" declared the old man angrily. "Get your money and leave the building at once!"

Barry worked his fingers nervously. "Please, sir——"

"Get out!" came the sharp command.

With his head on his chest, Barry staggered from the room. At a safe distance, he broke into a laugh. "I guess I put it over strong that time," he said to himself.

He listened for sounds of hilarity from his employers; he didn't hear any, and concluded that the complainants were still in the vicinity of the office. Humming a snatch of song, he went back to the umbrella department. As it was early in the day, he didn't feel justified in going home. Late in the afternoon, he was surprised to see the white-whiskered one hurrying toward him.

"Didn't I tell you to leave this store?" he thundered.

Barry winked at him.

"Don't you dare wink at me, sir!" the old man declared hotly. "Get out, this instant!"

A laugh from Barry threw the old man into a rage. He called for the head of the department.

Barry hastened to explain. "I didn't go home when you fired me," he said, "because it was too early. Did you mean that I should get out of the store for the day?"

The head of the department came up at this juncture. "What's happened, Mr. Waldron?" he asked eagerly.

Mr. Waldron! Barry drew back, astonished. The other clerks, none of whom had been in the department more than a few weeks, were flabbergasted. So this was the head of the great establishment! Barry remembered then that David Waldron passed most of his time in Europe.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Waldron," he began. "You know I'm the firing man, and——"

"You were, but you're not any longer!" declared the head of the firm. "I discharged you for good and sufficient reasons. Get out or I'll have you thrown out!"

## CHAPTER X.

### PICKING THE FRUIT.

THE suddenness of the blow as well as its unexpected source knocked Crane out of his wonted composure. The previous dismissals had mystified him until matters had been explained; this one stunned him. There was no mistaking the genuineness of this discharge. It came from David Waldron himself. "For good and sufficient reasons," the old man had declared. These words kept racing through Barry's brain. What did the old man mean? In the excitement of the moment Crane had forgotten Mullin's threat. It came back vividly when Mullin passed within a few feet of him, a triumphant leer on his swarthy face. This made Crane's fighting blood boil.

"They've got to tell me what those reasons are," he said to himself. "Mullin has made good his threat."

The next instant he was on his way to the elevator. At the eighth floor he met Olcott, about to descend.

"Sorry, Crane," the general manager said.

"Thank you," returned Barry; "but I think I've a right to something more than sympathy. I think I'm entitled to justice."

Olcott regarded him inquiringly. "But Mr. Waldron has dismissed you,"

he said. "Surely he can exercise that privilege, being the head of the establishment."

"Of course," agreed Barry quickly. "Nothing wrong with his discharging me, if he wants to do so. But I think I'm entitled to those 'good and sufficient reasons' he spoke of as the basis for my dismissal."

Olcott weighed the matter a moment. "I'll try to persuade Mr. Waldron to give you a hearing," he said. "You are entitled to that. You've done splendid work for us."

They retraced their steps to Olcott's office; Mr. Waldron made his headquarters there whenever he visited the store. While Olcott was interceding with the owner of the store in behalf of Crane, the latter stepped into a telephone booth and sent a message.

"Mr. Waldron will give you a few minutes, Mr. Crane," Olcott called out, holding the door ajar to admit Barry, who entered the room.

The old man did not mince matters. "You want the reasons for your dismissal?" he said brusquely.

"I do," answered Crane.

"Very well, then; you shall have them: You've been dismissed for interfering with the work of Mr. Mullin—work of the most difficult kind. He has been trying night and day to find the rascal who is betraying our advertising department to the opposition. You were warned to tend to your own duties and leave the solution of the mystery to him. You have disobeyed those orders. There; you have the reasons for your discharge."

"Does Mullin make these charges?" asked Barry.

"He does," said Mr. Waldron.

"Will Mullin make them to my face?" Barry inquired.

"Why—why, I don't see that it's necessary to prolong this discussion," Waldron said haltingly. Plainly he had been impressed by Crane's earnestness. "Still, if it will make you feel any more reconciled, I suppose we can arrange it." He turned to Olcott. "Bring Mullin here."

Ten minutes elapsed, and then Mul-

lin came in. His eyes met Crane's the instant he stepped over the threshold. The detective looked from Crane to Olcott, from Olcott to Waldron, his manner one of supreme confidence.

"Mr. Crane wishes to ask you a few questions," Mr. Waldron said, waving a hand in the dismissed salesman's direction.

Mullin turned sharply, his eyes filled with hatred; Barry returned the gaze unflinchingly.

"Did you tell Mr. Waldron that I interfered with your work?" Crane began quietly.

"Yes!" snapped Mullin. "And you have."

"In what way?"

Mullin glared at him. "You know well enough. You know you followed me to-day. You know that the general manager ordered you not to butt in. But you don't know that amateurs like yourself only spoil things; you have practically spoiled what I have done to solve the mystery." Realizing that he had the upper hand, the accusations came from him in a rush. Each one brought him closer to Barry; he looked as if he would have liked to tear him apart.

"Mullin speaks the truth," Waldron interposed. "There's been altogether too much meddling by amateur sleuths. I have every faith in Mullin."

"I beg pardon, sir," said Barry, "there hasn't been half enough meddling. That's the trouble. If there had been a little more meddling you wouldn't have had the advertising mystery on your hands so long."

As Barry spoke, he walked over and closed the door. Waldron had risen from his chair and was staring after him. Olcott, his breath coming in short gasps, showed impatience at Barry's deliberation. Mullin started to leave the room.

"I'm too busy to listen to this man's half-baked theories," he said, with a sneer.

"But you're going to listen, nevertheless," Barry declared firmly, placing his back against the door. "You've gone out of your way to make it unpleasant

for me since the day I entered this store. Now, I'm going to tell you a few things."

Barry's eyes were ablaze with the light of battle. Mullin took a step toward the door; then changed his mind. He didn't like what he saw in the face of the powerful young fellow that blocked his way.

"Go as far as you like," said Mullin, with an effort of indifference.

Waldron cut in at this point. "Mr. Crane, will you explain what you meant by that remark about meddling?"

"Just this," replied Barry. "Mullin had an object in discouraging the efforts of any one else to solve the mystery. The longer he could keep people from meddling, the longer he could keep on the pay roll of Spencer & Todd."

Mullin went white and red by turns. His confidence left him for the first time. "You lie!" he almost shrieked. "You're plumb crazy!"

Barry reddened. "Any other time I'd resent those first words in a man's way," he said quietly. "I'm too busy now. As for my being crazy, we'll all be in a better position to vote on that proposition in a few minutes."

Waldron and Olcott were watching the two men intently, consternation on their faces.

"Do you mean to charge that Mullin has been selling us out?" Waldron asked.

"I mean to charge just that—and a little more," answered Barry. "Mullin is at the bottom of what he has been calling the advertising mystery. Mystery! That's pretty good. I am not sure that he did not originate the so-called mystery; I have ever reason to suspect that he did; but I do know that he is the only one in this store who has benefited by the treachery."

Waldron and Olcott turned on Mullin. The detective tried to force a smile; it was a ghastly effort. He appeared to be shriveling in his clothes.

"This fellow's crazy," he said weakly.

"Surely, Mr. Crane, you must have some proof to back up such terrible charges!" Olcott exclaimed. "Mullin

has been with us a long time, and he has had our entire confidence."

"And he has betrayed it," Barry answered. "Unfortunately, I haven't got all the proof I would like to have."

"There goes his pipe dream," cried Mullin.

"Still, I think I've got enough to satisfy even him," Barry went on. He cleared his throat. His listeners, Mullin included, moved forward, eager for the details. "For a long time," Barry began slowly, "I was at a loss to account for Mullin's hostility to me. Now I think I know the reason. However, we'll get to that part of the story later."

Having delivered himself of this preface for the detective's benefit, Crane recited briefly the results of his campaign of surveillance, beginning with the day that Mullin's first appearance in a telephone booth outside the store had aroused his curiosity, and taking his small audience up to the moment he ascertained that the detective was in collusion with one of Spencer & Todd's employees; from that point he told his story in greater detail. Waldron and Olcott exchanged mystified looks at every new development in the tale of treachery, seemingly unable to comprehend it all.

"Not until then did I feel certain that I was on the trail of the man who was selling out Waldron Brothers," Barry went on. "But while I was satisfied that there was collusion between Mullin and the man that followed him into the booth on every occasion, I had no proof of any wrongdoing on their part. For days and days I tried to figure out what they were doing and how they were doing it—why they found it necessary to do so much telephoning? I got my answer two days ago."

Mullin was staring straight ahead, the silence of the room broken only by his labored breathing and Barry's even tones.

"Then it was that I made the discovery that they did not use the telephones at all," said Crane. "They just picked up the receivers for a bluff. The natural conclusion was that they were using the booths solely for the purpose of

transferring Waldron Brothers' advertisements to Spencer & Todd's man and from him back to Mullin. The——"

"Back to Mullin!" repeated Olcott, puzzled.

"Yes. I was just going to explain that part of it. You will be amazed at the cleverness of the arrangement. My investigations convinced me that the scheme was worked in this way: Mullin borrowed an advertising proof sheet every day, presumably in the line of his duty, taking great care, however, to borrow it from a different manager on each occasion. At ten or eleven or twelve, each morning, he would hurry to the appointed place, drop the proof on the floor of the booth, and then step out and make way for Spencer & Todd's man who would pick up the proof and carry it away; at two or three or four, after Spencer & Todd had copied the ad, their man would take the original to a booth where Mullin would pick it up and return it to the man from whom he had borrowed it. These transfers were arranged at varying hours each day to lessen the chances of detection. Mullin's returning the proof on each occasion made him immune from suspicion."

"He borrowed my proofs yesterday," Olcott spoke up.

Waldron took a deep breath, rose, and paced up and down the room, his hands clenched behind his back. "Was there ever such rascality?" he kept repeating aloud.

"The scheme was worked out to the smallest detail," Barry went on. "No telling how much longer they might have continued their operations. Why, they didn't take the chance of placing the proof in an envelope. An envelope lying on the floor would have excited curiosity if by any chance the wrong man happened to enter the booth. Spencer & Todd's man has been in the habit of shoving the folded sheet of paper into his outside overcoat pocket. I was near enough to it to have snatched it on several occasions; but that would have upset everything."

Waldron stopped abruptly in his walk, and turned to Barry. "I don't need to tell you, Mr. Crane," he as-

serted, with an effort at control, "I don't need to tell you that your story has shocked me. I have no doubt that it is true in every detail, but what can you offer in the way of proof?"

"Only this," said Barry. He drew a crumpled sheet of paper from his pocket and spread it on the table. It was the proof sheet of a page advertisement that was to be published in the newspapers the following morning!

Waldron reached for it excitedly. "And—and you found this in a telephone booth?" asked the head of the firm, with great deliberation.

"This morning," Barry announced. "The instant Mullin vacated the booth, I entered and picked up the proof he had dropped there."

Mullin sprang to his feet, a look of terror in his eyes. He flashed a look at Crane in a vain effort to read the latter's mind.

Crane returned the detective's frightened look with a smile. "You knew that I had been following you to-day," he said, looking straight at Mullin. "That's why you insisted on my dismissal. But you didn't know that I had beaten your friend to the booth, did you?"

"It's the advertisement announcing our big cloak and suit sale," Olcott put in, taking the proof sheet from Waldron's hand.

The fact that it was the advertisement for Rita's department had not occurred to Barry. As a matter of fact, he had given the paper only a hurried glance up to that time. But the discovery pleased him immensely.

"Miss Sheridan and I have been planning for weeks to keep that advertisement away from our rivals," Olcott explained. "But what chance did we have against such a conspiracy?"

"You needn't worry," said Barry. "This is one ad that Spencer & Todd are not going to print."

Waldron and Olcott looked inquiringly in his direction; Mullin, too, appeared to be waiting for his explanation.

"I got it at Thompson's drug store this morning," Barry continued. "The

booth in that place is the only one of all those they were using that offered an opportunity for the success of the move I had planned. It is so situated that you can stand behind one of the floor displays and see into it without being seen. This morning I followed Mullin into the drug store and took my place behind the floor display, knowing that he would leave by another aisle. Spencer & Todd's man was within a few feet of me, but as I appeared to be inspecting prices and articles he never suspected me. The moment Mullin cleared the door of the booth, I fairly leaped into the booth, pushing his accomplice to one side. I picked up the proof sheet of the advertisement from the floor, shoved it in my pocket, dropped a crumpled sheet of paper of the same size on the floor, and then, to lull the suspicions of the man who was chafing outside, sent a real telephone message. When I came out, I offered him a thousand pardons; he took them. I also had the satisfaction of seeing him pick up my dummy sheet and stuff it in his pocket."

## CHAPTER XI.

### A WILLING SUCCESSOR.

MULLIN just stared at the ceiling. His confidence had returned to some extent toward the end of Barry's recital, and now, a picture of arrogant defiance, he stood with shoulders squared, awaiting the head of the firm's action.

"Well, Mr. Crane," Waldron said thoughtfully, "you certainly have handled this matter in a masterful way. I don't know what you could have been thinking of when you said you did not have all the proof you would like to have."

"I was wondering along the same lines," said Olcott.

Crane hastened to explain: "I meant that I would have liked a little more time to find out how much Mullin was getting for his treachery," he said.

Waldron turned to Mullin. "Perhaps our loyal detective will be willing to supply that detail himself now that

he sees further denial would be useless," the proprietor said, with stinging sarcasm.

It was lost on Mullin. He laughed brazenly. "Let young Sherlock Holmes find that out for you," came his sneering rejoinder. As he spoke, he nodded in Barry's direction. "You'll get nothing out of me."

"Then perhaps we can get light on the subject," said Crane, "from a gentleman who, I think, must be in the reception room by now." As he spoke, he stepped to the door and threw it open.

"Greetings, friend Crane!" came in flowery tones from the waiting room. "I received your telephonic communication half an hour since, and hastened hitherward in response to the summons."

At sound of the voice, Waldron and Olcott saw Mullin start. A second later, when a shabby-looking fellow stepped into the office, the detective gave a sharp cry of surprise.

"Dayton!" he gasped.

"Mr. Chauncey Fletcher Dayton to you, sir," came from the stranger, with a grandiloquent sweep of his tattered sleeve.

Plainly Mullin was puzzled by this new turn of events. He stared hard at the newcomer. Dayton returned the stare.

"Unable to grasp the situation, I take it," observed Dayton, in the same cheerful manner. "You thought you had inculcated fear of incarceration in my heart when you threatened to conspire against my liberty if I tarried in this sort——"

"Who is this man?" asked Waldron, unable to restrain his curiosity long enough for Dayton to finish his oratorical outburst.

Olcott took his employer to one side. "This is the fellow we caught prowling about the advertising department," he said; "the one Crane nabbed."

"Oh, I remember!" Waldron said; "the man who escaped from Mullin."

A low laugh greeted this statement. It came from Dayton. "Escaped!" he repeated. "Pardon my unseemly levity, gentlemen, but the intimation that I had

eluded your detective is too grotesque for anything. I assure you that my dignity is not proof against such a ridiculous assertion."

At any other time Waldron and Olcott would have enjoyed the assault on the English language from such an extraordinary source. As it was, however, they were fast losing patience. Barry was the only one in the room who appeared to be appreciating Dayton's comedy.

"Do you suppose you could get your friend to tell us in a few words just what he knows about this affair?" said Olcott, with an appealing look toward Barry.

"I doubt it," replied Crane, with a chuckle. "Mr. Dayton insists on telling things in his own way." Then to the new actor on the scene: "See if you can't sidetrack a few adjectives and get right down to facts."

Another bow from Dayton; another sweep of the shabby sleeve. "In deference to your expressed desire for brevity," Dayton began, "I would make bold to say that I did not escape from Mullin. He permitted me to get away."

Waldron gave vent to a low whistle. "I think I see through it all, now," he declared.

"Much as I dislike to appear in the rôle of an informer," Dayton declared, "my own position makes it imperative that I should disclose my relations with Mullin. Three months ago, I had the misfortune to make his acquaintance at a time when money had been making a successful effort to ignore me. In this financial predicament, I was more than willing to meet him halfway when he suggested that we might both make a tidy sum by hypothecating—I believe that's the word; yes, I'm sure it is—your advertising each day for the benefit of Messrs. Spencer & Todd. I was to make the necessary abstraction, and he was to protect me in every way. He showed me how to get the proof sheets. We were to divide our ill-gotten gains equally. I——"

"How much was he getting for the job?" Waldron interposed.

"One hundred dollars a week," re-

plied Dayton. "At least, that's what he told me. Everything was the embodiment of tranquillity until the merry morning that I was intercepted by our friend Crane. Mullin permitted me to escape, but that night he hunted me up and informed me that he had decided to abandon our advertising venture, having reached the conclusion that the thing was too risky. I took his word for it. But when I picked up the newspapers and saw that Spencer & Todd were still obtaining the necessary information, I knew that Mullin had grossly deceived me; that his avariciousness had overpowered him, and that he was appropriating the amount that formerly had been shared with me. Naturally, I called the matter to his attention; to my intense surprise, he admitted that my suspicions were correct. Then he threatened to send me to prison if I did not keep away from him, broadly intimating that, if necessary, he would manufacture the evidence to put me behind the bars. Knowing that Mullin would do just as he had threatened, I gave him a wide berth. A few nights since—quite by accident, I assure you—I met Mr. Crane, and his splendid generosity, even after he had recognized me, prompted me to tell him my story. I gave him my address and a telephone number that would reach me in case he wanted me. He sent for me to-day. I have told my story, and now I am willing to take the consequences."

"Consequences!" sneered Mullin. "Serves me right for mixing up with a rank amateur."

"I plead guilty to the indictment," said Dayton. "I was an amateur. And if I hadn't met you I wouldn't even have been an amateur. It was my first false step; it will be my last. I don't know just what my punishment for this offense is going to be, but I do know that when the ends of justice have been satisfied I shall make every effort to live an upright life."

For the moment, Waldron, Olcott, and Barry forgot there had been such a thing as an advertising mystery. There was something pathetic in the broken figure that stood before them, freely

confessing his part in the conspiracy, without any expectation of immunity, but making it clear that he had learned his lesson. In striking contrast to Dayton was the defiant attitude of Mullin.

"Well, now that the evidence is all in, what are you going to do about it?" the detective said insolently.

Waldron eyed the detective curiously. "There are better men than you in State's prison, Mullin," he began, after a while. "I am pretty certain that I could send you there if I set out to do so. Prosecution of you would only bring the store a lot of undesirable publicity, the kind, as you are well aware, all business concerns are anxious to avoid. I have no doubt that, in your sneaking way, you figured it out in advance that in the event of your treachery being discovered we would not push the case against you. You are the meanest kind of a criminal, but I am not going to send you to jail. I am going to discharge you and see to it that you do not get another position in this city. I have no use for the black list; but honest employers have a right to be protected from men of your stripe. Now get out!"

Mullin hurried out of the door and was gone.

After a moment of silence, Mr. Waldron was the first to speak. "Mr. Crane," he said slowly, "I want to apologize for my treatment of you earlier in the day. I know that you will understand. Mullin had our entire confidence; he fooled us completely." Barry bowed respectfully. "Your loyalty and alertness," the proprietor went on, "will save us thousands of dollars, not to mention the worry and annoyance caused us by unscrupulous rivals. Needless to say, we would be delighted to have you remain with us; and we will be willing to make it worth your while to do so."

"And you won't have to be the 'firing man,' either," Olcott put in, bringing a laugh from Mr. Waldron.

"That's not a bad job," said Barry. "I rather enjoyed it toward the finish. But I think some one should have told

me the nature of my duties in the first place."

Olcott clutched Barry's arm. "Didn't Mullin explain all that to you?"

"He did not."

"Why, I told him to," said Olcott. "You recollect that while you and I were discussing the details of your employment, I was called away before I could finish. I directed Mullin, who was present, to explain everything to you."

"He never did it," Barry replied. "And in the light of what we have just learned, it is easy to understand why he didn't. The minute I caught Dayton, Mullin became my enemy. It was to Mullin's advantage to have me believe that the dismissals were genuine. He was anxious to get me out of the store."

Waldron nodded. "That explains everything," he said. "Mr. Crane," he added, after a pause, "how about taking Mullin's job at double the salary we paid him—two thousand five hundred dollars a year, to be exact?"

Barry could scarcely believe his ears. "Why—why that would tickle me to death," he replied, not without some confusion. "But isn't that a whole lot of money to pay a store detective?"

"Not for the brand of detective work you do," answered Waldron.

As the head of the big store said this, he extended his right hand. Barry shook it cordially, and thanked him for the promotion. A slight cough from the other side of the room warned them that Dayton was still on the anxious seat.

"I'm a bit puzzled how to proceed in the case of our friend Dayton," Waldron said, in a kindly tone. He was studying him. A wistful look had crept into Dayton's eyes.

"I'm inclined to think he's not a bad sort," put in Olcott.

Barry came to the defense of the verbose unfortunate. "That's the opinion I formed after a long talk with him the other night," he said. "He made such a favorable impression on me that I decided to take a chance with him. He assured me that he would come here

and confront Mullin whenever I should send for him. He has kept his word. It was his first offense, and——"

"I'll leave it to you, Crane," interrupted Waldron. "What shall we do for him?"

"Give him a job, if you can, sir," Barry answered.

Waldron did not seem to take kindly to this suggestion. "I thought of something in the way of money," he said.

"A chance to do an honest day's work is what Dayton needs now more than money," Olcott ventured.

Dayton gripped his hat a little tighter and nodded his gratitude to the general manager. "Give me a chance, sir," he pleaded, for the first time using simple words. "I'll work hard to make good."

"I'm disposed to give you a chance, Dayton," the proprietor said dubiously, "but—but I'm afraid that—to tell the truth, I don't know just where we could put you."

Olcott sprang from his chair. "I've got it," he exclaimed. "Make Dayton the firing man. Then he won't be in the store long enough at a time to be tempted."

"Good idea," agreed Waldron. "Dayton, report for work to-morrow morning."

In a few words, Barry explained the duties of the unique position to the new man.

Dayton was overjoyed. "From the innermost recesses of my heart, Mr. Waldron," he began, launching into his old grandiloquence. "I wish to give you positive assurance of the overwhelming——"

"That's all right," interrupted Waldron; "I'll take your word for the rest of it."

Over dinner that night—one that took in everything from appetizer to indigestion—Barry told Rita the whole story. Incidentally he told her another story. She seemed to like the incidental tale best.

"And now," concluded Barry, "I think we ought to celebrate by going to the theater; you remember you prom-

ised to go to the theater with me a long, long time ago."

"That suits me," she said. "Where shall we go?"

"I'll leave it to you."

"I haven't the faintest idea of what's in the theaters just now," she said, with a puzzled air. "I tell you what we'll do: We'll make a guess at it."

She opened an evening paper to the amusement page; then she closed her eyes, pulled a very long pin from her hat, and thrust it through the paper in front of her. They both laughed heartily when they examined the course the pin had taken. It had gone straight through an advertisement which read:

"Hilarity Theater—'His Blonde Nemesis.' To-Night at 8:15. Season's Greatest Hit."

### Animal Kingdom Laws

**M**ANY animals, birds, and insects have courts of justice much like those of men. Rats deal in a drastic manner with their malefactors. When an offense against rat law is discovered a court-martial is hastily convened, which is characterized by much squealing and scurrying about as the culprit is brought before his judges. The verdict is generally one of "Guilty," and as soon as this is agreed upon the whole army of rats pounce upon the unfortunate offender and devour him.

A beaver that is idle and refuses to work is at once boycotted, banished, and hounded out of the colony, and, no further notice being taken of him, he pines away, broken-hearted.

Sparrow law must be of an extremely rigid nature, judging from the numerous courts-martial held by them. When you hear the savage chirpings and hasty flutterings in the eaves and on the roof of your house, you may be sure that some unfortunate transgressor of bird law is having stern justice meted out to him by his outraged brothers and sisters.

Crows, jackdaws, and starlings are all known to hold courts-martial lasting for several days. Some of the birds

perch dejectedly, hanging their heads, others are sad and silent, while others are extremely garrulous.

The industrious ant, above all things, will not tolerate idleness, and woe betide one of the community whose aspirations tend toward swelling the ranks of the unemployed. He is quickly brought to justice. One minute he may be seen standing inside a circle composed of stern, merciless judges, and the next minute—well, there is not much fear that he will be a further burden upon the workers of the ant colony.

### Breaking Him

**H**E was a hard-working and intelligent Frenchman, but the English verbs still troubled him.

"Ah, yes, m'sieur, I saw Mrs. Brown the other day," he said to an American friend, "and she telled—I mean, told—me that her school was soon to break down."

"Break up, surely?"

"Ah, yes, break up? Your verbs do trouble me so yet! Break up—that was it!"

"Why was she going to let her school break up so early?"

"Because influenza had broken down in it."

"Broken out. It is a bit puzzling, isn't it?"

"Broken out—ah, yes! And she is going to leave the house in charge of a caretaker, as she fears it might be broken— How do I say that, please?"

"Broken into, I expect."

"That is it. Broken into—by the burglars."

"Is her son married yet?"

"No, the engagement is broken in."

"Broken off. Oh, I hadn't heard of that! Is she worried about it?"

"He only broke up the news to her last week. Is that right?"

"No; you should say just 'broke' there."

"Ah, well, I think I am nearly broke myself by those verbs of yours!"

And he went sadly on his way.

# Destiny's Office Hours

By  
Clarence L. Cullen



## CHAPTER I.

### CUPID AND CERBERUS.

**T**HE boy guarding the gate of the office anteroom was obviously enjoying his power and his obduracy. "No'm," he said to the woman outside the gate, his hard gaze roving over her shabbiness with a boy's cruel appraisal, "you can't git by. This ain't the boss' receivin' hour. Anyhow, I don't know you—and I know all the people he sees." He got a sharp glance at a sample copy of a weekly publication which she held without any attempt at concealment. "Not only that," he concluded bitingly, "the boss wouldn't fall for subscribin' for that paper," pointing an accusing finger at the periodical, "if I'd let you see him."

The woman smiled wanly into the boy's arrogant eyes. "You are a bright but heartless child," she said to him in a weary tone, observing, with detached amusement, how he stiffened at the word "child." "Nobody, I suppose, ever told you that you were Cupid made over into Cerberus?"

She turned from the rail with a sigh and started for the outer door. But the boy, affronted by the "child" and by

those other words which, for all he knew, might be an even darker derogation of his dignity, launched into ugly impudence, waiting until the woman's hand was on the knob of the door before hurling the Parthian dart.

"I don't know them guys," he broke out angrily, "but I can spot a grafter from here to Coney and back, and there's a cop on the ground floor to take care of your kind, and——"

His tirade ended abruptly with a squeal of pain. The hand that, tightly clutching his ear, pulled him sharply away from the gate, was the hand of his "boss." The president of the trust company had emerged from the inner office at the instant the boy began his abusive harangue. He paused outside of his office door long enough to sense the meaning of the scene and to catch the drift of the lad's stabbing words. Then in two strides from the rear he had the boy by the lobe and spun him around. For a quarter of a minute he held the ear in a vise of forefinger and thumb, the boy gazing up with eyes of fear into the man's stern face. The woman, her hand still on the knob of the outer door, watched this silent scene with the brooding gaze of one who sees another picture elsewhere.

Without a word the man grasped the lad by the shoulders and thrust him into the hall, the woman standing aside to permit of his opening the door. He bowed to her with grave courtesy when he reëntered an instant later.

"I don't think the boy knew what he was saying," she said to him. Her weary smile reappeared. "I scarcely heard him. I am used to the rebuffs of these office children."

"You were asking to see me?" he inquired, politely ignoring her apology for the boy.

"Yes," she replied. "But, of course, I knew I was taking an impossible chance. Presidents of trust companies do not receive solicitors for subscriptions to periodicals. But——"

"Don't they?" he interrupted her, and his face was transformed by a kind smile. "Perhaps they would if there were atonement to be made for ruffians at their office doors."

He conducted her through the gate, held open his door for her to enter, and placed a chair for her beside his desk. It was one of those somberly beautiful offices in which the effect of mahogany and bronzes is felt before the eye begins to pick out the component pieces.

"What is the periodical, madam, if you please?" he asked her, seating himself at his great flat desk and touching a button at its side. Without a word she placed the sample copy on his desk. He glanced at her, as if prepared to hear her exposition of the publication's merits. He saw that her troubled eyes were brimming with tears. He picked the weekly from his desk and began to turn over the pages. A brisk young secretary appeared.

"Make out a list of fifty of our people who would probably be readers of magazines," said the president to the secretary. He glanced again at the woman seated beside his desk. She was leaning back in her chair, very still, gazing at her hands in her lap—hands covered by shabby, worn-out gloves. Her lashes were wet, but she was holding the tears back. "Bring me the list as soon as you finish it," continued the president. "And, Thompson," as the

brisk young secretary started to go, "place a man outside my office. I shall not be seeing anybody for an hour or so."

The secretary went, and the president, making out a check for fifty subscriptions, placed it beside her on his desk. Then, rising from his chair, he strolled to a window and gazed out contemplatively. Without looking at the check the woman slipped it into her frayed hand bag and rose. He turned from the window.

"Perhaps you had better remain a while," he said to her. He was a handsome, well-presented man of sixty. His keen eyes were now simply kindly, and he spoke in a low tone. "You are overwrought. That impudent boy——"

"Oh, I had entirely forgotten about him," she put in quickly. "It was your wonderful kindness to me—and I do not even know your name—that—that——" She paused and bit her lower lip. From where he still stood by the window he caught the sound of the little sob in her throat. He walked quickly over to his desk and seated himself again before it.

"The name and what you call the kindness are equally unimportant," he said quietly, not looking at her, but at a paper weight which he revolved in his fingers. She again took the chair beside his desk and mechanically removed her rubbed and broken gloves.

She was thirty or less, of a beauty that plainly showed the mark of hardship—the beauty of a worn cameo. The hardship, while it had left her ivory skin unflecked, had etched tiny lines at the corners of her eyes. It had lighted a lasting lamp of worry in the eyes themselves, but it had not blurred the fineness of her features. Her tailored suit was shiny in some spots and frayed in others, the metal showed through the cloth covering of the buttons; her hat, resting on a mass of wavy, hastily dressed chestnut hair that still retained its gloss, was so manifestly homemade that even the eye of a man could perceive it; even the bit of lace at her white throat was a pieced makeshift.

## CHAPTER II.

## MOTIVES AND MOTIVES.

THE man at the desk, knowing that speech was, for the time, beyond his guest's powers, revolved the paper-weight in his fingers for some seconds before he spoke.

"Come, we shall see how we stand with the world," he said then, leaning back in his chair. She raised her eyes to his and looked into them steadily enough—but again her eyes seemed to be focused upon some picture placed elsewhere. "You spoke of kindness," he went on. "I revert to it solely to make the observation that when a woman appreciates a trifling so-termed kindness, it can only mean that she has not been getting her share of a woman's—any woman's—natural right to kindness." She was starting to speak, but he gently raised a hand. "I believe that I am not inquisitive," he went on, "but I am an old man, and I assume that an old man possesses certain privileges which cannot be granted to a younger one." He leaned forward with his arms crossed on his desk and looked into her face with a convincing gaze of friendliness. "The world, or somebody in the world"—she saw the casual glance which he cast at her wedding ring—"is withholding from you your inalienable woman's right to kind treatment. If that is so—and I think it is so—let us see if it can be corrected."

"But I do not understand," she said, dropping her gaze to her hands folded limply in her lap. "I do not, of course, come upon much kindness in this occupation which I follow for a livelihood for myself and my little——" He saw that she could not go on.

"Yes, of course; I understand," he said soberly, rising and pacing back and forth, his hands clasped behind him, on the deep rug. "The unprotected woman finds that the world is made of granite." He paused before her and glanced downward at her slim hands still folded in her lap. The wedding ring gleamed in the light of the shaded electric lamp on the desk. "Again I ask that you do not consider me merely curious," he

went on. "But you wear a ring. If you count my question unfair, do not answer it. I am inquiring whether your husband is living?"

She gripped the arms of the chair and shuddered as if under the agonizing fear of a poised lash. The blue circles under her eyes seemed instantly to deepen, and she stared, terrified, into vacancy.

"Living?" she gasped brokenly. "Oh, my God, I hope—I *hope*—he is living!" She rose slowly from the chair. Her face had become drawn into an expression of anguish. "I must go to him. He needs me. I——" She took a faltering step toward the door.

He took her arm and gently pressed her back into the chair. "Try to compose yourself," he said soothingly. "You are not equal to going yet a while. I am sorry my question agitated you. But, if anything is to be done, it is needful to get at the facts." She leaned back in the chair, again limp and apathetic. "Your strength seems to be at a low ebb. Let me get you——"

He crossed to a dim corner of the office, opened a cabinet in which decanters and glasses sparkled even in the dull light, and poured a glass of sherry. But when he stood before her, offering her the wine, she turned her face away.

"Thank you, no," she said hoarsely. "Not that. Not that curse of the world, after all the darkness and misery and tragedy——"

"It is only sherry, madam," he interrupted, still extending the glass. "You seem so weak that——"

"I'll be all right presently," she said in a calmer tone. "I appreciate your kindness. But I never yield to that," casting a quick glance of aversion at the glass. He placed the glass on the far side of the desk from her, where it would be out of her view. "If it had not been for liquor——" She paused abruptly and sighed.

"Have you lunched?" he asked her. She shook her head, not looking at him. "I do not eat of late," she replied. "I don't feel——" He nodded understandingly and touched the button on his desk. The man who had been sta-

tioned outside his door entered. "Order some food," he was told; "consommé, sandwiches, mineral water, coffee—and quickly. I am receiving nobody this afternoon." The man, so well trained that he did not even cast a sidelong glance at the woman sitting beside the desk, went out.

The president of the trust company seated himself again. "The food will be here directly," he said to her. "You should not neglect to take food. That is—er—it is——" He busied himself with some papers on his desk for ten minutes. The woman sat very quiet, her chin in her hand, her fevered eyes fixed. A waiter entered with tray and serving table. After he had spread the food the president of the trust company and the solicitor for subscriptions for a weekly periodical lunched together. She ate like an obedient child. Her apathy was such that she was beyond wondering. If she reflected that it was an odd thing that she should be taking luncheon in the somberly beautiful office with a white-haired man whom she had never seen before, and of whose very name she was ignorant, she did not give expression to that thought. Trouble takes many things for granted. The stimulating coffee brought a slight flush to her cheeks. The food gave her better command of herself.

"That which I thank you for mainly," he said when he had pushed back his chair, "is that you have not asked me my motive in detaining you. Well, there are motives and motives, and often there is no motive at all." He took a turn up and down the rug. "Do you feel well enough now to tell me a little about yourself?" he inquired, pausing in front of her. "Of course, if it would cause you pain——"

"You have been so strangely good to me that——" she began, but he waved off what more she would have said.

"It is easy to infer, then, that your husband is ill," he said.

"Yes," she replied, shivering, but manifestly striving to retain her composure, "he is terribly ill. He is in

Bellevue Hospital. He is so ill that they——"

"Yes, I understand," he put in; "in Bellevue. That may permit me to be of service. I am a member of the board of governors of Bellevue. How long has he been in Bellevue?"

"Since day before yesterday."

"Public or private ward?"

She gazed at him piteously out of misty eyes. "In the alcoholic ward," she replied.

"Have you seen him?"

"They will not allow me to see him. I begged them to. I went on my knees. But they would not let me see him. He is——"

"Yes, of course. His condition for the present is such that—yes, I understand. From what address was he taken to Bellevue?" She gave him the address of a lodging house in East Eighth Street. "Now, your husband's name, if you please."

She gave him the name. The hand with which he held the pencil gripped it convulsively for an instant, and he seemed to change his mind about writing it down. Then he rose. "If you will excuse me for about five minutes——" he said to her.

He passed into his private office, closing the door after him. At the telephone on the desk in his private office he called up the superintendent of Bellevue Hospital. "This is John B. Maxwell," he said in a low tone with his mouth close to the transmitter. ". . . Yes, of the board of governors. I am inquiring as to the condition of an alcoholic patient . . . in the public alcoholic ward. He was taken from an address in East Eighth Street day before yesterday. . . . Yes, that is the name. . . . Yes. Bad case of delirium tremens? . . . Yes. I see. Very weak? Yes. . . . Yes, I hear you. . . . Now in a dangerous state of coma? Yes. Well, if the patient is in a state of coma, it will be feasible to have him removed at once to a comfortable private room, will it not? He could not annoy other patients while in a state of coma? . . . Yes, of course. Well, Mr. Superintendent, have

that done at once, if you please. Put a first-rate specialist on the case. I will be responsible for that patient. . . . Yes. I shall be inquiring about his condition from time to time. . . . Yes, I understand. Good-by."

### CHAPTER III.

#### TO SHIELD THE MAN.

SOMETHING of the spring seemed to have gone from the president's step as he passed back into the other office where the woman still sat in the same brooding state in which he had left her; but he smiled gravely as he spoke to her. "Your husband is resting quietly," he said.

The words galvanized her. She sprang from her chair, her face glowing, her eyes wide and sparkling, and with both of her slim hands she grasped one of the hands of this new-found friend. "You inquired?" she broke out in a voice that was almost joyous. Her eyes filled. "You did that for me, a woman who had come to believe that there was no such thing in the world as a friend?"

"Please don't say such things!" he said, in a tone of pleading that seemed odd coming from a man of power. But a change had taken place in him during the past few minutes which she was too agitated to notice. "He is being taken to a private ward," he told her.

"And you did that, too!" she said brokenly, her tears streaming. "I cannot understand it. I— Oh, the poor, dear boy—my poor, dear, weak boy! If only he can get well and strong again, and we can start all over, I don't care if it is in a garret! I could be with him always, so that he could resist temptation, and our little boy would help him in that way, too——"

The man, deeply moved, walked to a window and stood looking out for a long while, while the woman sobbed in her arms, which she rested on the desk.

"I should not have given you the impression that he is entirely out of danger," he said, standing beside her, as her sobbing gradually ceased. "He is in a state of coma which naturally

follows the—the illness from which he has suffered. Without knowing a great deal about it, I take it that coma in such a case is equivalent to resting."

"But he is so strong!" she said, looking up eagerly out of reddened eyes. "That is," she added a little dubiously, "he used to be. He was a wonderful athlete when we were married. But since then, of course——" She paused with a finger at her lip.

"We are going to hope for the best," he said, patting her shoulder.

"And they will let me see him?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, now that he is in a private room—but not just yet," he replied. "When he comes out of his coma I will inquire again. Then we can both see him."

She gazed at him wonderingly. Her lips were framing a question when the bell of his desk telephone rang. "Oh, good afternoon, daughter," he said into the transmitter. "Coming to see me? I am glad you called. I want to see you. Are you motoring? . . . Come down at once, my dear. . . . I can't tell you over the phone. Yes, it is important. Oh, by the way, Gertrude, when you get down here, send for me to come outside, will you? I am having a conference in my office, and—yes, you understand, I know. Good-by."

For ten minutes again he pretended to busy himself with papers. Then his daughter was announced. Excusing himself, he walked swiftly, but still stoopingly, into the anteroom. A beautiful, buoyant woman of thirty, with a look of anxiety in her eyes, greeted him affectionately.

"What is it, father?" she asked him, after kissing him. "Have you——"

"Go up to Bellevue, my dear," he said to her, passing an arm around her shoulders. "Give my name. That will gain you admittance, though the visiting hour is past. Room thirty-two."

The daughter's face took on an expression of alarm. "Is——" she began.

"Yes, my dear," he interrupted. "Now go at once." She kissed him again and hurried out.

"I must go now," said the woman seated beside his desk when he reentered his office. "It's late. How strange that I should have stayed here so long! I do not understand it. I won't try to thank you. I——"

"But you must stay a while longer," he said. "You have not forgotten that we are going to the hospital together?"

"We are, really?" she asked. He nodded, pretending not to see the kindling wonder in her eyes.

"It is now two o'clock," he said, looking at his watch. "Three o'clock is my quitting time. Then we'll go."

Seeing that she had herself in hand, he conducted her by delicate stages to the subject of the marriage. With such a man she could not be other than frank. She sketched the story—an old, old one—with the woman's persistent, unswerving effort always and ever to shield the man—the one man.

It had been a runaway marriage. She had met him in southern California, where she was spending the winter with her people, who were from Detroit, her birthplace. He had told her frankly that he was a bit of a black sheep, and not friendly with his people, but she had disregarded that.

"All women do in like circumstances," murmured the white-haired man to whom she was telling the story. "But it was decent of him to tell you that before marrying you. Go on, please."

Beyond telling her that his people lived in New York, and that they were more than well to do, he had never mentioned them to her. After the marriage in Los Angeles, they had gone to San Francisco. There he had tried newspaper work—not successfully.

"He wrote superbly," she explained, wistful pride shining in her eyes, "but the editors did not understand him. One city editor told him, I remember, that the paper could not use a man who carried a limp leather edition of Keats around in his coat-pocket and read it in the office between assignments."

The white-haired man nodded understandingly. Her defensive words drew

pictures for him which she herself could not see.

They had become very poor, and it was then that the baby was born. He had tried everything to earn a livelihood, with scarcely any success.

"The poor boy never had any use for business," she said. "He was interested always in things apart from business. How could it have been otherwise? After taking his degree at Harvard, he finished at Heidelberg, and he never got the habit of being practical. But he sings splendidly, and is a superb violinist." There was a little break in her voice, but she controlled it. "It was his wonderful music, I suppose, that first made us care for each other. I play. When we were in San Diego, before our marriage, I accompanied his voice and violin on the piano, and—— Well, at any rate——"

He would go on occasional short sprees in San Francisco. This worried her, of course, but she attributed it to the despondency which overcame him, when, time after time, he failed in his attempts to earn a livelihood. Then the drinking periods began to come more frequently. A man always could get money for drink when he could not get it for any other purpose in the world. Occasionally a check reached him from his father. Always he sent the checks back—even when he was on the very edge of destitution. He had had some quarrel with his father, and therefore would accept no aid from him.

For four months he had worked as street-car motorman in San Francisco. Then, in the spring, he went to Alaska, leaving a little money with her—very little. He had hoped to return from Alaska before winter, but had been unable to get out.

"Of course, it was not the poor boy's fault," she explained. "The ice held him up there. And so I supported baby and myself by addressing envelopes. It was about the only thing I could do then. I had only been out of Vassar for about two years."

After a year's absence, he had returned from Alaska, with a few hun-

dred dollars. That money had soon been spent. Well, yes, a good deal of it had gone for drink. Oh, no, no, no, he had never been an actual drunkard, and was not that now, but— Well, he had had so many terrible disappointments! Of course, she felt badly always over his yielding to the impulse to drink, but she felt very sure that now, after this awful lesson at the hospital—

"And, since leaving San Francisco," suggested the man, "you have been helping to make a living by soliciting subscriptions for—"

"Oh, yes, many publications," she said. "I found that I was equal to the work. It is so hard for a man of Jack's sort to get employment. We have wandered about a great deal. He has tried everything, in many cities. He has been very brave and kind. He was never unkind, even when—" She shuddered, as one harking back to unforgettable scenes. "Oh," she sighed, clasping and unclasping her fingers, "if only there never had been such a thing as drink in the world!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### BEFORE THEY KNEW.

THE door leading from the anteroom was thrust open. The daughter of the president of the trust company, her eyes moist but alight, fairly ran to her father's desk. He rose to receive her. When first he looked up and caught sight of her, he paled. But when he peered closely into her eyes, as she wrapped her arms around him, he stood erect and smiled.

"I could not take the time to telephone," she said breathlessly. "Anyhow, I wanted to see you when I told you, old dear! He is conscious. He recognized me at once, and spoke a few words. He is going to live! The doctor told me so. All the doctors told me so—I made them! But they were telling the truth. And, oh, dad, it was so wonderful and beautiful to see poor dear old Jack again after all the long years!"

The white-haired man held her while

she sobbed in his arms. Her excitement and emotion had been so great that she did not even see the woman seated beside her father's desk.

That woman now rose from her chair, gazing with wonder at the scene. The daughter, turning swiftly, saw the trembling, shabby woman, with all her beauty, standing beside the great flat desk.

"Why, Alice Moreland!" she exclaimed. "What on earth—"

"Gertrude Maxwell!" said the shabby woman, in a voice that was a mere whisper.

It was the white-haired man's turn to look amazed, when the two women who had been classmates and intimates at Vassar flew into each other's arms.

"Oh, my dear," said the daughter, "what can be the trouble? You look so sad and broken. And how many thousands of times have I wondered about you since we left school! You must excuse me, dear, for not seeing you! My brother Jack, who is very ill in a hospital, has just been pronounced out of danger, and—"

The white-haired man stepped around the desk. "It is good for sisters to love each other," he said, his kind face crinkling into a broad smile; "but it is better to know that you loved each other before you became sisters." The two women peered up into his face. "Your old school friend, daughter," he went on, "is Jack's wife. Now, my dear," he said to his daughter-in-law, "we will all go to the hospital, and when we come away from there I want you to bring my grandson home."

#### An Ambiguous Word

TEACHER: "What little boy can tell me where the home of the swallow is?"

Long silence, then a hand is waved. "Well, Bobbie, where is it?"

"The home of the swallow," declared Bobbie seriously, "is in the stummick."

If you *must* talk about yourself, tell it to the family cat.



# As You Choose

By  
Robert W. Chambers.

AUTHOR OF  
"THE FIGHTING CHANCE," "THE FIRING LINE,"  
"THE BUSINESS OF LIFE"—ETC.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

## CHAPTER I.

### ON A FOOL'S ERRAND.

**B**ECAUSE it all seems so improbable—so horribly impossible to me now, sitting here safe and sane in my own library—I hesitate to record an episode which already appears to me less horrible than grotesque. Yet, unless this story is written now, I know I shall never have the courage to tell the truth about the matter, not from fear of ridicule, but because I myself shall soon cease to credit what I now know to be true. Yet scarcely a month has elapsed since I heard the stealthy purring of what I believed to be the shoaling undertow—scarcely a month ago, with my own eyes, I saw that which, even now, I am beginning to believe never existed. As for the harbor master—and the blow I am now striking at the old order of things— But of that I shall not speak, now, or later; I shall try to tell the story simply and truthfully, and let my employers testify as to my probity, and the editors of this magazine corroborate them.

On the twenty-ninth of February of the present year I resigned my position

under the government and left Washington to accept an offer from Professor Farrago—whose name he kindly permits me to use in this article—and, on the first day of April, I entered upon my new and congenial duties as general superintendent of the water-fowl department connected with the Zoölogical Gardens, New York.

It was, and is, the policy of the trustees and officers of the Zoölogical Gardens not to employ collectors or to send out expeditions in search of specimens. The society decided to depend upon voluntary contributions, and I was always busy, part of the day, in dictating answers to correspondents who wrote offering their services as hunters of big game, collectors of all sorts of fauna, trappers, snarers, and also to those who offered specimens for sale, usually at exorbitant rates.

To the proprietors of five-legged kittens, mangy lynxes, moth-eaten coyotes, and dancing bears, I returned courteous but uncompromising refusals—of course, first submitting all such letters, together with my replies, to Professor Farrago.

One day toward the end of May, however, just as I was leaving Bronx

Park to return to town, Professor Leonard, of the reptilian department, called out to me that Professor Farrago wanted to see me a moment; so I put my pipe into my pocket again and retraced my steps to the temporary wooden building occupied by Professor Farrago, general superintendent of the Zoölogical Gardens. The professor, who was sitting at his desk before a pile of letters and replies submitted for approval by me, pushed his glasses down and looked over them at me with a whimsical smile that suggested amusement, impatience, annoyance, and perhaps a faint trace of apology.

"Now, here's a letter," he said, with a deliberate gesture toward a sheet of paper impaled on a file; "a letter that I suppose you remember." He disengaged the sheet of paper and handed it to me.

"Oh, yes," I replied, with a shrug; "of course the man is mistaken—or——"

"Or what?" demanded Professor Farrago, tranquilly wiping his glasses.

"Or a liar," I replied.

After a silence he leaned back in his chair and bade me read the letter to him again, and I did so with a contemptuous tolerance for the writer, who must have been either a very innocent victim or a very stupid swindler. I said as much to Professor Farrago; but, to my surprise, he appeared to waver.

"I suppose," he said, with his near-sighted, embarrassed smile, "that nine hundred and ninety-nine men in a thousand would throw that letter aside and condemn the writer as a liar or a fool."

"In my opinion," said I, "he's one or the other."

"He isn't—in mine."

"What!" I exclaimed; "here is a man living all alone on a strip of rock and sand between the wilderness and the sea who wants you to send somebody to take charge of a bird that doesn't exist!"

"How do you know," asked Professor Farrago, "that the bird in question does not exist?"

"It is generally accepted," I replied sarcastically, "that the great auk has

been extinct for years. Therefore I may be pardoned for doubting that our correspondent possesses a pair of them alive."

"Oh, you young fellows!" said the professor, smiling wearily; "you embark on a theory for destinations that don't exist."

He leaned back in his chair, his amused eyes searching space for the imagery that made him smile.

"Like swimming squirrels, you navigate with the help of Heaven and a stiff breeze, but you never land where you hope to—do you?"

Rather red in the face, I said: "Don't you believe the great auk to be extinct?"

"Audubon saw the great auk."

"Who has seen a single specimen since?"

"Nobody—except our correspondent here," he replied, laughing.

I laughed, too, considering the interview at an end, but the professor went on coolly:

"Whatever it is that our correspondent has—and I am daring to believe that it is the great auk itself—I want you to secure it for the society."

When my astonishment subsided, my first conscious sentiment was one of pity. Clearly, Professor Farrago was on the verge of dotage—ah, what a loss to the world!

I believe now that Professor Farrago perfectly interpreted my thoughts, but he betrayed neither resentment nor impatience. I drew a chair up beside his desk—there was nothing to do but to obey, and this fool's errand was none of my conceiving.

Together we made out a list of articles necessary for me, and itemized the expenses I might incur; and I set a date for my return, allowing no margin for a successful termination to the expedition.

"Never mind that," said the professor; "what I want you to do is to get those birds here safely. Now, how many men will you take?"

"None," I replied bluntly; "it's a useless expense unless there is something to bring back. If there is I'll wire you, you may be sure."

"Very well," said Professor Farrago good-humoredly, "you shall have all the assistance you may require. Can you leave to-night?"

The old gentleman was certainly prompt. I nodded half sulkily, aware of his amusement.

"So," I said, picking up my hat, "I am to start north to find a place called Black Harbor, where there is a man named Halyard who possesses, among other household utensils, two extinct great auks——"

We were both laughing by this time. I asked him why on earth he credited the assertion of a man he had never before heard of.

"I suppose," he replied, with the same half-apologetic, half-humorous smile, "it is instinct. I feel, somehow, that this man Halyard *has* got an auk—perhaps two. I can't get away from the idea that we are on the eve of acquiring the rarest of living creatures. It's odd for a scientist to talk as I do; doubtless you're shocked—admit it, now!"

But I was not shocked; on the contrary, I was conscious that the same strange hope that Professor Farrago cherished was beginning, in spite of me, to stir my pulses, too.

"If he has——" I began, then stopped.

The professor and I looked hard at each other in silence.

"Go on," he said encouragingly.

But I had nothing more to say, for the prospect of beholding with my own eyes a living specimen of the great auk produced a series of conflicting emotions within me which rendered speech profanely superfluous.

As I took my leave, Professor Farrago came to the door of the temporary wooden office and handed me the letter written by the man Halyard. I folded it and put it into my pocket, as Halyard might require it for my own identification.

"How much does he want for the pair?" I asked.

"Ten thousand dollars. Don't demur—if the birds are really——"

"I know," I said hastily, not daring to hope too much.

"One thing more," said Professor Farrago gravely; "you know, in that last paragraph of his letter, Halyard speaks of something else in the way of specimens—an undiscovered species of amphibious biped—just read that paragraph again, will you?"

I drew the letter from my pocket, and read as he directed:

When you have seen the two living specimens of the great auk, and have satisfied yourself that I tell the truth, you may be wise enough to listen without prejudice to a statement I shall make concerning the existence of the strangest creature ever fashioned. I will merely say, at this time, that the creature referred to is an amphibious biped and inhabits the ocean near this coast. More I cannot say, for I personally have not seen the animal, but I have a witness who has, and there are many who affirm that they have seen the creature. You will naturally say that my statement amounts to nothing; but when your representative arrives, if he be free from prejudice, I expect his reports to you concerning this sea biped will confirm the solemn statements of a witness I *know* to be unimpeachable. Yours truly,

Black Harbor.                      BURTON HALYARD.

"Well," I said, after a moment's thought, "here goes for the wild-geese chase."

"Wild auk, you mean," said Professor Farrago, shaking hands with me. "You will start to-night, won't you?"

"Yes, but Heaven knows how I'm ever going to land in this man Halyard's dooryard. Good-by!"

"About that sea biped——" began Professor Farrago shyly.

"Oh, don't!" I said; "I can swallow the auks, feathers and claws, but if this fellow Halyard is hinting he's seen an amphibious creature resembling a man——"

"Or a woman," said the professor cautiously.

I retired, disgusted, my faith shaken in the mental vigor of Professor Farrago.

## CHAPTER II.

### IN THE FOREST GLOOM.

THE three days' voyage by boat and rail was irksome. I bought my kit at Sainte Croix on the C. P. R., and

on June first I began the last stage of my journey via the Sainte Isole broad-gauge, arriving in the wilderness by daylight. A tedious forced march by blazed trail, freshly spotted on the wrong side, of course, brought me to the northern terminus of the rusty narrow-gauge lumber railway which runs from the heart of the hushed pine wilderness to the sea.

Already a long train of battered flat cars, piled with sluice props and roughly hewn sleepers, was moving slowly off into the brooding forest gloom, when I came in sight of the track; but I developed a gratifying and unexpected burst of speed, shouting all the while. The train stopped; I swung myself aboard the last car, where a pleasant young fellow was sitting on the rear brake, chewing spruce and reading a letter.

"Come aboard, sir," he said, looking up with a smile; "I guess you're the man in a hurry."

"I'm looking for a man named Halyard," I said, dropping rifle and knapsack on the fresh-cut, fragrant pile of pine. "Are you Halyard?"

"No, I'm Francis Lee, bossing the mica pit at Port-of-Waves," he replied, "but this letter is from Halyard, asking me to look out for a man in a hurry from Bronx Park, New York."

"I'm that man," said I, filling my pipe and offering him a share of the weed of peace; and we sat side by side smoking very amiably, until a signal from the locomotive sent him forward and I was left alone, lounging at ease, head pillowed on both arms, watching the blue sky flying through the branches overhead.

Long before we came in sight of the ocean I smelled it; the fresh salt aroma stole into my senses, drowsy with the heated odor of pine and hemlock, and I sat up, peering ahead into the dusky sea of pines.

Fresher and fresher came the wind from the sea, in puffs, in mild, sweet breezes, in steady, freshening currents, blowing the feathery crowns of the pines, setting the balsam's blue tufts rocking.

Lee wandered back over the long line of flats, balancing himself nonchalantly as the cars swung around a sharp curve where water dripped from a newly propped sluice that suddenly emerged from the depths of the forest to run parallel to the railroad track.

"Built it this spring," he said, surveying his handiwork, which seemed to undulate as the cars swept past. "It runs to the cove—or ought to——" He stopped abruptly with a thoughtful glance at me.

"So you're going over to Halyard's?" he continued, as though answering a question asked by himself.

I nodded.

"You've never been there—of course."

"No," I said, "and I'm not likely to go again."

I would have told him why I was going if I had not already begun to feel ashamed of my idiotic errand.

"I guess you're going to look at those birds of his," continued Lee placidly.

"I guess I am," I said sulkily, glancing askance to see whether he was smiling.

But he only asked me quite seriously whether a great auk was really a very rare bird, and I told him that the last one ever seen had been found dead off Labrador in January, 1870. Then I asked him whether these birds of Halyard's were really great auks, and he replied somewhat indifferently that he supposed they were—at least, nobody had ever before seen such birds near Port-of-Waves.

"There's something else," he said, running a pine sliver through his pipe-stem—"something that interests us all here more than auks, big or little. I suppose I might as well speak about it, as you are bound to hear about it sooner or later."

He hesitated, and I could see that he was embarrassed, searching for the exact words to convey his meaning.

"If," said I, "you have anything in this region more important to science than the great auk, I should be very glad to know about it."

Perhaps there was the faintest tinge

of sarcasm in my voice, for he shot a sharp glance at me and then turned slightly. After a moment, however, he put his pipe into his pocket, laid hold of the brake with both hands, vaulted to his perch aloft, and glanced down at me.

"Did you ever hear of the harbor master?" he asked maliciously.

"Which harbor master?" I inquired.

"You'll know before long," he observed, with a satisfied glance into perspective.

This rather extraordinary observation puzzled me. I waited for him to resume, and, as he did not, I asked him what he meant.

"If I knew," he said, "I'd tell you. But, come to think of it, I'd be a fool to go into details with a scientific man. You'll hear about the harbor master—perhaps you will see the harbor master. In that event I should be glad to converse with you on the subject."

I could not help laughing at his prim and precise manner, and, after a moment, he also laughed, saying:

"It hurts a man's vanity to know he knows a thing that somebody else knows he doesn't know. I'm hanged if I say another word about the harbor master until you've been to Halyard's!"

"A harbor master," I persisted, "is an official who superintends the mooring of ships—isn't he?"

But he refused to be tempted into conversation, and we lounged silently on the lumber until a long, thin whistle from the locomotive and a rush of stinging salt wind brought us to our feet. Through the trees I could see the bluish-black ocean, stretching out beyond black headlands to meet the clouds; a great wind was roaring among the trees as the train slowly came to a standstill on the edge of the primeval forest.

Lee jumped to the ground and aided me with my rifle and pack, and then the train began to back away along a curved sidetrack, which, Lee said, led to the mica pit and company stores.

"Now what will you do?" he asked pleasantly; "I can give you a good dinner and a decent bed to-night if you

like—and I'm sure Mrs. Lee would be very glad to have you stop with us as long as you choose."

I thanked him, but said that I was anxious to reach Halyard's before dark, and he very kindly led me along the cliffs and pointed out the path.

"This man Halyard," he said, "is an invalid. He lives at a cove called Black Harbor, and all his truck goes through to him over the company's road. We receive it here, and send a pack mule through once a month. I've met him; he's a bad-tempered hypochondriac, a cynic at heart, and a man whose word is never doubted. If he says he has a great auk you may be satisfied he has."

My heart was beating with excitement at the prospect; I looked out across the wooded headlands and tangled stretches of dune and hollow, trying to realize what it might mean to me, to Professor Farrago, to the world, if I should lead back to New York a live auk.

"He's a crank," said Lee; "frankly I don't like him. If you find it unpleasant there, come back to us."

"Does Halyard live alone?" I asked.

"Yes—except for a professional trained nurse—poor thing!"

"A man?"

"No," said Lee disgustedly.

Presently he gave me a peculiar glance; hesitated, and finally said: "Ask Halyard to tell you about his nurse and—the harbor master. Good-by—I'm due at the quarry. Come and stay with us whenever you care to; you will find a welcome at Port-of-Waves."

We shook hands and parted on the cliff, he turning back into the forest along the railway, I starting northward, pack slung, rifle over my shoulder. Once I met a group of quarrymen, faces burned brick-red, scarred hands swinging as they walked. And, as I passed them with a nod, turning, I saw that they also had turned to look after me, and I caught a word or two of their conversation, whirled back to me on the sea wind.

They were speaking of the harbor master.

## CHAPTER III.

## A VISIT TO THE PEN.

TOWARD sunset I came out on a sheer granite cliff where the sea birds were whirling and clamoring, and the great breakers dashed, rolling in double-thundered reverberations on the sun-dyed crimson sands below the bedded rock.

Across the half moon of beach towered another cliff, and, behind this, I saw a column of smoke rising in the still air. It certainly came from Halyard's chimney, although the opposite cliff prevented me from seeing the house itself.

I rested a moment to refill my pipe, then resumed rifle and pack, and cautiously started to skirt the cliffs. I had descended halfway toward the beach, and was examining the cliff opposite, when something on the very top of the rock arrested my attention—a man darkly outlined against the sky. The next moment, however, I knew it could not be a man, for the object suddenly glided over the face of the cliff and slid down the sheer, smooth face like a lizard. Before I could get a square look at it, the thing crawled into the surf—or, at least, it seemed to—but the whole episode occurred so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that I was not sure I had seen anything at all.

However, I was curious enough to climb the cliff on the land side and make my way toward the spot where I imagined I saw the man. Of course, there was nothing there—not a trace of a human being, I mean. Something *had* been there—a sea otter, possibly—for the remains of a freshly killed fish lay on the rock, eaten to the backbone and tail.

The next moment, below me, I saw the house, a freshly painted, trim, flimsy structure, modern, and very much out of harmony with the splendid savagery surrounding it. It struck a cheap note in the noble gray monotony of headland and sea.

The descent was easy enough. I crossed the crescent beach, hard as pink marble, and found a little trodden path

among the rocks, that led to the front porch of the house.

There were two people on the porch—I heard their voices before I saw them—and when I set my foot upon the wooden steps, I saw one of them, a woman, rise from her chair and step hastily toward me.

"Come back!" cried the other, a man with a smooth-shaven, deeply lined face, and a pair of angry blue eyes; and the woman stepped back quietly, acknowledging my lifted hat with a silent inclination.

The man, who was reclining in an invalid's rolling chair, clapped both large, pale hands to the wheels, and pushed himself out along the porch. He had shawls pinned about him, an untidy, drab-colored hat on his head, and, when he looked down at me, he scowled.

"I know who you are," he said in his acid voice; "you're one of the Zoölogical men from Bronx Park. You look like it, anyway."

"It is easy to recognize you from your reputation," I replied, irritated at his discourtesy.

"Really," he replied, with something between a sneer and a laugh, "I'm obliged for your frankness. You're after my great auks, are you not?"

"Nothing else would have tempted me in to this place," I replied sincerely.

"Thank Heaven for that," he said. "Sit down a moment; you've interrupted us." Then, turning to the young woman, who wore the neat gown and tiny cap of a professional nurse, he bade her resume what she had been saying. She did so with a deprecating glance at me, which made the old man sneer again.

"It happened so suddenly," she said in her low voice, "that I had no chance to get back. The boat was drifting in the cove; I sat in the stern, reading, both oars shipped, and the tiller swinging. Then I heard a scratching under the boat, but thought it might be seaweed—and the next moment came those soft thumpings, like the sound of a big fish rubbing its nose against a float."

Halyard clutched the wheels of his

chair and stared at the girl in grim displeasure.

"Didn't you know enough to be frightened?" he demanded.

"No—not then," she said, coloring faintly, "but when, after a few moments, I looked up and saw the harbor master running up and down the beach, I was horribly frightened."

"Really?" said Halyard sarcastically, "it was about time." Then, turning to me, he rasped out: "And that young lady was obliged to row all the way to Port-of-Waves and call to Lee's quarrymen to take her boat in."

Completely mystified, I looked from Halyard to the girl, not in the least comprehending what all this meant.

"That will do," said Halyard ungraciously, which curt phrase was apparently the usual dismissal for the nurse.

She rose, and I rose, and ~~she~~ passed me with an inclination, stepping noiselessly into the house.

"I want beef tea!" bawled Halyard after her; then he gave me an unamiable glance. "I was a well-bred man," he sneered; "I'm a Harvard graduate, too, but I live as I like, and I do what I like, and I say what I like."

"You certainly are not reticent," I said, disgusted.

"Why should I be?" he rasped; "I pay that young woman for my irritability; it's a bargain between us."

"In your domestic affairs," I said, "there is nothing that interests me. I came to see those auks."

"You probably believe them to be razor-billed auks," he said contemptuously; "but they're not; they're great auks."

I suggested that he permit me to examine them, and he replied indifferently that they were in a pen in his back yard, and that I was free to step around the house when I cared to.

I laid my rifle and pack on the veranda, and hastened off with mixed emotions, among which hope no longer predominated. No man in his senses would keep two such precious prizes in a pen in his back yard, I argued, and I was perfectly prepared to find anything

from a puffin to a penguin in that pen. I shall never forget as long as I live my stupor of amazement when I came to the wire-covered inclosure. Not only were there two great auks in the pen, alive, breathing, squatting in bulky majesty on their seaweed bed, but one of them was gravely contemplating two newly hatched chicks, all bill and feet, which nestled sedately at the edge of a puddle of salt water where some small fish were swimming.

For a while excitement blinded, nay, deafened me. I tried to realize that I was gazing upon the last two individuals of an all but extinct race—the sole survivors of the gigantic auk, which, for nearly forty-five years, has been accounted an extinct creature.

I believe that I did not move muscle or limb until the sun had gone down and the crowding darkness blurred my straining eyes and blotted the great, silent, bright-eyed birds from sight.

Even then I could not tear myself away from the inclosure; I listened to the strange, drowsy note of the male bird, the fainter responses of the female, the thin plaints of the chicks, huddling under her breast; I heard their flipperlike embryotic wings beating drowsily as the birds stretched and yawned their beaks and clacked them, preparing for sleep.

"If you please," came a soft voice from the door, "Mr. Halyard awaits your company to dinner."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### WAS IT A MAN?

I DINED well—or, rather, I might have enjoyed my dinner if Mr. Halyard had been eliminated, and the feast consisted exclusively of a joint of beef, the pretty nurse, and myself. She was exceedingly attractive—with a disturbing fashion of lowering her head and raising her dark eyes when spoken to.

As for Halyard, he was unspeakable, bundled up in his snuffy shawls, and making uncouth noises over his gruel. But it is only just to say that his table was worth sitting down to, and his wine was sound as a bell.

"Yah!" he snapped, "I'm sick of this cursed soup—and I'll trouble you to fill my glass——"

"It is dangerous for you to touch claret," said the pretty nurse.

"I might as well die at dinner as anywhere," he observed.

"Certainly," said I, cheerfully passing the decanter, but he did not appear overpleased with the attention.

"I can't smoke, either," he snarled, hitching the shawls around until he looked like Richard the Third.

However, he was good enough to shove a box of cigars at me, and I took one and stood up, as the pretty nurse slipped past, and vanished into the little parlor beyond.

We sat there for a while without speaking. He picked irritably at the bread crumbs on the cloth, never glancing in my direction; and I, tired from my long foot tour, lay back in my chair, silently appreciating one of the best cigars I ever smoked.

"Well," he rasped out at length, "what do you think of my auks—and my veracity?"

I told him that both were unimpeachable.

"Didn't they call me a swindler down there at your museum?" he demanded.

I admitted that I had heard the term applied. Then I made a clean breast of the matter, telling him that it was I who had doubted; that my chief, Professor Farrago, had sent me against my will, and that I was ready and glad to admit that he, Mr. Halyard, was a benefactor of the human race.

"Bosh!" he said. "What good does a confounded wabbly, bandy-toed bird do to the human race?"

But he was pleased, nevertheless; and presently he asked me, not unamiably, to punish his claret again.

"I'm done for," he said; "good things to eat and drink are no good to me. Some day I'll get mad enough to have a fit, and then that——"

He paused to yawn.

"Then," he continued, "that little nurse of mine will drink up my claret and go back to civilization, where people are polite."

Somehow or other, in spite of the fact that Halyard was an old pig, what he said touched me. There was certainly not much left in life for him—as he regarded life.

"I'm going to leave her this house," he said, arranging his shawls. "She doesn't know it. I'm going to leave her my money, too. She doesn't know that. Good Lord! What kind of a woman can she be to stand my bad temper for a few dollars a month!"

"I think," said I, "that it's partly because she's poor, partly because she's sorry for you."

He looked up with a ghastly smile.

"You think she really is sorry?"

Before I could answer, he went on: "I'm no mawkish sentimentalist, and I won't allow anybody to be sorry for me—do you hear?"

"Oh, I'm not sorry for you!" I said hastily, and, for the first time since I had seen him, he laughed heartily without a sneer.

We both seemed to feel better after that; I drank his wine and smoked his cigars, and he appeared to take a certain grim pleasure in watching me.

"There's no fool like a young fool," he observed presently.

As I had no doubt he referred to me, I paid him no attention.

After fidgeting with his shawls, he gave me an oblique scowl, and asked me my age.

"Twenty-four," I replied.

"Sort of a tadpole, aren't you?" he said.

As I took no offense, he repeated the remark.

"Oh, come," said I, "there's no use in trying to irritate me. I see through you; a row acts like a cocktail on you—but you'll have to stick to gruel in my company."

"I call that impudence!" he rasped out wrathfully.

"I don't care what you call it," I replied, undisturbed, "I am not going to be worried by you. Anyway," I ended, "it is my opinion that you could be very good company if you chose."

The proposition appeared to take his breath away—at least, he said nothing

more; and I finished my cigar in peace and tossed the stump into a saucer.

"Now," said I, "what price do you set upon your birds, Mr. Halyard?"

"Ten thousand dollars," he snapped, with an evil smile.

"You will receive a certified check when the birds are delivered," I said quietly.

"You don't mean to say you agree to that outrageous bargain—and I won't take a cent less, either—good Lord!—haven't you any spirit left?" he cried, half rising from his pile of shawls.

His piteous eagerness for a dispute sent me into laughter impossible to control, and he eyed me, mouth open, animosity rising visibly.

Then he seized the wheels of his invalid chair and trundled away, too mad to speak; and I strolled out into the parlor, still laughing.

The pretty nurse was there, sewing under a hanging lamp.

"If I am not indiscreet——" I began.

"Indiscretion is the better part of valor," said she, dropping her head, but raising her eyes.

So I sat down with a frivolous smile peculiar to the appreciated.

"Doubtless," said I, "you are hemming a kerchief."

"Doubtless I am not," she said; "this is a nightcap for Mr. Halyard."

A mental vision of Halyard in a nightcap, very mad, nearly set me laughing again.

"Like the King of Yvetot, he wears his crown in bed," I said flippantly.

"The King of Yvetot might have made that remark," she observed, rethreading her needle.

It is unpleasant to be reprov'd. How large, and red, and hot a man's ears feel!

To cool them, I strolled out to the porch; and, after a while, the pretty nurse came out, too, and sat down in a chair not far away. She probably regretted her lost opportunity to be flirted with.

"I have so little company—it is a great relief to see somebody from the world," she said. "If you can be agreeable I wish you would."

The idea that she had come out to see me was so agreeable that I remained speechless until she said: "Do tell me what people are doing in New York."

So I seated myself on the steps and talked about the portion of the world inhabited by me, while she sat sewing in the dull light that straggled out from the parlor windows.

She had a certain coquetry of her own, using the usual methods with an individuality that was certainly fetching. For instance, when she lost her needle—and, another time, when we both, on hands and knees, hunted for her thimble.

However, directions for these pastimes may be found in contemporary classics.

I was as entertaining as I could be—perhaps not quite as entertaining as a young man usually thinks he is. However, we got on very well together until I asked her tenderly who the harbor master might be whom they all spoke of so mysteriously.

"I do not care to speak about it," she said, with a primness of which I had not suspected her capable.

Of course I could scarcely pursue the subject after that—and, indeed, I did not intend to—so I began to tell her how I fancied I had seen a man on the cliff that afternoon, and how the creature slid over the sheer rock like a snake.

To my amazement, she asked me kindly to discontinue the account of my adventures, in an icy tone which left no room for protest.

"It was only a sea otter," I tried to explain, thinking perhaps she did not care for snake stories.

But the explanation did not appear to interest her, and I was mortified to observe that my impression upon her was anything but pleasant.

"She doesn't seem to like me and my stories," thought I, "but she is too young, perhaps, to appreciate them."

So I forgave her—for she was even prettier than I had thought her at first—and I took my leave, saying that Mr. Halyard would doubtless direct me to my room.

Halyard was in his library, cleaning a revolver, when I entered.

"Your room is next to mine," he said; "pleasant dreams, and kindly refrain from snoring."

"May I venture an absurd hope that you will do the same!" I replied politely.

That maddened him, so I hastily withdrew.

I had been asleep for at least two hours, when a movement by my bedside and a light in my eyes awakened me. I sat bolt upright in bed, blinking at Halyard, who, clad in a dressing gown and wearing a nightcap, had wheeled himself into my room with one hand, while with the other he solemnly waved a candle over my head.

"I'm so cursed lonely," he said; "come, there's a good fellow—talk to me in your own original impudent way!"

I objected strenuously, but he looked so worn and thin, so lonely and bad-tempered, so lovelessly grotesque, that I got out of bed and passed a spongeful of cold water over my head.

Then I returned to bed and propped the pillows up for a back rest, ready to quarrel with him if it might bring some pleasure into his morbid existence.

"No," he said amiably, "I'm too worried to quarrel, but I'm much obliged for your kindly offer. I want to tell you something."

"What?" I asked suspiciously.

"I want to ask you if you ever saw a man with gills like a fish?"

"Gills?" I repeated.

"Yes, gills! Did you?"

"No," I replied angrily, "and neither did you."

"No, I never did," he said, in a curiously placid voice, "but there's a man with gills like a fish who lives in the ocean out there. Oh, you needn't look that way—nobody ever thinks of doubting my word, and I tell you that there's a man—or a thing that looks like a man—as big as you are, too—all slate-colored—with nasty red gills like a fish!—and I've a witness to prove what I say!"

"Who?" I asked sarcastically.

"The witness? My nurse."

"Oh! She saw a slate-colored man with gills?"

"Yes, she did. So did Francis Lee, superintendent of the Mica Quarry Company at Port-of-Waves. So have a dozen men who work in the quarry. Oh, you needn't laugh, young man. It's an old story here, and anybody can tell you about the harbor master."

"The harbor master!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, that slate-colored thing with gills, that looks like a man—and—by Heaven! is a man—that's the harbor master. Ask any quarryman at Port-of-Waves what it is that comes purring around their boats at the wharf and unties painters and changes the mooring of every catboat in the cove at night! Ask Francis Lee what it was he saw running and leaping up and down the shoal at sunset last Friday! Ask anybody along the coast what sort of a thing moves about the cliffs like a man and slides over them into the sea like an otter——"

"I saw it do that!" I burst out.

"Oh, did you? Well, *what was it?*"

Something kept me silent, although a dozen explanations flew to my lips.

After a pause, Halyard said: "You saw the harbor master, that's what you saw!"

I looked at him without a word.

"Don't mistake me," he said pettishly; "I don't think that the harbor master is a spirit or a sprite or a hobgoblin, or any sort of damned rot. Neither do I believe it to be an optical illusion."

"What do you think it is?" I asked.

"I think it's a man—I think it's a branch of the human race—that's what I think. Let me tell you something; the deepest spot in the Atlantic Ocean is a trifle over five miles deep—and I suppose you know that this place lies only about a quarter of a mile off this headland. The British exploring vessel, *Gull*, Captain Marotte, discovered and sounded it, I believe. Anyway, it's there, and it's my belief that the profound depths are inhabited by the remnants of the last race of amphibious human beings!"

This was childish; I did not bother to reply.

"Believe it or not, as you will," he said angrily; "one thing I know, and that is this: The harbor-master has taken to hanging around my cove, and he is attracted by my nurse! I won't have it! I'll blow his fishy gills out of his head if I ever get a shot at him! I don't care whether it's homicide or not—anyway, it's a new kind of murder and it attracts me!"

I gazed at him incredulously, but he was working himself into a passion, and I did not choose to say what I thought.

"Yes, this slate-colored thing with gills goes purring and grinning and spitting about after my nurse—when she walks, when she rows, when she sits on the beach! Gad! It drives me nearly frantic. I won't tolerate it, I tell you!"

"No," said I, "I wouldn't, either." And I rolled over in bed convulsed with laughter.

The next moment I heard my door slam. I smothered my mirth and rose to close the window, for the land wind blew cold from the forest, and a drizzle was sweeping the carpet as far as my bed.

That luminous glare, which sometimes lingers after the stars go out, threw a trembling, nebulous radiance over sand and cove. I heard the seething currents under the breakers' softened thunder—louder than I ever heard it. Then, as I closed my window, lingering for a last look at the crawling tide, I saw a man standing ankle-deep in the surf, all alone there in the night. But—was it a man? For the figure suddenly began running over the beach on all fours like a beetle, waving its limbs like feelers. Before I could throw open the window again it darted into the surf, and, when I leaned out into the chilling drizzle, I saw nothing save the flat ebb crawling on the coast—I heard nothing save the purring of bubbles on seething sands.

## CHAPTER V.

### TEN THOUSAND REWARD.

IT took me a week to perfect my arrangements for transporting the great auks, by water, to Port-of-Waves,

where a lumber schooner was to be sent from Petite-Sainte-Isolle; chartered by me for a voyage to New York.

I had constructed a cage made of oziers, in which my auks were to squat until they arrived at Bronx Park. My telegrams to Professor Farrago were brief; one merely said: "Victory!" Another explained that I wanted no assistance, and a third read: "Schooner *Borogrove* chartered. Arrive New York July first. Send furniture van to foot of Bluff Street."

My week as a guest of Mr. Halyard proved interesting. I wrangled with that invalid to his heart's content, I worked all day on my ozier cage, I hunted the thimble in the moonlight with the pretty nurse. We sometimes found it.

As for the thing they called the harbor master, I saw it a dozen times, but always either at night or so far away, and so close to the sea, that of course no trace of it remained when I reached the spot, rifle in hand.

I had quite made up my mind that the so-called harbor master was a demented darcy—wandered from Heaven knows where—perhaps shipwrecked and gone mad from his sufferings. Still, it was far from pleasant to know that the creature was strongly attracted by the pretty nurse.

She, however, persisted in regarding the harbor master as a sea creature; she earnestly affirmed that it had gills, like a fish's gills, that it had a soft, fleshy hole for a mouth, and its eyes were luminous, and lidless, and fixed.

"Besides," she said, with a shudder, "it's all slate color, like a porpoise, and it looks as wet as a sheet of India rubber in a dissecting room."

The day before I was to set sail with my auks in a catboat bound for Port-of-Waves, Halyard trundled up to me in his chair, and announced his intention of going with me.

"Going where?" I asked.

"To Port-of-Waves and then to New York," he replied tranquilly.

I was doubtful, and my lack of cordiality hurt his feelings.

"Oh, of course, if you need the sea voyage——" I began.

"I don't; I need you," he said savagely; "I need the stimulus of our daily quarrel. I never disagreed so pleasantly with anybody in my life; it agrees with me; I am a hundred per cent better than I was last week."

I was inclined to resent this, but something in the deep-lined face of the invalid softened me. Besides, I had taken a hearty liking to the old pig.

"I don't want any mawkish sentiment about it," he said, observing me closely; "I won't permit anybody to feel sorry for me—do you understand?"

"I'll trouble you to use a different tone in addressing me," I replied hotly; "I'll feel sorry for you if I choose to!" And our usual quarrel proceeded, to his deep satisfaction.

By six o'clock next evening I had Halyard's luggage stowed away in the catboat, and the pretty nurse's effects corded down. She and I placed the ozier cage aboard, securing it firmly, and then, throwing tablecloths over the auks' heads, we led those simple and dignified birds down the path and across the plank at the little wooden pier. Together, we locked up the house, while Halyard stormed at us both and wheeled himself furiously up and down the beach below. At the last moment she forgot her thimble. But we found it, I forget where.

"Come on!" shouted Halyard, waving his shawls furiously; "what the devil are you about up there?"

He received our explanation with a sniff, and we trundled him aboard without further ceremony.

"Don't run me across the plank like a steamer trunk!" he shouted, as I shot him dexterously in to the cockpit.

But the wind was dying away, and I had no time to dispute with him then.

The sun was setting above the pine-clad ridge as our sail flapped and partly filled, and I cast off, and began a long tack, east by south, to avoid the spouting rocks on our starboard bow.

The sea birds rose in clouds as we swung across the shoal, the black surf

ducks scattered out to sea, the gulls tossed their sun-tipped wings in the ocean, riding the rollers like bits of froth.

Already we were sailing slowly out across that great hole in the ocean, five miles deep, the most profound sounding ever taken in the Atlantic. The presence of great heights or great depths, seen or unseen, always impresses the human mind—perhaps oppresses it. We were very silent; the sunlight stain on cliff and beach deepened to crimson, then faded into somber purple bloom that lingered long after the rose tint died out in the zenith.

Our progress was slow; at times, although the sail filled with the rising land breeze, we scarcely seemed to move at all.

"Of course," said the pretty nurse, "we couldn't be aground in the deepest hole in the Atlantic."

"Scarcely," said Halyard sarcastically, "unless we're grounded on a whale."

"What's that soft thumping?" I asked. "Have we run afoul of a barrel or log?"

It was almost too dark to see, but I leaned over the rail and swept the water with my hand.

Instantly something smooth glided under it, like the back of a great fish; and I jerked my hand back to the tiller. At the same moment the whole surface of the water seemed to purr, with a sound like the breaking of froth in a champagne glass.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Halyard sharply.

"A fish came up under my hand," I said; "a porpoise or something——"

With a low cry, the pretty nurse clasped my arm in both her hands.

"Listen!" she whispered, "it's purring around the boat!"

"What the devil's purring?" shouted Halyard. "I won't have anything purring around me!"

At that moment, to my amazement, I saw that the boat had stopped entirely, although the sail was full and the small pennant fluttered from the masthead. Something, too, was tugging at the rudd-

der, twisting and jerking it until the tiller strained and creaked in my hand. All at once it snapped; the tiller swung useless, and the boat whirled around, heeling in the stiffening wind, and drove shoreward.

It was then that I, ducking to escape the boom, caught a glimpse of something ahead—something that a sudden wave seemed to toss on deck and leave there, wet and flapping—a man with round, fixed, fishy eyes, and soft, slaty skin.

But the horror of the thing was the two gills that swelled and relaxed spasmodically, emitting a rasping, purring sound—two gasping, blood-red gills, all fluted and scalloped and distended.

Frozen with amazement and repugnance, I stared at the creature; I felt the hair stirring on my head and the icy sweat on my forehead.

"It's the harbor master!" screamed Halyard.

The harbor master had gathered himself into a wet lump, squatting motionless in the bows under the mast; his lidless eyes were phosphorescent, like the eyes of living codfish. After a while I felt that either fright or disgust was going to strangle me where I sat, but it was only the arms of the pretty nurse clasped around me in a frenzy of terror.

There was not a firearm aboard that we could get at. Halyard's hand crept backward where a steel-shod boat hook lay, and I also made a clutch at it. The next moment I had it in my hand, and staggered forward, but the boat was already tumbling shoreward among the breakers, and the next I knew the harbor master ran at me like a colossal rat, just as the boat rolled over and over through the surf, spilling freight and passengers among the seaweed-covered rocks.

When I came to myself I was thrashing about knee-deep in a rocky pool, blinded by the water and half suffocated, while under my feet, like a stranded porpoise, the harbor master made the water boil in his efforts to upset me. But his limbs seemed soft and boneless; he had no nails, no teeth,

and he bounced and thumped and flapped and splashed like a fish, while I rained blows on him with the boat hook that sounded like blows on a football. And all the while his gills were blowing out, and frothing, and purring, and his lidless eyes looked into mine, until, nauseated and trembling, I dragged myself back to the beach, where already the pretty nurse alternately wrung her hands and her petticoats in ornamental despair.

Beyond the cove, Halyard was bobbing up and down, afloat in his invalid's chair, trying to steer shoreward. He was the maddest man I ever saw.

"Have you killed that rubber-headed thing yet?" he roared.

"I can't kill it," I shouted breathlessly. "I might as well try to kill a football!"

"Can't you punch a hole in it?" he bawled. "If I can only get at him——"

His words were drowned in a thunderous splashing, a roar of great, broad flippers beating the sea, and I saw the gigantic forms of my two great auks blundering past in a shower of spray, driving headlong out into the ocean.

"Oh, Lord!" I said, "I can't stand that!" and, for the first time in my life, I fainted peacefully—and appropriately—at the feet of the pretty nurse.

It is within the range of possibility that this story may be doubted. It doesn't matter; nothing can add to the despair of a man who has lost two great auks. For Halyard, nothing affects him—except his involuntary sea bath, and that did him so much good that he writes me from the south that he's going on a walking tour through Switzerland—if I'll join him. I might have joined him if he had not married the pretty nurse. I wonder whether—— But, of course, this is no place for speculation.

In regard to the harbor master, you may believe it or not, as you choose. But if you hear of any great auks being found, kindly throw a tablecloth over their heads and notify the authorities at the new Zoölogical Gardens in Bronx Park, New York. The reward is ten thousand dollars.



A Camera Chap Tale...

# The Presidential Snapshot

By Bertram Lebar.



## WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

Condensed in this form, that those who missed them may enjoy fully the story that follows.

FRANK HAWLEY, the Camera Chap, of the *New York Sentinel*, is sent by the President of the United States to the republic of Baracoa to obtain a photograph of its former president, Francisco Felix, to be used as evidence. It is doubtful whether Felix has escaped with the contents of the treasury, or been thrown into jail by the tyrant Portiforo. Hawley meets Señora Felix on the trip, and in Baracoa finds his rival, Gale, of the *New York Daily News*, with Virginia Throgmorton, daughter of the American minister. She confides to Hawley that she distrusts Gale, that Señora Felix is her friend, and that she knows Felix is a prisoner in El Torro fortress. Gale receives this latter information from New York, and the Camera Chap, in order to protect Felix from Gale, succeeds in convincing his rival, through a faked conversation with Virginia, that Felix is in Paris. Gale's newspaper publishes this story. Learning then that the prisoner is in danger of assassination, Hawley and Virginia resolve to help him.

The courageous girl, daring the anger of her father, who is a friend of the tyrant Portiforo, goes with Hawley in a motor boat to El Torro, under cover of the darkness. They land on the beach, and the girl screams and calls for help, thereby drawing the sentry away from the prison wall, while Hawley reaches the window of the prisoner's cell and takes a flash-light picture through the bars. Hawley puts his camera in a waterproof bag and swims across the harbor to the United

States battleship *Kearsarge*, which is anchored in the bay. Captain Cortrell, of the battleship, welcomes him and sends him ashore in a boat, with Lieutenant Ridder, an old friend, to aid him. At the hotel they find that the shutter of the camera is out of order, and the plate which was supposed to bear the momentous picture is a blank.

Virginia cleverly deceives the officers of the fort and is escorted to her home by Captain Reyes. She learns through Gale, next day, that Hawley has been arrested at his hotel, and is in danger of being shot as a spy.

The girl tries to persuade her father to use his influence to have Hawley freed, but the United States minister is bitterly opposed to Hawley and his newspaper. A cipher message comes from the President of the United States, however, bidding the diplomat do all he can to save the snapshot adventurer. Hawley treats his predicament lightly until he sees from his cell window the putting to death of Doctor Bonsal, the friend of Señora Felix. While he is reflecting on his own precarious position, two officers come and order him to accompany them to the palace of the president.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

AT THE PALACE.



HAWLEY believed that almost anything outrageous was possible after the terrible scene he had witnessed in the courtyard of the jail, and he accompanied his two visitors with some

misgivings, which, however, he took pains to conceal from them.

"If you don't mind," he said, with well-simulated carelessness, as they invited him to enter an automobile with a closed top which was standing outside the jail, "I'd like to know where you're taking me. I'm naturally of a rather curious disposition."

"To the national palace, señor," one of the men answered. "The president sent us for you."

The prisoner's face grew grim. He thought he could guess the reason for this summons. Disappointed at Lopez's inability to get the truth about the snapshot expedition, Portiforo was going to try his own skill as a cross-examiner. The Camera Chap had no doubt that the president of Baracoa was a past master at the gentle art of administering the third degree, but he was fully resolved that if Portiforo hoped to get anything out of him he was going to be greatly disappointed.

Arriving at the palace in a decidedly belligerent mood, which was intensified by his contempt for the man of whose brutality he had just had such startling evidence, he was somewhat astonished by the graciousness with which he was received. Portiforo was seated in the audience chamber, a large room furnished in massive mahogany and hung with rich Oriental draperies. Near the president sat Minister Throgmorton, whose scowling face was in sharp contrast to the smile which illuminated the former's rubicund countenance. The only other person present was a dark-skinned young man who sat at a big writing table in the center of the room, chewing the end of a pencil, with a stenographer's notebook before him.

"So this is Señor Hawley," Portiforo began quizzically, when the Camera Chap's two guides had conducted him to a position in front of the massive, thronelike chair in which the first gentleman of Baracoa lolled. "So this is the adventurous young man whose discretion, I fear, is not always as great as his valor."

To this the prisoner did not deem it worth while to make any reply. He

merely looked straight into the tyrant's beady eyes, his muscles tense, his mouth set in a straight line.

"I am always glad to gaze upon genius," Portiforo continued, without a vestige of irony in his tone, "and I am informed, Señor Hawley, that you are such a great man in your line that even the President of the United States has honored you by providing work for your camera."

Grasping the significance of this question, and conscious of the fact that the other's gaze was riveted searchingly upon his face, Hawley was keenly on his guard. "I have had the honor of photographing the President of the United States, if that is what you mean," he replied coldly.

His evident miscomprehension of the question seemed to please Portiforo.

"No; that was not quite what I meant," the latter said, after a slight pause. "However, we will let it go at that. I presume, señor," he continued, "you are wondering why I sent for you?"

The Camera Chap shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps you are in hopes that this summons may mean that, in spite of the seriousness of your offense, you are to receive mercy?"

"Mercy!" Hawley exclaimed, with an ironical laugh. "No, I scarcely expect that, sir—after the scene I witnessed in the prison yard this morning. I hardly think you know what mercy means."

Minister Throgmorton's scowl deepened, but the president's face did not lose its smile as he turned to the stenographer at the table, who had already started to make a record of the conversation. "I don't think you need put that down, Garcia," he said good-humoredly. "I feel confident that Señor Hawley will wish to withdraw that remark later on."

He addressed himself once more to the man before him. "I presume, señor, you refer to the execution of the traitor Bonsal. That was indeed a sad affair, and I regret that you should have been compelled to behold it. I

think, however, that you are unjust in calling it an outrage. The unhappy man met only his just deserts. He was found guilty, after a fair trial, of conspiring against the government of his adopted country. His fate was the fate which all traitors must expect." His small eyes twinkled. "Perhaps, however, you will change your mind about my ignorance of the meaning of the word mercy," he said dryly, "when I tell you that, in spite of the seriousness of your own offense, I have decided to let you go free."

The Camera Chap gave a start of surprise.

"The worthy representative of your country here," Portiforo continued, with a bow in the direction of the envoy, "has been kind enough to exert his personal influence in your behalf. While he fully agrees with me that officially he has absolutely no rights in the matter—that the nature of your crime puts you outside the protection of your government and permits us to do with you as we see fit, my esteem for Señor Throgmorton is so great that I have decided to grant his request to set you free, since he has asked it of me as a personal favor to him."

The prisoner, scarcely able to believe that what he heard was true, turned with a grateful smile to the American diplomat. "This is very good of you, sir," he began.

Minister Throgmorton silenced him with a curt gesture. "You can spare me your thanks," he said, his face still maintaining its frozen expression. "I want you to understand clearly that my intercession is not prompted by any sympathy for you. On the contrary, I feel that whatever sentence the court might see fit to pass upon you would be no more than you richly deserve. I consider you, sir, a disgrace to your country and to the honorable profession which has the misfortune to number you among its members. My action in procuring your pardon is due entirely to—er—to other reasons."

The president smiled appreciatively, and his glance, wandering over to the table, noted that the official stenog-

rapher was taking down every word of this caustic speech.

"You will observe, Señor Hawley," he remarked pointedly, "that were your own countryman in my place, you could scarcely expect to receive the leniency which I am showing you. Perhaps, now, you are ready to withdraw the intemperate remark you made a little while ago about my mercy?"

The Camera Chap smiled shrewdly. "I think I had better wait until I have heard the conditions on which I am to get my release. I suppose there will be conditions?"

"The only condition," said Portiforo, frowning at this cold response, "is that you get out of this country immediately. We will give you until to-morrow. There is a boat leaving for New York in the morning. If you are caught on Baracoan soil after that—well, what you saw take place in the prison yard this morning ought to give you a graphic idea of what you will have to expect."

Hawley opened his mouth as though about to say something, but changed his mind and merely bowed.

"And I warn you that next time," said Minister Throgmorton sharply, "if you expect any help from me you are going to be disappointed."

Portiforo chuckled. "I feel confident that there isn't going to be any next time, eh, Mr. Hawley? As a man of common sense, you are no doubt fully convinced of the inadvisability of doing any more camera work in Baracoa."

"Could I stay if I were to give you my word that I wouldn't use my camera while in this country?" the snapshot adventurer inquired.

The president grinned and shook his head. "Señor Hawley is such a great camera enthusiast that we should have cause to fear that he might be tempted to forget such a promise," he said dryly. "No; greatly as I regret having to be so inhospitable, we must insist upon your leaving Baracoa."

The Camera Chap bowed. "Very well, sir; I shall sail on to-morrow's boat," he said. His air was so much

like that of one who feels that he is driving a hard bargain, that Minister Throgmorton commented upon it angrily. "Anybody would think that you weren't satisfied!" he exclaimed. "You are without exception the most impertinent and ungrateful fellow I have ever met."

"I am sorry if I appear that way," Hawley responded simply. "I assure you, sir, that I am not ungrateful to you and Señor Portiforo for this unexpected clemency."

The president chuckled. "There is one other person to whom you are indebted for your good fortune," he announced dryly.

"Who is that?"

"Your brother journalist, Señor Gale. He was here yesterday to see me concerning you."

"To intercede for me?" Hawley exclaimed, scarcely able to conceal his astonishment.

Portiforo smiled. "He gave me some information concerning you which had a great influence upon me," he said vaguely. "In fact, if it had not been for the arguments he advanced, I don't think I should have decided to grant you freedom, even to oblige my dear friend, Señor Throgmorton."

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### BLUE SPECTACLES.

WHEN Gale told Virginia Throgmorton that he had a cablegram from his office asking him to return to New York and report for duty immediately, the girl received the tidings with an equanimity which was not at all flattering to his pride.

"Won't you be sorry to see me go?" he queried. Although his host's pretty daughter had taken no pains to conceal her dislike for him, his egotism was so strong that he found it difficult to believe that he really was not in her good graces.

"I think I shall be able to survive the blow," Virginia answered lightly.

The reporter frowned. "You didn't feel that way about me when I first came here, Virginia," he said reproach-

fully. "You and I got along together famously at first. It was only when that scamp Hawley first showed his face in San Cristobal that I began to lose my pull with you."

Virginia gave him a scornful glance. "Mr. Hawley isn't a scamp," she replied indignantly. "And he didn't have anything to do with your losing your pull with me, as you term it. I had already found you out before he arrived."

"Well, it's a mystery to me why you seem to be so strong for that fellow," Gale protested, ignoring the last part of her remark. "I should think, after the trick he played you with those Felix letters, you wouldn't have any use for him."

The girl stared at him wonderingly. "Have you the effrontery to keep on claiming that Mr. Hawley stole those letters from my desk, when they appeared in your own paper!" she exclaimed.

"That's easily explained," he rejoined coolly. "He sold the letters to my paper. He didn't dare sell them to his own, for fear that if he did the crime would be traced straight to him. A fellow with as little conscience as he has wouldn't hesitate to scoop his own sheet in order to make a few dollars. If you don't think he was the thief," he added audaciously, "who do you suppose was?"

"If I wished to name the thief, I feel confident that I could do so," Virginia returned disdainfully.

Gale's expression was one of injured innocence. "From your tone, I almost think that you suspect me," he said. "That's pretty tough, Virginia—giving that crook the benefit of the doubt in preference to me. Since you persist in being so cruel," he went on plaintively, "I am almost glad to go back to New York. Without your friendship, San Cristobal is a dull burg." His eyes gleamed spitefully. "My only regret at having to leave Baracoa at this time is that I shan't be here to see that rascally Camera Chap stood up in front of a firing squad."

With this kindly remark he went

out to see about booking his passage home. As he drew near the steamship office he received the greatest surprise of his life. Two men were just coming out of the place. One of them wore the uniform of a lieutenant in the United States navy. The other, who was in civilian garb, was a tall, slim young man whose pale face offered a striking contrast to his companion's ruddy countenance. Gale stared at the latter with as much amazement as if he had been gazing upon a ghost, and his surprise was not diminished when the tall man, recognizing him, came eagerly toward him with his hand outstretched and a smile upon his lips.

"I want to thank you, old man, for what you've done for me," he said warmly.

"Thank me!" the reporter couldn't help exclaiming blankly.

"I understand that it is largely to you that I owe my freedom. It was mighty white of you, Gale, to go to Portiforo on my behalf. I shan't forget it in a hurry."

Gale felt somewhat uncomfortable, suspecting that what he heard must be irony. But there was no mistaking the sincerity of the other's manner, and, as soon as he was convinced of this, the *News* man grasped the outstretched hand with well-simulated cordiality. He was greatly puzzled by this queer situation, but, possessing remarkable rallying powers, he quickly recovered his self-possession. "Don't mention it, Hawley, old fellow," he said, "I am glad to see you free. Who told you that I had a hand in getting you out?" he inquired, his manner implying that he would greatly have preferred to have his good act shrouded in anonymity.

"Portiforo told me," was the amazing answer.

"The deuce!" Gale muttered. "I can't understand why he should have told you that?"

"Isn't it true?" the other exclaimed, in an astonished tone.

The reporter smiled. "Oh, yes; it's true enough. When I heard about your being in trouble, I figured that my pull

with Portiforo might do you some good, so I hiked to the palace and did my little best to give you a boost. But," he added, with a show of vexation, "I can't understand why the president should have told you of my humble efforts. He promised that he wouldn't mention it."

"I'm glad that he did," the Camera Chap said impulsively. "It was a mighty decent thing for you to do, Gale, considering that the relations between us have been—er—somewhat strained. Without meaning any offense, I'd like to know why you did it?"

The *News* man shrugged his shoulders. "After all, blood is thicker than water," he responded sentimentally. "I couldn't stand by and see a countryman of mine made a target for Baracoan bullets, when it was in my power to save him, even though that countryman hadn't acted quite fairly to me in the past. Hang it all! I flatter myself I'm big enough to do a good turn even for an enemy."

"Well, we're not going to be enemies any longer," the good-natured snapshot expert declared, once more impulsively offering his hand to his supposed benefactor, who accepted it without a qualm.

Lieutenant Ridder, who had encountered Hawley outside the national palace, and accompanied him to the steamship office, had listened to this conversation with some surprise. "Who's your friend, Frank?" he inquired with a frown, after they had left Gale. "I can't say that I'm stuck on his looks. On first impression, I'd size him up as a mighty slippery proposition. And as for owing your liberty to him, I think you're mistaken about that. I know of somebody else who deserves most of the credit."

"Who is he?" the Camera Chap demanded eagerly.

The naval officer's eyes twinkled. "It isn't a he—it's a young woman. I wonder if you could guess her name."

"Miss Throgmorton?"

"Good guess," Ridder chuckled. "Yes; it was the United States minister's daughter that did the trick for you.

She forced her father to use his influence with Portiforo."

"Forced him? How do you know?"

"She told me so herself. I suppose she'd be angry with me if she knew I was telling you a word about it, but I think it only right that you should hear of her efforts in your behalf. She went to her governor and told him that if you were guilty she was guilty also, as she had assisted you to take that mysterious snapshot—she didn't tell me what it was—and that unless you were set free she was going to give herself up to the authorities as accessory before the fact. There's some class to a girl who'll go that far to help a friend."

"Some class!" Hawley repeated, a tender look in his eyes. "Say! She's the pluckiest, whitest girl I ever met."

The navy man grinned. "Well, you and she could form a mutual admiration society," he confided to his companion. "You certainly stand high with her, old man. She——"

He stopped short at a sharp exclamation from his companion. To his surprise he observed that, although his remark ought to have been of great interest to the latter, he was paying no attention to it. They were walking along the Avenida Bolivar, and the camera man's gaze was directed toward a man on the opposite side of the wide street. This man wore the uniform of an officer of the Baracoan army, and he wore spectacles of dark-blue glass.

"That's mighty queer," Ridder heard his companion mutter.

"Are you referring to the glasses?" the sailor inquired. "It is rather odd to find a fellow in the service with such weak sight. In our own army they'd retire him for disability, but I suppose anything is good enough for Baracoa. Do you know who the fellow is? He seems to know you from the way he's staring over here."

Hawley nodded. "Yes, I know him; his name is Reyes—Captain Enrico Reyes, of the engineers. But what puzzles me is why he should be wearing those goggles. He didn't wear any glasses at all a couple of days ago."

A little later the two men parted

company, Ridder announcing that he had to go back to the ship. Much as he liked him, Hawley was not sorry to be rid of him just then. He was eager to make a call at the United States legation, and as the person he hoped to see there was not Minister Throgmorton, he preferred to go alone. When he arrived at the legation, a disappointment awaited him. The old colored servant informed him that Miss Virginia was not at home.

The visitor was surprised and chagrined to hear this, as a glimpse he had caught of a pretty face at one of the upper windows apprised him that this announcement was not to be taken literally. His face lighted up, however, at some supplementary information which the servant imparted to him. "Miss Virginia is not at home, now, sir," the old darky repeated with a broad grin, "but," he added in a mysterious whisper, "she's gwine out horse-back ridin' this afternoon. She done tol' me to be sure and tell you that."

That afternoon, Hawley hired a mount and met his fair ally at the old trysting place. The girl had dismounted and was standing in the middle of the road talking to her steed as though he were a human being, when the Camera Chap galloped up. She ran eagerly to meet him, both her hands outstretched and her eyes shining joyously.

"This is almost too good to be true," she cried, as he jumped from his horse. "When I heard what they did to poor Doctor Bonsal this morning, I was half crazy with fear on your account. You certainly have had a narrow escape, Mr. Hawley."

"Yes; and I understand that I owe it largely to you that I am now free," he said, his voice trembling. "I can't begin to tell you how much I——"

"Nonsense," she interrupted, a rosy tinge making itself visible beneath her fair skin. "Who told you that? It is to the President of the United States that you owe your freedom."

"The president!" the Camera Chap cried incredulously.

Virginia smiled. "Didn't my father

tell you that? Well, it's the truth. He didn't tell it to me, either; but he received a code message from the White House yesterday, and he was so careless as to leave it on his desk when he went out. I suppose I ought to be very much ashamed of myself, but my curiosity forced me to work out the translation with the aid of the code book. What a very important man you must be, Mr. Hawley, to have the president so concerned about you. But tell me what happened at the palace! What did that tyrant have to say to you?"

Her companion laughed. "I must say, in justice to him, that he didn't act much like a tyrant to-day. If it hadn't been for the things we know about him, I would almost have thought from the way he treated me that he really was the genial, benevolent old gentleman he looks to be when his face is in repose."

"Did he exact any promise from you in return for your release?" the girl inquired anxiously.

"Only one. I am to leave Baracoa on to-morrow's boat."

Virginia's face clouded. "Of course, I expected that," she said, with a sigh. "Still, it's a great pity that you have to go."

Her words brought a joyous expression to Hawley's face. "Do you really care?" he asked.

"Of course I care," she answered, her color deepening; "but not on my own account—at least," she added, with sweet candor, "not wholly on my own account. I was thinking of poor President Felix. You are going to leave him to his fate? Of course, I don't blame you for going," she explained quickly, observing the hurt expression which came to his face. "It would be suicide for you to stay after what has happened, and you have already made enough sacrifices in his behalf. Still, it does seem a great pity that we can't do anything for him—that all our efforts should have been for nothing."

"Yes, it does seem a great pity," the Camera Chap agreed. "Tell me, Miss Throgmorton," he said with apparent irrelevancy, "do you happen to know

what is the matter with Captain Reyes' eyes? I saw him on the Avenida Bolivar to-day, and he was wearing spectacles with thick blue lenses."

Virginia frowned, as though she resented this evident attempt on his part to change the subject. "Yes, I have seen them," she replied coldly, "I met him this morning as he was returning from the oculist. He had been complaining of weak eyes for some time, and yesterday the specialist ordered those glasses. But what has that got to do with poor President Felix?"

"Nothing, of course," Hawley answered with a queer smile. "Nothing whatever. I was merely curious about those blue spectacles."

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### WIRELESS WARNING.

JUST as the steamship *Eldorado*, bound for New York, was about to leave her dock at Puerto Cabero, a touring car with a closed top dashed up to the wharf, and two women alighted and went aboard the ship. One of this pair, whose slender form was clad in black, wore a heavy veil which concealed her features, but Hawley, who was standing near the gangway when they arrived, gave a start of surprise. Despite the veil, he recognized the women as Señora Felix and her maid. The Camera Chap had not heard that the wife of the ex-president was to be among his fellow passengers. Later on, he learned that her departure from her native land was not a voluntary act. Her husband's successor to the presidency had sent her a curt notice the day before that the government of Baracoa expected her to sail on the *Eldorado*, and that if she saw fit to disappoint the government's expectation in this respect, she might have to stand trial on the painful charge of being in league with the government's enemies.

Although Hawley did not know at the time that the unfortunate woman was an exile, he could see from the way in which her slender form trem-

bled that she was under stress of great emotion, and his heart was filled with sympathy for her, but although she passed close to where he was standing, he did not attempt to address her or even to salute her. He was keenly alive to the fact that he was an object of close scrutiny from several keen-eyed, swarthy men who stood on the pier, and he realized the great necessity of treating the señora as a total stranger while they were looking on. But later, as the boat was passing out of the bay, and the Camera Chap stood against the rail of the promenade deck, gazing with mixed sensations at the grim, gray walls of El Torro fortress, he became suddenly aware that somebody was standing close beside him, and, turning, discovered Señora Felix.

The woman leaned over the rail, and her eyes were fixed yearningly on the fortress. She had raised her veil, and the sympathetic young man beside her could see the tears running down her haggard face. A sound as though she were choking came from her throat.

They were all alone. The rest of the passengers were on the other side of the deck absorbed in watching and waving salutes to the American battleship, which was an object of greater interest to them than the fortress. Under cover of this privacy, the Camera Chap thought there would be no harm in whispering a word of comfort to his unhappy neighbor. But, to his amazement, at the first sound of his voice, she wheeled on him with the fury of a tigress. "You!" she cried, her eyes blazing, her voice quavering with rage. "How dare you presume to address me after what you have done? Are you so lacking in shame, sir, that you would intrude upon the grief of a woman whose nearest and dearest you and your selfish government have murdered?"

"My dear señora!" the president's photographic envoy protested gently.

"Yes, murdered!" the frantic woman repeated fiercely, paying no heed to his interruption. "Your intolerable interference amounts to that. Things were bad enough before you came to Baracoa; at least, there was some hope

then. But now—now——" Her voice broke, and she covered her face with her hands.

"My dear señora," the Camera Chap repeated, taking advantage of this lull in the storm of denunciation, "I regret exceedingly that you should feel so bitter toward me, for I assure you—empty as the words may sound—that I would gladly give up my life to serve you and your husband."

If the poor woman had been in a saner mood, she would have realized that the man who uttered these words had already proved the sincerity of them by the great risk he had run for her cause, but she merely laughed bitterly.

"Your life, señor!" she cried. "Such a sacrifice as that was not required of you. All that you were asked to do was to give up your selfish ambition—to go back to your heartless president and tell him that the life of a noble man and a woman's broken heart were far more important in your eyes than a laurel for your own brow and a diplomatic triumph for your government. But you refused to listen to the pleadings of a devoted wife. You persisted in going ahead with your ruthless, blundering plans, not caring what might happen to your victim so long as you could boast to the world of your wonderful snapshot achievement."

Hawley saw that there was no use in trying to defend himself by pointing out to her that he had not made his unsuccessful attempt until he had been led to believe, from his conversation with the commander of the United States battleship, that the captive of El Torro would be protected after the snapshot had been taken, and that, moreover, it was the information which had come to him concerning the precarious condition of General Replife's health which had caused him to decide that desperate measures were absolutely necessary. In her present mood, he realized, such argument would have been useless. Besides, his thought was not to defend himself against her bitter accusations. Big-hearted chap that he was,

his sole desire was to comfort her, if that were possible.

"Tell me, señora," he begged, after an anxious glance at the group of passengers crowded against the opposite rail, "do you know definitely that anything has happened to President Felix, or are you merely giving expression to your apprehensions?"

Again she laughed bitterly. "Is it not to be taken for granted that the consequence of your mad act of the other night would be the assassination of my husband? Do you suppose for a minute that those ruffians would let him live now that they are aware that their secret is known?"

"But you do not know of his death?" the Camera Chap persisted. "You have not actually heard that they have done what you fear?"

She shook her head. "No, I have not heard," she said wearily. "It is scarcely to be supposed that they would proclaim their crime to the whole world. Assassins are not in the habit of advertising their deeds, señor."

Her reply relieved him of a great fear which her previous utterances had created in his mind. "Let us hope that your anxiety is groundless," he said soothingly. "I suppose, señora, you have heard the good news from the hospital. It was announced to-day that the condition of the minister of war is much improved. He surprised the surgeons by rallying when they thought there was no hope, and now they say that he is practically out of danger. And Replife's life means President Felix's life. Now that Portiforo knows that Replife is going to live, he will not dare resort to assassination."

The woman refused to be comforted by these arguments. "Who can tell how far that tyrant will dare to go, now that you have opened his eyes to the fact that the conspiracy is known?" she asked despairingly. Then she went below, and Hawley did not see her again for the rest of the voyage, for she kept to her stateroom, even having her meals served there. But the next morning her maid handed him a note,

the pathetic contents of which afforded him much satisfaction:

Please forgive me for my unkindness of yesterday. The sight of that terrible building, so long the tomb of that poor, noble martyr, made me beside myself. In my calmer moments I realized that I might have done you an injustice. I believe that you are brave and generous, and that possibly what you did you may have thought was for the best. For the risks that you have run and the sacrifices that you have made I am not ungrateful; and if, as I cannot help fearing, terrible consequences to me and mine have been the result of your gallant if indiscreet attempt, you have my forgiveness, señor.

"Poor little woman," said the Camera Chap to himself, as he finished reading this message of forgiveness. "If only——" His thought was interrupted by a hand laid on his shoulder. Turning hastily, he looked into Gale's grinning countenance.

"A love letter?" the reporter inquired banteringly, pointing to the note.

"Not exactly," Hawley replied with a laugh, hastily thrusting the missive into his pocket.

"Seemed to me that it was a lady's handwriting," the *News* man remarked.

The Camera Chap frowned. "How do you know that?" he demanded indignantly. "Did you dare look——" Then he abruptly cut himself short, resolved not to quarrel with the man to whom, he believed, he partly owed his freedom, and possibly his life.

"I couldn't help noticing the handwriting as I accidentally glanced over your shoulder," Gale explained.

"You didn't read the letter, did you?" Hawley inquired. His tone was anxious, for he had not heard the reporter step up behind him, and, consequently, had no way of knowing how long he had been there.

"Certainly not," Gale replied in an aggrieved tone. "Don't you give me credit for having any breeding?"

Except for this slightly unpleasant incident, Gale and the Camera Chap got along well together until the *Eldorado* stopped at San Juan, Porto Rico. There the *News* man made a queer discovery. When the vessel weighed anchor and started out for her trip to New York, Hawley was not on board.

He had gone ashore, explaining that he desired to make a purchase, and had mysteriously disappeared.

When the ship's officers and the other passengers learned of this disappearance, they were inclined to believe that the snapshot man's failure to show up was entirely accidental. But Gale, evidently, was not of that opinion, for, with a malicious smile on his face, he hurried to the wireless room and sent off a dispatch. The message was addressed: "Portiforo, National Palace, San Cristobal," and ran as follows:

Hawley missing at San Juan. Have reason to believe he is on his way back to Baracoa. Look out for him, GALE.

After sending this warning to the sly fox at Baracoa, he felt more cheerful. He had not a desire in the world to help the president of the little southern republic in any way; it was entirely his own satisfaction that was to be furthered by his actions.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### A WELCOME INTRUSION.

THE day after Hawley's departure from Baracoa, Lieutenant Ridder called at the United States legation with a message from the commander of the *Kearsarge* to Minister Throgmorton. On his way out, he encountered Virginia, and eagerly availed himself of the opportunity to renew his acquaintance with that captivating young woman.

The naval officer was flattered by the cordiality which she displayed toward him, but was astonished and concerned to observe that when he mentioned the name of his friend Hawley a frown came to her face and she hurriedly changed the subject, as though it were distasteful to her. He went back to his ship wondering what could have happened to bring about this change in her sentiments toward the man for whom she had previously manifested such warm regard. If Virginia had been asked to explain why she was displeased with the Camera Chap, she probably would have found difficulty in stating her grievance against him. As

she had told him, she could not with logic or justice blame him for going away, knowing what would happen to him if he ventured to remain on Baracoan soil. Yet she was disappointed in him, and his departure had aroused within her a feeling of resentment.

Possibly it was because he had appeared to accept the situation with such irritating cheerfulness, or it may have been that she had formed such an exalted opinion of his heroic qualities that she had half expected—unreasonable though she knew such expectation to be—that, at the last moment, he would defy Portiforo and his order of banishment and not leave Baracoa without making one more attempt to rescue the unfortunate prisoner of El Torro.

If Lieutenant Ridder had been a less loyal and unselfish friend, he might have sought to take advantage of Virginia's changed attitude toward the snapshot man and her evident liking for himself; for the daughter of the United States envoy had made such a great impression on him at their first meeting that he couldn't help feeling envious of Hawley's good luck. Not being at all the kind of fellow to seek to "butt in" on an absent friend's romance, however, he made it a point to steer clear of the embassy, and when, several days later, a tinted, perfumed note was handed to him by an orderly on the battleship, a frown came to his face as he read its contents. The note was from Miss Throgmorton, and it ran as follows:

MY DEAR MR. RIDDER: I am wondering why I have not seen you lately. Are they keeping you a prisoner on the ship? If not, and it is possible for you to come ashore this afternoon, I should like very much to have a talk with you.

I am going for a ride into the country, after luncheon. If you could find it convenient to meet me, then come to San Cristobal, and be at the northern gate of the Botanical Gardens, between one and two o'clock. You will find an old colored man waiting there. He will provide you with a mount and conduct you to a place where we can talk without danger of being spied upon. I hope you won't think me too unconventional in writing to you like this, but I positively must see you on a matter of life and death.

At first his almost quixotic sense of

fairness caused him to decide that he would send some excuse for not keeping this appointment, for he suspected that the last paragraph of the note must be more or less of an exaggeration; but presently he reproached himself for his lack of gallantry. He felt sure that Miss Throgmorton was too nice a girl to have urged such an unconventional meeting unless the circumstances justified it.

Promptly at one o'clock that afternoon, he arrived at the northern gate of the Botanical Gardens, and was met by old Uncle Peter, who conducted him to a near-by stable where two horses, already saddled, were waiting for them. Half an hour later, as they galloped along a desolate stretch of dusty road, the navy man caught sight of a girl on a pony coming toward them, and his pulses quickened as he recognized the trim, graceful figure.

"I suppose you are just burning with curiosity as to why I have sent for you," Virginia said, with a smile, as they dismounted.

"Anxiety would be a better word," he answered. "The tone of your note was so alarming that it is a great relief to me to find that you can still smile."

The girl sighed. "I suppose I have no right to smile," she said sadly, "for I really am in great trouble."

"What is it?" he demanded eagerly. "If I can help, Miss Throgmorton, you know you can count on me."

"Yes, I know that I can," she answered softly. "That is why I have sent for you. I—but we had better not talk here. We will go to the top of this hill. We shall be more safe up there."

Leaving Uncle Peter in charge of their horses, they climbed the hillock, and Virginia invited her companion to seat himself beside her on a boulder, under the feathery branches of a bamboo tree. "This is where—er—Mr. Hawley and I always met when we had secrets to discuss," she announced. "It commands a view of the road in both directions, so there is no danger of anybody creeping up on us unseen."

With an excess of caution which made him smile, she gazed up into the

branches of the solitary tree under which they were sitting. Then she continued, lowering her voice almost to a whisper: "I am going to begin, Mr. Ridder, by telling you what picture it was that Mr. Hawley and I were trying to take at the fortress the other night."

"Is it necessary that I should know?" he asked. He felt somewhat uncomfortable, for he could not help suspecting that it might be her evident pique against the Camera Chap which prompted her to give him the information, which, until now, neither she nor Hawley had seen fit to confide to him.

"If Mr. Hawley knew what I am doing," the girl said, as though reading his thoughts, "I feel sure that he would approve, for he couldn't be unreasonable enough to expect that just because he has given up the task of freeing poor President Felix, nothing else is to be done."

"Freeing President Felix?" the naval officer repeated, looking at her in bewilderment.

The girl nodded. "It was his picture that we were trying to get the other night. It was to rescue him that Mr. Hawley came to Baracoa. And now that he has gone, and Señora Felix has gone, and they have done away with poor Doctor Bonsal, there is nobody left but me to fight for the freedom of that unhappy man. But I can't do it alone," she added wistfully. "I am only a girl, and I realize my helplessness. I've got to have assistance, and that is why I have decided to take you into the secret. I know that you are brave and generous and trustworthy, Mr. Ridder."

The navy man bowed. "I am sure, at least, that you will find me trustworthy," he said simply. "If you really think it best for me to know, I shall be glad to hear the facts of the case, Miss Throgmorton, and to give you any help that I can."

Thereupon Virginia proceeded to tell him the tragic story of the missing president of Baracoa, and when she had finished, the lieutenant's face was very grim.

"It is the most amazing story I ever heard!" he declared. "It fairly makes my blood boil to think of that poor fellow being caged up there in the fortress with a battleship flying the Stars and Stripes less than half a mile away. But he's not going to be there much longer," he added, a determined expression coming to his strong face. "You're quite right, Miss Throgmorton, we've got to set him free. If you'll permit me, I'll speak to the captain about it as soon as I get back to the ship. I'll tell him the story, and——"

Virginia cut him short with a gesture of disapproval. "No, you mustn't do that. What I have told you is in the strictest confidence. If I thought that any good would come of it, I would have gone to Captain Cortrell myself, long before this. But I know that he would take no action in the matter. You know how he acted in the case of Mr. Hawley. And if he couldn't see his way to do anything for an American citizen, we can be sure he wouldn't interfere to help a man who has no claims on our government."

"I think you do him an injustice," her companion protested, resenting the somewhat bitter tone in which she spoke of his commanding officer. "There isn't a better-hearted or braver officer in the service than our old man. But of course he isn't always free to do what he'd like to do. The commanding officer of a battleship has got to think of pleasing Washington, D. C., before he can think of pleasing himself. How about your father, Miss Throgmorton? Surely the American minister wouldn't stand for such a conspiracy?"

Virginia sighed. "My father refuses to believe that there is any such conspiracy," she said. "Knowing how favorably disposed father was toward that tyrant Portiforo, I have always realized the futility of trying to enlist him in our cause. But yesterday," she added with a frown, "it occurred to me that, after all, it was worth trying. I was desperate, and saw no other way of helping poor President Felix. So I went to my father and told him my story. He laughed at me and told me

that I was suffering from hallucinations, and when I insisted, he became very angry and forbade me ever to mention the subject to him or to anybody else again."

A puzzled expression came to the naval officer's face. "That's queer," he muttered under his breath.

"No, Mr. Ridder," Virginia continued, "we can't hope for any help from either Captain Cortrell or my father. We've got to handle this thing ourselves."

"But what can we do?"

Virginia looked at him reproachfully. "The other day, when your friend Mr. Hawley was locked up, you were ready to go to the jail and attempt a rescue by force," she reminded him. "Wouldn't you do as much for this unhappy man?"

The lieutenant hesitated. "If I were sure that such an attempt would be successful, I wouldn't mind tackling it," he said. "But if I were to fail, Miss Throgmorton, you must realize what it would mean. There'd be the deuce to pay in Washington, and——"

"You didn't think of that when Mr. Hawley was in danger," Virginia protested indignantly. "You were quite ready to risk your career in the navy, and possibly your life, then."

"But Hawley was my friend, and I was under great obligations to him, besides."

"Does that make such a great difference?" the girl inquired somewhat coldly. "Are you willing to remain inactive while an innocent man is suffering a fate worse than death? Do you not feel an obligation to expose the villainy of these rascals? If so, I must say that I am disappointed in you, Mr. Ridder."

For a few seconds the lieutenant remained silent. Then suddenly his face lighted up. "You are right, Miss Throgmorton," he said, "I can't leave Baracoa without making an attempt to set Felix free. I don't know how we'll go about it, but we'll find a way—you and I together." He jumped to his feet, and, shading his eyes with his hand, looked toward the point in the

road where Uncle Peter was waiting with the horses.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "Who's that talking with your colored man? Looks like a tramp."

"More likely a spy," Virginia remarked, frowning. "I quite expected that I would be followed. Well, of all the audacity! Look! He's actually coming up to us."

Sure enough, the stranger, having exchanged a few words with the old darky, was climbing up the hill toward them, walking with the shambling gait of a native mendicant. He was a dark-haired, swarthy man, apparently past middle age. He was tall, but his figure was so bent that he appeared to be undersized. There was a five days' growth of hair on his chin, his clothing was in rags, and his feet were bare. Altogether, he was by no means a prepossessing person.

"A thousand pardons, señor, for this intrusion," he whined, addressing Ridder in Spanish, "but if you would earn the undying gratitude of a starving wretch, you can do so by separating yourself from a few cents. American money will do."

"Go away," the navy man growled. He spoke with unwonted roughness, which was due in part to Virginia's suspicion that the intruder was probably a spy, and partly to the fact that although the lieutenant's knowledge of Spanish was limited, he was sufficiently familiar with that language to realize the insolence with which the beggar spoke. "*Anda pronto!*" he exclaimed, with a threatening gesture.

He was startled by a cry from Virginia—a cry of mingled astonishment and joy. "Mr. Hawley!" the girl exclaimed with a half-hysterical laugh.

"Hawley!" Ridder exclaimed, staring incredulously at the human scarecrow. "Well, I'll be hanged if it isn't!"

For a few seconds the ragged mendicant appeared bewildered. He stared blankly at the couple. Then suddenly a broad grin appeared on his swarthy countenance. "This is a bitter disappointment," he declared ruefully. "I

had been hoping that this get-up of mine was good enough to deceive even your sharp eyes, Miss Throgmorton."

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### A NEW PLAN.

"SO you have come back!" said Virginia, her face radiant, a thrill of admiration in her voice.

"Of course," the Camera Chap said simply. "Did you think that I wouldn't? Surely you didn't think me capable of being such a wretched quitter?"

The girl's face showed her remorse. "Forgive me," she said. "Of course I ought to have known that even so great a risk couldn't keep you away. But you really should not have done it," she protested, with a contrariness which amused Ridder. "You are taking your life in your hands. If any of Portiforo's spies should recognize you——"

"I am in hopes that the eyes of Portiforo's spies won't be as sharp as yours," said the president's photographic envoy, shrugging his shoulders. "It seems to me that this disguise is pretty good."

"It is splendid!" Virginia declared. "And your mannerisms, too. I had no idea that you were such an accomplished actor. I can't explain how I knew it was you—certainly there was nothing about you to give you away. I guess it must have been my instinct which told me," she added, with a blush.

"I must admit you had me completely fooled, old man," declared Ridder, with a grin. "It's a wonderful make-up." He looked his friend over from head to foot and laughed. "Ye gods, you certainly are some spectacle!"

Hawley's face reflected his grin. "Talking about spectacles," he said, "how's our friend, Captain Reyes? Can either of you tell me whether he's still wearing those blue goggles?"

"He was wearing them as late as this morning," Virginia informed him, with a gleam of comprehension of the Camera Chap's apparently irrelevant interest in the eyesight of the custodian

of President Felix. "I met him to-day on the Avenida Juarez, and he told me that his eyes were giving him a lot of trouble, but are greatly improved since he has worn the glasses. The specialist has ordered him to wear them both night and day."

"Night and day!" the snapshot adventurer echoed joyously. "That's better than I dared hope for. Of course, I ought to be ashamed of myself for gloating over another man's misfortune, but I can't help regarding this as a gift from the gods. But tell me," he added, a shade of anxiety flitting across his face, "is Reyes still at the fortress, or have they put him on the sick list?"

"He is still on duty," Virginia announced. "I asked him, this morning, why he didn't lay off until his eyes were better, and he told me that his superiors had urged him to do so, but that he had insisted that he was capable of attending to his duties, and that they had let him have his way in the matter."

Hawley exhaled a deep breath of relief. "Now I know that we're going to win out," he chuckled. "Fortune wouldn't have put so many things our way if she weren't on our side."

"But what do you expect to gain by those blue spectacles?" Lieutenant Ridder demanded. "I can't see how they're going to help us free Felix."

The Camera Chap gave a start of surprise, and turned, with an inquiring glance, to Virginia.

"I—I felt that I had to tell him," the latter stammered contritely. "I thought—I didn't know that you were coming back, and it was necessary to have somebody to help me."

"That's all right, Miss Throgmorton," Hawley assured her. "I'm glad Ridder's been initiated into the order. If you hadn't told him, I should have done so myself. For in order to put through the little scheme I have in mind, old man," he announced, addressing the lieutenant, "I shall need your help."

"I shall be glad to do whatever I can," Ridder replied. "The story which Miss Throgmorton has told me about

Felix has got me so agitated that I'm ready to go the limit in order to help free him."

"What I want you to do," said Hawley, "is to make arrangements for a dinner to be held on board the *Kearsarge*."

"A dinner?"

"A banquet to be given by the officers of the visiting battleship to the officers of the fortress," the snapshot adventurer explained. "I believe such affairs are not unusual?"

"Generally it is the other way around—the other fellows wine and dine us first, and then we return the compliment," the navy man said. "However, I guess I won't have any difficulty in persuading the captain to reverse the usual order of things in this case. But what's the idea? Is this dinner part of your scheme for rescuing Felix?"

"A very important part of it," the Camera Chap informed him. "If you can bring it about and manage to have our friend of the blue glasses among those present, I have every hope of success. I'll outline the idea to you. I am confident that you'll both be as enthusiastic over it as I am."

But, greatly to his surprise, when he told them what he had in mind, they failed to display the amount of enthusiasm which he had expected.

"It would be sheer madness for you to attempt such a desperate thing," was Virginia's verdict. "You would surely be caught. Anxious as I am to see President Felix set free, I must beg you to give up all thought of carrying out this plan, Mr. Hawley."

"It's a clever scheme," declared Ridder. "I take off my hat to you, old man, for your ingenuity in having thought of it, and your grit in being willing to put it through; but I agree with Miss Throgmorton that it is much too risky a proposition. You might stand a slim chance of getting the picture, but you'd stand a much greater chance of being backed up against an adobe wall with a firing squad using you for target practice. Besides, it isn't

fair that you should do the whole thing all by yourself. Now that you've taken me into the secret, we ought to divide up the work and the danger."

The Camera Chap smiled. "There'll be work and danger enough for you, too," he promised. "If I'm caught and it comes out that you were mixed up in the plot—and I'm afraid that's bound to come out—I can see a peck of trouble coming your way. Portiforo will probably demand your surrender as accessory, and even if your skipper refuses to give you up, there'll probably be a court-martial in Washington in store for you, and possibly dismissal from the service. All this, of course, is to be dreaded only in the event of failure. But I'm not going to fail. I disagree with you both about my scheme not being practical. Of course, if we had to go up against a well-organized, highly disciplined garrison, I'd have to admit that our chances of success were scant. But Portiforo's army is a joke. Those soldiers at the fortress remind me of a lot of supes in comic-opera chorus. With a crowd like that to deal with, it would be possible to get away with almost anything. If Felix is still in the same cell—if they haven't moved him—it's going to be mere child's play to get the snapshot and make my escape—much easier than our other attempt, Miss Throgmorton."

"But if they have moved him?" Virginia suggested fearfully. "And it is very likely that they have. It is only reasonable to suppose that after our last attempt, those scoundrels would have taken that precaution. If they have him locked up in another dungeon—one that cannot be reached from the outside—what are you going to do then?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "In that event," he replied carelessly, "my job is going to be a little more difficult, of course. I shall have to go inside the fortress and hunt around until I find him. But let's be optimistic."

Although they still demurred at the project, they failed to dampen his ardor or persuade him to give it up.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

LIKE A BAD PENNY.

WHEN Virginia returned to the embassy, an unpleasant surprise awaited her in the form of a good-looking, dapper young man who greeted her with a sardonic grin.

"Hardly expected to see me back again, I suppose?" he remarked quizzically.

"I certainly did not," the girl replied coldly. "I supposed that you were in New York by this time, Mr. Gale."

"I changed my mind just after the boat sailed out of San Juan harbor, and went ashore in the pilot boat," the reporter informed her. "There were certain reasons why I deemed it advisable to return to Baracoa, so I cabled the office that they'd have to struggle along without me for a little while longer, and caught the next boat back to Puerto Cabero." He chuckled. "I rather thought you'd be astonished to see me, Virginia. Almost as astonished, I'll wager, as you were to see our friend Hawley come back again."

The girl gave an involuntary start of surprise, and her face paled. "Then you—" she began, but caught herself quickly. "Mr. Hawley back again!" she exclaimed, with an air of incredulity which was well simulated. "Surely that can't be possible!"

Gale smiled triumphantly. The sentence which she had left uncompleted and her momentary agitation had not escaped his notice. "Yes, he's back," he said, with sarcasm. "Didn't you know that? I had an idea that you might have seen him."

"Surely you wouldn't expect him to show his face in San Cristobal, considering the circumstances under which he left," the girl returned, her blue eyes boldly meeting his searching gaze.

"Perhaps not," Gale rejoined, after a slight pause, during which he did some rapid thinking. "Perhaps I was wrong in assuming that he has returned to Baracoa at all. He disappeared from the ship at San Juan, and I had an idea that he might have come back here."

"Is that why you returned, too?" Virginia demanded scornfully. "Were you lured back by the hope of finding him in Portiforo's clutches again, and being able to gloat over his fate?"

"Certainly not," the reporter answered emphatically. "I'm not bothering about Hawley at all. I came back here on a matter of business."

Part of his statement was the truth. It was not merely malice which had caused the man to postpone his return to New York and hurry back to San Cristobal as soon as he had discovered that Hawley was missing from the steamer. He had a professional reason for taking this step. He decided that he might have acted somewhat rashly in notifying his office that there was nothing in the weird rumors concerning Felix's incarceration in El Torro fortress. A certain note which the wife of the missing president of Baracoa had written to the Camera Chap, part of which he had managed to read over the latter's shoulder, on the promenade deck of the steamship, had opened the reporter's eyes to the possibility that he might have made a big mistake. He concluded that he had better seek to rectify that mistake by returning to Baracoa and making another attempt to get at the facts concerning Felix.

"I am sorry to find that you took me seriously the other day when we had that talk concerning Hawley," he said to Virginia. "I don't really wish the fellow any harm. He and I are good friends, now—I suppose he's told you of the large part I had in getting him set free—and I should regret exceedingly seeing him in trouble again. I am glad to learn that he hasn't shown up in San Cristobal. I was afraid that he might have shipped from San Juan in a tramp steamer headed this way. But, as you say, it is scarcely likely that he would have done such a rash thing."

He spoke without the slightest tinge of irony in his tone. It had suddenly occurred to him that it would be a good idea to give his host's daughter the impression that his suspicions were lulled. More was to be gained, he decided, by watching her closely for the next few

days than by endeavoring to bluff her into an admission that she knew of the Camera Chap's return to Baracoa and the reason thereof. That Hawley had returned to Baracoa he now felt quite sure. Virginia's demeanor had confirmed what, until then, had been merely a suspicion on his part. And that the snapshot adventurer's motive in coming back was to have another try at getting Felix's picture, Gale was equally certain. For the next three days he proceeded to carry out his plan of keeping a close watch on his host's daughter. He felt sure that sooner or later she would communicate in some way with the Camera Chap. Probably they were hatching out some scheme together for landing the precious snapshot. If so, by watching the fruition of that scheme, he hoped at least to gain some valuable information as to the whereabouts of Felix. Perhaps, even, if he played his cards right, he might be able to force Hawley to share the picture with him, in the event of the latter's success. A still more alluring prospect was the possibility of letting that expert snapshotter get the picture, and then, by working some clever trick, getting it away from him so that he could hand to his paper one of the greatest photographic scoops which had ever startled Park Row. Difficult as he realized this last feat would be, the *News* man did not consider it impossible of fulfillment.

He subjected Virginia to an espionage which would have done credit to one of Portiforo's professional spies, shrewdly suspecting that she was the keystone to the whole situation. But if the girl was in communication with the Camera Chap she was managing it with a skill and cautiousness which out-classed his keen powers of observation; for he was unable to detect even any indication that she had knowledge of Hawley's whereabouts. One discovery he did make, though: she seemed to have grown very friendly with a certain good-looking, husky young officer of the battleship *Kearsarge*. Gale learned that this man's name was Ridder. He and Virginia met frequently

and with a secretiveness which made the reporter wonder whether the daughter of his host hadn't already forgotten all about Hawley and was going through the early stages of a new romance. Strange to say, it did not occur to Gale that the naval officer might be acting as an intermediary between Virginia and the exiled snapshotter. He began to feel less positive that the latter had returned to Baracoa. At all events, he was pretty sure that the Camera Chap hadn't ventured to show his face in the capital or its environs, for he had reason to believe that Portiforo's spies were keeping a sharp lookout for that unwelcome visitor, and if he had been there it was scarcely likely that those human ferrets wouldn't have unearthed him by this time.

Having come to this conclusion, the reporter gradually ceased his close watch of Virginia's movements, and spent most of his time in Puerto Cabero, cultivating the acquaintance of the soldiers of the fortress, particularly that of Captain Enrico Reyes. He managed to persuade the latter to take him on another tour of inspection through the prison of El Torro, but was unable to find any trace of Felix there.

One day, as he sat drinking with Reyes in a café much frequented by officers of the army, the captain asked him whether he had received an invitation to the banquet on the warship.

"What banquet is that?" Gale inquired curiously.

Captain Reyes produced a card on which was engraved a formal invitation requesting his presence at a dinner to be tendered by the officers of the *Kearsarge* to the officers of El Torro garrison.

"I supposed that surely you would receive an invitation, Señor Gale," the army officer remarked. "The American minister and Miss Throgmorton are going to be there, so it is queer that you should have been overlooked."

"Maybe mine will arrive later," the reporter said. "Are you going to attend?"

The other announced that he expected to be among those present. "I

was going to send my regrets at first, on account of my eyesight," he declared. "I was afraid that with these glasses I should not be exactly an ornament at the festive board, and in such a well-lighted room I would not dare to leave them off. But Miss Throgmorton insisted upon my accepting the invitation."

"Miss Throgmorton?" There was an inflection of surprise in Gale's tone.

The gallant captain smiled complacently. "She told me that it would spoil the whole evening for her if I were not present. So what could I do, my friend? Of course, as a gentleman and a soldier, I could not disappoint a lady—especially one so charming as the daughter of the American minister."

Gale looked thoughtfully at his wine. "I wonder why she should be so anxious to have you there," he muttered. "It strikes me as being decidedly queer."

His companion's manner showed that he resented the remark. "I see nothing so very queer about it," he said indignantly. "I do not wish to appear boastful. Otherwise perhaps it would not be difficult for me to explain why Miss Throgmorton finds such evident pleasure in my society."

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### CAUSE FOR ANXIETY.

WHEN Gale returned to the embassy he found an invitation to the dinner awaiting him. Minister Throgmorton had mentioned to Captain Cortrell that he had a guest stopping at his home, and the commander of the warship had been prompt to take the hint. The reporter accepted the invitation with alacrity. As a rule, he was not fond of formal dinners. In the course of his reportorial experience he had attended many of them in an official capacity, and he had come to regard such functions as decidedly boring. The solid and liquid refreshments were, in his opinion, but poor compensation for the ordeal of having to listen to the long-winded, dry speeches which al-

ways came afterward. But he expected to find much to interest him at this dinner on the battleship. What his friend Captain Reyes had told him made him so eager to attend that even if he had not received an invitation he had fully decided that he was going to find some way of being present.

Virginia's behavior increased his suspicion that there was a peculiar significance attached to the affair. The girl appeared strangely anxious and ill at ease. If she had been a *débutante* looking forward to her first formal party, she could scarcely have evinced more nervousness, and, considering that, because of her father's position, such festivities were common occurrences in her life, her state of mind struck the observant newspaper man as being somewhat remarkable.

A conversation which he overheard between the girl and Lieutenant Ridder a day before the event, enlightened him to some extent as to the cause of Virginia's anxiety. The naval officer had called at the legation, and, on his way out through the garden, he stopped to exchange a few words with her.

"Everything is coming along fine," he informed her, unaware, of course, that the *News* man, concealed behind some shrubbery, was listening with intense eagerness. "The more I think about the scheme, the more I begin to believe that it is going to work out all right."

"But suppose Reyes should, at the last minute, change his mind and fail to show up?" Virginia suggested timidly. "That would spoil everything."

"Yes; that would spoil everything—for the time being," Ridder agreed. "We should have to postpone the attempt. But why should we suppose anything so gloomy, my dear Miss Throgmorton? He has accepted the invitation, and he has assured you that he will be there." A smile lighted up his face. "If you want to make absolutely sure that he won't disappoint us, why don't you ask him to call for you and escort you to the dinner? If he has any blood in his veins, he would jump at such an opportunity, and once he's

made the engagement he couldn't be so unchivalrous as to back out."

Virginia received this suggestion with an ejaculation of delight. "If he escorted me to the dinner, it would be his duty, of course, to see me home, also," she murmured, talking more to herself than to her companion. "That is a splendid idea of yours, Mr. Ridder—probably even a better one than you supposed. It has given me a big inspiration. I see a way, now, to change our original plans so as to reduce the danger of accidents to a minimum."

"What is it?" the naval officer demanded eagerly.

To the eavesdropper's keen disappointment, the pair walked away from that spot before the girl answered, so he was unable to learn the nature of the inspiration which had come to her. However, incomplete and puzzling though it was, he felt that he had good cause to congratulate himself on the information he had already gleaned.

The next morning, Virginia sent a charmingly worded note to Captain Reyes; and, as Ridder had expected, the Baracoan was much flattered by this fresh proof of Miss Throgmorton's favor, and eagerly grabbed at the opportunity which her note offered him to be her companion on the trip from the capital to the warship.

Moreover, he triumphantly exhibited the note to his friend Gale, later that day, as a proof of his intimacy with the fair daughter of the United States envoy.

The reporter smiled sardonically as he read the dainty missive. "Doesn't it strike you as the least bit odd, my dear Enrico, that Miss Throgmorton should put you to the trouble of coming all the way from the fortress to the embassy to call for her when she has both her father and myself to escort her?" he suggested.

Reyes laughed quizzically. "Ah, my unfortunate friend, I cannot blame you for being jealous!" he exclaimed.

Gale shrugged his shoulders, but let the taunt pass without verbal comment. He had suddenly changed his mind as to the advisability of striving to make

the army officer see the matter from his viewpoint. The thought had come to him that, after all, it would be better not to interfere with Virginia's mysterious plans at the present stage of the game. It would be time enough to open Reyes' eyes when the situation had taken more definite shape.

Resplendent in gold lace and gilt buttons, the Baracoan called at the embassy that evening, so late that he found Virginia on the verge of tears. Her father and Gale had left for the battleship nearly an hour earlier, and ever since then she had been almost frantic with impatience and fear that her escort was not going to show up at all. She received his apologies graciously, however, as they motored swiftly down the steep roads which led to Puerto Cabero. Not for all the world would he have been guilty of such a sad breach of decorum, her penitent companion assured her, if it had not been absolutely unavoidable. His duties at the fortress had made it impossible for him to get away earlier.

"In fact, my dear señorita," he announced, "if I had not made this engagement with you—which, of course, could not be broken under any circumstances—I fear I should have had to disappoint our hosts this evening and remain on duty at the fortress. On account of our latest advices regarding the enemy, our commanding officer did not deem it advisable that so many of his staff should absent themselves from the fortress at one time. Half of us were asked at the last minute to send our regrets to the *Kearsarge* and remain on duty, and, at first, I was among those selected to stay behind; but when I had explained to the general about my appointment with you, he agreed with me that I must go."

"Then I am very glad that I asked you to be my escort," Virginia declared with a fervor which went to his head like strong wine. "But what do you mean by advices regarding the enemy? To what enemy do you refer?" she inquired nervously.

He looked at her in astonishment. "To the revolutionists, of course, se-

ñorita. That traitor Rodriguez and his band of ruffians have proven somewhat stronger than we had imagined. Today they overcame a detachment of federal troops at Santa Barbara and seized the railroad. It is believed that, emboldened by their success, the beggars are now contemplating a forced march on the capital."

"But surely you do not fear an attack upon the fortress to-night?" Virginia inquired, her voice tense with anxiety.

Her companion laughed contemptuously. "Certainly not. There is no occasion for alarm, señorita. Those fellows will never get within a hundred miles of the capital. When they get up against Villaria's brigade they will be annihilated. Still, it would be bad generalship not to be prepared. I believe you have a saying in your language about eternal vigilance being the guarantee of safety. That is why our garrison has been placed on a strictly war basis and half of our staff has found it impossible to be the guests of the American officers this evening."

What he had said caused Virginia to feel uneasy, but she made a valiant attempt to conceal her state of mind from him. "I am glad to hear that the fortress is in no danger—from the insurrectos," she said, and her escort was astonished at the emphasis with which she spoke.

He favored her with a searching glance from behind his blue spectacles. From her past actions, he had good reason to believe that she was in sympathy with the enemies of the Portiforo administration. He did not feel any great bitterness toward her on that account. The fact that she was a woman, and a very pretty one, made him inclined to view her past offenses with indulgence. But it chafed him to hear her now expressing views, which, he was compelled to believe, could not be sincere.

"You do not desire the revolutionary cause to triumph, señorita?" he inquired, a strain of irony in his tone.

Virginia shrugged her shoulders. "To be quite frank with you, I don't

care whether they triumph or not. It is all the same to me which side wins," she replied carelessly.

"Then why are you so glad that the fortress is in no danger of attack?"

"Because," she answered serenely, "if the insurrectos were to be so inconsiderate as to attack El Torro tonight, I fear it would interfere with our dinner."

Reyes laughed heartily. "Oh, is that the reason? Well, have no fear, my dear Señorita Throgmorton. I assure you that there is not the slightest danger of our appetites being spoiled by any such interruption."

A little later they arrived at the seaport, and, alighting from the car, entered one of the battleship's launches which was waiting at the landing for them. As they stepped to the deck of the *Kearsarge*, Lieutenant Ridder greeted them. That young officer's face, which, a minute before, had worn a strained, worried expression, was now illuminated by a broad smile. "I'm glad to see you," he said to the girl. "I was beginning to be afraid that you weren't coming."

She smiled in a manner which showed that she appreciated the fact that, while to others his words might have sounded like a compliment, they were intended to be congratulatory. But a second later the smile disappeared from her lips. She glanced furtively at Reyes, and saw that he was occupied at the moment, chatting with one of the ship's officers, and she eagerly availed herself of this opportunity for a few confidential words with Ridder.

"There is danger," she whispered. "I am afraid we must give up the idea. I have just learned that they are very much on their guard at the fortress. They are awaiting a possible attack of the revolutionists, and the whole garrison is unusually wide awake. Under the circumstances it would be madness to go ahead tonight. Tell Mr. Hawley—"

The naval officer interrupted her with a deprecatory gesture. "It is no use," he whispered. "I have already

told him. I knew about the danger. Half our guests have sent their regrets, and some of those who are here have told us the reason. I have been trying my hardest to persuade Hawley that, under the circumstances, he couldn't possibly get away with his scheme tonight, but the plucky old chap won't listen. He says that we've made our plans, and it's too late to change them now. He insists upon going through with it."

TO BE CONTINUED.

**This magazine is issued twice a month, so you have little time to wait for the next section of this serial. It will appear in the April TOP-NOTCH, out March first. News dealers or the publishers will supply back numbers.**

### Vanishing Colors

SOME curious and rather unexpected results have followed experiments in Europe for the purpose of determining what color in a soldier's uniform is the least conspicuous to an enemy.

Of ten men, two were dressed in light-gray uniforms, two in dark gray, two in green, two in dark blue, and two in scarlet. All were then ordered to march off, while a group of officers remained watching them. The first to disappear in the landscape was the light gray, and next, surprising as it may seem, the scarlet. Then followed the dark gray, while the dark blue and the green remained visible long after all the others had disappeared.

Experiments in firing at blue and red targets, proved that blue could be more easily seen at a distance than red.

It may be that khaki, which is the prevailing color now for army uniforms, will have to give way to gray, for in these days of long-range weapons inconspicuous clothing is vitally necessary for soldiers.

### Doubtful Courtesy

A FRENCHMAN, on being introduced to Sir Edwin Landseer, the noted painter of animal pictures, said:

"I am most happy to make your acquaintance, for I am very fond of beasts."

# For the Club's Honor

By  
Wallace Watson



(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

## CHAPTER I.

### THE UNEXPECTED.

**T**HE result of the election is a tie. Mr. Mead and Mr. Bruce both finished with one hundred and seventy-two ballots to their credit."

Bruce's heart sank. His followers were cheering. They seemed to think it was as good as a victory. They pledged him their support; they stamped their feet, and clapped their hands. But Bruce knew it meant another fight, four hard weeks of directing a campaign before another election would be held. The excitement over, a reaction set in. He felt very tired.

What usually was a commonplace formality had become of tremendous importance—that is, important to the members of the Pequod Athletic Club and to their families, indeed, indirectly to most of the people in the pretty New England village of Pequod. For the old club had fallen on evil days. No longer a progressive, virile institution, standing for good athletes and athletics, it had become the lounging place of the town's wealthy young idlers.

For over a year now Vincent Mead's friends had been in control. Mead was a young ne'er-do-well, with plenty of money and keen wits. About him he had gathered young men like himself, who spent their time riding about in

automobiles and dining in the big hotels. Bruce knew that by a series of shrewd political moves, made easy by an abundance of money, Mead, a year before, had secured control of the club. He had swept the elections, installing himself as president and his crowd as a directorate.

There was a better element in the club, who didn't want this. Its leader was Bruce, a man who was serious yet quick to smile, with a fighting chin and buttressed by a forehead broad enough to show that the desire for combat came not of mere animal aggressiveness. Bruce looked a fighter; and now on this day he had finished his futile fight against Vincent Mead. The election was a tie, and Bruce's fight to make again of the club, not the lounging place of the town's fast set, but a healthy institution, would have to be fought again.

Reflecting on these things, he went outdoors. Pacing the veranda, he breathed deep of the cold January air. Below, the Pequod River wound away and lost itself behind a snow-crust hill, its wide ice sheet glistening in the sun. Bruce felt himself thinking gloomy things, for his disappointment was keen. He let his gaze wander down over the bluffs. Far across the ice he made out a sail approaching before the wind, a leg-o'-mutton sail, pulled as tight as a drumhead, and bearing at terrific speed a frail craft whose

steel runners sometimes slid, sometimes jumped, over the ice. It was one of the first ice boats of the year.

Enamored of the sport, Bruce watched with interest. He remembered a day the winter before when he had raced across this same stretch of ice, and the man he had just tied for the club presidency had raced against him. He remembered how close it had been, and how the unexpected gust had driven Mead's boat first across the line. And as he watched there came to him an idea that brought the old fire to his eyes.

His mind made up, Bruce took the clubhouse steps at a bound and sought Mead. Through a haze of cigarette smoke he discerned him with a few of his chosen cronies in the billiard room. They were betting on every shot. Bruce knew it to be a clear breach of the rules, but then they had always broken the rules. Being in control, they could do what they liked. When he approached the group, Mead looked around with a smirk. He was a slender man, carefully dressed, and always looked as if he had just risen from a barber's chair, with his hair, which was black and apparently ever damp, plastered down.

Bruce knew that Mead had not hesitated to use his money in trying to beat him. He knew that sometimes votes can be bought without paying any actual cash; that the mere thought of being intimately associated with money turns heads, old as well as young. And with his ever-open pocketbook, his air of being a good fellow, Mead turned many heads. How many more he would be able to win over to his side before the time for another election was what worried Bruce and brought him in from the porch with his proposal.

Mead turned to him. "Well, you did pretty well, didn't you?" he said patronizingly. Bruce agreed good-naturedly that he had, and Mead showed a little anger. "But let me tell you something, Bruce," he exclaimed, pushing back his chair, "you haven't got a chance in this next election. To-day was only a fluke."

"Have you any real nerve, Mead?" asked his opponent.

Mead flushed. "I suppose you're the only person around here who has any nerve," he sneered.

With a smile, Bruce turned the question aside and continued: "Last winter you and I raced our ice boats on the Pequod. There wasn't any prize up, and you won. Now, I'm willing to race again, only this time there'll be a prize."

"You want to bet something?" asked Mead eagerly.

Bruce shook his head. "I just want to decide this election, and do it in a novel way. On Saturday your boat will race ten miles against mine. The winner gets the presidency of the club. Of course, this must be subject to the approval of the club membership. What do you say?"

Before replying, Mead hesitated. Perhaps, after all, this would be the surer way; in the day's balloting Bruce had shown unexpected strength. He had beaten Bruce on the ice last winter, and why couldn't he do it again? So he resumed his patronizing air and said: "All right, we can call a meeting for this evening and get the club's consent to set aside the rules and decide the presidency in this way. Morton, you're on the board of governors—fix it up, will you? You can get practically everybody by telephone."

Tom Morton nodded and left at once.

Bruce was sincerely sorry to see this evidence of the hold Mead had over the young man. Bruce had long known his family. Now he wondered whether Vincent Mead had any object other than securing another supporter in cultivating Tom so assiduously. He couldn't help thinking of the sister, Gladys, who was not blind to the fact that her brother was one of the weak ones whose heads could be turned.

## CHAPTER II.

THE "SNOWBIRD" LEAVES ITS NEST.

**B**RUCE left the clubhouse quickly, for he knew if he remained Mead would try his temper sorely. As he was

turning into one of the long residence streets of the town, he saw a girlish figure passing swiftly behind the shrubbery of the Morton place, whereupon he hurried; he knew it was Gladys Morton, and Bruce had a way of walking faster whenever he saw her—in the same direction. Always, when he caught up with her, she would appear indignant that he had not called on her; and always he would have to reply evasively. Bruce knew there was only one thing that kept him from constantly besieging the Morton household; and that was because of Tom.

She was turning into Main Street as he came up, and she smiled. She turned her sparkling blue eyes on him and said: "So the stranger is abroad again?"

He took the rebuke, and they walked on, chatting away the time without once mentioning what was in their minds.

Presently Bruce said: "I'm going to take my ice boat out this afternoon and get it in shape for the season. Suppose you come along. Would you like to?"

So it was settled that four o'clock should find them down by the club dock. Gladys couldn't go earlier, she explained, for she had to take a music lesson.

The *Snowbird*, as Bruce's ice boat was called, came out of its nest that afternoon and skimmed across the white surface of the river. It followed the course over which the races were always held, a triangle with one turn at Hunt's Point, another at the Gilman Farm, and the third, the starting and finishing point, in front of the clubhouse.

There was a flurry of excitement in the big reception room when Tom Morton, curled up in the window seat, happened to see the *Snowbird* putting away from the dock. He called Mead, and together they watched Bruce guiding the trim craft. They watched him make a circuit of the course, and then, in evident alarm, drew on their overcoats and, picking their way over the slippery, frozen ground, hurried down to the river bank. Here, watch in hand, they

timed the *Snowbird* as it whizzed round the triangle.

"He's getting more speed than he was last year," said Morton, as, with a clanking of its runners, it swept by the finish line and on up the river.

"Yes," said Mead. "Too much."

And as they ascended the hill slowly, Morton did not speak again, for he saw that Mead was dropping into one of his bad moods. He watched him until, swiftly, the mood changed. A nasty little smile drew at the corners of Mead's lips. Something amused him evidently.

When they reached the clubhouse, he walked swiftly to a telephone booth, and closed the door behind him. Then he pushed it open a little, as if meaning for Tom Morton to hear. The number he called was long distance, and, after an interval, he got Boston on the wire. "Hello, Mr. Grimes, please. . . . Is this Joe Grimes? This is Mead talking—Vincent Mead. Say, I want you to come up here before Saturday. I've got a job for you. What is it? Oh, that would be telling." Let you know when you get here."

### CHAPTER III.

#### FAMILIAR, BUT PUZZLING.

**B**USINESS called Bruce to Boston a few days later, and he was in the Back Bay station waiting for the Pequod accommodation. It happened that the man before him at the ticket window had also bought passage for Pequod. Bruce wouldn't have noticed that if there hadn't been about the man something familiar. Somewhere he had seen the back of that head before. He knew it from the peculiar scar behind the stranger's left ear, and he found himself glancing frequently at him—a sturdy, rough, but decently dressed individual, who frequently shifted his feet and glanced down the track with impatience.

Bruce saw no more of him until Pequod was reached. Then the stranger swaggered down from the smoking car, and, crossing the platform, looked about as if expecting some one. His face was

as familiar as the back of his head had been. But where in the world had Bruce seen him? Somehow he felt personally concerned in the stranger's visit to Pequod. For the life of him, he couldn't tell why. He determined to wait now to see who it was the stranger met.

Presently he saw him pick up his bag and take a quick step forward, and the man who advanced to meet him was smooth, polished Vincent Mead. In growing wonder, Bruce saw him shake the stranger's hand cordially, slap him jovially on the back, and lead him to his automobile.

Where had Bruce seen that man before? He ceased to think about it as the hour approached for a meeting with Gladys Morton. He had promised to take her ice boating that night, for the moon was out and there would be many boats on the river. When he called for her at her home, she remarked that her brother had gone out with Mead and a stranger in the motor.

Bruce's arms were weighted with the extra sweaters, felt boots, and woolen gloves which are necessary in ice boating. After they had slipped on the felt boots over their regular shoes, and had wrapped themselves about with warm woolen fabrics, they made their way slowly over the hard ground and crossed the ice to where the *Snowbird* was tethered. It looked like a huge Grecian cross encumbered by many trappings. Attached to either end of a crossbeam, iron skates three feet long rested on the ice. These were the runners, and at the bottom end of the cross, so to speak, there was fastened another runner, a single skate that served as a rudder. Not three feet up the main plank loomed an uncomfortable-looking cockpit, an oval wooden platform fastened to the beam and rimmed with a guard rail about four inches high. It was on this that those who rode the *Snowbird* must sit. Ice boating did not seem a gentle pastime.

The temperature had dropped since sundown, and the runners had frozen to the ice, so it was necessary that Bruce chop them away before the start.

A few tugs on the peak halyard, and the big sail went flapping up the mast. It began to flutter loudly, for a stiff breeze had sprung up. It would be fast going. Cautioning Gladys to take a place well up on the cockpit, so she wouldn't be in the way of the sweep of the tiller, Bruce prepared for the start. With one hand on the rail, and the other on the tiller, he straightened it out, gave a heavy push, ran, half slipping, over the ice; then, as the wind, coming from behind, caught the sails, he jumped aboard and made off toward the first buoy. It was his plan to take Gladys around the course at racing speed.

Overhead the sails were bellying full, and the runners' harsh scraping changed to a low, swift song, as they went skimming over the ice. The moon had plated the surface with silver, and only when a cloud obscured its face were they prevented from seeing straight ahead. Bruce was steering toward the Hunt's Point buoy; and from an opposite direction Mead in his boat, the *Gull*, with Tom Morton and a third person also aboard, was bearing in on the same tack. The clouds drifting clear, Bruce saw in the moon's fuller glow that it was the stranger.

The *Snowbird* was gaining momentum. Soon they felt the rush of air, the perceptible pressing against them of the black night as they rushed on to the creaking of the mast, the rattling of runners, and the cold scraping of the rudder as it moved back and forth across the ice. Running with the wind, they were making almost forty miles an hour, and Bruce strained his eyes, looking for the white post of the buoy. Finally he caught it, dancing above his bowsprit, and, shifting the rudder, he began to swing out, to describe a wide curve that would swing him round the turn clear away of the *Gull*.

Bruce saw that the onrush of the *Gull* was making Gladys a little nervous. "Hold on tight now. We're going to swing round and work windward."

As he did so, he noticed that the *Gull*

was veering in at terrific speed. At once he stopped his own boat, swung it abruptly into the wind, and brought its runners to a grinding standstill, so that he might watch. He needed to watch; for if Mead could sail the *Gull* like this, he would have on Saturday a foe far stronger than he dreamed—one who might indeed, in fair race, win the club presidency.

Fortunately the last of the trailing clouds had marched across the velvet heavens, and the moon shone resplendent. It laid out the course of the approaching boat in a stream of silvery light, so that Bruce was able to see the three figures of Mead, Morton, and the stranger, who had his hand on the tiller, and was working the sail. And in that moment it came to Bruce where he had seen him before. It was on the Merrimac River, the year the big professional races were held above Lowell. He was sure of him now, for he had never seen a man who could take a turn so fearlessly. As he watched the *Gull* streak straight toward the buoy, tear up the ice, almost overturn, and go shooting off down over the course, Bruce felt sure of the man at its helm. He even remembered his name, for it had been spoken all over Lowell at the time. He was one of the greatest professional ice-boat racers in America.

"Joe Grimes!" exclaimed Bruce.

Gladys Morton looked at him in surprise. She, too, had been enthralled by the magnificent sailing of the *Gull*. "What does it mean?" she asked.

"It means that I'm going to have my work cut out for me on Saturday. Of course, it will be Mead at the helm; but there's nothing to prevent this man Grimes from riding with him, from directing him all through the race, from telling him just what to do every minute of it."

On the way home they stopped to have something to eat. When they reached the house, it was evident that those aboard the *Gull* must have returned immediately after finishing the practice spin. In front of the house they saw the gray shape of Mead's

car. There was a light burning in the window of Tom's room. As he said good night, Bruce heard the door upstairs thrown open violently. Mead's voice rose in anger:

"See here, Morton, you must do it! You can't back out now. You know what I've got on you!"

Fortunately Gladys had gone out of earshot to take off her wraps; for evidently her brother had become involved in something that would grieve her to hear. He heard Morton's voice answer clearly:

"No, Mead, I won't stand for that! You're not going to pull in my sister on this thing. In the first place, she wouldn't ask Bruce to take me on one of his practice trips; and in the second place, I wouldn't go. I don't like this fighting a man in the dark. If you and Grimes want to see just how fast his boat will go, why don't you time it again from the shore?"

"We can't tell that way," growled Grimes. "How can we know from the shore whether he's going as fast as he can?"

Again Mead threatened. "You do it, Morton, or I'm through with you. You know the consequences!"

Guessing this to be the end of it, Bruce hurried into the dining room so as to intercept Gladys while the others left the house. He was successful in this, and, with a certain amount of relief, heard the door close. He went home himself, as soon as the sound of Mead's motor had died. And, as he walked along, he wondered what it was that Mead held over the young man's head. Certainly Mead was leaving no stone unturned to win on Saturday.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MEAD'S MERCENARIES.

AFTER a hard rubdown with alcohol and a glass of hot lemonade to ward off any possibilities of cold after his trip on the frozen river, Bruce was ready for bed. Then the doorbell rang. Wondering who the caller could be at this time of night, he wrapped a

bath robe about him and hurried downstairs. At the door he found Tom Morton. Without a word he ushered him in, and they stood for a moment regarding each other in the light of the hall lamp. To Bruce he seemed like a different man. There was in his eyes the shining of the same courage that his sister had shown when she had first felt the *Snowbird* careening along at such tremendous speed. It was not the Tom Morton he had known, not the colorless youth who at the club had seemed so under Mead's influence.

"I'd like to—— Will you see me? Will you let me talk to you for just a minute?"

Bruce told him to come upstairs. In his room he drew chairs together and said: "Well?"

Tom Morton started as if roused from a mental coma.

"I'm going away," Tom said. "Going to-night—down to the city, to work. We have relatives there. I can put up with them. I can't stay here and look sister in the face. I've broken with Mead, and I suppose he'll tell."

"Tell what?" asked Bruce, thinking of the threat.

Morton hesitated. "Promise me you'll never let it out. I don't want anybody to know—not even sis. I was weak, pitifully weak. When Mead and his crowd took me up I was foolishly flattered. I did the things they did. They gamble a lot."

"You owe Mead money?" asked Bruce.

Morton nodded. "I gave him my note. It's quite a lot of money; more than I ought to ask any one for. That's why I want to go to work, to pay it off. It's been long overdue. Mead has used it as a club over me to make me do his underhanded jobs. At the election the other day, it was your idea to get townsmen who were not members to count the votes so there wouldn't be any suspicion of cheating. Well, Mead bought them, and I had to be the go-between. He told me that if I didn't he'd send my note to sister. You know how that would break her up. Then to-night—— That was the last straw!

I'm through with them; they're a bad lot."

"What about Grimes?" asked Bruce.

"Mead paid him two hundred dollars to practically sail the *Gull* for him on Saturday. The fellow's a wonder, and you haven't a chance. Mead was shrewd enough to do the thing within the rules, for to all appearances he'll be the man at the helm. But the professional at his side will run the whole thing. You haven't a chance—— But I must be going. There's a train at midnight; you'll tell sister, won't you? Straighten it out somehow."

"Forget the train!" urged Bruce. "What's the use of making a fool of yourself? Let's talk this over. It's your turn to promise me something. You promise me you'll never tell your sister and I'll lend you the money to pay up this note. Remember she's never to know it. Call it a loan. Some day you can pay it back."

The boy was hesitating, and Bruce took another tack. "I've listened to your troubles, now listen to mine. How about this race? How am I going to win it? I know I could beat Mead; but this professional, this fellow Grimes, is likely to be too much for me."

Tom Morton scratched his head in perplexity. Aimlessly, as one will when preoccupied, Bruce picked up a magazine from the table, letting the pages riffle through his fingers. It was one of those publications devoted solely to outdoor sports, and presently his eyes fastened upon an article that offered him instant fascination. He found himself reading snatches of the text. He glanced with more than ordinary interest at the pictures, photographs of ice boats. In many ways were they different from the boats on the Pequod. The camera had snapped them in many different positions, the pictures showing them capable of wonderful feats in sailing.

Possessed at once with a plan, Bruce turned to Morton. Tapping one of the pictures, he said: "Where can I get one of these boats?"

For a moment the other re-

garded him in bewilderment; then he emitted a long-drawn-out whistle.

"Don't you see," said Bruce swiftly, "that with such a boat I might have a chance, even against a professional like Grimes? On the last seven miles of the course, you know, there's a lot of rough going, and it will be necessary to tack all over a roundabout course."

Into Morton's eyes there came a gleam of understanding. He laughed. "I get you now," he said. "He has put a professional against you, and now it's up to you to teach that professional a lesson."

"I'm glad you see it the way I do," replied Bruce. "It's the only way to even things between Mead and me. It's the only way I can destroy the advantage that having a professional at his side throughout the race would give him."

"Certainly, and it's perfectly square! The agreement I made with the board of governors for you fellows did not specify the kind of ice boat that should be used. Anything that sails and has runners is eligible, and there is no course mapped out. You've simply got to reach a certain point in the shortest time to win the race. I'll back you to the limit."

The pictures that Bruce had seen in the magazine were of a trim little craft peculiar to Great South Bay. There they had been in use a few years by the south shore Long Islanders, and by the life-savers on Fire Island. The article said, moreover, that as yet only a few of these boats had been introduced into New England. Tom Morton thought he remembered having seen one, but wasn't sure.

When the two had finished talking they both donned mufflers and soon had the appearance of those who expected to face a long, cold night. His younger companion moved about restlessly, and Morton seemed to want to urge Bruce to hurry; but Bruce was packing a bag; nothing very elaborate went into it, just sweaters and heavy boots.

"All right now. Do you think we'll make it?" said the older man.

Morton looked perplexed. "I don't

know. It's not just like going around the corner; it's some distance away. You know we'll have to hurry to catch the late train, and after it has passed a few stations it becomes a milk train. It would never get us there in the world."

Bruce began pacing back and forth across the room. A little trace of worry crept round the corners of his eyes. He was thinking how much depended on their getting away from Pequod before it was too late. Abruptly he decided.

"We couldn't make it that way," he said; "there's no other train out until half past six in the morning. How about an automobile?"

"Where can we get one? Is McCarthy's garage still open?"

"If it isn't, we'll rout the owner out of bed."

Five minutes later Bruce was standing under the Irishman's window and throwing pebbles against the glass. All attempts to arouse the garage man by the doorbell had failed. Presently the window was slammed open, and McCarthy, his bald head incased in a nightcap, was leaning out and barking down at them. Bruce waited patiently. He knew it was McCarthy's nature to calm down after he had exhausted his vocabulary, and finally he induced him to listen. With the utmost difficulty Bruce convinced him that they only wanted to hire, not to steal, an automobile, and that they would have it back the first thing in the morning. A quarter of an hour later they were roaring off through the night at racing speed down the deserted roads toward the town of Hanover.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AN EVADED QUESTION.

WHEN he was called the next morning, Vincent Mead was very willing to get up. The day promised to be pleasant. Bruce would be humiliated. He dressed leisurely, and after breakfast he waited for the telephone call that invariably came from Tom Morton. He heard the clock strike nine, then the half hour, but no call came.

"Funny," he thought. "I'll ring him up." To his surprise he was informed by Gladys Morton that Tom had not been home during the night. She said he had left a note saying he had gone to Hanover on business.

"And he left no word for me?" asked Mead.

"Nothing," said Gladys, "except to tell you that after the race you would understand." It gave her pleasure to give him such an evasive message.

The boats were to come to the starting line at nine o'clock. When Mead arrived there, he saw that his own craft, the *Gull*, had been brought out from the club boathouse; but there was no sign of Bruce's *Snowbird*. To Mead's further surprise Bruce himself had not put in an appearance. Mead wondered if the delay was on purpose. He was puzzled when he learned that no one had seen his opponent that morning, nor had Tom Morton been about.

"Don't worry about Bruce not showing up," Joe Grimes assured him. "It's only an old racing trick to keep you waiting at the post. He's trying to give you a case of rattles. I'll give him something to get rattled about as soon as the race starts."

Not one, but a dozen sailing tricks had Grimes elucidated, and to Mead it didn't seem possible that his rival had a chance. As time drew on and Bruce did not put in appearance, he began to wonder if he had a case of "cold feet." He began by telling himself, then by announcing to others, that Bruce had quit. A few minutes later this appeared to be confirmed. A man hurried across the ice and said to Mead:

"They're saying downtown that Bruce hasn't been home all night. He hired an automobile at the garage and skipped about midnight. I made it a point to go to the dock where he keeps his boat, the *Snowbird*, and the sails are not even up."

Mead was a little provoked. He was confident of beating Bruce; now it seemed as if he were to be deprived of that pleasure. It consoled him a little, however, to see the disappointment of the crowd when he repeated to them the

man's message. He knew in that crowd only his bought friends wished him well. It came almost to the time scheduled for the race to start, and still there was no word from Bruce.

Thoroughly disgusted, Mead was about ready to call it all off. "I tell you he's got cold feet and quit," he told Grimes.

This time the professional was inclined to agree with him. "Well, why don't you go up to the clubhouse?" he suggested, "and claim the race by default?"

Mead favored this. The committee would bestow upon him the presidency according to the agreement, and Bruce would be a dead letter as far as Pequod was concerned. Still he was for waiting a few more minutes, as he hated to give up the opportunity of beating his rival.

About this time a quarter of a mile up the river road, where a bend in the shore and a compact grove of leafless trees served as a screen, an automobile came to a stop. It was flecked with dirt and looked as if it had been driven hard; and, tied across the tonneau, was a strange craft—a little boat with a tiny sail, just large enough to accommodate one person. Two figures bounded out of the car and began cutting away the boat's lashings.

"Did we make it on time?" asked Bruce.

Tom Morton ran to the edge of the road and looked over the river bank toward the crowd that was assembled at the starting line. "They're still there," he called out.

"Hurry, then. I want you to take the boat up to the starting line, and I'll hustle down in the car and get there before you. It won't do any harm to have a little fun with Mead. Besides if you sail the boat up to the line, it'll show everybody that you're on my side." Tom eagerly agreed.

As Bruce drove down the road he thought of the consternation that his little boat, the *Wild Duck*, would cause. As he stopped the car a cheer went up, and those on the ice flocked toward him expectantly. To Mead he said briefly:

"I'm sorry for the delay, but my boat will be along any minute now."

He had hardly spoken when he saw the *Wild Duck* nosing around the bend. Other eyes followed his, and they saw, off on the sweep of glistening ice, a tiny sail. On it came, seeming scarcely to touch the surface, faster than the wind. Against the white patch of canvas was outlined a lonely figure, so small in the distance that he seemed like a child on a box sled. As he came nearer, they saw a craft not as large as a ducking boat, its mast scarcely higher than a man, its body flat-bottomed and shallow, with a runner on each side, and none behind.

Bruce was watching Mead and Grimes. Mead's face had been undergoing a transformation. From outright curiosity it took on a smile, then he burst into loud laughter. "Look at the thing he's going to race in, Grimes!" he murmured. "Honestly, this is a joke."

But when he saw who was sailing the *Wild Duck* he changed his tone.

"Come on," he said angrily. "We'll give him the beating of his life."

But the professional looked dubious.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SPARROW AGAINST THE GULL.

THERE were many unanswered questions from the crowd before the two boats could be brought to the line. Mead's *Gull* so towered over the little craft that the struggle seemed unequal. How could the sparrow race against the gull and expect to win? Before them the ice reached away, a white, unbroken sheet, at the other side of which lay the west shore, a waste of russet fields studded with gaunt, leafless trees and hardy shrubs. Their course lay three miles in that direction with the wind at their backs, then four miles running along the wind, and three coming into it. It was a ten-mile race, and the winning boat should be home in ten minutes.

Maneuvering the *Wild Duck*, Bruce saw the hovering *Gull*, and knew that Grimes was watching him. He knew, too, that Grimes had guessed the direc-

tion the wind would come from; that was bad. It might result in the *Gull's* crossing the line first. Bruce feared that. Were Mead to gain the lead at the start, it would mean that his chances of passing him would be lessened.

Presently, over near the southern shore, Bruce saw the barren tops of the trees move with the rustling that tells of a coming breeze. Cautiously he maneuvered the little scooter to meet it; but Grimes saw it, too, and the *Gull* followed as persistently as a shadow.

Then with the swiftness of a tropical storm, a strong wind began to zip across the lake. Soon it was blowing half a gale, with the *Wild Duck* and the *Gull* tearing into it. A deft strategic tack, and Grimes had put the *Wild Duck* in the lee of the *Gull*. Close-hauled, Bruce saw that he was hopelessly pocketed. Unless he could "gybe out" the other boat would cross the line first. A puff of smoke came from the signal gun, the report echoing back from the frozen shores, and the first starting flag was struck. Toward the line the two boats tore, the *Gull* getting the best of the wind and seemingly destined to cross first. Bruce saw that gybing out was impossible. There was but one thing to do, a desperate move—so desperate that only an amateur would dare it—a move that might wreck his boat, wreck both boats, if it didn't succeed.

Bearing off, he opened the gap between them; then, as he neared the buoy, he jammed down his rudder hard. Its runner screeching, the light scooter spun around like a top. Leaping from the ice, it lifted its bowsprit in a swift arc that almost ripped into the mainsail of the *Gull*. Through a rain of chipped ice Bruce glimpsed Mead's terrified face. Then, using his own rudder with telling effect, he avoided a collision and, missing the *Gull* by scant inches, shot the *Wild Duck* across the line as the gun boomed again. The race was on!

Its first stages were uneventful. Getting under way almost together, the two vessels skimmed over the ice, their sails drawn tight as the wind drove them

straining from the booms. Bruce soon found it hard riding. It was much the same as an automobile race, where the heavy car stays on the track and the light car bounces and jumps along, lifted at times from the ground by the sheer force of the speed.

They were approaching the first buoy now, and with a smile Bruce saw the black line of open water looming over his bowsprit. It was there that the ice had cracked, a gap in its smooth surface fully a quarter of a mile. It was this gap that he had thought of in connection with the magazine pictures, when he had raced by motor to Hanover.

Now came the test. Its momentum increasing with the gathering speed of three miles, the *Wild Duck* rushed on. Clinging tight to the rail, Bruce saw just ahead a hummock in the ice. It was clear in the path, and to attempt to turn it would be to cut down speed; but he felt that his light craft ought to be able to take it. A moment and the rudders had caught against the lump in the ice. Like a jumper leaving a take-off, the *Wild Duck* rose in the air and leaped headlong twenty feet. When it came down it was in the waste of mushy ice. The mush splattered off the bow, rising in a gray screen, ice crystals and water flying high above, and the boat dashed straight into black water, while a horrified cry broke from the lips of the onlookers.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THAT SHORT CUT.

NO one who saw the little craft's terrible leap expected to see anything but a shattered wreck of boat and man; but another cry of astonishment and relief rose an instant later; for, far from plunging to destruction, the *Wild Duck* splashed, swayed, paused—righted herself, and sailed miraculously on, the water cascading in silvery jets about her bow.

For she was no ordinary ice boat; she was built for Long Island, to sail on the Great South Bay—which seldom

freezes over entirely—on clean ice, mush ice, and open water.

The cheering was ecstatic now. By scooting in, Bruce had taken a lead of fully a half mile on the *Gull*. Yet he knew that under the professional's masterly handling, the bigger boat would catch him on this straight race for the next buoy. The only thing he could do was to crowd the little scooter as much as he dared. It could never go as fast as the *Gull*; his only hope was in going fast enough so that he would not lose all the half mile gained by taking to the water.

He must win; for this race meant the breaking of Mead's hold, the saving of the Pequod Athletic Club from the snobs. And if none of these things was a big enough incentive, there was a girl waiting at the finish line, one who he knew wished him well.

Tightening up his sail, Bruce urged on the scooter. Already the wind had commenced to hum as the craft slid along, gathering momentum every time it moved its own length. He was sailing free now, letting the boat attain its maximum of speed; and he saw that he was gaining. The tiny craft went faster, the wind began to sing, low first, then rising in shrill crescendo. The speed increased, objects looked blurred. But Bruce saw the *Gull* rush by as if his scooter were standing still. Their speed must be frightful now.

After the bigger boat the little *Duck* gave chase. To Bruce it seemed as if the bowsprit were doing a weird dance. He felt the sensation of rising. He fancied the runners were off the ice more often than they were on. The resistance of the wind had become terrific. The cold was biting through his heavy clothes. But the speed grew, and with it that shrieking, maddening to the ears, and that dancing bowsprit. Now the black post of the second buoy was visible against the glare of the ice.

Again black water loomed over the bowsprit; again Bruce prepared to cut in and gain on the turn. He saw the big *Gull* forced to sail round the huge hole in the ice. To Bruce there was something funny in the way the big

boat had thundered past him on the straight stretch only to lose everything because the insignificant little scooter could duck its head and bob into the water, like the wild duck it was.

Just the rounding of a last stake now, and it would be over. More than a half mile in the lead this time, Bruce headed the scooter down the stretch to the finishing buoy. Like a little thoroughbred, the *Wild Duck* straightened out in a white flash of flying ice chips and tore up the stretch. Bruce, half risen, now was keeping a sensitive hand on the tiller and watching his sail. Behind him, far off to the right, the *Gull* was bearing in, its canvas spread full, its professional using every trick of his trade to overhaul him.

Little by little Bruce saw that the big boat was creeping up, and, to his surprise, the speed of his own craft fell off. Then he realized that he was the victim of one of Grimes' professional tricks. He knew that his rival was laying his course in such a way that the little scooter was slowly being blanketed—the wind kept from its sails—by the big *Gull*. Slower and slower moved his little boat. Already it was lagging like a tired runner who sees the home stretch but cannot finish. His sail began to flap uselessly. He could fancy Grimes laughing. Then the *Gull* raced away, and he was left with the hopeless task of catching up, or at least bringing his boat in to the buoy in time to do as he had done before and take the water while the professional lost by swinging out.

Soon, with the *Gull* out of the way again, the little craft got going, rattling over the ice. Nearer and nearer came the finish line. The black smudge that the crowd made on the ice became individual figures. Another minute and the *Wild Duck* was rushing toward the buoy. Before taking the water, Bruce saw the *Gull* making a desperate attempt to come around. Then came the bolt into the water, the splashing of his deck, and, climbing up on the other side of the ice, Bruce nosed his little boat across the finish line, scant seconds ahead of the *Gull*! He had won. A

cheer greeted him. The Pequod Club had fallen into clean hands. But in Gladys Morton's look of pride for him and gratitude for her brother, he had his chief reward.

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### A Lesson Worth While

**A** LESSON in itself sublime,  
A lesson worth enshrining,  
Is this: "I take no note of time  
Save when the sun is shining."  
These motto words a dial bore,  
And wisdom never preaches  
To human hearts a better lore  
Than this short sentence teaches:

As life is sometimes bright and fair,  
And sometimes dark and lonely,  
Let us forget its toil and care,  
And note its bright hours only.

There is no grove on earth's broad chart  
But has some bird to cheer it,  
So hope sings on in every heart,  
Although we may not hear it.  
And if to-day the heavy wing  
Of sorrow is oppressing,  
Perchance to-morrow's sun will bring  
The weary heart a blessing.

We bid the joyous moments haste,  
And then forget their glitter;  
We take the cup of life and taste  
No portion but the bitter;  
But we should teach our hearts to deem  
Its sweetest drops the strongest;  
And pleasant hours should ever seem  
To linger round us longest.

The darkest shadows of the night  
Are just before the morning;  
Then let us wait the coming light,  
All bodeless phantoms scorning;  
And while we're passing on the tide  
Of time's fast-ebbing river,  
Let's pluck the blossoms by its side,  
And bless the gracious Giver.

T. B.

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### A Boast or a Confession

**E**XTRACT from the annual report of  
a Michigan hospital: "No pains  
have been spared," et cetera.

# Making Him "It"

By Frederick  
Courtenay  
Barber



## CHAPTER I.

### A MOSSBACK RAG.



"**W**ILL do it if it's the last thing I ever do in Pokeville!" And Bert Norton swung his long legs from the leaf of his desk and walked to his typewriter table.

"It's likely to be the last thing worth doing in my Pokeville career," he continued, talking aloud in his enthusiasm. "I rather think it will give these mud turtles something to make them remember me."

His career in Pokeville was a sore point with young Norton. Graduate of a fresh-water college though he was, he might have turned to bigger things, he knew, instead of trying to make a live newspaper pay in his native town. Local pride, however, had brought him home at the end of his course with determination to devote his youth and brains to the advancement of the place where he first saw the light.

But how had Pokeville requited his devotion? By ignoring all his efforts for its own benefit. He had invested in an up-to-date plant the few thousands left to him by his father, and for years had published a paper recognized throughout the State as the liveliest little sheet in its borders.

A clean, bright, reliable weekly Norton published for Pokeville—and Pokeville wouldn't read it. Most of the few townfolk who did subscribe didn't pay what they owed. Seventy-five per cent of the third-rate advertisers who alone gave their patronage to the *Weekly Advance* held up the bills Norton trustingly sent to them; and the town gave its real support to the *Gazette*, a mossback rag without enterprise enough to score a scoop that happened in front of its own door.

Now Norton was broke, and next day he was going to a big city to become a reporter on a great daily. His plant had been sold to a secondhand dealer, and in twenty-four hours the *Advance* would suspend publication indefinitely. Its youthful owner was too disgusted with the community to sell the good will.

"Good will!" he snorted, when his foreman suggested it. "What's the good will of any hustling paper worth in a place like this? I wouldn't stick anybody with it. I couldn't look him in the face if I did."

It was with a feeling of resentment against the whole town that the young editor had spent the day in quest of a leading news story for the farewell number of the *Advance*. He had covered all the happenings of the week

without finding anything for the place of honor on his first page. It had been a busy day, and he was glad of it, since it had kept his thoughts away from the lack of response on the part of Miss Bessie Allaire when he told her he was going away to carve out a real career in the big city.

Norton had despaired of finding a front-page thriller, when, glancing through his office window, he saw Jeff Binns, the town pauper, slouching along on the opposite side of the street. Then came the inspiration that made him turn to his typewriter and prepare to wreak vengeance on Pokeville.

Before launching the torpedo intended to blow up the entire community's self-respect, Norton thought it would be well to assure himself that he was not to be balked of its success. Quitting his chair, he strode to the window, and, thrusting his head and shoulders out, hailed the bent figure over the way. "I say, Binns!" he called.

Pokeville's pauper—the smug little town maintained him because he was the only one it had—stopped and gazed wonderingly about. "Hi, Binns—over here!" shouted the editor, fluttering a bunch of galley proofs to snare the ne'er-do-well's attention.

Slowly sound led the way to sight. Binns construed the call and the streaming strips of paper to mean he was wanted on the ground floor of the *Advance* building. He ducked his head to Norton, shuffled across the street, and wearily entered the editorial room. His entrance was a compromise between a stumble and a crawl.

"Whadjer want?" he asked listlessly.

Norton, a fugitive twinkle in his eyes, concealed his amusement with difficulty. "Do you want to make some money?" he asked.

A glint of greed came into the idler's shifty glance. It was succeeded by a look of caution. Making money usually had to do with odd jobs, and if there was anything he disliked, it was an odd job. His attitude toward it was only less hostile than his hatred of a steady one.

"I dunno," he answered warily. If

his inquisitor hoped to trap him into an admission that he was in quest of work, he'd fool him. He'd show him how to trifle with an inoffensive fellow townsman's feelings. Binns regarded himself as not the least important of Pokeville's citizens. Was he not the only one in his class?

"Well, but do you?" Bert persisted.

Binns shifted his feet and studied the floor. Then he swung his gaze to the street, with a pensive expression. "I dunno, Mr. Norton," he returned stolidly. "I got a job o' work comin' next week fm Doc Giddens, and I been mighty busy all last month, and I kinda figured on givin' myself a little let-up for a spell."

"But this will be easy money, Binns," the editor urged.

"Whadjer want me to do?" asked the town pauper suspiciously. He had heard other men classify as "easy money" compensation he found it drearily hard to earn.

"Nothing," answered Norton.

"Whadjer say?" The loafer's slow wits struggled with the problem, arriving gradually at the conclusion the young man was poking fun at him.

"Nothing—ab-so-lutely not a thing," Bert repeated.

"Whadjer mean?"

"Just what I say. I'm willing to give you five dollars to do absolutely nothing."

"Fur how long?"

"Forever, so far as I am concerned. All you have to do is to take the five dollars, and do nothing further. I will give it to you cheerfully—to do nothing."

The suspicion in the pauper's eyes became conviction. "Whadjer stringin' me fur?" he asked indignantly. "If you didn't know I was a poor feller, you wouldn't dast to do it, Mr. Norton."

"I'm not stringing you, Binns," the proprietor of the *Advance* assured him. "To prove it, here's the money."

He took a bank note from his pocket and held it toward the visitor. Binns stared at it—blankly, at first, then avidly; yet he feared to take the tempt-

ing bait, lest it be a lure to some form of industry. It, of course, was out of the question that any one should give him something for nothing.

All his life, Binns had found that Pokeville folk demanded at least a theoretical return for every penny they gave him, and, though his performance seldom went beyond theory, he, at least, had to promise to do something for what he got. To receive five dollars without even going through the form of working for it was too good to be true.

"I dunno whadjer mean, Mr. Norton," he said dubiously. "You got me beat. Five dollars is a hull lot o' money to me, but——"

"You're afraid you'll have to do a job o' work for it, eh?" Norton finished for him. "Don't worry, Binns; you won't. When I told you I wanted you to do nothing for the money, I meant just what I said, neither more nor less. Now, listen. I'm going to publish something pleasant about you in the *Advance*——"

"Who—me?" asked Binns, astonished.

"Yes—and I'm willing to give you five dollars to do nothing about it. In other words, I'll pay you not to contradict it. Do you understand me now?"

Pokeville's pauper was dazed. To have anything printed about himself, other than a brief note of his semi-monthly arraignment as a "drunk and disorderly," was queer enough, but to have "something pleasant" published, and then to be paid not to say that it was untrue, seemed beyond belief.

However, Norton appeared to be speaking seriously, and still was holding out the bank note toward him. There could be no denying that. And if the "young editor feller" was so eager to get rid of five dollars, why should he, Binns, discourage the strange impulse? In a gingerly way, he accepted the greenback. "What'll I say if folks ask me about it?" he inquired, still only partly convinced the money was his.

"Say anything you like," Norton re-

plied cheerily, "so long as you don't contradict it. Is it agreed?"

"I guess so," said Binns waveringly—and, since this was as close as the man ever went to outright assertion, the young editor accepted the answer as a promise.

It was with a mocking grin, not at Binns, but at the people of Pokeville generally, that Norton saw the town loafer shamble out of his room, and heard him stumble down the steps. The grin widened when the editor, turning once more to his patient machine, began clicking out the first-page thriller for the good-by issue of the *Advance*.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE GET-AWAY NUMBER.

**B**ERT NORTON left Pokeville next day, with a farewell glance at only two buildings—the little brick structure in which he had fought a losing battle so courageously, and the home of Miss Bessie Allaire. Through most of the journey to the big city whither his new destiny was leading him, he entertained himself with perusal of the latest and last number of the *Weekly Advance*.

It was an issue, he felt, for which he need offer no apology. All the news of the week was there. The editorials were as full of snap and interest as if it was the first appearance of the little paper; and the principal story was one to make the Pokevillians sit up and take notice. It was that front-page thriller that aroused the liveliest pride in the former editor. It read as follows:

Dispatches from Dawson City via Vancouver yesterday brought the welcome news that one of the most modest men in Pokeville, Mr. Jefferson Binns, has just inherited a fortune that will place him on a plane with this town's most prosperous citizens.

Mr. Binns' uncle, Mr. T. Mortimer Maxwell, after accumulating millions in the Klondike, died in Dawson last month. By the will of the wealthy pioneer, practically all his estate, both real and personal, is left to his nephew, our esteemed fellow townsman. The personalty consists chiefly of funds in bank in Victoria, Vancouver, and Dawson City, and of bonds and stock in the Grand Trunk and Canadian Pacific Railways, as well as preferred stock in the Great Northern. It

is understood the realty includes several of the richest mining properties in the Klondike.

There followed a column of details, with several congratulatory paragraphs, in all of which Jeff Binns was spoken of as a worthy citizen, instead of as the lazy scamp everybody in Pokeville long had known him to be.

It was explained that, owing to the red tape which Dominion court procedure had inherited from the British law, months must pass before Mr. Binns could come into possession of his uncle's estate.

The story ended with an interview in which the newly enriched town pauper was made to say that of course he would invest the bulk of his wealth in Pokeville, as a mark of gratitude for the kindness always shown him by his fellow townsmen.

"I'm glad I did it," young Norton told himself, as the train sped toward his new sphere of usefulness. "Not exactly professional, perhaps, but it's the first fake I've written since I broke into the business.

"It'll make those Pokeville shellbacks a little more like human beings, I guess, before they hear the last of it. Besides, it's a practical experiment in human nature. It may do Binns some good. Maybe it will help to make a man of him.

"Yes, by George, I'm glad I did it!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### GETTING SQUARE WITH POKEVILLE.

POKEVILLE'S prominent men and women, as Norton had expected, read that last number of the *Advance* much more eagerly than they had perused the first, or any issue in between. The demand for the little paper became so great that all the news dealers had sold out before it was half satisfied, and it was with sadness they realized they could not renew their orders.

A real-estate agent's sign was in the window of the *Advance* office, the *Advance* plant, in crates and boxes, was on its way to the secondhand dealer, and

the editor had left town—never, he said, to return. Pokeville's prominent citizens had to make the best of the small edition that had been printed as a valedictory. Every copy of that week's issue passed through many hands.

Mr. Jeff Binns bought the first *Advance* that was on sale that day. Marveling greatly, he puzzled through the something pleasant which that editor feller had published about him. He was stricken dumb when the full sense of the story bored through the armor plate in which his brain for a lifetime had been sheathed against the danger of thought.

"Pleasant, huh?" was his unspoken thought. "Whadjer know about that?" Then his musing trailed off into anticipation of the general ridicule to which he knew he would be subjected. Ridicule wasn't what Jeff called it. His word for it was "joshing," but it was just as bad by one name as another. Whatever it might be called, it was more than he could stand.

So it happened that while a passenger train was carrying Bert Norton to the big city, the under side of a box car took Jeff Binns in another direction. And though one rode on a comfortable plush seat while the other bumped, they were equally glad to get away from Pokeville. Bert was fleeing failure, Jeff escaping ridicule.

Throughout his long ride on the freight train, Mr. Binns suffered not only extreme physical discomfort, but also the mental distress of a conservative soul in the throes of metamorphosis. He had abstained so many years from the two great uplifting influences, work and water, that he had come to regard them with that dread which the simple mind always feels for the unknown.

But, tucked in the handkerchief pocket of his threadbare coat, was his copy of that last issue of the *Advance*, in which he was spoken of as a worthy citizen. And when, at last, faint from hunger, Binns swung off the train near a promising town far from his former home, the first thing he did, after re-

freshing himself with a "hand-out" from a hospitable farmhouse, was to smooth out the crumpled newspaper with a shaky hand and once more peruse the something pleasant.

Slowly, as he read the flowery phrases about himself, a new feeling stole over him. It was well enough for Bert Norton to poke fun at him, but why should he be shown up so mercilessly? True, he hadn't worked very hard in several years; but what of that? It was nobody's business but his own. He was doing no harm to any one.

Yet—was it solely his affair? Was it right for him to be the only drone in a hive where all the others, though they didn't gather much honey, worked steadily and faithfully day in and day out, year after year?

A flush, such as had not colored Jeff's face since the last time his mother reproved him for some prank of boyhood, stained his sagging cheeks. Though he was alone beside the road, he glanced about apprehensively. A worthy citizen! Well, and why not? He had made nothing of his life so far, but he was not past middle age, and he was in a country where many men had struck their gait after they were forty. A worthy citizen—why not, indeed? If not in Pokeville, where it would be hard to get anybody to take him seriously, then in some new place, where he could make a fresh start without any handicap except his poverty.

It happened that the place where Jeff dropped off the train was a big farming center, and men were needed badly for the harvest. The moment the newcomer, stumbling along the lines of his new idea, asked for work, he got it so swiftly that it almost frightened him. Before he knew it, he was busy in the fields at three dollars a day "and found"; and in a week he had eighteen dollars to his credit on the farmer's books.

Times there were, even before the harvest was in, when Binns flagged in his good resolution. Visions of cool lounging nooks and glossy brown flasks floated above the waving wheat and

glimmered in the golden dust from the threshing machines. But the germ of self-respect had entered his veins, and, after a while, it was reinforced by the virus of ambition, with the result that when all the grain was in, the self-exiled Pokevillian, instead of hitting the road again, took a steady job in the near-by town and learned the way to the savings bank.

Month after month he worked. Month by month his bank balance grew, in spite of new clothes, good lodgings, and substantial food. Once in a while he took a drink, but he found alcohol interfered with this new game, work, in which he had become interested, so he soon learned to do without liquor. And he made some money, too, over the amount of his earnings, by a decidedly smart bargain which he drove in a real-estate transaction.

He had been away from home a year when an impulse came over him to go back to Pokeville and let people see that he really had become a man. All this time he had risen rapidly in the estimation of his new acquaintances. He was far from rich, but he had earned good pay in the latter half of the year, and, as he had spent money only on food, shelter, clothing, and a few reasonable amusements, he had almost a thousand dollars in the bank. This amount included his profit on the little real-estate deal.

While he was about it, he decided he would make his visit to the old town impressive. He bought a fur-lined overcoat, several good suits, a sole-leather trunk, and convincing haberdashery. When he arrived in Pokeville, he went to the best hotel and asked for two rooms and a bath. He intended to stay only ten days or so, and he felt he could afford a hundred or more for his expenses while there. He was resolved to show those Pokevillians they couldn't make fun of him.

Pokeville was properly amazed. It took only a few hours for word to get around town that Jeff Binns, once the official pauper, had returned and was occupying a suite—with bath—in the

highest-priced hostelry the place could support.

Immediately people recalled the article about Binns which they had read a year before in the last gasp of the *Weekly Advance*. So it was true, that Klondike story! Here he was, back from the frozen North, showing abundant evidence of wealth. There could be no doubt about his prosperity, since he had spent the first day in repaying various small loans made to him years before. Think of it—Jeff Binns a millionaire!

Everybody was eager to know all about it. He was plied with questions about his inheritance, but he considered himself still bound by his promise to "that editor feller"—as indeed he was—so he merely smiled benignly when he was asked about the twelve-month-old newspaper article. He denied nothing, admitted nothing, volunteered nothing. As he saw it, it was enough for Pokevillians to have ocular proof that he had become a worthy citizen.

And when things began to happen to him, as happen, they did in tumultuous sequence, he adhered stolidly to his policy of silence. All that the rest of Pokeville ever knew about T. Mortimer Manxwell, his fortune, and his will, it learned through that final issue of the *Weekly Advance*.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### POKEVILLE GETS SQUARE.

THE one-time editor of Pokeville's only live newspaper made good in the big city. He toiled as a reporter long enough to achieve distinction in that line, then became city editor, managing editor, and at last, after some years, editor in chief.

In the first few months of his new career, he wrote several times to Bessie Allaire; but when the cordiality of her replies tapered close to the vanishing point, their correspondence ceased. And Norton never had time to become interested in any other young woman. After twenty years in his new field, he found himself as nearly a confirmed

bachelor as it is possible for an intelligent man to be.

It was at the end of his second decade as a metropolitan newspaper man, that an impulse came over him to revisit Pokeville. He could not account for it. There was something absurd about wasting time on a trip to the town in which his early ambition had come to nothing. He had remembered the place with mingled bitterness and amusement for so many years that he failed to note the subtlety with which the chemistry of time eliminated the baser metal from the alloy. It was with much astonishment he found his memory of Pokeville had mellowed to a sort of affection for the cradle of his youthful dreams.

His mental metamorphosis resulted in a sudden journey to the old town. He recognized it chiefly by the changes. Twenty years had done much for Pokeville. It had tall buildings, trolley lines, even taxicab stands.

Main Street was graced by a fine theater in place of the ramshackle opera house in which he had worshiped the stars of a former generation. Several national banks had supplanted the old State institution. The shop fronts gave evidence of the window dresser's art. A general air of prosperity was noticeable everywhere.

Norton's city-trained eyes perceived instantly the high cost of the automobiles in which the wealth and fashion of Pokeville were whizzing along the principal thoroughfares. Most of the women were dressed according to the latest mode. Many of them had a look of culture that had not been common in the Pokeville society of his younger days.

A strikingly handsome matron in a sky-blue limousine attracted his attention. There was something familiar about her, but, scrape his memory as he might, he could not recall her identity. And he forgot her a moment afterward in his eagerness to glimpse a monument that stood on a knoll in the center of a pretty square. It was the colossal figure of a man, one hand outstretched in a benevolent gesture, as if giving greatness to all Pokeville.

"Whose statue is that in the park down the street?" Bert asked of the fashionably attired clerk, as he registered in a creditable hotel. It was ample evidence of Pokeville's well-being that it could support such a hostelry.

"How long did you say you expected to stay, sir?"

"I didn't say. A few days, I suppose. Whose statue did you say——"

"That," answered the man behind the desk, plainly striving to suppress a note of pride in his voice, "is the statue of Jefferson Manxwell Bynnes."

"Binns?" cried Norton, his conscience, even after twenty years, causing him to start slightly on hearing the name.

"Bynnes," replied the clerk. "Jefferson Manxwell Bynnes. Pardon the question, but—have you never heard of him?"

"How do you spell it?" inquired the editor, sparring for time.

"B-y-n-n-e-s," the hotel man replied. "Jef-fer-son Manx-well Bynnes. You have heard of him surely?"

"Why—ah—that is, I'm not sure," Norton evaded again. "Who is he?"

"He is not anybody now," said the clerk; "he is dead. He *was* Pokeville's most eminent citizen. He was mayor of the town for two terms, and then he was sent to the State senate. He was president of the Assimilated Gas Company, the Goldplain Mining and Exploration Company, the Ajax Steel Works, and the Unified Electric Lighting and Power Corporation, which controls all the trolley roads in this part of the State.

"Mr. Bynnes," the hotel man continued, "was an elder of the Ninth Presbyterian Church, a director in the Seventh National Bank, a prominent member of several fraternal organizations, and a colonel in the national guard. It may give you an idea of his wealth and importance to know that his life was insured for five million dollars. He was——"

"Stop!" cried the city man. "Can you tell me whether Mr.—ah—Bynnes was a native of this town?"

"He certainly was," the answer came

across the desk. "He was born here and died here, and with the exception of his stay in the State capital during his term in the upper house of the legislature, he lived here."

"Did he come of a wealthy family?" pursued Norton.

"Why—ah—no," returned the clerk. "I believe not. In fact, I'm pretty sure he was a self-made man. I understand he at one time was in very humble circumstances. Then, I am told, he——"

"But how did he accumulate all that wealth?" the editor broke in impatiently.

"I was about to tell you," resumed the hotel man, with a look of mild reproach, "that some relative of his—an uncle, I think—died somewhere in the Dominion of Canada and left him a large estate. With that bequest as a foundation, he built the really immense fortune he possessed at the time of his death. His possessions included half a dozen of the principal business blocks in Pokeville, the Eureka Theater, and this hotel."

Norton leaned heavily against the desk and stared. "You—you say his original capital came from Canada?" he persisted. A ray of understanding was flickering elusively before his staggered intelligence.

"I believe so—from the gold regions, the Klondike, some said. Come to think of it, it must have been the Klondike, for he named this house the Hotel Dawson. Shortly before his death, he planned a still bigger hotel, which was to bear the same name you do. It was to have been the Hotel Norton."

A look of conviction crept into the editor's face. It could not be merely a coincidence. The last statement settled that. It thrilled him a little to learn that Jeff Binns had not forgotten him, even though acknowledgment had been tardy. "When did he receive this Klondike inheritance?" was Norton's next question.

"Why, let me see—about twenty years ago, they tell me." It was plain the amiable clerk was willing to talk at

length on the greatness of Jefferson Manxwell Bynnes.

That settled it. There could be no mistake of identity. Norton was astounded by the outcome of the joke he had played on Pokeville two decades before. "Did Mr. Bynnes leave a family?" he asked, after a brief musing on the fortune he probably had missed by remaining a newspaper man instead of becoming a press agent.

"No children—only a widow. She is the leader of society here, not only on account of her husband's wealth, but also because she is a member of Pokeville's oldest family—the Allaires."

Norton up-ended his suit case and sat on it weakly. So that was why the correspondence between himself and Bessie Allaire had dwindled to nothing! He had been cut out by Jeff Binns—because, doubtless, of the phantom legacy born in his own imagination!

"Yes," the clerk went on, "it was Mrs. Bynnes who made her husband slip a 'y' and an 'e' into his name, I understand. They say it used to be plain B-i-n-n-s."

"Oh, that's a tradition, is it?"

"Yes. I'm not sure it's true."

How true it was none could know better than Bert Norton. Dazed though he was by the story of the former town pauper's leap to riches, he was resolved to get a line on the connecting link between the imaginary Klondike estate and the substantial wealth the man undoubtedly had acquired. "Is—is Mrs. Bynnes in town?" he inquired, as casually as he could.

"Oh, yes," the communicative young man behind the counter assured him. "There she goes now—the lady in the blue limousine."

That afternoon Bert Norton handed his card to a servant in the white marble vestibule of the Bynnes mansion.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE VIRUS OF AMBITION.

"IS it really you, Bert?" exclaimed Mrs. Bynnes, as, lovelier than ever, she entered the drawing-room, a white

hand extended in cordial welcome of her old admirer.

"It's really me, Bessie," said the editor in chief. He would have ordered the immediate discharge of a reporter who wrote such a sentence for the big city daily—but writing is one thing, friendly talk another.

"I never thought you would visit this little town again," she said, her eyes resting approvingly on his metropolitan exterior.

"Never thought I'd come myself," he admitted, "but lately something seemed to draw me here."

Mrs. Bynnes had not lost the tea-rose blush of her girlhood—that long-ago time when young Bert Norton thought of her as the unattainable flower of feminine perfection.

"You came to visit relatives, I suppose?"

"Don't you know, Bessie, that I have neither kith nor kin in Pokeville now?"

"Friends, then?"

"All the friends I had in this town must have forgotten me long ago, except—"

"Except me, you see." Her smile was lovely, and the tea-rose blush came and went as he had seen it come and go many times in days long past. It bloomed and paled often in the talk of an hour or more, during which they recalled perilously tender memories of their youth together.

Norton watched it appreciatively, noting with delight how gently time had treated her. Time? What was he talking about? Why, she still was a young woman. She was much less than twenty when she married Bynnes—or, rather, Binns.

Perhaps it was the graciousness of her manner, perhaps the sheer pressure of his curiosity, that emboldened him to question her about the details of her husband's tremendous rise in the world.

"I cannot tell you much about it," she said simply. "Mr. Bynnes kept his business affairs largely to himself. I only know that from the time he got his start, everything he touched seemed to turn to gold."

"But that's just the point," the editor persisted. "How did he get his start?"

"You ask me that?" she retorted, smiling.

"I surely do."

"Oh, Bert, Bert, you're as naughty as you ever were," said the widow, shaking her finger at him in mock admonition. "Don't you remember that wicked hoax you published in your little weekly paper—that story of the great fortune left to Jeff?"

He nodded guiltily.

"Well," she returned, "that was how he got his start."

"But there never was any Klondike fortune left him!" protested Norton.

"I know there wasn't," Mrs. Bynnes admitted sweetly. "But you and Jeff were the only persons in town who knew that, and you went away the day the paper came out. That story of yours, of course, was not enough in itself for the shrewd citizens of Pokeville. If you don't mind my saying so——"

"You know very well I won't be offended by anything you say, Bessie."

"We-ell, the people of this town never did think very much of the *Weekly Advance*."

"Too true—though I did my best."

"Of course you did, Bert. Well, your story gained unexpected confirmation—at least, it appeared to. Jeff went away the same day you did. He was afraid the whole town would laugh at him after reading the article. Strangely enough, the story made him ashamed of himself. He went to a town 'way up north, got work, and made a new start in life. A year afterward he came back for a visit looking prosperous, stopped at the best hotel, and paid all his debts. That made people think the story of his inheritance must be true. Jeff didn't deny it, because he had promised you he wouldn't. Besides he had developed business instincts after his reformation set in. And so——"

"Yes?"

"So the inevitable happened. Everybody in town who had anything to sell or promote or buy practically forced

Jeff to join in the venture. When he protested that he had not enough ready money they thought he was holding them off, and all of them insisted that it made no difference. They said it was only a question of time when the fortune would be turned over to him—you know, you had pointed out that the Canadian authorities were slow—and meanwhile his partners would advance the money. All he had to do was to sign papers making himself responsible for his share of the risk. As he had little to lose, and as they swept him off his feet with their insistence, he went into everything."

"And did he have no losses?"

"None. It happened to be the beginning of the big Pokeville boom, and there was nothing but profit from first to last. Jeff made money so fast that he never was called on to show a dollar of his supposed inheritance."

Bert Norton sat, open-mouthed. "It was I, then," he said, when he had regained control of his lower jaw, "who made a man of him!"

That Mrs. Bynnes no longer suffered the sensitiveness that had seized her years before when she induced her husband to change the spelling of his name was shown by the ease with which she overlooked her visitor's unhappy comment on his share in the making of the departed Jefferson. Proof that she did overlook it lay in the fact that she was as gracious to him through the remainder of his call as she had been up to that point.

Contrite, he sought to atone by repeating all he had heard in praise of the deceased capitalist. She listened, as became a widow of more than a year, in a way to indicate that her admiration for the dead did not obliterate her regard for the living.

"But tell me, Bessie," urged Norton, when he had recovered his self-possession sufficiently to revel once more in the sight of her loveliness, "why did you throw me over for some one else?"

The tea-rose blush returned once more. No young girl could have been

more reserved in manner, no widow more direct in speech. "I did not throw you over, Bertrand," she answered. "You never asked me to marry you."

Swiftly his mind leaped back across the years. It was true. In the singleness of his devotion, he had assumed that she would take his love for granted, and had never put it into words. Dared he do so now?

Somehow, in spite of the blush and all her graciousness, he felt he must take time for his second wooing. To propose to her on the spot might seem—well, there were those confounded Bynnes millions, creatures of his own youthful prank, in array against his sincerity.

"You will let me call again, Bessie?" he asked softly, as he prepared to leave her.

"I shall be glad to have you come to see me often, Bert, as long as you are in town," she responded.

In the Hotel Dawson that evening the communicative clerk inquired blandly: "You said, sir, you intended to stay here for——"

"Several weeks," answered Bert Norton briskly.

### A Long Quest

FOR hundreds of years the belief has prevailed that gold dust and gems to the value of five billion six hundred million dollars lie buried at the bottom of the sacred lake of Guatavita, in Colombia, a territory once occupied by Indian tribes renowned for their fabulous wealth.

The aboriginal Indians of that locality had a custom of casting all their vessels and ornaments of precious metal into the waters of the lake as offerings to their gods, and the knowledge of this custom led to the belief that has been handed down through the ages that it was the burying place of fabulous wealth. For centuries, almost ever since America was first discovered, travelers and explorers have engaged in various expeditions in search of this territory, and many attempts have been

made to drain the lake, without success.

The Spaniards were just on the point of succeeding in the task of draining the lake, after years of hard work spent upon it; but when they were halfway through, the sides fell in and years of work were wasted.

In 1900 an English company undertook the work. They proceeded to drain it by digging a tunnel through the adjacent mountains, bringing it below the level of the surface of the water.

The lake was not emptied until 1903, but it kept refilling on account of the heavy rains and the presence of springs. A certain number of jewels and ornaments found in the mud of the lake bed seemed to indicate that the search for the hidden treasure was to prove successful. Then the mud dried hard and fresh difficulty was thus encountered. Ever since the engineers have been continuing operations, but no further treasure has come to light.

After an outlay of some seventy-five thousand dollars, it has been decided to abandon the hunt. It remains to be seen whether any one else will take up the search.

### Memory Extraordinary

BROWNING, even in his old age, after a single reading of a book, used to quote page after page as fluently and accurately as if he held the volume in his hand. William Morris used to boast that if every copy of the "Pickwick Papers" was destroyed he could restore them to the world without a word missing; and Gladstone, when once he was unable to find his translation of the first Book of Homer to lend a friend, recited every line of it from memory.

### Making Money

JIM: "He's a good un, Jack. He's a millionaire who made his money out of iron."

Jack: "Well, look at that now! I made a few half dollars out of lead, and I got six months' hard labor for it!"



#### EARLIER CHAPTERS.

A summary of those that have gone before for the benefit of those who missed them.

GIFFORD RHODES, a college baseball player, applies for admission to the Maroons, a bush-league team. Manager McElroy sizes him up as a rank novice, and tries to humiliate him in a practice game. Rhodes shows pitiful lack of training, but his skill with the bat amazes the manager. Rhodes' independent manner, however, displeases the manager, and he tells him to go away and learn to play ball before he asks for a position. Rhodes realizes his unfortunate lack of training, and goes to work on a farm as a laborer. He practices base running in the pasture at night, until the farmer discharges him as a suspicious person. Then he appears at a baseball park during a game between the Lakeville Reds and the Sluggers. The manager of the Reds is in serious trouble for lack of substitutes, and he puts Rhodes into the game as shortstop as soon as he offers his services. The ill-tempered manager, in spite of some clever playing by Rhodes, criticizes him offensively after the game, and they are in danger of coming to open hostilities when an officer of the law appears and places Rhodes under arrest as a fugitive from justice.

Rhodes is accused of being a forger, fleeing from the law, but quickly proves the case to be one of mistaken identity. He next applies to Manager Kelley for a position with the Sluggers, and is engaged. He makes good, but is treated with jealous hostility by his teammates, particularly by Buck

Dyer, a pitcher. At one game he sees his sweetheart, Hermia Meredith, in the stand, and learns that she is favoring the suit of another man.

Manager Kelley likes Rhodes, who has been nicknamed "Rocky" by the men, and learns that the new man's father is "Blister" Rhodes, a famous ball player. Rhodes confides to him that he is playing the game without his father's knowledge, and that he really dislikes baseball intensely. He is trying to make a reputation in the game because his father has charged him with weakness in athletics, and he wishes to show him that he is wrong.

In a game with the Panthers much ill feeling develops between the teams. Dyer enrages the Panthers and their friends, and after the game he is set upon by a dozen hoodlums and beaten unmercifully. Rhodes comes upon the scene, and, ignoring the man's hostility to him, rushes to his rescue, and is knocked unconscious.

#### CHAPTER XVI.

##### THE TURN OF THE TIDE.

**I**N the depths of a pit, black as Egypt's night, Rhodes heard a voice, faint and far away at first, but swiftly growing plainer and clearer as returning consciousness made him aware that he still lived after the crashing down upon his head of the heavens and all the stars.

"Game as they come, that's what he is," the voice was saying. "I eat what I said about him being yellow. He tackled the whole bunch all by his lonesome; and fight—well, a dozen wild cats couldn't match him! He near had the gang breaking and running away when somebody hit him on the head with a rock. Then you boys sifted in just in time to save us both from being kicked into ribbons."

Gifford recognized the voice as Dyer's even before he opened his eyes and discovered that his head was resting on Manager Kelley's knee. All around him were the faces of the Sluggers—friendly, sympathetic, anxious faces. The ruffians who formed the attacking party had vanished. Dyer, somewhat dusty and battered, did not appear to be seriously harmed.

"I—I thought——" mumbled Rhodes trying to rise, and feeling weak and giddy.

"I'm all right, kid, thanks to you," said the pitcher promptly. "You created a diversion so that I came through with just a few bruises; but for you they'd have left me stiff, I reckon."

To the surprise of all, the new player pushed aside helping hands and rose to his feet. His head was throbbing and buzzing, but he insisted that he was all right. "If I knew anything about fighting, I might have lasted a little longer," he said. "All I could do was butt in and hit right and left."

Dyer grinned. "Let me say that you sure have a wallop. You knocked down four men that I saw, and I was too busy to keep the score particular and careful. I've a notion you'd make a rather swift little scrapper, and if you want to learn the rudiments of handlin' your dukes I'll be glad to show you how much I don't know about fighting myself."

Under the superficial banter of his tone, there was no mistaking his evident desire to make up for the past. For a moment Gifford hesitated, strongly inclined to turn down the pitcher's friendly overtures and show them all how little he really cared for their good will. But all at once he realized that he did care. His attitude

of cold indifference was nothing but a sham. He craved the intimate companionship, even the occasional horseplay, which enlivened the idle moments of the bushers. From all this he had hitherto been barred. If they were ready to lift the embargo he would be very foolish not to meet Dyer's advances at least halfway.

"Hope you're not making that offer because you think I won't take it up," he said, forcing a smile.

"No!" The pitcher's tone was emphatic. "I mean it."

"It's a bargain," said Rhodes. "But I hope you don't start this buzz planer going in my head every time you hit me." His fingers gingerly touched the place where he had been hit with the rock. "They added a beautiful bay window to my upper story, didn't they? Well, I'm satisfied to get off without having a skylight in my roof."

His eyes twinkled, and there was an infectious quality about his grin which brought responsive smiles to several faces.

"Mebbe he's a good lad, after all," commented Bull Johnson to a fellow player as the crowd broke up and started for the station. "Anyhow, he ain't yellow. Buck knows he was wrong about that, now."

Before many days had passed, the big catcher's opinion became unanimous among the Sluggers. Relieved from the necessity of being constantly on the defensive, Rhodes came out astonishingly, betraying unexpectedly the possession of a sense of humor and a fertility of invention which speedily added much to the entertainment of the team. Little by little, as a quality is perfected with constant practice, the new shortstop's ready wit became sharpened. There was no taint of meanness in his fun; but his sense of the ludicrous was so strong that he never lost a point.

It was in verbal altercations with the Panthers, or the Brownies, or the Lakeville Reds, that Rhodes' talent blossomed to its fullest flower. In the midst of a snarling clash of contending voices, his cool, drawling tones

would cut through the flow of vituperation with some pithy remark which almost invariably turned the laugh on one of the opposing players. If the latter attempted to answer back, he only plunged deeper into the morass of persiflage. Rocky was rarely at a loss. Several times he achieved the triumph of rousing, for an instant, a great roar of involuntary laughter from a man's own teammates. More than once he had reduced Monte Ward—whom he seemed especially to delight in harassing—to the point of apoplexy.

At first, various rougher methods of retaliating were attempted by the ball players, but here, also, they ran up against a solid wall. Rhodes never allowed his playing to digress from the line of clean, straight baseball, but he showed an ability to take care of himself on the diamond. A baseman who attempted to block the harmless-looking runner was quite likely to find himself inexplicably biting the dust. A husky Panther, seeking deliberately to spike the little shortstop, would suddenly recoil from the touch of the sharp brads into which he had run apparently with inexcusable awkwardness. There was no use appealing to the umpires. These officials, much as they might long to take sides with the injured one, were unable to point out a single movement of the agile shortstop which was not perfectly correct. There was a gradual lessening of these futile tricks, and soon they ceased altogether.

No one could have been more thankful for this than Rocky himself. He had found no enjoyment in the methods to which he had been driven for self-protection. The necessity of being constantly on the alert for unfair attacks took much of his attention from the legitimate game.

His attitude toward baseball had not undergone any definite change. He still disliked the game as much as ever, but he was more than ever determined to make good. Knowing better than any one else how far he fell short of the standard he had set for himself, he grudged every moment that was not directed toward the desired end. And

Kelley, watching critically from bench and coaching lines for flaws and limitations, took note of the improvement.

"He's the kind that climbs fast or blows up sudden," the manager concluded. "I'd like to give him a boost, and I'll do it the minute I'm sure it won't do him more hurt than good."

As the summer progressed, with the Sluggers taking more and more of a lead in the Warren County League race, the veteran manager was having his own private little struggle to do what he considered the right thing. He could not blind himself to the fact that the team's increased efficiency was due in no small measure to the spur of the excellent playing of this unknown son of a famous father. Though Rhodes was by this time on good terms with the entire team, there still remained a spirit of friendly rivalry which made the other men strain every effort to keep up with him—or as close as possible. He was, in short, a sort of pacemaker whom it was distinctly to Kelley's interest to hold as long as he possibly could. In addition, the manager had come more and more to like the boy personally; he wanted to have him about.

But it was the very fact that he had become so fond of Rocky, coupled with the memory of friendship for his father, which made it impossible for him to do the selfish thing and keep the young man where he was. Scarcely a day passed that did not see Kelley advising, criticizing, suggesting, giving freely out of the wealth of his experience in order that the infielder might more swiftly eliminate his faults and crudities and swing himself up the next rung of the ladder.

Toward the end of the season, when the time seemed ripe, the manager wrote and dispatched a brief epistle which resulted, a few days later, in the appearance on the grand stand of a short, stout stranger with nose glasses, who looked exactly like a jovial drummer. This person's interest was centered on one of the players, whom he watched closely.

The Sluggers were to play the Reds,

who were pushing them fairly close in the final spurt for the championship. Rocky, unconscious of anything special about the occasion, gave an average exhibition of his unusual talents. When he shot into Pink Ziegler's territory to scoop a difficult grounder, the stranger in the stand frowned slightly. Later, when the shortstop captured a hit which the left fielder should have taken, the fat man's disgust was patent. Even Rhodes' exceptional hitting did not cause the watcher to display enthusiasm.

At the conclusion of the game, the stranger descended upon the field and walked up to Kelley, who had lingered behind, as if expecting his approach.

"Well, how about it?" the manager demanded, in the perfunctory tone of one who already knows what the answer will be.

The rotund person's lip curled. "You're a good one," he retorted tartly, "trying to put that across on me!"

Kelley's jaw sagged and an expression of bewilderment overspread his countenance. "Wa-what!" he gasped. "You mean to say you ain't—going to take him?"

"Take nuthin'!" said the scout. "I'm jerry to you, Jim. You can't double cross me."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### HIS REGULAR STYLE.

FOR an instant the manager stared, frowning. Then his jaws closed with a snap, and his eyebrows straightened. But he did not lose his temper.

"You've got some kind of a bee buzzing round in your bonnet, Con," he said, "but I'm hanged if I know what it is. Suppose you let me have it straight. I never double-crossed a friend yet," he added, "and I reckon I'm too old to begin now."

The scout shrugged his plump shoulders doubtingly. "Do you mean to say, Jim," he asked, "that you didn't tell your players, both outfield and in, to hold back and let your shortstop make the play when he could reach it?"

"If I did," blurted James J., "I hope

to be shot in my tracks! That's his reg'lar style, Con; he didn't do anything special to-day. I've let him go to it, for it sort of prods the others to work harder. When it comes to coverin' ground, he's a howlin' snow-storm—a reg'lar blizzard!"

The scout appeared incredulous. "I'll look his record over. I don't like his grand-standing, but I suppose it was natural in a man who knew he was being watched."

"He didn't know it," asserted Kelley promptly. "If you think I put him wise, you're hitting below the hundred mark. I never even whispered to him. He pulls off that kind of stuff every day of his life."

The scout continued doubtful and suspicious, but James J. took him by the arm and conducted him to the manager's private office, there to hand him the official record of the Warren County League games in which Rhodes had participated. While this record credited the Slugger shortstop with a remarkable number of put-outs and assists, a little figuring revealed the surprising fact that his fielding percentage was better than .950.

"The figgers look pretty fair," admitted the representative of a real-league manager, "and as long's you swear you're giving me straight goods, I'll take a chance on the boy. But if he turns out to be solid ivory, don't ever call me down into the pastures again to look at any of your prize berries. Like the rest of 'em, I s'pose he thinks he knows it all a'ready, and he'll have to have that taken out of him to start with."

"You'll find him ready and eager to learn, and what he's told once he remembers."

"He's the kind that tries to play every instrument in the band, that's one thing ails him," criticized the visitor.

"That's just his way of trying to do his level best all the time," defended Kelley.

"A fine way to get the team as sore as crabs. Ain't you found it so?"

"Not to any disast'rous extent," said Kelley. "There was some growlin' at

first, but I put the muzzle on, and it stopped. His example's been good for the others. Since I took him on the team has speeded up twenty per cent."

"That's interestin'," admitted the scout. "I'll tell the chief. Let's have Rhodes in and settle the business."

If Rocky was surprised at the proposition made him by the scout of the Badgers, he did not show it. He seemed as cool and unimpressed as if the Atlantic Coast League had been merely another bush organization of the caliber of the Sluggers. Having signed for no more than the present season with Kelley, he was in a position to drive a bargain with Stillman. This he proceeded to do in a most businesslike way. But after he had left the rough little office of the manager and was crossing the empty field toward the gate, his freckled face expanded in a wide grin.

"Pretty soft," he told himself delightedly. "Think of being up against Johnny McElroy and his crowd next year! I was a joke for Johnny the first time we met, but if there's any baseball in me, maybe I'll do the laughing next!"

Even more gratifying, as he thoughtfully considered the advance, was the satisfaction of having taken another step toward the ultimate goal. He smiled grimly as he thought of his father; he thrilled with triumph as he recalled Hermia Meredith's regret and pity because of his inability to make good at just what he was doing now. He had no intention of taking either of them into his confidence yet, but the mere fact of having such a secret bottled up within him was the source of no little pleasure.

The season of the Warren County League ended on Labor Day in a blaze of glory for the Sluggers. When it came time for Rocky to pull up stakes and start for home, he found himself oddly reluctant to say good-by. There was little that was refined about his teammates of the bush. They murdered the king's English, scrapped on the least provocation, and at table several of them placed more dependence on the knife than is the custom in polite society. Nevertheless, Rhodes

was surprised and not a little puzzled by a sudden realization that he had formed an attachment for them. A few months ago he would have sworn such a thing impossible. Without his being aware of it, his views of baseball and of the men who made a business of playing the game were undergoing a change.

They shook his hand, thumped him on the back, told him they were black with envy, and wished him luck in the league higher up. Kelley poured a flood of advice into his listening ear.

Acting on the suggestion of Con Stillwell, Gifford had arranged to stop off at the Badgers' home town for the purpose of meeting Manager Brody. It needed little persuasion to induce Buck Dyer, who was headed for New York to take up his winter work, to break the journey with him.

Early in the afternoon, the two alighted from the train and entered a lunch room for a bite to eat. It was too late to see Brody before the game, so they took a car out to the grounds, secured seats, and settled down to enjoy the pleasure of watching other people play ball.

To Rhodes, at least, this pleasure was vastly increased by the fact that the Badgers' opponent was none other than Johnny McElroy's Maroons. With an odd amusement which held in it no trace of the irritation the man had formally aroused in him, he watched the antics of the manager on the coaching line; but when the Maroons took the field, he turned his attention to the players, curious to see how the work of these men, which had impressed him so greatly at the beginning of the summer, would seem now, in the light of increased experience.

"They got a new lad on third," suddenly remarked Dyer. "Wonder who he is?"

Rocky's glance shifted from the wiry Slat Ramsey at short to the tall, well-built third baseman who had just whipped the ball across the diamond with an easy, powerful swing. He caught his breath sharply, staring down

at the man with an expression of amazed incredulity.

McElroy's new third baseman was none other than Chalmers Robinson, Rhodes' classmate, and his most dangerous rival for the favor of Hermia Meredith.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

WITH UNNECESSARY SWEETNESS.

AT first Rocky could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes, but swiftly he saw that there could be no doubt of the man's identity. He would have been more than human had he not presently felt a thrill of satisfaction at the realization that this fellow, who had always pretended to scorn professional athletics, was now doing precisely what he had so often cried out against. Immediately Rhodes wondered whether Robinson's appearance with the Maroons marked the date of his essaying the game as a paid player. Somehow, he had a conviction that it did not, and he was seized by a desire to learn how long Chalmers had been carrying on the deception. He resolved to find out.

It was during the eighth inning that he took Dyer into his confidence and sought his aid. "You see how it is, old man," he concluded. "I don't want him to know that I've been asking about him, so I can't very well brace Johnny Mack myself. You know McElroy, and you could look him up after the game and find out all about it. While you're doing that, I'll settle with Brody, and we'll meet at the station."

The pitcher was willing to oblige him, and they separated just before the finish of the game. Taking care to avoid both McElroy and Robinson, Gifford sought the manager of the Badgers. When he reached the station, Dyer was waiting for him.

"That friend of yours strung you all right," Buck chuckled. "Mack dug him out of a jerkwater New Hampshire league about a month ago. Johnny's got him signed up for next season."

"But he is being paid now?" asked Rocky.

"Of course," was the emphatic reply. "He's been paid for the last two summers for playing on the Belton team of the White Mountain League—fifty a month this year and forty last. He's a fine piece of cheese to bawl out the profession, believe me!"

There was a grim smile on Rocky's lips as he led the way toward the train which was just pulling in. He had never liked Chalmers Robinson, and he felt no small satisfaction over the knowledge that the man was a hypocrite who masqueraded in false colors.

But presently the smile faded, as he thought of Hermia and wondered how much she really cared for the fellow. She had no idea, of course, of the deception which lay beneath the attractive exterior, and Rhodes felt almost in duty bound to warn her. Swiftly, however, the impulse died. It would be impossible. She would think him moved by petty jealousy. She would refuse to believe the story; even if proofs were brought, she would probably reject them.

He parted with Dyer in the Grand Central, and took a car uptown. It was with not a little relief that he found his father away on a business trip. Physically altered as he was by a strenuous summer in the open, he could scarcely have hoped to escape comment and questions, and the elder Rhodes would never have been content by the vague explanations which satisfied the mother.

For the same reason, Rocky avoided most of his friends during the short time before college opened. But, as luck would have it, on his last day in the city, he ran into Laura Reid on the avenue. She was as vivacious as usual, and he remarked in her manner an exaggerated sweetness he had noticed at other times when she had something particularly disagreeable to impart.

In her gushing way, she wondered where he had been all summer to get so brown—so positively athletic looking. Had she known where to find him, she surely would have had him up at Mohasset while Hermia was

there. Such a dear girl, and so popular! Of course he had heard about Chalmers Robinson and Hermia? Oh, yes, it was practically settled, although as yet there had been no announcement. It was merely a question of time.

She seemed bent on babbling on indefinitely, but Rhodes cut her short almost rudely, and made his escape.

"Nice kitty; how soft your fur is!" he muttered as he fled. "Well, it's certain they didn't recognize me that day at Lakeville, or I'd have heard of it from her. It's lucky I didn't run into them again, with Mohasset not a dozen miles away."

The meeting made him thankful he was taking the night train for Cumberland; another meeting with Miss Reid, he felt, would be more than he could stand.

He found the college apparently the same, but as the days passed he became slowly conscious of a difference. Formerly he had been content with his work and the mild relaxations of the small circle of congenial students—fellows who took the same course, were intensely interested in their studies, and not at all averse to talking shop at any and all times. On his return, Rhodes expected to pick up the threads he had dropped in June; he was puzzled and disturbed when he discovered how difficult that was. Instead of finding pleasure in the old crowd, with their irregular meetings in one another's rooms and their serious discussions, he was bored.

He presently came to the conclusion that this uncomfortable restlessness must be due to the unusual nature of his summer's work, and the irresponsible character of the men with whom he had been associated. He told himself that he would surely get back into the old rut before long. But somehow he did not. Instead, as the crisp autumn weeks swept on toward chilly winter, he drifted slowly away from the old conditions.

He began making regular daily trips to the gym, where he spent hours in vigorous exercising. Unable to par-

ticipate in the spring training of the Badgers, this was his only way to keep in shape; and he was determined not to start the coming season, more than a month late, under the handicap of poor physical condition. He kept up his boxing, too, partly because it was excellent exercise, but quite as much, it must be confessed, because of his in-born dislike for doing anything halfway. He grew to enjoy the varsity football games, took long tramps, skated, played hockey, even dabbled in basket ball.

He made new friends—friends of a different type from those who had satisfied him his first three years of college. Some of these made fine showings in the classrooms; others did not. But each one possessed qualities of both mental and physical alertness, and the broadmindedness of men who do things. Rocky grew to like them very well indeed, and his feeling seemed to be reciprocated. Sometimes he was smitten by qualms for having deserted his former associates, but by the time Christmas vacation came round he was entirely off with the old and on with the new.

In all these weeks he had heard no word from Hermia Meredith, which was rather to be expected, considering the fact that he himself had not written. At first he had refrained from a sort of pique at her evident preference for the other man. As the months passed, it grew increasingly difficult to start the correspondence, until at last he told himself that he would wait till the midwinter recess and see with his own eyes how matters stood.

On the last day in the gym, the place was well filled. After his exercise, he spent a lively half hour in the tank, with some of the swimmers; then, flushed and panting, his slim, well-knit body glowing from his exertions, he was scurrying through the dressing room when the gleam of something bright on the floor close beside the row of lockers halted him abruptly.

"Somebody's getting careless in his old age," he murmured, as he bent over and picked up a gold watch with a

dangling ribbon and heavy fob attached.

He turned it over, looking for marks of identification. The case was bare of initial or monogram, the handsome fob unmarked. "Some kettle!" commented Rocky, as he snapped open the case. "If I had one as good as this——"

The words ceased with the abruptness of a cut telephone connection; for there was a photograph pasted carefully on the inside of the gold case—a girl's photograph. And the eyes and the firm, sweet mouth were those of Hermia Meredith—Hermia, who had consistently scorned the type of girl who distributes her likeness carelessly broadcast.

"It's all very well if a person's actually engaged," she had told him when he begged a year ago for the very picture from which this face had been cut; "but I don't give them to anybody, Gifford, so you needn't feel hurt."

A rush of vivid color flooded the young man's face. There was only one inference to draw; only one man to whom the watch could possibly belong. As he realized how well it all fitted in with the conversation he had overheard weeks before, he was filled with a sudden childish longing to dash the costly thing of gold and delicate mechanism to the concrete floor. Then he saw Chalmers Robinson appear at the farther end of the long room and move slowly down the line of lockers, his eyes fixed searchingly on the floor.

Rocky snapped the watch case shut, struggled desperately for an instant for composure, and turned toward his successful rival. "Lost something?" he called in an elaborately casual tone.

Robinson glanced up quickly. "Yes, my watch. I must have dropped—You've found it!" His voice was full of relief as he stepped swiftly forward and took the article from Rhodes' outstretched hand. "Jove! I wouldn't have had anything happen to this for the world. Where'd you pick it up?"

"Here, half a second ago. I was just wondering whose it was. You ought to have your initials put on."

"I mean to. But it wasn't so much

the watch I was thinking of——" Robinson's emphasis was faintly significant. His eyes were fixed intently on Rhodes' face for a second before he thrust the watch into his fob pocket.

Rhodes finished dressing in gloomy abstraction. That evening he accepted an invitation—previously declined—to spend his vacation in Washington. The first week of the new year saw him back at Cumberland without having gone within two hundred miles of New York.

## CHAPTER XIX.

CHEER, WITH FLASHES OF GLOOM.

GIFFORD passed rapidly through the various degrees of gloom usually experienced by a man who has been thrown down hard, starting with the stoic demeanor of an early Christian martyr and ending with the simulation of gay nonchalance calculated to hide—not entirely, of course, but just enough to contrast effectively with occasional flashes of romantic melancholy—the fact of a broken heart. Not that his feeling for Hermia Meredith lacked depth; but youth is elastic, and Rocky was not the sort to brood long over an irremediable grief.

Those three weeks in Washington, with the constant succession of new sights and interests, helped astonishingly to soften the first bitterness. Before he had been back at college a week all that remained of Rhodes' disappointment was a nagging little hurt whenever he thought of Hermia, and a strengthened determination to make a name for himself in organized baseball. It was, he felt—rather boyishly—his most effectual means of opening Miss Meredith's eyes to the gravity of her mistake.

Though he made no conscious effort to avoid Chalmers Robinson, Rocky saw little of him during the winter term. The handsome chap traveled with a small, ultra-select, and decidedly sporty clique of seniors who had little use for the diversions of the common herd. Just how they employed their leisure moments was not accurately

known, but there occasionally sifted through the student body rumors of midnight poker which made Rocky wonder how Robinson managed to hold up his end in a crowd noted for their wealthy parents and sinfully lavish allowances.

"Reckon he must always win," Rhodes concluded. "He's the sort to do that, somehow."

But his associations did not prevent Robinson's prompt response to the first call for baseball material. To show up amidst the motley array of nervous underclassmen, tall, graceful, assured in his well-worn uniform with its magic "C" which he had carried triumphantly for two years; to catch the whispered comments of admiration or envy; to feel that every eye was watching his slightest movement—all this was sweet incense to his nostrils.

He loved, too, to be in the midst of a throng of youngsters who hung breathlessly upon his words. Rhodes, straying into the cage during one of the early days of indoor batting practice, came upon him holding forth to three or four sophomores on the sanctity of the amateur athlete and the low estate of the professional. It was a pet topic with Robinson—almost an obsession. Rocky paused now, his lips curling. A moment later he had the satisfaction of meeting Robinson's eye, and, with a meaning smile, passed on to watch the batting.

It was not the first time he had been drawn hither by a restless desire to see how things were going, and it was very far from easy to stand idly by when his fingers itched to close around a bat. The team this year was woefully short of good material. Gifford realized this from observation without the need of Jerry Crandall's constant lamentations. If only it were possible for him to play, he knew he could plug a big hole in the infield better than any one they had in view. He railed bitterly and with ever increasing vehemence against the unjust laws of amateur athletics which kept him tied hand and foot when his college needed him.

"A fellow can be a waiter, deck hand,

or any other thing he feels like, to earn a little vacation money," he mourned, "but he can't play ball. It doesn't seem a fair deal at all."

Once—it was after outdoor practice had commenced and the inefficiency of the dwindling squad had aroused Rhodes to a high pitch of rebellion—he seriously asked himself why, after all, he shouldn't go out with the others. Plenty of college men did it every year without being found out. Robinson, for instance, was a living example that a man could be a professional for three years and yet preserve his amateur standing. And Robinson was working for personal glory, while Rocky thought only of the success of his college team. The chances were a hundred to one against any one's knowing of his summer work in New England. If he were not found out, what harm would be done?

But somehow he was not satisfied with these sophistries. Just or unjust, the rule regarding professionalism was plain and unequivocal, and honorable men were bound to abide by it. If Robinson chose to make of himself a living lie, that was his business; but he could not step down into the same class.

No doubt it would have been better had he kept away from the athletic field. There he was tormented watching the daily struggle made by captain and coach to lick the team into shape. Nearly every afternoon—sometimes alone, more often with his chum, Billy Trowbridge, or some other friend—he showed up during practice until he became almost as much of a fixture as the regular players.

"Since you're so crazy about it," remarked Trowbridge half jokingly one day shortly before the first regular game, "I don't see why you don't try for the team. Seems to me I have a vague recollection of your being on the freshman nine three years ago."

Rocky grinned broadly. "Thank Heaven your recollection is vague. What I remember hurts like an ulcerated tooth. I played in just two games. In the last one, I enrolled my name on the tablet of fame, along with others,

who have stolen second with the bases full. Selah!"

"A champion bonehead play!" Trowbridge laughed. "I gather that your interest here is more theoretical than practical, then."

"Let it go at that," agreed the other. "It sounds well, whatever it means. Anyhow, I hate to think of the old college being done brown on both sides, like a fried egg. There's a leak somewhere in the gas pipes," he added, with his eyes fixed on Chalmers Robinson.

Robinson was orating, in his usual fashion, on the recent public exposure and downfall of a prominent amateur athlete with a semi-professional past. Trowbridge listened amusedly for a moment, and then raised his eyebrows.

"I suppose what he says is all true enough," he remarked; "but he certainly has a little-tin-god-on-wheels way of saying it. Well, I must beat it. By-by."

Left alone, Rhodes stood there, his lips curling. "Robinson," he called, "look here a minute."

Astonished, the man addressed turned and stared indignantly at the person who had summoned him so peremptorily. For an instant, it seemed as if he meant to snap out a sarcastic refusal; but something in Gifford's face must have stirred his curiosity, for he shrugged his shoulders and lounged languidly over.

"Well, what do you want of me?" he inquired disagreeably.

"Not much," answered the young man. "I thought I'd give you a bit of advice. I've heard you blowing a lot about professional athletics lately. If I were in your place, I'd quit."

## CHAPTER XX.

### A TRY FOR HOME.

A FLAME of angry crimson leaped into Robinson's face, and his eyes narrowed. "You blamed little runt!" he gaped furiously. "What do you mean by that?"

Gifford smiled pleasantly. "Johnny McElroy's Maroons are a pretty fast

little bunch of ball players, aren't they?" he remarked suavely. "I happen to know Johnny. I know about the new third baseman he brought from the White Mountain League in August. Do you get me?"

Evidently Robinson did. He turned white, then crimson, and finally a pale, unhealthy gray. His air of pompous self-sufficiency vanished as swiftly as the gas from a pricked balloon. He looked wilted. Finally he moistened his dry lips nervously and shot a furtive glance at Gifford.

"You're not—going to—put them wise?" he asked in a low, uneven voice.

"No," returned Rocky contemptuously. "Perhaps I ought. Anyway, I can't stand any more of your driveling hypocrisy. Cut it out."

He turned away abruptly, missing the glare of impotent fury cast after him by the crestfallen man he had humiliated. The satisfaction of taking the wind out of his rival's sails had put him in good humor. He joked with Bob Crosby, the varsity full back, who was as interested as himself in the baseball situation, chaffed several other onlookers, and finally ended by volunteering to fungo flies for the squad.

It was something he had hitherto refrained from doing. He had a suspicion that, once he got a bat in his hands, he would forget caution and give himself away. While he was not in the least ashamed of his summer occupation, he saw no reason why it should become the subject of public comment and criticism.

There was something exhilarating in the mere heft of the bat and the strong, choppy swing with which he drove the ball whistling into the outfield. Before he had been at it five minutes, he completely lost himself in the sheer pleasure of this absurdly simple act. He was unconscious of surprised glances and whispered comments, when, now and then, he deftly caught the ball with one hand; and once he could not resist the desire to line it down to second, which he did with accurate ease that was in itself a betrayal.

Crandall's voice, announcing the end

of practice for the day, brought him at last to earth, and he caught the captain's questioning glance fixed upon him.

"Now the soup's on the tablecloth!" he thought, as he slid into his coat and moved rapidly away. "If they get after me, I may have to own up I can't come out because I'm a professional."

He fairly fled from the field, purposely deaf to a shout or two from behind. He made straight for his room in the dormitory. He wanted a few minutes to collect himself. They would be down on him when they knew. It was really a shame that a man in his position, who did not need to play ball for money, should have made himself a professional when the team needed him so badly.

"But I had a reason," he reminded himself as he ran up the stairs and flung open the door of his room. "I'd never——"

He stopped abruptly, his eyes widening. A square, broad-shouldered, florid man of fifty odd stood frowning out of the window, one hand in his pocket jingling keys and silver with a vehemence which suggested extreme impatience. He looked round sharply.

"Why—father!" stammered Gifford. "I had no idea—— Is anything the matter?"

"Matter?" repeated the older man tartly. "What wouldn't be the matter? I've been cooling my heels in this hole a good hour waiting for you to come in. Your mother's down at the hotel. Nothing would do but she must break the trip to Chicago by stopping off here—as a *surprise!*" He emphasized the word queerly. "That comes of your piking off to Washington instead of coming home, where you belong. Well, don't you understand me? Perhaps I'd better formally extend an invitation to dine at the hotel and spend the evening."

"Not necessary, sir," his son assured him quietly. "It won't take me five minutes to change. If you don't want to wait, I'll come along later."

Beyond an added touch of color and a slight tightening of his lips, he seemed

oblivious to the verbal assault. He was used to this sort of thing, particularly when his father's notoriously short temper had been at all tried. Although he accepted it all with outward indifference, not even custom had sufficed to banish a feeling of indignant protest against the older man's frequently unjust treatment of his only son.

"Huh!" grunted Bliss Rhodes. "If you won't be more than five minutes, I'll wait."

He turned back to the window. For a few moments the silence was unbroken save by the sounds made by the younger man, as he rapidly changed his clothes. "Still keen to break into the sawbones game, I s'pose?" suddenly remarked the elder man in a tone which left no doubt as to his contempt for his son's chosen profession.

"Yes, sir."

"Huh!" The keys jangled. "Any man can be a doctor if he has a nice, ladylike bedside manner. Well, come in."

Firing forth the invitation, he turned and saw the door open to reveal a brawny youth who hesitated awkwardly at the unexpected sight of this bristling stranger. "Come in, Bob," invited Rocky in an ominously quiet voice. "Let me introduce my father."

The two shook hands perfunctorily, old Blister's eyes resting with some approval on the student's wide shoulders. Crosby turned hastily to his friend. "I didn't know there was any one here," he said apologetically. "I won't bother you now. I came in to—— Well, you've simply got to try for the team, Giff."

"Team!" blurted Bliss Rhodes, his eyes opening wide. "What team?"

Bob Crosby's eyebrows went up. "Why, the baseball team, Mr. Rhodes—the varsity."

The older man laughed sardonically. "The baseball team! That's rich! You after my son to try for the varsity ball team? How long have you known him? He can't play baseball or any other man's game, and he won't try, either. I'm sorry to say it, but he lacks——"

"I beg pardon, father; we're keeping Crosby," suddenly cut in Gifford in a voice which made his elder stare at him. "He's in a hurry to get away."

The football player looked relieved. With a hurried word or two about seeing his friend soon, he was thankful to escape from the embarrassing situation. Closing the door deliberately, Gifford turned round, his face white.

"Well," he said slowly, in a voice which shook a little, "permit me to compliment you on the promptness with which you found an opportunity to humiliate me."

Never before had Gifford spoken to his father in that tone. Bliss Rhodes gasped, and his florid face turned redder. "You? Did I say anything that wasn't true?" he exploded, when he recovered.

The younger man faced his father unflinchingly. "Because I've never had any use for baseball, do you think I lack the brains and ability to play it?" he asked. "Wait a minute!"

He crossed the room to his desk, fumbled for an instant in a pigeonhole, and brought out a long envelope. From this he twitched a folded sheet of paper, shook it open, and, as he returned, thrust it into his father's hands. The angry man read it, scowling. Then he raised his head swiftly.

"What's this?" he rasped.

"I didn't mean to let you in on it," said his son quietly, "until I'd gone up another round on the ladder, but, since you've forced part of it from me, you may as well have it all. For years you've been throwing it in my teeth that I hadn't the brains or nerve to play even bush baseball. Finally it became a little more than I could stand. Just to show you what a cinch it was, I went down in the sticks last June and got a job as shortstop for an old friend of yours named Kelley."

"Old Jim Kelley!" gasped the elder Rhodes in a queer voice.

"The same man."

"Tell me about it," requested the father in the same husky tones.

Rocky recounted his experiences

briefly, and ended them abruptly, startled by the extraordinary transformation in his father's face. First he stared as if doubting what he heard; then there flashed into his face an expression of gladness that made the young man tingle uncomfortably; for there came to Gifford suddenly a clear understanding of his father which all those years had failed to bring. "I didn't know you cared as much as that, dad," he muttered awkwardly.

Old Blister blinked. Suddenly shooting out one hand, he gripped his son's shoulder. "But can you make good, boy?" he demanded with almost fierce anxiety. "Can you make a hit with the minors—and then go higher?"

Gifford smiled. "I don't know," he answered. For an instant the sudden squaring of his jaw gave his more delicate face an odd resemblance to the man opposite him. "But I'm going to make one almighty hard try for a home run."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### AMID STRAPPED TRUNKS.

THAT evening Gifford had to tell the story of his summer's experiences over and over, the elder man asking a thousand questions, and chuckling heartily as he listened to the rehearsal of the young man's adventures in the bush. In his son, Blister was practically living over again his own early days at the game which he considered by far the greatest ever devised by man.

He was bluff, jovial, enthusiastic, human; and once or twice the youth sighed a little at the thought of those wasted years of strife and antagonism. There was just one fly in the amber: though the older man did his best to hide it beneath an outward show of confidence, Rocky could see that in reality he was harassed by a doubt of his son's ability to make good, even with the minors.

"I suppose you can't blame him, at that," thought young Rhodes, as he walked slowly back to his room. "He don't really know a thing about my playing, except what I've told him.

Still, I wish he had a little more confidence in me."

Nevertheless, the knowledge that such a doubt existed increased the incentive to make good. To fail now would mean the utter dashing of the high expectations he had raised in his father's mind; perhaps it would seriously mar the friendly relations between them which he had found so pleasant.

Failure was more than merely possible. Fortunately, unlike many men who make rapid progress in the game, Gifford was not inclined to fancy that he already knew all there was to learn. Also, fortunately, he had read in a magazine the story of a big leaguer who, through conceit, had met with many reverses and setbacks in his climb from obscurity to the majors; and he had taken that lesson to heart, forming a resolution not to hurt his own chances by getting a swelled head.

With so much to learn, he felt that he should be making the most of every hour. He chafed under the necessity of waiting for commencement and his degree, which all at once had become of such minor importance in his scheme of things. He even considered cutting the Gordian knot by leaving college at once. But saner daylight reason showed him the folly of such a step.

The necessity of making known that he was a professional athlete seemed of small importance. When Crosby spoke to him, soon after breakfast, he imparted the information casually, and listened with composure to the other's dismayed comments. Of course the news spread, and he was somewhat annoyed at the general criticism of what he considered purely a personal matter. Nevertheless, this was easily tolerated when he realized that, while he might not play on the varsity, he was free to go out with the scrub and throw himself heart and soul into the business of getting all the baseball practice possible.

As April merged into May, and the spring weeks crept slowly on, the result of that practice became apparent, even to himself. He would reach the Badgers,

perhaps not in as good condition as the men who had been playing real ball for six weeks, but in infinitely better shape than he had hoped for two months ago.

Letters began to arrive from Joe Brody, each one more insistent than the last, urging him to lose no time in joining the club. The veteran shortstop was beginning to show signs of giving way under the strain, and the manager was anxious to lay hands on his new recruit in time to knock him into shape before the other blew up completely.

The instant the last grilling test of examination week was over, Gifford packed up and made ready to leave by the early-morning train. If he had passed the exams—and he felt fairly confident that he had—his degree was his without the necessity of waiting for commencement. It was a pity, perhaps, to forego it, but another week's delay seemed unbearable.

In all this time, he had told no one save Billy Trowbridge of his summer plans or the contract with the Badgers. Billy was quite safe, and he was intensely interested in his chum's future. Often, as on that last evening in the dismantled room, amid strapped trunks and nailed-up packing boxes, they had talked it over. To Trowbridge the incongruity of it all never seemed to lose its perennial freshness.

"It still gets me," he confessed that night, sprawling across the bed while Rhodes stowed away a last few belongings in his suit case. "To think of a chap grinding away as you've done at something he dislikes, putting himself where you are, simply because he's set his stubborn mind on showing 'dad'! Are you quite sure, old man, that you do hate it as much as you did at first?"

Rocky straightened up. His lips had parted for a ready affirmative, but slowly they closed in silence. A faint wrinkle dodged into his forehead. Oddly enough, he had not asked himself that question for months. He had taken the answer for granted. He had even been a little proud of the indomitable will and strength of character

which had brought him this measure of success against his real inclination. But did he hate baseball? He remembered the queer restlessness that had driven him to haunt the cage, and, afterward, the baseball field. He thought of those weeks of laborious practice and the almost feverish anxiety to cut college and join his team. There had been no sense of hardship in any of this, but rather the keen enthusiasm which comes when one's heart is in one's work.

The discovery was a real shock; it was difficult for him to adjust his mind to this new conception. Few people are ready instantly to acknowledge the complete upsetting of a cherished point of view. He flushed a little, and smiled with faint embarrassment.

"Oh, well, not so much as at first, perhaps," he admitted. "I suppose, in a way, baseball is a pretty decent little old game."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### UNDER MAROON FIRE.

**S**HORTLY before six the next afternoon, Gifford leaped from an open car and began to push his way through the crowd that was pouring out of the ball park. It was a noisy throng, and he did not have to strain his ears to learn that the Badgers had just lost the first game of a series with the Maroons—lost it, too, by a swamping score.

"The old fossil oughta been sent to the scrap heap years ago," declared one indignant fan. "I says so last season, but Brody hangs on to him, an' now see what he's gone an' done."

"Tossed off a game just when we needed it the worst way!" bitterly agreed his companion.

Rocky paused, alert and curious. "Say, Jack," he asked abruptly, "who's that you're talking about? I didn't see the game."

The two young fellows stared. "Who?" growled one, after sizing up the inquirer. "Why, that has-been at short, of course. All the baseball he ever had's ran outa him. Threw the game away twice."

Gifford nodded his thanks and passed on. So it had come at last; Pen-nock had succumbed to the strain. Likely at this very moment Brody was raging about the recruit whose delayed appearance was in a way responsible for the disaster.

"Well," thought the new player, as he reached the gate, which had been obligingly pointed out by some youthful hangers-on, "it's lucky I didn't stay for commencement." His passage was barred by the pompous guardian of the portal, and he showed that he was in no mood for delay. "My name's Rhodes," he cut in on the other's remarks. "Where's Brody?"

With a surprised grunt, the man slammed the gate shut, grabbed the young man by the elbow, and hurried him round a corner to the clubhouse entrance. "The chief's in there," he informed him in a cautious tone, pointing to a partly closed door.

"Snyder!" suddenly bawled a voice from within the room.

The gatekeeper ducked and disappeared in a flash. The door was jerked open, revealing the lank figure of the Badgers' manager, still partially clad in the club uniform he invariably wore, though his memory did not extend back to the time when he had actually taken part in a game. His thatch of graying hair stood on end; his lean face was set in a scowl that deepened for an instant as he caught sight of his visitor, but vanished abruptly before the rush of surprised recognition.

"Suffering Moses!" he ejaculated. "You're here at last, are you? It's time! I was getting ready to burn up the wires between here and Cumberland. Come in!"

The manager's relief at the sight of his much-needed shortstop was so apparent that Rocky smiled to himself as he entered the small office and took a seat.

"I cut the last week and hustled here the minute exams were over," he explained. "You know our contract specified that I didn't have to show up till the twelfth of June."

"Huh!" grunted Brody, to whom

exams and college degrees were of small moment compared with the needs of his ball team. "I was a fool to stick in such a clause. Pennock's gone to smash, and I s'pose it's going to take you a week or more to speed up to the right notch so's you can play real ball."

"I'm ready to go in to-morrow if you need me," Rhodes stated quietly. "I wrote you a while back that I was working every day, and I've kept it up."

Brody was skeptical. While he dressed, he asked many questions concerning the amount and quality of the recruit's practicing. "College baseball ain't the real thing, anyhow," he observed at last, "though what you've been doin' was prob'ly better'n nothing. We'll see how you show up in the morning. Come in and meet the bunch."

The members of the team were gathered in the locker room in various stages of undress. Gloom pervaded the assemblage, and there was no perceptible lightening as Gifford was presented. They were all polite enough; there was none of the crudeness of the Sluggers. But somehow, by subtle shades of manner and expression, they gave the new arrival the impression that they blamed him for the recent defeat which had so dashed their spirits.

One of them particularly appealed to Rocky. He was tall, clean-limbed, and rather handsome. He had hair the color of old Domingo mahogany, straightforward gray eyes, and a noticeable reserve of manner. He was Harvey Atkins, the regular backstop, familiarly known as "Ruddy." He was surprised as well as pleased next morning to have Atkins stroll over, as he was arraying himself for practice, and exchange a few casual remarks.

On his mettle, Rhodes worked like a Trojan, and acquitted himself well. Brody's comments were brief, but it was evident that the manager had been agreeably surprised.

Back in the clubhouse most of the players thawed noticeably. Only one of them seemed openly disposed to patronize the new man. This was Curly Griffith, a member of the infield,

who had been farmed out to Brody by the manager of the famous Blue Stockings. There was every probability that another spring would see him back in the big league training camp, with added experience and a fine chance to make good.

"Which accounts for his being a little lofty toward a raw busher like me," said Rocky to Atkins, who had given him the information. "I'd like to be in his shoes myself."

As the moment approached for his second appearance on the professional baseball stage, the new recruit was conscientious of a growing nervousness. He couldn't help being a little anxious and wishing the ordeal was over. Knowing as he did the brand of baseball furnished in this league, he wasn't at all sure that his own efforts would measure up to it. But the thought of Johnny McElroy and the surprise in store for that jocular person cheered him. When he finally left the clubhouse with the rest of the team, and jogged across the field toward the diamond, he had ceased to consider the possibility of failure, and was looking forward with a keen delight to the imminent encounter with the manager of the Maroons.

The latter chanced to be deep in conversation with some of his men, and seemed oblivious to Rocky's presence during the Badgers' period of snappy practice. As he came in from the field, Rhodes purposely strolled slowly past, and was rewarded by an astonished stare from the lively McElroy.

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed that irrepressible person. "My old college chum, dinged if it ain't! Are you traveling with Joe as a mascot or bat boy? That's one way of getting with a real ball team."

Rocky grinned. "Guess again," he said. "I'm the real, original, triple-action jinx for your crowd. You haven't a chance in the world while I'm around."

It took McElroy only a few minutes to ascertain Rhodes' status with the Badgers, and he at once set about avenging the blow struck at his most

delicate sensibilities. Gifford had scarcely left the bench to take the field with the rest of the team when a chorus of sarcastic comments arose from the Maroons:

"Pipe the new kid at short! Willie off the pickle boat!"

"He's going to show us how real 'rah-rah' boys play the game."

"Hold up your chin, little man. It won't hurt you much, and it'll be all over in a few minutes."

They were after Rocky's goat, and he knew it. Though he flushed a little under this fire, he took it with seeming composure. He was sensible enough to make no effort at retaliation. To talk back now, before he had shown the crowd what he could do, would be fatal. So he held his peace, praying for a chance to turn the tables on his tormentors.

\* Banty Kerrigan, the Badger pitcher, opened up with a fine line of samples. In the first inning, only one Maroon got a good crack at the horsehide, sending a long fly into right field, where it was promptly gathered in by Skeets McCarter, another farmed-out product of the big league.

Rhodes was fifth on the batting order, following Griffith, and when he appeared to select his stick, the Maroon cohorts resumed the attack with refreshed ardor. The superior first baseman fouled out to third, and Gifford stepped to the pan with two down and men on second and third.

It was not the first time he had faced the Maroons' long and lanky twirler. As his eyes met those of Moose Conroy, who had been unctuously delivering more than his share of taunts, he remembered that other day a year ago when he had spoiled eleven of this pitcher's good ones in succession. He took a fresh grip on his bat and gave Moose a significant smile.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The next installment of this serial novel will appear in the April TOP-NOTCH, out March first. This magazine is published twice a month, so you will have but a short time to wait.

### Well Qualified

THE business magnate was bombard-  
ing the applicant with the usual questions.

"Are you a teetotaler?"

"Yes."

"Speak French?"

"Yes."

"Good salesman?"

"Yes."

"Can you tell a good lie?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, I'll give you a start."

The young man got on famously for a few weeks, until one fine morning a dainty Parisian damsel approached him and sweetly stated her requirements in the native tongue. The poor young man was flabbergasted, not comprehending a single word. Five minutes later he was facing his indignant employer.

"This is scandalous, sir. When I employed you did you not tell me that you could speak French?"

"True," mildly replied the culprit; "but did you not also ask me if I could tell a good lie?"

### As Ordered

THE menu of a certain London restaurant is a thing of wonder to strangers. It contains several pages of various dishes, all classified, mostly with weird French names.

The country visitor eyed it up and eyed it down, but could make nothing of it. And the waiter stood silently by his side. At last, in despair, the diner dabbed his finger in the middle of one page, and said:

"Bring me some o' that."

"Oui, m'sieu!" replied the waiter. "That ees mayonnaise dressing, sar."

"I know that, my man," snorted the countryman. "I can read!"

"But, m'sieu," said the waiter apologetically, "what will you have it on?"

The diner glared. "On a plate, of course, you idiot!" he roared. "Do you feed your guests in troughs at this restaurant?"

# Diamond Fox ~

by *Harold de Polo*



(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

## CHAPTER I.

### WHAT SPEED MEANT.



IN the litter of seven little whelps he stood out as a diamond stands out against a piece of coal. He was far bigger and sturdier than the others; he seemed to know, without being shown, just where to look for his milk; his coat was redder and thicker, and more gorgeous than any, his mother recalled ever seeing; and across his chest, by some inexplicable trick of fate, there slanted a dark, almost blackish streak through his fine fur—the streak which, later, gave him the name of Black Fox among the men-creatures when his fame had spread far and wide.

He grew with a quickness that was truly surprising, and within a month he loomed up above his brothers and sisters as if he were of the generation before them. Also he grew in sagacity in a way that pleased his mother and father greatly. His mother, his chief teacher, took delight in teaching this offspring who learned so willingly and so rapidly, and spent more time on him than on all the others. He followed her directions implicitly, whining for further

knowledge when the task was discontinued for the day.

The time came when she deemed them all large enough to take on the hunt for food. Their hole was high up on a rough promontory of rock-strewn hillside, with a few pines and cedars scattered sparsely about it. They had learned to prowl about the close vicinity in search of woodmice; and once they had seen their mother waylay a reckless blacksnake and break his neck. Always cautious, she now took them over the roughest trail away from the home, making them climb over rocks, up boulders, through crevices—for stone does not hold the scent which the men-creatures' dogs might follow should they chance to be near.

Soon they came to a patch of green, sweet-smelling woods. Immediately they wanted to play—all, that is, save Black Fox. He, his sharp little snout wrinkled in disdain, his shrewd eyes narrowed, stalked along by his mother's side and kept a sharp lookout; for he knew one thing well: she and his father had brought him food; they surely must know how to get it. He did not. What more simple than to watch those who did know?

The mother, with sharp growls and an occasional cuff of her paw, quieted the frolicsome cubs. Then, stealthily, she led them behind the trunk of a squat, low-branched hemlock, and sat rigidly before them, her eyes wide, her every muscle ready for the least emergency. After a few minutes had gone by, a chattering gray squirrel scampered down the path in front of her retreat. Presently he made his way near the hemlock. Then the cubs saw what speed meant: with one single bound, as straight as an arrow, the mother launched herself through the air and pinned the little gray thing to earth, breaking his neck on the moment with a snap of her sharp fangs.

After that she moved along. Soon a leaping, wide-eyed rabbit came down the trail; and again, with one of her marvelous leaps, she caught him in mid-air between her punishing jaws, and tossed his carcass to the cubs so that they might feast upon it.

But Black Fox ignored the rabbit, dainty morsel that it was. Quietly, while his mother was watching the others, he stole away and walked up the path for perhaps a hundred yards; there, in exactly the same position he had seen his mother take, he stretched himself out behind a protecting shrub and waited. His little eyes were glowing expectantly, his mouth was wide open and ready, his nose constantly sniffing. The others were satisfied to eat what they were given; he was not. He wanted to make his own kill, in his own way, and so earn his place in the wild. For he realized, even now, that those who would survive must successfully elude their enemies and must overcome their prey.

Soon another rabbit came down the pathway. Black Fox's body quivered with excitement for a brief instant, then tautened. He waited until the rabbit—a good, big jack—was directly in front of him in the air on one of those long leaps. Then the little fox, with a bound that would have done credit to his elders, shot out from his hiding and met his quarry full and squarely. His

teeth sank in on the back of the neck, and he dragged the animal down.

But the rabbit was no coward; also, he was an exceedingly large and powerful creature of his kind. He tried to shake himself free, kicking, and squirming, and clawing with volcanic force and speed, and Black Fox had to shut his eyes as those wicked claws came dangerously close to them. Yet, with a grim, dogged termination, he held on; he knew well that he had the hold—therefore, if he lasted long enough, he would master.

Soon the rabbit, exhausted, lay flattened out, and then Black Fox sank in his fangs with a sudden snap and ended his life. Then he picked up his quarry as he had seen his mother and father return with their kills, and trotted majestically back to his mother. There, with all the nonchalance in the world, he threw the beast to his brothers and sisters just as he had seen his mother do. He himself was hungry, but he would not show it. And, try as she might, his mother could not coax him to partake of his kill. Instead, he lay proudly on the ground and watched the rest, while she licked his furry little body, her heart swelling with pride. The prize of the litter had shown that he was made of superior stuff!

Black Fox's education progressed rapidly. He learned just what animals were too powerful for him, and he respected them. With the mink—slim, wiry bundle of nerves—a truce must always be kept; the skunk must be shunned, for the frightful odor it gave forth, which seemed to burn out the eyes and choke the throat, could not be combated; certain poisonous reptiles also must be given a wide berth; and, last but not worst of all, the men-creatures and their baying hounds.

Of this last danger he had had ample warning. One day, when he and his mother and the others were in front of the den, she had signaled to them. All of them, except one of his little brothers, had understood. The black stick men-creatures carried had boomed forth with a red noise and the little cub had toppled over dead. Instantly the

mother had left the cave by the back way and made for another hole farther up the mountainside. This lesson Black Fox never forgot; and it profited him greatly.

His learning progressed until he was almost as big as his mother and father. Then, following out the laws of his kind, came the day when he felt instinctively that he was now fit and ready to go and grapple with the world in his own way. There was no good-by. He was out hunting with them all when, seeing the trail of a partridge, he followed it through the snow. He made his kill successfully; and, after he had eaten it, slowly looked back over the path he had come, stood irresolute a moment, and then swept forward, higher up the mountainside, to fight his battles alone.

He fared admirably, hunting, and enjoying life to the full with all the careless abandon of a youngster with a free heart and a valiant one. Then, after perhaps a month had gone by, he met another slim, ruddy form on one of his trips from the farmhouse in the valley. He rushed up with a little yelp, but she retreated coquettishly. Still he followed her; and so, for a good half hour, this playful chase kept up and they raced madly about. Finally the female deemed her capture secure, and she coyly stood still and allowed him to approach her.

## CHAPTER II.

### KING OF HIS KIND.

**B**LACK FOX was now full grown. He stood high and powerful at the shoulders; his jaws were long and punishing; his form was a slim, muscular, deep-red bundle of sheer sinewy muscles; and in his eyes there was a look of cool and clever knowledge. He was a king of his species, without a doubt. Together, he and his mate ruled their domain. He had moved higher up on another rocky ridge, a good ten miles away from the valley that was sprinkled with farmhouses. Many times, though, in the soft, pale moonlight, he ran down to capture a fowl or two. Traps

of every description were set for him, yet always, with great disdain, he avoided them. Hounds were set after him; always, after playing with them till he tired of it, he lost them in the forest.

Animals of the woods, smaller than himself, kept their distance. He became known as a master hunter. The men-creatures, even, spoke of him about the fire at night, and not one of them was there who hadn't sworn to have the pelt of the cleverest fox they had known. Yet he uncovered their traps as if to say that such devices were only an insult to his intelligence; their hounds he outclassed with his speed, and endurance, and craftiness; their guns he avoided as if the very sight of one might mean his death. And so, for a long, glorious season, he continued to beat them all and to live a blissful life, far up on the mountain, with his slim and wily mate.

Still men swore that they would have him; and, the more they swore, the more daring and numerous became his depredations. He was even known, during the day, to come quietly up behind their very backs and make off with a hen from before their very doors. Yet there was one man in particular—known as Zeke Barrows—who hunted him with a dogged persistency that was occasionally annoying to Black Fox. The man was a tall, slim, lean-jawed woodsman, his chief feature a pair of hard, cruel eyes that seemed to instill fear into both man and beast. And Black Fox knew, from covert watching, that he possessed a skill with the long black stick that was truly marvelous. He had seen him, once or twice, bring down a partridge or a rabbit at a distance really phenomenal. It was wise to keep away from this man-creature.

One day he saw Zeke Barrows walking along the trail with his weapon. Feeling a certain devilry within him that would not be mastered, Black Fox thought what pleasure it would be to taunt the man. Instantly, not a hundred feet in front of him, he flew straight across the trail. But he was vastly surprised. Instead of raising his

gun and discharging it, the gaunt woodsman stood still in his tracks, raised his fist and shook it.

For Zeke Barrows did not want the animal dead—he wanted him alive. With the spreading of the fame of his speed, and endurance, and cunning, there had gone forth a proclamation that the sum of two hundred dollars, cash on delivery, would be paid for Black Fox living. This offer had come from a wealthy hunt club some fifty miles away, where the huntsmen were at great trouble in finding foxes possessing sufficient strength and vitality and cleverness to give their thoroughbred pack a run that was anything like worth while. And the words that came to them about this one made them anxious to obtain him for their special hunt of the season. That is why Zeke Barrows, crafty, avaricious being that he was, would not pull the trigger on his quarry.

But Black Fox, of course, did not know this. He took a special delight, now, in robbing Zeke Barrows of whatever he could, for he realized that this man-creature, for some reason, was the worst enemy he had in the world.

Then came the day when his mate presented to him a litter of six little cubs. Black Fox, wily beast that he was, moved his own den farther away from the mother and young so that his tracks, should they ever be detected, would not give the helpless ones away; also, when he approached with food, he did so by a long and intricate trail that would not hold the scent. For he realized that Zeke Barrows, should he learn of the little whelps, would know that he had far more chance than before of capturing their sire. He gave up the raids on the farmhouses in the valley, too; and, as the season was a poor one, he sometimes traveled full fifteen miles away, over on the other side of those long, shining rails.

He was returning from one of these raids one day when he heard, not a quarter of a mile from his den, the baying of a dangerous hound that dwelt in the valley—the one that had always given him the most trouble. He

dropped his burden behind a convenient poplar and made his way hastily forward. Nose to the ground and running wildly, he saw the dog; and not a hundred yards behind, their faces tense, Zeke Barrows and two other men. Like a flash the truth swept through his brain—they had discovered his mate's scent and were heading straight for the den!

His eyes blazed, his lips lifted in anger, and showed his fangs; then he darted from his hiding, made a bound straight for the dog, and passed before the astonished cur's very nose like a streak of red lightning, so fast that the hound had to let himself out to the limit to follow him. Right ahead, on a dead line, the fox ran, thinking only of putting all the distance he could between the dog and the den that held his mate and young. He ran with all his superb muscles in gorgeous play, feeling fit and fine and strong though he had just completed a thirty-mile trip; he took to the brook and endeavored to destroy his scent.

The hound, to-day, followed him with a grim persistency that he had never demonstrated before. After a good half hour of the chase, Black Fox suddenly struck upon what he deemed an excellent idea. His old cave, where he had lived previous to the advent of the cubs, was at least two miles from the den he now occupied. The first entrance, on the hillside, led deep down into the earth; then it took an upward slant and came out at the back, a hundred feet away.

He would lure the hound to this hole, fly into it himself, and out the back way, and the dog would still be bellowing foolishly at the front entrance. Also, when the men came up, they would stay there and try to get him out. Yes, this was a good plan to follow. And so, doubling in his tracks; he raced for the hole, making the ground spin beneath him as his gorgeous form shot over it like some wonderful thing with uncanny speed.

As he neared his former home he allowed the hound to approach closer. At last the den's mouth loomed up on

the hillside before him, and he covered the intervening ground and shot into it like an arrow. The hound came to a halt and bayed furiously at the entrance. Black Fox streaked through the underground passage, racing like mad. But when he came to the rear opening he received a great surprise: the hole was blocked and his retreat cut off!

Black Fox thought quickly. His brain, as yet, had never lost its coolness, and it did not fail him now. He sniffed the scent of man in the cave, and he knew that he was in serious danger. There was no escape at the back; in front, the dog was howling madly—but, between man and dog, he would far rather face the latter. Therefore, without waiting an instant, he squeezed about and made a wild dash for the front hole, his fangs bared, his eyes gleaming, ready to put up the fight of his life rather than stay here trapped like a helpless thing. *But the front entrance, too, was blocked.*

### CHAPTER III.

#### WITH DIABOLIC MOCKERY.

**B**LACK FOX crouched down, a wild, fierce light in his eyes. Here was a situation that was too big for him to meet. Defeat and capture were imminent. He thought quickly; then, with furious haste, went to the back and dug frantically into the earth in an effort to cut his way through to freedom.

Suddenly, his keen nostrils detected the odor of smoke, thick and pungent. He realized then that his fight was hopeless. He continued digging; but, little by little, the underground passage became filled with smoke so that Black Fox found it hardly possible to breathe. He made his way to the center of his former home, hoping to escape from the dreadful enemy that he could not fight. Still it pursued him. Outside, he heard the baying of the dog, and the harsh, strident voice of Zeke Barrows.

At last Black Fox grew dizzy, his breath seemed to be stopping, his eyes were shut tight. Then he found it necessary to cough; and the more he

coughed, the worse he felt, for every time he opened his mouth thick smoke entered it. His legs tottered under him, he felt himself swaying, and he realized that if he stayed here he would be suffocated.

Outside were his mortal enemies—the dog and the men-creatures. But to stay here was death. Better to rush outside and make his last fight. His mind made up, he crept close to the front entrance, and made a desperate spring for whatever blocked the hole. The moment he did so, he felt himself jerked high into the air. He fought, and bit, and clawed to no avail, for he was securely a prisoner inside a burlap bag which had covered the hole.

Soon he was dumped into a strong wooden crate, where he bit and clawed at the bars with fury. It did no good; those wooden slats withstood his strongest efforts. And outside, leering at him with diabolic mockery, he saw the hard, lean face of Zeke Barrows, with its cold, cruel eyes. Zeke Barrows, after a long and tireless campaign, had at last come off the victor. But Black Fox, in his sturdy heart, told himself that the battle was not yet ended. He still had life.

After two days spent cramped up in the crate, Black Fox was driven down to the station and put into one of the cars—one of those long things behind the big, puffing monster that traveled so smoothly on the long, shining rails. At first he felt fear, wondering what this weird thing would do to him; then, as it rumbled along, and no harm came to him, he realized that he was safe for the moment. And so, with his usual coolness, he settled himself comfortably to enjoy a nap.

But sleep would not come to him. Always, before him, was the thought of his slim, comely mate, high up on the hillside, surrounded by the litter of cubs; always, too, there was the thought of what lay beyond this trip—whether he were to live or die, and in what manner he was to do either.

That evening, when the moon came up, the black monster on which he rode came to a halt and he was again lifted

into a wagon and drawn over a country road. Soon the wagon stopped, and he was lifted out, taken from his crate, and put into a fenced inclosure. There, with more space at his command, he raced madly about, stretching his stiffened muscles. Then he paused to think. He eyed the wire that held him, and with great leaps, tried to get over the top of it. But it was too high. He did his best to bite through it with his sharp teeth—but this, too, was futile. It only hurt his teeth. And after a while he settled down and sleep came to him.

Early the next morning, after he had been awake for several hours, he noticed that dozens and dozens of men were assembled not far from his cage. Many of them wore scarlet coats, and sat on horses. Most all of them passed before his cage and viewed him, speaking of him with praise. All talked and laughed gayly, and there was much unwonted noise; also, not far from him, he heard the occasional baying and barking of his other dreaded enemies—the hounds.

Then, wonder of all wonders, one of the men-creatures came and opened the door of the cage. For a moment he could scarcely believe it; but, instantly gathering his wits, he streaked through the aperture, dashed across two fields, and made for the dark patch of woods that he saw looming up beyond. The men, behind him, let out a great cheer as they swore that never in their lives had they seen such wonderful speed.

Black Fox, although greatly elated at once more being free, nevertheless felt an odd sense of fear. His clever brain told him that, after so much trouble had been taken for his capture, it seemed very queer he should be given his liberty so easily. Yet he thought that the best thing to do was to put as much ground as possible between himself and those scarlet-coated men. And so he ran into the woods, up a steep hill, and put his belly to the earth and raced on through the forest.

After perhaps ten minutes of this, he told himself that maybe it was not necessary to use all this speed, especially

as he felt cramped after his uncomfortable captivity; and so he came to a halt and traveled at a slow, easy trot. But suddenly there came the dreaded cry—only, this time, it was far, far worse than any he had ever heard. Previously, he had been chased by a single hound; now, somewhere behind him, there was a baying that told him there were many. It was, in fact, a full pack of some twenty thoroughbreds; the pack that was said at the Hunt Club to be the gamest in the whole country.

He tried his old tricks. Taking a steep knoll at high speed, he ran along on top of it for a few hundred yards, shot to the side, and doubled in his tracks, turning around and about in queer figures. This would form a little tangle in his trail that would occupy the pack for a minute or two. Next he raced wildly along in search of a brook, and when he came to one, waded into it for a couple of hundred feet. Then he went off into the woods, and quietly hid himself behind a shrub to see just exactly how shrewd the pack really was.

Black Fox received a surprise. They unraveled his first tangle with apparent ease; and then, coming to the brook and seeing what the quarry had done, they ranged themselves along the water's edge and systematically traversed each bank so that, sooner or later, they would learn where the fox had left the water.

Black Fox, from his hiding, saw this with a qualm of disappointment. These hounds were certainly most wonderful beasts. Angry at being so quickly foiled, he rose carelessly from the bush, allowed them to see him, and streaked away with his well-known speed, telling himself that here, at least, he had them far outclassed.

He always had been imbued with a supreme pride and confidence that could not be broken; now, though, he realized that these hounds must be respected. So, laying his belly to the ground, he showed a spurt of the speed that had made him famous. Up a hill he went; down the other side; across green meadows; into a patch of woods; and then, thinking to kill his scent once

and for all, straight into a muddy swamp he splashed, crossing it with all the quickness he could master. After he had accomplished this, he deemed it unnecessary to exert himself so much, and once more came down to his slow, even trot.

Presently, as he was loping steadily across a field, he saw the baying, close-running pack break out of the swamp and come tearing after him; also, some of those fearful men in red coats were following close at the dogs' heels. Never had he thought that hounds could run so fast; it was something entirely new to him, something that he could scarcely believe. Now, and now only, did he give them the entire credit that they justly deserved. They were enemies, indeed, that must not only be respected, but feared!

For a long time the run continued, and Black Fox fell back on his old tactics of trying purely and simply to tire out his opponents. He ran over hills, through brooks, across meadows, all at a steady, even gallop that was calculated to keep him a certain distance ahead of his pursuers. In his heart there still sang supreme confidence; for had he not, in his varied career, always outrun anything foolish enough to pursue him?

Suddenly he came to a place where there was a deep ravine cut clear in the earth. The natural thing for him to do was to skirt it or else carefully make his way to the bottom and so cause his pursuers some trouble in following him. But if he could manage to span that sharp cut in the earth he would have all the chances very greatly in his favor. It was perhaps fifteen feet wide—a great jump—yet he had taken many hard leaps before this in his native mountains.

The baying of the hounds came closer—closer. The distance across the ravine was terrifying, yet behind him there lurked sure death. So, gathering every muscle taut, he pulled back, ran a few steps, and then sailed clear for the opposite bank, his body rigidly outstretched.

But, as he left the earth, the rim

gave way beneath him. That little delay, when it was too late to regain his footing, cost him the leap. He did his utmost to avert catastrophe, yet only his chest and forepaws struck the bank. For a brief instant he stayed there, grappling to secure a hold and pull himself up; then, kicking and squirming to right himself, he plunged down and down to the bottom of the ravine, thirty feet below.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A HERO'S NERVE.

**B**LACK FOX lay stunned where he had fallen. Fortunately, he had landed on his feet; but his whole body had received a jolting and shaking such as he never before had experienced. At last, stretching his aching limbs, he got to his feet—only to drop back with an acute growl of pain; for his left hind foot had been sadly wrenched and felt as if the bones had been torn to pieces. So he lay quiet.

Then, perhaps two hundred yards away, came the baying of the indefatigable pack. A hunted haunted look came into the eyes of Black Fox. The pack were upon him, would discover him—and he was crippled. He knew that it would do no good to hide; he would surely be found sooner or later, and then—

His eyes blazing, he raised his head proudly, and swelled out his chest. He, the greatest, cleverest, and most dreaded fox that ever had reigned in his own domain would not give up yet. And, getting to his feet as the pack paused at the ravine brink, he sailed over the ground again in his brave and almost hopeless struggle.

Over the edge of the ravine scrambled the hounds, bent on bringing their quarry to earth; and along the bottom of it raced Black Fox in the noblest run that any of his kind ever had put up. His foot, now, pained him worse than ever; his legs shook; and his heart felt as if it would burst.

As he left the woods, he faced the railroad tracks, and a long line of freight cars rumbling slowly past

blocked his way. Some of the car doors were open, but no men looked out. The baying of the hounds came closer. There was only one way of escape. Instinctively he took it.

With a tremendous spring, Black Fox left the ground, and sailed straight through the door of a car.

Except for two large boxes, the car was absolutely deserted. He looked out and saw the landscape whizzing by him. He did not know what to do. Then he resolved that the only thing was to put as much distance as possible between himself and those dreaded hounds. Therefore, quite calmly, he went behind the largest box and lay down, so exhausted that he was sleeping soundly before a minute had gone by.

Later in the afternoon, as the great ball of sun was sinking in the horizon, he awoke, and stretched his stiff limbs, and made his way to the door of the car. Suddenly, he threw back his head, narrowed his eyes, and looked again. Far away there loomed the tall bulk of a familiar mountain; and there, a verdant valley—a valley that seemed strangely familiar, too. One of these black monsters had taken him away, and another had brought him back. This was where he lived. And he made a wild leap and landed safely on the earth.

His sleep and rest had done him much good, and, with a slow, steady trot, he started for his home. He traveled easily, knowing that with his pained leg it would be foolish to make any speed. He passed the house of Zeke Barrows, and soon was slowly ascending the hills that would lead him to his den. His body was pained and bruised and battered; but in his heart there was a joyous, pounding song that made him forget all else. He was free—free; once more free to roam over the vast territory he called his own! The next morning, with his mate and young, he would go still farther up the mountain, to an inaccessible spot where he never need have fear of being discovered by Zeke Barrows or any of his kind!

That evening, as the full moon bathed

the woods, Black Fox returned to his den. For a minute his mate stood gazing at him; then, when she realized it was really he, came forward and tenderly licked his scratched and battered face. And Black Fox, after returning the caress, stood by her side, his head held high, his body rigid in a kingly pose, and looked proudly out upon the world he had come so near leaving, and that now was his own again.

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### Louis Agassiz

IT was about forty years ago that Louis Agassiz died, and the sorrow born of the tidings that the great scientist and incomparable man had passed out from the ways of men was keenly felt in the hearts of those who knew and loved him, says the New York American.

Agassiz was an extraordinary man in many ways. His very make-up was such as is but seldom seen in great men. There are plenty of men with big brains, there are plenty of men with big hearts; and there is no dearth of men who possess winsome personalities, along with a keen appreciation of what, for want of a better term, we call the spiritual; but it is only now and then that a man combines within himself all of these gifts. They were combined in Agassiz. He could think straight as the path of a cannon ball; he could love as tenderly as a little child; he could astound by the profundity of his scientific acumen, and, without the least effort, and apparently without any consciousness of what he was doing, he could make everybody who came in contact with him love him like a brother.

The name of Agassiz is immortal. His labors in paleontology, in ichthyology, in geology, and in other fields, will keep his memory forever green; but high above even his splendid fame as a scientist looms our recollection of him as a man.

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Charity is blessed, but it never helped a man to regain his lost self-respect.



*A Tale of Railroad Tunnel Making*

# Letting in Daylight

*By* Mervin Roberts

## CHAPTER I.

### THE SNEER OF THE SELF-MADE MAN.

**T** IRED of reading, and desperately weary of hearing Mrs. Wright's phonograph over the way, Ralph Morton, alone in the superintending engineer's car, got up from the leather sofa, untangled his long legs, and stretched his arms. He looked through the blue interior haze which he had blown from his pipe, out upon the spiritless, arid waste that reached away to the south, to condole with the sad, dun buttes.

"A sweet place!" he growled, gazing at the clumps of greasewood and the dark junipers. "A great country to be doing nothing in! And that blessed superintendent may not come along for five days. Now, if Tom Scantleburry had been here in my place, it would have been his undeserved good fortune to strike camp before the chief left, and be assigned to something or other right away. The luck of some men! Nothing to do now, I suppose, but go down and swap lies with the trackmaster for another hour or two, or else over to that smothery office car."

He went out of the door and looked along at the interminable rows of old freight cars which were the lodging

houses of some twelve hundred Greeks, Russians, and Swedes, at work on the new line, and decided for the office car as he went down the steps; and, although Ralph Morton would hardly have owned it, the reason for this was because in it, clicking away at the telegraph key, was Miss Merwin, with her dancing black eyes, and above them dainty wisps of the blackest hair, whom everybody in Red Gulch knew as Billy. Not that Ralph was so very susceptible; at college there had been plenty of girls, and some with black hair, too. There had been none in his classrooms, for he had taken an engineering course, but the fair coeds were always in evidence on the campus. There was very little good in looking at Billy, for she wore the superintendent's ring on her finger, and the wedding was to come off on Christmas Day; so Jones, the chief clerk, had told him. Still he went.

Now that he had received his commission to join the engineering corps at Red Gulch, the world was looking very bright to Ralph. He had waited a long time for this chance to express himself. He crossed the tracks and stepped into the big and buzzing office car, entering it at the end farthest from where Billy sat. Again did the slouchy clerk eye Ralph's all too new and correct outing suit with a pitying smile, and

again did the others make whispered comments upon his clean sombrero, and stiff, spotless, tan lace boots, which had obviously never seen a day's service in the field. Again did the round-shouldered, greasy-trousered train dispatcher sit up sprucely and glance at Billy, to see what impression Ralph's clothes made upon her. Morton sat down by Jones, who, while turning the whispering leaves of a big letter file, answered his questions without looking at him.

"Mr. McDonald is on the wire at Humbolt Siding," called the sweet, though somewhat throaty, voice of Billy, "and wants you to send Mr. Gordon a carload of spikes, Mr. Jones, and see what's the matter with seventeen-ninety-two."

Ralph, on whom the heat and hum of the car were beginning to have a soporific effect, perked up and took note. McDonald was the man he was to look to for orders.

"Tell him I sent the spikes to Gordon this morning, and that seventeen-ninety-two is on a rip," answered the clerk. He saw Ralph's look of curiosity. "On a rip means up for repairs," he condescended to explain.

"And he wants to have Dave Price canned," said Billy.

"For why, I wonder?"

"For that accident, of course," said Billy, who seemed to know everything.

"Sure," said the clerk.

He turned to the timekeeper, who had just come in. "Mix up a walk for Dave Price," he ordered. "Old man canned him. An' if he tries to ride out, make him hit the grit."

Ralph could not keep pace any better than if it had been in Chinese. Here was technical terminology that had not been included in his college course.

He felt still more a tenderfoot when Billy sang out: "And he says to tell Mr. Morton to go over to tunnel seventeen and take a good look at the work there, and see what he thinks of it, and come back and meet him here to-morrow at one-thirty."

"You heard," said Jones to Morton. "Tunnel seventeen is twenty-five miles east of here. If he puts you at that,

you'll have your work cut out for you. Four engineers have failed at it already."

"How do you get there?" was Ralph's first inquiry. He was feverishly eager for action. That four, or twenty-four, men had failed before him signified nothing.

"You can go out on twenty-one. She leaves at one-fifty-seven. But you'll have to ride on the engine, and it will soil your clothes—unless you prefer a dirt dumper." The men all grinned.

Billy did not smile. Her soulder was thumping, and she was writing furiously. "Message for you, Mr. Morton," she called, and he went over to her desk to read what was written in Billy's swinging telegraph hand:

Look over work carefully. Bad mistakes have been made. Ground very shaly. Will take some tall planning. May have to be abandoned, but would gain two per cent grade.

"I'm sorry he's going to give you that tunnel," said Billy, in a voice that the rest of the car could not hear. "It's a—desperate job."

"Is it?" he asked, speaking low, and wondering why she should take any interest in his task, or its difficulty. "We'll see;" this in the same tone he might have used in essaying to open a sardine can.

"You don't seem to be afraid of it."

"No. Mr. McDonald doesn't know it, but tunneling is where I live."

"Glad to hear it," she said. "But—well, just wait till you see what a messy place it is. Yet I do hope you'll succeed."

"Thank you." He went out of the car, to walk up and down the track in his impatience to be off and see the tunnel. He was watching the giant steam shovels lifting their huge loads of gravel, when Billy came along on her way to luncheon in the eating house, a cheap-looking little box car, of whose smells and flies Ralph had already sufficient experience. In her trim, crisp shirt waist and cowboy hat she looked quite fetching, and there was all the poetry of girlhood in her walk.

She glanced at him as she passed.

"Aren't you coming to luncheon?" she asked.

"Yes," said he absently, following her.

Mrs. Briggs, the trackmaster's wife, and Mrs. White, the train dispatcher's wife, with Billy and Ralph, sat down at the oilcloth-covered table in the paper-lined car and resumed the pleasantries that had begun at breakfast. Then they talked of their amusements—horseback riding on Sundays, card parties in somebody's car almost every night, and occasionally a dance.

Ralph found himself alone with Billy after luncheon, as the others rattled through their meal and promptly left the car.

"It's a dismal camp up at Seventeen," she remarked. "A blowy old place in a steep cañon, very creepy at night, too. I was there when Mr. McDonald first began to work. The tunnel was begun under his personal superintendence. To tell you the truth"—her voice dropped confidentially—"he was the first man to fail with it. Since then, he's tried engineer after engineer. The president wants to open the road by the first of December, and that will be the last work done on the new line, if it's done at all. Mr. Long, the chief engineer, would do anything for the man who could put it through."

"You seem to enjoy railroad construction," observed Morton.

Her eyes brightened. "I think it's the grandest work! That is where you do the big things—things that people never really appreciate; but they are big just the same. Oh, I envy——" She broke off and glanced at the clock. "But there, I've got to run back to my key and relieve Mr. Clark."

"I see," said Ralph admiringly. "You would like to do these things yourself."

"Yes," she said, sighing; "but my part is so small. Well, good-by." She stepped quickly out of the car, and he watched her from the door as the desert wind swayed her short skirt and played with the loose ends of her hair.

Ralph's inspection of tunnel seventeen was long and complete. He stayed up all night and had the little search-

light which worked from the push car play upon every nook and cranny of it. He took copious notes, and during the whole forenoon brought to bear upon the problem one after another of his favorite theories of tunnel work.

He went back to Red Gulch at noon, very tired, and with his new tan boots streaked and spattered, and his new sombrero looking as if it belonged to an old campaigner. "I think I can do it," he said to McDonald. "They've gone in too far to the east, and the timbering isn't right. I'll make out some new plans."

McDonald liked the new plans when they were presented, but he was dubious as to their practical working out. "You're like all of them college fellows," said he. "You go in too much for theory." This was the self-made man's little sneer, but it did not dismay Ralph Morton, nor did he seem worried by the frequent reminders that the time was short. It was only two months before the first of December.

While they were talking, Dave Price walked into the car, his engineman's cap on his head. "I'd like to know, Mr. McDonald, why I'm canned?" he asked sullenly.

"You know well enough, Dave," replied McDonald. "A man who will deliberately run his engine into a sink-hole, like you did, I ain't got no use for. And another thing—I heard you've been hanging around Miss Merwin's end of the office car too much. I can't have that. That lady's under my protection."

There was a shamed look on Price's face, but he protested. "'Tain't true!" he said.

"Enough of this, Dave," said McDonald. "Your time's made out. You can git out o' here!" The man walked away, muttering.

## CHAPTER II.

### A NIGHT'S PATROL.

THE next day Morton attacked the tunnel "with both hands and all four feet," as he wrote an old classmate in Denver. He had promised to have it done and the track laid through

by the first of December, as McDonald, under the dictation of the powers, had insisted. The first two weeks of these months of unremitting toil, he slept only five hours each night and was in the tunnel nearly all of his waking hours. He had an eye on every drill, and breathed the powder smoke of the blasts with the joy of a young general.

"We've caught the ground," he reported gleefully to McDonald one evening when he ran over to Red Gulch on his motor car to find out why he was not provided with the new dump train he had asked for; "and we're going at the rate of twenty feet a day."

"Good!" said McDonald. Then he stole a quiet glance at Billy and another at Morton. These glances were not lost upon the young man, who thought he had detected a bit of uneasiness in the superintendent's attitude toward him in the presence of the girl. But the burly form of Price, standing outside the doorway, turned the thoughts of both men in another direction.

"Does that big Mormon bother you any more?" Ralph heard him ask the operator. "If he does, I'll make it hot for him. Discharged men shan't be lurking around this camp."

"Well, he's just a little——" she began, and then her good nature shone through her frown. "Oh, he doesn't mean anything by it! But I do wish he'd go home to his wife."

"So do I," said McDonald, "and he'll have to do it."

Ralph looked at the engineman, and felt that he would like to punch his head, but the fellow quickly disappeared from the office door.

That night, as he was going to bed in the clerk's quarters, Ralph caught sight of Price lurking about Billy's car. The young engineer shut off the light of his bull's-eye lantern, and from between the grooms' car and the telegraph operator's, which was the last on the side-track, he watched and waited. At last he saw Price mount upon a large supply box, which he had pushed close, and peer at Billy's window.

Quietly stepping up to the box, Ralph sprang upon it and flashed his lantern

full into the face of the man who was at that moment trying the fastenings of the window.

"Not a word!" he muttered menacingly, as he grasped Price's collar. "Not a sound! Get down off this box with me, and don't do anything to frighten her. I'll settle with you!"

When they were well across the track and a few yards from the car, Price tried to break away from his captor, but the grip which had made Ralph the best tackle in college held the man firmly as by a strap of steel. Then a half dozen lusty kicks were administered to the squirming captive.

"Now," said Ralph, "you've got to light out of this camp as quick as your legs let you, and if you ever show up within sight of her again, or molest that young woman, wherever she is, you'll wear a broken face for the rest of your life."

"All right," promised the cowed and chastened Price. "Jest let me git my things together and I'll travel."

Ralph went with him to a bunk car, where he watched him pack an old valise, then saw him walk rapidly eastward down the track. But the young engineer was not satisfied. He turned out his light and went back and stood by Billy's window a long time, his hand on his revolver and his eyes and ears alert for signs of the return of the dismissed man. As the night grew colder, he walked quietly up and down to keep warm; and so he stood sentinel for her all night.

He was looking off toward the east, whence came the golden rays of the desert dawn, when there was a stir near at hand. He thought Billy was rising, and started guiltily away. Stout boots clumped over the frozen ground, and around the corner came McDonald, his breath hanging about him like a wraith in the chill air. The superintendent glared at Ralph with palpable suspicion.

"Thought you went back to the tunnel last night," rasped the superintendent.

"Mr. McDonald gets up rather early in the morning," was Ralph's mental remark, as he started his little motor

car down the track. "Well, it did look a little strange, my standing there by the car, staring at her window."

The tiny engine sputtered and fussed, and soon the car was whirling down the road at dangerously high speed; for Ralph was very anxious to get back to the tunnel. Two miles out he saw Price sitting by a camp fire, with a distinctly depressed air. He stopped to speak to him.

"Is that as far as you've got?" he asked. "You promised to leave the country at once."

"Waal, I don't like walkin' the ties," snarled the man. "Say, ain't the' room on that car o' yourn fer two?"

"Yes; but——" Then it occurred to him that this would be a good way of seeing the rascal well away. "All right, get on—quick! I'm in a deuce of a hurry. Right in front there. Rest your valise on the rods, and hold on tight. You deserve to walk, you high-binder; but I'll take you along."

The little engine spat and sputtered again, and the car darted furiously down the track. "Say, ain't this a little too fast for such a light car?" asked Price. "She might fly the track."

"Yes, she might," replied Morton coolly; "but if it hadn't been for you, I'd have been over in camp long ago."

"Heh? How's that?"

"Never mind." He didn't care to explain that his patrolling had kept him from starting for the tunnel before daylight, as he had intended.

The car whizzed along with gathering speed. "Say, this is a thirty-mile gait, all right," said Price nervously. "She's too light for that—she's——"

"Keep hold of that satchel, or you'll lose it," was the terse command.

Ralph was on edge with impatience to be at the tunnel, and push forward the work for the day. The engine palpitated like a living heart, and tore along so rapidly that the cold morning air cut their faces. The frightened engineman, unused to the machine, clung to his seat with both hands, and neglected the valise which joggled backward and fell on the rail under the rear wheels.

Instantly the car leaped into the air like a new sort of flying machine. Ralph set his teeth and clung tightly to the handlebar, while the car bounded like mad over a low embankment. Quickly the hard, gray earth rose up to smite him with a sense-shivering crash, and then—oblivion!

### CHAPTER III.

#### THOSE THEORY CHAPS.

WHEN Morton's eyes opened, he was in the office box car, and a physician was bending over him, who had been called there from Lorain by telegraph. "How's Price?" was his first word, followed hastily by: "Did the new dump train get to the tunnel?"

"Dave's all right, Mr. Morton." It was one of his own men who spoke. "He was only stunned a little. And the dump train is at the tunnel by this time."

"That's good," said Ralph painfully, for something seemed to be pressing hard against his lungs, and his breath was short. "Send him along east as far as you can. Don't let him come this way. But say—what are you doing with me? I've got to go back to the tunnel."

"The doctor'll have to see you first," was the reply.

When the doctor had spent some time feeling about with his big hands, Ralph winced and said: "Thank you—that's enough of that."

"It hurts—does it?" asked the doctor. "I should think it would—five ribs broken."

"Dear me—that's awful!" It was Billy's voice, and so Ralph smiled to reassure her. It was a sickly smile, and she replied to it with another almost as sickly.

"There's no danger," the physician assured her, "as long as he keeps quiet." He gave his patient a stimulant, removed his upper clothing, and wound an interminable plaster cast round and round his body.

"That's better," said Ralph. "Put me into a car, please. I've got to go back to seventeen."

"No," said the doctor; "you're going to the hospital."

"I'm hanged if I do! I've got to go back to that tunnel right away!"

The words were low, if determined, and Billy was not supposed to hear them. But she did, and she smiled across to McDonald, who had just come in. "Isn't he magnificent?" she murmured, out of earshot of the invalid. "Are you going to let him do it?"

"It's none of my affair," replied McDonald. "He's a free agent, I guess. I couldn't hold him back."

"But the doctor will," said she; "won't you, doctor?"

"I'm giving my orders," said the doctor. "If he disobeys them, it's at his own risk."

"You won't think of it, will you?" she pleaded, turning to Ralph.

He smiled. "Those Greeks will blast the roof off if I am not there to tell them what to do," he said, "and they won't make three feet a day. I've simply got to go."

So, in spite of remonstrance, he was put into an easy-chair, which Billy padded with her softest pillows, and carried aboard the train.

"Isn't he wonderful?" she cried, as Ralph's train pulled out, and he waved his hand limply.

"Oh, I don't know," snapped the superintendent. "You seem to take a wonderful interest in Mr. Morton," he added.

"Mr. McDonald," bawled Jones, from the end of the office, "you're wanted on the wire," and McDonald strode away, leaving Billy in a meditative mood, looking down the track at Ralph's dwindling train.

Ralph, with all his old ardor, but with only a remnant of his old strength, precipitated himself against the obstacles that lay in the way of the opening of the tunnel. He directed the work from the platform of a little push car on which stood his chair. Whenever he wanted to stand, he had to be helped by two men, and for the first week or two it was almost impossible for him to take a step. And, with all the rest of the hard luck, the shale

must be fought again. The good, firm ground had run out, and he was encountering a most treacherous and dismally disconcerting formation. Formerly he had been able to ride on a horse around to the eastward—he was going into both ends of the hill at once—but now all he could do for the farther section was to hear the complaints over the telephone wire, and to call back his orders.

To McDonald, who came down to see the work more frequently than ever, and to observe the young engineer growing paler and more peaked-faced, Ralph remarked fretfully, one morning:

"All I can do is to sit here and listen to those section two fellows tell me how it happened, and then make a roar over the wire. But their troubles over there are nothing to ours on this side. We're up against the worst formation you ever saw."

"Well, give it up, then, why don't you?" suggested McDonald, who had grown more and more unsympathetic as time went on.

"No, sir," said Ralph, closing his teeth on the words like a bulldog. "I haven't begun to fight this thing yet."

When McDonald went back, he told Billy that the young engineer would have to be taken off the work. "These theory chaps are all well enough where they belong," he said, "on experimental work; they can cover a lot of drawing paper very beautifully, but——"

"Why, he isn't giving up, is he?" she asked, in surprise. "He tells me he can do it, and I believe it. And he says he's getting better."

"But you haven't seen him for two weeks," said McDonald, looking at her narrowly. Billy blushed. "Has he been writing to you?"

She would not answer, and so he fumed and raged in his secret heart, and sent out a request to Mr. Long, the chief engineer, for another man to take charge of the tunnel. The chief surprised him by a descent upon him in person, demanding to know what all the trouble was about in that tunnel. He went with McDonald to the scene of

operations, and looked the work over with a wise air.

"Why, he's doing all right," said the chief, when he came back to McDonald's car, where Billy sat at her desk, with interest apparently for everything but their talk. "Nobody could cut into that hill any better. The timbers under the shale would hold up ten times the weight he's got there. It's remarkable how well he's done—and with five broken ribs, too. Of course, he's looking like a death's-head, but if he wants to kill himself, it isn't our fault. He's the best tunnel man we've got, McDonald, and you ought to know it."

As no reply was made by McDonald to Ralph's repeated requests for new machine drills, the young man went himself to Red Gulch three days later. There was no one in the office car but Billy when his men helped him in and seated him in a pivot chair.

"Oh," cried the girl, when she saw Morton's face, sharpened by pain and anxiety; "you must stop that work. You are killing yourself."

"No, indeed," he returned, smiling; for he was pleased to see her. "I feel strong enough. I may be killing my Greeks, but I'm all right myself. A couple of shots went off prematurely in the second section last night, and they pulled some of the boys out in pretty bad shape—poor chaps! But we're driving right ahead, and we'll win out by the first, and open up as the president has ordered."

"But you must rest," she insisted.

"I will," he promised, "before long."

The next day, Ralph was surprised to receive an order from the superintendent, taking away all his old skilled hands, and ordering others, with no experience of tunnel work. "This is so you can have the benefit of fresh men," ran the message, and Ralph felt the satire.

"He'd like to cripple me with a green crew. He doesn't want me to finish up the job. He wants to show the chief I'm not fit for it, as he says. And there's something behind it all, too."

For a while he was much depressed. Then a new light shone in his hollow

eyes. "We've got all the material that we want to finish up with, haven't we, Jack?" he asked his assistant.

"Yes—everything; but this green crew that's coming will knock us, sure."

"Wait," said Ralph, the new light still shining in his eyes.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SUPERINTENDENT SEES A LIGHT.

THAT night, after the new hands had arrived at the tunnel, and before the old ones had been taken off work, a wire went to McDonald from camp ten, saying that an overcharged blast down the line at Milford, half a mile from the tunnel, had covered the track deep with débris. "It's a big slide," ran the telegram; "will take two days or more to clean up, unless we can get a lot of men to work."

"You can have all the tunnel men," wired McDonald, delighted with this chance of further crippling the ambitious Ralph. "I'll order them all out for you."

Then he dictated to Billy, with a significant and triumphant note in his voice, the message to Morton:

Send all your men to clear the track, new and old, and be sure to send the old men to Red Gulch as soon as the track is open.

Billy paused a moment over her key. "But that means stopping all the tunnel work," she protested, in a surprised tone, "and they won't be through by the first."

"Never mind. I'm doing this," he remarked harshly. "I've got to keep that track open."

"You could pick up men around here," she suggested. "There's a lot of Russians waiting to be paid off."

But he shook his head and turned to leave the car. "Send that wire," he ordered. Billy's fingers sought the key as he banged the door behind him.

At the end of three days, McDonald got on an engine to run up to the tunnel. The engine stopped at the slide, for the track was still covered there, although two hundred men were shoveling and moving rock for dear life.

"It was a bigger mess than they reported," said McDonald, "but it doesn't seem as if they'd done very much so far. Wonder who the particular idiot was who ordered that blast? It wasn't necessary. The cut was wide enough already."

He walked around the slide, and, taking a motor car, was soon at the tunnel. "Are you going clear through?" asked Ralph, from where his push car stood on a siding at the tunnel's mouth. He was paler than ever, but his face had lost some of its strained and anxious look.

"Through what?" asked McDonald.

"Through the tunnel," replied Ralph.

"I guess not!" was the reply. "How could I?"

"Look!" Ralph pointed a thin, triumphant finger at the great, black throat. "Can't you see daylight through there? I can."

McDonald stared hard, his eyes squinted up, and the muscles of his mouth relaxed. Straight through the hill ran two gleaming rails, and away ahead glared a bright patch of sunlight, focusing down fine, and bringing out all the colors of the distant scrub cedars, the red rocks, and the gray-green sagebrush.

The dazed superintendent gasped: "But how did you do it? My orders—the slide!"

"Oh, yes," said Ralph, laughing. "I want to thank you for sending up that other crew. It gave me a double force. I guess I pushed them a little hard. The green chaps took some heavy coaching, but they knew a whole lot about tunnel work after the first day."

"But my wire—the slide! The new hands were to clear that up; the old men were not to stay; you knew that."

"Yes, I knew you ordered them all back to Red Gulch. But how were they to get there? The slide was in the way."

"But I sent another order the next morning, telling you to put all hands to work to clear the track."

"Did you? I didn't get any such message till to-day. It must have started when the wire went down after the big

blast, and been held over somewhere. I knew you wouldn't want all those Greeks loafing about, so I thought I'd just let 'em all stay in the tunnel, and work with the new hands. I knew you wouldn't mind. And the track will be clean in a couple of hours. How do you like the tunnel? Isn't she straight—a perfect level?"

McDonald did not speak for a minute. Then he said: "You're smart, ain't you? Those wires weren't down an hour. I'll bet you covered that track on purpose."

"Won't take you up," said Ralph, laughing. "But the tunnel's finished—that's the main thing. And this is only the twenty-ninth—two days ahead of time."

## CHAPTER V.

### WHAT HAPPENED TO THE THEORY CHAP.

AT noon on the first of December the first train, covered with flags, ran through the tunnel. It carried the president of the road, the general manager, and other officials, and the head men of Red Gulch, all in a glittering, luxurious, overheated coach.

Billy, sitting by the chief engineer's wife a little away from where Ralph rested in his old easy-chair, heard the president say to the chief engineer: "Long, I want you to look out for that young man, Morton, and give him all the work he wants. You say he eats it up; well, keep him full. But first let him take a good vacation, and get into shape. Fired his doctor and worked that tunnel through with five ribs broken, did he? That's what college football does for these young fellows. He's the sort. He'll be a credit to you."

The train stopped at Good Hope, and they all got out to go uptown to the barbecue and speechmaking planned by the townspeople, who were boisterously enthusiastic over the advent of the new line. No, not all of them went. Ralph remained behind in his armchair. He said he wanted a little quiet.

After a while he looked up from his paper, and there stood Billy. McDonald was near her, talking to her in a

pleading voice. "Ain't you going to the barbecue?" Ralph heard him say to her. "I thought you said you would."

"No, I think not," said she. "I don't care for speechmaking. It isn't talking about things, but doing things, that I like. Besides, I've got a headache."

"Indeed? Well, I've got to go and sit on the platform with the president and the rest. Come along, can't you?"

"I'd rather stay," she said quietly. And she stayed; and at last McDonald flung out of the car sulkily.

Ralph sat with his newspaper between them for some time, pretending to read. Then he laid the paper down. "You shouldn't have missed the barbecue," he said, in a constrained tone, as the porter passed through. "It will be a grand affair."

"I know, but I don't care for it, and I wanted a chance to tell you something. I've been awfully wicked."

"Wicked?" His brows went up a little.

"I held out the telegram he wanted to send—held it out for three days."

"What telegram?"

"The one telling you to send all the men over to the slide. When he ordered the old hands out of the tunnel, and the green ones to take their places, I knew he was trying to beat you. Then I heard of the blast, and was glad, for your men couldn't get away, and you could go on with your work. But when he sent that second order, why, I—I just kept it back."

"Did you?" His thin face lighted up wonderfully. He tried to spring up, but settled back again with a little sigh of pain.

"Oh, but you're a—you're a——"

"He didn't want you to win," she went on, with flashing eyes. "He knew how hard you had worked, and under what awful difficulties—sick, lame, and all of that—and yet he tried to beat you down and get you out. But he couldn't do it. That blast of yours was a magnificent coup."

He laughed with her. She was silent for a while, and then: "I—I told him what I did," she continued, "but I also told him why I did it. So I don't think

he will have much to say against his telegraph operator at headquarters."

Her voice was a little grim, and he glanced at her left hand. She was no longer wearing the superintendent's ring.

"What's the matter?" asked the girl quickly. "You look pale. Do you want a glass of water?" He shook his head. "What, then?" she repeated anxiously.

"You," said the young engineer; "but I can't come over there and get you."

Billy blushed and hesitated; then she crossed the car, and stood before him, saying faintly: "Here I am!"

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### An Up-to-date Girl

**I**T was after her birthday, and the little maid of eight was sitting disconsolately by the nursery window.

"Aren't you going to play with your new doll?" asked her mother, with a side glance at the discarded present.

"No," said the little girl.

"I thought you liked her so. Don't you?"

"No."

"Oh, but you wanted a nice dolly. One that talked, didn't you?"

No response.

"And this one says 'Ma-ma!' 'Pa-pa!'"

The little maid's eyes flashed and sparkled as she replied:

"I want a doll that says 'Votes for women.'"

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### A Timely Sentence

**I** TRUST your worship will excuse me this time," said a habitual drunkard at the police court; "it is my misfortune—I am a child of genius."

"And what is your age?" questioned the magistrate.

"Forty-two years."

"Then it is time you were weaned. You'll have to do fourteen days away from the bottle."

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Everybody is willing to help the fellow who needs help the least.



# His Diamond Ten Strike

By  
John D. Emerson

(A COMPLETE NOVELETTE)

## CHAPTER I.

IN BAD.



AFTER he had rolled four frames and failed to knock down a single pin, Teddy Driscoll felt like kicking himself for having accepted old August Boggleheimer's invitation to be his guest at the bowling club. He could see that his clumsy handling of the ball was beginning to get on Boggleheimer's nerves. Each time he made a "poodle"—which is the technical term for rolling the ball into the gutter instead of sending it all the way down the alley—the old man glanced at him as though he considered it a personal insult. After the fourth mishap, Mr. Boggleheimer, forgetting the laws of hospitality, expressed his opinion of his guest in forceful language.

"Can't you keep them on the alley? The pins are not in the gutter," he sneered. "Never in my life did I see such bonehead bowling. Hands like feet, you must have. Only for you, our side might stand a chance of winning, but your poodles are going to cost us the game. And I lose three dollars and seventy-five cents in bets," he wound up savagely.

"I'm sorry," said Teddy contritely. And his distress was genuine. There

was a reason why he desired to stand high in Mr. Boggleheimer's good graces. The reason's name was Julia Boggleheimer. She was as pretty as a life-insurance calendar, as slender as her father was stout, and as sweet-tempered as the latter was violent. Teddy's admiration for her was so profound, and she occupied such a prominent place in his dreams of the future, that he looked upon her parent's displeasure as a downright catastrophe. "I'm sorry, Mr. Boggleheimer, that I'm doing so badly," he repeated. "You know, I told you, when you asked me to come up here, that I was no bowler," he added deprecatingly.

"I don't ask you to be a bowler," was the scornful rejoinder. "All I ask, young man, is that you try to act as if you had some eyes and some hands. If you would keep the ball on the alley once in a while I would be satisfied. I don't expect you to make strikes or spares—although, believe me, I've seen other greenhorns come up here and knock down all the pins with the first ball—if only you would help our side's score along by knocking down a couple of pins each frame, it would be sufficient. But how any man, even a beginner, can the ball send into the gutter every time, is something I can't understand at all."

He pointed to the other side of the big room where the women members of the club were engaged in a spirited contest on the two alleys set aside for their use. "Look at the women!" he exclaimed contemptuously. "If they can keep the ball on the alley, surely a big, strong feller like you ought to be ashamed of himself for not being able to do it. Just watch my daughter! This is the third time she's ever bowled in all her life, and you don't see her making any poodles."

Teddy didn't have to be told twice to watch Mr. Boggleheimer's daughter. It was no great hardship for him to switch his gaze from his harsh critic's scowling countenance toward the graceful girl who was just getting ready to take her turn at the pins. He saw her poise herself at the foul line, one little, daintily shod foot put forward, her slender, shapely arm swinging in order to give momentum to the ball she was about to deliver.

She used a ball much smaller and lighter than the lignum-vitæ and hard-rubber spheres with which the men bowled. It left her hand and went speeding straight down the center of the alley with the smoothness of a yacht sailing through still water. It hit the head pin and sent every one of the ten to the floor with a crash.

Her father greeted her performance with a grunt of approval. "A strike!" he exclaimed. "As pretty a hit as ever I see." He turned scornfully to Teddy. "Let's see you do something like that, you poodler. Aren't you ashamed of yourself to let a girl put it all over you?"

The younger man grinned sheepishly. This was the first time in his life that he had ever visited a bowling alley, and it was a great surprise to him to find how much science there was to the sport, and still more of a surprise to discover that, try as he would, he could not get control of the heavy ball, which, despite his most frantic efforts, persisted in heading for the gutters.

A shout from the men's alleys diverted his attention—for the time being,—from Miss Julia Boggleheimer. A

stout, blond young man, who bowled with his left hand, had just scored a strike for the sixth time in succession, and the players of his side were showering upon him hilarious manifestations of their approval.

Mr. Boggleheimer was prominent in the group which crowded around this hero and handed him verbal bouquets. The blond, curly-haired young man was not on his side of the game, but the old man was such a bowling enthusiast that even the fact that his three dollars and seventy-five cents' worth of bets was now in greater jeopardy than before, couldn't restrain him from applauding this fine performance.

"Beautiful bowling, Louie, my boy!" Julia's father exclaimed, patting the young man affectionately on the back. "If you can do like that at the tournament next Tuesday night, we beat those Phoenix fellers sure, and you win the diamond ring. You make me proud to think it was me that got you into the club."

Teddy regarded the blond bowler enviously, and with some misgivings. Although most of the members of the club were strangers to him, he was well acquainted with this young man. His name was Louie Sharp, and he worked in Mr. Boggleheimer's office, and was a frequent caller at his employer's home. Teddy had reason to suspect that he didn't go there to talk business with the old man.

Observing that his daughter was disengaged at that moment, Boggleheimer went over to her, and, taking her by the hand, led her to the men's blackboard. "I want you to give a look at Louie's score, my dear," he said. "Isn't it wonderful?"

Julia scanned the unbroken line of crosses chalked against Sharp's name, and turned approvingly to that young man. "That's splendid, Louie," she exclaimed. "If you can do that next Tuesday night, you ought to win the diamond ring."

Louie grinned and stepped up closer to her. "If I win it," he said, looking ardently into her dark eyes, "I know what I'm going to do with it."

"What?" the girl inquired innocently. "I'm going to have the setting changed so that it will fit a girl's finger," he announced. "Do you think she'd be willing to wear it, Julia?"

Julia shrugged her shoulders. "I think it will be time enough to ask her that after you've won it," she replied coyly. Then she turned to Teddy Driscoll, who had been standing near enough to the pair to overhear this conversation.

"How are you getting along, Teddy?" she inquired, with a pleasant smile.

"Him!" Boggleheimer exclaimed scornfully, answering her question before Driscoll had a chance to speak. "Give a look at his score. Never in my life have I such bowling seen."

The girl glanced again at the blackboard, and her laughter rippled out musically. "Four goose eggs! Dear me, Teddy, that's a terrible showing." Then, observing how seriously he took it, she added encouragingly: "Never mind, though; this is your first attempt. You'll soon get the knack of hitting the pins."

Louie Sharp laughed raucously. "If he bowls for another ten years, he may be able to get pins down—if he uses a broom instead of a ball," he said. "The very first time I bowled, if I remember rightly, I had a score of over a hundred, with two strikes and three spares."

Julia frowned. "I guess you're a born bowler, Louie," she said, a trace of irony in her tone. "But, after all, there are other things in life besides bowling."

Hearing those words, Driscoll felt happy for the first time since his arrival at the bowling club.

## CHAPTER II.

### A DIFFICULT SPARE.

**A**FTER the fourth game, Driscoll astonished himself and his critics by displaying a remarkable improvement. Control of the ball seemed to have come to him suddenly, and, although he wasn't able to make strikes or spares, he at least managed to keep on the alley

and to knock down a few pins every frame he rolled.

Mr. Boggleheimer congratulated him upon the improvement. "Maybe I judged you too quickly," the old man admitted. "Lots to learn you've still got, but at least you don't act now as if you had toes on your hands instead of fingers." He smiled at the visitor encouragingly. He could afford to be genial now, because in the last two games there had been a change in the line-up of the players, and Driscoll had been put on the other side, which had enabled Mr. Boggleheimer to recover the greater part of his three dollars and seventy-five cents, and his good humor. "Maybe after all, some day, you make a bowler," he continued graciously. "Now that I come to think of it, I was awkward myself when I first started, and look at me to-day." He threw out his chest. "Two hundred and fifty is my average."

"Fine!" exclaimed Teddy, rejoicing at this change in the demeanor of Julia's father. "How long have you been bowling, Mr. Boggleheimer?"

"Fifteen years," the old man answered. "That is, it will be exactly fifteen years next Tuesday night that I joined the Progressive Club. I am giving a diamond ring in honor of the event, to be competed for by the members. The member of our club—excluding myself, of course—who bowls the biggest individual score in our match with the Phoenix Club next Tuesday, will get the ring."

He took a tissue-paper package from his waistcoat pocket. "It's a prize well worth winning, too," he declared, unwrapping the package. "There's nothing small about me. Ain't it a beauty?"

Teddy examined the ring, which the other held out for his inspection. "What a fine diamond," he said. "I don't believe I've ever seen so white a stone."

"It isn't white; it's blue—steel blue. Those are the most expensible diamonds," Mr. Boggleheimer announced. "But take a look at the inscription inside. The winner ought to value that more than the stone, even."

"Come on, Boggleheimer. It's your turn," one of the players shouted just then.

"Be careful," the men on his side entreated, as he stepped to the rack and picked up his ball. "The score is very close."

"Leave it to me," the old man assured them confidently, as he stepped to the foul line. "Just watch your Uncle August closely, and he'll show you some bowling."

The big ball went sailing down the alley with the speed of greased lightning. It hit the head pin squarely and sent all the others sprawling. A chorus of applause came from his adherents, but it died as his opponent on the other frame also made a strike hit.

"Now for another one, August, old boy. You can do it," the men of his side urged.

Boggleheimer nodded confidently. Under the pretense of tying his shoe string, he permitted his opponent to bowl first, and grinned as he observed that the latter left four pins standing.

"The best he can get is a spare," he observed. "Now watch me, boys." Once more the big, hard rubber ball left his hand and darted down the alley. But this time, although it crashed into the head pin as before, only eight of the pins went down. Moreover, the two that remained standing were corner pins—one on each side, with the whole width of the alley between them.

His adherents groaned. "We lose," they told each other mournfully. "Sandberg will make his spare, and Boggleheimer can't possibly get more than one of those pins."

The latter, overhearing this remark, turned and winked at them. "Don't you be so sure of that," he returned confidently.

A minute later the whole bowling club went wild with delight. Boggleheimer's ball, sailing down the alley so close to the extreme edge that it was half in the gutter all the way, struck the pin in the left corner and sent it clean across the alley, where it collided with the right-hand pin and knocked it down.

Driscoll uttered an exclamation of mingled astonishment and admiration. If he had not seen the thing done, he would have considered it a physical impossibility for two pins so wide apart to be knocked down by one ball.

"What did I tell you?" Boggleheimer chuckled. "You don't see that done every day, eh, Charlie?"

Charlie Smith, proprietor of the alleys, nodded. "It's the most difficult spare there is," he announced. "There are very few men who can do it."

"You bet!" agreed Boggleheimer proudly. "Well, boys, I guess that wins the game for us."

It certainly looked that way; for Sandberg, his opponent, had failed to make his comparatively easy spare, bringing down only three of the four pins he had left standing on the first roll. There was only one more man on each side to go in, and the one on the opposing side was Teddy Driscoll. In view of that raw beginner's past performances, his side was ready to throw up the sponge.

A surprising thing happened. Teddy made a strike. For the first time that night, he experienced the thrill of seeing all the pins go down beneath the onslaught of his ball, and of being greeted with applause instead of jeers.

"Congratulations!" cried Boggleheimer. "Even though you're not on my side, and that strike of yours is likely to win the game for you fellers, I got to hand it to you, young man, for that shot. How did you do it?"

Driscoll laughed. "I couldn't tell you. I'm afraid it was just dumb luck," he answered simply. "I sent down that ball just the same way as all the others, but it seemed to behave differently. Maybe it's because I used a different ball this time," he suggested. "All night I've been using wooden balls, but this time I thought that I'd take one of these black rubber boys for a change."

The old man nodded. "It does make a great difference what kind of ball you use. You want to pick out one that just suits you and stick to it all the time. A good bowler never changes balls in the middle of a game. Take Louie

Sharp, for instance: he's been using the same ball ever since he joined the club. If he had to change to another I guess he wouldn't be able to do so well."

"Wouldn't he?" exclaimed Driscoll, evidently greatly interested. "I had no idea that it made such a difference. Guess I'll use that same ball again. I believe I have another shot coming to me?"

"Two more shots," Boggleheimer informed him. "See if you can't make another strike."

As Driscoll went to bowl, the men on his side watched his efforts with renewed hope. Since he had done so well on the other frame, they thought he might be able to pull them through. But his right hand seemed to have lost its recently acquired skill, for, much to their disgust, he made two poodles.

"That's too bad, Teddy," Julia Boggleheimer said sympathetically. The women had finished their game, and she had come over to watch the wind-up of the men's contest. "If you had hit a few pins your side would have won. Well, anyway," she added encouragingly, "you succeeded in making a strike."

"We'll make a bowler out of him yet as soon as he learns the difference between the alleys and the gutters," her father predicted genially. He had just won three dollars on the game as a result of those last two poodles of Driscoll's, so he was not disposed to hold a grudge against the young man.

Mr. Boggleheimer changed his shoes and put on his hat and overcoat. "Ready, my dear?" he inquired of Julia. "Well, good night, folks! Coming our way, Louie?"

"Just a minute, while I put this ball away," Sharp called back. He rented a locker, and always made it a point to lock up his ball so as to prevent its being used by the clubs which hired the alleys on other nights of the week. Having attended to this detail, he went downstairs with Julia and her father. To his chagrin, Driscoll accompanied them, announcing that he, too, was going their way. Moreover, when they reached the street, the latter skillfully

managed to arrange matters so that the group broke up into pairs, he walking ahead with the girl while Louie had to trail behind with Mr. Boggleheimer and listen to a long dissertation on strikes and spares from that bowling enthusiast.

"The more I see of that Louie Sharp, the better I like him," the old man remarked to his daughter, after they had arrived home. "He is a fine young man in every respect, and his bowling is simply grand, considering that he's only been at it a couple of seasons. I hope he wins the diamond ring next Tuesday night."

Julia shrugged her shoulders. "Louie is all right, but—what do you think of Teddy Driscoll?"

Her father made a grimace. "I can't say that he impresses me very much. Such a wretched poodler I never in my life saw."

The girl laughed. "I didn't mean as a bowler, pa. What do you think of him otherwise? After all, bowling isn't everything."

"No, bowling isn't everything," Boggleheimer admitted, with some reluctance. "But at the same time, my dear, you can judge—" He stopped short and his face turned pale. "The loafer!" Julia heard him mutter. "The nervy crook!"

"What's the matter, pa?" Julia inquired, viewing her parent's sudden agitation with alarm.

"The miserable grafter!" the old man continued savagely. "If he don't give it back to me, I'll have him arrested. I suspected there must be something wrong about a fellow, what made so many poodles."

"If he doesn't, give what back to you?" Julia demanded impatiently.

"My ring," the old man growled. "The diamond ring which I was offering for a bowling prize. I handed it to that scamp, Driscoll, to look at tonight at the bowling club, and he didn't give it back to me. I let him have it just before I went to bowl, and in my excitement at making that wonderful spare I forgot to ask him for it afterward."

"Well, don't get excited, pa," his daughter said soothingly. "If Teddy didn't return it to you, he must have forgotten it, too. Of course he wouldn't keep it intentionally. We'll remind him of it to-morrow morning."

"We'll remind him of it right now," Boggleheimer corrected explosively. "And we'll take a policeman along with us to make the reminder a little stronger. I'm not going to give him a chance to skip by waiting until to-morrow morning. What's his address?"

"I don't know," Julia replied. "He changed his boarding house recently, and I haven't the new address. I only know where he's employed. We'll have to wait until to-morrow morning."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE BURGLAR'S HAUL.

**E**ARLY the next morning, Charlie Smith, proprietor of the Excelsior Bowling Alleys, rushed out excitedly to the street in search of the policeman on post. He did not find that uniformed member of the force, but, better still, he encountered his friend Detective Lieutenant Larry Bradley, of the central office. "You're just the man I want, Larry!" the bowling-alley man exclaimed. "Come along with me. I've been robbed. My place has been burglarized!"

"What did they get, the alleys?" the policeman inquired facetiously.

"So far as I can discover," Smith answered earnestly, "the only thing that's missing is one of the balls."

"One of the balls?"

"A rubber regulation match ball which belongs to one of my patrons."

Lieutenant Bradley elevated his eyebrows. "They must be pikers," he muttered contemptuously. "Those things aren't worth much, are they, Charlie?"

"About seven dollars each," the other informed him.

"That's what I thought. Well, I'll investigate."

He accompanied Smith to the alleys, and the latter showed him a window at the rear of the big room which bore unmistakable signs of having been pried

open with a jimmy. "Here's where they got in, all right," the policeman exclaimed, examining the window. "Pretty crude work, too. Looks like an amateur's job. When did you discover it, Charlie?"

"About fifteen minutes ago. I came down to open up the place as usual, and the condition of that window at once attracted my attention. I thought immediately of the safe and the cups. There's over three hundred dollars in the safe—I was going to bank it today—and some of those loving cups over there on the sideboard are worth quite a lot. It was a great relief to me to find that they were all right."

The detective walked over to the sideboard and examined curiously the silver trophies which adorned it. There were several of them, the property of the various clubs which used the alleys. "And you mean to say that they passed up all this more or less valuable junk and the money in your safe, and got away with only a secondhand bowling ball worth seven dollars when new?" he queried incredulously.

"Queer, isn't it?"

"Queer? It's the craziest thing I ever heard of. What would possess a crook, professional or amateur, to risk going to jail for the sake of a fool thing like that?"

Smith shrugged his shoulders. "I give it up. All I know is that the ball is gone and nothing else is missing. See, here's the private locker from which it was taken."

The policeman examined the locker, the door of which had been jimmied. "Crude work," he repeated. "You can take it from me that no regular crook did that job. If I didn't know you so well, Charlie, I'd be inclined to suspect that you framed the whole thing yourself. It certainly has a phony look to it."

"What would I do anything like that for?" Smith protested indignantly. "Ah, here's a man who may be able to help us!" he exclaimed, as the door opened and a stout, ruddy-faced man entered. "Good morning, Mr. Clement."

"How are you, Charlie?" responded the newcomer, at the same time bowing slightly to the officer. "Am I too early for a little session with the pins?"

"A bit too early, Mr. Clement. None of the pin boys has got down yet; they are not due until eleven. You know, you never come in before that time. By the way, I wonder if you'd mind giving us your opinion about something. As you're a detective, you may be able to solve the mystery."

Jonathan Clement, head of the Clement Private Detective Agency, smiled. "What mystery is that?" he inquired of Smith, whose alleys he frequently patronized in the daytime, bowling all by himself for the sake of the exercise.

Lieutenant Bradley grinned. "The mystery of the great bowling-ball burglary," he chimed in facetiously. "Here's a case worthy of your steel, Clement!"

The private detective frowned at the irony in the other's tone. He knew that his rivals of the force looked upon him and his methods as a joke. He turned inquiringly to Smith, who proceeded to make him acquainted with the details of the case.

"Sounds interesting," Clement observed. "I'll take a look at that window."

He spent several minutes studying the broken lock, Lieutenant Bradley watching him with a broad grin. Then he walked over to the locker and examined it carefully. "Who rents this locker, Charlie?" he inquired.

"A man named Sharp, a member of the Progressive Club."

"Pretty good bowler?"

"One of the best in the club."

"And he always uses the same ball, of course? This loss will make a difference in his form?"

"I'm afraid it will," Smith agreed. "He's an awful crank about that ball. I'm afraid he'll kick up an awful fuss—especially as his club has a match on with the Phoenix Club next Tuesday night."

"Ah!" exclaimed Clement triumphantly.

Lieutenant Bradley turned with a

scowl to the bowling-alley man. "Why didn't you tell me that?" he growled. "It throws a light on the case."

Then he turned his attention to his rival. The latter had stooped and picked up several burned matches from in front of the locker. "I believe you always sweep this place up before you go home, don't you, Charlie?" he asked.

"It's the last thing we do at night."

The private detective smiled lightly and carefully examined the burned matches in his hand. The other sleuth watched him with amusement. "Ah, a clew," he jeered.

Clement paid no heed to his persiflage. "Where is your electric-light switch?" he inquired of Smith.

The proprietor informed him that it was in the hall.

"I thought so," Clement observed. "The burglar couldn't find it. That's why he had to use matches. He wasn't a professional crook, or he'd have brought a light with him."

"Wonderful!" cried Bradley. "I knew the job was done by an amateur the minute I looked at that window. I didn't have to find any matches."

At this point Callahan, who ran a restaurant on the ground floor of the building, came in. "What's the excitement, Charlie?" he inquired. "I saw you run out of here a little while ago looking as rattled as a chicken with its head off. I wondered what was up."

"My place has been burglarized," Smith informed him. "Didn't see any suspicious characters around here last night after I left, did you?" He knew that the restaurant man always kept open until a late hour.

"Come to think of it, I did," Callahan answered. "At least, I don't know whether you'd call him a suspicious character, but I saw a feller come up here last night a couple of hours after you had locked up. Afterward I saw him go to the back of the building."

The two detectives received this with great interest. "Did he have a bowling ball in his hand when he went out?" the police lieutenant inquired.

"I couldn't tell you. I got busy with some customers right after that and

forgot all about him, so I didn't see him go out. Anyway," the restaurant man added, "I thought he was all right; he was one of the gentlemen who was bowling here last night."

"One of the members of the Progressive Club?" Smith asked incredulously.

"I don't know whether he was a member. I've never seen him here before. But he was bowling with them. You remember when I came up last night to get you to change a ten-dollar bill, Charlie? Well, I noticed him then. I noticed him particularly, because I saw him make four poodles in succession while I was waiting for my change. He struck me as being the saddest bowler I ever saw."

"I know the one you mean!" Smith exclaimed.

"Who is he, Charlie?" Bradley demanded.

"I don't recall his name," Smith answered, "but I could easily find out. August Boggleheimer of the Progressive Club would be able to tell us. He brought him here as his guest last night."

"Boggleheimer, the sausage man," Clement muttered. "Guess I'll look him up."

"Why should you bother yourself with this fool case?" the other detective demanded jealously. "There's nothing in it for you. That ball was worth only seven dollars when new."

Clement smiled quizzically. "As you observe, my friend, there doesn't appear to be anything in this case for me—judged merely from a financial standard," he responded. "But, after all, there are other incentives besides money. Sometimes I tackle a case just for the sport of it. It is because I possess that temperament," he continued dryly, "that I so often succeed where my brethren of the force fail."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A STRONG CASE.

**L**IEUTENANT BRADLEY accompanied Clement to Boggleheimer's place of business. The policeman was

not greatly impressed with the case. The larceny of a seven-dollar bowling ball, whatever the motive, struck him as being too trifling a matter for a man from the central office to bother with—at least, that would have been his attitude in the matter if it had not been for Clement's activity. He feared from the private detective's demeanor that he might see more in this case than was apparent to himself.

They found Mr. Boggleheimer in his hat and overcoat, just about to go out. He was accompanied by his employee, Louie Sharp.

"What can I tell you about that loafer!" the old man exclaimed explosively in response to their inquiry. "I could tell you a whole lot about him if I had the time, but you'll have to excuse me just now for the reason that we're in a hurry to get around to his office before he has a chance to dispose of the ring—although I'm afraid that he's already got rid of it."

"The ring?" Lieutenant Bradley repeated eagerly. "Has he been stealing rings, too?"

Mr. Boggleheimer explained about his missing diamond, and a glint came to the policeman's eyes. "That fellow's a crook. He's our bowling-ball burglar all right," he announced, turning to Clement.

"It looks that way," the latter answered quietly. "However, we'll look him over first, before we jump at conclusions. If you don't object, Mr. Boggleheimer, we'll go along with you."

Mr. Boggleheimer did not object. On the contrary when he learned that his visitors were detectives, he was glad to have them in attendance. "For as sure as I sell sausages, I'm going to have that crook arrested if he don't hand over my ring right away," he announced. "But what do you mean by calling him a bowling-ball burglar?" he inquired curiously.

"He broke into Smith's alleys last night and stole one of the balls," Bradley explained.

"The cheap grafter!" growled Mr. Boggleheimer. "What do you think of a feller that would do a trick like that,

Louie? Now, I'm sure that he meant to keep my ring."

An expression of uneasiness had come to Louie Sharp's face. "Do you know who owned the ball that was stolen?" he inquired of the detective.

"A fellow named Sharp, I believe."

Louie groaned. "I suspected as much. I noticed that he was watching me closely last night when I put the ball away. His manner struck me, at the time, as being odd."

"Did he know that you are in the match against the Phoenix team next Tuesday night, Mr. Sharp?" Clement inquired.

"Yes, he knew that," said Boggleheimer. "And he knew, also, that without that ball Louie wouldn't be able to do a thing. I told him so myself. And I remember, now, that he seemed interested in what I said. I'll bet that's what put it into his head to do it."

Teddy Driscoll was employed as a draughtsman in an architect's office. They found him at his drawing board. He was smiling as he worked, but the smile swiftly left his face and was replaced by an uneasy expression as he caught sight of his visitors.

"Good morning, Mr. Boggleheimer," he said nervously. "I was coming around to see you later on. I wanted to—"

"I've saved you the trouble," Boggleheimer interrupted, with a sneer. "Where is my ring?"

"It—that's what I wanted to see you about," the young man stammered. "The fact is, Mr. Boggleheimer, a queer thing has happened."

"Is that so?" the old man sneered. "Well, let me tell you, young feller, a much queerer thing is going to happen in a minute if you try any monkey business with me. Fairy stories I don't want to listen to at all, because I can buy plenty of those in the bookstore. These gentlemen, here, are detectives, and unless you give me my ring right away, they're going to put you where you won't be able to steal any more rings, or bowling balls, either."

"Bowling balls?" Driscoll repeated, with an inflection of surprise.

"Come, young fellow," exclaimed Detective Bradley brusquely. "You might as well cut out the stalling. If you didn't steal the ball, what were you doing at Smith's alleys at two o'clock this morning?"

Driscoll smiled. "I can explain that. I don't know what you mean about stealing a bowling ball, but I admit that I returned to the bowling alleys last night—or, rather, early this morning." He turned to Boggleheimer. "It was on account of your ring that I went back there."

"On account of my ring?"

"I couldn't sleep last night for some reason," Driscoll continued, "and it suddenly occurred to me, Mr. Boggleheimer, that I hadn't handed you back your ring. I can't explain why I hadn't thought of it before, or why it should have occurred to me just then. It seemed to enter my mind like a flash. As soon as I thought of it, I jumped out of bed and went through my pockets. Strange to say, I couldn't recall what I had done with the thing. I remembered your giving it to me to look at just as you were called on to bowl, and I recall slipping it on my right thumb—it was too big to go on my fingers—with the intention of returning it to you as soon as you were through bowling. But after that my mind is a complete blank so far as that ring is concerned. I haven't the slightest idea what I did with it."

Boggleheimer received this with a snort of contempt. "And of course you didn't find it in your pockets?" he inquired scornfully.

"No, I did not, I regret to say. That is why I went back to the alleys. I figured that I must have dropped it up there."

"So," said Bradley, "you want us to believe that you broke into the place in order to hunt for the ring?"

"I don't care whether you believe it or not," Driscoll returned coldly, "but it's the truth. At least, I went back there for that reason; but I didn't break in. I was in hopes that I would find the place still open, or somebody on the

premises; but when I got there I found the door locked and the alleys dark."

"And then you went around to the back, climbed the fire escape, and jimmed the window," the policeman suggested.

"I did nothing of the kind," was the indignant response. "Do you think I would commit burglary, even for such a cause?"

Up to this point, Detective Clement had not said a word; now he took a hand in the examination of the suspect. "Young man," he said quietly, "what were you doing at the rear of the building? You were seen going back there."

Driscoll nodded. "I can easily explain that. When I found the front door locked, naturally I went to the back of the building to see if there was any chance of getting in that way."

"And then you broke in and stole that ball," the other detective persisted.

Driscoll laughed. "What motive could I have for stealing a bowling ball, even if I were capable of such an act? This is the most absurd charge I ever heard."

"Is it?" asked Boggleheimer. "I guess there was motive enough. You don't like Louie. You are jealous of him on account of my daughter. Don't you suppose I know that? For spite work you stole the ball so that he wouldn't be able to do well in the match against the Phoenix Club. Oh, yes, it looks to me as if there was plenty of motive for you to play such a trick. And as for being capable of it—well, I guess that any rascal who could be mean enough to steal a ring, would also steal a bowling ball."

Mr. Boggleheimer's excited utterance caused Detective Bradley's face to light up. "So there's a woman in the case!" He chuckled. "That's interesting information. I suspected that he might have had some bets on the Phoenix team and stole the ball to make sure of their winning; but now that I know that he's jealous of Sharp on account of a girl, it's as clear as daylight to me why he turned that trick." He tapped Driscoll roughly on the shoulder. "Get on your

hat and coat, young feller. We're going to take a little walk. Your story is too thin to suit me. We'll give you a chance to try it on the judge."

They marched Teddy Driscoll to the precinct station house, and on their way there an interesting incident occurred. The prisoner walked with his left hand in his coat pocket. Suddenly it came out, and Detective Bradley saw something which caused him to grab Driscoll's wrist.

"Hold on there," the policeman exclaimed triumphantly. "I was a little too quick for you that time, my boy." He unclenched his captive's fingers and took therefrom something which glittered in the sunlight.

"My diamond ring!" cried Boggleheimer excitedly. "This is what I call luck!"

The policeman grinned. "You bet you're lucky, sir. If I hadn't been watching him so closely he'd have got rid of the evidence."

He turned with a sneer to the prisoner. "I reckon that was one of the pockets you forgot to search last night, eh?"

"But I did look there," Driscoll protested, a look of bewilderment on his face. "I can't understand this at all. I'm positive that I went all through this coat last night, hunting for the ring. I can't make out how I could have overlooked it then. And, of course, I wasn't trying to throw it away, just now," he added indignantly. "My fingers had just closed on it and I was taking it out to see what it was."

Detective Bradley winked at Detective Clement. "Ain't he a wonder?" he inquired, with mock admiration.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE VICTOR.

ON the following Tuesday evening, the night of the big contest between the Progressive and Phoenix teams, Louie Sharp called at the Boggleheimer home to accompany Julia and her father to the alleys.

"Feel in pretty good form, my boy?" the old man inquired anxiously. He

had asked Louie that same question at least a hundred times that day, at the office, but he put it to him, now, as though it were a new thought. "I myself never felt better. If I don't show those Phoenix fellers some phenomenal bowling to-night, I shall be disappointed. I feel it in my bones that I'm going to break my own record."

"I hope you will, sir," said Louie. "I'm afraid our team will need some record-breaking bowling from you in order to win. You can't hope for much from me. If I can bowl up to my average score I'll be lucky. Without that old black war horse of mine I'm afraid I'll be all at sea." He sighed. "If only the police could have succeeded in making that scamp Driscoll tell what he did with it! I was in hopes they would recover it before the match."

Julia echoed his sigh. Her faith in Teddy Driscoll had died hard, but when she heard the circumstantial evidence against him she had been forced to admit to her father that she might have been deceived as to the character of that unhappy young man.

"You must do the best you can, Louie," she said encouragingly. "The club depends upon you."

"And I want you to win the diamond ring," her father chimed in. "There ain't anybody in the club I'd rather see get it, my boy."

"Thank you," replied Louie simply. He turned eagerly to the girl. "Do you want me to win the ring, too?" he inquired. "You know what I intend to do with it if I am fortunate enough to land it? I told you the other night."

The girl's blush indicated that she had not forgotten. "Of course I want you to win it, Louie," she said, after a momentary hesitation. "In fact, I shall be greatly disappointed if you don't."

A satisfied grin came to Sharp's face. "It is as good as won already," he announced confidently. "Even the handicap of having to bowl with a strange ball can't keep me from running up a record score, now that you've given me such an incentive, Julia," he added ardently.

Despite the disadvantage under which he strove, Sharp bowled that night as he had never bowled before. He beat even Boggleheimer's score, thereby establishing a new record for the Progressive Club. And largely as a result of his phenomenal performance the Phoenix team was defeated by twenty pins.

After the game, Boggleheimer went up to him, his face radiant with delight. "Here, my boy," the old man said, handing him a small package wrapped in tissue paper; "accept this with the compliments of the club and my own congratulations. You deserve it. This is the proudest day of my life, and we owe it all to you."

"Thank you," said Louie simply, unwrapping the tissue-paper package.

As soon as he could disengage himself from Boggleheimer's attentions, he went in search of Julia. "I told you I was going to win it," he said with a grin, as he slipped the ring on her slender finger. "I knew that I couldn't fail after the encouragement you gave me. The ring is much too big for you, but I'll have it made smaller later on. In the meantime, I ask you to keep it as a mark of our—I beg your pardon, sir?"

The last words were addressed to a stout, ruddy-faced man who had rudely intruded on the tender scene.

"I wish to congratulate you on your wonderful bowling," the newcomer explained. "It was remarkable; especially in view of the fact that you had to use a strange ball. A brand-new ball, I believe, was it not?"

Sharp nodded. "It arrived from the factory to-day. I tried to match my lost ball as closely as possible, but of course it wasn't possible to get one exactly like it."

"Of course not," the other agreed. "What a beautiful ring!" he remarked, suddenly observing the diamond which sparkled on Julia's finger. "I have rarely seen so perfect a blue stone. Do you know, Mr. Sharp," he added quietly, "it looks exactly like the ring you found in the thumb hole of your bowling ball the other night."

Louie turned pale. He had already recognized the stout man as the private detective named Clement who had participated in the arrest of Teddy Driscoll, but had not acknowledged his acquaintance in the presence of the girl. "What do you mean?" he demanded indignantly. "I didn't find any ring in a bowling ball. What nonsense is this?"

The detective smiled. "I am afraid your memory is a trifle poor, Mr. Sharp," he said quizzically. "You must have found that ring in the place I mentioned. Otherwise," he demanded sternly, "what could have been your object in breaking into these alleys the other night, jimmying your own locker, and stealing your own bowling ball?"

"What's all this?" cried Boggleheimer, joining the group in time to hear the last words. "Louie didn't steal any bowling ball. You must be crazy to say such a thing. The ball was stolen by a scamp named Driscoll—the same rascal who tried to make off with my ring. You ought to know that as well as anybody," he continued indignantly, recognizing Sharp's accuser.

Bland and smiling, Detective Clement turned to the old man. "I think that when you hear the interesting truth about your ring and Mr. Sharp's bowling ball, you will regret exceedingly the injustice you have done poor Driscoll, Mr. Boggleheimer," he said.

Julia uttered a joyous cry. "Is Mr. Driscoll innocent?" she inquired eagerly.

"Driscoll was no more to blame for the disappearance of the ring than he was for the larceny of the bowling ball; he was merely a victim of remarkable circumstances," replied Clement.

"Remarkable circumstances?" Boggleheimer repeated incredulously.

"I consider them remarkable," the detective rejoined. "I am something of a bowler myself, and I know that it isn't every day that a ring slips from a bowler's thumb and lodges in the hole of the ball he is using. You see, Mr. Boggleheimer, it was like this," he continued: "Amazing as his story appeared, Driscoll was telling you the

truth the other day, when he claimed that he couldn't recall what had become of your ring. As he told us, he remembers that you handed it to him to look at just before you were called to take your turn at bowling. For safety's sake, he slipped it on his right thumb, intending to give it back to you as soon as you were through. But in the excitement which followed the wonderful spare you made he forgot to return your property, just as you forgot to claim it. After that his recollection completely fails him as to what he did with the ring." A smile illuminated the detective's ruddy countenance. "But I have had a talk with him," he went on, "and I have been able to assist his memory considerably. As soon as he told me that it was his turn to bowl right after yours, I was able to suggest to him immediately the solution of the mystery—especially as he informed me that he had used a hard-rubber ball, the same kind as the one which was stolen. The deduction was obvious. When he was called to bowl he stepped up to the rack and picked up a ball, slipping his thumb and the second finger of his right hand into the deep, round holes by which all bowling balls are held—absent-mindedly overlooking the presence of your ring on that thumb. He did not know that the ball was the private property of Mr. Sharp; nothing was said of it. He recalls now that his thumb fitted very tightly into the hole. When he pulled it out, the ring remained behind, wedged in so tightly that even the jar of the ball hitting the pins didn't dislodge it. In the excitement of the moment he did not notice the loss of the ring. Very simple, isn't it?"

"Sounds fishy to me," remarked Boggleheimer dubiously. "Your fairy story overlooks the fact that the scamp had two more shots after that. If the ring had been in the ball he must have noticed it the next time he used it."

"He didn't use the same ball again," Clement replied. "He intended to do so, since he had done so well with it, but there were several other rubber balls on the rack, of course, and he

picked up one of these instead. That accounts for the fact that he followed up his strike by making two poodles. In fact, I think it accounts for the distressingly poor bowling he had done all night. He has unusually slim fingers, and he had been unable to get a ball which fitted his hand—except for that one strike hit, when the presence of the ring made his thumb fit the hole snugly.”

Boggleheimer shrugged his shoulders. “You talk just like one of those detectives out of a book,” he declared scornfully. “Theories is theories, but facts is facts. You seem to be overlooking the fact that the ring was found afterward on that rascal Driscoll, when we were taking him to the police station. How do you explain that?” He grinned triumphantly at the detective.

But the latter did not appear to be at all discomfited by this reminder. “I think Mr. Sharp can explain that,” he said quietly. “If, however, he is too bashful to do so, I will undertake to speak for him. You will recall that when we first burst in on Driscoll at his office, he was in his shirt sleeves, standing at his drawing board. His coat was hanging on the wall. It was a perfectly easy matter for Mr. Sharp to slip the ring into his rival’s pocket.”

Louie’s face turned a shade paler. “I’d like to know why you should accuse me,” he began hotly.

“There are several reasons,” Clement answered, with a smile. “One of them—an important one—is that you bowl with your left hand.”

Sharp received this with a derisive laugh, and Boggleheimer indignantly demanded to know what that had to do with it.

“It has this to do with it,” the detective informed them. “The bowling-ball burglar was left-handed. I realized that as soon as I examined the window. The marks of the jimmy were all on the right side of the lock. A right-handed man would naturally have tackled the lock from the left side, as he faced the window. Try it yourself, Mr. Boggleheimer, and see if I am not correct about that. As soon as I noticed,

to-night, that Sharp was bowling with his left hand, I was convinced that he was the guilty man.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LITTLE THINGS.

“IN detective work,” said Jonathan Clement, addressing Sharp, with the air of a professor delivering a lecture to a class in criminology, “it is always the little things that count. You left several other clues behind you that night. They enable me to tell you exactly what happened after poor Driscoll left the ring in the ball.”

“I should be glad to hear it,” said Louie, with a sneer. “Of course, I need scarcely assure my friends here that you are wrong—but, at least, you are interesting.”

“Thank you,” rejoined Clement politely. “I hope I shall not cease to be interesting when I outline to you exactly what you did that night. To begin with, you discovered the ring wedged tightly in the ball as soon as you went to put your property away in the locker. You would have taken it out then, but you didn’t have a chance to do it. Driscoll was near you; so was Charlie Smith and several of the members. You wanted that ring, and you knew that if you took it out in their presence you would have to give it up. So you decided to wait.”

“Why didn’t I take the ball home with me?” Sharp suggested ironically. “I could have removed the ring then at my leisure.”

“Very true,” the detective asserted. “But you were going to walk home with Miss Boggleheimer, and naturally you didn’t want to be bothered by having to carry it. Besides, you had no reason to be in any particular hurry. It was your intention, then, to put the ball safely away in your locker and call for it the next day.”

“And what made me change my plans?” Sharp demanded. There was still a sneer in his tone, but his manner had become less confident.

“The sudden thought that Driscoll

might recall what had become of the ring and come to claim it early the next morning," Clement replied promptly. "It was the fear of that possibility which made you decide to commit burglary.

"So you went to the alleys and forced the window," he continued, still in the tone of a lecturer addressing a class. "As soon as you were inside you went fumbling around in the dark for the electric-light switch. You couldn't find it, so you had to burn matches. By that dim light you broke open your locker. You had left your keys behind, so you had to break it open. You took out the ball and tried to dislodge the ring. It was set in so tightly that you couldn't get it out right away. You had used your last match in getting the locker open—there were only a few in the box——"

An exclamation of astonishment from Sharp interrupted him. "How do you know that?" that young man demanded, suddenly taken off his guard. "How can you tell that I had used my last match?"

The detective smiled. "It was very simple. As I remarked before, it is the little things that count in detective work. I examined the burned matches that you left behind. Some of them were burned only halfway. One of them was blackened to such an extent that it must have come near scorching your fingers. That must have been your last match. If there had been any more left you wouldn't have held it so long. And the fact that you had burned all your matches," he continued, smiling at Louie's discomfiture, "explains why you took the ball away with you. Your departure was hurried by the fact that you heard somebody outside just then. It was Driscoll coming back to look for the ring. His approach caused you to rush out in panic."

"But why should Louie have stolen the ring?" protested Boggleheimer, somewhat impressed by this skillful analysis and Sharp's uneasy demeanor. "He knew he stood a good chance of winning it. And if he did steal it, why should he have put it in Driscoll's

pocket? What good could that do to him?"

Clement shrugged his shoulders. "I can offer you only an opinion as to that. My belief is that his first intention was to dispose of the ring for what it would bring—I suspect that if you look into his private affairs you will find that he has been spending more money than he earns—but, afterward, when he heard Driscoll accused, he saw a chance to make things hot for his rival, and decided that he would rather dispose of the ring that way than by selling it. This, however, I must admit, is only mere conjecture on my part. I have no evidence, as yet, to support that theory."

He turned sternly to Sharp. "Come, young man, what do you think, now, of the case?" he demanded. "Are you still going to deny that you stole your own bowling ball?"

"I do deny it," Louie began hoarsely, "I——"

"Then perhaps you will explain how you happen to be using that ball tonight?" his inquisitor interrupted. "It was a clever scheme of yours to send it to the factory to be freshened up, then have it shipped here so that you could use it without suspicion."

A startled cry came from Louie. "Good heavens!" he gasped, suddenly losing his nerve. "Are you a wizard? How could you know that?"

"I didn't know it," Clement replied, with a grin. "I merely guessed it when I saw how well you did with that alleged new ball. But, of course," he added, "I can easily confirm my guess by going to the factory and inquiring whether the ball they shipped you today was a new one, or——"

"No, that isn't necessary," Sharp cut in brokenly. "It's no use, Mr. Boggleheimer. I might as well admit all that he has said. I can't tell you how sorry I am."

"I'm sorry, too," said the old man sadly. "From a feller that made poodles I might have suspected it. But it is hard to believe such things of such a fine bowler."

# The Men Behind the Stories



## GILBERT PATTEN

INTERVIEWED BY J. A. FITZGERALD

**E**VERYBODY here? Very well, then. Remove your ear laps and get ready to hear the horrible details concerning Gilbert Patten. Yes. That's the man—the fellow that writes the rah, rah, rah stuff: Roger Boltwood's little playmate. I don't mind admitting that it was a struggle to wring a confession from him. Actually he ran out of the base line half a dozen times to prevent being tagged. It was not until he was confronted with overwhelming evidence of his guilt in the shape of many stories that he broke down and consented to tell all.

Before proceeding, let it be understood that this little tattle is just between ourselves. Never breathe a word of it. For the benefit of those who are in the habit of peddling gossip, it may be well to state that our friend Patten is admirably equipped to resent any loose talk. Six feet one and still going up, broad-shouldered, clear-eyed, and quick of action, the most casual observation convinces one that he possesses a punch which carries with

it a trip to the hospital with stop-over privileges.

Mind you, this is only a guess on the writer's part. The Patten punch might entitle the recipient to a trip to the morgue. I didn't test it. No; every time I had to ask a question that carried a hint of trouble, I managed to put considerable space between us and set myself for a quick start.

All this is dragged in here for the purpose of warning you that your chances of living to a ripe old age will be greatly increased if you refrain from irritating Patten. In a word, if you feel, after absorbing his damaging admissions, that you have got to ask him a few pertinent questions, use the telephone. And make it a long-distance call—the longer, the better.

**N**OW that you have been properly warned as to the necessity for discretion, we will proceed with the investigation. Having learned that this favorite author was aware of my surveillance, I realized that I would have to employ strategy to gain his presence.

The trail led to a house in Lexington Avenue, New York. I could not help but admire the quietness of the surroundings. Save for the ear-splitting racket made by half a hundred riveters at work on a near-by skyscraper, the rattley-bang of flat-wheeled trolley cars passing the door every few seconds, the blasting in the new subway, the strains from half a dozen asthmatic pianolas, and the cries from a score of children at play, not a sound broke the stillness. Surely an ideal place for an author to do his authoring.

An inspection of the names on the house letter boxes failed to reveal either a "Patten" or a "Boltwood." "Ha, ha!" I chuckled softly. Come to think of it, I used three ha's. I want to be absolutely fair in this matter. But I didn't intend to be foiled, even by such a journeyman foiler as Gilbert Patten.

I stepped into the hall and listened. From an apartment on the second deck came the groans of a typewriter. It was plain that the machine was being beaten to death! Ascending the stairs in an exceedingly stealthy manner, I paused at the door. I felt certain that I had landed my quarry, but how was I to gain admittance? That was the question. There was no doorbell. The staccato shrieks of the typewriter precluded the possibility of his hearing a rap on the door.

Right here is where I employed the aforementioned strategy. I decided to unravel a college song. That would bring him out if anything would. Never having been to college, and not being able to sing, you will appreciate the handicap that I was under. I'll go further than that. I didn't even know a college song. The only one I have ever

heard, the only part of one, to be exact, deals with the delights of "Seeing Nellie Home." I never knew the rest of it, and I never knew a college man who knew the rest of it. I am of the opinion that there isn't any more of it.

**S**UMMONING all my fast-waning courage, I released "Seeing Nellie Home." The effect was magical. A commotion, caused by the overturning of chairs and tables in Patten's haste to answer the cry of distress, came to my ears. The next instant the door opened.

"You are Gilbert Patten!" I shouted triumphantly.

"Discovered!" he exclaimed.

Before he could close the door, I stepped into the room, and presently found myself face to face with the battered writing machine. And you'll never believe what I am going to tell you! The machine was still writing. In fact, it continued to go for some time after I entered the room. That will give you some idea of Patten's punching power.

By the way, here's a bit of news that may interest you. It's entirely aside from the interview. Patten is just putting the finishing touches on another big baseball serial. Keep this fact quiet. He'd be furious if he knew that I had told you.

"I'd like a few words with you," I began, as gently as possible.

"How much a word do you pay?" he asked eagerly. Then, realizing that he had made a mistake, he hastened to apologize. "Pardon my commercialism," he pleaded. "What can I do to, or rather, for you?"

"Tell me something of your past."

All the color fled from his cheeks.



*Sincerely yours,  
Gilbert Patten*

In his fright he offered the writer a good cigar—a regular ten-center.

"Spare me!" he implored.

His grief was pitiable. I realize that there are far pleasanter sensations than having all the dark deeds of one's life dragged out by the roots, but what was I to do? My orders were to bring in Patten's past, dead or alive.

"Impossible," I returned firmly. "Slip me the bad news."

HE began pacing up and down the room, as if uncertain where to begin. Suddenly he stopped and bestowed an affectionate pat on several hundred sheets of manuscript which were awaiting shipment to the market. This seemed to calm him.

"In the first place," he began slowly, "I was born——"

"The name of the first place, please?" I interrupted.

"Corinna, Maine. But here, don't get this thing mixed up. I was only born once."

"In Corinna?"

"Any place."

Briefly, Mr. Patten reviewed his boyhood days in Perun—I mean Corinna—laying stress on his stay in Corinna Union Academy, one of the best known of the smaller schools in the Pine Tree State, and passing lightly over the plundering of birds' nests, jam larcenies, and the snowballing of some of Corinna's first, second, and third citizens.

"Up to that time, my life was practically blameless," Patten explained.

"Had the literary fever asserted itself in any way?"

"Not a hint of it. No; my parents had done no writing. No one can point a finger at them in that way."

Pausing long enough to let this fact sink in, he went on: "I sold my first story when I was seventeen."

"How much did you get for it?"

"Three dollars. And you can go the limit in explaining how big that trio of American beauties looked to me at that time. Every time I looked at it—which was all the time—I felt sorry for the Mint."

"Did you try to curb the habit after that?"

"I'm afraid not. I went from bad to worse, and before I was twenty I was the owner of a weekly newspaper. You can spell that weekly with or without an 'a.' After I had accumulated seven hundred and fifty dollars in debts, my parents waited on me in a body and informed me that I would have to retire from journalism. A few weeks later I found a buyer for the paper. I introduced him to my subscriber, but not until he had paid me my price. I came to New York after that, and took up story writing. I have been at it ever since."

HE looked at me for further instructions. "Go on, go on," I urged. "Your story interests me strangely."

"I cannot recall offhand," Patten resumed, "just how many stories I have written. I have had about twenty books published. Most of my stories have some sport for a background. Early in my career I realized the demand among the young men of this country for stories of this type, and, in order to help supply that demand, I posted myself in the details of many branches of sport. As I am fond of athletics, this was not a hard task."

"It has been suggested that you must have played baseball at some time in your life."

Patten laughed good-naturedly. "Baseball is my favorite dish," he declared. "I was a player at one time. But my ability never caused the big-league scouts any worry. I spend about six months of the year in Camden, Maine, and for several seasons I was manager of the Camden team in the Knox County League."

"Where do you spend the rest of the year?"

"Part of it in New York; the rest traveling about the country."

"What do you consider your best work?"

"The Boltwood stories."

"Do you happen to have a favorite author concealed about your person?"

"Ralph Boston on the first ballot," came the prompt reply.

"One word more, Mr. Patten."

"That will cost you two cents," he returned.

"How do you keep in condition?" I asked.

He drew himself up, and appeared to be standing on his own shoulders. Then he begged me to tap him on the chest, ostensibly for the purpose of seeing how utterly indestructible it was, but really for the purpose of having some excuse for hitting me back. I did not fall into the trap.

"Why," said the author, "I don't do much to keep in shape. I exercise regularly, and seldom eat anything but food."

"Do—do—do you drink?"

"Wait till I get my hat," returned Patten joyously.

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### The Fate of Crassus

THE month of December, B. C. 53, in what is now Asiatic Turkey, was fought one of the decisive battles of history, says the Reverend T. B. Gregory, in the *New York American*. At Carrhæ the Parthians killed a Roman proconsul, annihilated a Roman army, and precipitated the rivalry between the two Roman citizens which was to end in the overthrow of the republic and the establishment of the empire.

And all this was brought about by a lot of semibarbarous nomads, who, as the Romans thought, had no military ability whatever and were not even worthy of serious consideration.

Crassus, who, with Cæsar and Pompey, formed the "first triumvirate," being ambitious of renown and desirous of increasing his store of worldly goods, set out with an army of fifty thousand men to conquer the Parthians. He thought the job would be an easy one. The legions were invincible, and, while they had never as yet met the Sons of the Desert, no fear was felt as to the outcome of the expedition.

Striking boldly into the desert, Cras-

sus came up with the enemy a little to the eastward of the Euphrates, and there began at once one of the most remarkable fights of history. The Parthian force, composed entirely of cavalry, formed about the Romans in a circle, which was slowly drawn tighter and tighter as the struggle wore on.

Riding close up to the legionaries, the Parthians would rain their deadly arrows upon them and then suddenly ride away. The Romans charged with splendid courage, but they might as well have charged the wind or the flying clouds of heaven. Closer and closer drew the death circle and thinner and thinner grew the legions. On the one side, there was no surrender, and on the other, no mercy. Slowly but remorselessly, the work of destruction went on, and presently Crassus was dead and his army annihilated.

The "Parthian arrow" did its work well, and the ghost of the dead army, flitting back to Rome, made the masters of the world shiver to the very marrow in their bones. That ghost was doubly significant. It meant that Crassus' army was dead and that the great republic was ready for the shroud; for, just as the Parthians had crushed Crassus, the great Julius was about to crush Pompey and establish the imperial rule.

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### A Practical Woman

HIS idea of a practical woman is one who can get as much pleasure out of changing the chiffonier to where the dresser stood and the dresser to where the chiffonier stood, as she would find in buying a new rug for the dining room.

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### The Usual Procedure

AN army bride always cuts the cake with her husband's saber."

"A pretty custom. What about it?"

"But the present sabers are too heavy for brides."

"That's bad. We'll petition the secretary of war to have sabers made lighter."



# Around the World in Thirty Days



By *Albert Dayson Terhune*

## ON THE WAY.

A summary of the chapters that took the travelers from New York, through Europe and Siberia, to the Japanese coast.

**K**ENT STEELE, a wealthy young lawyer, and a prospective candidate for the district attorneyship, bets fifty thousand dollars with "Con" Shevlin, a political boss, that he can make a tour of the world, beat Royden, the man who is trying to smash the record of world tours for the *New York Planet*, and be at home before the political campaign opens. He has just written a proposal of marriage to Ruth Graeme, but he sends her a telegram, explaining his sudden departure, and starts on his trip within an hour after the wager is made. Royden has already sailed on the *Brandenburg*, and Steele overtakes the ship near Nantucket by means of an aeroplane and gets aboard. The rival globe circlers race neck and neck through England, France, and Germany, but Royden is arrested in the latter country for flagging a mail train, and Steele is held in Russia as a nihilist. An American consul secures Steele's release, and the rivals meet again on the run through Siberia. Their train is delayed, and Royden steals a locomotive and runs away with it. Steele goes up in a dirigible balloon, and is carried across the barren wastes by a cyclone. The balloon is wrecked, and Steele is picked up by the train he desired to catch. After exciting adventures in Vladivostok he gets to Tsuruga, Japan, and makes a dash for the eastern coast in a motor car. Royden has taken the same route, just ahead of him, and when Steele arrives at the village of

Chaka he finds the native fishermen up in arms, bent on violence to all foreigners.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE FANATICS.



**A**S the horde of shouting, gesticulating natives advanced menacingly to meet the automobile containing Steele and the Japanese chauffeur, the traveler observed a high cement wall with a large gateway at the left of the road, about midway between the auto and the seething mob.

"That is the American mission; I know the honorable missionary well," said the chauffeur, trying to preserve his Japanese stoicism in spite of his terror of the rioters.

At that moment, the great gate of the mission swung wide open, and an old man appeared, beckoning the imperiled wayfarers to enter. The chauffeur, without slackening speed, veered sharply to the left. Tipping dangerously, the car wheeled and plunged into the newly opened gap in the wall. Under the quick application of the brake, it came to a jolting halt within the dark space beyond the gate, which closed

behind it with a clang. The uproar from the lane outside instantly became muffled, but it did not cease.

Presently a lantern was lighted, and Steele saw that he was in a paved courtyard, on one side of which rose the wall, and on whose three other sides were doors and windows. The white-bearded man in linen clothes, who had opened the gate, was stepping forward to greet him. Behind him were several other men—two of them white, the rest evidently native servants.

"We were fortunate in seeing your lights," said the elderly man, "as you coasted down the slope. On the chance that you might be making for the mission, we ran to the gate. I am thankful that we were in time."

"And I thank you with all my heart," returned Steele, springing to the ground and grasping the proffered hand. "I would not give much for our chances if we were out there now," he added, as the uproar in the lane rose to a fiercer note.

"The walls are strong," said the missionary. "They were built for such emergencies. Let me introduce myself. I am Doctor Hoover, the head of this mission."

"And I am Kent Steele," answered the traveler. "I am making a tour of the world in a race with another man from New York."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the host. "We see the newspapers rarely here in Chaka. We shall be much interested in hearing of your race."

Turning, he presented the two other missionaries; then introduced his wife, and explained that his two daughters and his niece were in the house.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Steele," apologized Mrs. Hoover, "that you should see Chaka under such conditions. Our people at heart are kindly enough—or they would be if only their hot-headed agitators would not stir them up against all foreigners. It seldom happens nowadays; this is the first uprising in nearly a decade."

"Some superstition?" asked Steele. "What is the cause this time?"

"I had not meant to tell you, Mr.

Steele," answered the missionary with visible reluctance, "for it is no fault of yours. Just a little while before you arrived another white man passed here in an automobile on his way to the harbor where the tender of a large steam yacht was waiting for him. He was urging his chauffeur to run at top speed, I am told, and in one of our narrow lanes the heavy machine struck and knocked down a frail teakwood *torii* and demolished it."

"A *torii*?" queried Steele. "What is that?"

"One of those peculiar, graceful arches that you see on all roads in the vicinity of temples in Japan. They are called prayer gates, and are placed as warnings to the traveler of his approach to a temple or sacred place of the Buddhists. The man in the auto would have done less to enrage the peasants had he run down and injured a man. They are very jealous of their sacred things, and the word went through the village like a lightning flash that a foreigner had demolished a *torii* and gone on his way unpunished. I am told by my faithful Japanese servants that the native chauffeur of the auto was so terror-stricken by the accident that he deserted his machine and fled on board the yacht with his employer."

"And now, I suppose, they are feeling very bitter toward any white man in an automobile," said the guest, wondering whether Royden had knocked down the *torii* by accident, or design. "I can understand it."

"They were gathering near the wrecked prayer gate, expressing their indignation," answered the missionary, "when they saw the lights of your car on the hill. That was enough for them! Now the poor people have lost their heads completely and are ready to exterminate all the foreigners within reach."

"You think they will attack the mission, Doctor Hoover?"

"It is probable that they will. They use no reason once they are wrought up by some fancied outrage like this."

"If I were not taking refuge here, would they attack the mission?"

"Yes, assuredly. Why?"

"Because, if my presence is their only reason for attacking you——"

"You would not be insane enough, surely, to leave us and go out into that riot—to sacrifice yourself for us? They would tear you limb from limb."

"Better than have them do the same thing to all the rest of you."

"It is too late," said Doctor Hoover. "The sacrifice would not help us now. I tell you this on my solemn word. Set your mind at rest on that."

"The mission can stand a siege?"

"So far as danger of storming it is concerned, yes; but we are not provisioned. We had not expected trouble. We have food for barely a day within these walls."

"Is there a consulate in Chaka?"

"No. There is a French consular agent at Kuwana, but none nearer."

"You have a wireless apparatus, my chauffeur informs me."

"Yes; on the roof. It was installed last spring by my son, whom I will present to you. The natives think it is some manifestation of a foreign demon. My son has also piped an excellent spring over there by the wall and provided us with a convenient water supply. He gets the necessary pressure by means of a pump and compressed-air tank, and that hydrant you see there is for use in case of fire."

The unceasing rising and falling murmur of excited voices beyond the wall reminded the two men presently that it was time to take some practical measures for defense. Steele asked again for the wireless operator, and Doctor Hoover called his son—a keen-looking fellow of seventeen or eighteen—from the house. A few words assured Steele that the wireless apparatus, while "homemade," was thoroughly practicable and ready for use. The young man was proud of his scientific achievements, and enthusiastic over the possibility of putting them to serious use.

"Will you please send this message at once?" asked Steele, writing some-

thing on the back of an envelope. "And after that will you send this?" he continued, as he wrote a second message. "There," he added, turning back to Doctor Hoover, "that ought to solve the difficulty, which is only fair on my part, since I got you all into it. Also, it ought to enable me to continue my race—even though handicapped pretty heavily. It all depends on when those two messages are picked up."

The missionary's son lost no time in getting to the house with the messages and to his station on the roof.

"I sent the first wireless to Washington," Steele went on, "or rather to be picked up by the nearest wireless station along the coast here, relayed to Yokohama and hence cabled to Washington. I explained that the mission was attacked and asked leave to act as United States representative here, in the absence of any local consul on the ground."

"Will they grant that at Washington?" asked the missionary in wonder. "And if they do, what is there that you can——"

"They will grant it," said Steele. "I am known to the secretary of state, to whom I cabled. So I am not going to waste precious time waiting for the answer. The second message I sent was a call to the first of Uncle Sam's ships that may happen to catch it. It is a summons to come here at full speed and carry the white residents of Chaka to the nearest place of safety. There is usually a United States scout cruiser somewhere in these waters at this season. I am counting on her picking up my message. The nearer she is to Chaka, the sooner, of course, she will reply to our call. So I hope none of us will be compelled to go hungry long."

Suddenly, as they stood talking, a wicker basket full of blazing tar flew like a meteor over the walls and into the courtyard. With the utmost coolness a native servant filled a bucket from a barrel by the side of the house and dashed the water on the fire basket. Doctor Hoover motioned to his wife to go indoors, as a second flaming missile was flung.

"This is going to be more serious than I thought," he said to Steele. "I am glad you sent those messages. They will try scaling ladders next."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE FISHERMEN'S SIEGE.

THE solid gates of the mission shook with the impact of a heavy blow. Steele, peering through an iron grille, saw that six men were holding horizontally an eight-foot piece of heavy timber. As he watched they drove it once more with full force against the gates.

The narrowness of the lane prevented them from swinging back the battering-ram to any distance and from getting a running start. Thus the shock of impact was lessened, though it was still severe enough to shake the portals almost from their massive hinges, and to send showers of loosened cement pattering from near-by portions of the wall into the courtyard.

Another and yet another fire basket hurtled over the wall, and one of the stolid native servants repeated the earlier performance of throwing buckets of water over them, which extinguished the blaze before damage was done.

"They can keep that sort of recreation up for a year," said Steele, in grim amusement. "There is nothing inflammable in the courtyard, and the gates, for all the harm done to them so far, will hold firm, I think."

"They judge our courtyard by others in Chaka," replied the missionary. "Most courtyards here are choked with firewood, rubbish, furniture, and all sorts of inflammable odds and ends. A fire basket tossed into one of them would smoke out the occupants of the court and of its house in no time. When they find they haven't set anything afire they'll try new tactics. They will give up pounding, too, when they realize how solid our gates are. Then we shall have to look out for trouble, for they will try to scale the wall. That will be more serious."

"The wall is high," commented Steele.

"Yes, and the top is strewn with broken glass," added Doctor Hoover, "but it is eighteen inches broad. If a man could gain a footing through the broken glass——"

"How are you going to guard against that?"

"I—I had not thought," confessed the missionary.

"What firearms have you in the mission?" inquired the traveler.

"They who take up the sword," quoted Doctor Hoover, "'shall perish by the sword.' This is the house of peace; it harbors no weapons."

"No weapons!" exclaimed Steele in dismay. "A dozen people—some of them women—are to hold this place against hundreds of fanatics, and without a single weapon!"

"You carry none, then?"

"I bought a good revolver at Vladivostok, but it was in the valise I lost there. Another pistol is with my luggage somewhere in Siberia. Chauffeur, do you happen to have a gun about you?"

"No, sir," answered the Japanese, "I never carry one. In most parts of my country it is never needed."

The throwing of fire baskets had ceased. The futile pounding on the gate died away. A minute of comparative silence prevailed in the choked lane outside, broken only by the shuffle of many bare feet and the breathing of low-voiced orders. Some new move was apparently brewing. Steele went to the gate, slipped open the narrow iron slide and peeped out. As he did so a sharp metal point flashed through the slit. He jerked back his head barely in time to miss receiving the keen, curved blade of a fish spear full in the face. As it was, the edge grazed his cheek.

"Not a very hopeful prospect for peeping Toms," observed Steele, as he quickly slid shut the panel. "Lucky that these fisher folk have no firearms. I couldn't have dodged a bullet as easily as that."

The clamor of voices rose again to a

yell. The gongs that had fallen silent for a space were beaten clangorously once more. There was a light thud against the side of the wall.

"Put out the lantern," ordered Steele. "There is enough light on the other side from all those torches to make the wall top as bright as day for us. I don't want them to be able to see us. Their eyes will be dazzled by their own torch-lights. That will help us. Ready, there!" he added to the native servants who had provided themselves with long bamboo poles—the only weapons available.

A fisherman armed with a fish spear mounted the ladder whose thud Steele had heard as it was placed against the wall. The man leaped atop the wall, spear poised for a throw. Evidently he was unaware of the glass upon the wall top. As he leaped upon it it bit deep into the soles of his naked feet. With a howl of pain he lurched backward. A muffled crash and a series of angry yells indicated that he had fallen upon the heads of his comrades.

"Good!" exulted the chauffeur.

"They will know better next time," said Steele grimly, half to himself.

"They will not try again," observed the clergyman.

"I think they will try again," said Steele, "but they will know better than to cut their feet on the glass. Look!"

Silhouetted against the glare that rose from the lane, the wall's summit seemed suddenly to have come to life. Dark, oddly flapping shapes tossed against the red background and waved to and fro along the line of the wall's coping.

"What is it?" asked the missionary.

"They are throwing their spare garments on top of the wall," answered the sharper-eyed Steele. "They are covering the glass for a distance of thirty feet or so with a matting of cloaks and shirts. With that upholstery of clothes a dozen men can stand on the wall without cutting their feet."

Soon there was a thudding along various places on the wall directly beneath the padded stretch on top, as ladders were raised. At almost the same instant a half dozen heads showed black

above the wall's edge, and as many men climbed upon the cloth-protected space. Steele and the other men in the inclosure brandished their clubs and poles and prepared to resist an onslaught, but one of the six fishermen—a huge, brawny fellow with an air of authority—lifted his hand and indicated that he had something to say.

"One of the chief men of the village," whispered the missionary to Steele. "He wishes to parley with us."

As the hubbub lessened somewhat in obedience to the big fisherman's commanding gestures, he began to speak in Japanese. He informed Doctor Hoover that the mission and all its regular inhabitants would be spared if they would at once deliver the stranger to the people for punishment; otherwise the mission would be sacked and burned and all within it slaughtered. The Japanese servants, as they listened, drew together in a whispering knot, staring at Steele through the darkness. The white men glanced nervously at each other.

The missionary replied quietly in the same language that he would give all possible protection to the guest who had sought shelter within his walls, and explained gently that the village people were unreasonable and unjust in their desire to wreak vengeance upon an innocent traveler for the unfortunate act of another man who was beyond their reach.

The village hero had no ear for reason. He scowled angrily and poured forth a torrent of abuse and threats. The stranger must be given up at once, he said, or the outraged people would pull down the walls of the mission and take the lives of all those found within. He turned toward the villagers on the outside of the inclosure and harangued them briefly, but evidently with much effect, for they broke into howls that made the people inside the walls shudder with apprehension. Some members of the mob shouted fiery suggestions to the speaker on the wall, and with each new threat the frenzy of the fanatics grew in volume.

"My people say that you have treated them with treachery," shouted the big

fisherman to Doctor Hoover. "You have spoken soft words to them while plotting against their welfare. All the wells and springs of the village are running dry, while you have the ever-flowing spring locked inside your walls with its waters held back in iron tubes. My people say that you shall give them the water that belongs to them, and that you shall turn out the white man with the black heart who goes fast in a wagon that smokes and who would desecrate our sacred things."

"The big fellow is evidently something of an orator," said Steele quietly to the missionary. "May I ask, doctor, if I am the subject of his discourse?"

The grave old man evaded the question, fearing some act of rashness on his guest's part if he told him all. "He says that the people are angry because I have the spring inside my walls," was his answer. "I always give them freely of the water when they need it, but now I dare not open the gates."

While the burly agitator was enjoying his own eloquence, addressing alternately his followers and the mission's little band, more of the fishermen clambered to the top of the wall, and it was evident that they needed but a signal from the leader to leap down and engage the defenders in hand-to-hand conflict. Steele poised his club grimly, and made ready for the desperate scrimmage which seemed imminent.

"We want the spring that the gods gave to our ancestors!" cried one of the newcomers on the wall, brandishing a spear menacingly.

"Be still, thou fisher for the slow-moving turtle!" ordered the self-appointed orator of the occasion; "I am the one who speaks the words of our people to the dull-witted foreigners."

"Be thou still thyself!" retorted the newcomer contemptuously. "Too much talk is not for warriors; I come to fight, if the treacherous foreigners do not yield. Let us have our water!"

"Sure! Take as much as you want," called a boyish voice from the roof of the house, and as Steele and the others turned in surprise an explosive, rushing noise came from behind them, and a

powerful column of water shot over their heads and struck the impatient warrior on the wall in his midriff, knocking him from his perch like a cannon shot.

"Tell us when you have enough," shouted the missionary's son from his house top station, as the stream from the large fire hose bowled over the pompous speechmaker and two of his companions. The other rioters made frantic haste to escape the rude bath, and in a flash the wall was clear.

Steele wheeled in amazement to learn who had turned the tide of the disturbance so opportunely and in a manner so amusingly ironical. Back in the heavy shadow near the house stood a slender girl in a white frock. In her right hand she held the large nozzle of the hose pipe, while with her left she turned a lever in the hydrant to shut off the stream which had wrought such havoc among the enemy.

"Great Scott, a girl!" exclaimed the traveler, astounded. "One of your daughters, Doctor Hoover?"

"My niece," answered the old man. "She's a clever girl and a brave one."

"I asked Bob how to do it," called out the girl at the hydrant, with a nervous quaver in her voice, "and then he gave me the signal when he thought I'd better turn it on."

At the first sound of her voice, Steele started forward and uttered a muffled exclamation. Then, as she finished speaking, he cried out with evident emotion: "Ruth! Ruth Graeme!"

"My niece——" began the missionary, looking somewhat startled at his guest's outburst.

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Steele quickly. "Of course, it's impossible. For an instant I was sure I recognized this lady's voice as——"

"You ought to know my voice well enough, to be sure, Kent Steele," broke in the girl, dropping the hose and stepping forward out of the shadow. "Why is it impossible that I should be here in Japan?"

Steele was speechless. He seized her hands and peered into her face almost incredulously. "Ruth," he began, find-

ing his voice, "what does it mean? How could you get here—in Japan—when I left you in New York?"

"You didn't leave me in New York, Kent," replied the girl, "I left you there. But I'll tell you about it later. Don't forget, please, that we're all in danger here. The mob is still yelling out there, although you don't seem to hear it."

"You're right," said Steele, letting go her hands; "I must wait. They will surely make another attack."

"Mr. Steele," called the young man on the roof sharply. "I've got the wireless going! I've had an answer! The torpedo-boat destroyer *Baxter* is just off the bay, and she has picked up my call. She's on her way here."

"Good work!" called out the globe-circler. "I hope she'll beat all records for speed on this trip."

The cries and muttering of the mob had decreased to a low, steady murmur, with an occasional sharp word of command. There was little encouragement in this, for none of those in the mission familiar with the character of the peasant fishermen entertained for a moment an idea that they would become disheartened to the point of abandoning their sinister object. Presently there was a dull, cracking sound at the gates, and the stout timbers strained at their hand-forged hinges.

"Quick!" cried Steele; "barricade the gates—pile something against them! Those fellows are using strong leverage in some way, and the hinges won't stand it long, even if the timbers do."

The elderly Doctor Hoover had barely recovered from his amazement at the unexpected acquaintanceship between his niece and his guest, but he realized the new danger instantly, and quickly set his servants to dragging garden furniture, barrels, boxes, and all available heavy objects, and piling them against the groaning timbers.

"We must be ready with the hose again," said Steele. "If they break in the gates the stuff piled there will bother them and help us to hold them back a while with the water."

"I know just how to manage it now," said Miss Graeme; "I'll be ready."

"You must leave that to us, Ruth," replied Steele. "You did us splendid service in that last attack, but you must go into the house and help your aunt and your cousins to bar the doors and windows; and you must stay there."

"I'm not afraid to stay out here," asserted the girl pluckily. "I'm sure that my uncle will let me stay."

"But I will not let you," returned Steele firmly. "Please go to the house at once."

"Why, what right have you——" began Ruth indignantly.

"Merely whatever right belongs to the man who has asked you to marry him," answered Steele.

Of course it was news to her. She blushed rosily and started to speak.

"Now, go," he said. "There is no time for argument."

She turned in hopeless confusion and retreated to the house.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### A RISKY EXPERIMENT.

WITH a huge boulder as a fulcrum the fishermen wielded two levers of heavy timber against the mission gates. Only by force of numbers and great persistence did they move the large rock from the roadside to the desired point, but their labors were not fruitless; with the power exerted by twenty brawny men the levers caused the seasoned planks of the gates to crack and splinter. A skillful application of a timber to a point near one of the hinges tore loose the iron bolts and the hinge gave way. With wild cries of delight the peasants threw themselves into the attack with added zest, and in a quarter hour the gates stood without hinges, held in place by the mass of truck piled against them on the inside.

A fisherman forced a blazing torch through a wide crack and set fire to the barricade, but quick use of the hose by the defenders extinguished the flame. The firmness with which the battered gates were held by the obstruction in-

side infuriated the mob anew, and they began hacking at the planks with hatchets and pounding them with logs and timbers. One wide plank split its entire length and was quickly splintered into matchwood. This gave a considerable advantage, and in ten minutes more the whole structure was reduced to kindling. Some of the furniture and other articles in the barricade fell forward, and the peasants rushed upon the pile and began tearing it down. But the powerful column of water from the hydrant ripped through the mass and fairly threw the foremost of the attackers back upon their comrades.

The leading spirits in the mob exhorted their followers to brave the water and clear a lane through the debris to the foreigners without further delay. Quickly two score of the fishermen rushed into the blinding, smothering spray and tore madly at the obstructing mass and threw it aside.

"We are nearing the finish, Doctor Hoover," Steele observed calmly to his host. "I think you and your son can do everything possible for the protection of the women and hold the house against those ruffians until relief comes. You have your servants and these other two gentlemen to aid you. I will say good-by to you now, and I am going to attempt to create a little diversion."

Before the missionary could inquire as to his purpose he sprang to the front of his automobile, where it stood near the middle of the inclosure, cranked the engine, then took his place in the chauffeur's seat, at the wheel.

"My good friend, what are you going to do?" exclaimed the missionary anxiously.

"The best thing that I can think of to delay the attack on the house," answered Steele. "Please don't try to dissuade me. I would give myself up to the mob, but it is too late now to pacify those fellows with the sacrifice of one man. When they have thrown aside what remains of our barricade I shall charge them with this car at full speed. If I force a way through them they will pursue me for a while, I think. If they stop me I shall have

reduced their numbers by a half dozen or so, and they will tarry a while to punish me. Don't try to help me, Doctor Hoover. Give your whole attention to your women and the house. It's the only thing to do now."

The little Japanese chauffeur who had brought Steele to the mission stepped forward respectfully. "Honorable Mr. Steele," he said ceremoniously, "by your leave I shall make the charge with you. You are brave, honorable man, like samurai; never have fear. I shall take the wheel and run car very fast; you fight with the wild men when they try to stop us. You let me go, please? Very fine thing; very honorable death. Please."

"I couldn't refuse," answered Steele; "you're a trump!" He seized the little Jap's hand and shook it feelingly as he gave up the driver's seat to him, and took his place in the seat beside him, with a large club in his hand.

Doctor Hoover and the other white men started to protest against the desperate project vehemently, but Steele waved them back. "We are ready," he said grimly. "If we do not meet again, I wish you good fortune."

But there was another interruption. While young Hoover played the hose steadily upon the remaining part of the barricade and the mob worked furiously at thrusting it out of their way, Ruth Graeme ran out of the house and hurried to the automobile.

"I saw you from the window—I know what you mean to do!" she cried. "You mustn't, Kent; you shan't do it! They'll kill you."

Steele, who had stepped to the running board of the car when he saw the girl, got down and took her hand. "My dear," he said, "I've got to do it; I can't see any other way. I may divert their attention from the house for a few minutes, and in that time relief may come. I am glad of this chance to say good-by to you."

She begged piteously that he would not take the awful risk, but his quiet air of determination presently silenced her in that regard. She bowed her head and sobbed bitterly.

The attackers succeeded in making a narrow breach in the barricade, and a man with a long sword slipped through, but the direct application of the rushing stream of water drove him back.

"They'll soon have it out of their way," said Steele, "and we must be ready. Please leave us now and go with your uncle to the house."

She clung to his hand desperately. "You said—you said that you asked me to marry you," she gasped brokenly. "I didn't know it."

"I wrote to you just before I sailed on this world tour," he said hurriedly. "Then I cabled to you from Europe."

"I never got them," she moaned. "I left New York suddenly. I'm sorry, Kent—I was upset by things I heard about your political life, and I thought I didn't want to see you again."

"Calumny is one of the penalties of public life," he replied kindly; "I wish you had brought the stories to me."

There was a crash from the gateway as a large section of the obstruction was swept aside. Ruth screamed and fainted in Steele's arms.

"Poor little girl," he said hoarsely. "But it is better so." Then he kissed her and tenderly but hastily put her into Doctor Hoover's arms. "All of you to the house—quick!" he cried, and sprang to the seat of the car.

Without command the quick-witted chauffeur started the engine and backed the car to the rear of the yard. "Make better start here," he explained quietly; "more swift."

A concerted rush of the mob broke down and hurled aside the last resistance of the obstruction, and the water no longer checked the attack. With a roar of the unmuffled exhaust, the motor car dashed forward, meeting charge with charge. The headlights were still burning, and their glare, together with the thunderous noise of the engine, for a moment demoralized the enemy. Many of the peasants paused, then fled precipitately from the monster, but others, with the grim persistency of fanatics, stood their ground.

A dozen spears reached for the two men who crouched behind the hood,

and Steele struck them aside with a sharp sweep of his club. Two men fell in front of the car and were run over; half a dozen more were swept down like mown grass by the fender and running board. The car bumped, bounded, and slewed dangerously over the rough débris still left in and around the gateway, then plunged into the narrow road, headed perilously for the wall on the opposite side. The chauffeur, with admirable skill and coolness, turned the heavy car in the narrow space, coming within a hair's breadth of overturning it. Steele gave no commands; he fought off assailants, and left the maneuvering of the car to the faithful fellow at the wheel.

The bulk of the rioters outside the wall of the mission were massed in the road to the right of the gateway, and it was in that direction that the chauffeur drove, with characteristic courage and carelessness of personal safety. The tires of the car were slashed by the knives and spears, and the wheels were running on the rims, but the Jap meant to get every bit of speed out of the machine as long as it would stand up.

In the rear, now, a horde of men, yelling like fiends from the pit, pursued the car of destruction, and the sound of their advance gave Steele a thrill of satisfaction. His plan had worked out far better than he had dared hope that it would.

The chauffeur cried out suddenly and applied his brake. There, before them, in the darkness, was a wall, making a trap from which there was no way of escape. The rioters had smashed their lights at the first charge, and they had narrowly missed striking the wall at full speed.

As the car stopped, the pursuers doubled the volume of their bedlam, and came on like avenging demons. Steele and the chauffeur jumped from the machine and darted recklessly into a hut close by; they slammed the heavy door and barred it. An instant later the mob was screaming and leaping about the small structure, and the chauffeur explained breathlessly to Steele that one of the fishermen was clamorously be-

seething his fellows not to burn his dwelling. Presently heavy blows of stones and clubs shook the building from top to bottom.

The Jap, groping in the darkness, found a sharp sword and an ax, and with these weapons the two men made ready for their last stand.

A flash, like sheet lightning, illuminated the hut through the cracks in the thatch and planking, and startled the two occupants; but, unlike lightning, it remained, a steady glare. The shrieks of the mob instantly ceased and became a dull, growling murmur.

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Steele; "it's the warship! Now these fellows may make well of the little time they have left."

"They know very quick what the searchlight mean," said the Jap gleefully. "Once, about two years ago, these people make some revolt against Japanese government. Very soon come Japanese gunboat, light up village with searchlight, and shoot guns at the houses. Now they much afraid of warships."

Out of the night came the boom of a gun from the ship's batteries, and the noise of the rioters became even less. It was evident that the commander of the *Baxter* was firing a warning salute. Presently a peaceful stillness fell upon the vicinity of the hut. The chauffeur cautiously unbarred the door and peeped out. There was no one in sight. The fisher folk had scattered to various hiding places, terrified by the tangible menace of the ship of war. The searchlight was now playing fitfully over the town, but it discovered no scene of disorder in any quarter.

Steele and his companion, gripping their weapons to be ready for any emergency, left the hut and ran silently back along the deserted road to the mission. Before they reached the gateway they heard many voices, and as they entered the mission yard, now lighted by lanterns, they saw an officer of the United States navy and a party of twenty bluejackets, armed with rifles and a light tripod machine gun.

Doctor Hoover uttered a glad cry

at the sight of Steele, unharmed save for sundry scratches and bruises, and Ruth Graeme, pale and haggard, rushed forward without a word and threw her arms about the neck of her sweetheart, hiding her face upon his shoulder.

"Mr. Steele, I presume," said the young ensign from the warship, with an apologetic but merry smile. "If you'll permit me, sir, I am Mr. Townley, ensign, of the United States torpedo-boat destroyer *Baxter*. I have a despatch for you from Washington, by cable and wireless, and I have orders to report to you and obey your instructions, recognizing you as temporary representative of the United States government."

"Your timely arrival and your report give me a great deal of pleasure, Mr. Townley," responded Steele, smiling broadly at his unconventional position with the girl in his arms. "At the moment, you see, I am—engaged, but presently I will receive your report with proper formality."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### ROYDEN SCORES AGAIN.

THE commander of the *Baxter* agreed with Steele that the party from the mission, including the faithful native servants, should be taken on board the destroyer and transported to Yokohama, where they could remain until the Japanese authorities had restored order in Chaka, which would doubtless be in a state of disaffection for some time. The authority of the United States extended only to the point of protecting and aiding its citizens and their households, but the Japanese government could be relied upon to take prompt action.

Comfortable quarters were assigned to the visitors aboard the warship, and they lost no time in seeking rest after their evening of peril and nerve-racking excitement. Steele's first act before retiring, after the proper official formalities were attended to, was to send a wireless to Yokohama, requesting the steamship company to hold the steamer

*Empress of Russia* until the arrival of the destroyer. The ship was scheduled to sail at four a. m. for America, but the world-circler had vague hopes that the company's agent might stretch his schedule for the sake of the advertising that the steamship line would derive from the newspaper accounts of the race. He sent also a dispatch to the state department at Washington, acknowledging the order to act as government representative at Chaka, and reporting the action he had taken. Then he went to bed and slept soundly for the time that he remained there. Thanks to his splendid physical condition, recuperation was a rapid process with him, and an hour's sleep would do more to repair his exhaustion than half a dozen hours would do for people of sedentary habits.

He was on deck again at six-thirty in the morning, scanning the shore line for a glimpse of Yokohama harbor. An orderly handed him a wireless message, and he read:

*Empress of Russia* sailed at six a. m. Waited two hours by order of home office for Mr. Royden, whose yacht was delayed by accident. Could not authorize further delay.

Steele turned with a shrug, and handed the message to the commander of the destroyer. "I lose this move evidently," he said coolly. "Now it's a case of getting my wits to work in quick order."

The naval officer smiled mysteriously and fingered some papers which he had brought on deck. "You'd be glad to catch that steamer, wouldn't you?" he said. "Of course, you know our limitations as to my authority to take part in a private matter; and I should judge that your own authority as chargé d'affaires at Chaka became nonactive when you left that port. However, I am still under your directions as to the disposal of you and your party. It so happens that I have a dispatch just received by wireless, ordering me to join the cruiser squadron for maneuvers off Honolulu without delay. That means that if I make an early appearance I shall receive credit for promptness and

efficiency, and I don't think a little thing like speed would be unpleasant for you just now."

"It's mighty good of you to think of helping me," responded Steele heartily; "but, my dear lieutenant, I hardly care to go to Honolulu just now. I don't see——"

The lieutenant laughed. "I'm afraid you're not up on the efficiency of our navy, Mr. Steele," he said. "You probably do not know that the *Baxter* is the finest destroyer in the navy, and that she is capable of making thirty knots an hour in a pinch. We are near Yokohama now, and little time will be lost if we put your party ashore there; then, if you so instruct me, I shall lay my course for Honolulu across the path of the *Empress of Russia*. She can't make more than twenty-one knots, at the best, and we can sail circles around her if it pleases your fancy. I'm very sure that they won't refuse to take you aboard, and you'll be well on your way in a little while."

"Lieutenant," said Steele joyously, "I hope I may have the honor to address you as admiral before the good ship *Baxter* is old enough to go to the scrap heap."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THREE AND A TIGER.

HER recent experiences had worked such a change in Miss Ruth Graeme that she no longer found the beauties of Japan alluring. Her parting with Steele when the *Baxter* touched at Yokohama was brief, but she had no difficulty convincing him that she would sail for home on the next steamer.

The missionary and his household, with the Japanese servants, planned to stay at Yokohama until they could return to Chaka with safety. The chauffeur, who had shared the perils of the adventure at Chaka with Steele, manifested a devotion to his temporary employer which was touching. He politely insisted, at first, on accompanying the traveler on his journey, and was only pacified by Steele's assurance that

he might later go to the United States and enter his service as a motor-car pilot in the mazes of New York. The globe-circler would have been glad to take with him his sweetheart, the entire mission household, and the little Jap, but he knew that there were yet before him obstacles and experiences which he must meet and fight out by himself—"He travels the fastest who travels alone."

The *Baxter* ran out of Yokohama harbor at a twenty-two knot clip and increased that to thirty as she plowed past Amaka San into the Pacific on the track of the steamer for America. The commander of the torpedo-boat destroyer was proud of his speedy craft, and he would have driven her gayly across the ocean for the convenience of his passenger if the matter of authority had not interfered.

The steamship had a good two hours' start of the war vessel, but the latter's commander made good his boast of a steady thirty-knot speed. In a little over four hours the smoke from the funnels of the *Empress of Russia* was sighted, and about half an hour later the two vessels were within signaling distance.

The commander of the destroyer signaled that he wished to put Mr. Kent Steele of New York aboard the steamer, and that if the ship would slow down he would send the passenger in a launch. The request from an officer of the United States navy was received with consideration; the captain of the liner signaled his acquiescence, and the vessel hove to. The sea was rolling in an easy swell, fanned by the trade winds, and after Steele had parted from the naval officer with many expressions of gratitude and friendship, he was ferried comfortably from one ship to the other. As he stepped from the launch to the accommodation ladder which was let over the side of the liner, the bluejackets on board the destroyer sent a ringing Yankee cheer over the water, and the steamship's passengers, lined along the rails, caught the spirit of the affair and replied with "three and a tiger."

Thus, Steele's welcome on the *Empress of Russia* was anything but cold, and he found the officers in a state of good humor which was surprising, in view of the fact that they had been called upon to stop the engines and heave to in mid-ocean to accommodate a single passenger.

"I booked my passage by wire from Tsuruga; at least, I had a ship's officer do it for me," said the new arrival to the purser, after he had thanked the captain. "I hope you have a stateroom for me."

"I am glad to say that I have," answered the officer. "I reserved a room for you, but I scarcely expected to see you come aboard about seven hours out of port."

A voice familiar to Steele sounded from the crowd. "I shouldn't have been surprised if he had dropped from a Japanese toy kite, or walked aboard in a diving suit," said Royden, smiling sourly. "I shouldn't have given him up altogether until we sighted Vancouver."

Steele turned toward him, smiled, and bowed. The man was evidently living up to his promise to play fair; he had made no move, apparently, to prevent the captain from taking his rival aboard.

Royden returned the bow perfunctorily, and added, with another wry smile: "I assure you, Steele, that I didn't lead that cheering just now; but—I congratulate you."

"Thank you," responded Steele heartily. "Allow me to congratulate you, Royden, on being so near the last lap of your trip."

"I shall order a special dinner for tonight," remarked the genial captain, "in honor of having two round-the-world racers on my ship. It's great business! Whichever of you breaks the record I shall be able to enjoy a fair slice of the glory. This is the maiden round trip of my ship, and I'll try to show 'em that we can cut three days off the round-trip record. I clipped one day and a half from the old running time on the way west, and I'll do as well or better on this run. This ship was built

to cut thirty-six hours from the old running time between Yokohama and Seattle, and I am glad to say she is making good. It'll take a tidy bit of coal to do it, but the bunkers are full—I'll throw in the furniture if we run short," he added with a smile.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### TOUCH AND GO.

THE sun was climbing up from the horizon when the passengers of the *Empress of Russia* viewed the shores of the Strait of Juan de Fuca—the Dominion of Canada to port, and to starboard the northern boundary of the United States. The water about the big liner was heaving and rolling in a growing gale; nevertheless it swarmed with small craft, and several men were taken aboard with difficulty from a tug as the big ship slowed down.

The captain was in a joyous mood, for he had beaten his westward record from the Strait, and there was every probability that he would accomplish what he had striven so hard for—to cut three days from the old round-trip time between Yokohama and Seattle. It meant an increase of pay for him.

For Steele, and Royden, too, of course, it was an occasion for rejoicing. Not a single mishap had set back the eastward progress of the *Empress of Russia* from the time she sailed out of Yokohama harbor to the present moment.

Steele had sent a message by wireless to Honolulu to be transmitted thence by cable to a friend at the Seattle Yacht Club, and he quickly found that one of these visitors was an emissary of his friend.

"Come on, Mr. Steele!" cried the man excitedly, as soon as he learned the identity of the traveler; "I've got the fastest motor boat in these waters ready to take you off. There she is, out there," he added, pointing at a long, slim boat of the racing type bobbing like a cork on the swell off the port bow. "That man at the wheel—Barbour—is the best driver of racing boats

in the Northwest, and he'll go the limit if you'll let him."

"If he hits only the high places on the waves with his keel he will hear no objection from me to-day," responded Steele gayly. "To be sure, I have everything to live for, but I—well, I want to get to Seattle. You can't get that boat alongside a second too soon, sir."

As the racer nosed her way carefully up to the accommodation ladder in response to a signal from the man on deck, another motor boat, of a similar type, pushed in beside her. Steele did not wait for a possible dispute over precedence, but ran down the ladder, leaned forward from the small grating at the bottom, caught the bobbing prow of his boat, and leaped aboard.

As the driver reversed his engine and backed away, Royden jumped into the other boat. He was in good humor, and he smiled quizzically at his rival across thirty feet of water.

"A box of cigars—New York's best—for the winner of this boat race, Steele," he called out.

"You're on!" replied Steele cheerily; "provided we follow the same course. I haven't talked with my skipper yet."

Then the two boats, with cannonading from their exhausts, shot out toward the east, and a mighty cheer went up from the passengers and crew of the *Empress of Russia*, while yachts and small craft all about blew shrill whistles and fired their little saluting guns.

The *Empress of Russia*, having discharged her two world-renowned passengers, got under way for Victoria, the first port of call on her trip through the tortuous channels to Vancouver and Seattle. The two motor-boats went under full speed, dashing through pounding waves and swirling spray, Royden's on the port of Steele's about a quarter of a mile. Presently Royden's companion headed his craft perceptibly toward the northwest.

"Evidently going straight to Victoria to make the Sound steamer for Seattle," said Steele with lively interest. "I thought Royden would do better than that, Mr. Barbour."

The motor-boat expert smiled. "No doubt Mr. Royden's driver dissuaded him from trying to navigate the Sound in a small boat," he said calmly. "The seas are running dangerously high today; it makes pretty heavy work even for the steamboat pilots. But," he added reassuringly, "I am absolutely under your orders, Mr. Steele."

"Thank you," responded Steele heartily. "I want to make Seattle in your boat, Mr. Barbour, if you are willing. Mind, I don't insist on it; I have no right to place you and your fine boat in jeopardy for my personal ambition; but if you are willing to take chances I shall be grateful."

"For your own sake," said the other coolly, "I must warn you that it's seriously dangerous to run the Admiralty Inlet in this boat in such weather as this. I am willing to take any chances that you are."

"That's mighty white of you," replied the passenger. "I want to get to Seattle in the shortest possible time. If you are willing to make the run, go ahead."

"That goes," said Barbour, without hesitation, and he set the motor humming like a trip hammer.

#### TO BE CONCLUDED.

The next section of this serial—the concluding one—will be in the April number of TOP-NOTCH, out on March 1st. As this magazine is published twice a month, you never have to wait long for any particular story that you want to read. Back numbers may be obtained of news dealers or the publishers.

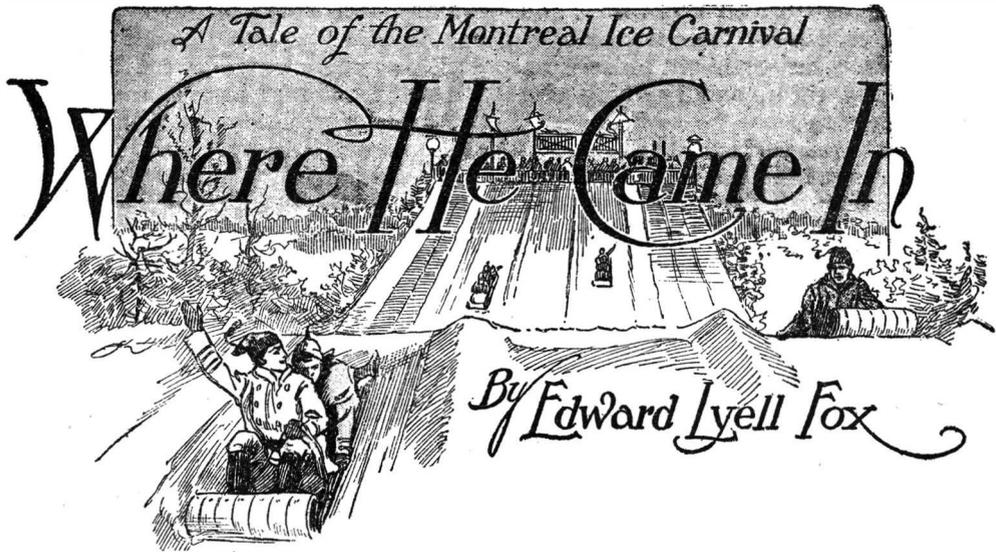
### The Great Man

MY friends, it has been my happy privilege to be useful in many ways, and to contribute what I could to the public good. It is every man's duty to do that, and I do not want to take any credit to myself for anything that I have done, the gratification of feeling that I have been helpful to my fellow men being all the reward I ask. It has been my privilege to come into close association with many of the most distinguished men of the world, and to have had many of them for my close friends,

and, while this has been a privilege and a pleasure, it has given me no greater gratification that I feel in standing before you to-night, for the common people are, after all, quite as useful as those of us who, through accident or otherwise, find ourselves in the more exalted positions in life.

"I quite agree with my old friend, Andrew Carnegie, that—— But I did not come before you to-night to speak of myself or of the many good causes to which I have given my support as well as a part of my income. The question before us to-night has to do with that most sacred of all institutions, the home, than which there is nothing in the world so dear to the true and normal human heart. Who would not agree with one who has said, 'He is happiest, be he king or peasant, who finds peace in his home'? It is the home, my good friends, the home, that calls forth, or should call forth, the best that is in us." That's how the great man talks in public.

Listen to him now talking at home: "Where in thunder is my collar button? It's a mighty queer thing that I never can find a collar button when I want one most. I bet if I bought nineteen gross of collar buttons to-day, there wouldn't be one in the house to-morrow. Somebody find a collar button and put it in my evening shirt. Get me a clean handkerchief, some one, and here you, Maria, brush up my evening suit. I should think you'd have pride enough in your husband to want to have him look his best when he stands before the public. If you appreciated him as much as—— Pull down that window, somebody! Want me to catch my death of cold dressing with a window open? Where is my evening tie? Where is it? Strange thing to me that a man can't—— Find that tie, somebody, and you or one of the girls come here and tie it. Help me on with my coat. Where's my gloves? Where's my umbrella? It's enough to make any man yell when he can't find one of his things and a thousand people are waiting to hear him speak and fussing if he is late. It beats time," et cetera.



## CHAPTER I.

### AN ADVERTISEMENT ANSWERED.

**D**RUMSEAUGH puzzled Arden, disturbed him unaccountably; but as Arden gazed out of a window of the little Scotch boarding house, he was glad he had come to Montreal, where he was born, but to which he had not returned since leaving it at the age of six. Across the broad Place Vigé, a stream of pedestrians pouring from the Canadian Pacific offices wound under the leafless trees and disappeared down side streets. One by one, the big arc lights began to splutter, giving to the snow a bluish tint, unnatural, gorgeous. Arden knew that the sandy-haired Drumseagh did not call his guests down for dinner until seven, so there was still time to watch the panorama of the Place as other near-by office buildings gave up their workers—a hurrying panorama, moreover, for Montreal was beginning its white Mardi Gras, its seven-day fête of winter sports and receptions; and the workers must hurry home to dress for the night.

Arden heard the door open and there was Drumseagh. He had met the Scotchman for the first time at the railroad terminal, only two hours earlier. Arden recalled him towering in a group

of hotel agents, peering at the faces of all who left the train, and finally seizing Arden while he extolled the merits of his little boarding house. But now Drumseagh held a burning waxed taper. Obviously he had come to light the lamps. Arden judged him the kind of a Scotchman who believes gas or electric companies cheat you. In the yellow taper light, Drumseagh's face seemed sharpened by contrast with the enveloping gloom. Arden looked upon a lean man with high cheek bones and thinning hair, his brows black and bushy, surmounting a pair of tiny, peering eyes. A "plain man," to use Drumseagh's own expression; a "sly" one, too, those who knew him long might add. Arden had known him only two hours.

As he shuffled about the room, he called a pleasant good evening to his young guest. Responding cheerfully, Arden turned to watch the busy square. He saw, though, that old Drumseagh was not to be put off. Instead of hurrying on and lighting the other lamps in the house, he lingered.

"Were you thinking of staying in Montreal long?"

Knowing the species of male boarding-house keeper can be just as inquisitive as the female, Arden resigned himself to the inevitable.

"I came up just to see the White Fête," he explained, "the storming of the ice palace, the torchlight procession, the toboggan races, and anything else that's interesting."

And that was perfectly true. Arden had so arranged his business as to take a week off in midwinter. He was young and a hustler—one of those men who believe in doing a year's work in ten months instead of in twelve.

"Hm! Just to see the White Fête, eh?"

Arden felt that the Scotchman was regarding him doubtfully. Indeed from the moment of Arden's arrival he had seemed strangely suspicious. It had annoyed him almost as soon as he had entered the Drumseough house. He experienced almost immediately a feeling of surveillance. About to go elsewhere, he reflected it would be less troublesome to put up with Drumseough's prying nature for the few days he would be in town.

"Did you see this?"

Drumseough offered him a Montreal newspaper. Arden saw that one of the small advertisements was marked with pencil. A little curious now, he read:

WANTED—A stranger in Montreal not averse to earning considerable money for a few hours' work. One night, all that is requested, and excitement promised. Call alone at 10 St. Beauprey Street.

As he looked up, Arden imagined that the Scotchman was watching him more closely. "It kind of struck me that you might be interested in that, being as you have so much time on your hands—eh?"

He peered at Arden intently. Arden was running over the words—"one night"—"call alone"—"ten St. Beauprey Street." Even the address sounded romantic. The fête wouldn't really begin until the next afternoon; why not embark on the adventure?

"Tell me, Mr. Drumseough," he said abruptly, "how do you reach St. Beauprey Street? I suppose I used to know the way when I was a boy, but I couldn't find it now, I am afraid."

With a readiness that was next door

to eagerness, Drumseough gave his boarder the required directions. As Arden swung along Rawton Street he felt the thrill that comes from an expectation of you-know-not-what. On all sides old-fashioned brick buildings were discharging streams of people who promptly lost their identity in the crowd that swarmed on through the streets. He felt them falling into step with him by the hundreds. The world was in step with him! He was to have an adventure in old Montreal! Appreciatively he recognized the different nationalities—a cosmopolitan city, Montreal, with its mixture of French, Spanish, Scotch, English, and Yankee.

The evening was cold and his pace quickened. It couldn't be far now. The Scotchman had said "ten squares down and three to your left." Following these directions, Arden presently found himself in a French quarter. He recognized it instantly from the names written across the shop windows on either side. It was very French, the tricolor even flying from the tops of many small brick buildings. At the corner of Rawton Street he turned into St. Beauprey; soon he stopped before one of those dwellings, now shabby, but bearing traces of former prosperity.

Number ten St. Beauprey Street was a little sandstone structure with a curious white stoop, smudged with dirt. That it was an old building, Arden instantly recognized from the brass knocker on the door. Hesitating on the sidewalk, he saw it was in the heart of what appeared to have been a fashionable residence quarter. Most of the old-fashioned houses had been transformed into shops or else stood as if on their dignity, silent, aloof.

It puzzled Arden to see no light in number ten, nor a sign of life. Half wondering if he had called at a wrong time, he ascended the steps. Seeing no doorbell, he lifted the knocker, and it fell with a resounding crash against the heavy wooden portal. Almost immediately he heard a heavy key turning. The door creaked open; a servant stood bowing, and Arden found himself looking down a long hall at the end of

which appeared to be an occupied room. He could see a yellow shimmer of light between a rift in the heavy curtains.

He was telling the servant his mission, making him understand with difficulty, for the man was French, when abruptly, although he was in the middle of a sentence, the servant left him without a word of apology and went scurrying downstairs into the basement. Then something clicked, and overhead a cluster of tiny glass bulbs flashed into light. Full upon his face they blazed down, and Arden felt they had been lighted so that some one might observe him. He may have been right, for, after a brief pause, the curtains down the hall stirred and a man came toward him with extended hand.

"You are the young gentleman who has answered our advertisement?" said the newcomer, with a courteous smile. "If you will be good enough to come into the other room we will discuss business."

His manner was most friendly, yet Arden was aware of an instant dislike for him. Perhaps it was his smile, too open, affected. He seemed to be a Canadian; his English was perfect. Arden found him most gracious, overgracious. Insisting upon his young caller going first, he was content to follow, thrusting his hand into his coat pocket, however, and gripping something, holding it there. Down the hall they walked, Arden a little mystified but unsuspecting, the other man alert, on guard.

Once in the room he waved Arden to a comfortable chair. Everything seemed to be done to put him at his ease, yet upon Arden the effect was exactly opposite. He still felt that he was being watched—a feeling that did not leave him, when the servant who had abruptly dashed away at the sound of the telephone now slid from behind the curtains as though he had just come up from below. Somehow that servant annoyed Arden. Apparently the fellow had no business in the room, yet he insisted upon lingering, always within call.

Arden turned from him to a study of the stranger. He felt that the other

had been studying him as if reflecting before speaking. Finally when he spoke it was with caution.

"Visiting friends in the city?—judge from your accent you are from the United States?"

"Yes," replied Arden. "I live in New York."

This reply seemed to delight the man greatly. He introduced himself as Duval.

"Queer," thought Arden; "that name's French. This man isn't French!"

"I take it," said the other, lifting his eyebrows, "that you came here to see our winter carnival, the tobogganing, and sports." At Arden's nod, he went on: "I take it that you would welcome a little diversion, since you have answered our advertisement. Frankly it was calculated to attract some one like you." He paused to bring into his tone what he judged suitable admiration. "Some one with plenty of keen life in him, a sense of fair play—and nerve!"

## CHAPTER II.

### A COOL PROPOSAL.

AS Duval continued, Arden's curiosity, already whetted, fairly leaped.

"I suppose you know all about the toboggan race to-morrow night?" said Duval. "We Canadians make a great deal of tobogganing. This contest means as much to us as the playing of the championship baseball series does to you in the States. Now it happens that I am particularly interested in the Mont Royal race."

Arden knew about that race. Who in Montreal did not? In a city renowned for winter sport, it was to be what the newspapers liked to call "the classic of the season." Arden knew that after the ceremony of the storming of the ice palace, the toboggans would begin racing down the long Mont Royal slide—a wild race down an incline three miles long and as slippery as ice. He knew, too, that almost the whole city would turn out to watch the sport.

"Before telling you what I want you

to do," continued Duval, "I'm going to impose upon your good nature with a little story. Twenty years ago my father, Philip Duval, was the most prosperous manufacturer of toboggans in Canada. To-day the Duval toboggan is losing popularity; indeed the business I inherited has for the past two years lost money steadily. Now, that is true enough of many concerns, but in my case it was due to trickery. The man my father trusted, whom he had lifted up from nothing, making him the superintendent of our plant, stole the secrets of construction that made the Duval toboggan the fastest in Canada. Then getting backing, using our secrets, getting away our best workmen, our best racing men, he gained a big vogue for the new toboggan, and for the past two years has been profiting at our expense."

Arden had heard similar tales. They were not uncommon in American business. But his was not a cynical nature, and the dishonesty of it affected him. As he looked at Duval, he saw a man who seemed so hopeless, beaten. In that moment Arden lost some of his first unfavorable impression and felt sorry for him.

"But I'm not through with them yet," continued Duval. "They fought me in the dark. Now I'm going to fight back. I tried to meet their unfair methods with fair ones. It has got me nothing. You've got to fight trickery with trickery. Here is where you come in."

Puzzled, Arden wondered what was going to be asked of him. Duval began talking swiftly. "Don't you see, if a Duval toboggan wins this race to-morrow night, it will mean our business salvation. Let a toboggan maker win the Mont Royal and he is on easy street. There are thousands of toboggans sold every year in Canada. People like to buy the make that won the big race. You see, they like to point to it and say: 'This is a duplicate of the model that broke the record on the Mont Royal course.' Now, I've got to win that race. If I do, it means we'll sell thousands of Duval toboggans and save the company. If we lose it means fail-

ure. Also, the toboggan we've got to beat is the Coburn. It's named after my father's old superintendent."

Still Arden could not see "where he came in." He wondered if he wasn't listening to a victim of business depression, to a man whose mind had been unhinged by continued worries. Duval's next words, however, showed that he was far from being unbalanced.

"It seems to me," he said, "that in a case like this the end justifies the means. I must make absolutely sure of winning. The Coburn toboggan must not go as fast as it is capable of going. There are several ways of doing this. One would be to put ashes on the slide in the Coburn's path. That would be too crude. The ashes would be seen and reported. There would be an investigation. The way I can beat the Coburn is to secure a man who will ride on it as passenger and who will be intrusted with the spike brake. It will have to be a man with influence, for to be taken as passenger is indeed an honor in Montreal. That's why I'm particularly interested in you who this evening's newspaper said are in Montreal for the carnival—Mr. Arden, the New York Athletic Club tobogganist. Am I right?"

Arden nodded; he guessed what was coming.

"Now, sir," continued Duval, "I am looking for a man who will jam that spike brake in the slide all the way down and hold up the Coburn's speed. The man steering won't get on to this, for he'll be too busy holding the sled to his course." Duval paused. "You've heard my story. Do you think I'm justified in winning this way? Do you think I am justified in fighting unscrupulous foes with their own weapons? Will you try to ride as passenger on the Coburn toboggan? Coming to Montreal as a member of New York's most prominent athletic club, it will be easy for you to secure permission."

So incensed was Arden at the man's proposal that for a moment he with difficulty refrained from answering him as he deserved. Emphatically Arden did not think Duval justified. It was

treachery, it was using a knife in the back, and if none of these things, it made for crooked sport. He knew he was face to face with a situation that needed delicate handling. Obviously it was a plot to make money on the part of two men—Duval and Coburn. He knew that the Mont Royal races were never organized for this purpose. He must gain time to consider some way to outwit the rascals. He felt that were he to refuse Duval outright, that he would immediately take steps to secure some one who could be bribed into doing this thing. Better hold him off until the night of the race, and thus insure a clean contest without putting the stigma of an official investigation on the big event. Accordingly, choosing noncommittal words, Arden said:

"What you have told me is very interesting. I shall be glad to have you tell me just what you want me to do. Only you'd better take it up with me to-morrow, before the race. I'm in a hurry now. Meanwhile, suppose you tell me the name of the man who will handle the Coburn toboggan, so that I can see him and talk with him as I shall want to."

"Of course, of course," agreed Duval. "By all means you should become acquainted with him; bring your New York Athletic Club influence to bear, so that he will take you as a passenger. No stranger could be taken otherwise unless a personal friend of the driver."

"And the driver's name?"

"Bob Frawley. You'll find him, I think, at the Montreal A. A. clubhouse."

Arden took up his hat to go. "Good," he said. "I'm going straight to Frawley." Perhaps the way he said that made Duval look at him sharply, but it was only a fleeting suspicion, for as Arden continued, the man smiled. "I'm at Drumseugh's," he added—"a quiet little boarding house on the Place Vigé. If you want me for anything, telephone."

Duval, the essence of courtesy, showed him to the door. Duval was delighted with the way things had gone, and as soon as his visitor departed he reflected on the wisdom of Drum-

seugh's choice. The shrewd Scotchman had done well to choose a stranger to the city, who did not appear to suspect, and who seemed willing to aid him in what he proposed.

### CHAPTER III.

#### DRUMSEUGH DOESN'T LIKE IT.

AS Arden anticipated, there was not much difficulty in meeting Frawley; nor was there any difficulty in securing Frawley's promise to let him ride on the Coburn toboggan during the race as passenger. After presenting his New York Athletic Club credentials at the Montreal A. A. clubhouse, Arden had found that hospitable institution keen to do all it could for him. No; Mr. Frawley hadn't chosen his passenger yet, and although there were a good many applications from his friends, they felt sure he would be delighted in thus entertaining a visitor from a sister athletic club in New York.

It was his good fortune to take luncheon that day with Frawley—a sturdy young chap, with a complexion a woman might have sighed for, and a trim, active figure. With a start, Arden noticed how closely he resembled Duval. In build, height, and walk the two men were identical.

"Do you know, Mr. Frawley, that you have a double in Montreal?"

Frawley laughed. "If I have, I've never seen him."

"Oh, his face isn't like yours—it isn't as big a coincidence as that; but in figure, the way you carry yourself, even your walk, you are just like him. Funny you've never met him. He's in the toboggan business. His name is Duval."

"I've never heard of him."

That struck Arden as queer. Here was Frawley, who evidently had been racing a toboggan for years, yet he had never heard of the man who had said he was one of the most prominent toboggan manufacturers in Canada.

"Are you sure?" he said finally—"positive there's no one in the toboggan business named Duval?"

Frawley laughed. "No one, unless

you can call a toboggan a person. There is one named Duval in to-night's race. But it hasn't any connection with any firm. I don't even know where it got its name from."

Arden knew instinctively that Frawley was telling the truth. He was the kind of a man whose face tells you it is impossible for him to lie. Arden recalled Duval's shifty eyes, his sly, tricky mannerisms. To Duval the comparison with this trim, young Canadian was disadvantageous. Arden asked Frawley if he knew anything about the Coburn toboggan company.

"Certainly, they're the oldest in Canada. They've been in existence sixty years."

Duval had said the Coburn was a comparatively new concern. Bit by bit Arden drew enough from Frawley to tear Duval's story to pieces. It had been a framework of untruth. Arden kept his peace, however, telling Frawley nothing. He reflected that there was nothing to gain by telling; better to find it out for himself, and not worry his new companion on the eve of his big race. If there was any plot against him—as apparently there was—if for any reason any man or group of men desired to see Frawley beaten, he would see that they did not succeed. Frawley had impressed him favorably.

By all means he, Arden, would do as Duval wished—ride with Frawley. Only instead of holding back the Coburn, he would do his utmost to help it beat the Duval toboggan. He concluded that the man's name was not Duval, that he had assumed it merely to lend truth to his story, for there was a toboggan of that name in the race. But why was the man who called himself Duval going to such lengths to secure Frawley's defeat? Because there was no toboggan manufacturer named Duval, Arden knew now why the newspaper advertisement had called for a stranger. Of course they had sought a dupe who would know nothing about the city or its tobogganing. Thus would the man known as Duval be able to "get over" his fabrication.

Leaving Frawley, Arden agreed that

they meet after dinner in Dorchester Square, and watch together the storming of the ice palace before going to the Mont Royal slide.

When Drumseagh came to his room before dinner that evening, he was garrulous, as usual. The old Scotchman seemed to be full of the toboggan race, and Arden thought to please him by chatting about it.

"Drumseagh," said he, "it happens that I'm going to be in the race to-night as a passenger. I know how to handle a toboggan myself, you know, but passenger is the best I can do; and it took pull to get that."

"What toboggan you going to ride on?"

"The Coburn?"

"With Frawley?" Drumseagh asked eagerly.

"Yes."

"Splendid!"

"Good old soul!" thought Arden. "Just because one of his boarders happens to be in the limelight to-night, he is tickled." To further humor him, he said: "And, Drumseagh, watch us! We're going to make that Coburn sled go faster than ever before. We ought to beat the Duval."

A look of suspicion crossed Drumseagh's face. Arden was puzzled. He tried to think why anything he had said should offend the Scotchman. They stood for a moment regarding each other, neither speaking. Drumseagh's brow was clouding. He seemed about to be seized with a violent fit of temper. As Arden felt his little, peering eyes, he became conscious that in their depths dwelt a positive hate. The old man's fingers began to twitch, and when it seemed as though he were going to spring at him, he turned abruptly and rushed from the room.

A few minutes later, Arden heard him fumbling around in the hall. Arden had just pushed open the door and was going out to demand an explanation of his conduct, when he heard Drumseagh's voice, keyed in alarm, speaking to one of the servants. He had evidently tried to lower it, but so intense

was its note, that its carrying power was farther than he imagined.

"If Duval telephones," Arden heard him say, "tell him I'm on my way to tefi Beauprey Street, and to wait in for me. Something important has happened."

Abruptly the downstairs door closed, and, hurrying to the window, Arden saw Drumseagh's big form go lurching down the street. He had learned enough to tell him that Drumseagh was leagued with Duval in the game to secure the defeat of the Coburn bob. Of its motive, however, he was still ignorant. Only from what Frawley had told him, he knew the "sob" story about Duval's father to be a falsehood.

The great race was not to start until after the ice castle had been stormed—until after nine o'clock. There were a few hours in which, after meeting Frawley at Dorchester Square, Arden could enjoy the spectacle before hurrying to the slide. Clothed in stiff buckskin snow leggings, a heavy mackinaw that fell to his knees, a worsted toboggan toque down over his ears, he was ready for whatever the night might bring.

As he left the house and hurried across the Place Vigé, he smiled in anticipation. He could scarcely wait to meet Frawley and tell him what he knew. It was becoming an adventure bigger than he had bargained for.

Frawley was to meet him at the ice palace—a solid structure, built of ice blocks the size of an ordinary desk. Forty feet into the air it rose, and Arden could see the shimmer of the moon on its glistening sides when he was blocks away. To meet at Dorchester Square was Frawley's suggestion, but the place was black with people, and to single out an individual was a task well-nigh impossible. Everybody was watching Mont Royal, white and ghost-like, rearing against the night at the other side of Fletcher's Field. With thousands of others, Arden watched, and saw presently on the frosted crest of the mountain a twinkle of a light. It became a glow, then a thin band of wavering yellow light that seemed to

writhe, as coiling and uncoiling, it twisted down the mountainside, while from beyond rose the cry: "Here come the snowshoers!"

Then Arden saw the torchlight procession stream slowly into view. Down the snowy slopes of the mountain, across Fletcher's Field, through the narrow streets leading into Dorchester Square, where at the first sight of the flaming torches, a burst of cheering swept the crowd. Fireworks boomed, bands crashed, and amid a tumult the ice palace was stormed, the snowshoers attacking by firing hundreds of roman candles, and those within the castle replying with colored fire and a display of fireworks in fantastic shapes.

When the excitement was at its height, a hack drove slowly along the edge of the crowd. Watching it curiously to see how the driver would thread his way through the congested street without knocking any one down, Arden suddenly found a new interest in the vehicle. Inside were two men whose faces he couldn't see; and Arden would have given the hack no further thought but for the fact that he glanced at the driver's seat as the vehicle passed under an arc light. To his amazement, he saw that the old chap on the box was not one of the city's hackmen, but Drumseagh, his talkative and obliging landlord.

## CHAPTER IV.

### AT THE STARTING POINT.

FROM the top of the Royal slide, Arden gazed down a glistening slope that, bordered with electric lights, reached so far away, that off somewhere in the night the two rows of lamps merged into a single yellow glow. On all sides, in the glare of batteries of calcium lamps, rose the grand stand already filled with spectators, who stamped their feet constantly, for the night was rapidly becoming colder. Most of the other tobogganers were on the scene, all dressed in the regulation carnival costume, every face hidden by a black mask.

While waiting for Frawley, Arden

strolled about the square inclosure that crested the slide, and from which in a few minutes the toboggans would be pushed, beginning the race down the shimmering ice hill. The starting time was drawing near, and Frawley was late.

Gazing about, he saw the Duval toboggan its name painted in big letters. Like their own, the Coburn, it was stationary at the top of the chute, awaiting the shove that would send it careening down the icy incline. Moreover, it would race in the lane just next to the Coburn, a long, low mound of packed snow separating the lanes all down the slope. As the seconds passed, and still no Frawley, Arden began to worry. Suppose Frawley had been delayed by the crush in Dorchester Square, and should be unable to reach the top of the slide before the race started?

He began restlessly pacing up and down, at the same time watching the other toboggans so as to get an idea of their speed. Many of them flew tiny flags from their curved prows. He noticed, too, that most of them were of the type known as the "Dreadnaught." There were also several "Red Deers" and "Lauriers" from Quebec and Ottawa. All looked fast, capable of making almost a mile a minute. But Arden was experienced enough as a tobogganist to know that of the field, the Duval and the Coburn were fleetest. Both were heavier than any of their competitors, and their weight was distributed in such a way that terrific momentum would be gained once the icy road began slipping away beneath their polished surfaces. Especially was this true of the Coburn. To be sure, it looked much faster. No wonder the man known as Duval had for some ulterior reason feared Frawley's Coburn in a fair race.

Finally, to Arden's relief, the familiar figure appeared hurrying across the inclosure. Evidently choice or circumstance had held off his arrival until the last minute. Vaguely Arden wondered which had caused the delay. His face concealed by the carnival mask, the newcomer pushed his way through

the spectators who had collected at the head of the slide. As Arden saw him he waved. Then, noticing that the starter was raising his pistol and realizing that in a moment would come the shot, signaling the start of the race, Arden hurriedly took his place on the toboggan.

As he curled up under the prow, he felt his companion drop into place behind him. Picking up the spike that the man known as Duval had wished him to use as a brake to check the Coburn's speed all the way down the slide, Arden remarked:

"Frawley, this is the spike they wanted me to do you up with."

Now the starter, fingering the trigger, was calling the roll of contestants.

"And Frawley," continued Arden, "this race is as good as won. The Coburn is much faster than that Duval toboggan."

But his seatmate did not reply; he was very busy with the steering gear. At Arden's reference to the Duval, however, he laughed. His nerves wrought up by the gathering tension of the start, Arden kept on a running fire of remarks. None of these meeting any response, he turned around suddenly and faced the other man.

"Hang it all, what's the matter, Frawley?" he demanded. "Have you lost the power of speech?"

A surly nod was the only answer. In some agitation now, strangely uneasy, Arden thrust the spike in the snow so as to check the toboggan were a start attempted. A sudden premonition had changed swiftly to open suspicion. Reaching up quickly, he snatched the mask from the other's face. Then he found himself staring, not at Frawley, but at his double, dressed in Frawley's carnival clothes—the man known as Duval.

Simultaneously the roar of the starter's pistol broke the night. With a quick rush forward, Duval tried to pick the spike from Arden's hand, and push the Coburn across the inclosure down into the chute.

A sharp kick and Arden caught him in the stomach, and, his feet slipping

from under him, Duval tumbled his length in the snow. By this time the other toboggans, one after another, had slid across the inclosure, and, dipping their prows, had bolted into the slide. Scrambling off the toboggan, tripping Duval as he tried to rise, Arden gave a little run, pushed the Coburn in front of him, threw himself upon it, and plunged down the glistening slide.

## CHAPTER V.

### AT TERRIFIC SPEED.

**G**AINING terrific speed almost instantly, his toboggan shot ahead, careening. Without a passenger's weight, it was difficult to keep it on the slide, and it began to leap off, shooting through the air and coming down hard, shaking every bone in his body. So great was his speed, so dark the night, so blinding the flash of the lanterns on either side, that it seemed as though he were taking a wild drop into nowhere.

The wind whistled, and its resistance grew stronger. Not many seconds had passed before he found it difficult to breathe. Not many more seconds when he found that his Coburn was indeed fleet, for he began to overtake the others—first a Red Deer, then a Laurier, a Dreadnaught, and, like Monte Cristo, he counted to himself, "One, two, three!" There were still five to be accounted for before he would even catch the Duval, plowing a hundred yards in the lead in the lane on his left.

So terrific had become the speed that through sheer necessity of holding their toboggans on the course, the other drivers were using their breaks. Arden knew he couldn't do that. He must heighten, rather than lessen, speed. He must get out of his toboggan all there was in it. So much had its momentum increased, that it would leap from the slide six yards through the air now, crashing down as though it would smash to bits. Arden thanked his lucky stars he had tobogganed so often at home. Not in such a way, however, sweeping as fast as a racing automobile down an ice hill at night, with only a frail structure beneath.

One after another he passed the toboggans now, and there was only the Duval in the lead. Little by little, he came upon it. They passed the two-mile post, and there was only a mile to go. The slightest slip now and his toboggan would jump the course, leaving its own lane and come down amuck. Arden began to fear that with the brakes off, one of these wild leaps his toboggan was taking might result in disaster. He had to steer with wonderful steadiness.

They were coming toward the finish line, and there were more lights; the black masses of the crowd seemed denser. The lights were more blinding. So terrific had become the wind resistance that it was hard even to keep open his eyes. He could just make out the dark blue of the Duval. Heavily weighted, it was making a race of this last quarter mile. Arden didn't know who was riding it, but whoever it was, he knew his business. Like meteors the two toboggans streaked down, falling, it seemed, from out of the sky. Far behind them the glistening white of the slide was as a comet's trail sloping up into the black sky. And like meteors, they were descending unhampered now by anything human, both going faster, faster, gravity ever quickening their pace.

A few seconds and Arden was abreast of the Duval. A brush, neck and neck, then the man in front of the Duval raised his arm and flung something at him. Arden felt its sharp edge strike his cheek. It fell on his toboggan; it was one of the spike brakes with which every one was equipped. It pained, but it hadn't stunned him. Instead it only made him more anxious to win, and discarding all thoughts of danger, all chances of jumping the course, he wrenched loose the dragging steering ropes, and urging the toboggan on with what impetus he could give to it with his own body, he had the satisfaction presently of seeing the Duval drop behind and then disappear. A moment later he whizzed across the finish line, and, unable to check the speed of his toboggan, his steering ropes gone, he

brought up in a snowbank. But he had won the race.

Many ready hands were there to help him, and offer congratulations on the victory. But Arden returned their felicitations somewhat absently. "What of Frawley?" he kept asking himself. "Where is he? What have they done with him?" In a flash he saw again the figure of Drumseagh on the box of the hack. Ah, the old rascal! Ten to one, he knew all about this pretty affair. The thought was enough to make Arden act at once. With a good-by to everybody, he hurried away from the slide and hailed a taxicab.

He gave the driver the number of his boarding house in Place Vigé, and, under the spur of a promised extra tip for rushing, he was driven in that direction at a stiff pace. But they were some distance from Drumseagh's hostelry when the driver heard his fare howling to be let out of the cab. This was occasioned by a glimpse Arden had caught of the very man whose absence had caused all his anxiety—Frawley himself.

Luckily the chauffeur stopped before Frawley had got out of sight, and angrily Frawley tried to throw off the hand with which Arden, coming up suddenly, clutched his arm. Frawley was hurrying for the toboggan slide. When, however, he recognized his passenger standing there and whooping for joy, his expression of anger changed to one of bewilderment.

"What the dickens are you hooraying about?" he demanded of the delighted Arden.

"We've won, man; we've won! Why shouldn't I hooray?"

"Won!"

"Yes. I went it alone. The Coburn won."

In a cozy grillroom, with something hot before them, the new friends exchanged experiences. "I was kidnaped," said Frawley, "and it happened this way: I got a telephone call supposably from you to come at once to number ten Beauprey Street. When I got there, I was shown into that back room you

told me about, and the fellow who ushered me in went out and turned the key in the lock. I was a prisoner. You can see me thrashing about in that room for about half an hour having a high old carnival time of it. Several times I tried the door, but to no purpose. Once I heard the rascals talking in an adjoining room. Drumseagh was one of them, and I guess Duval another. They were quarreling. Drumseagh wanted his pay for inviting you into the game. The whole affair, as I gathered from their talk, was a frame-up to make the Coburn lose the race to the Duval, on which toboggan the crooks who engineered the thing had placed their money. After a while the talk ceased; all was quiet. Again I tried the door, and to my surprise this time it yielded. I had only to walk out of the house, and—here I am."

Arden was silent a moment, puffing his cigar. "Well," he said presently, "what are we going to do about it? Those fellows ought to be dealt with by the law."

"That's so," agreed Frawley. "Yet I don't think we'd ever find any of them but old Drumseagh. The arch crooks, the ones who employed him, have got out of Montreal by this time probably—gone back to New York, I guess, where they belong. Just now I am in rather a merciful mood so far as Drumseagh is concerned. It was fortunate, old man, that he called you into the scheme, for if they had got somebody else we—I mean you—wouldn't have won the race. That's where you come in. Rather lucky you came back to your native land to enjoy the carnival."

### Somewhat His Business

**R**USTIC: "I see you are painting those old trees."

Artist: "Yes, I am; but it's no business of yours. Instead of interfering with me, you had better get on with your work."

Rustic: "Well, my work is to chop them down, so hurry up with your painting."



BY ROLAND ASHFORD PHILLIPS

## CHAPTER I.

### DEALINGS WITH TROUPERS.

**T**HE manager of the McHugh Repertoire Company, Mr. Booth Wellington McHugh, his hands clasped behind him, his chin buried between the flowing ends of a frayed scarf, stood, a distant figure, in a corner of the American House lobby. And in this position he felt, rather than saw, the approach of the eagle-eyed and bewhiskered landlord.

This individual, evidently braced for the encounter, planted himself in front of the actor-manager and displayed an itemized bill. "Here you are, Mr. McHugh," he announced shortly. "Read it. Amounts in all to forty-five dollars and eighty cents, allowin' for professional discount."

McHugh, stirred into life, bestowed a withering glance upon the unfortunate human who had dared to disturb him; but, conscious of the waving and significant bit of paper, condescended to accept it. In fine scorn the manager lifted his chin, adjusted his shell-rimmed glasses, untangled the broad silk ribbons that fell from them, and glanced at the scrawled figures. "Forty-five dollars?" he questioned.

"Yes, sir. The rate was two dollars

a day per person. There's ten of you troupers. For two days that's forty dollars. The rest is extras."

McHugh pursed his thin lips and nodded. "Ah, quite right, landlord. Quite right." He reached into the depths of his coat and extracted a worn and shining wallet. On the point of opening it, he hesitated, frowned, and returned it.

The host stood his ground. "Forty-five dollars and eighty cents or you don't get your trunks," he announced grimly.

"My dear sir," thundered the outraged McHugh, "dare you intimate that I will not meet my obligations?"

"I don't think you've got any money," answered the unruffled and determined landlord. "I've had dealin's with troupers before."

"Taunt me not, landlord," declaimed McHugh, with an impressive sweep of his hand. "I am not of a mind to quibble over such trifles. You shall be compensated for your meals and lodgings, humble though they were."

"I'm givin' the best meals in the State of Iowa—for the price," declared the host. "You never had better. You ate enough for two men yourself. The waitress said so."

"Have patience, sir, I beg of you," soothed the manager, with a furtive

glance around the lobby. "All in due time, my man. This slight obligation will be adjusted by my secretary. He is elsewhere, just at present. But do not be alarmed. Meanwhile, kindly have our luggage taken to the station. We are leaving at two o'clock."

"Well, you can go, but your trunks can't," returned the other. "I don't suppose there's anything much in 'em, but they don't leave my house until you've settled your bill. I've got a whole attic full of show trunks now—and yours will join 'em."

"Not so loud, my dear host," begged McHugh. "The money will be forthcoming. You have my word for it."

"I'll have your baggage for it," said the landlord. "If you want to settle you'll find me at the desk."

Delivered of this, the indignant host stalked away, leaving McHugh to accept the predicament as he was in the habit of doing—philosophically.

The two performances in What Cheer, Iowa, had not been a success—artistically or financially; and as he had brought the company into town with just sixty cents in his pocket, the present situation was far from promising. "Duke" McHugh, as he was known to his associates, while disturbed, was not daunted. It was such an old, old story to this carefree, ready-witted, and smooth-tongued knight of the buskin, who in his fifty years of footlight experience had played everything from Hamlet to the hind legs of a property elephant, that an easy and unhampered departure from a town would have been looked upon as something remarkable.

Once he was alone he fell into a deep study; then, sighting the form of his juvenile leading man descending the stairs, he strolled over and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Reamer, my boy," he began, in a fatherly voice, "I have been placed in a rather embarrassing position this afternoon. The unfeeling boor of an innkeeper demands to be remunerated. Our engagement in What Cheer did not produce as great a box-office success as I had hoped for, although artistically

our performance left nothing to be desired. But to-morrow we are booked to play Battlesboro, a most excellent town. I am sure we shall do well there. I feel, somehow, that from to-morrow on, our tour will be a very prosperous one."

Reamer, who was not altogether ignorant of what this discourse prefaced, shrugged his shoulders and looked away. Always, with McHugh, the next stand was sure to be the turning point: success was bound to follow failure. This blind trust in the future—in the town to come—had been the one bright light in his unending struggle for recognition.

"If you want money, Duke," Reamer answered, "you won't get it. I'm broke—stone broke," he added gloomily. "I loaned you the hundred my governor sent me last month. You promised to return it the next night—but you didn't. I've been with your outfit for six weeks, and I haven't seen a penny of salary. You're free and easy with your pledges, but it looks to me as if the McHugh Repertoire Company were on the verge of a bust-up. I'm done. Dad said if I wanted to come home he would wire me transportation. I've just told him to do so."

"But my dear Reamer," protested McHugh, "your future—"

"Oh, hang the future! I won't get it staying with you. I was a fool in the first place to listen to your milk-and-honey talk, and to give up my job. I'm going home and live like a human being."

McHugh clutched despairingly at his coat. The prospect of losing an attractive leading man who was willing to work and wait, and who, most of all, often received a check from home, was distressing.

"You are making a grievous error, Reamer," the actor-manager told him hastily. "While I admit the past few weeks have been trying and unpleasant ones, still you must remember an artist's life always is beset with petty annoyances. Only the plodders succeed. You must never give up. To mount the ladder of fame, rung by rung—"

"I'll let you and your troupe practice the ladder climbing," Reamer broke in. "My feet are getting tired. I'll go back home to the job—and the girl. It may be a lowly ambition, but it's got play acting beaten a mile."

With this Reamer turned on his heel and walked away. The lines of McHugh's face were etched deeper. He stroked his chin thoughtfully, and while he reflected upon his leading man's unexpected decision recalled to mind that he was badly in need of a shave.

Then, when Ira Sampler, genteel heavy and property man, and oft-times leader of the orchestra, appeared in the lobby, McHugh braced himself for another shock. "The sheriff's holding our stuff at the theater," Ira announced, with tomblime cheerfulness. "Wouldn't let me touch a stitch of the wardrobe or take down any of the drops."

"That's very annoying," remarked McHugh, and continued to feel of his bristly chin. "What is the claim?"

"Twelve dollars—for printing and lights."

"Not so much as I expected," replied McHugh. "We shall have to pacify these mercenary rustics, I presume." Then his face brightened. "Our next stand is Battlesboro, and we are good for three nights there."

The versatile heavy man did not absorb any of his manager's enthusiasm. "Huh!" he exclaimed. "How can we play the next stand if we can't get our stuff?"

"We must come to some understanding, Ira," responded McHugh.

"All right. You try. I've done my best. I've argued and threatened and pleaded. But the sheriff won't budge."

After Ira had taken his departure, the manager turned to contemplate his reflection in a wall mirror. The act was responsible for a brilliant, though none the less painful, solution of the problem. His heavy fur-lined overcoat was his last asset. It had cost him one hundred dollars at the beginning of the season—a hundred dollars which he had exacted from the overambitious graduate of a small-town dramatic

school, who yearned to bask in the mellow glow of the footlights, and who cared more for prospective fame than for present cash. McHugh seemed to have reached that pinnacle of success where he could demand and receive considerations from aspiring members of his company in lieu of paying them salaries. He was a past master of this art. Prospective Booths, and Mansfields, and Mary Andersons were, as a rule, susceptible to this extortion.

However, it wrenched the heart of the actor-manager to part with the earmark of his noble profession. The days were growing colder; and well did McHugh realize that, aside from the prestige, an actor's overcoat often covered a multitude of sins. But necessity must be served. That arrogant individual at the theater would be glad to accept the coat as security for the slight obligation. The impatient innkeeper was welcome to hold the trunks. The first performance in the next stand would bring in the wherewithal needed to release them, and the play at that town could be changed to one requiring modern dress, so the company might appear in street clothes. It was a simple matter to shelve "Hamlet" for "East Lynne."

Confident that the affair could be adjusted, McHugh stalked majestically down Main Street, his right hand tucked into his coat front—not alone from habit, but to hide the fact that he possessed only one good glove.

He came upon the august person of the sheriff planted at the stage door. "I am Booth McHugh," he began.

"I thought so," remarked the sheriff. "You don't git your riggin' out of this hall until you hand over the twelve dollars owin' to Mr. Sam Hopper," he announced, rising from his chair.

"My good man," continued McHugh frigidly, "I have come to arrange a settlement of this trifle. It so happens that my ready cash is held up and——"

"I ain't here to listen to excuses. I got to have the twelve dollars," broke in the sheriff.

"In lieu of cash," said the manager, "I can, at a personal sacrifice, intrust

into your care, this overcoat. It is worth two hundred dollars."

The sheriff sized up McHugh, and then the coat. The manager very reluctantly removed it, and the representative of What Cheer law and order inspected it with calm deliberation.

"All right," he agreed at last. "I guess it'll do. Hopper can git more use out of it than he can out of them things inside."

"My company plays Battlesboro to-morrow night," McHugh continued. "I will send back the money, and expect the instant return of my coat."

The sheriff slipped on the coat, and thrust his hands into the warm, furry pockets. "Don't think you'll show in Battlesboro to-morrow," he observed.

"Why not?"

"Op'ra house burned down last night."

McHugh, human shock absorber, forgot to stroke his chin, and for the first time in his life lost the power of speech. He stood dumb and helpless, watching the sheriff walk away. Then, from out of these depths of despair he heard a familiar voice.

"Mr. McHugh!"

He turned slowly. In the door of a dressing room he beheld Miss Dayton, a recent acquisition to his company; a slim, attractive girl, who lent grace and beauty to the galaxy of theatrical stars under McHugh's management, and who had won instant favor with the manager because she desired experience more than she did salary.

He walked toward her. "Did you wish to see me, Miss Dayton?" he asked.

She nodded. "Yes. I want to talk over a proposition with you."

McHugh stopped warily. Actors who desired to talk over "propositions" were creatures to avoid; this he knew from much experience. But he finally allowed himself to enter the dressing room, and to find a seat on a trunk.

"Mr. McHugh," she began abruptly. "I want you to produce a new play."

McHugh's chin came up from his crushed Windsor cravat, and he bent

a pair of cold-gray eyes upon the speaker. "A play? I do not need one, my dear young lady."

"Oh, but you will need this one," she protested eagerly, while a sudden rush of color dyed her cheeks. "I wrote it. It's my very own. You know ever since I was old enough to read, it has always been my ambition to be an actress-playwright. The folks at home only laughed. But I was determined. I didn't care how much fun they made of me. I knew I would succeed. Now that I'm an actress, I want to appear in my-own play—in a part I wrote myself. I want the home folks to see me. Oh, you understand how I feel about it, Mr. McHugh—I am sure you do!" Her eyes were shining, and she clasped her hands together. "They all said I would never amount to anything. I want to show them that I have succeeded. Oh, to be seen in High City just one night! To look across the footlights at the familiar faces! To see their surprise—to hear their applause—to meet them at the stage door after the performance—I can conceive of no greater happiness."

McHugh listened to the rush of words, and watched, with no little admiration, the eager, rapturous expression on her flushed face. But he was not impressed, and, when she stopped breathlessly, he shook his head. "I am afraid, my dear," he began, "that under the present cir—"

"Oh, I have it all planned out," she broke in hurriedly. "I knew there would be a great deal of trouble, and some expense. But I prepared for it." She thrust her fingers into a hand bag that lay in her lap and withdrew a handful of bank notes. "There! This will help, won't it?"

Something big, and hot, and painful caught in McHugh's throat. An observer might have fancied he was about to swoon. The sight of the yellow-backed bills waved within a foot or two of his face was too much for the actor-manager to bear. The room whirled dizzily in his vision. The trunk upon which he sat became for the nonce a plunging and sinking boat, battered

by wind-whipped seas. He held to it grimly, despairingly.

"There's over two hundred dollars here, Mr. McHugh," the girl was saying. "It's all I have. I've been saving it up for ever so long. I knew the time would come when I would want to use it. Now the time is here. I want you to accept it."

Slowly, very slowly, McHugh came back to earth again. The warm blood began to course back into his veins. His eyes fastened themselves upon the crumpled fistful of currency. That a lowly member of his company had had this unbelievable sum—that she could produce it as easily and as calmly as a magician produces a rabbit from a silk hat—was enough temporarily to unbalance a stronger mind than McHugh's. "You—you've got the money?" he asked huskily. "All of the two hundred?"

She nodded. "Won't it be enough?"

Enough? McHugh drew in a deep breath. Enough to redeem his precious coat, enough to satisfy the landlord, enough to get the company out of What Cheer to a more appreciative stand! Enough to—

"My dear Miss Dayton," he began, once more the suave and winning manager, "I am surprised—overwhelmed. A new play is something I have long desired to produce. And you have written one! Still, why not? You are capable of anything, my dear young lady. Of course I shall produce it—and at once. And while the monetary arrangement is a secondary consideration, undoubtedly, in the course of events, there will be slight expenses to meet. So I will accept the money."

The crumpled bills changed hands. McHugh counted them over, one by one, slowly and with the keenest of pleasure. There was that in the feel of the bank notes which warmed the cockles of his heart. They totaled two hundred and twenty dollars. He pocketed them all.

"Now," he said, rising, "you will have to excuse me. I have several other matters awaiting my attention. I shall expect to see you at the hotel,

Miss Dayton, in one hour. Once there we can, at our leisure, discuss the affair, take up the details, and arrange for rehearsals."

The moment he had left to pursue, with undignified haste, the wearer of his raiment, Miss Dayton smiled. And it was such a smile, that, had the manager been a witness, would have astonished him. The childlike demeanor, the innocent, trusting light in her eyes, were gone. In their stead came a cool and calculating expression.

## CHAPTER II.

### IT HAD POSSIBILITIES.

EMILY DAYTON, leading woman with the McHugh galaxy of near-stars, had lived, for the greater part of her twenty-two years, a well-ordered and uneventful life in High City. Her meeting with McHugh, and the engagement which followed, had taken place within the past two months. She seemed to enjoy her labors and the vicissitudes of a Thespian life, for she never complained of the parts given her, or of the salary that was not offered. The sum of two hundred and twenty dollars which she had acquired, and which she so trustingly placed in the itching palm of her manager, had been accumulated by hardship and no little self-denial. But she had gone into the affair with open eyes and courageous heart. She saw through the present difficulties into a brilliant and alluring future; but not the future McHugh suspected she had in mind.

For a beginner, she was a quick study, an accomplishment that stood her in good stead. She was graceful, attractive, contented, and imbued with the spirit of eternal youth. From minor parts she had advanced, on short notice, or none at all, to important ones—when other members of the cast suddenly deserted. She progressed rapidly and smoothly from maid to ingénue, from ingénue to second business, from second business to leads, as, one by one, her superiors dropped from the ranks. She was an ideal bit of putty in McHugh's ready fingers.

When McHugh found the sheriff, after leaving the theater, and parted with twelve dollars of his Heaven-sent hundreds for the release of his coat, he hurried on to the hotel. Once there he went directly to Ira's room and informed that individual that because of the fire in Battlesboro, the company would remain in town for another night.

If any one in the company was known to be McHugh's confidant, Ira Sampler was this man. McHugh often confided in his actor-property man, frequently asked advice, and once in a while accepted it. Therefore, it was but natural that he should impart to him the news of the windfall.

Ira listened to the glad tidings, and quickly pocketed the five dollars the manager slipped him as an advance on the salary he never expected to draw. "Are you getting all of that," he asked, indicating the roll in the other's fingers, "just for putting on the girl's play?"

"Of course. Why not?" McHugh seemed pained at the other's remark. "I shall be under added expense."

"Huh!" exclaimed Ira skeptically. "What'll it be?"

"Well, I must have new paper," the manager began, "and perhaps new wardrobe."

"Is it a costume piece?" questioned the property man, scenting added burdens.

McHugh thoughtfully returned the roll to his pocket. "I really could not say. I did not think to ask for the script. However, all in good time, Ira."

"Suppose it's rotten?" suggested the property man. "There isn't much hope of its being anything else. These fool women all think they're female Shakespeares."

"I will attend to that. One performance will not amount to a great deal. Miss Dayton is an aspiring playwright. I believe in encouraging such worthy ambitions, Ira, provided there are no royalties to pay. Also, a play written by a local woman is likely to attract a good house. The prospects are of the brightest."

"Where's this town?"

"High City is about a hundred and fifty miles north of here. I had not dated it this season; so our route will have to be altered."

Ira laughed. "Altered? Why, we've never had three consecutive dates booked ahead since I can remember. It's going to eat into that roll of yours to pay for a hundred-and-fifty mile jump."

"Ira," declared the suddenly inflamed McHugh, "the soulless railroads and the contaminating motion pictures are the upper and nether millstones between which the artists of the present day are being slowly and ruthlessly crushed. That I have survived in spite of both I attribute to a benign horoscope, and a cunning brain. However," he added, in a calmer tone, "we must arrange for other stands between here and High City."

They descended to the lobby, where the other members of the company were pleasantly informed that they were to have a night's rest and to remain over in What Cheer until the following noon. Then McHugh strolled idly toward the desk.

With a bored and condescending air the manager tapped a lean finger upon the dusty show case. "One of those perfectos, landlord," he commanded; "and take one for yourself."

But the landlord did not seem eager to obey. He stared sullenly at the actor-manager. With simulated indifference, apparently unconscious of the other's poisonous glare, McHugh brought to light the magic roll of bank notes. The effect upon the proprietor of the American House was instantaneous. He stirred into life with an alacrity that was as abrupt as it was amazing. The box of cigars was upon the case before McHugh could take a second breath.

The manager critically selected two, and nodded to the landlord to help himself, which he proceeded to do. "I find we shall be compelled to remain under your hospitable roof for another twenty-four hours," said McHugh, placing the unlighted cigar between his

lips, and snapping the rubber band that encircled the money. "Our Battlesboro engagement has been canceled by a disastrous conflagration."

"Glad you're stayin', Mr. McHugh," responded the proprietor, sizing up the roll. "You're always welcome at the American House."

"Ah!" exclaimed the manager absently, as if he had just made a discovery. "Notice you have a safe. I ought to have availed myself of it earlier." He reached for an envelope into which he slipped the currency. "I will place this five hundred in your care until to-morrow."

The landlord hid a broad smile, as he turned to open the safe door. When he again faced the manager, McHugh was moistening the flap of the envelope. Once sealed, he flattened it with elaborate care upon the desk, wrote his name across it, and pressed the bulky package into the other's hands.

"It'll be here any time you want to settle your bill, Mr. McHugh," the proprietor announced.

With a curt nod, McHugh sauntered down to the front of the lobby, enjoying the rare aroma of his ten-cent perfecto, and interested, for the moment, in the arrival of the depot bus. It had drawn up at the curb, and the driver was bowing out a single passenger—a well-dressed young man who stepped briskly through the door on his way to the desk, the driver following with two suit cases.

These suit cases immediately attracted McHugh's eyes, for upon the end of one was a suspiciously new yellow sticker, marked: "Hotel," and as the driver passed nearer, he made out the additional line of smaller type: "The Primrose Path Company."

With pursed lips McHugh cast back in his mind. According to the last *Clipper*, the Primrose Path had been a failure in Chicago, and had closed after a week at the Lyric. This much the manager was sure of; for he kept well informed of new plays and their fortunes, in New York and Chicago, and on certain occasions pirated them for his own gain.

So he watched the owner of the suit cases sign his name to the register. The proprietor himself escorted the guest to his room, and McHugh walked back and inspected the signature. He read: "Neil Sheldon, Chicago."

"H-m-m," he reflected, turning away. "I wonder if he is at liberty?"

McHugh had remembered suddenly that he was without a leading man, now that Reamer had signified his intention of returning home, and that this Neil Sheldon would make an ideal substitute. Naturally, he debated, it was beneath his dignity to ask an actor to accept a position in the company. It would be humiliating. But in the face of the present stringency, such a procedure was pardonable.

McHugh installed himself in the most comfortable of the vacant chairs, and awaited the return of the actor. It was after the manager's perfecto had been regretfully cast aside that Mr. Sheldon appeared, and by good fortune took a chair beside McHugh.

"You'll pardon my asking, my dear sir," McHugh began, after smiling pleasantly at the young man, "but I believe you were a member of the Primrose Path Company which closed last week in Chicago."

Sheldon, who seemed to notice the manager for the first time, admitted that such was the truth.

McHugh cleared his throat and edged his chair forward. "My name is Booth McHugh. I am the manager of the McHugh Repertoire Company, on tour of the Middle West. You have doubtlessly heard of me. May I ask if you are at liberty?"

Sheldon shook his head, and pocketed the railroad bulletin he had been studying. "No, sir," he replied. "I was fortunate enough to be engaged for a New York production the very night we closed in Chicago. I am only stopping off here, as you might say, between trains. I intend leaving at midnight."

"Too bad," murmured the disappointed manager. "I had hopes of engaging you myself. My leading man has been called away, owing to a death

in his family, and I find it necessary to fill his place immediately."

Something like a smile hovered about the other's lips as he regarded the venerable actor-manager, who might have stepped from the pages of a comic paper. But there was more pity in his glance than disrespect.

"I hardly think it would be advisable for me to consider your offer," he said. "I have the New York engagement in prospect. And you know, yourself, Mr. McHugh," he added, "Broadway means a great deal to one in our profession."

McHugh nodded slowly. There was a quick change in his countenance for the instant. New York! Broadway! It all came back to him. In the fifty years of struggle and privation, these words had meant a great deal to him, too; but he had never been nearer the goal than Oil City, Pennsylvania. The lines in his face deepened; his lips tightened. He sat back in his chair, his head bent, his hands folded patiently in his lap. Fifty years was a long, long time. But maybe next year, or the next—

"We all hope to get there sooner or later," Sheldon continued, too absorbed in his own thoughts to consider the other's.

"Yes," said McHugh. "Sooner—or later."

Their talk drifted on, for they were regulars in the same service, with the same ambitions, and the same hopes stirring in their hearts. Only the years mattered. And gradually McHugh regained his former confident pose.

As the supper hour approached, the manager cast longing, questioning glances at the closed dining-room doors. When the head waitress finally did appear between the folding doors, and placed the usual bowl of toothpicks on the little stand beside the dusty, artificial palms, McHugh mumbled his excuses and darted forward, first to cross the threshold into that alluring region of gastronomic delights.

Sheldon smiled to himself as he beheld the unceremonious departure of his companion. "A king of the fly-by-

nights," he murmured. "And offering me an engagement! Time was when I would—"

The last of the sentence was caught in his throat. He leaped to his feet with a suddenness that threatened to send the chair through a lobby window. The cause of this spectacular demonstration was the sight of a trim young woman, who had descended the stairs, and who was now walking toward the dining room. In a bound Sheldon had reached her side, and was holding both her hands.

"By all that's wonderful!" he cried. "Emily Dayton!" The girl, startled at the unexpected encounter, looked at the man with questioning eyes; then a quick color mounted into her cheeks. Before she could speak, Sheldon had rattled on. "What are you doing here?" he asked. "Where have you been?"

"Neil!" she faltered. "You?"

"I hope so!" He laughed. "What's left of me, at least. Of all the women in the world—to meet you in this outlandish place! I knew you and your father, like myself, had left High City, but I could find no trace of where you had gone."

She began to explain. He checked her. "Come over in a corner and begin from the first," he begged. "I want to hear everything. The dining room is crowded—besides, I'm too excited to eat." He led the girl to a divan. "Little Emily Dayton," he repeated over and over again, as if to assure himself this meeting wasn't a dream. "Let's see, it has been something like five years since I phoned you—"

"It seems twice that long," she interrupted. "I guess High City has forgotten us both by this time."

"I'm not regretting it," he returned grimly. "I only regret that I could not explain, at the time, why I was running away. I gave you an excuse over the phone. An hour later I was on a train bound for Chicago."

"None of us knew—then," she said. "Even father wondered. But he could get no explanation from the bank. After we left High City he learned the truth. He meant to go back—but he

didn't." Her voice broke suddenly. Sheldon was quick to sense the truth.

"You mean—mean he is dead?" he asked softly.

She nodded. "Three months ago."

He found her hand and pressed it. "He was the first and best friend I ever had, Emily. And to think he was crushed, humiliated, driven away because of——"

She looked at him through misty eyes. "What do you know about—that?" she questioned.

"I know too much," he replied gravely. "That's why I left town without saying good-by. That's why—— Oh, but don't let's talk of unpleasant matters; tell me about yourself. I want to know why you are here, and what you are doing, and what you intend to do."

When she had told him, he was more amazed than ever. "An actress!" he exclaimed. "Emily Dayton? Couldn't you find anything better than that? Why, I've been bucking the same game myself. I played two years in a Chicago stock company, a couple of seasons on the road, and one week with a new production. Now I'm on my way to New York."

"Neil," she broke out tremulously. "Stay here. Stay with McHugh."

He gazed at her in astonishment. "I'm afraid that is impossible, Emily," he said. "You see I have a chance with a New York production. It is the best offer I have ever received. It will mean everything to me." She did not answer. "You don't blame me, do you? New York is everything to us, you know. Why don't you give up this fly-by-night aggregation, and come to New York?" he asked. "I know one good manager there. He'll look out for you. I know he will. It will be a thousand times better than sticking on this hide-away circuit with this superannuated has-been manager."

She shook her head slowly. "I can't now. Oh, I'm sorry, Neil. I thought perhaps you were not working and——" she hesitated.

"Can't?" he repeated. "Why not? What's to keep you here? You've noth-

ing to gain by remaining with McHugh, have you?"

She did not reply, and seemed to be thinking deeply. It occurred to him that she might have a serious reason for wanting him to stay. "Why did you ask me to remain here?" he persisted, more earnestly. "Is there something I can do to help you? If there is—I am willing to give up the New York engagement. But you must tell me the truth."

At that moment McHugh, emerging from the dining room, started to promenade the lobby. Almost at once he caught sight of the couple on the divan, and turned toward them.

"You will pardon me, Miss Dayton," he began, nodding to Sheldon, and apparently surprised at finding the two in such intimate conversation; "but when it is convenient to you I shall be pleased to look over the script of your play."

He bowed again and passed on. Sheldon looked after him, his mind working swiftly. "Your play?" he repeated, turning to the girl. "Have you written one, Emily?"

"Yes."

"Is that why you won't come to New York?" She nodded. "Is McHugh going to put it on?" he continued persistently.

"Yes." And then, almost before she was aware of it—because she could no longer hold up under his questioning—the girl poured out the whole of what had taken place that afternoon.

Sheldon listened with eyes that blazed indignantly. "You paid that man two hundred dollars to put on your play for one night in High City?"

"Yes."

"Why, that's the most outrageous thing I ever heard of!" he cried. "That is why you wouldn't leave the company, is it? He has your money! Robbed you of it!"

"He didn't rob me," she protested.

"Of course he did. He never will produce your play, Emily. And even if he did, what would a performance by his company, in High City, amount to? He is playing you for an easy mark. I

wouldn't trust him with five cents. But I'm glad you told me," he added grimly. "I'm going to get back your money—every penny of it, if I have to throttle the old thief."

She clutched his arm impulsively. "Not that, Neil. You don't understand."

"You're the one who doesn't understand," he returned. "Just watch me. Why, with two hundred dollars you can get to New York. This is no kind of a life for you."

She kept a determined hold on his arm. "Listen to me, Neil," she resumed. "I didn't mean that you should know everything. Now you force me to explain."

What she had to tell answered the host of questions that rushed into his mind. And when she had finished he sat for a long time without speaking.

"You should have told me this at first," he said at last reproachfully. "I had the right to know." He sat in silence for a minute, then he took both her hands into his own. "You know I never wanted to see High City again—or the people there. But I'll go back now. I'll go back with you, Emily. Broadway can wait. We'll fight shoulder to shoulder. That's the way it should be done, isn't it? Now where is the play?"

"In my room."

"McHugh hasn't seen it yet?"

"No."

"Good!" Sheldon exclaimed. "We'll go into supper now. Afterward I'll interview him."

That same night, when Ira Sampler tapped upon the door of his manager's room in quest of information that had to do with the removal of the wardrobe at the theater, he found McHugh in a dilapidated dressing gown, his feet elevated to the window sill, his third perfecto tucked between his lips. He removed his cigar and smiled blandly upon his visitor.

"A most auspicious day, Ira," he declared, before the other could make known his desires. "Fortune smiles!"

"How's that?" asked the heavy man.

"You doubtless recall my mentioning Mr. Neil Sheldon?"

"The Chicago actor? Yes."

"This afternoon he rejected, with the utmost contempt, my offer of an engagement. But this evening—this evening, Ira," McHugh repeated, "he came to me and begged for an opportunity to join the company."

"Huh!" said Ira. "Giving up Broadway and a real salary for this?"

"Exactly. And when I informed him that the remuneration would be thirty-five dollars a week——"

"Some weeks," broke in Ira.

"When I mentioned the salary," continued McHugh, unruffled at the interruption, "he agreed without a murmur. It's a feather in my cap, Ira. Mr. Sheldon will be a most excellent addition to our cast of principals. And the whole of the story is—he has fallen in love with Miss Dayton. I am under the impression they have previously met. A most remarkable coincidence, isn't it?"

"Some people are downright fools," was Ira's blunt rejoinder.

"Not at all, Ira. Not at all," remonstrated McHugh. "In my youth I, too, was stirred by these impulses. Ah, the heart of youth! It is ever the same. Nothing matters—money, or fame, or future. For us who have turned the corner, Ira, and can look back upon those days——"

"What about that play Miss Dayton wrote?" Ira broke in, unmoved by the manager's flight of fancy.

"Ah," replied McHugh, gathering his robe about him; "it has possibilities"

### CHAPTER III.

#### SOMETHING THAT CRACKLED.

AT noon on the following day, after McHugh had seen to it that the trunks were removed from the American House, and started on their way to the station, he called the members of his company together, and informed them that the next stand would be Elberon; that because of a new leading man, who was not conversant with all the parts, the production there would be "She Stoops To Conquer." Sheldon

had played this in his stock experience, and felt confident of mastering the rôle of *Hastings* on a day's notice. Miss Dayton, of course, was to be *Kate Hardcastle*, while the versatile McHugh would assume the character of her father.

The aggregation comprising the McHugh Repertoire Company was a peculiar mixture of odds and ends of embryonic and obsolete talent. Not one of them, the manager and Ira Sampler excepted, had been of the original company formed three months previous. One by one they had dropped by the way, travel-worn and forgotten. But McHugh went merrily on, undaunted, undismayed, filling the thinning ranks whenever and wherever the opportunity presented itself.

The present roster included, besides the two principals who have already been introduced, Guenevere Harcourt, ingénue, a drooping blonde who had once graced the vaudeville boards, and who obliged between acts with selected songs and dances; Gladys Reid, an ambitious character woman and a graduate of a dramatic school; Clarabell Campbell, a precocious child actress, who was equally at home as little *Eva*, or as *Puck*; her mother, known on the program as Nora von Hemert, a pathetic creature of shawls and black silk, who was a general utility woman, as well as repairer of the company wardrobe, and who perpetually sought to win favor in McHugh's eyes.

Of the men, Rupert Muir was as dashing a juvenile type as the salary could hope to entice; Bayliss had the responsibilities of second business upon his shoulders, and Ira Sampler did the best he could with the gentlemanly heavies, when not otherwise engaged as "props." As for Booth Wellington McHugh, this doughty manager assumed the lead in the majority of Shakespearian productions; and the character of his performance was only determined after he had "counted the house."

Once this motley array of talent had departed in the wake of the trunks, McHugh breathed easier. The proprie-

tor of the American House, not forgetting the security he had locked within his safe, was liberal with his smiles, and even forced upon the not-unwilling manager a generous handful of cigars.

"We won't leave What Cheer until two-thirty," casually remarked McHugh, as he lighted one of the cigars; then, aware of the puzzled expression on the hotel proprietor's face, added hastily: "You see, my good man, I make it a rule to get my people away an hour or so before train time, that none of them will have an excuse for missing it."

The landlord nodded, squinting through the smoke. "Where'd you say you was goin' from here?" he asked.

"Cedar Falls," the manager fibbed blithely. "Should any communications arrive for me, kindly forward them to that address."

They smoked in silence a few minutes. Then McHugh consulted his watch. "I have a small business matter to attend at the theater," he announced. "Might as well settle it at once. I will return here in five minutes. Kindly see that my bill is made out, landlord."

"With pleasure," replied the latter, and went back to his desk.

McHugh left the American House with his usual calm and majestic stride, and swung down Main Street; but, once around the corner, he quickened his pace, and was soon covering the ground in a most undignified fashion.

Out of breath, he reached the railroad station just as the one o'clock train arrived. Within a few minutes bag, baggage, actors, and manager of the McHugh Repertoire Company were settled in their respective places. The train pulled out, and What Cheer, Iowa, was left behind.

The impatient and wondering proprietor of the American House, when McHugh did not appear at two o'clock, took advantage of the law in this case, and opened the bulky envelope that had been intrusted to his care. He gave one heart-wrenching glance at the carefully folded white paper inclosed therein, and dashed away in frantic search of the sheriff.

## CHAPTER IV.

## FAIR SPOILS.

THE arrival of the McHugh aggregation at Elberon that night at dusk was not attended with any undue excitement. The usual idlers at the station watched the members of the company as they filed across the platform, but refrained from any audible comments. Later, however, a thin-faced chap in overalls, who was the driver of the hotel bus, registered his opinion in a voice that was overheard by the manager.

"Shucks," he declared. "'Tain't even a girl troupe."

McHugh had made no preparations for the reception of his people, or for the housing of his production; but these slight matters were soon adjusted. The company was comfortably established at the hotel, and after supper the manager interviewed the owner of the opera house, where terms were made for two performances.

The two hundred dollars reposed snugly in the worn and shiny wallet of McHugh's coat pocket.

The performances the following afternoon and night were favorable from a box-office standpoint, in spite of the fact that the principals stumbled through their parts and that the scenery was not suited to the play. This scenery was known, professionally, as "tack stuff." It was painted upon strong muslin, instead of canvas, and in place of being fastened upon frames in the usual manner, was hung as curtains. In this way it could readily be put into position, and as easily taken down, and could be folded and packed into trunks. This was of great advantage, since it eliminated that bugaboo of all managers, excess baggage. What mattered if massive castle walls did billow? If there were no doors in gaping doorframes? Suppose there were wrinkles on the sky; and mighty trees trembled in the draft? Provincial audiences were not expected to be too critical.

These two performances, to Sheldon, were something of a lark. The make-

shifts that were called into use were so ridiculous, it was all he could do to keep a sober face during his most trying speeches. But McHugh was so impressed with the acting of his new leading man—with the manner in which both principals conducted themselves, in fact—that he congratulated himself. It seemed to him that Miss Dayton had never before showed such remarkable ability as during the love scenes between Sheldon and herself. The delighted manager was satisfied that as long as he possessed such an ideal couple, all future love scenes were bound to be convincing.

During the last act of the night performance, when McHugh had made his last exit, and was waiting to ring down the curtain, Ira Sampler beckoned, and without a word led him mysteriously into the lean-to used as a prop room. With a jerk of his thumb, the actor-property-man indicated a big, travel-battered trunk, its identity all but lost under a successive layer of plastered labels. "Ever set eyes on that before, Duke?" he asked.

"Never," replied McHugh.

Twice the size of the other trunks, it stood there, a ragged, disreputable vagabond. The leather grips at either end had long since departed, and bits of rope substituted. The brass fastenings were bent and loose; the dirty canvas covering was torn; the lock gaped. "Who owns it?" McHugh inquired, after an inspection.

"That's what I was going to ask you."

"Maybe it belongs to the house."

"No. It came up from the station with our other stuff. I didn't happen to notice it until just a few minutes ago."

McHugh rubbed his chin meditatively, forgetful of the grease paint. "It might be Sheldon's," he guessed.

Ira shook his head. "Can't be. I left his trunks up at the hotel this morning."

The puzzled manager essayed to lift an end of the trunk, but failed to budge it. "It's remarkably heavy," he said. He tried to decipher the labels, but

failed in this, too. Suddenly his lips tightened, and he exchanged glances with Ira. "Have you told any one?"

"Not a soul," answered the property man.

"Try some of your keys," suggested the manager.

"I did. They won't fit." Ira caught his employer's eye. "The lock doesn't look very strong, though," he added suggestively.

"We must establish the ownership of this article," declared McHugh. "Get me a hatchet."

"Going to take a chance and open it?"

"Fair spoils, Ira," said McHugh.

The hatchet was applied, and the lock snapped almost without effort. McHugh lifted the lid. Ira leaned forward with expectant eyes and suspended breath. As the contents were uncovered he gave an exclamation of disgust. "Huh! Doesn't look encouraging, does it? Must have belonged to an advance man of some stranded troupe."

"Undoubtedly," murmured McHugh, frowning.

"Why couldn't it have been filled with wardrobe?" Ira asked. "Then we could have used it."

The manager proceeded to investigate more thoroughly the contents of the vagrant trunk. Suddenly, as he unfolded a sheet of gaudily colored paper, he smiled. He was on the point of speaking, when the door of the room opened, and the juvenile man, Muir, broke into the room.

"Where's McHugh? Oh, here you are," he added, at the sight of the manager. "Where have you been? Do you know I had to walk off the scene and ring down the curtain?"

McHugh shut the lid of the trunk. "How thoughtless of me," he declared. "I had completely forgotten the performance was on."

Leaving instructions with Ira to see that the trunk was securely strapped, McHugh hurried out upon the stage. During the following intermission, he made his way to Miss Dayton's room and tapped upon the door.

"It's McHugh," he called, in response to her query. "May I see you a minute?" The door was opened, and the manager beamed pleasantly upon the occupant of the star dressing room.

"You'll pardon this interruption, my dear," he began, "but I have just been thinking over a few details in connection with the new play. It seems to me that the title is rather weak and vague. It is lacking in dramatic value. I do not suppose there would be any serious objection to rechristening it?"

Miss Dayton looked up quickly, in the act of dipping her fingers into a jar of cold cream. "Had you a substitute in mind?" she asked.

He nodded. "How would 'The Dangerous Road' do?"

Unnoticed by either of them, Sheldon, on his way from the stage, had paused in the open doorway, and overheard the last of the conversation. "It seems to me that title has been used before," he put in.

"I hardly think so," the manager replied.

"It's an excellent one," announced the leading woman, with a swift glance toward Sheldon.

"It is stronger and better suited to the piece than yours was," added McHugh.

"I'm satisfied," said Miss Dayton.

"Very well. We'll consider it done."

McHugh bowed himself out of the room. Once they were alone, Sheldon spoke. "I wonder if that crafty old man has an object in view?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" Miss Dayton turned, her face glistening under the liberal application of cold cream.

"Oh, nothing. I'm certain the title isn't original with him; but just at present I cannot recall where I saw it used."

"It fits the play admirably," argued the girl. "And so long as the piece itself isn't changed, what does it matter? You know the old saying: 'A rose by any other name——'"

Sheldon laughed. "Maybe you're right, Emily. But McHugh is a peculiar sort of fellow. I'm afraid there will be trouble when rehearsals start

—that is," he added, "if he allows me to direct them."

## CHAPTER V.

### TRAVELING THE ROAD.

THE leading man was right in his assumption that trouble would ensue when the rehearsals of "The Dangerous Road" were begun. First of all, Sheldon insisted upon regular and arduous rehearsals—something unknown to the McHugh aggregation. New productions were not rare, but a rehearsal meant possibly two readings. The rest was trusted to luck. With one or two of the opening speeches committed to memory, the remaining lines were a matter of conjecture. What mattered if the voice of the prompter boomed out at regular intervals, entrances and exits were hopelessly confused, "props" were forgotten? The story was told, according to the time-honored formula; the hero met his reward, and the villain was made away with. As far as that went, first-night audiences had nothing to criticize.

McHugh was only too willing to be relieved of the troublesome and unnecessary business of directing; nor did he object to the changes the leading man made in the script, or the manner in which he insisted that certain parts should be read. The fact of the matter was that McHugh would have put on the last act first, or opened all of them with a hymn, so long as Miss Dayton was content. As long as he was confident that he was in no immediate danger of being separated from the two hundred dollars that rested snugly within his wallet, the manager viewed the operations with complacent eyes. To him, the coming production in High City was merely an incident—like duping a hotel proprietor, or playing a stand on another company's paper.

His part in the new piece was short, for which he was extremely thankful, but, according to the director, very vital to the third act of the play. Sheldon went over that particular scene in which he appeared so many times, and with

so much care and perseverance, that even McHugh felt it necessary to protest. On one occasion, when Sheldon had had him read the lines over and over again, and insisted upon certain business that the script did not call for, the manager waxed indignant.

"My dear Mr. Sheldon," he cried, "this elaboration of detail is most absurd. Quite unnecessary. Quite. We are not preparing for a Broadway appearance, sir."

"One never knows," Sheldon responded pleasantly, not in the least perturbed at the interruption. "Now we'll go over the act from your entrance, Mr. McHugh," he resumed. "Begin, please."

If the manager found the rehearsals wearing, it was to be expected that the remainder of the company shared his discomfort. Miss Harcourt, the ingénue, was loud in her protestations, declaring in no uncertain tones that it was worse than playing the "four-a-day" circuit. The mild Miss von Hemert, mother of Clarabell, feared the strain would be too much for her "darling baby," while Ira Sampler, the hardest worked member of the cast, complained at every opportunity, and was in such an irritable state of mind that he never could remember a piece of business from one day to the next.

The men of the company, though they grumbled and argued at the extra work, gave Sheldon very little trouble—Bayliss excepted. From the very first this actor had objected to Sheldon's engagement as leading man; and now that he was given free rein as director, his hatred increased.

Bayliss was a capable actor, and an excellent type. Only laziness had kept him down to the level of his present position. Sheldon tried in every way to help with his part, but the other did not take kindly to these efforts, resented each word of criticism, "soldiered" through the rehearsals, and was the worst stumblingblock in the director's path.

When Sheldon took him to task one day over the slovenly manner in which he read a speech, Bayliss promptly flew

into a rage. "Look here," he broke out, "I'm doing the very best I know how, and that settles it. If you don't fancy the way I'm playing this part, get another man; I'm willing. But don't make out that you're so superior. You're no better than the rest of us. We're all dubs, to be hanging on with this down-and-out troupe of hamfats. You're no Belasco pet; all that hot air you shot into McHugh about giving up a Broadway engagement doesn't go down with me. If there was a ghost of a chance for you in New York, you wouldn't be wasting your time here."

"We won't discuss personalities," said Sheldon quietly. "I want to help you. You've got a great opportunity in this play. Why won't you make some effort to——"

"What a joke!" broke in the other. "What's a performance or two in High City going to amount to, I'd like to know? I'm disgusted with the whole business. It's tough enough to jump from water tank to water tank, and to sleep in day coaches, and to put up with the grub they hand you in these two-dollar-a-day hotels, without wasting six hours out of every twenty-four at a fool rehearsal. If McHugh didn't owe me so much money, I'd give up, and hire out as a farm hand."

Sheldon argued with him for a long time, but did not succeed in getting much better work from the disgusted actor. The director was helpless in this respect. Neither Bayliss, nor any of the others, feared dismissal. McHugh had never been known to discharge a member of his company. He usually owed them too much money. So Sheldon had to make the best of the material he had to work with.

When Ira Sampler beheld the "prop" sheet, he grinned; and when the director told him that no makeshifts would be tolerated, he laughed. "What do you think this is? Sarah Bernhardt's farewell tour? How do you expect I'm going to get all these things? They cost money. Who puts up for them—you or McHugh? The Duke won't stand for any extra expense, I tell you."

But Sheldon was firm. "McHugh

said you would attend to it," he declared. "So get busy."

Ira accepted the list, and scanned the items. "How do you expect to have a 'break-away' door, when we don't carry doors at all?" he protested.

"Perhaps the house in High City can supply it," said the director. "It is a better theater than you have been in the habit of playing."

The property man flared up at this, but swallowed his wrath after a visible effort. "Just wait until the Duke sees this," he warned. "He'll have a nervous chill."

Ira was right. When the astounded manager viewed the imposing list of props necessary to the performance of "The Dangerous Road," his eyes blazed. "Absurd!" he cried. "Unnecessary! Why, there are more props down here than is used for our entire repertory. They'll cost—cost over fifty dollars."

"Very well," replied Sheldon. "Suppose they do? You have the money, haven't you? You didn't expect to put on this production without some preparation, did you?"

McHugh calmed down a trifle when it became apparent that the director was not altogether in the dark concerning his agreement with the playwright. "But my dear Sheldon," he protested, in a milder voice, "for just a single performance it seems——"

"I concluded it would be an excellent idea to give a try-out performance before reaching High City," Sheldon broke in gently.

"Impossible," declared the manager; "and senseless as well. I have already ordered the paper for the High City appearance. Why waste any of it on another stand?"

Sheldon looked surprised. "You've ordered special paper for 'The Dangerous Road'?" he asked.

"I have, sir. The most expensive and elaborate paper that it is possible to obtain—on short notice," he added.

"Miss Dayton hardly expected that," Sheldon said. "But, anyway, we will not have to paper the preliminary stand. A mere announcement will answer. I

am taking a personal interest in the piece, McHugh," he continued impressively, "and as it is my first attempt at directing, I want to see a finished performance."

The manager proceeded cautiously. He could not antagonize his leading man. "I'll consider the matter, Sheldon," he said. "There may, and there may not, be an advantage in giving a preliminary performance."

Meanwhile, through all the troubles and disputes, Miss Dayton and her leading man continued to labor patiently over the script. It had been almost entirely rewritten, for Sheldon knew more about the subtle art of stage carpentry than the playwright.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT.

AFTER considerable persuasion, McHugh finally agreed that "The Dangerous Road" should be produced in Madison, a little town fifty miles from High City. The manager, wisely enough, saw that any objections he might offer would lead to unpleasant complications, and it was a steadfast rule with him to side-step everything that even remotely resembled trouble. Though he had no faith in the new piece, he saw no possible harm in offering it to the Madison audience—if this would serve to keep both his principals in good humor.

On looking out of his bedroom window on the morning of the performance, Sheldon was astounded at seeing on the billboard opposite the hotel a sixteen-sheet poster announcing the performance of "The Dangerous Road." The varicolored stand was a work of the printer's art, and while it did not accurately illustrate the scenes of the play it advertised, it served to attract attention. Already a crowd had assembled in front of it. He noted, with increasing amazement, that the title had not been inserted separately, as is the usual procedure where printing concerns have stock paper prepared in advance, but was an integral part of

the whole scheme. It lacked, however, information as to the author's name.

Directly below the ornate lettering was the announcement that the piece was "the most startling production of the season."

Sheldon whistled softly to himself as he turned from the window to finish dressing; but before he had left the room, a sudden thought had flashed into his mind. He hurried down into the lobby in search of McHugh, but found that the manager had eaten breakfast and left the hotel.

In the dining room he discovered Miss Dayton alone at one of the tables, and hurried over to join her. "Well," he began, smiling; "how's the rising young playwright this fair morning? Nervous?"

"Not a bit," she answered. "But if Madison was New York——"

"Ah, that would be a different story, eh? Noticed the billing for your play?" he continued.

"How could I do otherwise? Looks like an advertisement for a circus, doesn't it?"

"Worse," commented Sheldon.

"I don't recall the scene on the board opposite the hotel," Miss Dayton continued.

"You will not recall any of the scenes," he answered.

Arrived at the theater, after he had talked further with Miss Dayton, Sheldon heard much discussion of the pretentious billboard announcements; but he kept his own opinions to himself. This much he did know: such paper as graced the dead walls of Madison had had its conception at other hands; the wily manager had had no voice in the printing. How it had come into McHugh's possession was still a matter for conjecture.

A final rehearsal was gone through with, and with urgent pleas from the director to be on hand at seven o'clock, the company was dismissed.

For once, they arrived promptly, and Sheldon started in to coach them in their make-up, referring them for their various types to photographs he kept in his pocket. "This is about the sort

of character I'd picture you to be," he would say, selecting one of the photographs. "Now see how near you can make up to resemble it."

McHugh grumbled a little when the director advised him to wear a certain type of beard—one which would entail a great amount of tedious work with crêpe hair—and to give his eyes a peculiar droop by the ingenious use of court-plaster and putty; but in the end the manager complied with the request, and as he was far from being a novice in the subtle art, the transformation from Booth McHugh to the character he was to assume was an amazing accomplishment.

Ira Sampler, similarly coached, and outfitted complete from Sheldon's wardrobe, was turned into a fastidious, side-whiskered old man, in a spike-tailed coat and glasses. Bayliss and Muir followed Sheldon's directions as to their character delineation, although at first the juvenile man protested strenuously at the addition of an aquiline nose, and further disfiguration of his handsome features.

"I'm not a character man," he objected, after listening to the director's instructions.

"Well, in this production you are supposed to be the very unhandsome juvenile-character man," responded Sheldon. "It's a new type."

Bayliss, for all his ill feeling, allowed himself to be guided by Sheldon's advice, and after a great deal of study and hard work was changed into a portly, red-faced, bald-headed gentleman of sixty.

"Shades of John Falstaff!" he exclaimed, surveying the finished make-up in the mirror. "Am I not a picture?"

"We look like a pair of slap stick comedians," growled Muir, fingering his putty nose.

"I feel like one," answered Bayliss. "If we don't scare the orchestra when we make our first entrance I lose my guess."

With mock gravity they locked arms, and marched out upon the stage, to be greeted with howls of merriment from the other members of the company.

Sheldon surveyed the entire cast, individually and collectively, before calling the first act, and seemed remarkably pleased at the result. Miss Harcourt, the ingénue, had a character part after her own heart, and the director found no fault with either her make-up or her costume. Clarabell Campbell was a barefooted boy, and seemed to enjoy the novelty of it. Her mother was a charwoman, who would have appeared in high-heel slippers and a silk dress had Sheldon not protested. Miss Reid, the character woman, was commended by the director on her exceedingly clever performance of an overdressed small-town gossip.

Miss Dayton, in a simple, girlish frock, her hair plaited down her back, looked the picture of rural charm and innocence. As she emerged from her dressing room, and started down the corridor in response to the call, she stopped suddenly at the sight of a strange old man who walked toward her. A cry was upon her lips; but she caught herself in time.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. McHugh," she said, relieved. "I didn't recognize you in that make-up. You frightened me."

The manager smiled. "That's the greatest compliment you could have paid me, my dear," replied McHugh. He took both her hands and patted them. "The act's been called. I just came over to wish you good luck."

"Oh, thank you, thank you," she said earnestly.

Once out upon the stage and surrounded by the other members of the cast, she studied them with increasing surprise; and at last, meeting Sheldon's questioning glance, nodded her approval.

"Do they look real enough?" he asked in an undertone when he had given the signal for the curtain, and they were standing alone in an entrance.

"Almost too real," she told him. "I met Mr. McHugh in the corridor—and for a moment, in that dim light, I thought——" She stopped, but Sheldon understood.

"We've succeeded far better than I dared hope," he said.

The overture ended. McHugh, at the warning button, snapped his fingers smartly. "Clear, please!" he cried.

The stage crew and the actors hurried into the wings. The curtain went up, and the dialogue began.

Miss Dayton and Sheldon gazed out upon the scene—the beginning of the play that was to mean so much to them both. "Haven't forgotten your side props, have you, Emily?" he asked.

"No. I have everything."

He listened for a few minutes, then spoke again: "Ready. Here's your entrance. Good luck, little actress-playwright."

To his surprise she stepped back and clutched his hand. "I'm—I'm afraid to go on," she murmured.

"Why?"

"I don't know. Everything, I guess," she faltered. "The play—the people—all the preparation."

"Nonsense," he remonstrated. "You mustn't fall down now." He pressed her hand. "Buck up, Emily."

She drew in a deep breath and stepped into the glow of the weak footlights. In spite of his encouragement, she was nervous. Her lines came with a perceptible effort, as if an unseen hand was about her throat. At all too frequent intervals she glanced appealingly toward Sheldon, who stood in the nearest entrance, ready to prompt her, but once he had come on the scene she gained confidence; and after a faltering, uncertain beginning, the act ended in triumph. Sincere applause followed the fall of the curtain.

The second act opened much better, and progressed as smoothly as if this were the hundredth, rather than the first, performance. To Sheldon's surprise and gratification, Bayliss, for all his indifference at rehearsals, gave a finished and letter-perfect performance. He was mindful of the peculiar enunciation in which he had been so patiently drilled, and of the intricate tricks of business that made up the character. McHugh made his first entrance with

the usual dramatic flourish so dear to him, and paused expectantly for the applause that did not come. But if he viewed with disfavor this woeful lack of appreciation on the part of the audience, it did not detract from his endeavors, for he entered into the spirit of his part with fervor.

The short, crisp dialogue, the tempo in which the scenes were played, and the swiftness with which the absorbing plot unfolded, all contributed to a certain nervous suspense shared by the participants and audience alike. There were no flowery, windy speeches, for Sheldon had pruned them down to the pith; every line counted, every speech went home. Cues were picked up on the instant; entrances never missed fire; exits were timed to a nicety, and each bit of rehearsed business fell into its allotted niche with the precision of well-oiled machinery.

The whole play was so different from the usual cut-and-dried, shopworn, and stereotyped vehicles staged in the theater, that the Madison audience seemed too enthralled to applaud, except when the curtain fell. Then they broke into a storm of clapping and pounding that threatened to dislodge the very roof; nor were they appeased until each member of the cast had taken a bow.

Back of the curtain line enthusiasm ran high. The ingénue executed a fancy dance on her way to the dressing room, McHugh was jubilant, Ira Sampler darted frantically about in quest of his props, humming to himself. A broad smile illumined the countenance of the morose Bayliss. Clara-bell hugged her mother rapturously, and Muir, the unhandsome juvenile man, forgetful of his putty nose, knocked the end of it askew while ducking around a post. Miss Dayton was elated. Sheldon, feeling as jubilant as the others, still managed to exert more self-control, and to keep some semblance of order in his part of the theater.

The third act opened to breathless suspense, and the scene was quickly prepared for the supreme moment at the close. McHugh made his entrance,

Sheldon followed at his heels; Bayliss and Muir were already on.

Then, like the snapping of a taut thread, a single, penetrating cry arose, beyond the circle of yellow footlights: "Fire!"

In the winking of an eye, the play, and the players, and all that existed back of the curtain line were blotted out. The audience, keyed to a nervous tension, had needed but this one, sinister word to change them into a blind, panic-stricken mob; and like a mob they came to their feet and surged toward the one narrow exit.

Sheldon, alive to the emergency, rushed to the apron of the stage and shouted aloud. This failing, he lifted his arms in a frantic, mute appeal. But no one of the hundreds heard, or if they did, gave heed. So far as the director could see, there was no sign of smoke or flame; but to stem the panic before him was hopeless. The air was filled with a confusing babel of shouts and cries and the crashing of chairs.

"The fools! The fools!" he cried, helpless in his rage.

He sprang from the stage, cleared the orchestra pit, and ran up the aisle. "There is no fire!" he cried, trying to make himself heard above the tumult. "There's no danger!"

But this effort was as useless as the others had been. As well try to hold in check a herd of frightened cattle, as to expect the possessed spectators to listen. Their one thought seemed to be to get out of the doomed theater.

In an incredibly short time the house was emptied. A few of the braver spirits hovered about the exit, to peer back with anxious, searching eyes. The floor of the theater was covered with programs, hats, and other bits of wearing apparel that had been heedlessly tossed aside and trampled upon.

The manager and his property man met behind the scenes a little later.

"It looks to me, Ira," said McHugh, "as if some one was trying to queer this show from the front."

"Huh!" said Ira. "That's not the only queer thing about this show."

"It looks very strange to me," admitted the manager. Then he went back to join his company.

TO BE CONTINUED.

**TOP-NOTCH** is published twice a month. The next installment of this serial will appear in the April number, out March first.

### An Easy Guess

**A**T a meeting at which Bishop Wilberforce presided, a man who was to speak, said to the bishop:

"I need not speak; I don't think they expect me."

"To be sure they do," said Wilberforce. "Don't you see they are all going?"

### Back to the Farm

**T**HERE are too many "dreamers and thinkers,"

And not enough tillers of soil;  
There are too many eaters and drinkers

Who use up the products of toil;  
There are too many boosters and boomers,

With manners too easy and bland;  
We're cursed with too many consumers.  
We ought to go back to the land.

There are too many getters and takers,  
And not enough men who produce;  
There are too many broad rolling acres  
Untouched and untilled—out of use;  
We stick where the grime and the grit  
is,

And the streets with the poor are  
aswarm;  
We're crowded too much in the cities,  
We ought to go back to the farm.

We've got to be workers and plowers,  
Who sweat in the fields like true  
men;

We've got to make use of our powers  
To make the land blossom again.  
What, me? On a farm? And to stay  
there?

Well, not for a bundle of pelf!  
I was trying to show you the way there,  
But I'll stick to the city myself.

T. B.

# Talks With Top-Notch Readers

By BURT L. STANDISH

## THEIR POINT OF VIEW

FROM Mr. Raymond A. Stevens, of New Amsterdam, New York, we have this comprehensive letter:

Just a few words of commendation concerning the last few numbers of TOP-NOTCH. Evidently that state of somnolence which seems to prevail has failed to clutch the editor of TOP-NOTCH in its grasp, judging from the stories he has handed out recently. Great, simply great! Serials were O. K., novels unbeatable, short stories excellent. Thank you, Mr. Editor; thank you for your liberal dealing of athletic tales—baseball yarns, bowling and boxing, not to mention the Boltwood serials. But when it comes to talking baseball, there is one author who has it over them all for: genuine, eighteen-carat-diamond humor. Place the name of J. A. Fitzgerald in the TOP-NOTCH hall of fame. He surely deserves it. Even Charles E. Van Loan himself will have to surrender his laurels to the man who placed "Beauty O'Brien" on the fiction map. "Beauty" would cure any man of the blues. I doubt not but what he could even make a turnip laugh.

Some more of those effervescent stories of the diamond. Some more of that choice humor which Mr. Fitzgerald so lavishly displayed in the best baseball story of the year—"Beauty O'Brien, Pitcher."

The Boltwood stories appeal to me very strongly. In some respects they bear a slight resemblance to Owen Johnson's "Stover" stories. In Boltwood, Mr. Patten has a clean, virile character, possessing moral as well as physical courage; a character who should command the admiration of any

man or woman who knows the difference between right and wrong.

A few more serials on the order of "Forward March" would go very nicely. I am rather fond of stories of American history, as should be any American with an iota of patriotism and red blood in his body.

Just a suggestion before closing. Summer will soon be here—the time of the year when one begins to feel a desire to throw off the yoke of civilization and go back to the primitive life.

TOP-NOTCH has never published a *genuine* camping story; one that takes you into the woods, near the shore of a beautiful lake, shows you the fun and pleasure derived from life in the big outdoors with only a tent for shelter. A camping serial would go great this summer—would make cool reading for hot weather. Why not set one of your authors—who is familiar with the life—at work on one?

We have published a novelette that dealt with the life of the open in the summer, although it may not have come up to the specifications presented by Mr. Stevens. It was written by Jackson Gregory and bore the title, "The Purple Emperor."



THE desire for a larger or an oftener TOP-NOTCH is expressed in frequent letters, of which this is a fair example:

*Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.*

DEAR SIR: I have been a reader of your magazine for over a year, and am glad to say that I am perfectly satis-

fied with it. I suggest one more serial, a few more long and short stories, and one more complete novel, and a charge of five cents more.

Those animal stories by Harold de Polo are excellent. I have just finished "That Air Adjustment," and believe it is one of the best short stories I have ever read.

Come over with some more of those Lefty serials and a few stories about the Pacific coast. Wishing your magazine the utmost success, I remain,

FRANK A. QUEST.

A letter containing a similar request is the following:

*Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.*

DEAR SIR: Just a line to tell you that TOP-NOTCH is in a class by itself. That may sound stale to you, but it is true, nevertheless—and the class is a high one. You are giving us the best ten cents' worth of reading on the market. I am with the people that think you ought to do one of two things—come out twice a month at fifteen cents, or come out four times a month at ten cents. My own choice would be the present rate of issue, with more pages, at fifteen cents, if you think you can give us more of the same standard. But whatever you do, stay as you are or change, I am with you. Yours very truly,

GEORGE A. SEATON.

Easton, Pa.

We should like to hear from other readers on the subject of a larger TOP-NOTCH, but there is little use discussing the question of issuing more frequently than twice a month. Most readers we find, for various reasons given, do not desire it oftener than twice a month.



FROM Miss Mabel Reynolds, of Seventh Street, Port Arthur, Texas, we have this:

I think your magazine is just fine, and want to ask you if it is possible for James French Dorrance to give us

a sequel to his wonderful story, "Gold Bound," which was a novel in the Christmas number. I would like very much to have Rupert Ducane make his fortune in Alaska and marry his golden girl, Yukona Grey, and, of course, have more adventures in the wonderful North thrown in with it. I have no kick to make. Hoping to have my wish come true, I wish you all prosperity.

Mr. Dorrance has been informed of the desire for a sequel to "Gold Bound," and he replies that he feels the same way about it himself. So we may look for the further adventures of Ducane and his golden girl.



THIS is from Mr. Harold de Polo, author of many dramatic tales of animal life:

*Editor of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE.*

DEAR SIR: Having just read the kindly criticism of S. T. Ballard, of South Orange, in regard to my story entitled "The Fish Hawk's Reckoning," I make haste to answer it. I take it that Mr. Ballard, in the first place, is at odds with me as to the possibility of a fish hawk getting the better of an eagle; secondly, that he disputes the eagle's kingship of the air.

Now, it is quite true that the eagle, although having the honor of being called the "King of the Air," does not, in some cases, entirely deserve it. The kingbird—or bee martin—has often driven him off, although usually in numbers; but, although the smaller birds are able to cause him much inconvenience, they have never been known, to my knowledge, to kill him.

As late as this summer, I witnessed several such incidents as Mr. Ballard describes; but it is admitted that kingbirds usually pester hawks, and crows, and kites more than they do eagles—so, at least, Mr. Lydekker says. But, for that matter, fish hawks also enjoy the prestige of occasionally putting eagles to flight. I quote the following from "Gould's Naturalist's Library": "When driven—the bald eagle—as he

sometimes is, by the combined courage and perseverance of the fish hawks, from their neighborhood——” But that suffices, proving that the kingbird is not the only one known to master the eagle in that respect.

Another rather interesting fact, in regard to the eagle and the kingbird, is in a little book on the animal kingdom I have, published back in 1845: “He had some other curious habits”—a tame eagle is spoken of. “His custom was about once a week to make a hearty meal, and that was sufficient for six days. His most common food was the kingbird, of which he would sometimes catch ten in the course of a few hours.” That gives another side to the story.

But the eagle, although sometimes bested, does deserve the title of “King of the Air.” He is surely one of the strongest and cleverest birds known; also, where he loses once, you may count upon it that he will win ten times. All naturalists agree in calling him by the above title, just as they agree in calling the lion the king of beasts, although he, too, has been known to suffer defeat by smaller animals—usually in numbers. No, I believe that the eagle, without the slightest doubt, justly deserves his title.

And now in regard to the fish hawk, in my story, besting his enemy the eagle. I have quoted the sentence showing that the former occasionally drive him off through the very strength of their numbers. It must be remembered also that in my story conditions existed that were rather out of the ordinary. The fish hawk was laboring under the great courage that had been instilled in him through the wreck the eagle had made of his home, his mate, and his young; also, the eagle was hampered with a very heavy lamb, and he, too, had the thought firmly in his brain that he must get the food to his young at all costs.

I was told this summer, by a lumberman in the Catskill Mountains, that he had, several years before, while in the Rockies, witnessed a scene such as I described in my story—only the eagle, instead of a lamb, had a tur-

key in its talons. It lost out chiefly for the same reason that mine did—it held on doggedly to its prey and would not loose its hold, keeping up in its foolhardy scorn for its apparently insignificant enemy until too late.

I hope that I have answered Mr. Ballard entirely to his satisfaction; and trust, also, that he will take it in the same kindly way that I took his criticism. Nevertheless, there is just one little point I would like to dispute with him. He says that the kingbird is smaller than the ordinary chippie. That is a mistake, for the kingbird is about twice the size of the chippie referred to. He can easily verify this by looking up any modern natural history and glancing at the plates that give the comparative sizes.

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### Same Old Grouch

AN old lady who saw “The Merchant of Venice” many years ago, recently witnessed a modern production of the same play. When asked how she liked it, she replied: “Well, Venice seemed to have been spruced up a bit since the first time I saw it, but that *Shylock's* just the same mean, ordinary thing he was forty years ago.”

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### Brain Exercise

THERE had been serious trouble in a certain school. One of the teachers said he was no believer in the old hackneyed system of teaching.

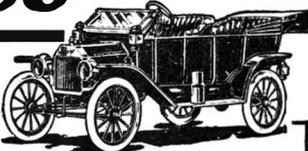
“What is wanted,” said he, “is something which will make the children think and reason for themselves. Mere addition and subtraction are too mechanical.”

In accordance with his ideas, he gave his pupils one hundred questions, of which the following is a specimen:

“What is it that can go up a spout down, but cannot go down a spout up?”

The brain-fever hospitals thereabouts were full of children for weeks afterward, and the teacher was dismissed without honor, yet the answer to the riddle was very simple: “An umbrella.”

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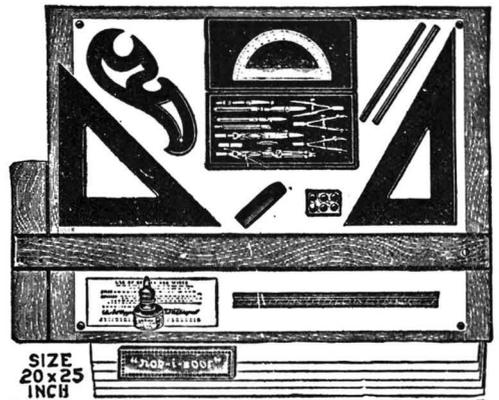
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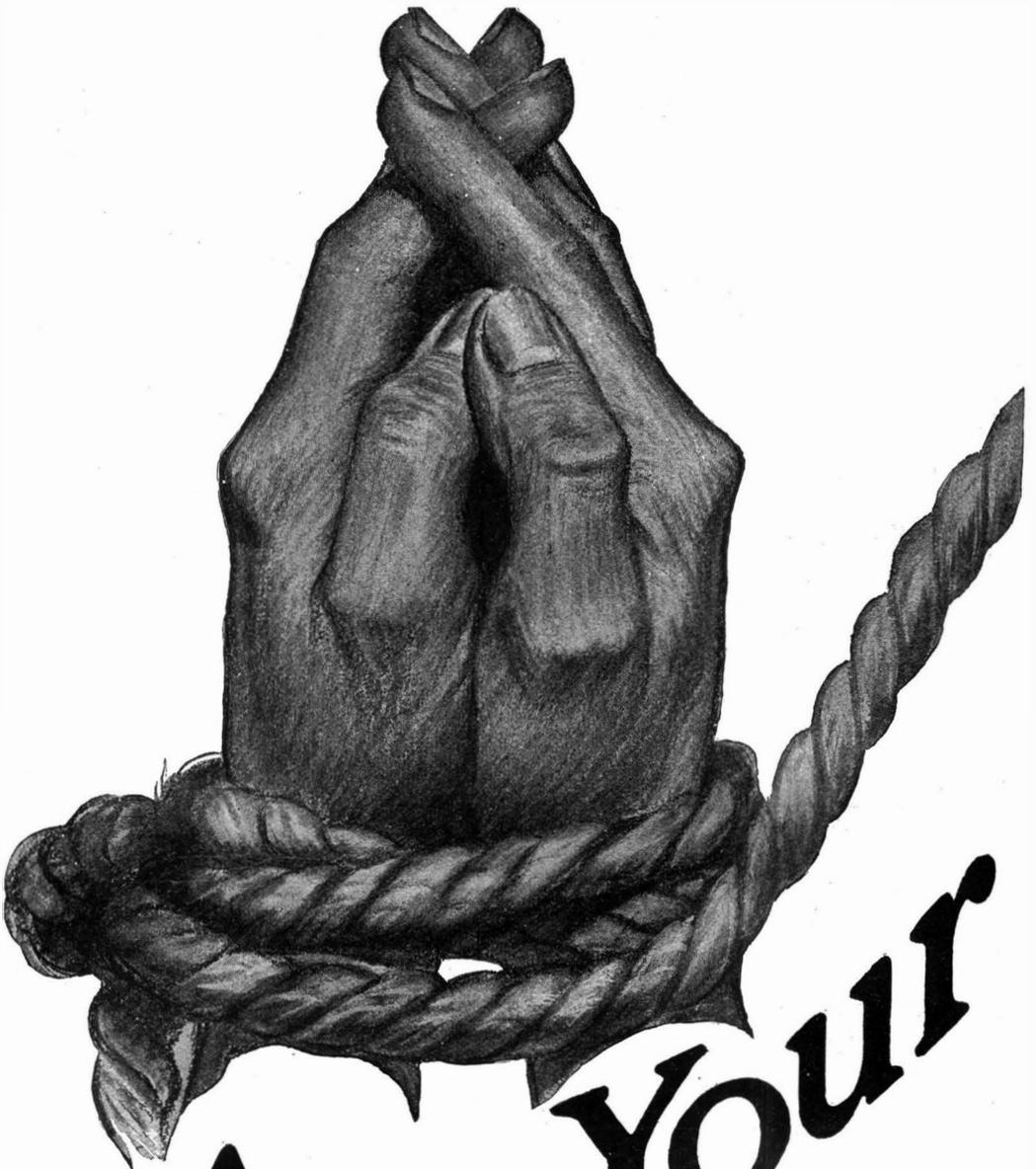
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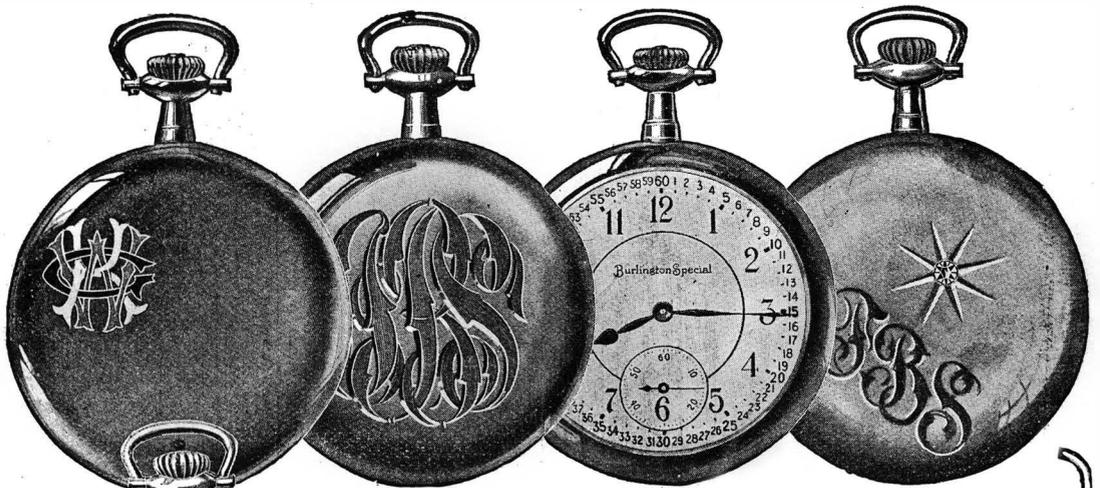
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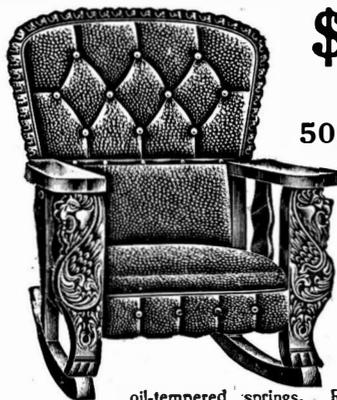
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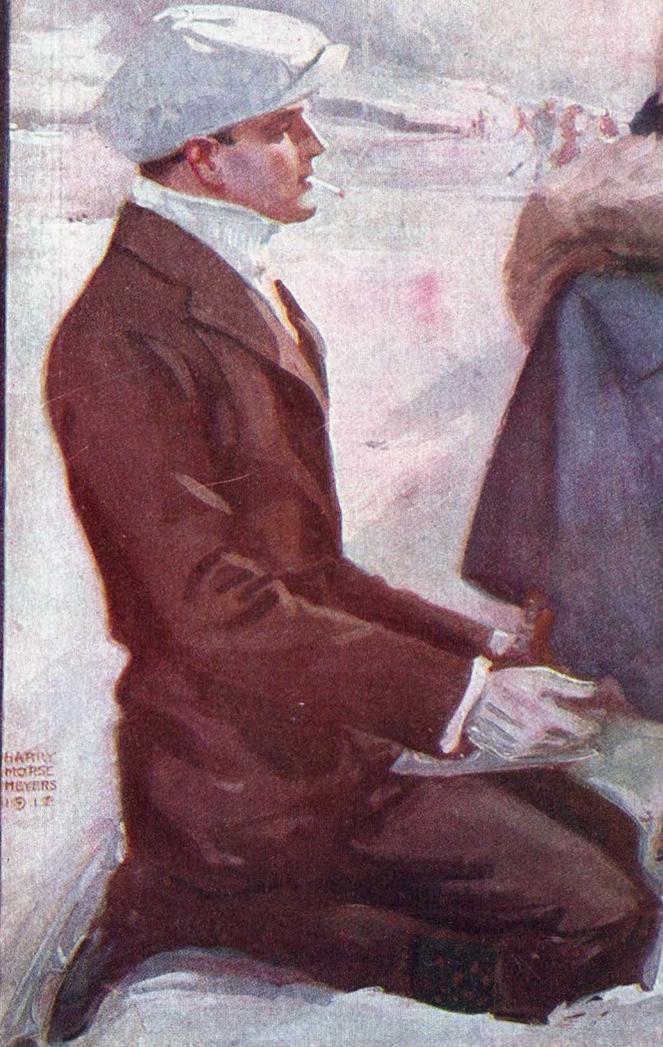
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